

VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

BULLETIN OF THE COORDINATING SECRETARIAT FOR PLANTATION AREAS

PRIVATIZATION

They tell us that Privatization is the answer.

They say that Privatization has made America the richest country in the world, in the history of humankind.

They say that there, in some places, even the sewerage system is privatized.

As if being the richest country in the world, the richest person in town, the richest family in the neighbourhood has to be the target.

As if there is only one meaning to the word "richest" and that that meaning is money.

As if the rat race, the insatiability of the consumerist appetite, the cult of pleasure, the exploitation of the blacks, the suppression of peoples who want to be different, is a small price to have paid to attain the target.

As if the poverty of the many has to be endured in order that a few may become rich.

No, we do not believe these things.

We believe that there is another way.

We believe that there is the other way in our culture, in our history, in the culture and the history of our villages and our estates. We believe that there is the other way for all people in the primitive human yearning to share, to work together, to live as one, to own as one.

It is probably the more difficult way. But it is the way for all those of us who love our land, our people, our ways, our values, our future.

— Editorially

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF ESTATE YOUTH THE BACKGROUND

Education, Nutrition, Income

Census and other official and unofficial publications of socio-economic import in Sri Lanka should resist a tendency to ignore the distinctiveness of the estate sector relatively to the two other sectors of the social economy, the urban and the rural. One reason for such a tendency to gain ground may be the increasing contacts between estate and village, sometimes making it difficult to say whether a particular individual or a particular activity is estate or village or to determine the particular mix of estate and village in individual, family or group life. The other and less tenable reason may be the blurring of the special claims of the estate population to programmes which would release it from secular neglect and disadvantage.

Any study on Technical and Vocational Training in the Estate Sector should seek to keep both reasons in mind: the increasing interaction between estate and village on the one hand and the distinctive claims of the estate people to programmes of socio-economic amelioration on the other. Vocational and Technical Training is indeed one such programme. Creatively planned and efficiently imparted to estate youth, such training will serve at some point in the future to obliterate the distinction between estate and village and fuse both together in a common rural identity. But to be blind to the differences now is only to delay their desirable disappearance.

There is an accumulation of evidence to support the more pronounced neglect and disadvantage of the estate population relatively to the urban and even to the rural sectors of the social economy. This evidence has often been adduced in recent years but it may be useful to re-present here certain basic indicators which have special significance for the subject of technical and vocational education for the estate sector.

The first indicator is education for which the data is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

The opportunities for vocational and technical education are limited by the fact that only 10.32% of the estate population has obtained secondary or higher level education. In 1978/79, however, the percentage of those attaining the same levels of education was a mere 7.95, indicating that from 1978/79 to 1981/82 there has been some advancement in the levels of educational attainments. Furthermore, there has been some bridging of the gap between estate boys and estate girls in the matter of education but the female level of educational attainment and the female rate of literacy on the estates still lags behind that of the male. The reasons are endemic to the plantation system. Such advancement as has been made in general and female education, however, may be expected to raise demands for similar opportunities of skills training as are available to rural and urban populations.

Table 1. Percentage Population by Educational Status and Sectors 1981/82

Educational Status	All Island	Estate	Rural	Urban
No Schooling (Illiterate)	24.57	44.49	24.02	19.79
No Schooling (Literate)	0.45	0.77	0.45	0.32
Primary	37.90	44.42	38.99	31.44
Secondary	25.77	8.46	26.10	30.55
Passed SSC/OL	9.37	1.71	8.77	14.38
Passed HSC/AL	1.40	0.15	1.25	2.44
Undergraduate	0.11	—	0.10	0.21
Passed Degree	0.43	—	0.32	0.97
Other	—	—	—	—

Source : Report on Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Survey 1981/82
Part I, p. 69; Part II, p. 40.

The greater disadvantage of the estate youth relatively to the other sectors and to the all-island population in all categories of education is strikingly evident.

The education of children and youth in Sri Lanka takes place through three sub-systems, each specialized for its purpose: (i) the primary and secondary school system, extending from kindergarten to university entrance; (ii) the tertiary system consisting of universities, technical, teacher training colleges and other post secondary institutes; (iii) institutes providing vocational and technical training at less advanced levels of theory than the technical colleges.

