

RURAL SRI LANKAN WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Participation and recognition in
sustainable agricultural livelihoods
across their life course

Dr Samanthi J. Gunawardana
Monash University



Monash University
Gender, Peace & Security

Research Team:

Mr Balasingham Skanthakumar, Social Scientists Association
Dr Pradeep Peiris, Social Scientists Association
Mr Shashik Silva, Social Scientists Association
Thiyagi Piyadasa, Oxfam
Buddhima Padmasiri, Open University

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Hambantota, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

Cover Image: Mrs K.H. Ranjanee. Miniethiliya, Ambalantota, Hambantota District, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Pavithra Jovan de Mello/OxfamAUS.



In memory of G. Kusumawathie
1973-2017
Farmer and fearless activist Panama, Ampara.



Kusumawathie's cultivations on her reclaimed land,
Peanut Farm, Panama.
December 3rd, 2017.
Photo: Samantha Gunawardana.

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Published by Oxfam Monash Partnership

Suggested citation: Gunawardana, S.J (2018). *Rural Sri Lankan Women in Agriculture*.
Participation and recognition in sustainable agricultural livelihoods across their life course.
Melbourne: Oxfam Monash Partnership Report.

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Published, 8th March 2017. <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Cartoon-of-the-day-125065.html>

While we have identified some of the women that appear in pictures by name in this
document, we have not identified those that wish to remain anonymous.
Consent was provided for use of images.



Mrs.K.H.Ranjane & Daughter,
Hambantota District, Miniethiliya, Ambalantota Sri Lanka.
Photo: Pavithra Jovan de Mello/OxfamAUS.

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Outside the JSSK office.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community Based Organisation	LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
CIC farms	Chemical Industries Colombo Limited	MJH	Magampura Janatha Handa
DSD	Divisional Secretariat Divisions	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
FTZ	Free Trade Zone	OFC	Other food crops
HEO	Human Elevation Organisation	PAFFREL	People's Action for Free & Fair Elections
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	Rs.	Rupees
ILO	International Labour Organisation	SDF	Social Development Foundation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
JSSK	Jatheen Athara Sahayogitha Sangawrdena Kamituwa	SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna	STF	Special Task Force (police)
		UNDP	United Nations Development Program

NON-ENGLISH WORDS

Alli/ alliya (universal)	Unit of measurement. An alli is 14 x 14 fathoms, where one fathom = 6 feet. Now harvested using machines
Amma (universal)	Mother
Ape shakthi (Sinhala)	Our strength
Ayya (Sinhala)	Big brother
Beedi (universal)	Traditional hand rolled cigarette
Betel (universal)	Betel leaf, from the peraceae family; betel nut as in areca nut from the areca palm
Brinjal	Eggplant
Cadjan	Coconut palm leaves
Chena (hene)	Dating back to indigenous groups and adopted by indian settlers from the 3rd century b.C. Also known as 'slash and burn'
Divi Neguma (Sinhala)	Livelihood upliftment. Government economic policy under the economic development minister basil rajapaksa
Gama Neguma (Sinhala)	Village upliftment/awakening. Government economic policy under former president mahinda rajapaksa, as part of the nation building and estate infrastructure development ministry in 2006.
Grama Niladhari (Universal)	Village officer within divisional secretariat
Grama sevaka (Universal)	As above
Jak (Universal)	Jackfruit
Jana Shakti (Sinhala)	People power
Kuli (Universal)	Day labour(er)
Lakh (Universal)	One hundred thousand
Maha (Universal)	A cultivation season which falls within the 'northeast monsoon' from september to march. The major growing season for the country.
Mahajana Shakti Grameeya Committee (Sinhala)	People's power rural committee
Mahaththaya (Sinhala)	Mahaththaya denoting social rank/respect, literallyly 'mr.'
Mahinda Chinthanaya (Sinhala)	Mahinda's vision. With reference to former president mahinda rajapakse
Mali (Sinhala)	Little brother
Manum kuli (Sinhala)	Measurement rent
Molayak (Sinhala)	Grinder
Mudalalis (Sinhala)	Merchants
Nangi (Sinhala)	Little sister
Paalu (Tamil)	Lone/unused
Podi Mahathaya (Sinhala)	Small 'mr'.
Pradeshiya Sabha	Local council
Roti (Universal)	Flatbread
Seettu/Cheetu (Universal)	Local cooperative savings scheme
Thosai (Universal)	Thin pancake made from rice flour and urad beans
Yala (Universal)	A cultivation season which falls within the northeast monsoon from end of may to the end of August

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team would like to thank and acknowledge the following contributions.

The members of the Oxfam Monash Partnership (OMP) Governance Committee provided ongoing support for the project. In particular, we thank the Partnership's three consecutive leads, Alexandra Kennedy, Eleanor Jackson, and Saba Mebrahtu Habte who provided unfailing support for this project.

We are indebted to the Oxfam partners and their leadership in Sri Lanka who assisted with the qualitative fieldwork. The organisations were: the Human Elevation Organisation and Social Development Foundation in Ampara, Magampura Janatha Handa in Hambantota, and Jatheen Athara Sahayogitha Sangawrdena Kamituwa in Polonnaruwa. Oxfam field offices in Ampara and Hambantota also helped us to coordinate this work, while Sandun Thudugala, the Economic Justice Manager provided valuable input into scoping the project.

There were many research assistants and translators who assisted in the project. At Oxfam, they were Eshani Seneviratne, Chinthani Sooriyamudali, Senel Wanniarachchi, Dinukshi Fernando, Avisha Fernando, Madhavi Andradi, and Sanduni Warnasuriya. Mactalin Soosainathar and Suthagini Ponnampalam assisted with the qualitative fieldwork and data collection in Ampara, as well as translation and transcription. At the Social Scientists Association, they were Mark Schubert, Mitun Rahul and Hasini Lecamwasam. Anushaya Collure and Niyanthini Kadirgamar assisted with the initial literature review.

The survey enumerators were: I.G.D. Abeyrathna, R.D.P. Sanjeewani, T.P.H.R. Dharmasena, N.G.A.P. Rathnasheela, H.A. Mayuri Sanjeewani, M.I. Ismath Jahan, A.L. Mariena, A.C.S. Riswana, M.I.S. Riyasa, S. Sumaiya, U.L. Anver, N. Theviga, N. Rajendran, J. Lavanya, K. Susinthira, M. Anutharsiny, J.C. Watson, Loretta, R.A. Keerthi Rathnayake, L.G. Bhagya Hansamali, D.P.M. Nimmi Senaratne, Eeshani P. Liyanage, W.M.M.M. Wanasinghe, Sanduni Nilushika, S.M. Amarawasam, M.S. Kankanenge, Erandi Madhushani, P.M. Siriweera, M.P. Wijayathilaka, and Sarath Kumara.

Dr Nilajana Premaratna helped to construct timelines based on the qualitative interviews.

Thank you to our drivers Raja and Upali for their services and knowledge about the landscape of Sri Lanka. Their discussions during long drives to and from field visits aided our understanding of the landscape and communities that make up the country.

Finally, our deepest thanks go to the women of Ampara, Hambantota, and Polonnaruwa who, while not named in this project for reasons of anonymity, gave up their time to participate in this project. We hope we have done justice to your lives and this report in some small way assists in increasing the recognition you deserve, and the improvement you want to see to your livelihoods, your households and your community.

SUMMARY

Rural Sri Lankan women are ever-present in agricultural economies, but their experiences and contributions are invisible in policy. Although agriculture has always relied on women's participation and labour, few accounts highlight women's paid and unpaid contributions to the sector. Data is needed to document the contribution rural Sri Lankan women make to production and the barriers they face in participating in agriculture, so that women can gain recognition and new opportunities, and so that existing opportunities can be enhanced. As the country rebuilds following a 26-year war, recognition of women's contribution is vital to working towards economic security.

This report contains preliminary findings from a survey of 2093 women and 66 in-depth life narrative interviews carried out between 2014-2016. Our purpose was to generate insight and evidence to inform policy and advocacy, and to enhance more equitable participation and recognition of rural Sri Lankan women in agriculture. The study examined how rural women in the Hambantota, Polonnaruwa and Ampara districts in post-war Sri Lanka participated in agricultural livelihoods (food crops, paddy, livestock) throughout their life course, from childhood to the time of the study. It summarises the barriers women from multiple ethnic, religious and age groups faced in participating, and the facilitators that enabled them to participate in agricultural livelihoods. Uniquely, the study emphasised women's participation contextualised against the social, political and institutional interactions within the broader political economy.

The findings show that rural Sri Lankan women participated in multiple, at times overlapping, agricultural and non-agricultural livelihoods throughout their lives. Rural women performed all agricultural work tasks, except operating machinery such as tractors. Throughout their life course, women's contribution to agriculture included: paid/compensated work as day labour on private farms, or waged labour on commercial farms; unpaid labour in family-owned cultivations/farms; subsistence labour (e.g. home gardening) and unpaid social reproductive labour such as care work (cooking, cleaning, childcare), as well as civic engagement (community work and political canvassing).

At the time of the survey, less than a third of the sample participated in agricultural livelihoods. Of the households whose main source of income was agriculture, 68% of women from such households were engaged in agriculture as their main source of income. In the interviews, just under 50% of the participants engaged in agriculture at the time of the interview, and the main source of income varied.

A prominent common pattern across different generations, locations and ethnic groups is the relationship between women's participation in agriculture and unpaid care work such as cooking, looking after children, and cleaning. Women began participating in agriculture in their early teens. At the same time, many engaged in (unpaid) care work for siblings, which in turn supported the adults in their households to sustain livelihoods. Across religious, ethnic, and location groups, agricultural participation was lowest during the period of the life course when women had young children. Significantly, the survey demonstrates that their

participation in any form of livelihood was highest during this period. Prevailing gender norms reinforced women's responsibility for childcare which meant women preferred home-based livelihoods, that generated income without travelling far (e.g. to local fields or farms, or migrating to another town or country). Women were responsible for almost all cooking and cleaning within the household, as well as overseeing children's welfare, maintaining home gardens (thereby strengthening household food security), and at times, working alongside spouses in paddy cultivation. By their 40s, participation in agriculture rose exponentially over time, but engagement in any livelihood activity dropped overall. Elder women (60+) reported the highest rate of participation in agriculture.

Gender norms and expectations around care work responsibilities were a significant barrier to participation in agriculture, and these norms interacted with other key barriers across the life course. These barriers included: violence and insecurity (e.g. domestic violence, war), corporeal experiences (illness, disability), access to natural resources (land, water), environmental factors (drought, wildlife), economic (lack of markets) and lack of financial capital (finance). The interplay of these barriers impacted different groups of women in distinct ways. For example, the interviews demonstrated that landlessness was an acute issue for the children of land grantees who resettled in Hambantota during the 1970s and 1980s, but this was not reported as a significant factor in the other districts. In Ampara, increasingly restrictive gender norms reinforced Muslim women's seclusion and participation in public spaces such as public markets or agricultural fields at the time of the interviews; women in their 40s in contrast reported greater mobility when they were in their 20s. Other than travelling out of town, this was not reported as a significant barrier for women in the other districts.

Enabling factors included social capital (e.g. kinship relations, local networks), civic participation, participation in and access to collective organizing, and skill and knowledge acquisition. First, kinship relations enabled a small sample of interviewed women to receive childcare support from female relatives. This enabled them to continually participate in the agricultural sector. Second, the survey cohort reported low levels of civic participation including agriculture related collectives (only 3% of the sample reported this). Those that did participate did so to varying degrees, from passive meeting attendance, to taking on an active leadership role in community groups. Third, less than 1% of the survey reported participating in agriculture-related vocational education.

The lack of civic and training participation did not denote a lack of interest, but a lack of opportunity. Thus, in contrast to the survey cohort, the interviews demonstrated the possibilities of collective organizing and civic participation. Where opportunities were created for the interviewees, they reflected that civic participation gave access to resources including social capital such as networks, training, finance, housing, advocacy and representation, and most strikingly, enabled women to develop their confidence and leadership

capacities, including their ability to advocate on the behalf of their communities. Non-Government Organisation (NGO) provisioning of training in paddy cultivation, organic methods and sustainable water management enabled some women to participate/maintain participation in agriculture. However, this alone did not help them sustain agricultural engagement owing to the barriers noted above.

Notably, factors such as political capital (patronage relations), and access to financial capital (debt) was either a barrier or enabler for women's participation in agriculture. Women in the interviewee cohort instrumentally participated in political networks to access resources such as land and employment, but this did not guarantee access to sustainable livelihoods. Engagement with political patronage was a long-term commitment that required time and labour from the women, which also added to their unpaid social reproduction responsibilities. In relation to financial capital, microcredit providers (private, NGO-led, and state-run) were ubiquitous except in Ampara, where the lack of access to finance inhibited entry into livelihood activities. However, in Polonnaruwa and Hambantota where finance was readily available, the inability to repay various types of debt resulted in exiting from agriculture or shifting participation patterns. When harvests failed, women became indebted, land was mortgaged, and women began working as day labour elsewhere.

These enablers and hindrances to participation cannot be isolated from each other; they are mutually reinforcing and, as such, need to be addressed in this way. Gendered structural, economic, cultural and political elements need to be unsettled both by challenging gender norms and by designing policy and development practices that take women's unpaid and paid labour, roles and responsibilities in rural households and communities into consideration. Policy needs to reflect the different life stages of women as well as their location and ethnicity. The lack of sustainable livelihood choices remains a source of insecurity for women. Rural women's message to researchers, the state, NGOs and prospective employers was clear: rural women need livelihood opportunities that are ongoing and stable, and that take into account their social reproductive roles and responsibilities in the household, which in turn need to be recognized, redistributed and reduced.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a gender-sensitive integrated national plan to promote gender equality, rural livelihoods and sustainable agriculture. This includes the development of gender sensitive indicators and data pertaining to agriculture, as well as responding to national level policies (e.g. National Policy and Action Plan to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Gender Responsive Budgeting)
- Ensure that all the institutions involved in translating policy into practice are gender mainstreamed.
- Recognise and address the enduring relationship between different forms of violence that impact women's lives and agricultural livelihood engagement.
- Ensure that agricultural and supporting policies/ programs, while standardised across the country, are flexible and targeted towards women in different life stages. Women at different stages of their lives, situated in different regions, have different needs.
- With the International Labour Organisation, research and strengthen regulation and practice around agricultural labour conditions on commercial farms and wage labour.
- Work with existing agencies, communities, grassroots level women leaders, NGOs and CBOs to define key areas of women's empowerment in agriculture to build community responsive and contextual policy for diverse cohorts of women.
- Women have greater time and mobility constraints than men, as gender norms and expectations place primary responsibility for childcare and domestic duties on women. These responsibilities directly influence the type of work that women can participate in and the location where work occurs. Thus, help change the narrative and behaviours.
- Revise and reinvigorate technical training and vocational training in rural areas to give women access to agricultural extension and vocational education services.
- Starting with the recognition that women are not accessing resources and information through official sources, and often rely on social networks, explore models of informational sharing and support initiatives that advocate for participatory communication efforts.
- Have greater regulation and guidelines to regulate all forms of microfinance (private, public and NGO sector).

INTRODUCTION

Globally, agriculture has always relied on women's participation across time, space and generations through the production of food, selling produce in local and regional markets and raising animals. Women have additionally contributed to unpaid care and domestic work, as well as home-based gardening to generate human and social capital necessary for agrarian communities to sustain themselves. Women play a crucial role in food security; it is estimated that women farmers produce up to 50% of food crops and comprise, on average, 43% of the agricultural workforce worldwide.¹ In South Asia, close to 70% of working women are found in agriculture.²

Yet, universally women's labour in agriculture has remained largely invisible. Women are rarely culturally recognized as 'farmers' but counted as 'family workers' if at all. Influenced by histories of colonialization, women in South Asian agriculture have been subject to a gendered division of labour³ where women became associated with home-based tasks and subsistence farming. Historically, they laboured primarily in the informal sector with few social protections, and in time and labour-intensive tasks. Women today continue to face wage gaps of up to 40%,⁴ and gender gaps in access to land, technology, extension services, education, and financial services. They work longer hours and have fewer leisure hours when taking into account unpaid activities such as cleaning and childcare. Moreover, women are under-represented in the decision-making process of organizations such as Farmers Associations, or local political institutions meaning their views are rarely heard. As such, they are neglected in policy making.⁵

Agriculture remains important for rural Sri Lankan women but few accounts highlight the importance of women to the sector. Between the 1970s and 2000s, the types of tasks Sri Lankan women perform has transformed. Historically women contributed to sowing and reaping in rice paddy and cultivations. Mechanisation in the 1980s shifted some of their tasks in paddy away from reaping and sowing, to weeding and fertiliser application. By the 2000s women engaged in all aspects of paddy, cultivations, home gardening, and commercial farming as well as off-farm livelihoods.

Although rural livelihoods are becoming more diversified⁶ and increasingly delinked from agriculture and farm employment, for most of the 20th century up to 80% of the population were classified as rural.⁷ Economic liberalisation reforms that involved promoting exports and opening Sri Lanka up to free trade from 1977 onwards resulted in a drop in the gross domestic product contributed by agriculture from 35% in 1950 to 10.1% in 2015.⁸ Reduced state support (such as subsidies for farming inputs) and the liberalisation of agricultural imports exposed domestic food crop cultivators to competition from abroad.⁹ From the mid-1980s onwards, real income from paddy cultivation stagnated, or even declined.¹⁰ By the 1980s, more than 40% of rural household incomes was accounted for by off-farm livelihoods.

Today, agriculture remains important for rural women. The agriculture sector occupies 43% of the total land in Sri Lanka.¹¹ A third of the Sri Lankan rural population relies on agricultural livelihoods. In 2015, more women were formally employed in agriculture compared to men

(33% compared to 27.4%). In the informal sector (which comprised two thirds of all employment in Sri Lanka), 68% of all 'contributing family workers' in the Sri Lankan economy are concentrated in agriculture. In 2013, it was estimated that women constituted 71.8% of this category.¹² Given that domestic agriculture provides approximately 75% of food for the country via small-scale farming activity,¹³ women's contribution to food security is immense. Yet a review of Sri Lankan national level policy since independence from colonial administration (1948) to the present period reveals that women's experiences were omitted from policy.¹⁴

In an effort to bring women's experiences and voices to the forefront of discussion about agricultural livelihoods, this study carried out between 2014-2016 examined how rural women in the Hambantota, Polonnaruwa and Ampara districts of Sri Lanka participated in agricultural livelihoods throughout their life course, and the barriers and facilitators they faced in doing so. The study captured the experiences of Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim and Adivasi (Indigenous)¹⁵ women across multiple generations. Surprisingly, there is only a small body of existing (fragmented) studies that are out of date, or fast becoming so, on this topic in Sri Lanka¹⁶. None take a life course approach to analysis.

AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Our purpose was to generate insight and evidence to inform policy and advocacy, and to promote more equitable participation and recognition of rural Sri Lankan women in agriculture. The following questions were explored in this study:

1. What kind of agricultural livelihood activities do rural Sri Lankan women engage in through their life course?
2. What factors help facilitate or hinder women's participation and recognition within sustainable agriculture livelihoods?
3. What changes need to be made to help improve participation and recognition of women in agricultural livelihoods?

Our research questions are especially important in a post-war context, where military and political settlements have not necessarily translated into secure lives for women, particularly those without access to basic needs or resources. Sri Lanka's civil war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (1983 -2009) severely impacted agricultural communities and those dependent on land and coastal resources.¹⁷ Agricultural livelihoods were disrupted due to displacement, occupation, or limited mobility owing to violence. Displaced women often looked to alternative non-agricultural activities.¹⁸ Although at the time of writing it has been eight years since the war ended, women in communities directly affected by the conflict continue to be disadvantaged in accessing and participating in sustainable livelihood options.¹⁹ We contended that planning economic reconstruction efforts without paying attention to underlying gendered inequalities and structures can further entrench rural women's marginalization.²⁰

AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS

In this study, we are concerned with women's participation in agriculture across their life course, taking into account their social reproductive roles (of which one aspect is care work). We also recognise the importance of place, political economy, and intersections of ethnicity, gender, class and caste as having important explanatory power when considering livelihood options and challenges. Agency and the ways in which people, households, and communities negotiate these relations also give insight into livelihoods.²¹

Livelihoods are complex, spatially and temporally varied conscious and unconscious responses to the context in which people are situated. Importantly, livelihoods are seen as sources of meaning, power and agency within a social world²².

An oft-repeated definition is that a livelihood: "...comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long-term."²³

Capabilities, assets and activities are commonly understood as a series of interlinked 'capitals', access to which forms the basis of livelihoods. These capitals include: human (skills, education, training, labour, health); social (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations); financial (money, credit, savings, debt); natural (land, water, minerals); and physical (house, livestock, machinery, tools, buildings). Researchers interested in livelihoods therefore examine how livelihoods are assembled based on a combination of the above capabilities, assets and activities in a given context.

The literature on Sri Lankan women's participation in agriculture identifies, in an ad hoc manner, gender gaps in capabilities, assets and activities which hinder women.²⁴ These include: discriminatory land ownership laws; lack of access, knowledge about methods, lack of participation in organisations that can aid participation in agriculture, mechanisation, scarcity of irrigated or other sources of water; war and natural disasters which cut off access to land; and economic policy reform and privatisation. Remedies offered therefore sought to broaden access to the above (training,²⁵ markets, employment, infrastructure), land reform in line with state policy, and new technology. Since the 1970s at least, interventions by state, donors and development agencies towards the greater participation of women in rural livelihoods have included training and self-employment for women to boost household income and raise the standard of living. These projects range from promoting cottage industries that process or add value to local produce or resources, poultry or goat rearing, pottery, tailoring, and petty trading, sewing, and weaving.

While a useful framework, the livelihoods approach has been critiqued for neglecting structural factors such as long-term shifts in the political economy of rural communities,

and relations of power and agency including gender and household relations.²⁶ Thus while the interventions discussed above are commonly cited as appropriate waged work for women²⁷ they often reinforce stereotypes "by providing appropriate strategies that fit the known gender relations at the household and the society."²⁸

The problem with this approach is that these policies and interventions do not address underlying structures, relations of power and processes of historical/social dynamism.²⁹ Even the village community itself is presented in undifferentiated terms, as if all of its inhabitants have the same capabilities, and with identical endowments and outcomes. There is no analysis of stratifications and inequality on the basis of class and caste. Significantly, women's lives are investigated with minimal reference to their location, age, ethnicity, or gender relations and ideologies.

In this study, we recognise that a key system of power within all societies is gender. Gender can be conceived of as social norms, attitudes, beliefs and ideologies about men and women that guide behaviours and roles. Gender manifests in, and intersects with, various other power structures and relations such as class, ethnicity and caste.³⁰ Gendered livelihoods therefore entail the material realities and [gender-based] processes that shape livelihoods.³¹ We focus on these neglected factors, contextualising women's lives against broad shifts in political economy, as well as taking into account power relations in local communities, and the agency of women themselves. This means asking questions about who owns and has access to each of the capabilities listed above. For example, do men and women have access to assets such as land? What is the common gendered division of labour in a community? Who has access to resources such as social and political networks, and who is able to access training including vocational training and agricultural extension services? Who is able to have a say in how capital such as land is purchased, used, mortgaged and sold? Are there gender norms or customary practices that preclude women's participation in certain types of paid employment?³²

Gender norms pertaining to women's roles as wives and mothers in relation to the nation-state have been powerful in post-colonial Sri Lanka. Women are venerated for their caregiver duties; however this role is not accounted for in agricultural policy.³³ This is important as these roles can impact how women participate in livelihood activities and how they are valued. In the late 1970s, Sirisena³⁴ argued that self-perception by Sri Lankan rural women as 'housewives,' rather than as farmers, has contributed to their marginal recognition in agricultural production. Significantly, Sirisena³⁵ notes that women's participation rate in the labour force is under-estimated because the statistics do not record women's part-time economic activities which they combine with domestic work, leading to an under-estimation of women's participation in agricultural production.

Moreover, we observe that women's domestic work, which is an important aspect of social reproduction that contributes to maintaining societies, remains largely uncounted and invisible. Social reproduction can be understood as unpaid domestic care, social provisioning such as community

Figure 1. The Gendered Division of Labour. © Awantha Artigala.



work, emotional and affective labour, biological reproduction labour, and the labour involved in the reproduction of culture and ideology that helps to reproduce and stabilise social relations. The labour can be unpaid household/community work as well work that occurs in the market.³⁶ Unpaid labour has been described as a 'subsidy to capital'.³⁷ Common forms of social reproductive work such as childcare and cleaning are often categorised as "care work". A strong division of labour occurs in the household where women are heavily engaged in social reproductive activities such as childcare³⁸.

Social reproduction is often omitted from livelihood frameworks although women continue to do the majority of unpaid labour around the world. In general, this gendered division of labour has not shifted despite more women taking up paid employment.³⁹ Women's care work is overlooked in development policy and economic account-keeping as it is regarded as unproductive, even though it is fundamental to sustain economies. Some have advocated measuring women's contributions, producing gender disaggregated statistics,⁴⁰ gender sensitive collection methods such as time-use surveys and the development of indicators to assess the gender impacts.

In the past two decades, policy platforms by consecutive governments have continued to portray women as primarily mothers and wives, and while documents such as *Mahinda Chinthanaya* (Mahinda's Vision, under President Mahinda Rajapaksa, 2005-2015) and *Yahapalanya* (Good Governance, under President Maithripala Sirisena, 2015-) recognized women's role in the economy, they continued to neglect the totality of women's lives including their responsibilities for care work, meaning policies have been designed without due attention to women's unpaid labour. Moreover, women are often problematically included in the category of 'youth and women'.⁴¹

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study approached the study of women's participation in agricultural livelihoods from a life course and intersectionality perspective. We aimed to capture retrospective life history data.⁴²

A 'life history' involves: 'reconstructions of [a] person's experiences, remembered and told at a particular point in their lives, to a particular researcher/audience and for a particular purpose: all of which will have a bearing on how the stories are told, which stories are told, and how they are presented or interpreted'⁴³.

Taking a gendered livelihoods perspective involves looking at the totality of women's lives and how that is reflected during different stages of their life course. The 'life course' captures different stages of human life such as childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, through to elder status. Essentially, a life course represents a relationship between time and human behaviour, and how age, relationships, life transitions, social change, interactions with institutions, social movements, the environment, culture, families, communities, and political processes change and shape people's lives from birth to death. Elder identified four factors that influence the life course (1994, 1998):

- Historical generational factors based on the year of birth, and geographical location;
- Social ties to others including parental relations, marriage, childbearing, old age, intergenerational relations, and household relations;
- Human agency in constructing one's life course in terms of selecting themselves into roles and situations within given constraints and;
- Variation in timing of events and social roles when an important event or transition point is noted.

A life course perspective⁴⁴ has a number of strengths that a situational survey or interview cannot accomplish. It enables us to examine how women adapt to change, crisis and opportunity over the life span against broader historical, geographical, political, economic and social context and transformations. It allows us to look more closely at women's multiple roles as children, siblings, wives, mothers, and elders, and relationship with livelihood activities. By looking at the totality of women's lives through their life course, we can begin to account for Sri Lankan women's intertwined invisible contributions to agricultural livelihoods, and forms of unpaid and invisible labour such as childcare and domestic work. Differences can be identified to see if opportunities and challenges have changed from generation to generation.

