



THE EFFECT OF A DEVELOPMENT PROJECT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF PEOPLE; BASED ON THE SAMANALAWEWA RESERVOIR PROJECT, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

As any other country, in Sri Lanka development projects are being conducted to deliver a specific output aiming to improve the economic and social conditions of the people. However, only a few projects have paid their attention to socio-cultural aspects of the people prior to the initiation of the project or during the planning stage to get the ideas of a particular group of society. Therefore, this research was conducted to find out the effect of a development project on people and their socio-cultural aspects based on the Samanalawewa Reservoir Hydroelectric Project in Balangoda, even after 2 decades from its commencement. Among these Wegapitiya, Kinchigune and Imbulpe areas were selected as the study setting. The qualitative data was gathered from 150 families, including 50 families from each area and interviews were conducted with a questionnaire guide composite with open-ended and close-ended questions. The first generation can be identified as those who were victimized and first-affected from the development project and the second generation represents those who were born and raised in the relocated areas. Therefore, a comparative analysis was carried out based on the socio-cultural aspects which both generations have gone through during the past two decades. The socio-cultural aspects of the people were converted into a new form of life in socially, economically and mentally. All social and kinship bonds as well as social solidity were disrupted and people became commercialized. People had to give up on farming and agriculture and had to work at industries in this new life. Access to the new livelihood opportunities, education and health were expanded while culture, religion, values and attitudes, customer preferences, population and rate of growth, age distribution and social mobility transformed at the other end. People have gone through different stages that resulted from the development and post-development situations. They have been able to manage and adapt to new socio-cultural aspects with the effect of modernization and commercialization during the last two decades.

Keywords: *Relocation, Socio-culture, Development, Commercialization, Society*