Table 2. Sampled Population by Educational Category by Sector and by Age Groups 10-13, 14-25

Educational	0-13 Years					14-25 Years						
Category	All Island	Est-ate	Ru-ral	Ur-ban	All Island	Estate		Rural		Urban		
						No	%	No	%	No	%	No
General	7979	362	6133	1482	7133	76.0	451	95.8	5328	76.1	1354	70.7
Arts	1	-	-	-	1103	11.7	13	2.8	874	12.5	216	11.3
Commerce	-	-	-	-	515	5.5	3	0.6	372	5.3	140	7.3
Science	1	-	-	1	622	6.6	4	0.8	417	6.0	201	10.5
Agriculture	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	4	0.1	-	-
Medicine	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.1
Law	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.1
Engineering	-	-	-	-	6	0.1	-	-	2	-	4	0.2
Other	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	4	0.1	-	-
Total in Sample	7979	362	6133	1484	9390	100.0	471	100.0	7001	100.0	1918	100.0

Source: *Report on Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Survey 1981/82 Part II, pp. 51-52.*

Up to very recent years the estate population had difficult access to the primary part of the first sub-system, very limited access to the secondary sector of the first sub-system and to the second sub-system and very nearly no access at all to the third sub-system. Within the estate sector, females are more disadvantaged than males as is shown in Table 3 (though the most recent figures in the Badulla District and in the whole country show that females now tend to stay longer in the schools system than males).

Table 3. Sampled Population with Secondary Education Grades VI to AL/HSC by Sex and Sector

	Total in Sample	Male		Female		Total	
		No	As %	No	As %	No	As %
		of (i)		of (i)		of (i)	
(i)							
All Island	41451	7605	18.3	7544	18.2	15149	36.5
Estate	2742	164	7.1	89	3.2	283	10.3
Rural	30766	5570	18.1	5541	18.0	11111	36.1
Urban	7943	1841	23.2	1914	24.1	3755	47.3

*Source: Report on Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Survey 1981/82
Part II, p.40*

There is a very special handicap which estate youth face in the matter of entry to the third system of skills training. It lies in the fact that nearly the totality of schools situated on the estate are only primary schools. Hence the great majority of estate girls and boys do not proceed beyond Grade V to the minimum educational requirement for entry into many of the craft level training programmes in the state sector, which is Grade VII or VIII. It is only in Grade VI that a technical subject is introduced into the school curricula. Missing Grade VI, the estate youth also miss the technical subject. It is therefore hardly necessary to add that estate youth will not qualify for admission to technical level education or for commerce education where a pass at GCE O/L with appropriate credits has been stipulated as the minimum educational requirement.

The second indicator is nutrition and health. A survey done twelve years ago showed that chronic undernutrition or stunting (height for age) occurred in 62.4% of estate children while for village children the percentage was 38.6. Acute undernutrition or wasting (weight for height) occurred in 8.6% of estate children and in 6.3% of village children. Concurrent chronic and acute undernutrition occurred in 6.1% of estate children and in 3.0% of village children.

The rate of infant mortality on the plantations between 1885 and 1985 has been in nearly all years much higher than the national rate. Though the rate has fallen sharply on the plantations in some areas in recent years due to the concerted action of some individuals and organizations, it still remains higher than the national rate and a matter of concern and not only because it is one of the three indicators used to set up the too uncritically pedalled PQLI or Physical Quality of Life Index.

The nutrition indicator has been adduced for the principal reason that later on in this paper a special plea will be made for the training of estate youth in integrated farming which, if successful, can effectively minimize the deprivation of the estate population in the field of health and nutrition.

The final indicator is income. The relative deprivation of the estate people is borne out by the figures adduced in Table 4. Not only is income lowest in the estate sector, but from 1978/79 to 1981/82, the increase in money income per house hold in the urban sector was 105.1%, in the rural sector 73.4% but in the estate sector was only 50.3%. In real terms, it must be remembered, the increase, if any at all, was much lower in all sectors. With the wage increases consequent upon the strike

of January 1984, and especially with the equalization of wages of women and men and the stipulation of 26 workdays per week, the gap between estate and rural or urban incomes has probably narrowed but has, even more probably, not been closed.

Table 4. Incomes by Sector 1978/79 and 1981/82

	Estate		Rural		Urban	
	1978/9	1981/2	1987/9	1981/2	1987/9	1981/2
Mean Income in 1 month (1)	301	449	617	1077	823	1625
Average number of income receivers per household (2)	2.40	2.46	1.54	1.45	1.63	1.64
Household Income (I) x (2) (a)	722	1105	950	1562	1341	2665
Average Size of Household (b)	4.73	4.81	5.49	5.21	5.67	5.48
Household per Capita Income (a) ÷ (b)	153	230	173	300	237	486

Source: *Reports on Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Surveys 1978/79 and 1981/82, Statistics Department, Central Bank of Ceylon, Colombo, 1983 and 1984*

It is often thought and sometimes said that the estate population is better off than the village population because more persons in the family are wage employed in the estate sector than in the village and because there is work every day for those who want it. Table 4 is effective evidence to the contrary testifying as it does to the paradox of low rates both of unemployment and income of the estate population.