Importantly, a life course approach enables us to hear about women's lives through their narration and to understand both what is most important to them and how

they manoeuvred within barriers or through opportunity throughout their lives.⁴⁵ An aspect of understanding women's lives was to pay attention to differences among women. As such, this study was designed, and the resulting data analysed, using an intersectional approach⁴⁶ – that is, taking into account gender, generational differences, and other systems of power such as class, caste, ethnicity, and geographical location. For example, life expectancy rates for men and women vary by geographical location⁴⁷. In the context of this study, we might ask, what is the relationship between life expectancy and livelihoods across the life course? As life expectancy is an outcome of health and living standards, among other factors, livelihoods that contribute to bodily depletion can have a significant impact on life expectancy. Gender segmentation in the labour market in Sri Lanka demonstrates that women from rural backgrounds are often employed in class-based livelihood activities with poor working conditions that may damage their health⁴⁸. Conversely, if women are living longer what livelihoods and social protections are available to sustain them, and what are the characteristics of the women who have/don't have access to these support systems? An intersectional approach enables us to map the interconnections between different systems or relations of power, how they function and the impact on different people. It is the combination or intersection of these systems/relations that can be discriminatory or oppressive for women and provide a barrier to agricultural participation.

We asked women to focus on the types of livelihoods they completed throughout their lives from childhood to the interview moment. If life histories enable us to capture retrospective stories to the present moment of the interviews, then life course methodology enables us to update histories; that is to capture change over time, and what is influencing this change. We do this by contextualizing women's lives against the broader political economy, and at the same time, leave open the possibility for updating the research in a subsequent future round of data collection. By using a life course perspective⁴⁹ we can examine how women adapt to, and manoeuvre within moments of change, crisis, blockages, and opportunity over the life span against broader geographical, political, economic and social context and transformations.

Retrospective methods are common across a range of disciplines such as demographics, the social sciences, and medical studies. Although some concerns have been raised about the reliability of participants' recall accuracy, attention to survey design (such as the ordering of questions), and use of life history calendars, life event calendars, and event history calendars are widely-accepted methods to assist with recall of past events.^{50 51}

Figure 2.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2014

Selection of targeted research districts, outreach to Oxfam partners and compilation of information by partners about region and villages.



Literature review of English, Tamil and Sinhala literature.

APRIL 2014

Scoping field trip by Monash and Oxfam project leads.



Introduction of the project to local Oxfam partners and informal discussions with women community members to inform research design and ethics application.

MAY - OCTOBER 2014

Preliminary study design including development of the survey instrument.



Participate in Australian Council for International Development mock ethics review to gain feedback. Submit completed application to the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee for approval.

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2014

Training of survey enumerators from each district.



Commence town-hall meetings, focus groups and Individual life course Interviews.

JANUARY 2015

Pilot survey and refinement of the survey instrument.



Completion of life course interviews and focus groups. Commence interviews with various officials.

FEBRUARY - APRIL 2015

Completion of survey. Complete all interviews.



Commence analysis.

OCTOBER 2015



Public presentation of preliminary results and closed forum for interviewees to provide feedback on the results and study.

DATA COLLECTION

Figure 2 outlines the data collection process. Data was collected via a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews. The survey was designed to elicit an overall macro-level understanding, while the interviews provided depth of detail to help illuminate the key findings in the survey.

Data was collected between December 2014 - April 2015. All of the data collection occurred in Tamil and Sinhalese, other than interviews with officials which were conducted in English. All explanatory statements and consent forms were translated into Sinhala and Tamil, and verbally explained to participants.

The preliminary work included the following: Research Assistants undertook a comprehensive literature review of English, Sinhala and Tamil literature. The scope of the study was limited to Hambantota, Ampara and Polonnaruwa: communities that Oxfam have worked with in long-term

partnerships, and which were easily accessible (see descriptions below). Basic information about rural livelihoods and villages were identified through five local Oxfam partners. The partners are listed in Table 1.

A scoping field trip was made in April 2014 by the Monash and Oxfam project leads. Discussions with local Oxfam partners and informal interviews with rural women provided preliminary insight to inform the study and helped identify important ethical considerations. Following this, an ethics application was submitted to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) mock ethics exercise that led to the development of national guidelines for ethical research by NGOs. Following this input, ethics clearance was sought and obtained by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Table 1. Oxfam Partner organizations.

DISTRICT	ORGANISATION
Ampara	HEO – Human Elevation Organisation SDF – Social Development Foundation
Hambantota	MJH – Magampura Janatha Handa
Polonnaruwa	JSSK – Jatheen Athara Sahayogitha Sangawrdena Kamituwa

RESEARCH LOCATIONS

Ampara, Hambantota and Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka's 'dry zones' were the selected field sites. These districts represent the country's primary rice cultivation areas. Ampara and Hambantota are also home to coastal fishing communities.

Table 2 below outlines the primary ethnic and religious composition of the areas based on the latest census (2012). The numbers are reported using the same classifications used in the government census. Statistics on the indigenous populations are included in 'other'.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics.

DISTRICT	ETHNICITY	RELIGION	SEX RATIO	
			M	F
Ampara	Sinhala: 39% Sri Lankan Tamil: 17.3% Sri Lankan Moors (Muslim): 43% Other: 0.7%	Buddhist: 39% Islam: 43% Hindu: 16% Christian: 2%	48%	52%
Hambantota	Sinhala: 97% Malay: 1.7% Sri Lankan Moors (Muslim): 1.1% Other: 0.2%	Buddhist: 97% Islam: 2.5% Other: 0.5%	48%	52%
Polonnaruwa	Sinhala: 90.7% Sri Lankan Tamil: 1.7% Sri Lankan Moors (Muslim): 7.4% Other: 0.2%	Buddhist: 90% Islam: 7.5% Hindu: 1.7% Christian: 1%	49%	51%

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Population and Housing Sri Lanka, 2012.

The rural population have been important constituents for the post-Independence state. Made up of a series of villages, the 'rural' is also where 87% of the identified poor are living; almost half are small-scale farmers.⁵² All of the districts we selected include post-independence large-scale agrarian, irrigation and hydropower generation development projects. Designed to provide land to the landless and promote self-sufficiency for farmers, families settling in these areas were given 2.5 acres of non-transferable (but inheritable) land on which to cultivate rice. Early projects initiated in the 1960s included the Gal Oya scheme in the Eastern province where Ampara is situated, and the Uda Walawe irrigation scheme in the Southern Province where Hambantota is located. The most ambitious, the Mahaweli Development Scheme spans several districts including Polonnaruwa in the North Central Province⁵³. The agency responsible for operations (the 'Mahaweli Authority') also manages another scheme spanning a part of the Hambantota district⁵⁴.

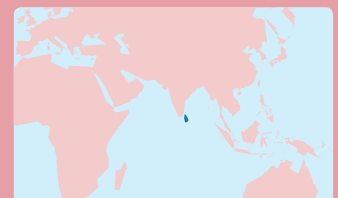
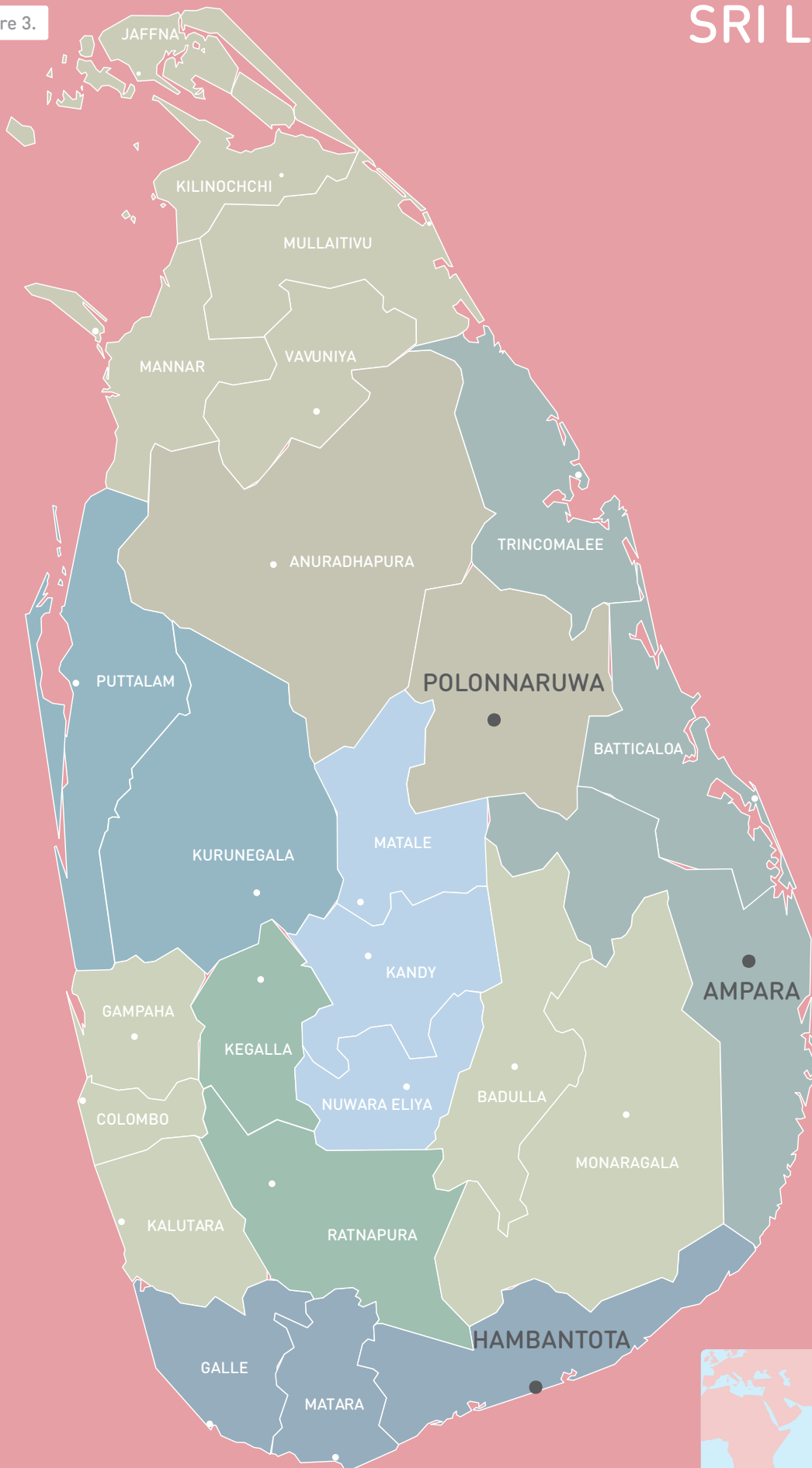
Historically, these districts have also been the site of protracted conflict and periods of various forms of political violence. The communities where the interviewees resided were deeply affected by the conflict between the LTTE and Government of Sri Lanka, as well as conflict between Tamil and Muslim communities, having experienced expulsion, displacement, and loss of family. The most prominent conflict has been the war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE (1989-2009) which resulted in the loss of between 80,000 – 100,000 lives (combatants, military, civilians). Fighting was concentrated in the North-East claimed as part of the LTTE's separatist aims, with attacks by the LTTE throughout the country. As part of the Eastern

Province, Ampara was directly affected both in terms of fighting between the LTTE and Government, and conflict internally between the Muslim population and the LTTE (e.g. the LTTE expulsion of Muslim populations from the area). "Border" areas and towns such the Northern and Eastern borders of the Polonnaruwa district adjacent to the direct areas of LTTE claim were also heavily impacted by the conflict. In addition, other periods of violence transpired between Sinhalese-led political groups such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, or People's Liberation Front) and the state in the late 1980s in the south of the island. Known as the 'time of terror' and described as 'hidden war', the JVP insurgency during 1987-1989 unfolded in Sinhala majority areas such as Hambantota and Polonnaruwa. It is estimated between 40,000 – 100,000 people died as a result of this conflict.

Finally, it is important to note the impact of environmental disasters and stressors in the areas studied. The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami devastated the southern, northern and eastern coastlines (three quarters of the country), killing more than 30,000 people. Hambantota and Ampara were severely affected. As half a million people became homeless, aid flowed into the country including funding for housing from various donors. The aid was distributed unequally or not disbursed, and a new buffer zone between the coastal beachfronts and land prevented many from reclaiming land or rebuilding⁵⁵. More recently, climate change related drought had severely impacted communities in the sites studied. Agricultural impacts include crop loss and water shortages.

Figure 3.

SRI LANKA



Adapted from [freevectormaps.com](https://www.freevectormaps.com)

FIELDWORK: LIFE NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS, INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND FEEDBACK

Life course narrative interviews and focus groups occurred across a two-month period (December 2014-January 2015) in seven different villages. Qualitative research was interrupted due to floods in December 2014 and the Presidential election in January 2015. All discussions and interviews were conducted using the participant's language (with the aid of an interpreter in the case of Tamil, and with a research assistant in the case of the Sinhala interviews). More general interviews were held with key stakeholders in each community including Non-governmental organisation (NGO) and Community Based Organisation (CBO) leaders and government officials. Their insights were valuable to understand the types of livelihoods on offer in each community and the support services available to women.

Table 3 below gives details of the villages we conducted the life course interviews, livelihood activities in each area, Oxfam presence and number of life course interviews conducted.

These participants were recruited from an initial town hall meeting and focus group discussion. At these meetings, the project was introduced and consent was sought to record and use the proceedings. A general focus group discussion ensued with the participants to understand the key livelihoods and issues/challenges facing women in the community. At the conclusion of the meeting, the researchers invited the women to participate in individual life narrative interviews. A date and time was arranged with those who volunteered.

Appendix 1 outlines the characteristics of each interviewee. In Hambantota, we interviewed predominately Sinhalese Buddhist women in two villages that were part of the Uda Walawe irrigation project. In Polonnaruwa fieldwork was conducted in two border villages (adjacent to Ampara and Batticaloa districts) that were officially created by the Mahaweli scheme settlements. The two villages had a mix of *Adivasi* (indigenous), Sinhalese and Tamil members, and there was considerable intermarriage among the cohort. In Ampara, the area studied was a part of the Batticaloa District until 1961, before the creation of Ampara in 1962. Three villages were approached to capture the ethnic diversity of the district. Two of the towns were in Northern Ampara. One had a predominately Tamil population and the other, Muslim. A third village was visited further towards the South which was predominately Sinhalese.

All discussions and interviews were conducted using the participant's language (with the aid of an interpreter in the case of Tamil, and with a research assistant in the case of the Sinhala interviews). Each individual interview opened with an explanation of the project, and confirmation that the participant consented to take part. The life history interviews began with the prompt, 'Tell me about your life, and the various livelihoods you have engaged in through your life.' During the narrative, the researcher took notes and, where appropriate so as to not break the flow of the narrative, asked some probing questions (e.g. what year was that? Where was that? How old were you?). Following the narrative, the researcher then worked with the women to construct individual timelines and clarify details shared during the narrative. Further directed questions were asked such as, 'What do you think is the greatest challenge for women completing agriculture?'

In addition, three town-hall style group discussions were held in each respective district to gain an overview of the issues within that particular area. Additional interviews were conducted with local government officials at the district and provincial level, as well some as civil society leaders. Two additional follow up focus group discussions were held with the participants: one in Hambantota as the women wanted to meet after the interviews to discuss the results, and one after the initial sharing of findings in Colombo.

The interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and translated to English before being analysed using NVivo. An initial round of open coding was followed by refinement of the codes and then grouping in themes and memo writing. A research assistant also produced summary timelines for each participant interviewed; this helped to analyse the sequencing of life events and livelihood uptake.

Table 3. Interviews by District, Livelihood activities and Oxfam presence.

DISTRICT	DISTRICT SECRETARIAT DIVISIONS	LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES	OXFAM PRESENCE AT THE TIME OF RESEARCH (YES/NO)	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
Ampara	Palamunai	Chena cultivation, chicken rearing, day labourer, small shops, garment workers, brick cutting, migration for work, home industries – string hoppers, small businesses – coconut/paddy, international migration	No	19
	Akkaraipattu	As above	No	
	Panama	Agriculture, chena cultivation, nuts, corn, cane, lagoon fishing, sea fishing, palm products, footwear, chilli powder, government servants, civil protection, tourist related employment in hotels, garment factories, international migration.	Yes	
Polonnaruwa	Dimbulagala	Paddy, forest collectors, labourer, small scale fisheries, brick making, metal works, livestock, sand mining, cane cutting and cane preparation, reed weaving, vegetable and fruit cultivation, international and domestic migration.	Yes	27
	Boatha	Paddy, chena cultivation, inland fisheries, small scale merchant fishing temporary labour, quarries, garment factories, forest collectors, international and domestic migration.	Yes	
Hambantota	Lunugamvehera	Paddy, Chena cultivation, Commercial level fruit & vegetable cultivation Brick making Bag making Inland fish process Dress making Daily labour (agriculture related) Housemaid Retail shops Commercial sex work Mobile marketing (Fruit & Vegetables) Retail selling in fair Migration for foreign employment or to urban areas	Yes	20
	Tissamaharama	Paddy, chena cultivation, commercial level fruit & vegetable cultivation, brick making, grinding mills, dress making, daily labour (agriculture related), Palmyrah items, dairy (curd), retail shops, commercial sex work, mobile marketing (fruit & vegetables), retail selling in fairs and markets, international and domestic migration.	No	
Total				66

SURVEY

While the interviews were being conducted, a pilot survey was conducted among 64 respondents in Ampara, Hambantota and Polonnaruwa with the participation of 21 trained field researchers drawn from the communities where the research was to take place. Using this pilot, the questionnaire was finalised upon the recommendations made at a debriefing meeting in which the principal researcher and the field researchers who had conducted the pilot survey participated. A two-day field-training workshop was conducted for 34 field researchers before the main survey commenced. During the workshop, field researchers were briefed on the project and its objectives, the questionnaire, the field method, and research ethics to be followed during the phase of data collection.

The semi-structured survey was conducted from February-April 2015. It captured retrospective and current data. The survey was designed using the information from the initial scoping trip and also drew on questions about access to credit, capital and decision-making from the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index⁵⁶ questionnaire. We asked participants to work backwards sequentially from the survey day, to recall past livelihoods to capture livelihoods across the life course. We also collected data on level of participation in civic life, and the degree of agency these women exercise within their households.

A Multi-Stage Stratified Random Sampling Method was employed to select participants. This method enabled the capture of diverse opinions of the various ethnic, religious, caste, and class groups that comprise rural Sri Lanka. Within each selected district, the survey was conducted in three randomly selected Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSDs). Out of these three DSDs, one was selected from among the DSDs where Oxfam was working and the other

two were selected from among the DSDs where there was no Oxfam presence. Within each selected DSD, a Grama Niladhari (GN) Division was selected randomly using the GN list. In each selected GN Division, a starting point was chosen by the respective field supervisors to begin the random walk using the right-hand rule to select households for the survey interviews. We did not create an ethnically representative sample based on the demographic figures outlined in Table 2, choosing instead to capture diverse age ranges, to map generational differences. Field researchers were instructed to select participants from each household such that the age quota was satisfied.

Using the above sampling method, a total of 2097 women participated across the three districts. In order to ensure the quality of the field research, the senior research team accompanied the field researchers during their fieldwork. Table 4 presents a breakdown of the sample.

The completed questionnaires were scrutinised and coded before being keyed into computer databases. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The reported key findings are descriptive in nature.

The preliminary results of this survey and the Hambantota qualitative case study were presented at a public forum in Colombo in October 2015. In attendance were many of the participants of the life course interviews. Following the presentation, a public Q&A was held with all in attendance, as many of the participants shared their responses and suggestions. Following the public Q&A, a closed feedback session was held with the study participants, where the data was checked, omissions noted and suggestions incorporated.

Table 4. Survey Sample by District.

DISTRICT	DISTRICT SECRETARIAT DIVISIONS	VILLAGES WITH OXFAM PRESENCE	VILLAGES WITHOUT OXFAM PRESENCE	TOTAL
Ampara	Addalaichenai	140	-	722
	Thirukkivil	130	-	
	Sainthamarathu	-	186	
	Kalmunai	-	196	
	Lahugala	-	30	
	Padiyathalawa	-	40	
Polonnaruwa	Dimbulagala	287	-	698
	Hingurakgoda	-	203	
	Elahera	-	208	
Hambantota	Tangalle	269	-	677
	Katuwana	-	204	
	Okewela	-	204	
Total		826	1271	2093



Ranjani Kumari, 29yrs, farming cauliflowers with loan support from RGNK/Oxfam.
Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Tom Greenwood/OxfamAUS.

SURVEY FINDINGS

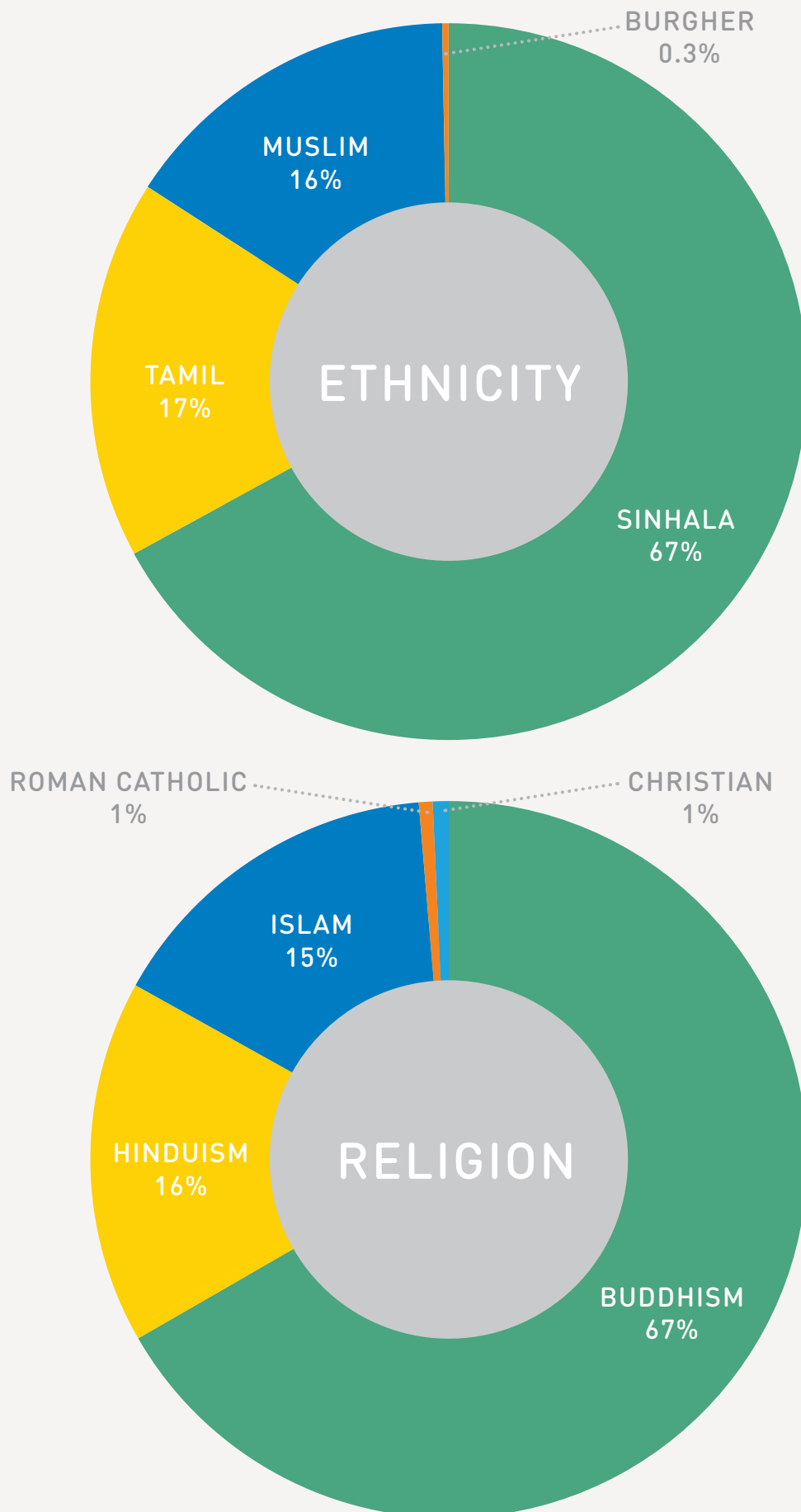
OVERVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 4 below presents the ethnicity and religious background of the participants. The majority were Sinhalese and Buddhist, with smaller portions of Tamil and Muslim women, reflecting the general demographic character of the districts.

The majority of rural women who participated in this survey were married with at least one child by the time they were 30. The majority of women were aged 21-50 years old, married (87%)⁵⁷ with children (85%). The majority (91.6%) were married by the age of 30 and had children (84%). *Of the women with children*, 64% of the respondents had their first child by the age of 25, and a further 27.2% had their first child at the age of 35. Thus, by the time they were 30, women had experienced a significant shift in their life course.

Approximately 90% of the women were literate. However, 48.4% had a lower than 10th grade education⁵⁸. 7.8% completed their final year of secondary education, and only 2.5% of the sample had completed university. Starkly, only a further 0.7% reported having vocational, technical and professional training. 10.4% of the participants had participated in government-run livelihood programmes such as *Gama Neguma* and *Divi Neguma* but only 14.2% of that sample reported receiving any form of training as a result of the participation.

Figure 4. Ethnicity and Religion.



ACCESS TO, OWNERSHIP OF, AND INFLUENCE OVER ASSETS

While 78% of respondents reported that they had access to a house, only 27% reported ownership. Similarly, 31% had access to paddy land, and 32% had access to other land for cultivation. However, as Table 5 shows below, less than half of the sample had ownership of paddy land, while little more than half owned other cultivation lands.

Moreover, as the table above demonstrates, women have little decision-making power over selling, mortgaging/renting or purchasing land. Indeed, the proportion of women who report ownership of the asset is higher than the proportion who report decision-making power over the asset.

Women in Ampara had the highest rate of sole ownership (47.5%) compared to Polonnaruwa (22.4%) and Hambantota, which had the lowest rate (14.1%). This trend can be attributed to customary matrilineal inheritance in Ampara.

Table 6 below demonstrates that spouses also had ownership over factors of production such as large livestock, fishing equipment and farm equipment. Women had greater control over assets such as small consumer durables (40%) and jewellery (73.3%) that are not essential to the rural agriculture economy, although jewellery can be used to raise capital in emergencies through pawning. However, when looking again at decision-making power, women have less say in selling or purchasing this asset.

However, as the table below on influence demonstrates, women report consultative decision-making power over purchasing some of these assets such as consumables and land.

Table 5 Land and housing.

	AVAILABLE	WHO WOULD YOU SAY OWNS MOST?			WHO WOULD YOU SAY CAN DECIDE WHETHER TO SELL MOST TIMES?			WHO WOULD YOU SAY CAN DECIDE TO MORTGAGE OR RENT OUT MOST TIMES?			WHO CONTRIBUTES MOST TO DECISIONS REGARDING A NEW PURCHASE?		
		Respon- Dent	Spouse	Other Family Member	Respon- Dent	Spouse	Other Family Member	Respon- Dent	Spouse	Someone Else From The Family	Respon- Dent	Spouse	Other Family Member
House (and other structures)	77.7	26.6	43.6	29.8	17.2	49.8	33.0	15.3	43.8	40.9	13.1	54.5	32.3
Paddy land	30.7	13.7	42.5	43.9	10.7	44.5	44.8	8.9	42.0	49.1	9.1	44.8	46.1
Other land used for cultivation	31.9	18.1	47.4	34.5	16.2	46.8	37.0	14.1	45.0	40.9	12.5	49.5	38.0
Other land not used for agricultural purposes	17.4	23.9	42.9	33.2	21.2	44.2	34.6	19.0	42.3	38.7	16.4	43.9	39.8

Table 6. Decision making in the household.

