

Sanitary Issues of Plantation Sector Workers – A Case Study in Pussellawa, Sri Lanka

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Health and sanitary condition of people in Sri Lanka have been developed remarkably over the past two decades. However, poor sanitary conditions are still prevailing in some communities in the country, especially within plantation sector worker communities probably due to the lower education levels and/or traditional habits. Their residences are overcrowded with less space, and lack of proper sanitary facilities.

This study was carried out in a tea estate community in the Melfort Estate, Pussellawa, Sri Lanka to identify the socio economic factors and the health and sanitary issues leading to stream pollution. A questionnaire survey and site investigations were carried out in a densely populated stretch closer to a drainage stream at the Melfort Estate, to find out the type of households, population data, available sanitary facilities including excreta disposal mechanisms, gray water disposal mechanisms and water consumption patterns etc.

The results indicate that even though majority of households in this community (95%) comprises with a pit latrine for disposal of excreta properly, still few people (3% of total population) uses improper ways of excreta disposal methods like open defecation in bare lands. In addition, excreta of 14 infants and 2 elderly people with walking difficulties out of 325 populations (ie. 5% of total population) are disposing directly in to the drainage stream or on bare land contributing to the stream pollution. Moreover, 26% of pit latrines are with close proximity to the stream which allows leaching of toilet waste into the stream. Further, people dispose their gray water and garbage improperly, creating aesthetically unpleasant and environmentally damaged sites. Therefore, to prevent further deterioration, these communities should be made aware of the prevailing sanitary issues together with suitable remedial measures.