The Complete Absence of Skills Training in the Estate Sector

The beginnings of formal vocational and technical education in the modern period—as distinct from the training of craftspersons in the ancient and traditional society often at very high levels of skill by systems of which we yet know little—came with the setting up of industrial schools by missionaries in the late 1850s. The first of these was

probably the school set up by Rev. J. Thurstan in 1859 in Kollupitiya. Training was provided in agriculture and livestock farming, in carpentry and weaving. The viability of the schools was ensured by government grants which began to be made available from the 1870s to schools functioning in Kandy, Galle and Jaffna. None of these schools touched the estate sector which had begun to make its separate appearance in the second quarter of the 19th century.

The Government Technical School set up in an old coffee store at Maradana in Colombo in 1873 further formalized technical education in the country. By 1981 under the Ministry of Higher Education there were 21 technical institutes: 8 polytechnics in Colombo, Amparai, Galle, Kandy Jaffna, Badulla, Warakapola, Dehiwela; 13 Junior technical institutes at Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Kegalle, Kalutara, Matara, Ratmalana Ratnapura, Sammanthurai, Kuliyaipitiya. Mattakuliya, Homagama, Nuwara Eliya, Hasalaka. In addition there is a technical unit at Patha Dumbara, affiliated to the Kandy polytechnic, and another at Beliatta, affiliated to the junior technical institute at Matara. Not one of these was intended to attract trainees from the estate sector. A very small number of youth from the estates may have occasionally succeeded in gaining entry to a course in one or another of these Institutes—such as the two young men we met at the Badulla Technical College, one of whom was even the best student in the carpentry class—but they are rare exceptions.

Since Dominion Status was allowed to Sri Lanka in 1948, the efforts of the late 30s and the 40s to break out of the colonial structure of education were intensified. It was keenly felt, at least by the more far-sighted leaders, that school education had to be geared to the perceptions and needs, no longer of colonial rulers, but to those of an independent nation, looking for rapid socio-economic development. The urgency of a change in educational direction was heightened by the population upsurge of the second half of the 50s. Hence from the 40s and, in a more pronounced manner, in the 60s and 70s, when those born in the 40s began to put forward their claims, definite efforts were made to balance the claims of general and academic education against those of technical and vocational education, even in the school system.

The efforts proceeded in two directions: one by way of the progressive inclusion of technical and practical subjects such as agriculture, wood work, shorthand and typing into regular school curricula in the secondary grades of the schools; the other by the provision of skills training to school leavers or to premature drop-outs allowing them access to the facilities of classrooms, laboratories and workshops of the schools after school hours.

Until the mid-1980s, however, when the SIDA programme began in the Badulla District, these efforts did not reach the estate schools. Four reasons may be adduced. The first was that, in nearly all schools located on the estate itself, education did not proceed beyond Grade 5 or the last grade of the primary stage. Secondly, the schools were most poorly equipped even for basic general education and not at all for any form of technical education. Thirdly, the estate schools were, in effect, until nationalization, private schools owned by the owners of the estates and were not part of the national system of education. Fourthly, it was in the general national social consciousness, even of the estate people themselves, that the children of the estate workers were destined to be forever the hewers of wood and the pluckers of the teabuds and nothing else.

POVERTY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL CAPITALISM

"Fire and heat are generated when fuel is burnt. When energy is released at a point, energy has been consumed at another, according to the principles of thermodynamics. When you see super-development taking place in one country be sure that exploitation of human and physical resources has taken place in another. As the South American writers like to stress: The riches of the developed countries should be explained in terms of the poverty of the undeveloped."

"The struggles of the past were more concentrated on localised issues and were more concerned with individual and group grievances. Today our struggle has been internationalised, and is concerned with the scandalous differences between the rich and the poor..."

"It is not merely for civil rights, for self-determination, or for the colour of our skin that we are fighting at present. The poor of the world have found that with all their rights, their votes and the respect of their human dignity given back to them' still they will remain poor. At the basis of all human grievances there is the same socio-economic issue of poverty caused by a system of exploitation."