	AVAILABLE	WHO WOULD YOU SAY OWNS MOST?			WHO WOULD YOU SAY CAN DECIDE WHETHER TO SELL MOST TIMES?			WHO WOULD YOU SAY CAN DECIDE TO MORTGAGE OR RENT OUT MOST TIMES?			WHO CONTRIBUTES MOST TO DECISIONS REGARDING A NEW PURCHASE?		
		Respondent	Spouse	Other Family Member	Respondent	Spouse	Other Family Member	Respondent	Spouse	Someone else from the family	Respondent	Spouse	Other Family Member
Large livestock	4.9	15.7	47.1	37.3	13.7	44.1	42.2	11.8	35.3	52.9	10.2	36.1	53.6
Small livestock	.8	43.8	18.8	37.5	43.8	18.8	37.5	0.0	12.5	87.5	9.0	24.4	66.7
Chickens	10.8	58.4	14.6	27.0	48.2	18.1	33.6	18.6	12.4	69.0	45.4	17.7	36.9
Fish pond or fishing equipment	2.4	14.0	62.0	24.0	10.0	64.0	26.0	4.0	46.0	50.0	5.3	36.8	57.9
Small farm equipment shovels	81.1	22.3	49.0	28.7	15.9	47.8	36.2	11.7	39.8	48.4	14.2	51.1	34.7
Large farm equipment	12.2	4.7	60.5	34.8	4.3	59.0	36.7	3.1	57.4	39.5	3.2	50.2	46.6
Large consumer durables	83.9	31.5	34.6	33.9	22.1	38.5	39.5	16.5	32.1	51.4	17.3	41.4	41.3
Small consumer durables	73.0	40.0	27.7	32.3	29.6	31.2	39.2	21.7	25.7	52.6	24.1	35.5	40.4
Cell phone	87.2	23.5	37.0	39.4	17.9	38.5	43.6	14.0	31.0	55.0	15.7	40.3	44.0
Means of transportation	66.6	6.0	61.1	32.9	5.7	60.0	34.2	3.9	50.0	46.1	4.5	60.6	34.9
Jewellery	73.3	73.9	5.6	20.5	61.0	12.9	26.1	57.3	12.5	30.2	53.7	17.1	29.1
Savings	26.1	36.9	13.3	49.7	30.4	13.7	55.9	22.5	11.5	66.0	28.1	16.0	55.9
Shop	5.0	29.5	34.3	36.2	24.8	34.3	41.0	20.0	33.3	46.7	18.0	29.5	52.5
Boat	.7	21.4	50.0	28.6	21.4	42.9	35.7	21.4	42.9	35.7	5.5	10.9	83.6

* The numbers marked in red cannot give strong conclusions because the sample size is insufficient for that particular analysis.

INFLUENCE WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

Women have substantial agency in household responsibilities which match their gendered division of labour in the household, and hence have the power to make decisions pertaining to it. The fact that men do not make these decisions is typically not regarded as a loss of their agency because of the prevalent belief that the domestic space is essentially a feminine domain.

Women have reported joint consultative influence in relation to social activities, economic activities such as going abroad, participating in political meetings, and decision-making around agricultural production. However, it is not clear how this consultation plays out and whether this is truly a consultative process that denotes joint decision-making.

Table 7. Women's decision-making capacity within the household.

	Will decide without consulting my husband / parent / in-law	Will decide alone but will inform my husband / parent / in-law	Decide in consultation with husband / parent / in-law	My husband / parent / in-law decides
Preparing meals	57.2	8.5	30.0	4.3
Cleaning the house	69.3	9.3	19.2	2.2
Care of children on a day-to-day basis	62.1	10.1	26.3	1.5
Education of children	47.8	10.1	39.3	2.8
Purchase of consumer goods such as appliances	31.0	9.3	54.6	5.1
Purchasing house/property	9.9	6.3	76.1	7.8
Purchase of furniture/durable goods	15.8	7.0	71.5	5.6
Purchase of clothes for self	47.7	11.4	38.7	2.3
Investment / savings	18.8	6.7	69.7	4.8
Monetary transactions with neighbours and friends	27.4	12.4	56.7	3.6
Visiting relatives	19.4	13.1	64.7	2.8
Visiting friends	20.1	14.5	63.3	2.0
Going abroad for work	10.5	4.9	76.7	7.9
Going outside for leisure activities such as a film	9.9	6.9	79.2	4.0
Going outside on pilgrimage	12.6	7.7	73.2	6.5
Going outside of village for work	13.5	6.5	73.3	6.7
Participate in village voluntary meeting	31.9	8.4	55.6	4.1
Participate in a village level political meeting/discussion	22.7	5.6	65.7	6.0
What inputs to buy for agricultural production	14.8	5.2	58.2	21.8
What types of crops to grow for agricultural production	17.0	4.5	57.4	21.1
When or who would take crops to the market	12.4	3.8	60.9	22.8
Livestock raising	15.7	5.6	60.8	17.9
Other livelihood production	12.5	5.1	71.3	11.1
What inputs to buy for other livelihood production	11.3	5.4	71.7	11.6
Whether or not to use family planning to space or limit births?	9.8	7.6	79.3	3.3
If your family receives remittances how they are used	11.4	6.2	76.0	6.3
If your family hires farm labour, who, when, and how to hire	10.0	5.6	73.4	11.0

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARE WORK

Women across multiple age groups remained overwhelmingly responsible for care work within households. The survey starkly highlighted the gendered division of labour within the household. As Table 8 demonstrates, women were overwhelmingly responsible for cooking (94.4%), cleaning (95.9%) and collecting firewood (73.0%).

Women also maintained the most responsibility for home gardening and, where applicable, looking after elderly relations. In addition, looking at the contribution of sons and daughters, and extended family, there is a clear gender disparity in terms of cooking and cleaning. The biggest contribution spouses made was to home gardening with 18% of respondents reporting this support.

DEBT

Although most of the sample answering the question about debt (n= 1998) accessed loans from NGOs (16.8%) and formal institutions such as banks (32.8%), the findings suggest that in cases where borrowing was done for cultivation purposes, informal sources (24.6%) were tapped more than formal ones (17.1%). Additionally, most of these borrowings were done for household purposes (32.2% for personal needs and 20.0% for domestic needs). However, there was a low response rate for the follow up questions on use and this particular result should be interpreted cautiously.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The survey demonstrated that there was low overall formal engagement among the cohort in civic participation, including in women's groups. The lowest participation ranges were among those directly related to agriculture (3% or lower), although those who did participate reported acquiring benefit from them. Only 2.5% reported being a part of a water users' group and 3.1% a part of agricultural/livestock/fisheries producers' group, including marketing groups.

Funeral societies that offer significant financial relief and support during periods of bereavement are widespread in Sri Lanka and the survey found that 27.5% of the respondents have, at some point, been part of a funeral society, with 12% taking on committee roles. *Seettu* (community-based savings system) was the second most popular form of collective participation among the participants, with 23.7% being a member of such a group at some point in time, and 15.7% of that figure had also held office at some point. In terms of livelihood assistance and support, 12% of the participants claimed to have been members of a women's group assisting and providing livelihood training at some point in time. However, 31.8% of the respondents had held office at some point in the present or in the past.

Table 8. Person responsible for household activities.

Activities	Self	Spouse	Father	Mother	Father-in-law	Mother-in-law	Son	Daughter	Other	Not Applicable
Cooking	94.4%	9.0%	.6%	14.5%	.2%	4.5%	1.2%	10.2%	3.5%	.1%
Cleaning	95.9%	11.1%	.9%	12.6%	.1%	4.2%	1.5%	10.7%	3.0%	.2%
Taking children to school	30.5%	15.2%	1.1%	1.5%	.2%	.5%	1.5%	2.1%	4.9%	54.6%
Teaching children	43.2%	9.3%	.3%	1.1%	.1%	.3%	1.3%	2.8%	5.5%	49.2%
Collecting firewood	73.0%	14.8%	2.8%	8.0%	.2%	3.9%	1.0%	4.1%	3.3%	13.2%
Bringing water	56.4%	5.5%	.7%	4.5%	.1%	1.7%	.3%	3.1%	3.1%	37.5%
Tending to home garden	47.0%	18.0%	2.8%	5.6%	1.5%	2.6%	1.6%	2.8%	1.1%	45.9%
Looking after elderly relations	9.4%	2.5%	.1%	1.0%	0.0%	.2%	.1%	.7%	.5%	89.5%

PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOODS OVER THE LIFE COURSE

In Figure 5 below, the red line shows the percentage of women in each age category who reported participating in any livelihood activity at various stages of their life course. This includes agriculture (all forms), home-based production, industrial work, self-employment, and the service sector⁵⁹. This inverse u-shaped curve demonstrates how participation increases as women reach their 20s, and sharply declines after the age of 50. The study revealed that roughly 21-40 years of age was the time when the highest percentage of respondents engaged in some form of livelihood activity.

The blue line separates out and represents those women who participated in any agricultural activity. Here we see an inverse pattern of participation. Participation in agriculture falls to the lowest level of participation between the ages of 21-30. As noted above, the ages 16-30 represent the period within which 91.6% of women in the sample got married, and by 35 all had given birth to their first child. Beyond this, agricultural livelihood engagement sharply increases, reaching a peak after the age of 60, as other forms of livelihoods decline significantly, denoting the importance for elder women.

Figure 6 below further separates out paddy cultivation from other forms of agricultural production.

This figure demonstrates how, as young women, participation in paddy was higher than other forms of agriculture. This is unsurprising as many women had parents engaging in paddy cultivation. Participation in paddy drops compared to other forms of agriculture combined, but trends begin to converge again after the age of 60. Interestingly, engagement in other forms of agriculture begins to increase when women are aged between 21-30, just as paddy cultivation is at an all-time low.

Variations in participation across the districts are shown in Figure 7 below. This graph demonstrates some clear divergences for women across the districts according to life course stage.

Participation in agriculture steeply declined by their 20s. In the significant 20-40 age periods, we can see that women in Ampara had the lowest levels of participation and Polonnaruwa the highest. While patterns begin to converge for women in Polonnaruwa and Hambantota from age 31 (and again diverging post 60), the rates of participation for women in Ampara are not as high until they are above 60. Again, there is a clear difference between their participation and that of women in the other two districts.

Figure 5. Engagement in agriculture among those who participated in agriculture across different points in their life versus any activity. (survey)

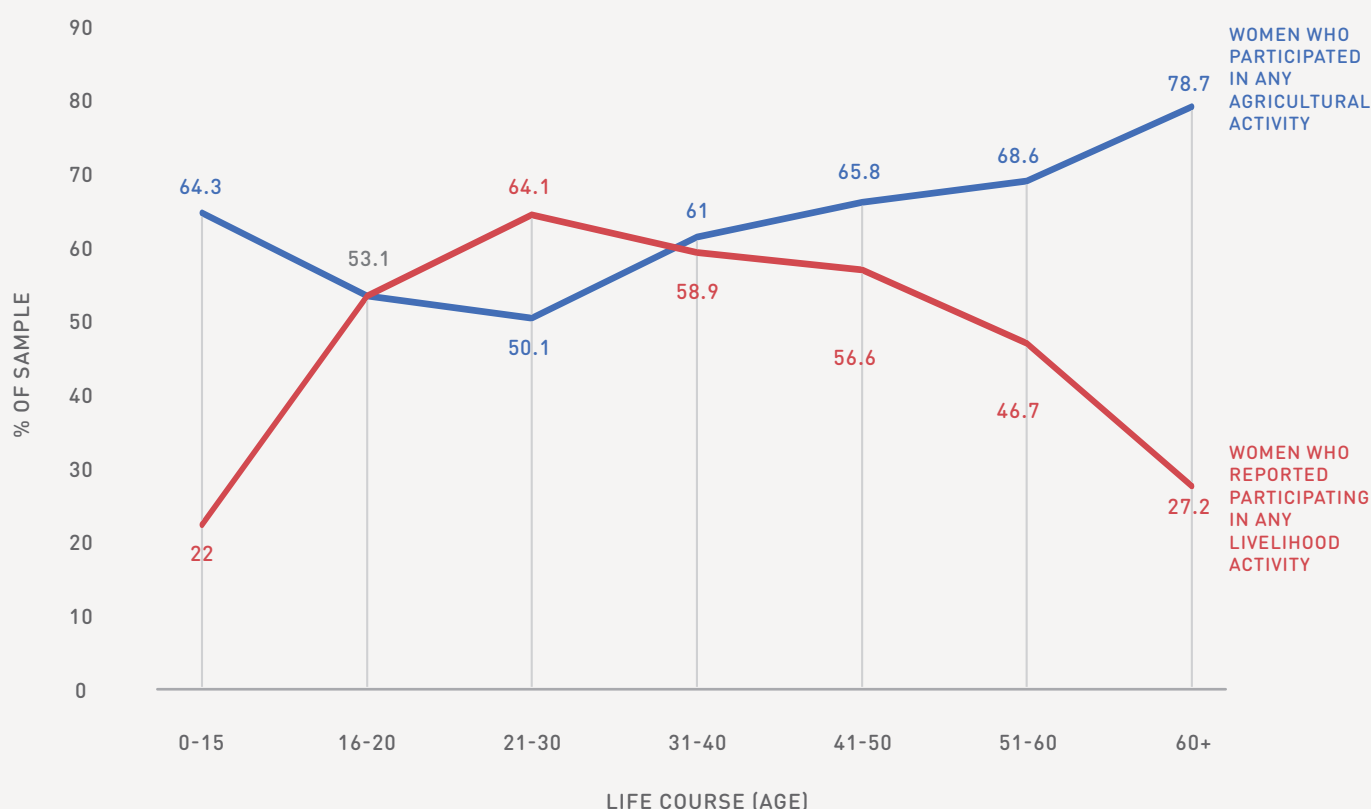


Figure 6. Engagement in paddy and non-paddy agriculture among those participated in agriculture.

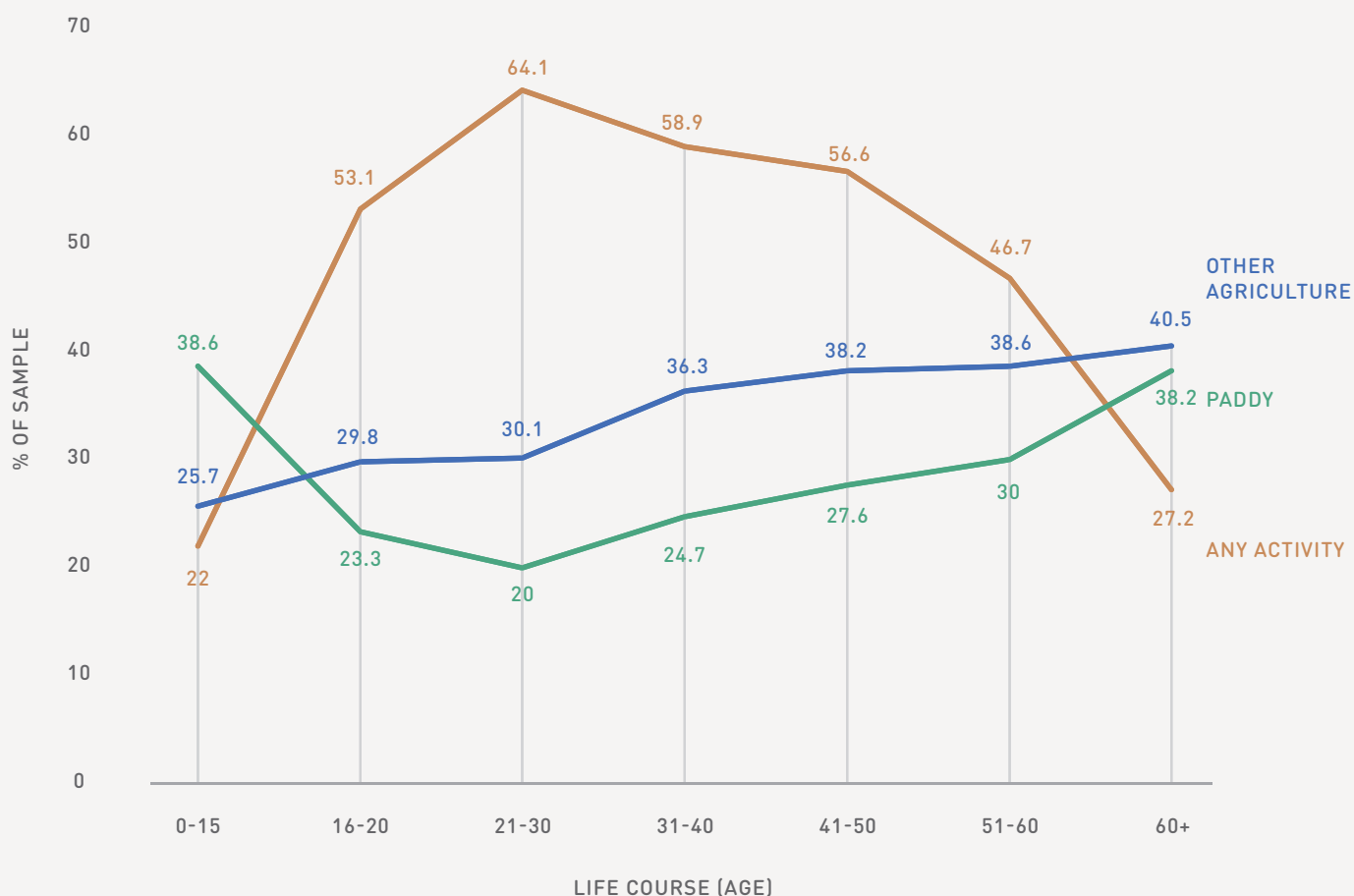
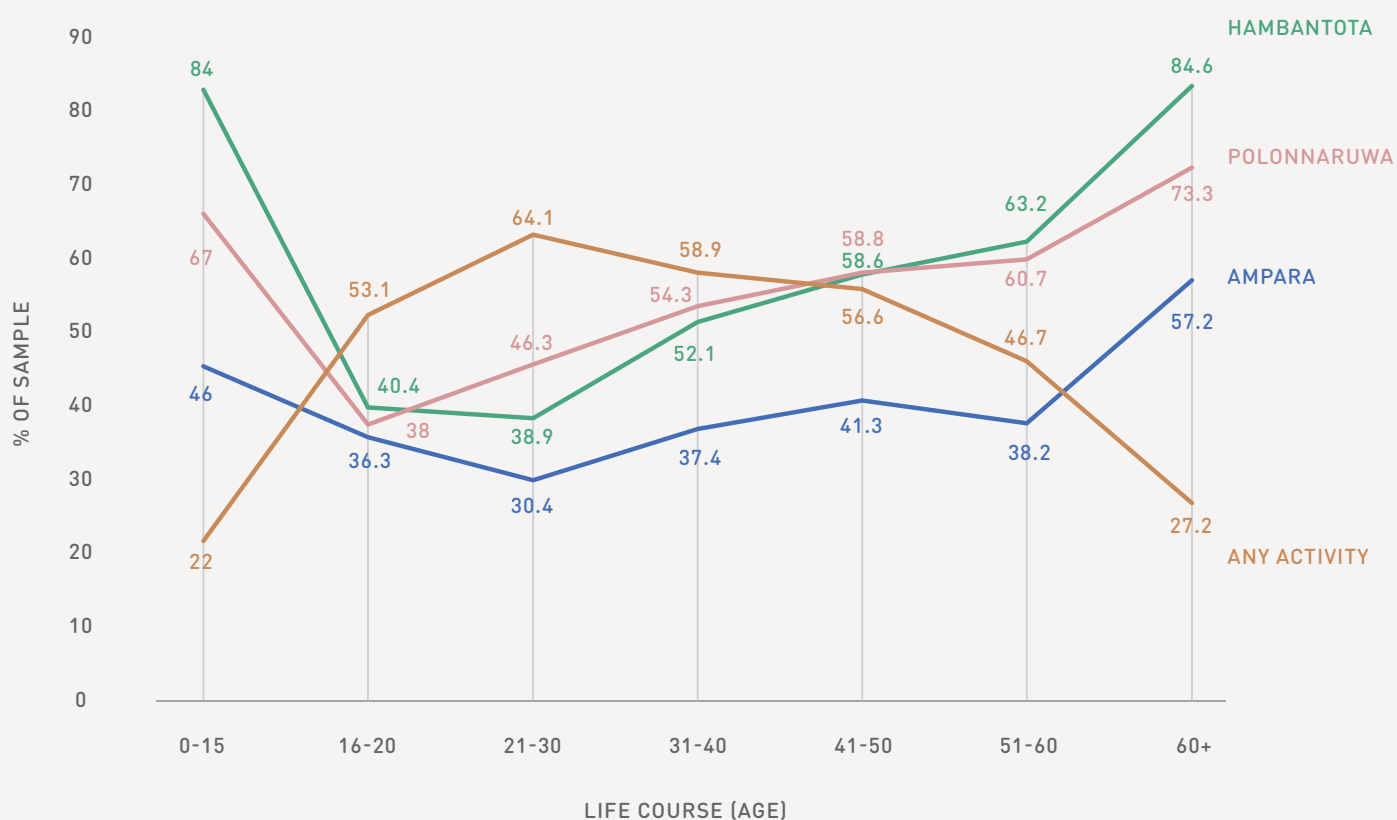


Figure 7. Engagement in agriculture among those who participated in agriculture by District, across different points in their life, versus any activity. (aggregate) (survey)



RURAL WOMEN'S LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES AT TIME OF RESEARCH

As Table 9 demonstrates, at the time of the survey, less than a third (26.8%) of the survey cohort participated in agricultural livelihoods (food crops, paddy, livestock). 35.7% of the respondents claimed they did not engage in any form of livelihood activity. Of the 1,125 women who reported hours worked per day, the majority (53.6%) worked 3-6 hours per day. A further 14.4% worked only 1-2 hours, and the rest worked more than 7 hour days. This suggests that most women work part-time hours.

Of the households where the main source of income was agriculture, 68.1% of women from such households were engaged in agriculture as their main source of income. This included food crop production, paddy and livestock-related activity.

Variation between districts is apparent in terms of agricultural livelihoods. As Figure 8 below demonstrates, in Hambantota almost 50% of women participated in the production of food crops, and just over 30% participated in paddy cultivation. Women in Ampara, in contrast, reported greater levels of livestock livelihoods. They also participated in paddy and, to a lesser extent, other food crop production. Ampara women also reported the highest rate of unwaged labour in the sample. Polonnaruwa women reported higher levels of participation in paddy, and the highest rate of unemployment in the cohort.

Of those women who resided in households where agriculture was the main income, 66.2% reported that they had access locally to the main resources needed for their livelihood. 13.9% reported they did not, while 19.9% reported this was not relevant to them. Similarly, 60.0% said they had 'easy' access to these resources, while 16% said they did not. 23% reported it was not relevant to them. However, as this cohort was already participating in agriculture, access to resources may not have been a barrier.

FOOD FOR HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION

67.8% of the sample reported their households produced food for consumption. The district level breakdown is provided below in Table 10. Ampara had low levels of consumption compared to Hambantota and Polonnaruwa.

Of those producing food for their own consumption, 42% produced paddy and 67.2% cultivated vegetables. Table 11 demonstrates the primary responsibility for food production for the household. Again, a clear gender division is seen.

In almost 60% of the cases, the spouse was reported as taking the responsibility for paddy, however, 52.9% of respondents also reported that they 'helped' with it. Thus, while women are not counted as taking the main responsibility for paddy, women's labour and energy is being directed towards paddy cultivation. In the case of vegetable production, the respondent was mainly responsible for producing home garden products such as vegetables (55.5%); yet only 31.9% of spouses help with it, suggesting women sustain this activity with less support.

Table 9. Livelihood activities of women.

LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITY	%
Agricultural: OFCs*	11.7
Agriculture: paddy	9.5
Agriculture: chena	.9
Agriculture: livestock	4.7
Government	2.0
Government: education	1.2
Government: social welfare	.2
Home-based production	2.7
Home-based production: non-agricultural	7.5
Industrial	2.7
Industrial: garment	1.6
Migrant labour	.9
Self-employed	3.7
Services: domestic work	.4
Services: education	.5
Services: healthcare	.5
Services: retail	1.0
Unemployed	35.7
Unwaged labour	6.2
Wage labourer	2.6
Retired	.4
Other	2.2
Agriculture: other	.4
Government: other	.1
Industry: other	.6
Base	2090

*OFCs = Other food crops

Figure 8. Agricultural livelihoods by district within households where income is derived mainly from agriculture.

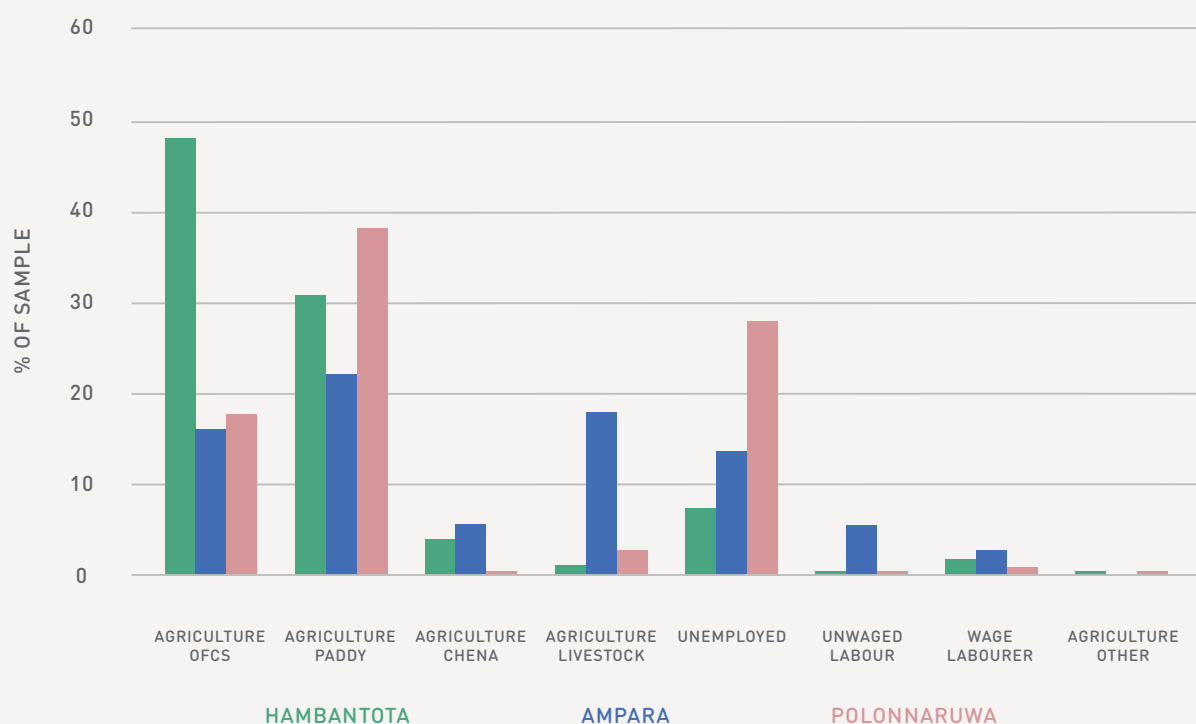


Table 10. Food production for consumption.

	HAMBANTOTA	AMPARA	POLONNARUWA
Yes	80.9%	43.8%	80.1%
No	19.1%	56.3%	19.9%
Base	676	720	697

Table 11. Person who takes priority in activities to produce food for household consumption.

	PADDY CULTIVATION	VEGETABLE CULTIVATION	POULTRY BREEDING	FRUITS FROM TREES IN YOUR GARDEN
RESPONDENT	12.0	55.5	51.2	38.5
SPOUSE	59.5	26.5	26.9	39.5
OTHER*	28.6	18.0	21.9	22.0
BASE	560	884	201	1059

*Other refers to family members including parents and parents-in-law, and other relations. The main 'other' category was the respondent's mother and father.

RETURNING TO AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOODS

Of the women who reported that agriculture was **not** the main source of income at the time of research (74.2% of the sample), 22.5% of this group reported that they had performed an agricultural activity in the past. Of this 22.5%, 55.2% said they would return to agriculture if given the choice, as it was seen to be a profitable venture where previous experience would help them enter the role (Figure 9). Of those that believed this to be the case, respondents from Ampara had the highest belief in the profitability of agricultural livelihoods; this is significant given the lower rates of participation in agriculture in Ampara.

