

EFFECTIVENESS OF SAMURDHI PROGRAM AS A POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGY IN SRI LANKA: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATORY STUDY

W.M.A.S. Premarathna¹ W.M.S. Sekara²

Poverty is a significant and persistent issue with far reaching consequences. Accordingly, poverty reduction is a crucial achievement and understanding the factors contributing to this success is essential. The Samurdhi program introduced in 1995 is often cited as a significant factor in poverty reduction effort in Sri Lanka, yet the desired goals have not been fully realized. Over the past 28 years significant government expenditure totaling approximately 600 billion rupees has been allocated to the program. Despite the substantial investment and the program's primary objective of poverty eradication, the Samurdhi program has been unable to effectively address the countries poverty problem. This is evident from the continuous expenditure and the persisting number of beneficiaries over the years. In 2022, the government allocated 65 billion rupees for the program benefiting 1.7 million individuals. The inability of the Samurdhi program to achieve its intended goal raises important questions regarding its effectiveness and impact on poverty reduction effort in Sri Lanka. Main objective of this study is to study the causes of less effectiveness of Samurdhi as a poverty alleviation strategy in Sri Lanka. Specific objectives are to identify specific characteristics of beneficiary households who success and failed in move out of poverty, to explore the nature of determinants of Samurdhi program which helped beneficiaries to move out of poverty and to explore the nature of determinants of Samurdhi program which caused beneficiaries not to move out of poverty. The qualitative exploratory approach was used as research design. Population of the study consist of all families residing in the Mailewa Gramma Niladhari Division totaling 210 families. The sample for this study was used 20 families purposively selected. This sample was comprised 10 families who are lost Samurdhi benefits within a short period of time (approximately 5 years) and 10 families who are still receiving Samurdhi benefits for more than 5 years. Primary data collected from semi-structured in depth interviews. Qualitative data analysis using a descriptive method was selected as data analysis technique. Descriptive narratives and quotes were used for data presenting. Additionally, graphs and tables have been used to present relevant secondary data and provide a visual representation of key information. The study found that the effectiveness of the Samurdhi program was not at a satisfactory level. This study found several reasons (targeting issues, lack of sustainable livelihood, limited impact on poverty reduction, weak monitoring and evaluation, corruption and politicization insufficient support services and lack of coordination with other programs) for the failure of the Samurdhi program to effectively address poverty. These findings will lead to improving the effectiveness of the Samurdhi program.

Keywords: Beneficiaries, Effectiveness, Poverty alleviation, Samurdhi program, Sri Lanka

¹ Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale amalishubhashini376@gmail.com

² Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale sewwandimadhu1999@gmail.com