

SPATIAL DETERMINANTS OF THE POVERTY AND ACHIEVEMENT OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: CASE STUDY IN WALASMULLA DIVISIONAL SECRETARIAT

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MDGs which consist of eight goals, supported by 18 quantified and time-bound targets and 48 indicators, focus the efforts of the world community on achieving significant, measurable improvements in people's lives by the year 2015. To accelerate the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is necessary to localize the MDGs to translate the national goals into goals that are relevant, applicable and attainable at the local level. Poverty in Sri Lanka continues to be a growing problem despite Sri Lanka being an exceptional country with its life expectancy, literacy rate and other social indicators nearly on par with those of developed countries. Poverty and status of MDG achievement have a spatial dimension. Geography, particularly the physical environment, plays a significant role in the poverty condition and the status of MDG achievement of communities and of the people living in disadvantaged regions. However, this spatial dimension of poverty and MDG achievement has not been given much attention in many studies.

This study explores the spatial patterns and the possible underlying determinants affecting poverty condition and MDG achievement status in the GN divisions of Walasmulla Divisional Secretariat in Hambantota district. Survey was conducted in 53 GN divisions of Walasmulla divisional secretariat to find status of 38 localized indicators of MDG. Poverty and MDG status maps were derived using the survey data. Agro-climatic condition which consists of elevation, rainfall as well as access to road infrastructure, proximity to major towns, school density and population density were all derived using GIS. Finally multiple regression analysis was performed to identify significant determinants of the poverty and MDG achievement.

According to the result of the survey, higher incident of poverty could be seen in Ihala Mruthawela, Namaneliya, Galahatiya North and Uda julampitiya GN divisions whereas lower incidents of poverty are reported in Walasmulla west, Walasmulla South, Pissubadda and Warapitiya GN divisions. After the analysis of data of MDG indicators, it was observed that Walasmulla west, Walasmulla south and Ihala Walasmulla GN divisions which are located close proximity to Walasmulla town have shown best performances in achieving MDG while Daluwakgoda, Udahagoda and Haggitha Kanda North GN divisions have shown poorest performances.

Results of the study shows that spatial variation in the incidence of poverty is mainly caused by rainfall and closest distance to town and disparities of MDG achievement are mainly caused by road density and rainfall.