BARRIERS TO AGRICULTURAL PARTICIPATION

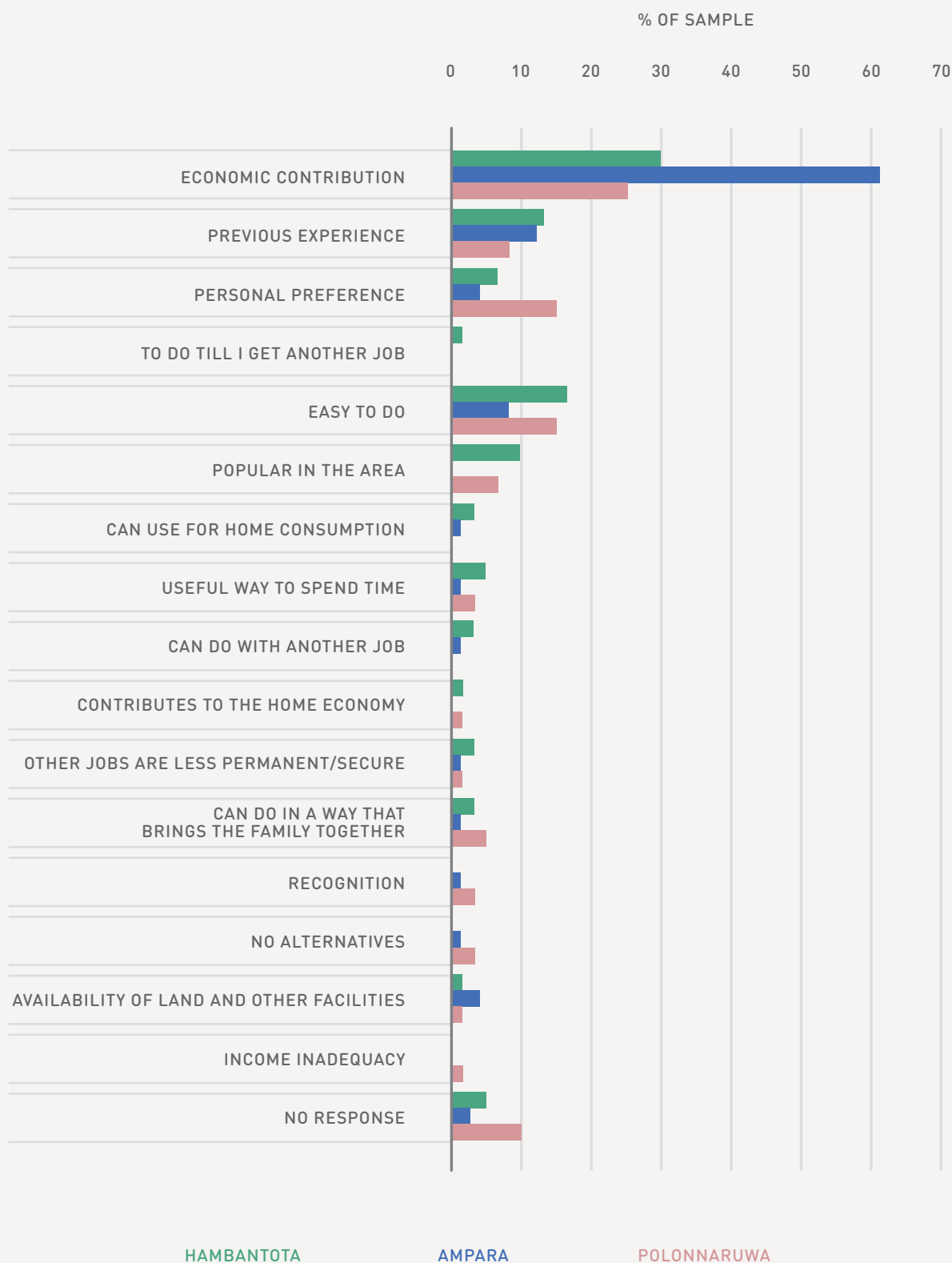
The women were asked to rank the desirable livelihood options available to women in their area. In aggregate, women preferred home-based, non-agricultural production, followed by agricultural production. The top reasons given were: it was home-based (24.4% gave this option as their first preference), with high incomes (13.4%), time saving (11.5%) and a traditional or common activity in the area (11%).

Further variation was presented when looking at what would induce participants to return to agriculture. The majority (33.9%) reported land availability, followed by capital availability (17.7%) and availability of facilities needed (12%) overall. However, we can see how these incentives vary by district in table 12 below.

Table 12. What would help participants return to agriculture?

	HAMBANTOTA	AMPARA	POLONNARUWA
Land availability	28.3%	32.9%	40.7%
State sponsorship	10.0%	2.7%	0.0%
Can do leisurely	6.7%	1.4%	0.0%
Capital availability	23.3%	16.4%	13.6%
Earns knowledge	18.3%	2.7%	0.0%
Can spend time constructively	6.7%	1.4%	1.7%
For consumption	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Can do as a group	3.3%	0.0%	1.7%
Preference	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Previous experience	3.3%	1.4%	1.7%
Availability of plants and seeds	0.0%	6.8%	8.5%
Availability of necessary facilities	1.7%	19.2%	13.6%
Freedom	0.0%	4.1%	3.4%
Availability of loans at low interest rates	0.0%	0.0%	6.8%
Lack of harm from wild animals	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Ability to settle mortgages and redeem lands	0.0%	1.4%	3.4%
Health	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Decline of income in current livelihood	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Support of family members	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
Resources are given access to	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Death of spouse	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
No response	18.3%	17.8%	11.9%
Base	60	73	59

Figure 9. Why return to agriculture if given a choice?



In Hambantota, state sponsorship, land availability, capital availability and knowledge/skill acquisition were highlighted, and these can be seen to be interrelated. State support and resources directed towards finance, land, and education/training support could incentivise women to return to agriculture. In Ampara, land, capital and other support facilities were identified as key incentives, while in Polonnaruwa, land, capital, and facilities were reported as incentives.

This cohort was asked to identify barriers they may encounter (table 13). In response to this question, 14% of the respondents reported that natural elements such as rain, environment and natural disasters may be a barrier. The lack of water was a concern for 12% and harm from wild animals for 13.5%. Lack of money was reported by 21.4% of the population. However, looking again at district distributions, we can see that the lack of money was the biggest concern in Ampara, while the lack of water and potential for natural disaster was of key concern to Polonnaruwa, a district beset with drought.

Table 13. Barriers encountered in returning to agriculture.

	HAMBANTOTA	AMPARA	POLONNARUWA
Rain	3.3%	8.2%	6.8%
Taking care of the children	5.0%	1.4%	3.4%
Lack of water	13.3%	4.1%	20.3%
Crop diseases	10.0%	0.0%	3.4%
Lack of profits	6.7%	12.3%	0.0%
Lack of ability to sell produce	13.3%	1.4%	1.7%
Risk involved in maintaining crops	13.3%	0.0%	1.7%
Harm from wild animals	21.7%	2.7%	18.6%
Unconducive environment	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Costly	3.3%	0.0%	1.7%
Unavailability of land	0.0%	19.2%	8.5%
Lack of money	0.0%	42.5%	16.9%
Natural disasters	3.3%	2.7%	13.6%
Lack of tools	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Scarcity of labour	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%
High interest rates	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Ill health	1.7%	1.4%	1.7%
Job commitments	1.7%	0.0%	1.7%
Lack of time	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Reluctance of husband	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
No response	16.7%	8.2%	22.0%
Base	60	73	59

Of the cohort that reported they **would not** choose agriculture again (44.8% of the cohort that had completed agriculture in the past), corporeal reasons including ill health and ageing were reported, alongside not having facilities. Again, we can see how this varies by district in table 14.

The survey revealed that the lack of financial capital was reported by 21.4% as a barrier to participation. Microcredit providers (private, NGO-led, and state-run) were ubiquitous in the areas in which this study was conducted. In the survey, up to a third of women reported that they had taken out loans from a bank, with just over half this number reporting that they had taken out a loan from an NGO.

Although most of the sample (n= 1998) accessed loans from NGOs (16.8%) and formal institutions such as banks (32.8%), the findings suggest that in cases where borrowing was done for cultivation purposes, informal sources such as family or local individuals (24.6%) were tapped more than formal ones (17.1%). Additionally, most of these borrowings were done for household purposes (32.2% for personal needs and 20.0% for domestic needs) rather than agriculture although bank loans were taken for paddy cultivation. However, there was a low response rate for the follow up questions on use and these results should be interpreted cautiously.

Table 14. Reasons for not returning to agriculture.

	HAMBANTOTA	AMPARA	POLONNARUWA
The current job is easy	8.1%	11.5%	3.0%
Ill health	12.9%	11.5%	12.1%
Have to take care of the parents	3.2%	1.6%	0.0%
Lack of physical capacity	4.8%	8.2%	0.0%
Harm from wild animals	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%
No permanent income	6.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Hard to do with age	14.5%	4.9%	33.3%
No facilities	6.5%	21.3%	15.2%
Hard to do with periodically going abroad	1.6%	1.6%	0.0%
Can do another job	3.2%	0.0%	3.0%
No time	6.5%	4.9%	6.1%
No training	1.6%	4.9%	0.0%
Have to take care of the children	6.5%	0.0%	3.0%
No land	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Inability to get the spouse's help	1.6%	1.6%	3.0%
Too tiring	4.8%	4.9%	6.1%
Climate does not allow	3.2%	0.0%	6.1%
Lands distributed among the children	1.6%	1.6%	0.0%
Domestic obligations	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Reluctance of children	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Ill health of family members	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
No response	12.9%	21.3%	12.1%
Base	62	61	33



Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri

Table 15 shows the reasons why the livelihood options were pursued over the life course. As can be seen below, a key reason was the lack of options and opportunities, which deepened as women aged. Similarly, some women use skills

learned in their childhood as they aged, while necessary skills declined as they aged. Opportunities also declined as women got older.

Table 15. Why livelihood options were pursued over the life course.

	0-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Because of the absence other opportunities in the village	24.2	25.3	25.8	28.9	29.7	33.8	38.3
Because it is easy to learn	3.2	5.2	4.9	4.2	4.4	3.2	4.3
Because I learnt it in my childhood	18.9	11.3	9.7	8.3	9.4	11.1	14.9
Because I have no other talent	4.4	7.6	5.8	5.2	4.2	7.4	12.8
Because I have the necessary skills	3.7	7.3	11.1	13.5	12.1	9.7	8.5
Because the opportunity presented itself	37.3	34.8	32.4	32.4	31.4	26.9	17.0
Because I received training	1.4	3.0	4.7	3.2	3.1	2.8	2.1
Because I am staying at home	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Personal preference	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0
Because the workplace is nearby	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Because my parents wanted me to do it	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
In order to earn more	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
No response	5.8	4.9	4.6	3.8	5.6	5.1	2.1
Base	434	1049	1215.0	771.0	481.0	216	47



When asked about how they learned about the main activity at each stage of their life course, the following responses were recorded in table 16 below. The sources of knowledge changed through their life course; as they matured, self-sourced opportunities increased as did spouse-sourced opportunities, while, unsurprisingly, parental sources declined. However, parental-sourced opportunities

(not in-laws) also picked up again after their 50s, suggesting the importance of social networks. Significantly, employer sources declined as well. Although 'self-sourced' category grew, it is not immediately clear from where they sourced this information.

Table 16. Source of information for opportunities through the life course.

	0-15	16-20	21-30	21-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Self	16.8	22.1	28.4	38.1	38.0	37.0	42.6
Through a relative	1.4	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	0.5	0.0
Through a neighbour	0.5	1.8	2.3	3.4	4.0	4.2	2.1
Through a villager	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.2	1.2	0.9	0.0
Through somebody engaged in the same profession (either currently or in the past)	1.6	5.3	7.7	7.0	5.4	5.1	8.5
Through parents	72.1	37.5	25.8	23.3	26.4	30.1	25.5
Through a sibling	0.2	0.7	1.0	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0
Through spouse	0.7	3.2	7.4	10.2	11.2	11.1	19.1
Through a local government officer	0.2	0.7	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.0
Through a friend	0.2	3.1	3.4	1.6	1.2	0.9	0.0
Through employer	1.2	17.7	12.8	5.2	2.9	1.9	0.0
Through a job agent	0.2	0.7	1.7	1.4	0.6	0.5	0.0
Through village priest	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Through the spouse's family	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.5	.6	0.5	0.0
Through a politician	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
No response	4.1	4.2	5.0	4.7	5.8	6.5	0.0
Base	434	1049.0	1215.0	771.0	481	216.0	47.0



Kumudu Devi, 38yrs. Home gardener with Oxfam/KPNDU support.
Vakarai, Batticaloa district, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Tom Greenwood

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The 66 women interviewed shared similar characteristics with women in the survey in terms of background, education levels, marital status and children. However, there were a few key exceptions:

- 57% were active participants and/or beneficiaries in Oxfam's community partner organisations;
- 47% of women were participating in agriculture (a higher rate of participation in agricultural livelihoods at the time of the research than the survey sample);
- Only 9% reported cultivating a home garden for household consumption; and
- 39% of interviewees owned land in their own names, a higher proportion than the survey sample.

In each community, women uniformly expressed the need for opportunities that gave access to stable, ongoing livelihoods. Poverty and the lack of viable sustainable livelihoods were identified as key challenges for women in their communities.

WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES DO RURAL WOMEN ENGAGE IN THROUGH THEIR LIFE COURSE?

The table below summarises the type of agricultural livelihood activities that rural women engaged in through their life course.

Women from all three districts were involved in almost all stages of work, from planning and preparing land, harvesting, weeding and applying pesticides and fertilisers, with some variances across ethnic group and age. However, no-one reported operating tractors or other heavy machinery, suggesting that some of the tasks continue to be segmented by gender. Life stage affected participation in agriculture with three key discernible life periods common in the lives of all three communities: childhood and early life; youth and before marriage; marriage and birth of children. In some instances, experiences of widowhood and separation from spouses was important in explaining participation.

Table 17 Agricultural tasks through the life course.

SECTOR	TASKS
Cultivation including vegetables, fruits, legumes, paddy, chena, tea	Planning Cutting drains for paddy Preparing grass baulks for paddy Digging holes for planting Clearing land including clearing jungle and setting fires for chena Preparing soil for planting Crop establishment and transplanting paddy Manual harvesting (plucking, reaping) Collecting offcuts Weeding Watering Fertilising Pesticides Overseeing irrigation (minority only)
Animal husbandry	Watering and feeding animals, protecting, shepherding, cleaning pens and cages
Post-harvest	Drying, grinding flour, milling rice
Selling	Selling produce
Other	Fetching water
Home gardening	Planting, planting, maintenance including watering, harvesting
Auxiliary	Weaving coconut fronds, cooking and taking food for labourers

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE: SCHOOLING, LABOUR AND CARE WORK

The interviews demonstrated that women started to participate in and contribute to agricultural production in their early to late teens. They began working in agriculture to help parents and/or because they were unable to continue schooling owing to poverty or conflict/war.

As girls and youth, they worked alongside their parents and guardians. For example, P10 was a 67-year-old Sinhalese Buddhist woman from the Southern coastal town of Hikkaduwa who grew up with her grandparents. She went to school and helped her grandmother with her dry fish business by collecting the dried fish in the sun and bringing them inside for storage. Moreover, she helped her grandfather by feeding his cows and watering plants. This type of unpaid auxiliary labour was common:

“I helped my parents to keep livestock in our home; I fed the goat and chicken, made smoke in the cage of goats in order to chase the mosquitos at nights and would clean the goats’ cages while I was going to school too. We had small-scale home gardening. Sometimes I helped my parents. From our vegetable garden we took vegetables for our own food needs.” (A10)

In paddy production, girls helped adults to meet targets, and were often treated as extensions of the family member they accompanied rather than an additional labourer⁶⁰:

“We grew up and when our mother went to cut paddy, I also went with her. My mother cut paddy alli⁶¹ for 3 days. These days a paddy alli can be cut within an hour. Earlier it was difficult for our parents. When we go to cut paddy, my mother and I cut one paddy alli for 3 days. That was the speed of cutting paddy. If my mother remains standing, I also remain standing, if she takes a break I also take a break.” (Sriya, 53, Sinhalese Buddhist, Hambantota)

“As a child while I was going to school I helped my mother to cut the paddy harvest. My mother couldn’t cut the paddy as she was disabled. She couldn’t cut the alliya. So my sister and I go with my mother to cut the harvest. More than our studies we helped her. We suffered a lot... That is because my mother didn’t have the strength. It constrained the space for our education.”

“I would go to paddy land and cleaning paddy, grass cutting it is like a kulli work, I helped my mother, but the earning was not enough so I had to go to abroad.”

One of the key reasons that women participated was because they could not continue their education owing to poverty which was at times heightened by the loss of a parent:

“I studied up to grade two, we were living under poverty, that time there was no facility to go to school and continue the education.” (A07)

“When father died I was just 10 years old, I dropped out from school at the age of 12. I went to paddy land to collect cut off paddy, for weeding and did other daily labour work. I struggled a lot but my life did not improve.” (A03)

“We are very poor and I am not ashamed to tell you that my father is an alcoholic and our family life was very problematic. I really liked to study, but with the environment at home and my father’s lifestyle, my mother was unable to make us study a lot and therefore our studies were unfinished.” (H03)

If the death of a parent pushed women into work, growing up in a conflict affected area pushed girls out of education but may have disrupted their participation in agriculture. A05

reported that she stopped attending school after reaching puberty as there were no adequate facilities for girls in her area. Access was the key issue for A09 and A10. Not only did the conflict disrupt learning, the lack of proper roads and transport was a key concern for girls, given heightened concerns over security:

“Couldn’t go to school because of terrorist attacks. That is to say, we were up all night and couldn’t study where we were here and there. There were so many problems like that those days. Scared to walk on the roads... parents kept us at home saying that life is more important than education.” (P11)

“In this situation in 1990, there was an ethnic conflict between Muslim and Tamils. During that time in my village, around 42 people had been murdered in that conflict and this interrupted my studies. I could not continue further, so after 1990 conflict we were displaced to Karaitivu and we stayed IDP [internally displaced persons] camp located in Karaitivu where STF [Special Task Force] helped us during that time. That experience is the most difficult part in my life. That incident in 1990 affected me a lot. Beside this, IDP camp where we stayed was not good place. There were hygienic issues, space issues, we had to stay at the school therefore we have to face lot of issues.” (A08)

At the same time, women made substantial contributions to social reproduction activities such as care, cooking, laundering, emotional and affective labour, among other examples:

“I was the one who cooked at home mostly. I used to cook for everyone and serve and keep 10 servings. There are 10 people in my family. So I used to cook and serve and keep 10 servings. I used to get trapped to do all that. I used to wear an apron at the hip so that my clothes won’t get dirty and then cook for 10 people and serve and keep. In the evening after that I used to go somewhere to watch TV, to a house. We didn’t have a TV at home. So to watch the teledramas, I used to go. It is because I didn’t go to school.” (H19)

A18 began helping her father take care of her younger sister at the age of seven after their mother left the family. Unable to continue schooling, she dropped out of school after grade 5 to care for the household. Later, her father left her with a foster family, where she went to work in a tea estate. Her father later disappeared at the height of the JVP troubles in the late 1990s. She recalled:

“They [the foster family] have tea estates; they also have green leaves plots. Four or five people work at the estate. We also had to cut grass. So with the other workers I went to the farm at 7 in the morning, I come back at 12 noon with those workers. After that we cook and eat and go back to work. Then we’d return only at 5pm. After returning I had to wash the dishes at night. That was my monotonous lifestyle. I had absolutely no freedom. Actually I didn’t have a childhood or a youth.”

“My mother went abroad. After that only me, father and little brother were left. My two sisters were in the garment [factory]. After that Father had to do the housework then had to send us to school and also he had to find the money to feed us. This was as soon as mother went abroad. After that I said, I can’t go to school alone. So my father was also suffering. After that my father said go to school. I said I can’t go and after that he sent mother letters abroad and said that I was not going to school and all that. After that they looked at my horoscope. My horoscope said that I was not keen on education and that I can’t learn. They looked at the horoscope and said that I can’t educate myself and they did everything for that but yet I couldn’t. I stayed with father he planted black eyed peas and things in the garden. Because my grandmother had taught me how to do those things I helped my father.” (P06)

TRANSITION AND INDEPENDENCE BEFORE MARRIAGE

From the age of 15-20, most women dropped out of school and transitioned into livelihoods that were often independent of their parents. This was not only due to the inability to get high enough results to advance to the next educational level but also owing to similar disruptions as those listed in the previous section (e.g. poverty, parent’s illness, conflict). Others such as H13, H15, H20, and A17 got married and stopped schooling. For P10 and A9, the distance and transport access deterred continuation.

What is notable is that at the age of 15-16, and before marriage, the majority of the women across all three districts and multiple ethnic groups were involved in some form of livelihood generation, either indirectly and unpaid by assisting families in their activities, or directly through employment. These activities were in some cases completed in tandem with other activities.

Most activities were non-agricultural. Some of the older women from Hambantota reported working in the handloom sector in their hometowns. H11, for example, worked from home with her aunt who owned the loom for two years. H01 went for one year of training but did not report working in the sector during her interview. H20 was the only person who reported working in the service sector, being employed as an assistant in a major Ayurveda hospital in Colombo, and later in a local dispensary. H07 and H13 worked in their parents’ shop. H07 helped her father’s small grocery (unpaid work). H13 helped with housework after her mother went abroad, as well as helping in her father’s milk shop. H19 made incense sticks with raw materials that were mailed to her, but she was unable to sustain this activity. H11 and H17, both older women reported engaging in *beedi* making. H01, H02 and H03 wove coconut leaves to sell or wove mats. H03 for example reported weaving coconut leaves into sheets and, with her mother, selling them to people in their village. H03 was employed in a Philippine-owned garment factory in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone (FTZ) following a period of engagement as a nanny/domestic worker in her aunt’s house. Her mobility also assisted the rest of her siblings:

“After the child became big they sent me to the free trade zone in Katunayake, unlike today you can’t get

a job there without the letter of some minister. At that time, I didn't even have a birth certificate, but my aunt made all the arrangements and sent me to work in the free trade zone. After that, I worked there for about 7 and ½ years. While working there, I got 4 of my siblings to join me in Katunayake, and that is how we built up our family life."

In Ampara, some women worked as pre-school and primary school teachers, among other occupations. A11 worked as a pre-school teacher for 3-4 years in Lahugalle, near Panama. After she got married, she stopped working. A16 worked as a pre-school teacher and then at *Sarvodaya* as one of their staff members. At the same time, she continued with the family's *chena* cultivations. This only stopped after the conflict erupted in 1990. A01 was engaged in several occupations prior to marriage including pre-school teaching and daily wage labour in agriculture.

A couple of the women worked in paid positions with NGOs and CBOs. A01 worked with an NGO in Trincomalee at different times before her marriage. Sinhalese woman A14 from Panama worked in various CBOs and tried to start various businesses, so that she was "not a burden" to her parents. She hired people and sold produce in the market for example. Similarly, Tamil woman A08 worked in various projects and occupations. She was a counsellor in a mental health unit for three years in a health clinic, a voluntary primary school teacher and NGO staff member. In addition, she helped at her parents' grocery and general shop.

Several of the women from Ampara migrated for employment both domestically and internationally. A18 secretly got her passport unknown to her guardians and went to a 14-day training in Galle. She then went to Lebanon to work as a housemaid for four years. Four of the six Muslim women from Palamunai migrated overseas as domestic workers. Most travelled illegally while under 18 years of age. A02 was 16 when she went abroad with the assistance of an agency she got to know through relations, while A04 reported an agency from Colombo came to their village and appointed staff in the village who helped create fake passports:

"...I was 16 years old. I went to the Saudi Agency and made my age like 31 years old... I wore a sari and I appeared like a big [older] maid."

Similarly, A06 took her elder sister's identity card to make a passport. As A07, who went abroad at 16 years of age, reported, it was *"very common to get passport even though we are underage."*

In Polonnaruwa, P02 trained and worked as a nurse in Colombo before getting a shop at a private hospital in Polonnaruwa, but resigned after getting sick. At 14, P04 began working in a batik factory in Ratmalana and laboured there for three years with her sisters. P09 worked in a government-owned tea estate plucking tea leaves in the Matara district but left to work in a garment factory in Katunayake where she laboured for six years. P18 also worked in a garment factory, and then later went abroad as a domestic worker. P23 also worked in a garment factory as a checker. P10 sewed clothes from home as well as weaving reeds into baskets and mats while caring for an ill relation.

P25 went with her classmates to the local handloom factory; she also helped in her mother's business to wash and prepare leaves for weaving.

Of the 66 women, only 20% continued to work in agriculture. Nine women from Hambantota worked in agriculture: in paddy, home cultivations, or animal husbandry. H13 helped with harvesting. H10 helped her father in paddy cultivation after leaving school in year 10. H09 helped grow and cultivate bananas in the garden. H01 reported helping her father collect coconuts when they were harvested and help dry them. H04 engaged in helping to grow chilli and mung beans, as well as grinding flour. H04 and H12 were engaged in animal husbandry related tasks: H04 helped milk cows and sold the milk, but H12 helped her father manage goats. H04 would take their fresh produce such as chillies to the market when the father was not available. In Ampara, A09 engaged in farming and rearing chickens. She also worked in a coconut plantation. A17 continued to do home gardening and weaving coconut fronds. In Polonnaruwa, P20 and P12 continued to work in paddy. P12 focused on assisting her sick mother as well as intermittently working in paddy. P20 harvested rice after receiving a small paddy plot:

"I went to plant paddy, cut the paddy harvest. I have gone for work like that. With the money I took care of my needs. When I was there like that, I got a small paddy field with a yield of one bushel of rice. The elder sisters helped me make it work. From the money I got from the harvest I bought gold jewellery."

MARRIAGE AND CHILDBIRTH AS A KEY TURNING POINT.

This section outlines how women, in conjunction with their spouses, continued to participate in a set of diverse livelihood activities. The birth of their first baby resulted in a shift in the way they participated in agriculture.

Most of the women in Hambantota were first/second generation settlers or married into the community. In the early days of the settlement, even before they began cultivation, the community needed to clear the jungle and women contributed significantly to this. When asked about her livelihood soon after marriage, H18 reported:

"Those days so I didn't do anything. We used to clean the jungle and plan the paddy cultivation and make a plan. We planned to cultivate grains and green grains in the garden. Those things only... we used to cut the drains in a row and plant the seeds and after that when about three or four leaves came, so we put soil on to them, and I helped with work like that. I helped with work like that like to cut through the soil."

After her husband received paddy land, she also helped with preparing the baulks of the field and worked *"just like my husband"*. She continued to go to the paddy fields until recently as her husband has prevented her owing to health concerns.

Some, such as H02 and H17, reported that following marriage they engaged in planting and harvesting crops, as well as helping with gardening before their children were

born, and then again after they started school. Women worked alongside their husbands after marriage in paddy cultivation, especially when there were no other options. After giving birth to their son, H01 reported starting paddy “because we can’t do anything else”. She reported:

“After that the two of us got together and did farming and somehow made the house in a normal way. With our combined efforts and without a steady income we educated our son while going on with the paddy cultivation.”

Women were engaged in household work at the same time. For example, H17 and H04 reported that they did housework and cultivation.

Home gardening was a key element of survival tactics for the stages of early settlement. For example, H01 had settled initially without land deeds. She reported engaging in home gardening rather than paddy cultivation.

Others like H07 engaged in other paid employment, but would still contribute to cultivation:

“After coming here, I went to work at a garment factory for some time. I would anyway help out with the cultivation. To go to the paddy field, to fertilise, to spray pesticides, to plant...”

Some engaged in day labour:

“...well I would go for day labour, paddy cultivation work, here and there, to plant paddy... to cut the paddy harvest...” (H10).

