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*Implementation of Public Policy on Poverty Alleviation: A study on  
Samurdhi Programme in Sri Lanka*

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## Abstract

This thesis is based on an empirical study of the Sri Lankan Government's official Programme for poverty alleviation which is named as "The Samurdhi (Prosperity) Programme". It examines the politics of policy implementation.

Students working in different academic disciplines had revealed that there occurs divergence between policy expectations and policy outcomes in most of the policy areas; specially, in the programmes designed to alleviate poverty due to various conditions. They had offered different causal explanations for this divergence. A great many students, who study politico-administrative issues had shed lights on different aspects of politics in the policy process. However, there are little studies that focus on politics of beneficiaries. The present study distinguishes itself from the other studies as present literature lacks studies that examines the politics of beneficiaries in policy implementation. The present study argues that the major cause of divergence between public policy expectations and policy outcomes lies in the beneficiaries as they participate politically not in to the policy formulation; but into the policy implementation. Thus, they demand political interference to allocate particularized benefits for them.

The main objectives of the present study are twofold. Firstly it aimed at examining the effects of political participation of beneficiaries in the policy process and policy outcomes. Secondly it is aimed at examining whether the public policy on poverty alleviation had grasp problem of poverty in its multi-dimensionality.

Three Divisional Secretariats, namely, Galle Four Gravetus, Nagoda and Niyagama of Galle District had been selected as the area of the study. Bulk of the data for the present study has been collected through a questionnaire which covered 150 beneficiaries and was filled by

the researcher interviewing them. Further, in addition to both published and unpublished secondary sources of data, interviews with officials of different echelon of bureaucracy, local politicians and beneficiaries, group discussions with Samurdhi animators, a group exercise with selected youths in village Poddiwela were also formed part of data base for the present study. It shall be noted that while including qualitative analysis, these data had been analyzed quantitatively using simple statistical devices.

The first chapter is dedicated to explain the conceptual frame work of the thesis. In this chapter, relevant concepts to the study had been explained. It includes the definitions of poverty, poverty alleviation, public policy, policy failures, participation etc, that are being employed in the present study. Statement of the Research problem, objectives of the study and research methodology are also included into the same chapter.

The objective of the second chapter is to contextualize the public policies for poverty alleviation in Sri Lanka in a historical and political perspective. So; it includes a brief examination of the nature of political culture and political participation and evolution of public policies for poverty alleviation since the introduction of universal franchise in Sri Lanka in 1931.

The third and fourth chapters elaborate the particular and specific characters and different elements of the programme under study. The third chapter discusses the said official vision of the policy behind the Samurdhi Programme and the approaches to reduced poverty included in the official programme and its various sub- activities. The fourth chapter is a discussion of the organization designed to implement the various projects under the programme. It had discussed the nature and kind of partnership between the public sector and beneficiaries' organizations intended to be built to carry out the responsibilities of implementing the policy.

Fifth chapter tests the objectives of the public policy behind the Samurdhi Programme against the empirical evidence and it has pointed out that the programme had been unable to make a lasting and satisfactory impact on poverty alleviation. Further, it was cleared that the Samurdhi Authority had been unable to design a projects that match with the diverse and multiple causes of poverty and thus, damaging the partial possibility of success. So, it is revealed that nature of political participation of beneficiaries coupled with the inability on the part the Samurdhi Authority to design a project capable of succeeding is major causal factors of policy divergence and constrain in successful implementation of public policies for poverty alleviation. This ultimately allows politicians to misuse the programme for political purposes even though the programme is participatory in its contents. The final chapter composed of the summary of the study and policy implications. Here it is convincingly, proven that publicly policy for poverty alleviation diverges its said direction of participation in to political manipulation because of the beneficiaries' political role in policy implementation. This conditions allows politicians to misuse the human and physical resources for poverty alleviation to fulfill their personal aggrandizements.