There is a world wide confrontation between a system of destruction which is fighting desperately for its own survival and the victims of the system, the poor of the world, who wish to lead full lives using the resources that God has distributed for them plentifully all over the planet. Capitalism has internationalised capital, labour and the means of production in general. It has also internationalised unemployment and human sufferings. Consequently it is the system itself that has caused the internationalisation of the struggle. It is not the people of South America,

Africa and Asia only who are fighting for their freedom. Every human being who is concerned about the future of the world will join forces with all of us in eliminating the greatest evil which seriously threatens the very existence of mankind, namely international capitalism."

- Canaan Banana, The Gospel According to the Ghetto, pp. 136 and 141 reproduced in Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, **Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers**, Book 3) Harare: Mambo Press, 1987), p.24

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS OF THE CSPA

(1) GAMI SEVA SEVANA (GSS)

Address: Gami Seva Sevana, Office Junction, Galaha. Nearest Ry. Station: Peradeniya Kandy. 14 miles.

(Voice of the Voiceless, No 1, August 1980, began a series of short articles on the member organizations of the CSPA, with an article on USCOD. Subsequent issues carried articles on Diyanilla Technical Institute (No 2, October 1980), Estate People's Services (No 3, December 1980) and Satyodaya (No 5, June 1981). The series stopped at that point.

It has now been decided to begin a new series of articles on the present member organizations. What follows is the first article in the series.

Member organizations are requested to send in similar presentations on the history, structure, aims, activities of their organizations for publication in future issues of this Bulletin.)

Gami Seva Sevana (Rural Service Centre) is an organization which seeks to serve the needs of people in rural areas. It was set up in 1977 at Office Junction, Galaha, 14 miles from Kandy and has continued its activities from the same address until today. These activities are various, but all activities are aspects of Gami Seva Sevana's chief objective of being a Centre for Rural Developmental Education. Its concept of rural education included both villages and estates or plantations. The choice of Galaha as the location for the Centre was therefore fortunate, since Galaha is a centre both for several villages and for several estates.

Training

GSS imparts practical training in integrated farming with special emphasis on techniques of organic farming and on alternate rural technology. These techniques and alternate technology are used in GSS' farm which is therefore able to provide training in the practices and methods which GSS advocates.

The residential training programmes are conducted for six persons at a time over a period of six months. The objective is to help them to become self-reliant farmers in their own areas upon completion of the training course. Depending on the availability of financial resources, GSS hopes to have uninterrupted training courses of this kind throughout the year.

Besides the 6-months training courses, GSS also conducts day seminars and weekend workshops in skills related to alternate rural technology, such as biogas and organic farming.

GSS is a place where people can come together for group adult self-education not only in integrated farming and alternate rural technology but also in health and nutrition, in various aspects of cultural life and for inter-religious dialogue and meditation. GSS seeks to support all activities which serve the purposes of genuine community building and group activity.

Specific Projects

Over recent years GSS has successfully sponsored a **Milk Cooperative** and a **Credit Council**. These provide useful service to the villagers and estate families around the Centre.

Within the limits of its resources GSS also helps people to set up in self-employment. It makes soft loans available for the purchase of a cow or for a small-scale poultry scheme. Cow-keepers make use of the grass available in ravines. People are assisted to make the best possible use of the one acre of land made available to them by the National Agricultural Diversification and Settlement Authority (NADSA).

Since 1979 GSS has done what it could to introduce biogas to the people of the area. Its own biogas plant which serves the cooking needs of the GSS community also serves as a model to the people of the area. GSS hopes to train a few village youths as bricklayers and masons competent to make biogas digesters.

Since 1983, at the request of the people in the area, GSS opened a farm shop which is now a very popular place in the village. Villagers bring their own farm products to the shop which retails them to the people at fair prices.

Community Living and External Network

Residential members of GSS have various linguistic and religious affiliations. Yet they experience no difficulty, but only mutual enrichment, in living and working, eating and worshipping together. Different home languages are no hindrance to the full and free exchange of views.

The Women's Section of GSS meets every other month to coordinate the activities of the women in the area. It has a handloom workshop which produces handlooms of high quality. These have a fair demand both locally and from foreign visitors. The Women's Section also conducts sewing classes.

In recent years GSS has been requested to extend its activities outside the Galaha area and even outside the Kandy District. It has therefore assisted in setting up small independent farmer groups and village development centres in the Anuradhapura area. In these places it helps to provide training in farming, and leadership skills by means of seminars and workshops.

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