Others rented other people’s fields:

“...during that time, we cultivated paddy and worked in paddy fields. We still don’t own any paddy fields, and the ones we have are taken on rent. We rent people’s paddy fields and then pay them a certain amount or plan on giving them paddy once the crops have been planted... We cultivated perennial crops, cashew and sesame and we have cut the sesame, and we have put them to dry... we try to do as much work without hiring help, and our children don’t really work on these things, but my son helps me a lot... This land has coconuts, down there and we weave coconut leaves.” (H03).

Having young children, however, meant they did not engage as much in cultivation activities that required them to be away from the house for long periods of time. H06 went to harvest sesame after getting married, but her husband:

“...won’t let me go like that. The two kids are there as well. They also have to be looked after. This one is sickly, so I’m scared to leave him and go. In that sense, I haven’t done anything much.”

Childcare was important. An early settler, her husband, received the land grant in his name but was reluctant to settle owing to the hardships they would have to face. She

and her mother secretly settled on the land and her parents resided with her for 12 years until the children were grown. H11 reported undertaking cultivations in the garden and working with her father and hired labour in the paddy fields; childcare and other unpaid labour provided by her parents helped. For H19, she reported that she only went to reap paddy after the children got bigger.

Other women did not contribute directly to paddy planting or harvesting, but they did contribute by cooking for the workers (H17).

H19 raised chickens using a loan from the Janasathu Society and sold the eggs as well as retaining them for home use. She found it hard to maintain this livelihood, however, as stray dogs ate the chickens. She still retained a few for eggs, which she sold at Rs. 12 per egg.

Many of the women migrated into their husband’s natal village and, in doing so, adopted the predominant *non-agricultural* activity in the area for women, picking up skills from neighbours and kin. H06 explained how she obtained a loan from her sister-in-law to buy soil to make bricks. She explained:

“... well, I have always done the brick project since those days. That is what I have been doing since those days... That is to say, I didn’t know a single thing about it. I didn’t even know how to pour things into a brick stencil. These things are not there in that area [her home village]. Over there what we had been doing was things like paddy cultivation work. I didn’t learn from anyone either. I didn’t go to learn like that either. By myself, I would go and look at it while people cut bricks. After that, I got two stencils made. After that from home I cut bricks from over there to here [indicating land in her front yard]. I cut about 4000-5000 bricks that time. After that, I started that business.”

Three women from the sample engaged in garment sector work, although many quit garment work upon marriage. H03 worked in Katunayake for three years after marriage (her occupation prior to marriage). H07 began working as a machine operator at the local garment factory (formally Lanka Fashion, now Orient) in nearby Giriulla, while also contributing to cultivation work. She worked for a year before stopping work when she got pregnant with her eldest child. H08 worked at two separate local garment factories for about two years before resigning when she needed to get her children admitted to pre-school.

H16 was the only woman who reported going abroad after marriage and the birth of her four children. The first time, she did so only for one month as her husband passed away after illness and she returned. A year later, she again went abroad and worked as a domestic worker in Singapore before returning after ten months stating that she did not receive all her pay. She then went for a third time but fell ill herself so returned.

H016 was widowed and living with a long-term partner. She expressed great frustration about her experience with her status as a single woman living alone. She sold curd at the side of the major road leading to Kataragama. She

received land from her mother to begin a shop selling hoppers (following her mother's example) and then curd. She continued to do this as well as making Palmyrah bags following the training programme started by Chamal Rajapaksa's wife.

H20 helped her ex-air force husband run a bike repair shop by assisting directly in the labour process. Following their separation, she lived at home and began making cotton candle wicks.

Chena was the key agricultural livelihood that Panama women from the Sinhalese community participated in after marriage. As A12 explained, after she got married although she did not cultivate paddy, she cultivated maize, peanuts and kidney beans. In addition, using the sewing skills she learned from her mother, she sewed clothes from home if a neighbour requested it or for her own family to wear, particularly when her children were young.

A13 had always engaged in cultivation since she was a child. After marriage she assisted in her in-laws' *chena* immediately and cultivated a plot for herself and her husband. Although she found an opportunity as a pre-school teacher with the home guard service, her husband dissuaded her from participating. Thus, she also engaged in sewing:

"...in the time I got married, my husband's mother cultivated. They had a large chena cultivation in that area. They cultivated pumping water every day. So when we go there we make something for us. I helped a lot to the husband's mother's chena work too. We make for us [she and her husband] and helped them [in-law family]... and also sewed for a fee... even now I sew pillowcases for others."

A14 also assisted in her in-laws' *chena* cultivation after marriage by assisting her husband with watering, and her father-in-law with fertilising a banana field. Her in-laws were in Anuradhapura, and she also prepared food, washed clothes, and looked after her elderly mother. After moving to her natal village of Panama, she began to volunteer with a local CBO but continued with *chena* and sold the produce at the local market close by until she became ill. She received a machine for engaging in political work, and she sewed when given orders by neighbours or in small shops:

"... sometimes I used to go when the ladies who have put clothes [shops] ask for help and say they will pay something... that is for various festivals they sew a lot of clothes. When there are a lot of people, customers, they ask us to come. So I go. They give some money and give a dress too."

However, she had stopped this livelihood about 2.5 years ago owing to illness.

A16 also engaged directly in *chena* after marriage. During paddy cultivation, she cooked meals for labourers in the field. This was especially the case when the children were young. After they began to get older, she diversified using her connections in the Rural Development Society:

"The children are now grown up. It was after [I] bought a small grinder (molayak). It was one, which was bought for household use. I am in societies. [I am] in the women's rural development society. I was the president of that women's rural development society. Now these days I am its secretary. Those days there was a loan programme in that society. It is there even today. Got 15,000 from that first... and bought a small grinder. It was after buying like that did the grinding by keeping it at the back of the house."

A15 engaged in various activities including day labour and cultivation. She had found it:

"...very hard to live. Suffered a lot, actually a lot. By becoming attached to Oxfam organisation I was engaged in the brick industry [brick making] at home. Did it like a project. If we look at the Oxfam side, then I got into groups and at present I am working with the central committee... my husband didn't send me for outside work. He using his ability he never did anything to make me ask from someone else and sustain. I am also not used to that with the society I grew up in. To go to others. Didn't let me go like that. While staying at home I...ah I raised chicken for a little period. Did home gardening. Other than that I brought bananas, coconut from my mother's village and sold them here. Other than that I cut [made] bricks at home for around two years."

A17 did a variety of activities after marriage. While her husband fished in the lagoon, their paddy fields had produced a loss. She and her husband contributed to paddy field labour and *chena* but she also worked from home:

"I give [provide] food. If someone asks for lunch packets I provide [them]. Do it on my own... that has been for a long time. Since I was expecting the son those days I didn't do it. I provided food [lunch packets] for an organisation here 'Practical Action'... that organisation made roads here and I provided them with food. There was a mali (little brother) who was logging at our place; I provided food for him."

Land unavailability was another issue in this area. Several women lost access to land in the post-war era. A19 worked alongside her father in paddy work after marriage, and then later built and ran a shop which sold fuel oil. They were one of the families that had been dispossessed of their land in Peanut Farm where they had cultivated nuts, peanuts and maize:

"We were cultivating that. After my husband went on the pension, we cultivated there. I too stayed here. Children came to school from there... It was while we had cultivated that we were not allowed to go and then the burning. My husband came back after that. Then did paddy work here... there were peanuts, when they set fire there my peanut bags were there."



Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

Some of the women began to engage in non-agricultural livelihoods as they lost access to cultivation land due to conflict. For example, Sinhalese woman A11 explained that she did not go to the paddy field far from her house, but only the one close by. By the year 2000, however, she was participating in societies that gave her access to microfinance with low interest rates:

“...in 2000 there were small groups and one or two societies. Like women’s development [groups] and we did little, little things as small groups. We brought rice and sold it. Milk packets. We got a training from the social development foundation we got awareness through that training. They taught us things like how to save.”

The Muslim women from Palamunai engaged in a narrower field of opportunity. After marriage, many juggled care work and income generating activities such as mat-weaving (A03, A05) and sewing (A01, A04, A05).

A06 moved to Colombo and ran a communications shop with her husband, but returned to poultry rearing when her husband abandoned her soon after the tsunami:

“Three months after the tsunami I came back to this place. After coming here, I had to face poverty, as there was no means of income at the time. I had four children. She [indicating child] was not born at that time. I started rearing chicken and cooking string hoppers and I started a juice business... did a juice business along with string hoppers business and thosai business. I was involved in mat-weaving. I did multiple jobs at that time to maintain my children. This is how I worked hard and could hardly manage the day-to-day expenses for my school-going children. I did not express my suffering outside.”

While A06 had access to a more sustainable post-tsunami livelihood project that promoted yoghurt making and selling, the husband had taken the yoghurt making equipment.



Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

POLONNARUWA

Polonnaruwa women engaged in mixed activities, and their pathway to agriculture was non-linear. Women engaged in a range of livelihoods following marriage, often spanning multiple categories in either parallel or sequential order.

Kuli (day work) work was prevalent for many women, who also completed other livelihood activities. In the period following marriage, P01 did *kuli* work such as stone quarrying, making bricks, and construction. Following the birth of their daughter, she also worked in paddy cultivation. P11 reported that “all I know is this *kuli* work” and spent her married life going to sow, cut and harvest paddy, as well as spraying pesticides. P03 engaged in day labour and collected fruit from people in the village and sold them near the Dimbulagala temple. P05 engaged in day labour work cultivating paddy and worked on a farm for a couple of months. She also wove coconut fronds. With her husband they commenced paddy work immediately after getting a land grant. However, she soon went abroad to work in Saudi Arabia:

“After marriage we suffered a lot to do paddy work... For some time we got aid. After two, three years we were given fields. We cultivated that, sent the kids to school and in 2003 I went abroad because it was so difficult... I looked after a child. One child in a house... the madam in the house was a teacher. And the master also goes to work. Till they came home I looked after the child and after that I did house work also.”

P06 had joined her husband in cultivating paddy and then later had the opportunity to work in a shop. P07 continued with day labour in a quarry and also cooked and sold string hoppers to the local army post. Other activities included running small shops selling locally sourced betel. She also sold repackaged cashew nuts that she had bought from another vendor. P16 did day labour work. After her child was born, she and her husband cultivated paddy land before becoming heavily indebted.

For some, agriculture was a temporary activity. For example, P09 migrated to her husband's village in Anuradhapura after marriage and assisted with cultivation of the *chena* as well

as some food processing. She then migrated internally to the Katunayake free trade zone after marriage and joined her younger sister there. After coming to Boatha, she worked in a shop and later prepared food for JSK meetings.

P10 did not work in agriculture herself but managed their cultivation. She ran a small grocery and teashop on land she received as a commercial land grant. Her husband continued to cultivate paddy until becoming ill. After her husband became ill, she then managed the paddy cultivation by hiring others to work but she reported *“it was not successful. It was not successful like when he did it, so we gave it up”*.

P13 engaged in vegetable and other small legume cultivation as they did not have paddy lands, selling the excess after keeping most for consumption. In addition, she sewed clothes for neighbours from home, and went to work as day labour to tar roads for 2-3 years.

In this community, migrating overseas after marriage was more prevalent than for the other communities (e.g. P08, P05, P14, P17, P18). P14 worked with her husband in paddy cultivation, home gardening, making string hoppers to sell, rearing chickens and cows, and worked as a volunteer teacher. Later, she went abroad to Singapore:

“Paddy cultivation was not a sufficient livelihood. Due to the cost of living, children’s issues, and LTTE issues in this area, I went abroad.”

She worked in a shoe factory and, upon return, continued to help with the paddy cultivation. P14 then ended up working on a UN water project and helped to manage this project. P17 also engaged in paddy cultivation work with her mother-in-law by helping with fertiliser and pesticide application. After their land grant, she started to grow vegetables on their land. Eventually, she migrated to Saudi Arabia where she looked after the children and completed the housework. Upon return, she then engaged in paddy work. P18 ran a small shop but, as it was not competitive, she went abroad two years after the birth of her son. On her return, she worked in a garment factory for three months, before quitting and cultivating paddy:

“...cultivated a paddy field by myself. I have a paddy field in my name. Since there was a vehicle for transportation, I hired people myself and cultivated the paddy field.”

However, she stopped this owing to floods and decided to go abroad again, this time to Jordan to work as a domestic worker.

Other women engaged in various activities. P15 also ran a small general shop where she sold *beedi*, sugar, tobacco, *betel* and a few vegetables. Following this and upon migration to Boatha, she engaged in farming and looked after dairy cows. P23 worked as a packer in a local garment factory where they were sewing uniforms for a large

insurance company. She also worked as a cashier at a small local restaurant. P24 helped with their rice business. Her family cultivated up to 30 acres and they processed and sold rice from their home. She reports helping out with measuring the rice to sell. She helped to cook food and oversaw the women who cooked food. She also oversaw the processing of the paddy. P21 reported she went to “oversee work in the paddy fields.” After losing the fields after heavily mortgaging them, she made and sold hoppers, roti and string hoppers. She also worked on building roads and breaking rocks in the quarry. Other tasks including planting and transporting teak plants on a plantation. Following this, she went to work at a farm. P25 engaged in paddy cultivation and maintained the home garden. She also helped with starting the paddy work when they first began to cultivate it by cutting the drains, planting and picking them. Along with her husband, she also went to work in the local commercial farms helping to dig holes to plant banana trees. P26 went to day labour work, working in farms, chopping wood, and working in paddy. She worked at a commercial farm for two years, planting bananas, teak, and coconut. P27 engaged in cultivation of paddy on a day labour process. She also made bricks and helped to fertilise and spray pesticides. She also worked on the commercial farm, looking after coconut plants, fertilising them and so on. She also went to catch fish with a group of 11 women in the lake.

Seven of the women had also experienced widowhood. This had a major impact on their livelihoods. P11, for example, stayed with her husband’s parents after his death and engaged in day labour work such as paddy harvesting. She also engaged in various household tasks for neighbours. She:

“Went to houses, worked in those houses and got the children milk powder and brought them up. It was with much difficulty that the two of them were brought up... I would go to get firewood and bring bundles of firewood. Would apply cow dung or clay in houses. It is by doing this sort of things that the two children were brought up.”

P16 moved in with her sister after her husband passed away. Her sister went abroad leaving her to care for their children:

“I stayed at that house taking care of my kids and my sister’s kids. Sometimes I went for labour work. That house broke down after a while so we build this house and moved here. Now we’ve been here for six years. That’s how we lived. After my husband died I couldn’t think straight.”

From there, she also began preparing lunch packets for an NGO, and worked in a garment factory in Welikanda. At the same time, she engaged in *kuli* work including hoeing. She also went to work on day labour wages in homes and shops to help out.



Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri

WHAT FACTORS HINDER AND/OR ENABLE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND RECOGNITION WITHIN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE LIVELIHOODS ACROSS THEIR LIFE COURSE?

Table 18 below presents a summary of the factors that facilitate or hinder women's participation and recognition within agricultural livelihoods across the life course. These factors listed in the table should be understood in relation to how they interact and connect with each other. The influence of each element deepens and recedes at different points in the life course, as well as within the context of economic, political, and social developments at various times.

Table 18. Summary of factors that facilitate, hinder, or both facilitate or hinder women's participation.

CONSTRAINTS	ENABLERS	EITHER CONSTRAINT OR ENabler
<p><i>Gendered norms and expectations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social reproduction • Spousal attitudes • Norm, stigma and expectations <p><i>Violence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict and security • Domestic violence <p><i>Corporeal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ill-health (multiple forms) • Disability • Ageing <p><i>Natural resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlessness and land insecurity • Water access • Natural environment • Weather/climate • Wildlife <p><i>Economic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsustainable/unavailable markets • Cost of inputs • Access to capital • Underpayment 	<p><i>Support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with social reproduction • Kinship and social relations/ networks <p><i>Participation and access to collective organising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in collectives <p><i>Skill and knowledge acquisition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills gained through childhood, kinship and village networks, training programs 	<p><i>Patronage and clientele relations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political links and participation <p><i>Economic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to capital – credit and debt

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND UNPAID CARE WORK

One of the main factors that has impacted and influenced women's participation in agricultural and other livelihoods has been the social reproduction role that women bear.⁶² This includes unpaid domestic work such as cooking and cleaning, childcare, overseeing education, elder and invalid care, and engagement in community work. However, as can be seen from the narratives above, women did not aggregately and completely withdraw from agriculture owing to social reproduction. This was, however, the most common factor across all three communities; these findings match the patterns of participation found in the survey. This section discusses how social reproductive activities hindered participation, while help with such activities assisted participation.

Women (H07, H08, H12, H13, A17, A13, P16) reduced their livelihood activities in agriculture, especially in paddy, after giving birth to their first child and during the first few years of a child's life, particularly if the work was outside the house:

"There was not enough time to do anything. All the children were small. They were all born without much of a time gap. So when I bath all the children and wash the clothing of 4-5 children, clean up after them, clean the house... I'm not capable of doing a job... I didn't go when they were small. I couldn't go. There was no one to leave the children with. When my eldest daughter was in a more understanding age, I left the children and went with my husband for day-labour." (A13)

"When we wake up in the morning we have so much to do. It's not one thing, we have to cook, take care of children and send them to school. To be honest 24 hours is not enough for me. Sometimes, I go somewhere to cook — for example my husband's grandmother died and I had to go there and cook. Most of the time, I am stuck at home doing work. This is not because I am slow and inefficient, I am very active." (A18)

Responsibility for her children prevented P012 from working more hours at a commercial farm:

"I am unable to go to work on all seven days. The children's school sends messages about meetings. The children get sick. Maximum it is only ten days I get to work for [per month] ... Five days I have to stay back...

That farm trusts me. That Mahaththaya knows that I will not go to another farm. Till today I have not gone to any other farm, abandoning this farm."

Where women did work in agriculture with children, they often took their kids with them to the field:

"I had also got a paddy field so having to go the paddy field you have to work in it ... with the harvesting I helped a bit I took the children I kept them under trees. First they told us to do the chena, so we planted chilli and then planted the paddy fields and then we took the children, planted and cooked and went. Just the two of us [husband and her] had to work." (H16)

A09 similarly described similar constraints but pointed out she was still able to carry out some home gardening work:

"When my husband goes to work, I will take care of my home garden, sometime he will come during the interval time and join us and look after my children. I have four children so we can't be involved in cultivation on big scale but we managed to grow vegetable for managing our household needs."

Even after children had grown up, women also provided care to their grandchildren. P07 had mortgaged and lost her paddy fields to support her children and now her grandchildren as their parents sought income elsewhere, precluding her from other work. P19 reported she was unable to work in day labour owing to the care she provided to her daughter's three children; she was responsible for cleaning, cooking, bathing the kids and doing their laundry. H04 had been engaged in harvesting work but was unable to continue participation in agriculture owing to supporting her wage earning adult children:

"I could have gone more, but I have no way of going, because my son is working at a security firm in Hambantota, and I have to send him food in the morning. I have to prepare food for my daughter as well. So some days I wake up at three in the morning or four, and I still find it hard to prepare food on time."

It is important to note that women also had to exit non-agricultural livelihoods owing to care. Among the Sinhalese community in Panama, A11 felt unable to pick up her past livelihood as a pre-school teacher, as it required extensive time outside the house including on weekends which would diminish her capacity to cook for the household and take care of her children. A18 had to shut her grocery shop after

her husband became ill as she could not maintain care for her husband. Following this, she went overseas to pay off debts accrued during his illness. However, she exited that opportunity to take care of her child and oversee her education.

In the Muslim community, while several women had been overseas migrant workers prior to marriage, they experienced difficulties in reconciling their work with their role as carers. A03 ran a shop but again was unable to maintain it because of the lack of childcare. Indeed, one of the key concerns in the Muslim community was safety and security for female children especially within female-headed households. This fear prevented women from taking up opportunities elsewhere. A03 elaborated:

“According to the present situation, we can’t step outside of home, and leave the female children alone at home. Men are a problem — especially teenage girls have to be protected. In my house there are no men so if I go anywhere leaving my children at home alone who will give protection to my children? I would feel uncomfortable and I get tension thinking about children.”

Similar issues were raised in the Polonnaruwa cohort. While some, such as P015, did not do any other work in the period that her children were small, others did work in various livelihood activities. Other opportunities had to be forgone to accommodate childcare. For example, P06 was unable to attend training in a self-employment business making incense sticks as the training took place far away over three months, rather than on weekends, which was preferred.⁶³ The local schools depended on voluntary parental labour for various activities. Being unable to fulfil this mothering/community role resulted in fines from the school, so women like P06 opted to focus on their reproductive duties. Echoing the responsibilities of communities above, women were primarily responsible for overseeing education as well.

Thus, it is not surprising that assistance with social reproduction is an enabling factor. Some women reported their husbands actively engaged in sharing reproductive labour. P02 reported her husband contributed to everything, including cooking if she could not: *“If I can’t cook, he cooks. We work together.”* P12 also reported her husband helped with cooking for the children in the evening when she came home late from working at a commercial farm. P05 reported that she and her spouse did not have a gender division of labour:

“Husband helps me with the housework and we also help with his work... Yes. He helps with the cooking. Cuts wood, bring water and all of that. He helps with the housework.”

Others were able to access childcare. H04’s mother-in-law took all three of her children to preschool and brought them home. H04, however, still prepared meals and got her children ready for school. H16’s three children aged under 10 lived with her mother-in-law while she was abroad and her husband ill. When she worked in local paddy fields, P14 left her children with her mother-in-law. H08’s mother looked after her baby when she went to the garment factory. A08 was one of the few women from the Ampara district that reported getting help from her own parents for childcare. In Polonnaruwa, P03, P14, P18, and P27 relied on their own mothers to look after their children. For P14 and P18, this was vital as they were able to take up migrant work overseas. P12 relied on her eldest daughter to look after the baby; the daughter dropped out of school in grade 8 to do so. Others worked cooperatively with husbands:

“I did household work. I cleaned the garden and planted vegetables. When my husband came, to help him I went to the paddy fields... Did all the household work and all that. Son was small then. Used to give him toys and keep him on a mat, and managed to do all the work in the garden... do the household work and then go for the weaving...” (P25)

Only a couple felt gender norms had changed since her childhood:

“Women like my age did not go to work outside. Nowadays girls are educated they are improved their knowledge and they go to work outside, it has been changed a lot in positive way in my village, they got to hospital work and university work and work as security... Women work as security in hospitals, in our time this was not possible and this was not allowed... Nowadays women and females have to earn using their own hand and they have to improve their life themselves.” (A09)

“...now my husband washes clothes, sweeps, its very convenient at home. I only have the cooking bit. Giving the children baths does all.” (A19)

GENDERED NORMS AND STIGMA

After marriage, husbands' attitudes towards women's roles in care impacted the decisions to engage or not engage in any form of livelihoods. H13, for example, expressed a desire to find employment in a garment factory or to take up an opportunity to go abroad but her husband did not want her to *"leave the kids and go anywhere."* H08 reported that, after giving birth, childcare considerations were given precedence, as her husband *"won't let me do anything."* Similarly, H13 reported that her husband emphasised her child caring role over livelihood opportunities, insisting that she make the children her priority. For H15:

"My husband doesn't like me working. I was involved in the Palmyra bag enterprise at a very small scale but my husband didn't like me continuing it, thinking that it will affect the children's education and the housework. The fear was that the children's education would be compromised."

In relation to an opportunity to take up some training, A13 reported her husband,

"... he didn't like it. He said you have to go outside [the village] for training for three months, leaving the children. He doesn't like. He doesn't like women working... If both are doing jobs there is no one to look after the children."

A13 further reflected that she passed up an opportunity to work in the home guard sourced by her sister, who was also in the home guard, as her husband believed that working outside the home would *"create problems in the family."*

H01 was able to engage in paddy planting with her husband, but since he has been injured, she has been unable to go as well:

"My husband has a problem with his leg and he goes by bicycle and he doesn't let me work, so we use workers to do everything."

A06 was married and then went to Kuwait for a few months. However, when she returned, her husband did not allow her to go for available agricultural day labour work. Similarly, A07 reported that at the time of the interview, her husband did not allow her to do agricultural day labour for unspecified reasons.

Beyond their relations with husbands, negative gender norms and stigma prevented various forms of livelihood activity as it prevented women from engaging in public space. Recounting the time that she was widowed, H16 reported that she

faced continuous forms of harassment for living without male protection and engaging in the public space:

"...women have a lot of problems. They can't even have their own business. Married or unmarried ... women aren't allowed to work. Now I don't have so many external problems [but] someone who is alone will have lots of problems. They will not be accepted by society they will corner her and if you're a girl and at 22 if you're not married then it's a problem. Now for this one [her daughter] there are problems... Mentally you fall. You don't have a job you're just at home like that" (H16).

Underlying this were the gender norms that women faced when taking on different roles. H15 believed:

"There are many dimensions. Women get labelled. A woman staying at home gets one label. If a woman goes out and speak in a society, then that women gets another. Another character."

In Panama, women were subject to gender norms around respectability. For example, being a widowed woman made her vulnerable. In addition, it also made her female children vulnerable. A11 explained that she was subject to being maligned after her first husband passed away. Here she describes her reason for getting remarried and how she asked her [former] mother-in-law first:

"This is why I got married. I have a daughter now... Even if a man comes to the house and goes gets maligned. Because of that I got and stayed publicly married. Even yet I asked my ex- mother-in-law that I am getting a proposal. She told me — you are young. She knows that he has a son and told me that my daughter will just grow up right if his son is brought up right. [They will] live together with love."

For Muslim women, gender norms were felt acutely. A01 was an outsider to the community in the sense that she married into the community. Throughout her interview, she highlighted the differences between growing up in Trincomalee and living in this community. Perceiving her birth village to be more friendly and conducive to women's participation in economic activity or mobility outside of the home without stigma, she reported that she faced constant surveillance and moral policing from her neighbours:

"If ladies come to my home that is ok. If gents come villagers think bad about me, no understanding. In Trincomalee it is not like that — even my Tamil

male friends would come to my house it was not a problem..."

For the Muslim women, gender norms and community surveillance were a barrier to participation in livelihoods outside the home. Gender norms were also internalised by the women. Asked whether she went to the market, A03 reported:

"Buyers will come to home and I feel shy to take this stuff to market... it is very far. There is a market which is very far; men will be at the market. I feel shy to go there, if I go to market it is shame to me, in female children cannot have future life. If I live respectably, only someone will come to marry my female children."

Thus, although many of the women reported they had migrated overseas prior to marriage (e.g. A02), it seemed gender norms had tightened within a generation. In the focus group discussion held prior to the individual meetings, a woman in the group remarked that a good woman (someone who wants to get a good name in the community) is someone where *"even our birth should be non-visible for the outside world."*⁶⁴

Rather, it was the young men that were now encouraged to go overseas. A02's son-in-law was abroad, for example. A03 rationalised that she had a son of 10 years but noted that if she had an elder son she would send him abroad:

"If I had son, I would have sent my son to abroad and earned some money but none for me — I don't have. I have only five female children so what to do? No brother no father no husband. I don't have any help or support."

In Akkaraipattu, practical concerns such as inadequate infrastructure prevented mobility. For example, A10 stated that women did not go out for work because of transportation problems that rendered women insecure in public spaces.

NETWORKS AND RELATIONSHIPS

KINSHIP

As noted above, kinship assistance with care work enabled participation. More broadly, kinship was both an entry point into agricultural livelihoods, and an enabler of participation. Kinship networks spanned local and urban spaces and, as such, provided opportunities for mobility and employment including accessing non-agricultural livelihoods (H03, H20, H06, H08, A13, A16, P14).

In agriculture, kinship networks were the strongest form of social protection found in rural areas. Reasons for relying on kin included: moving back into parents' houses when their marriages broke down (H20, H12), they became widowed (A11, P16), food security (A15), debt (H07, P19), land scarcity (A14; A15; A16), being orphaned at a young age (P01), or housing (P57). Many participants relied on kin during disruption, displacement or turning points in her life. A15 and her family were displaced during the war and they moved to her mother's village. She lived with her grandmother. Her father was able to capture some land to cultivate and live on. A08's spouse and child stayed with her parents when returning from displacement.

