

# Obstacles Faced by Women in Urbanized Areas in Kandy District Related to Food Crop Cultivation

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**Abstract** - In general, women play an important part in urban agricultural output. Regardless of their roles, women farmers confront many obstacles that impede their greater productivity in metropolitan settings. With a focus on Kandy, Sri Lanka, this study examined the issues faced by women farmers in metropolitan locations. A total of 70 women farmers were surveyed across the district's urban areas. Lack of land facilities was identified as one of the most significant barriers to greater production by women, according to the matrix ranking, lack of credit facilities is another issue that have been noted among others. Appropriate recommendations were made, including hosting agricultural extension programs by authorities, particularly for women farmers, and the inclusion of women in agricultural decision-making.

**Keywords:** *Agricultural issues, Food security, Urban farming, women's participation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women's kitchen gardens or homestead plots are frequently overlooked when it comes to agriculture, yet they play a significant role, particularly in terms of dietary diversity. In certain cases, women also raise a significant portion of the household's main cereals or root crops (1).

Their economic empowerment, which allows them to produce more and participate in policy development, is crucial to tackling poverty and food insecurity. Women's contribution to subsistence production (farm/income generating activities) is counted as unpaid family work. It is estimated that over 56% of the women work as unpaid family workers (2) with women's participation in planting, weeding and post-harvest work high.

For instance, Olaoye (1999) discovered that Nigeria's capacity to increase crop output is constrained by the recurring occurrence of drought caused by uneven rainfall distribution and/or rain cessation throughout the growing season (3). Population migration to urban areas is another issue. Urban population growth in Sri Lanka is 1.9% in the past year, which has been rising for the last couple of years after the steady decline from the 1960s (4).

And as almost half of this population is women, it is important to look at their potential in urban farming to help the uprising in the food crisis among many other issues.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The focus of this study is the Kandy district in March and April 2022. Using a random selection approach, households in the sampled urban settlements were selected to receive the questionnaire. The target population consisted of one-woman farmer per household, and samples were only taken from those households. A randomized sampling method was used in the process.

The percentage contribution of these difficulties faced by women farmers in the study area was calculated using a matrix 15x7 ranking system. Ordering things in this manner entails going from best to worst, smallest to largest, etc. The scoring process entailed the women farmers giving numerical scores to each group of issues. This was

carried out following the most urgent issue limiting women's participation in agricultural production in the research area.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After filtering the 70 responses 66 of them were suited to analyze the data. According to the survey conducted, 80.3% of them were single young adults, with an average of 4 people living in each home. Additionally, 43.9% of the studied women farmers have sat for the G.C.E Advanced Level Examination, while 28.8% had a degree. In addition, practically all farming activities, including planting, weeding, transplanting, fertilizer application, and harvesting, were carried out by women farmers. In addition, they cultivate a variety of crops, including cereals, herbs, spices, fruits, and vegetables.

Lack of sufficient land was likewise listed as the top issue facing them by 32 (48.5%) respondents, while 9 (13.6%), and 3 (4.5%), ranked it as the second, and third issues, respectively.

In the research area, the productivity of the staple food crops is often low, mostly because the quality of the seeds and the fertilizers tend to be low; this was ranked as the fourth most pressing issue overall. Additionally, since farm inputs are required to raise productivity, this is significant. The level of income, the size of land holdings, or the potential level of agricultural production—in which women may be at a disadvantage—could all affect access to inputs. overall it was ranked as the seventh most pressing problem.

The following table showcases the parameters taken for the survey and the results.

Table 1 : Ranking of problems in urban farming

Problem	Rank						
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Credit facilities	8	6	5	4	1	2	9
lack of land	32	9	3	2	4	2	1
Lack of farm input	1	7	5	5	3	4	4
Seasonal rainfall	1	3	7	11	8	6	4
Lack of knowledge	3	7	5	7	4	2	5
Lack of storage	-	3	-	6	4	8	2
Animal disturbance	16	7	9	3	6	3	3
Poor road facilities	-	3	1	2	-	1	1
inadequate agri. services	-	1	4	3	12	4	6
Pests and diseases	2	11	12	8	9	3	2
Marketing problems	1	-	2	3	-	2	3
Low productivity	-	3	8	7	7	11	4

Inability to access necessities goods	2	5	2	-	3	7	5
Inadequate labor force	-	-	1	4	1	4	5
Policy changes	-	1	2	1	4	7	12

As per the above table, recent policy changes were identified as the most pressing seventh issue among many women farmers. In addition, women farmers in Kandy identified access to credit as one of the least concerning problems to their ability to produce agricultural products. This was majorly based on the fact that they are utilizing household scraps, and leftover vegetables to grow new crops.

From the aforementioned findings, it can be seen that women farmers in the sampled small towns confront a variety of issues, the most important of which are limited access to land, animal disturbances, pests and diseases, and low productivity.

Another pressing challenge could be noted as the lack of agricultural knowledge. This could be solved by conducting agricultural programs for women engaging in household gardening.

This study supports Tunde's (2011) observation that most women farmers maintain small plots of land because they lack access to financing that would allow them to buy larger plots and farm supplies to boost production. A strong institutional framework should be created through initiatives that cater to the training requirements of women farmers for them to be more relevant and productive in the agricultural sector.

Zoning designated agricultural areas next to roads, power lines, or waterways (buffer zones) would be a significant step in increasing the legitimacy and sustainability of urban agriculture.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It was identified that lack of land is the most pressing issue. This was major because almost all of these women were living in urban settings. It could be identified that many of these farmers use seasonal rainfall as a method of watering their crops. Introducing new technology like hydroponics, wastewater filtering, and drip irrigation could help to illuminate this issue. Issues like pests and diseases, the inability to access necessary goods for farming, and low productivity could be linked to the recent policy changes of avoiding the import of fertilizers, vegetable seeds, and agrochemicals.

Before the food crisis, the houses were designed as spaces to live, disregarding the environmental elements and sometimes even regulations. Imposing strict restrictions and making the architects, designers and necessary authorities aware of the situation may help to eliminate this problem.

Women contribute significantly to the growth of the national economy. They make up more than half of a country's human capital and have a major impact on agricultural output. It is important to recognize their importance in overcoming the obstacles to agricultural development and productivity. Farmers are typically seen as "males" by policymakers, development planners, and providers of agricultural services, despite this tendency in most descriptions of agricultural development planning. It is important to have the input of female farmers when making policies related to agriculture.

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