Living with kin as adults helped draw women into agriculture. P06 lived with her in-laws up to a year after marriage helping with paddy until they received their own land. H20 returned to her natal house and lived with her father helping with housework, cultivation fieldwork, preparing food for the labourers, and animal husbandry. P02 reported that her brother initially came to Dimbulaga in the 1980s; they soon followed. H08 reported an aunty first told her about how to settle on land in the area, to 'quietly' build on the land and settle in. After, the aunt took her to meet a Minister to get a deed to the land⁶⁵.

In contrast, the Muslim women tended to discuss *the lack of kinship* rather than how kin networks assisted:

"Everyone ignored me because I married cousin and went. In my family, except my mother, others are not speaking to me. Then after coming here I have no land. I just stayed house to house." (A01)

"I continuously have been struggling until now. We do not have either elder brother or younger brother or father and no help." (A03)

"My siblings live near the beach but I won't go to their house. Nobody come to me and ask 'did you eat and whether your children go to school.' Nothing, but neighbours and villagers would come and give some sort of assistance." (A06)

For others such as A02, their kin simply lacked resources to help:

"My siblings also do not have that much of wealth to take care of my children, sometime only they would give cooked food especially during the festival time."

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY/WOMEN'S COLLECTIVES

Given the participants from this sample were sourced through CBO networks, it is not surprising that many of the women in the sample participated in various community collectives along with women's collectives, including taking on leadership roles. There were several layers of engagement: from attending basic meetings in village welfare societies, such as the funeral society or Samurdhi (a long-established welfare payment provided under the state-owned poverty alleviation programme), to participating in NGO and CBO activities and taking on officer roles such as President or Secretary. Others were members of political parties, but only a minority of the sample was involved in farmer associations. The 'meeting' was the main mode of exchange between these organisations and participants. Muslim women in Ampara had the lowest level of engagement. The table below lists the organisations that women reported being a part of.

Table 19. List of organisations women participated in.

AMPARA	POLONNARUWA	HAMBANTOTA
SDF (CBO) HEO (CBO) Coastal Conservation (NGO) Women's Development Fund Women's Rural Development Society Women's Bank Microfinance group Women's Bureau Funeral Welfare Fund War Affected Women (NGO) Mothers and Daughters of Lanka (1 woman) Life after War (CBO) Nawagama Community Development Society Savordaya Oxfam Samurdhi	JSSK Microfinance group Women's Society Village Development Society Funeral Aid Society Farming Society (2 women, only 1 active) Ape Shakti (CBO) Red Cross (one woman only) People's Action for Free & Fair Elections (PAFFREL) Mother and Daughters of Lanka (1 woman) Volunteer work committee	MJH Mahajana Shakti Grameeya Committee (People's Power Rural Committee) Oxfam CARE World Vision Samurdhi Gama Neguma Microfinance groups Rural Activists Committee Sanasa Funeral Society

In Panama (Ampara) the Sinhalese women participated in multiple organisations including microfinance organisations (e.g. A11, A12, A14, A13, A15, A16, A17, A18, A19). For example, A13 was a member of three groups, including Social Development Foundation (SDF), the key Oxfam partner we worked with in this study, and two CBOs, including one they had formed themselves called the Nawagama Community Development Society. A15 worked with Oxfam, a local CBO, was a member of the local Samurdhi committee, and the secretary of a state-initiated rural women's development society which gave microloans. A16 was another member of SDF and of the women's rural development society. In the past, she had taken on the role of President and was the present Secretary. At the time of research, she was also a member of the Women's Bureau, a government-run initiative from the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, and the funeral welfare society. A19 was one of the most active women in the community, having started working with committees as a child, and continued even after she had her own children. She worked on human rights issues with the rural community society, including taking land dispossession matters to the Human Rights Commission. In the past, she had worked with the NGO War Affected Women. She worked with a local member of the Pradeshiya Sabha, a woman who took active part in addressing women's concerns. A19's activities linked her to a long-standing grassroots women's organisation, called Mothers and Daughters of Lanka, and through them she also engaged in election monitoring during the 2015

Presidential election. She noted that in their community it was the women who volunteered for and attended all sorts of collective meetings, from resistance movements to NGO activities.

The Polonnaruwa community also reported active participation in multiple groups, including political party activities (P08, P12, P01, P02, P05, P10, P09, P14, P15, P16, P18 P20, P21 P25, P26). P08 was a member of the Jatheen Athara Sahayogitha Sangawrdena Kamituwa (JSSK, the Oxfam partner involved in the project), microcredit organisations, the Women's Society, the village development society, and the funeral aid society. P01 was active in many collective groups, despite her illiteracy, and explained how women like her were encouraged to participate:

"...they go for gatherings and take leadership goals. Although I am uneducated, for the past few years I have been playing the role of organisational secretary [in JSK] and created gatherings. I didn't study, but I bring the files to children and make them check it and gain knowledge from that and when my younger daughter was here she helped me a lot with work like that and she is very shy but she helps me a lot and even teaches me letter."

P02 had a long association with JSSK. She was a secretary in the Women's Society, and community group the Uthpalawanna Village Development Society which was

supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). P06, P07, P08 and P09 were active members of JSSK. Meetings included community work, planning meetings and training seminars on topics such as gender, drugs, and violence against women.

P16, P17 and P23 were the only members of the cohort reporting that they belonged to a farming society. As a member, P17 took on a leadership role for the past two years while participating in several other groups:

"There are canals for the paddy fields along our paddy field road. I am the leader of that canal. There are 10 paddy fields under me. They come to me if there are problems in any of those 10 paddy fields. After that, I'm the one who gives letters to the officers of the farmers' society and take care of everything. They tell me if they need seed paddy and things like that. I write a letter and give them. After that they take care of it. This time paddy fields were flooded, and then we went and checked them and wrote letters. Like that, there's a leader for every canal. Mahaweli gives us training and things."

P24 was the Secretary a self-organised microfinance CBO called Ape Shakthi, which collected membership fees and provided small loans for cultivation. Moreover, she was the Secretary for the Welikanda Division of the Red Cross. P24 had links to the broader women's movement and other civil rights groups. She was a member of PAFFREL (People's Action for Free & Fair Elections) and Mothers and Daughters of Lanka and engaged in election monitoring. She was a member of the Farmers' Association but reported not actively participating as these associations were "very difficult" due to a lack of unity among the members in terms of adhering to consensus discussions.

In contrast, the Muslim women in Ampara had the lowest level of participation in CBOs or NGOs among the sample. When interviewed, most of the women reported only participation in Samurdhi (welfare) group meetings (A03, A04, A05, A07). Among more active members, A06 reported that she was also a part of HEO, another Oxfam partner involved in this project.

Among the Tamil women in Ampara, A08 was the most active member, having participated in youth clubs and then, as an adult, being employed by HEO. A09 reported that she was a member of HEO while A10 was a subcommittee member of HEO and a member of Samurdhi.

In Hambantota, most women interviewed were involved with multiple organisations including Oxfam's partner CBO, SDF, and reported active participation in political activities. H03, who was also involved in the activities of the local Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) political network, reported that:

"I am a part of the women's society and I am the president of it. And then I am the president of the Oxfam water project and I am the vice president of the political discussion society."66

H13 was a participant in Samurdhi and *Gama Neguma*. Within the *Gama Neguma*, she reported she was the 'sub-projects treasurer' in the microcredit scheme. She was also a member of two other microcredit organisations, and the

treasurer in the *Mahajana Shakthi Grameeya* Committee (People's Power Rural Committee).

Although women seemingly participated continuously in formal activity, they also curtailed their participation for reasons similar to withdrawing from livelihood activities. A14 had to curtail her participation after getting married and her illness prevented greater mobility. P01 did not attend meetings during working time or when she was ill. A15 had to resign from official roles after having children. After her daughter was born, H07 did not do any livelihood activities. Although she participated in volunteer work, she noted that:

"Though I didn't do a job, there is work to be done in the village. Social work... in societies and association... A meeting could take up a whole day."

Examining the motivation for participation and the outcomes of participation, most women participated for the instrumental benefits achieved, particularly those pertaining to agricultural and non-agricultural livelihoods (A15, A16, A11, A18). The women in Panama in particular discussed strong outcomes. For example, Oxfam had supported the women with legal fees regarding displacement from Peanut Farm *chena* lands.

In Hambantota, the women talked about another International NGO (INGO), CARE, positively as it provided access to microloans and housing (H15, H12). Another Oxfam partner organisation Magampura Janatha Handa (MJH) was reported to have engaged in awareness-raising programs pertaining to violence against women and provided aid such as building toilets (H12). H14 received psychological counselling lectures and met the counsellor once to access contraceptives, all through MJH.

With regards to state-run programmes, H08 reported that she went to Samurdhi/*Divi Neguma* meetings monthly, not only to access the monthly welfare payment but also to access microloans.

Similarly, in Polonnaruwa, P06 and P07 joined JSK and received housing assistance.

P07 went to political meetings and received a land grant to assist with housing. P05 also reported participating in political meetings, as did P08. P08 attended meetings and was interested in asking for electricity. P06, P07, P08, P09 received house grants or assistance with housing after attending meetings and participating.

Overall, participation in CBOs and NGOs had an empowering impact on the women, and thereby facilitated greater levels of participation. A17 was taking part in a seed and home gardening programme. She received seeds from Oxfam. A13 accessed training on home gardening, as well as water resources for cultivation. P02 participated in political meetings, and lobbied a minister for cultivation land:

"I went for meetings, repeatedly told the minister and got a paddy field. We finally got one. It gives about 2 paddy bushels. That is enough for us. We get by with that."

Participating in JSK activities (P08, P01, P05, P03) gave access to training on livelihoods. In particular, many of the early settlers and land grantees such as P03 reported learning how to cultivate paddy via JSK. P01 reported that

she used to stay at home and weave mats while her children were small up until the 1990s. However:

"The JSSK centre came and taught us how to work in a paddy field and because of that now I know very well how to work in a paddy field."

In addition, she reported that:

"They gave prominence to people who have not been educated. They gave us seed and taught us how to plant them, they made us interested, they gave us financial support and that really helped me and gave me a lot of knowledge even though I was uneducated. Now I can do anything because I did this and I don't need to get as tired anymore."

Earlier, she had mortgaged her paddy land for the past 10-12 years, but after cultivating with JSSK training, she reported the paddy field was returned to her.

Engagement with JSK helped P01 gain greater confidence:

"I learnt paddy cultivation and I learnt how to speak and before that I was very shy because I was uneducated and I was scared. They gave me prominence more than my husband. My husband drank and wasted so I took prominence in thinking about my children and I learnt all that thanks to JSK."

Participation helped to change gender expectations over time:

"There were many training camps conducted by the JSSK for years...for both men and women...those days, women were not even allowed at meetings... if you take me, I haven't been in one and actually I haven't even spoken with a man. If you take me as an individual. When I was at my village, I wasn't allowed out at night...after five o'clock in the evening. Even when I came here, I still wasn't allowed to go out. It is only when I joined JSSK that I moved forward..." (P14)

This participation was significant as it also helped to shift gender roles in paddy cultivation. P01 recalled:

"It started to change since I was small, my grandmother didn't step to the paddy field and she gave my grandfather food staying at a distance, there was a fence and she stayed behind the fence and called out to my grandfather and then gave him the food. We went behind and called out to our grandfather saying 'ei ei' and our grandmother use to talk to our grandfather and give him food and then come. That was when we were small, but when I was big it wasn't like that women worked and we didn't know much but the JSK Company came and even the Tobacco Company⁶⁷ came and gave us aid and seed to plant and came to supervise, so we were very keen on keeping it well-cared for and there are some people who still don't understand and there are people like us who came up as well. There are still people who don't cultivate in their paddy fields and they mortgage the fields and do odd jobs."

P05 reported how joining JSK helped to bring women into public spaces and community engagement. Joining in 1998, she reported:

"We didn't go to societies. We were confined in homes. We joined them and gained a lot of knowledge as a result."

Other examples of participation clearly demonstrated the leadership roles that women took on in Polonnaruwa. P01 took on leadership roles from the very early days of her residence:

"Our Suneetha Nangi... and when I came here she must be younger than me, our top house Podi Mahathaya is what we call him, they had a well in the house that is close to the school and it wasn't developed then and there wasn't even a proper road and that road was very small, she used to come there to get water and we met like that and became friends and joined societies together and went for gatherings. There is a women's society and a death organising society, they didn't exist at that time and we played the roles of Secretary and president and I was the president of the women's society for a short period of time and I can take leadership but I can't read nor write."

She continued her leadership roles and reflected that although she could not read or write, she was still able to take on leadership roles by relying on her younger daughter to assist her with the written work. P01 believed that:

"...now more prominence is given to women now even when it comes to going for gatherings or talking. Even when my husband was alive and someone came home I would go in front and talk..."

P02 and P05 both took leadership roles in working with public authorities to advocate for public resources such as water or road improvements.

P07 believed that women had a position in the country as:

"In the past, it wasn't like that. Our fathers went for everything. In the past if a male comes, fathers don't let us come out even. They are the ones who talk. We don't talk. We come out only after they leave. There was a period like that. It's not like that now. If someone come, the person at home will talk before the adult."

P14 also had a significant public role after taking a leadership role on a UNDP water project which provided water for over 600 families, 24 hours per day. In addition, she acted as a community leader with respect to other gender-based issues. However, she did not believe that men and women had equal recognition in society, despite women taking on leadership roles within the household and in the community:

"R: No, they don't accept... they say that we can't become equals... [laughs]

I1: Why do you think about that?

R: I don't know, if you take me, in this house more than my husband it is me..."

Ultimately, it is worth noting that community leaders also acted as gatekeepers and advocates and had access to power. Speaking of a local community leader, P23 explained:

"Yesterday you met an Ayya, who talked to you when you were leaving. In this village he has a lot of... that is to say, he can do anything he wants. He has connections in high places. We go with him as something we do for him. We can get some help from him. He helps us whenever we need it. So we help him."

Local religious leaders were also important. The local head monk added provided assistance and counsel particularly if the issue could not be solved by the *grama sevaka* (A16). In relation to the Peanut Farm land dispossession case, as A17 explained, the head monk acted as an advocate when she faced police and security personnel harassment following her husband's activist activities. Similarly, in Polonnaruwa, the chief monk had been an influential figure. P10 recounted how the chief monk would solve "*whatever problem*" they had.

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL NETWORKS

Political participation discussed by the women in Polonnaruwa and Hambantota included voting, canvassing, and attending meetings (political rallies, loan/livelihood schemes). Women reported participating in the hopes of receiving a service or access to resources such as land, housing, employment, and livelihood resources in return (A14, A17, A19, H20, P23, H16, P09). The respondents were frank about the instrumental and transactional aspect of their participation, and the fact that engagement and participation meant they could gain some advantage including access to justice:

"It was on the pressurising of a politician that the police would even do some work for the village. At least now we are expecting the correct law [to be enforced]. Police harassed us a lot." (A17)

"We vote. Every time we vote but what do they say, they say that you didn't vote for this side so there is nothing for you." (P13)

"If you want help from Ministers then you have to canvass and help with election campaigns and work for them if you want to get various things from them. Otherwise, you can't get anything." (H16)

"...when we go through them and give letters, they do it. [gives name of provincial council member] They have been here from small days. His mother was the midwife in the small hospital in Manapitiya. We used to know them well. The Amma is very old now. They are good. If we say something, they get it done." (P07)

Working within these relations of power enabled women and their families to gain access to inputs of production such as water lines (P09) and land (P12, P10). If they did not attend and participate, the fear was that women would miss out:

"They say that you are not in our party and that you are supporting another party and they don't give. Even if we want to go and get a letter for our son, we can't because we worked for the opposition..." (H03)

"Earlier I didn't go to them. But these ones [children] need to have a future. We must go with the prevailing pattern. If we stay at home... If there was something... If we go to get something... They would say you didn't come for this, you didn't come for anything. It's this time that I'm going for everything like this. Otherwise I wouldn't go." (P13)

However, some of the women expressed disillusionment with the process (H16, H04), while others reported that they were not heard as they lacked power and influence:

"No one to ask. There is no one to tell our hardships to. There are... there are Ministers and MPs, but no use in them, no use in telling them, no use in giving letters to them. That's why. We don't go behind them. I don't have time to go behind them for meetings and canvassing, I can't go. I am here with a sick person." (P10)

"We are frustrated. We don't get anything. They get rich and we go to the dogs. They don't help us helpless people." (P16)

"There's no use in going to the *grama sevaka*. Problems are there as well. A few days ago they were giving out some aid. We didn't get any. Everyone else received, but we didn't. Nothing for these helpless families. They pick and give, the *grama sevaka* officers chose and give. The have-nots are cut off. They don't inquire after them." (P19)

In Ampara, rather than political parties themselves, the *grama sevaka* office was reported as an important enabling or blocking factor in determining access to various entitlements, services and information. A part of the Divisional Secretariat, these village level officials are on the frontline delivery of essential state resources including information. For example, when facing a land issue, the participants first went to the Divisional Secretariat office. As the representative of the government/state, villagers identified the *grama sevaka* as an essential conduit between the people and the state. For A11, A12, A13, A14, A15, and A16, the *grama sevaka* was the first person they contacted when issues with electricity, water access, or disasters such as floods requiring aid arose.

For the Muslim participants in Ampara, there were fewer avenues to seek help. A06 felt village leaders favoured the well-off not the poor. While the mosque was a key point of call for many of the women, many reported that there was no-one to go for help. A05 reported there was "*no-one*" to support her. A04 reported going to the *grama sevaka* and then the police but they did not really go "*to police office for conflict; we just do our work and stay at home*". Moreover, she did not feel heard by politicians.

CONFLICT AND SECURITY CONCERNS

In the past, factors such as war and other security concerns, such as the JVP–government conflict in the late 1980s, impacted all livelihoods in all three districts.

Ampara was caught in the crossfire of conflict: all of the participants' livelihoods or families' livelihoods were affected by conflict at some stage during or after the conflict. The LTTE had set up a camp in Panama in the late 1980s and imposed certain rules such as night curfews on the population. In the early 1990s, the Sri Lankan army engaged the LTTE and the LTTE left the area. A civil home guard was put in place with people from the village recruited into service, including female pre-school teachers. A11 recalled that the family could not access their *chena* land where her father grew maize and nuts during the 1990s and early 2000s. Moreover, her husband was killed by the LTTE while working in his paddy field. Without a livelihood, she moved in with her mother before remarrying. Others, such as A12, reported being unable to access their land, with people relying on crops such as cassava in home gardens. A13 reported restricted mobility:

“... during the LTTE trouble times, didn't do any paddy work in the paddy fields which are far, only in the close paddy land. There were no savings those days, we used to live on what we find...”

Many of the participants fled to the forests and lagoon at night, particularly when the threat of conflict and violence escalated, and only returned in the morning (e.g. A12, A13). Cultivations such as A16's family *chena* was abandoned at times like this owing to the fear of violence.

In Palamunai, the war had a major impact on the Muslim and Tamil women as conflict erupted between the two communities in the 1990s, leading to displacement. Women's safety was a constant concern. A07 and A06 reported that there were problems with the police and army harassing women, but that they were not affected. A06 alluded to violence from military. During the final phase of the war in 2009, daily life was disrupted including sleep patterns. Earlier fighting in the 1990s had led to prolonged displacement for others (A08, A10, P12, P17, P20, P24, P21):

“In 1990, riots took place and this stopped our schooling. We all were displaced and went to IDP camp. Only we took some clothes with us...In the IDPs camp we could not get any opportunity to work there, my father and my husband would go to kuli work to nearby villages, as we were in the small space there was no space to either chicken rearing or keeping livestock. This period was hard to cope with the day-to-day expense.” (A10)

“...when we were displaced we left all the vegetables. We had just plucked some brinjal when we were displaced, we just left everything.” (A09)

“During the war, we faced many hardships. During the war we ate while being on the run, we bathed while being on the run...Our brother was doing a job related to fish...He would supply the army camp with fish. They suspected of him being a Tiger. That is why they took him... Yes, in our village a lot of people were taken ... had dug a pit, had put tires...he was burned raw.” (P12)

The war greatly restricted mobility:

“I remember when I was small, there was a camp where today we have the temple. In the evening you hear noises like crackers. Parents would tell us they were crackers but would drag us and run. We didn't know where we were running to, we just ran. We will run and go to a house and everyone would be there. We cook very early in the evening around 5pm. Then we would leave and return home only after the sun had come up. The days when my father was home, we would stay.” (P18)

“We stayed at the camp. Lived from the donations they gave us... We couldn't go outside. We couldn't even get down outside...We had to stay inside the camp... We couldn't even go to work on paddy cultivation... It was the army that went to the nearby paddy lands. With the army. Used to go at eight in the morning, then at ten again... came back home at seven, when the Tigers come, we came back home.” (P25)

In the displacement camp itself, A09 reported that the men like her husband went for *kuli* work. When they returned from the camp, they discovered that the land was bare:

“We were scared to come back and came with the security of military and we cleared our land. There was not even on a single coconut tree on our land.”

P10 reported how their profits from paddy were also extracted by the LTTE:

“During the war we faced many difficulties. During the war we were in that house down there. Then those people... the Tigers were also in the Soruwila village. Then they would ask for extortion money after we have taken the harvest from the paddy land. They would ask for 5000 Rupees. Like that. If we have things at home, they would ask for that... Sugar, Coconut, Rice... from the shop, have to give like that. If there are items that they need they will quickly get it from us and go... The army was there. We were too scared to tell the army; those people would threaten us.”



Hambantota, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Violence and abuse in the household prevented participation in agriculture for some. Several of the women reported how domestic violence and deprivation of financial support exacerbated disempowerment without recourse to other forms of livelihood. A01 had suffered physical abuse from her husband and suffered loss of income as her husband gave all his earnings to his mother. A06 suffered intense physical violence, including attempted murder by her husband, and was also deprived of financial support by him. P01 reported her husband was an alcoholic who resented that she took responsibility for her siblings who were without guardianship. He used the money he earned to drink, they got into fights and he physically abused her. P03's father was an alcoholic who abused her mother as well as destroying property, which placed her in a precarious situation from childhood. P19 reported that in her life with her husband, she experienced, *"Nothing but pain. Nothing to eat, nothing to drink, nothing to wear... I lived a very difficult life."* Although she worked as a day labourer, it was her mother-in-law who used to provide her with food.

P26's experience of domestic violence had directly curtailed her income earning opportunities. Her husband had severely physically abused her until one day, after work, he had upset a pan of hot oil while she was cooking, burning her face, shoulder and arm. As a result, she reported,

"After that I didn't go for day labour work. I do these small, small odd jobs and wait. It's a bit hard for me to stay in the sun."

The day labour work required in the area required standing in the sun, which stung her burns and caused her even more pain. Although the abuse had stopped after she got burned, she said she did not report him to the police:

"I didn't go to the police, because if that happens, I am the one to suffer again. I will have to earn if he gets remanded."

CORPOREAL

Agricultural work required intense physical labour. As women became older, they were unable to participate in paddy cultivation. H05 and P10, for example, were unable to bend down and stay in that position for long periods of time as required when cutting paddy. H11 explained that she preferred making bags, as it was *"...hard for us to do farming. Something like this is better. Without age, it's hard to cultivate"*. Similarly, H10, the oldest woman in the cohort, reported that up until the age of 63 she did hoeing and paddy cultivation work in the field. However, she stopped, as she *"can't walk down. When I walk a little distance, I feel about to collapse. No strength"*.

Illness was also a barrier. For A14, she had suffered an illness related to her womb (unspecified) at the age of 35 that left her bedridden for up to 9 months. She was unable to do any work in cultivation, especially heavy work, after this. Even after recovery, she got back pain, which prevented her from helping with cultivation work. Within the Muslim community, A05 reported stopping work as she became ill following a miscarriage. After this, she did not want to do a job. P01 also experienced ill health after her husband passed away, leading to her mortgaging their paddy fields, and her daughter taking up the responsibility of paying off debts. P016 suffered a mental breakdown after her husband committed suicide when faced with overwhelming debt incurred during paddy cultivation:

"I couldn't even go for work. I had so many questions about how I could repay the loans and stay with my kids. I started to despise my own kids. I got a mental condition. I stayed at the Polonnaruwa Hospital for one and a half months. They informed my sister that I had a mental condition. They had to transfer me to a bigger hospital and wanted my sister to sign a consent form. I don't remember any of this. They gave me lots of sleeping pills because I shouted and disturbed everyone at the hospital."

NATURAL RESOURCES: WATER

The lack of access to water because of the lack of infrastructure in the early days of settlement in Hambantota and Polonnaruwa, as well as conditions of drought, impacted participation (e.g. H11, H05, H03, H12). P18 described the competition for water:

“Cultivating a paddy field means first of all you have to hire people to build the bunds. Then you soak the paddy seeds and go to plant, that means when the paddy sprouts start growing, I take my lunch and go by myself in the bike. Then I return around two, three in the afternoon because the elephants come. Then I have to turn [on] the waterway. I get into arguments/ disagreements with people when turning [on] the water. They don’t say anything to me because I’m very argumentative. They don’t say anything because I’m a young girl and they leave me be while I turn the waterway. And then they go in the night and turn it back. Then I go in the morning again, and scold them, and turn it again. That means we get a very small amount of water. But that small amount is used for about 10 paddy fields, so no one waits while one person turns it and gets their work done. It’s very competitive, you simply must get involved in that manner.”

The women in Ampara reported similar issues:

“After that I did [cultivation] in the land which my parents gave. Then I had a water issue. My mother’s well broke. So after that in this land we stay... behind is their [husband’s] brother’s land. So they say they want to build it... build a house, build the well so I didn’t make it [cultivate on the land]. Even this time they said they want to build a shop. So I thought about it too and thought it’s ok if they built it and put some [cultivated produce]. After that they didn’t build it. When I try to make it [cultivate in the land] they say they are going to build it [on it]. So in the little space [I/we] have [I] have planted, even in a pot.” (A17).

A14 reported she did not want to pursue agriculture because of the lack of water:

“We have had enough of paddy cultivation after doing it for so long. At one point we work so hard to die when there is no water. If there is no water in the well and if we bring a motor for 30,000 - 150,000, if we go to water [the cultivation] in that section and if there is no water in the well, everything we cultivated and all is finished.”

In the early years of the settlement period (both legal and illegal) in Hambantota, many recounted that they did not have any tap water lines in their households at all. They had to purchase it from common tap lines on the road. This experience defined the experience for many who settled in the early 1980s under President Jayewardene, and later in the late 1980s-early 1990s, under President Premadasa. Water came in tanks and barrels, for which the settlers received a voucher card.

“They gave water for 11 rupees those days during Mr. Premadasa’s time. The tap line was on the road. We had to take water from those. The whole village. They didn’t give water to the houses. We had to get water from the road” (H17).

This also impacted on women’s daily tasks:

“We fill those [containers] up around 2-3am, in the night we bathe, the children and us. By the morning, there won’t be any water... We bathe them [the children] at 2-3am in the night so they could go to school in the morning” (H05).

Prior to the beginning of operation of the Weheragala Reservoir in 2009, H03 recounted how, in 1999, she invested her savings from garment sector work into cultivation:

“... I was helping my husband with paddy cultivation, because this area has a lot of paddy fields, and we cultivated 16 acres of paddy with the money we had, thinking that we will earn more money but because of the problems with the water we lost all of that. We incurred a loss of a couple of lakhs and from there, our lives fell apart again” (H03).

Even with new reservoirs, participants felt this was for the benefit of the powerful:

“We were given water miss, they thought the water in the dam was more than enough for paddy cultivation and he [Chamal Rajapaksa] has mango plantations from Horana and water was given there and then there was a shortage of water for the farmers here. He gave water to his plantations while our paddy fields were drying up. What I’m saying is the water was given to an area that was not allocated to it. They gave it according to the agreements that they signed. After that innocent farmers suffered from that” (H03).

The lack of water hindered the ability to expand their livelihoods:

“The biggest challenge is the inadequacy of water to do cultivations because then they can do their cultivations and earn a better living” (H12).

Asked to describe what the main challenge that women faced within their community H12 believed it was, “... *the inadequacy of water to do cultivations*”. H18 faced a similar issue when there were water restrictions:

“Now when they stop water we can’t even get water because there is no motor. There is no small motor to get the water.”

One way of overcoming the water shortage was to buy machinery and equipment. In the case of H11, her son and a neighbour’s son invested in a water pump and set of pipes.

Affordability remains a key issue. For participants in the Oxfam home garden project, the cost of paying for water

was still prohibitive. An active participant in the MJH-Oxfam partnership projects, H13 was asked whether she was currently cultivating. Her response was:

“No, I haven’t cultivated anything so far. Now we have access to water through that project. But water from the waterline is expensive. After we exceed a designated number of units, the price is doubled. During the rainy season, we can manage but when it doesn’t rain it’s very difficult to cultivate.”

NATURAL RESOURCES: LAND

Ownership and access to land was important but not a predictor of participation in agriculture and recognition for women. For example, Muslim women in Ampara owned land but used it primarily for residential purposes. Others who did not own land participated as day labour elsewhere, as buying land was out of the scope of possibility for most of the participants:

“...those who have money can buy land from those who sell...We can buy if we have money...what is mostly there are lone/unused [paalu] lands. Everyone is in Belliata, Tangalla, Weeraketiya... people from those areas are there. They take land from here and stay over there. When they sell land, only those with money can buy.” (H07)

Therefore H07, like other landless households, completed paddy activities by renting paddy fields, which rendered their livelihoods and they became indebted. As a result, they stopped agriculture:

“We don’t have paddy fields. We take them for rent. You need about fifty thousand, sixty thousand [rupees] to buy a paddy field. So the expense is more. That... that is to say... the amount you get after harvest there’s nothing there. That profit is what we have given for a paddy field. The profit that we get. After that we wash our hands. Then you get more loans as well. You can’t pay all of that back. So we have given up paddy cultivation.”

In Polonnaruwa, P03 reported they did not have fields but rented their labour out. They lacked money to buy the resources (e.g. fertiliser) to maintain a field.

In terms of settlement and ownership, women in Hambantota and Polonnaruwa had similar experiences. Those who were among the first generation of people to receive land grants as part of large dam and irrigation schemes fell into two categories. First were the women who had moved to the area with their spouses after gaining a land grant for housing and paddy⁶⁹. These grants helped to encourage cultivation, although there were some discrepancies in how they received land (e.g. a smaller area than those who received initial official settlement grants in the case of H02. P05, who received residential land in 1985, received 2.5 acres of paddy land after a few years). Most was owned by the spouse. In Hambantota, H16 was the only respondent who reported getting a land grant including a paddy field directly (i.e. not inherited) in her name, while H08 and her husband were able to save and buy land jointly.

In Polonnaruwa, some women such as P07, P08, and P10 owned land in their own name.

For the Adivasi population in Polonnaruwa, Mahaweli land grants meant “coming out of the forest” to give up traditional *chena* and hunting livelihoods to begin farming. Land grant beneficiaries included P01 who did not have the training or knowledge to complete paddy cultivation:

“The government gave it [land] to us and after that we got a paddy field as well, but it took a long time for that paddy field to give us crops. We didn’t have any experience in working in a paddy field, so we had no understanding of it. We worked in the garden but mostly did odd jobs.”

Second where those that occupied land in the hopes of gaining land⁶⁹. The participants themselves identified this as an “unlawful settlement.” Some had received official deeds over the years (e.g. H05), while others were still waiting. H18 had lived in the area before receiving land 2–3 years later. Many of the women also had only recently received the deeds to the land, in the run up to the 2015 Presidential elections.

“...we didn’t have any permit or documents till last month...We received letters requesting payment for the land we were illegally settled in from the divisional secretariat and so on. But we never paid for the lands.... But we had grown coconut, jak and mango and even lime in this land... there are only like ten families in this area of the village. So we got together to obtain the license” (H04).

Others like P11 and P16 reported that, while they received land from Mahaweli after marriage, they did not receive the deeds. H09, had moved several times through various stages of land occupation (encroachment), re-settlement, and then finally received a formal land grant.

For P18, she was able to have land titles written and registered in her name however; the lack of formal deeds rendered her claim to the land precarious:

“Since I’m married and my husband has a salary as well, I filled the forms and got a paddy field and a land in my name. I haven’t received a license for any of that...I went after them about 10 times, filling up forms and spending money. They ask us to take manum kuli [measurement rent] and the revenue reports for the paddy field from the AG office. I took them and went about three, four times. Still I couldn’t get a proper revenue certificate... I have the land and I have the paddy field as well. But I don’t have license yet. You need the license to make the deeds. They don’t give the license. Now it’s as if we are there without permission.”

In Ampara, lack of land deeds was an issue for some, placing them in precarious positions. As A15 asserted:

“Some have permits and deeds miss. There are also ones that don’t have. I think a lot of the land issues here are because of not having permits and deeds. There is difficulty in getting permits and deeds made.”

Actually even the land in which the chena cultivation we are working on doesn't have a permit. Even though it is a land coming from our family for a long time still [we] do not have at least a permit."

A09 was also cultivating on claimed land:

"That is not my own land, which is belonging to someone, it was just empty land so we just cultivate in that land. It is about half an acre."

For some with access and ownership of land to cultivate, land quality was an issue for some:

"We have chillies and vegetables like okra and coconuts. Recently coconut, capsicum and all kinds of seeds were distributed. But they were dried up. Only the ones in the pots survived. Some like the capsicum are now bearing fruits. It makes me happy to see them. Pots are more suitable to this area" (H11)

"... We received a paddy field as well. But it was in Welikatta. It couldn't be cultivated because it was too salty." (H9)

Few women in Hambantota and Polonnaruwa reported inheriting land. H19, H12, P18 and H20 had parents who received land and could be classified as second-generation settler residents. Other women had married a second-generation man from the area. In these cases, some were waiting for land and often relied on relative's housing and usually engaged in non-agricultural employment until they received land. After H10's husband died, her daughter inherited the land. A widowed woman with one child, living with her parents, she was one of the few women who bought land in her own name.

Among the Sinhalese women in Panama, A15's husband was able to gain land from his mother.

"I don't know whether I got it because of my luck. If not, they don't give here. Might chase you off. (Slight laugh). I got this piece of land from them [in-laws]. So

after that the two of us [her husband] made a small house in this. Small in the sense actually I put the foundation and made two rooms with concrete blocks, cadjan roofing and we came to live in this house"

The Ampara district was renowned for their matrilineal inheritance, where the mother's land and/or house is passed on to the daughter. However, parents could not afford to build houses for their daughters and, as a consequence, many of the sample had migrated overseas to Saudi Arabia as domestic workers to accumulate savings for their own dowries. A07 and A02 went to Saudi Arabia and A02 built her own house on the land her parents gave her.

"... I got married, it was an arranged marriage. As a dowry I gave this house to my husband but it was in my name. Then my parent could not manage day-to-day expenses and again they send another younger sister of mine to Saudi as a housemaid. She also did the same and built a house and then got marriage and settled. Then my third younger sister went to Saudi, she earned there and built a house and got marriage and settled in her house. Now father is staying with her." (A02)

A06, A07, A04, and A02 all migrated overseas as underage workers. As A02 described, she was underage when she first migrated to Saudi Arabia. She *"dressed up like a big maid and went to Saudi as a housemaid"*. She said further: *"You know in Sri Lanka we can't get working opportunity. If we want to get married, we need a house that has to be given as a dowry to the groom. My family was under poverty so I had to go and I went."*

Dowry puts pressure on some Sinhalese families too:

"...now most of the time it is not given... actually it is good... if not the parents become helpless. It is good if parents give dowry as a duty (yuthukama). If it's given. If you have. How to give if you don't. Now there isn't much land to be given. Now mostly people do not have land. It's this that is there. Even for us this bit was given from what was there...now we don't have a piece of land to give to one of our children." (A13)

“...For us it was a land, which was given, and we built the house. We were not given any goods. There was no means to give. Had the ancestral home. It was given to nangi- the youngest. She is not alive now. It was given to her. Paddy land [we] had... here both the dry and the wetland are both given to the girl child. Have to give the jewellery. Have to make a house and give. If not, the one who marries fights. Gets married only if those are given. If not won't. It is there a lot”. (A16)

A19 also had a similar experience receiving land after her marriage where her mother's land was divided between the five girls in their family; she lived surrounded by her sisters. A11 received a paddy field adjacent to a house making up one acre as a dowry. She indicated that if her “...daughter gets married someday”, it would be passed on to her. A13 inherited her father's land, but followed her husband to their current settlement.

Within the Muslim and Tamil community this practice placed older women in precarious situations. As A09 reported, she was living with her husband, daughter, son-in-law and grandchild on land that had been given to her daughter as dowry. This meant that she no longer had any land in her name. Some women such as A05 were intending to give their land and house to the daughter, while moving out. A05 reported she had “*nowhere to go after that*,” but some moved to a smaller patch of land on their own land. Indeed, to be without dowry is problematic.

Finally, land dispossession was a key determinant in hindering participation. In Panama, the takeover of “Peanut Farm” by private operators and military saw livelihoods severely affected. As women were the primary cultivators of the *chena* activities located there, it affected them the most. A13, A17 and A19 reported losing land when an Air Force camp was built. The significance of this loss was reflected upon by A17. She recalled that they made approximately Rs. 150,000 from selling produce grown on that land. A17's husband and herself had engaged in *chena*, planting sesame, mango, and other vegetables, which was maintained primarily by A17. Even after the land was taken over, her husband went secretly to plant but the crops were removed by the military each day. Other resources such as equipment and fertiliser

were left hurriedly on the land when they were kicked out. Moreover, the participants acknowledged that they could not afford to buy such a large piece of land given their limited resources. Without access, A17 was unable to grow and sell vegetables. This income was used for everyday items such as the children's medical expenses. Although she found an alternative livelihood in cooking and selling food, this income stream was intermittent whereas cultivation was an ongoing income stream. A similar story was told by A19. Both her parents and herself lost land:

“There was a big impact. We lost the income from one hand. We had a lot of land to cultivate. We took a lot of income from that. Often planted chilli, peanuts, black-eyed beans and green grams seasonally. Got a lot of income from that. So after losing the land, nothing. Also lost land to cultivate. So the land was stolen from all around the village. So we are just home, without a means of income.”

Although she was engaged in some livelihood activities, she compared this scenario to wartime:

“...in a way it felt better when the war was there. That is though the war was there we went everywhere, the only fear was that we will be killed by the terrorist. They didn't do anything like this. After the war we lost a means of income. We lost land. The land, which we had to give to our children. All lost. Everything happened with the end of the war. The whole life just got sad. Those days [we were] living quite well.”



Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT: WEATHER

The swings in weather patterns from drought to heavy rain made planning and cultivation a precarious occupation:

“... this time because of the drought I couldn’t do anything. Although it rained quite heavily, the crops were badly affected by it...There’s eggplant, which needs to be sprayed with waters. There’s also peanuts...peanuts as in, we received it from the department of agriculture, the sir in charge of agriculture. We took 20kgs of peanuts. That’s what we planted. The ones who gave us are the ones who buy...We had planted corn too, but because of the heavy rain, it stopped growing. It rained the past few days, and even the chilli plants withered because of it.” (H04)

Flooding was an issue, and forced participants such as A09 to rethink their livelihood. Polonnaruwa also experienced severe flooding when fieldwork was carried out. The excessive rains flooded home gardens and cultivations, which rotted root systems and damaged crops.

For H06, harsh sunlight had contributed to the withering of 30 coconut plants in her home garden. Combined with the harsh sunlight and effort it took to water her coconut and chilli plants, H06 reported she did not plant anything new but wanted to.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT: WILDLIFE

In Hambantota, wildlife including elephants and monkeys, as well as some domesticated animals such as buffaloes and cows, (H16, H06) ruined cultivations. H05 and H13 also reported issues with elephants, but asserted that the situation had improved from earlier days. Others had stopped engaging in *chena* cultivation in the past owing to elephants. An electric fence had been installed and residents reported that elephants no longer come. H06 cultivated chillies in her home garden but she could not secure the area from animals. Residents in Polonnaruwa were also affected:

“...elephants come and eat everything. Even last night elephants came...They came and ate a coconut tree on the garden over there.” (P17)



ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL

Women exited certain livelihoods because they were unable to sustain them financially. For A11, this was because customers began to take the rice on credit, and she decided to stop this practice. Even with NGO-supported projects, A14 lamented the lack of markets locally as their customers were *nathibari minisu* (those without means). A15 reflected:

"I think the main challenge is not being able to sell the products for a good price. Not having good markets. Actually people must be facing difficulty and discontent that they are making little money in spite of working so hard. Even us."

"I can say generally there no problem for women after the war. But due to the riots, the population of the village has reduced — many of our villagers died. So we need to go to outside for markets to sell our own products." (A10)

The cost of inputs into paddy cultivation meant that profit margins were low. H05 reflected that paddy cultivation was not very profitable:

"... when you consider the rent as well. The day-wage for cutting paddy...when all of that is added up...there is not a very big profit but at least you have the rice."

H07 rented paddy fields as the cost of owning and harvesting them was large:

"We don't have paddy fields. We take them for rent. You need about fifty thousand, sixty thousand to buy a paddy field. So the expense is more. That... that is to say... the amount you get after harvest, there's nothing there. That profit is what we have given for a paddy field. The profit that we get. After that we wash our hands. Then you get more loans as well. You can't pay all of that back. So we have given up paddy cultivation."

Although there were many financing options available in Hambantota and Ampara, the lack of capital was an issue in Ampara in terms of pursuing all livelihood options. For example, A02 reported:

"I wanted to open a shop in front of my house and built a shop it is also could not finish the construction work and I could not have seed money to open this."

Similarly, when faced with the lack of capital, it was difficult to continue agricultural work:

"We cultivated then in the chena cultivation, some grow some don't. We even cultivated in the home. The rain destroyed them all. Now we are going to cultivate again. My father had brought chilli seeds and they have been sowed in the chena cultivation. All have become plants now. So he [husband] bought a motor, an old one. We don't have money to buy a new one. Around 30 [30,000] something and a new one is around 70 [70,000] something. Will look for the places to cultivate in the coming future."

CAPITAL, FINANCE & DEBT

The providers of capital and finance including microcredit and other loans were numerous and varied. The following table summarises the availability by district and type of finance participants relied upon. Finance was an enabler of agricultural livelihoods as it enabled continued participation; alternatively, it provided incentive to move away from agriculture. At times, access to finance trapped participants in debt that led to the loss of land and other hardships that prevented participation.

Table 20. Finance Providers.

	AMPARA	POLONNARUWA	HAMBANTOTA
Private providers (LOLC Micro Credit, Ceylinco, Commercial credit, Prime Grameen, Bimputh, Daya Sarana)	X (Panama)	X	X
Banks (People's Bank, NDB, Bank of Seylan)		X	X
State programmes (<i>Divi Neguma</i> , <i>Gama Neguma</i> , <i>Samurdhi</i> , Women's Rural Development Societies)	X (Panama)	X	X
Local NGO (e.g. Jana Shakti in Hambantota)			X
International NGO (World Vision, BRAC, War Affected Women, CARE)	X	X	X
International development assistance (Asian Development Bank funded loan)	X		
Rataviru loan (for returned migrant workers)	x		
CBO			X
Local money lenders	X	X	
Religious (Mosque, Temple)	X		X
Mortgaging land	X (Palamunai)	X	X
Credit at local shops	X	X	X
Pawning jewellery		X	X
Seetu	X	X	X

Private providers include LOLC Micro Credit, which gives loans for small transport (tuk-tuks, motorbikes), farm machinery (tractors, harvesters, threshers etc.) and group loans specifically targeted at women. As stated on their web site, 90% of LOLC group loans are taken by women, making up a third of their total borrowers.⁷⁰ Other private providers such as Ceylinco also gave group loans. Commercial Credit is another local private provider for the agriculture sector. Microfinance is one of the main arms of its service portfolio and is targeted to low-income families. Banks such as the People's Bank and NDB also provided loans, which were accessed by participants and their families. State poverty alleviation programmes *Divi Neguma* and *Gama Neguma* provided loans to support home-based economic units. This was provided through Samurdhi (welfare payment). Local not-for-profit organisations also existed, such as *Jana Shakti* (NGO bank for women) a member-based microfinance group which began in 1989 as an apex body of several women's groups in the Hambantota District. INGO style funds such as Vision Fund, the microcredit arm of INGO World Vision, and BRAC finance also operated alongside these organisations in Hambantota. Finally, finance was also available through traditional means of accessing finance including: religious institutions, mortgaging land, pawning gold jewellery, and *seettu* (community-based saving schemes).

The loans were taken for multiple reasons. Loans were taken for non-agricultural purposes such as accessing electricity and water for the household (H12, H08, A01), training needs of children (H01), home improvements (H08, H05, H06, H19, H16, A18, A17, P05), self-employment in non-agricultural jobs/self-employment (H05, H16, H13, H09, H05, A01, A11, A13, A14, A16, A10, A01, P02, P20, and P22), and for customary or religious rituals (P12).

While in Ampara, only one woman (A09) reported taking out a loan for agricultural purposes, women in Hambantota and Polonnaruwa used microfinance and other forms of capital available to *continue* their agricultural livelihoods. However, this led some to unintentionally leaving agriculture owing to indebtedness.

In Hambantota, while some loans were taken in the husband's name, as in the case of paddy loans, many were taken in the woman's name as she had greater access to microcredit initiatives targeting women in particular such as the group loan schemes. H18 and her husband had taken a loan to buy a tractor from the People's Bank. From a loan of Rs. 265,000, they paid Rs. 50,000 in interest. Many (H10, H02, H04, P23, P17, P2) took loans to complete planting and harvesting. H04 explained how the loan cycle worked for paddy farming:

"It takes about 3 months for harvesting, so in about four months we can settle it. You can either settle all at once, or on an instalment basis. Because we cannot go for an instalment basis, we settle it once and for all."

H02 borrowed up to Rs. 100,000 from both *Jana Shakti* and Samurdhi to plant and cultivate paddy and fruit crops such as banana. For the banana cultivation, they were paying back the loan in monthly instalments, but with the paddy cultivation, they paid back the loan in six months, keeping with the cultivation and harvesting cycle. H03 had also taken out paddy loans but believed that it could be recouped after harvesting. In the past, however, following drought and lack of access to water, they were unable to cultivate paddy.

The loan amounts ranged from Rs. 10,000-Rs. 265,000. Loan repayment cycles varied from having to pay every fortnight (as in the case of Ceylinco group loans), to every month (as in the case of the Vision Fund), to every 6 months (as in the paddy loans). The fortnightly payments were often difficult for the women to sustain. Organisations such as LOLC came to visit each week: in some cases, to a central location, and in other cases directly to houses to collect the instalments. Some took out cascading loans. For example, H08 had taken out one loan with LOLC but refrained from taking other loans as she felt the interest rate was too high.

As payments are required frequently (every week or every fortnight in some cases), people took cascading loans to pay off previous debt. H07's experience exemplifies this. As her family did not own any land, they took out loans to rent paddy fields and cultivate them, but they could not sustain this:

"...but still we can't finish paying off the loans we owe. There's no way to eat. We lived on loans. And then after the children came as well... Don't even have a job... there's no way to cultivate paddy as well. It was by trying to cultivate the paddy fields that we got in to trouble. We tried to cultivate paddy and failed. Cultivation can fail. Our loans increased. That's why we had to borrow in lakhs."

H07 began by pawning gold jewellery to get money to cultivate paddy. They had also borrowed Rs. 200,000 with interest to begin a small shop for the husband. However, this business failed; the interest came up to almost the same amount as the loan. In order to pay back this loan, they took another loan from the People's Bank in 2009, and at the time of the interview was paying this back in instalments. Another separate loan was taken to recover the gold jewellery and they were also paying this back in instalments. AS a result of this, they no longer cultivated paddy:

"We don't have paddy fields. We take them for rent. You need about fifty thousand, sixty thousand to buy a paddy field. So the expense is more. That...that is to say...the amount you get after harvest, there's nothing there. That profit is what we have given for a paddy field. After that we washed our hands. Then you get more loans as well. You can't pay all of that back. So we have given up paddy cultivation."

Others had taken mortgages against their lands or loans to help with cultivation, but were unable to pay back the debt, resulting in the loss of land. P01 got into debt after her husband became ill, eventually mortgaging their paddy land until her daughter was able to pay off the debts. P13 mortgaged paddy land in the 1990s and the debt still continued at the time of research. Starting with a loan of Rs. 100,000, it has increased to 300,000. She expressed helplessness in paying the money back:

"There is no way to do it. I live with the hope that at least the children will get it back one day. But even the children... they do hired labour [kuli] work, so how can they, Miss? With the life conditions today, the children don't have. Each one has about three or four children. When looking at the shortcomings of the children, they also can do nothing. Now suddenly if I get sick, they will have to assist in getting medicine for that."

Such indebtedness led to tragic circumstances for P16 whose husband committed suicide as a result of harassment from the individuals they owed money to:

"We both cultivated the paddy land together and lived there. After 2 years our son was born. We both continued to work the paddy land alone even with the two small children. From then onwards things became increasingly difficult. My husband cultivated 3 paddy lands and elephants destroyed our cultivation. When we lost our cultivation, back then we didn't write to officials for compensation, now we write to officials, and also the price of paddy was also not high, it was a difficult life. So we became indebted. We lived in a small hut... We were also in and out of parents and siblings houses. We became indebted to paddy mudalalis. My husband received a lot of threats from them, saying are you going to give us the money? Or what should we do to do? My husband got scared. Actually in 2005 we became extremely vulnerable, our daughter, son, my husband and myself. We would go to the paddy shop for about 9 days. The paddy shop mudalali is Shantha. He is the one who completely ruined my husband's life. Ruin meaning, he used to give us fertiliser on loan. He gives it on loan with an interest, about 5%. One bag of fertiliser was about 850 back then. He would charge 5% interest per bag. We don't buy only one bag no madam? When we have to buy fertiliser for 3 paddy lands? Because of that, our loans increased."

P20 also had to raise funds in similar ways:

"We mortgaged it [land] because we had problems. We lost children one after the other. We had to take a lot of loans because of that, since the children became ill. And then we had to mortgage the paddy field. I had gold jewellery, we pawned those. They got repossessed. We couldn't get them back."

P07 mortgaged her land to support her sick grandson. After losing the field, she reported:

"We are discouraged. If you use the brain, can get anything. The fact that I lost the field is like I have lost an arm. I lived by that."

SKILL ACQUISITION

As many of the women in the sample had not received formal education or training, they acquired agricultural livelihood skills in many different ways at different stages of their life course, including through parents, training programmes, and peer learning. Skills included cultivation and processing skills, as well as non-agricultural livelihood skills such as weaving. Here the focus is on agriculture-related skills. Much of this acquisition was informal and most women were unable to access formal training in the latest techniques or technologies in sustainable agriculture.

One of the most important forms of learning that had occurred was the learning from their childhood, gained by working in family livelihood activities; it was often these skills that had provided for ongoing survival and security. Such 'inherited' skills were vital for women's livelihoods:

"Earlier when I went with my mother one alli took three days. Now when I go with my husband, we manage to cut about 2-3 alli by this time. We do more work than those days. Because of what my mother did, scolding me not to stay idle and do this, that has worked out in my favour now. Did you understand? When she taught me, I acted out of anger and remained idle whenever she took a break. But what she taught me by scolding me, I know it now. Now I know why she so strictly taught me how to work with my hands. I'm making use of that now. Now I can do double, triple the amount of work." (H05)

"Parents were doing cultivation, so we were getting ready to do cultivation. Because we helped the parents, our hands became skilled" (P02)

Kin, including parents and grandparents, were instrumental in passing along skills that the women could use in later life, often as a survival strategy. From mat weaving (H05, H03, H11) through to agricultural techniques such as milking cattle, planting and harvesting produce or even how to sell produce in a market (H04, H09, A09, A01, P02, P25, P06, P07, P12) parental instruction and early experience participating in agricultural livelihoods sustained women later in life. This was especially true in times of crisis (e.g. separation from spouse as in A03's case).

The other important source of training and skill acquisition was through NGOs and CBOs (unsurprising given the sample characteristics). In Panama, A13 received training from an NGO on water management and cultivation. In Polonnaruwa, women gained training from JSSK on paddy cultivation (P03):

"JSSK came and taught us how to work in a paddy field and because of that now I know very well how to work in a paddy field. I know very well how to work in a paddy field... They gave prominence to people who have not been educated. They gave us seed and taught us how to plant them, they made us interested, they gave us financial support and that really helped me and gave me a lot of knowledge even though I was uneducated. Now I can do anything because I did this and I don't need to get as tired anymore." (P01)

State institutions did provide some training in Polonnaruwa:

"Then, Agriculture Department gave coconut plants. Both of us went. Husband came to look. They told us to plant coconut beds. Both us didn't have money. Pawned the chain that was in my neck, parents gave us that chain, kept in the bank. The agriculture department gave us the plants, planted them and today I get a revenue out of it" (P02).

P06 received training from her spouse:

"He does farming. I help him with his farming. I don't know a lot I haven't been farming since I was small. He is the one who took me to farm and taught me how to tie bundles of paddy and how to hold the reaping hook and how to cut paddy. He is the one who took me to the paddy field and taught me to all these details. How to pick paddy, plant paddy he taught me."

The pattern of skill acquisition points to the complex, and at times paradoxical, nature of skills and skill acquisition. On the one hand, skills gained in childhood were crucial for survival in adulthood; on the other, this demonstrates how little training and learning was made available to the women. NGOs were the other source of training for women, but only one woman reported participating in a programme related to agrarian livelihoods.



Indrani Nallathambi, 32yrs, home gardener with Oxfam/KPNDU support, holds an eggplant grown in her garden.
Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Tom Greenwood/OxfamAUS.



Hambantota, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO RECOGNISE AND STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOODS

This report has demonstrated the way in which women participate in agricultural livelihoods across their life course, the enabling factors, and the barriers women may face in participating. Surveying 2093 women and conducting in-depth life narrative interviews with 66 women revealed some common patterns across multiple ethnic and religious groups. The findings show that rural Sri Lankan women participated in multiple, at times overlapping, agricultural and non-agricultural livelihoods throughout their lives. Rural women performed all agricultural work tasks, except operating machinery such as tractors. Throughout their

life course, women's contribution to agriculture included: paid/compensated work as day labour on private farms, or waged labour on commercial farms; unpaid labour in family-owned cultivations/farms; subsistence labour (e.g. home gardening) and unpaid social reproductive labour such as care work (cooking, cleaning, childcare), as well as civic engagement (community work and political canvassing). Based on these findings, we articulate a series of recommendations below that can help strengthen women's participation and recognition in agriculture.

RECOMMENDATION FOR POLICY MAKERS, PLANNERS, AND IMPLEMENTERS

1. Develop a gender-sensitive integrated national plan to promote gender equality, rural livelihoods and sustainable agriculture.

- Align agricultural policy with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and Goal #2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- Ensure that all agriculture policy is in line with the Policy Framework and National Action Plan to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence.
- Work with the Ministry of Finance to ensure that a gender responsive budgeting process is implemented for all agricultural planning, policy, programme formulation, assessment of needs, allocation of resources, implementation, auditing, and impact evaluations.
- Policy should recognise that 'women' are not a homogeneous group: life course stage, ethnicity, and local contexts matter.
- Develop gender disaggregated data that takes into account women's unpaid, uncounted contributions in all areas of agriculture.
- Decouple 'youth' from 'women' in policy making. The tendency to treat 'women and youth' in the same policy is factually incorrect as 'youth' can include boys as well as girls. Although youth and women share some similar challenges, the challenges women face are different to men and boys.
- A gender analysis of existing markets, policy and value chains should be conducted e.g. of programs such as the *Food Production National Program 2016-2018*. This will mean asking the question of whether men and women are able to participate in and benefit from this National Program, or whether the programme entrenches existing norms. It will also mean assessing the outcomes of the programmes and measuring impact on equality.
- The state institution with the highest political clout, in conjunction with the Ministry of Development Strategies and International Trade, and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, should work in collaboration to develop an integrated national plan to address gender equality, livelihoods and sustainable agriculture.
- Concrete action plans and targets should be developed through consultation of communities, civil society and state institutions.

2. Ensure that all the institutions involved in translating policy into practice are gender mainstreamed.

- Gender mainstreaming should extend to the relevant agricultural ministries, including: the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Rural Economy, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Ministry of Plantation Industries, and Ministry of Irrigation. Moreover, authorities such as the Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Services, Provincial Councils and Provincial Ministries, Mahaweli Authority, as well as institutions such as the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute, and universities including regional universities such as Ruhunu University and Eastern University, should be consulted and involved.
- In addition to gender/woman focused roles within these organizations, identify leaders in these departments among high-level ranks that may be outside of 'gender/women focused' work who can act as champions inside these organisations.
- Personnel should receive training and capacity building support to engage in gender mainstreaming, which encourages reflection and learning.
- Support cross institutional bridge-building and focus on problem-driven approaches.

3. Recognise, explore, and address the enduring relationship between different forms of violence that impact women's lives and agricultural livelihood engagement.

- All stakeholders should recognise that violence in multiple manifestations (e.g. from structural violence such as land dispossession, multiple forms of domestic violence, and the violence of insurgencies, war and conflict) impacts opportunities and access to all the forms of resources needed to engage in agricultural livelihoods.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, civil society, regional government authorities, police, legal aid commissions and women's development organizations should invest in programmes that help to educate, prevent and address violence against women.
- Adopt a National Action Plan for women as mandated under United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which affirms the vital role and equal participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.

4. **Ensure that agricultural and supporting policies/ programs, while standardised across the country, are flexible and targeted towards women in different life stages. Women at different stages of their lives, situated in different regions, have different needs.**
 - War-affected communities and war-affected women need support to help build up agricultural livelihoods.
 - Girls should be encouraged to continue schooling rather than dropping out when they are under 18 years of age. Encouragement and education can come from civil society or the state to stay in school longer through extra support and resources.
 - Consider targeting vocational and technical training policy and programmes to girls who drop out early.
 - Women over the age of 40 participate in large numbers in agriculture but have little access to training and opportunity. Consider targeting vocational and technical training policy and programmes to older women. Ensure appropriate and accessible design of learning material.
 - Ensure policy includes initiatives that are designed keeping in mind care responsibilities. Aim to recognise, reduce or redistribute these responsibilities via supportive policy and programmes.
 - Account for and develop programmes and policy for women with disabilities.
5. **With the International Labour Organisation, research and strengthen regulation and practice around agricultural labour conditions on commercial farms and wage labour.**
 - Review working conditions in agriculture across the island.
 - Work with the International Labour Organization (ILO), industry groups and employers to develop code of conduct for agriculture labour; connect to the SDGs.
 - Support development of an inspections system for farm labour.
6. **Work with existing agencies, communities, grassroots level women leaders, NGOs and CBOs to define key areas of women's empowerment in agriculture to build community responsive and contextual policy for diverse cohorts of women.**
 - Work with the community to.
 - ▶ Share knowledge about international and national standards and targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals.
 - ▶ Seek out the voices of communities to understand what empowerment feels and looks like.
 - ▶ Identify areas where women already take on leadership roles and decision-making, so interventions will not undermine their leadership.
 - ▶ Identify whether any policies will intensify gender-based violence.
 - ▶ Design policies and programmes that do not add additional unpaid labour for women.
 - ▶ Ensure non-partisan selection processes for inclusion in these endeavours (see below).
7. **Women have greater time and mobility constraints than men, as gender norms and expectations place primary responsibility for childcare and domestic duties on women. These responsibilities directly influence the type of work that women can participate in and the location where work occurs. Thus, help change the narrative and behaviours.**
 - Support national awareness campaigns in local communities targeting women to help themselves assert their identity as producers as well as mothers and wives.
 - ▶ Instigate a national conversation on who is a 'farmer'. Even women who do not own farming land are still farmers, engaging in waged labour or home gardening.
 - ▶ Build on tradition rather than rejecting tradition. Sri Lankan society venerates motherhood; celebrate social reproduction as valuable and encourage conversation about what motherhood means in terms of labour contribution. Women are mothers, farmers, producers, 'food heroes' – all these roles help to contribute to rural society.
 - Highlight where tradition has broken down for the better (e.g. women no longer banned from fields).
 - Support policy and projects that recognise, reduce or redistribute social reproductive labour responsibilities.
 - ▶ For example, consider subsidised childcare, and training of a cadre of childcare workers that will generate employment but also enable others to participate in agriculture. Childcare is itself, a devalued occupation that attracts very low wages. However, this presents an opportunity to explore different modes of childcare delivery such as cooperatives where workers can also gain higher returns.
 - Consider a national conversation that challenges assumptions about gender roles in the household and the value of women's labour in all areas identified.
 - Engage with men and boys as well as women and girls. Spouses are important influencers of livelihood and caring decisions.
 - Pay attention to regional differences among different cohorts such as Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim women as well as caste and class groups.
 - ▶ Aside from a national conversation, ensure that the conversation is region/district specific.
 - Work with local community leaders, advocacy groups, community development specialists, and women in Ampara to address constraints among the Muslim cohort.
 - Help change norms around suitable education for rural women; promote vocational and technical training.

8. Revise and reinvigorate technical training and vocational training in rural areas.

- Give women access to extension services and technical training that encompass agricultural knowledge. Utilise existing training infrastructure such as rural training centres.
- Change norms around 'suitable' education for women; they should not only be channelled into micro-enterprise.
- Include topics such as sustainability and sustainable agriculture and entrepreneurial training in extension courses.
- Explore designing specific inclusive vocational education programmes for women farmers with low levels of education.
- Design education programmes in a flexible manner so that women can take up the opportunities, e.g. hold them during school hours or other times women can attend.
- Provide childcare facilities.
- Train and employ more women instructors.
- Ensure trainers and teachers have knowledge about women farmers.
- Consider forming partnerships with universities and university students e.g. at Ruhunu to provide training services.
- Reinvigorate the notion of the "Farmer Field School Approach" to include discussions of all forms of agriculture (traditionally, it was focused on paddy), sustainability and eco-friendly forms of farming.

9. Recognise that women are not accessing resources and information through official sources, and often rely on social networks.

- With civil society, assess why more women are not approaching official outlets for information (e.g. councils, Mahaweli authority).
- Explore alternative models of information sharing.
- Strengthen communities and families to facilitate communication. Explore the strengths and weaknesses of traditional communication processes; do they omit women? How can they be revised to include women?
 - ▶ Support initiatives that advocate for participatory communication efforts.

10. Have greater regulation and guidelines to regulate all forms of microfinance (private, public and NGO sector).

- Microfinance Institutions need to be more transparent with clients on their charges, terms and conditions.
- Support programmes that help women to make informed decisions and to differentiate between different providers/sources as well as their services.
- Complemented by capacity-building of agencies such as the Cooperatives Ministry, Central Bank of Sri Lanka to properly monitor and supervise the industry, as well as to be gender sensitive of the relevant factors.
- Support community-driven micro credit systems using successful examples. Strengthen policies to ensure the reliability of such systems.





Hambantota, Sri Lanka.
Photo: Buddhima Padmasiri.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ADVOCACY & PROGRAMME PLANNING

- 1. Advocate to various stakeholders the importance of gender mainstreaming agricultural policy, practice and programmes.**
 - Share and disseminate the results and recommendations of this and similar studies to raise awareness from the grassroots level to the policymakers about women's multiple forms of labour contribution and participation in agriculture.
 - ▶ This may require building a business and social case as to why gender mainstreaming is important, e.g. build and share a case as to why women should not be solely responsible for childcare and other social reproductive tasks.
 - Help identify 'champions' of equality across various government departments related to agriculture and not just those in gender/women focused roles.
 - Work with a university, the UN or other experts to help provision training and capacity building for ministries and government departments.
 - Work in partnership with stakeholders to conduct research projects and development of gender sensitive indicators. Be the champion of this type of analysis.
- 2. Use the Sustainable Development Goals #2 and #5 as a strategic point for advocacy.**
 - Work regionally to extend this discussion with neighbouring countries, arrange exchanges with other regions to learn and share information.
- 3. Recognise that women in different life stages have different needs e.g. young women, women entering into childbearing years, elder women, and as such, programmes should be tailored to specific life course stages.**
 - Target young women to either (a) stay in school or (b) if they are unable to continue, orient towards technical and vocational education using existing networks.
 - Explore models of community-based childcare/childcare cooperatives that also offer fair wages for workers.
 - Ensure programme participation does not impose greater time burdens on women, provide childcare for example.
 - Older women lack access to educational/upskilling opportunities; ensure training is accessible to all.
 - Women with disabilities require programmes that are inclusive.



4. Support or instigate a national and regional campaign/conversation on gender roles in the household and how to value labour.

- Support national awareness campaigns in local communities targeting women to help themselves assert their identity as producers as well as mothers and wives.
 - ▶ Instigate a national conversation on who is a ‘farmer’. Even women who do not own farming land are still farmers, engaging in waged labour or home gardening.
 - ▶ Build on tradition rather than rejecting tradition. Sri Lankan society venerates motherhood; celebrate social reproduction as valuable and encourage conversation about what motherhood means in terms of labour contribution. Women are mothers, farmers, producers, ‘food heroes’ – all these roles help to contribute to rural society.

5. Highlight where tradition has broken down for the better (e.g. women no longer banned from fields).

- Support policy and projects that recognise, reduce or redistribute social reproductive labour responsibilities.
 - ▶ For example, consider subsidised childcare, and training of a cadre of childcare workers that will generate employment but also enable others to participate in agriculture. Childcare is itself a devalued occupation that attracts very low wages. However, this presents an opportunity to explore different modes of childcare delivery such as cooperatives where workers can also gain higher returns.

6. Build community, collectivisation, and leadership so women and male allies can work together to address these issues with stakeholders.

- Stop treating women as 'beneficiaries'; approach women as political agents.
- Arrange childcare collectives for meetings/collective groups so women can participate more; make this a permanent budget line in grant applications, project plans and costing.
- Create opportunities for long-term engagement including leadership. Build women's capacity to advocate for themselves.
- Support women's leadership in community level politics, to ensure women are in a position to decide their needs and act upon them.
- Sensitise men with respect to the gendered division of labour in households, care work, and violence against women through community level activities.
- Bring together the community and powerful stakeholders in various forums to help define women's empowerment in agriculture.
- Work with local farmers, associations, groups and collectives to build awareness and support changes in structures to be more inclusive of women.
- Explore the importance of social networks and participatory communication methodologies, which emphasise horizontal communication exchange.
- Support collectivisation in all arenas:
 - ▶ Consider facilitating the formation of a national association or movement of women farmers/food producers
 - ▶ Unionise waged agricultural workers, as well as casualised labour. Reach out to non-partisan unions who may be sympathetic and value gender equality including in leadership.

7. Support revitalisation of technical training and vocational training in rural areas, using existing infrastructure.

- Help to change norms around 'suitable' education for women.
- Advocate for sustainability/sustainable agriculture and entrepreneurial training.
- Aid design and delivery of training for women farmers with low levels of education, or low levels of mobility, e.g. reinvigorate the notion of "Farmer Field School Approach".
- Ensure revitalisation includes provision of childcare facilities.
- Advocate for the training and employment of more women instructors.

8. Recognise, explore, and address the enduring relationship between different forms of violence that impact women's lives and agricultural livelihood engagement.

- Recognise that violence in multiple manifestations (e.g. from structural violence such as land dispossession, multiple forms of domestic violence, and the violence of insurgencies, war and conflict) impacts opportunities and access to the all forms of resources needed to engage in agricultural livelihoods.
- Invest in programmes that help to educate, prevent and address violence against women.
- Advocate for the adoption of a National Action Plan for women as mandated under United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which affirms the vital role and equal participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and *in post-conflict reconstruction*.
- Reevaluate delivery of microfinance programmes

9. Review microfinance programmes

- Support programmes that help women to make informed decisions and to differentiate between different providers/sources as well as their services.
- Ensure microfinance programmes are implemented with financial literacy and business development training programmes.

APPENDICES

HAMBANTOTA

PARTICIPANT	AGE	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICIPANT
			ACTIVITY	MARKET	
H01	67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with cultivation Wove coconut leaves and mats Sewing Cultivation Home garden Looked after cows Wove mats and boxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow and sell beetle leaf 	Local (in village and close by)	N
H02	53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wove mats Wove coconut leaves Gardening Crops cultivation Paddy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't participate 	NA	N
H03	≈53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaving and selling coconut leaves Mat making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make and sell blouses** Cultivation* Organic farming* 	Local (in village or neighbouring villages)	Y
H04	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selling home garden produce at Oxfam market* Cultivate other's paddy fields* 	Local (in village or neighbouring villages)	Y
H05	53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy Brick cutting Home gardening Cook and sell food Small shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cook & sell food Grow bananas* Rent out paddy fields* 	Local (in village or neighbouring villages)	Y
H06	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help cultivation Day labour Brick making Home gardening Business selling miscellaneous items Vegetable selling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bricks making ** Selling vegetables* 	Local (in village or neighbouring villages) May get out-of-district customers for bricks	Y
H07	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation Helped husband's business Garment Vegetable planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home gardening but not yet selling 	NA	Y
H08	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factory Palmyra bag making Buying and selling clothes (trading) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buying and selling clothes (trading)** 	Local (in village)	Y
H09	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation Day labour Weaving Migrant (Baharian) domestic worker Sewing Brick making Home garden cultivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home gardening* Cultivation* 	Local (in village or neighbouring villages)	Y
H10	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation Chena Gardening Day labour Cut bricks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stopped working at age 63 owing to illness and relies on children financially 	NA	Past

HAMBANTOTA (CONT)

PARTICIPANT	AGE	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICIPANT
			ACTIVITY	MARKET	
H11	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sewing Beedi Paddy Handloom Cultivation Home gardening Palmyrah bags Tea and rice shop Selling milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palmyrah bags* Some home gardening* 	Tourist transient market	Y
H12	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garments Cultivation Animal husbandry Goats Selling milk Palmyrah bags Worked in several CBOs Shop ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palmyrah bags* NGO activities 	Tourist transient market	Y
H13	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation Poultry Palmyrah bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palmyrah bags* 	Tourist transient market	Y
H14	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped make clay pots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation* 	Local	Y
H15	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harvesting Garments Brick making Cattle Palmyrah bag Vegetables 	NA	NA	Past
H16	48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultivation Domestic abroad Bags Curd Food in own shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bags* Curd* 	Tourist transient market	Y
H17	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bags 	NA	NA	Y (recent)
H18	61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labourer Cultivation Gardening Tea packet covers Palmyrah bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tea packet covers Bags* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reported to be export market Tourist transient market 	Y
H19	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy Incense Chena Chickens Palmyrah bags Goats Tea boxes for export Food Canteen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chickens 	Local	Y
H20	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy Traditional arylvedic assistant Garments Dispensing medicine Helped husband bike shop Paddy Orphanage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making cotton oil wicks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local village Temple communities 	N

AMPARA

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICIPANT
				ACTIVITY	MARKET	
A1	32	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour cutting onions as child with mother Ground flour Cultivation Private tuition classes NGO officer Montessori teacher Day labour to plant onions Weeding Pre-school teaching Onion harvesting Home-made food shop in local area Sewing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selling coconuts** Sewing orders** 	Local	N
A2	49	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting cut paddy Mat weaving Overseas domestic worker in Saudi Arabia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mat weaving (Receives Samurdhi) 	Neighbours - Middle man takes them to market (unclear where)	N
A3	46	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping mother make food items like hoppers Gather cut paddy Day labour Weeding Selling eggs, sugar and chilli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaving mats Goats rearing* Some poultry Selling nuts 	Neighbours - Middle man takes mats and poultry to market (unclear where)	N
A4	49	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help mother carry paddy to the mill Helped dry rice Weave mats Migrated to work as housemaid to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia Ground paddy Sold rice Day labour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mat weaving 	Neighbours - middle man takes them to market (unclear where)	N
A5	48	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help mother prepare pan leaf for mother Mat weaving Rearing chicken 	-	-	N
A6	44	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped mother cook Collected firewood Collected fish with father Cut paddy Migration at 12 years old to Saudi Arabia, and later to Kuwait Worked in husband's communication shop in Colombo Rearing chickens Food and juice Weaving Yoghurt making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mat weaving Poultry Stone quarrying* 	Neighbours, local - Middle man takes them to market (unclear where)	HEO, participated in previous NGO Solidar and UN habitat.
A7	42	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped mother feed and maintain chickens Weed paddy and cut grass as a day labourer At age 16 went to Saudi Arabia as a housemaid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mat weaving 	Neighbours - Middle man takes them to market (unclear where)	N

AMPARA (CONT)

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICIPANT
				ACTIVITY	MARKET	
A8	35	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help clean backyard for father Helped in family small grocery shop Volunteer work in medical clinic Primary school teacher worked in mental health unit in Palamunai hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poultry* NGO 	Neighbours	Y
A9	60	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped with vegetable cultivation as a child Chickens Farming of empty 1/2 acre 	-	-	HEO
A10	40	T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a child, helped in laundry Raised goats to sell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laundry work 	Local	HEO
A11	38	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a child, helped with cultivation and piling Pre-school teaching String hoppers orders Chilli mill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catering for school canteen Chilli mill 	Local	SDF
A12	63	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As child helped parents with chena cultivation Sewing Chena Home garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sewing* Chena* 	Local	SDF
A13	38	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a teen, helped mother with cultivation When older went with cousin to Colombo as companion and looked after baby Completed training for garment. Helped husband mother pump water for chena Sewing Cultivation Training for teaching Made food with neighbour Provided food for army Picked peanuts Worked in sister's chena Worked in communal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catering for army base Cultivation including home gardening Chena* 	Local	N?
A14	39	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a child, worked in chena Worked for CBO Ran small business, garment for 3 months Helped in laws with Cultivation CBO worker Chena Sewing Cooking food and putting in shops Oxfam water project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ill Water project 	-	HEO
A15	36	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a child helped cultivation Rubber factory in Avissawella Chena with husband on rented land Raising chickens Home gardening Selling vegetables and fruit from mother's village Brick making Chena Making slippers/shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chena on 1.5 acres Peanuts Legumes* Small slipper factory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Town 	Y

AMPARA (CONT)

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICIPANT
				ACTIVITY	MARKET	
A16	53	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped mother with chena Helped mother sell cooked food to shops CBO staff Montessori teacher Chena Cooked and sold lunch packets Home gardening 	Business selling spices and distribution to villagers, shops, hotels in Arugam Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Large Town 	Y
A17	35	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wove coconut fronds with mother Sold mother's coconut toffee in school Chena Home gardening Paddy Cooked and sold lunch packets Kept boarders at home Sold fish her husband caught Chena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home gardening* Aloe vera drink for meetings** 	Local	Y
A18	37	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped father's work Tea estates from age 11 Chopped firewood Housemaid in Unawtuna for 3 years Migrated to Lebanon to work as maid Shop Lanka cleaning services in Colombo Maid in Saudi Arabia Chena Makes slippers and chilli in Oxfam led collective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works in chilli mill 1 day a week and small slipper factory 2 days a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Town 	Y
A19	42	S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped father with paddy Land cultivation in parent's land Opened a shop Mushroom cultivation Small petrol shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Petrol shop (operates from home) 	Local	Y

POLONNARUWA

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICI- PANT
				ACTIVITY	MARKET	
P1	48	Father was Sinhalese, mother was Tamil. She identified as Sinhalese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housemaid Stone quarrying Brick making Mat weaving Day labour at construction sites Home garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour - paddy* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market Local 	JSSK
P2	57	Sinhalese, Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour Sewing Selling coconuts Collect and weave coconut fronds Chilli mill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sesame sweets** Chilli powder and rice flour** Sewing machine** Day labour - paddy* 	Local	JSSK
P3	?	Adivasi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped father with wood cutting and paddy Day labour on road making projects Home gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour - paddy** 	Local	JSSK
P4	60?	Adivasi Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chena as child Chena after marriage Cultivation in field and garden Paddy Cut wood with husband Collect fruit and cultivate beetle leaves to sell 	NA		N
P5	49	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with paddy Paddy day labour in commercial farm Catering for functions Weave and sell coconut fronds Selling paddy to villagers Migration to Saudi Arabia as a maid and working in childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy cultivation* Use JSSK mill Weaving coconut fronds 	Local	Y
P6	31	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home gardening Batik garment factory Paddy reaping Shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour - paddy* 	Local	
P7	65	Adivasi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a child, domestic work in Colombo Wove coconut fronds Helped father with Chena Day labour in cultivation Stone quarrying Sold string hoppers and sweets to organisations and Army post Chena Home gardening Paddy Sell things at temple Small shop near bus stand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour* Reaping paddy Sewing** 		JSSK
P8	36	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housemaid in Jordan Cook meals for JSSK functions Home gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking for events** 		JSSK
P9	55	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tea plucking Garment Chena Home gardening Prepared food for JSSK Worked in shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home garden Food orders** 		

POLONNARUWA (CONT)

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICI- PANT
				ACTIVITY	MARKET	
P10	67	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped grandmother with salted fish drying Helped look after father's cows Helped with cultivation like watering crops Sewing Weaving baskets Helped with chena Helped in father's shop Chena with husband Home garden Paddy Grocery and tea shop Looking after animals Sewing Weaving Day labour Selling rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owns and manages bookshop 	Local	
P11	37	Tamil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with Chena Day labour in paddy Helped build houses Firewood Some animal husbandry 	-		N
P12	37	Tamil Hindu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged 10 got sent to work as domestic worker Looked after chickens Worked in book making company Day labour Tarring road Commercial farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home garden for consumption CIC farm [commercial] 		JSSK
P13	63	Adivasi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with cultivation Cultivation for consumption; sold if excess Sewing Cultivation with husband Sewing Raised animals in 80s and 90s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour agriculture* 	Local	
P14	43	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with cultivations Paddy cultivation including planting Rearing chicken and cows Volunteer teacher Made string hoppers Wove coconut fronds Plant chilli Grew banana Worked in shoe factory in Singapore Paddy field work Worked on UNDP-funded pipeline project as leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cashier (local government) 	NA	JSSK
P15	46	Tamil Hindu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with farming Small shop Cultivation of vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sell milk and goats Chilli powder grinding Growing vegetables 	Local	?

POLONNARUWA (CONT)

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICI- PANT
				ACTIVITY	MARKET	
P16	36	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with chena Domestic worker Garment factory Day labour work Domestic worker Paddy cultivation Garment factory Brick making Day labour Chop firewood Lunch packets for meetings Plant vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tries to plant home garden 	-	JSSK
P17	37	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with taking food to field Cut wood Cut paddy and other farming Helped mother in law with cultivation Paddy Vegetable cultivation Farm employment Migrated to Saudi Arabia as a housemaid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour - paddy* 		
P18	25	?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garment in Colombo Paddy Small shop Migrated to Jordan as housemaid Day labour work Help build lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour - paddy* 		N
P19	52	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut grass in exchange for food Gem business Day labour work Housemaid work Farm work 	None		N
P20	38	Reports that mother was Sinhalese Hindu and Father Adivasi Hindu; does not report her own ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut paddy with cousin Paddy cultivation Roof tile manufacturing Small shop Sold tobacco at local temple festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop 		JSSK
P21	55	Adivasi, Sinhalese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with chena Day labour Made hoppers and other food Sold eggs Worked as witch doctor (but not for income) Quarry work Teak tree planting in farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teak planting on commercial farm* Make hoppers during cultivation period* 	-	
P23	33	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped grandparents with chena Garment factory in Kurunegala Communication Garment factory in Colombo Worked as cashier Paddy cultivation 	-	-	

POLONNARUWA (CONT)

PARTICIPANT	AGE	ETHNICITY/ RELIGION	PAST LIVELIHOOD(S)	LIVELIHOOD(S) AT TIME OF RESEARCH * DENOTES SEASONAL TRADE/PROFIT ** DENOTES IRREGULAR ACTIVITY		CURRENT OXFAM PARTICI- PANT
				ACTIVITY	MARKET	
P24	56	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After marriage only, measure paddy in family rice business Looked after management of rice mill Had farm with chickens. Red cross work Founder of CBO INGO local organiser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy from renting out land* NGO 	-	
P25	57	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped parents with cultivation of paddy Weaving mill Helped mother make mats Grew vegetables at home Paddy cultivations Worked in farms to plant trees Worked in weaving factory Home gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handloom weaving 		
P26	43	Sinhalese Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yogurt making Making tea packets Cigars Day labour Chopped fire wood Paddy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day labour* Working in shop Commercial farm 		
P27	32	Sinhalese Catholic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut paddy Home garden Cut rented paddy after marriage Brick making Day labour Lake fishing Farm looking after coconuts 		?	JSSK

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57 Of the others who did not have a spouse: 8.3% were single, 0.9 were divorced, 1.9 were widowed, while 0.7 were separated.

58 30% had studied up to grade 10, 11.3% of them had passed the Ordinary Levels.

59 It must be noted here that there was a small sample of respondents age 60+.

60 Women in Polonnaruwa reported other forms of child labour such as domestic work. P07, a 65-year-old Adivasi woman reported that she had worked as a domestic worker from the age of 9. P12 was a Tamil woman born in Valachenai and began to work in domestic work from the age of ten. P16 went to work in domestic work which exposed her to sexual violence.

61 An *alli* is 14 x 14 fathoms, where one fathom = 6 feet. Now harvested using machines.

62 Looking back to the women's childhood and youth, caring responsibilities prevented them from taking up different forms of opportunities. For example, H04 was unable to follow her sister into garment work as: *"Mostly because my mother was home alone and she used to always be ill. So it restricted me travelling."* Moreover, women suffered discrimination in other realms because of childbearing. H20 had experienced out and out discrimination from work because of her child. As she recounted her experiences, she explained that she could not use her existing contacts to gain employment as she now had a child: *"...those who are married, have children, divorced... they don't even take...Saying too many problems."* By problems she meant the employer was worried that she would take too much leave to take care of the child

63 Note, other women had experienced exclusion from opportunities for other caring responsibilities. H11 reported that she was in Colombo for 9 months when her daughter was pregnant, and missed out on Oxfam funding for a toilet as they checked attendance at meetings. Her bag making business had been interrupted for similar caring duties *"many times like that."*

64 Indeed, the women reported being able to come to the meeting because their husbands and men were not at home.

65 P12 reported living with her mother-in-law until, following arguments, their belongings were thrown out and they lived *"under trees"*. These disputes disappeared after gaining a land grant.

66 SLFP

67 Chemical Industries Colombo Limited (CIC) farms

68 H05, H07, H08, H09, H10, H11, H17, H18 H19, H20, P01, P02, P03, P05, P07, P10, P11, P12, P15, P16, P17, P19 and P25 all received land.

69 H13, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H13, H15, H19 reported they settled without deeds.

70 This business is part of the largest non-bank finance conglomerate in Sri Lanka; set up under the mega Japan based ORIX corporation, ORIX remains the main investment partner in these loans.



Hambantota, Sri Lanka.

Back Cover Image: Hambantota, Sri Lanka.
Photos: Buddhima Padmasiri.



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