

## Exclusion of the Plantation Tamil Community from the Local Government Service Delivery in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Ambagamuwa Pradheshiya Sabha in the Nuwara-Eliya District

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**Abstract:** The Pradheshiya Sabha (PS) has the mandate to play a more active role in rural development with the local participation in planning and implementing development programs. The PS covers both rural and estate areas in its locality. The total population of 18.3 million of the country consists of 72.2% rural, 21.5% urban, and 6.3% estate sector residents. The estate sector has the characteristics of a rural scenario but has not been mandated to Local Authorities, in this case, Pradeshia Sabhas, to serve them. Exclusion of nearly 2200 state settlements and 0.9 million estate residents from the administrative purview and service delivery mechanism of Local Governments throughout its history is a major political and development issue in the country (Christine, 2003, Hetige, 2003, Vijesandiran, 2011). The objective of the study is to examine the causes for the exclusion of Plantation Tamils from the Local government service delivery, Ambagamuwa PS in particular. Primary and secondary data were used for the study. PS members, officials, public were purposively interviewed. The study found that the present Pradeshia Sabha Act was redrafted from the previous Village Councils Act which excludes estate residents being served from public funds. Clauses 2(1), of section 33, 18 (xiv), 18 (xxii) and 134 (4) of the present Pradeshia Sabha Act, states that every Pradeshia Sabha can administrate only rural areas. The estate residential areas that are part of the estate business enterprises are considered as private entities and any part of Pradeshia Sabha funds can be spent only on village and rural development. Further, they do not have the mandate to impose rates and taxes on estate residents, residential buildings and their properties because those are considered as built-up localities of estate enterprises. These clauses limit the legitimate/statutory mandate and powers of the Pradeshia Sabhas in extending their functions to the estate sector. Hence, estate residents remain as mere voters without entitlement to any services from local authorities. Exclusion of estate settlements from public service delivery leads to social, economic and political marginalization of all estate communities and to anon-economic form of poverty among them. It can be concluded that, reforms in the PS act, institutional arrangements and affirmative action would resolve this problem in the long run.

**Keywords:** Local Government, Service Delivery, Plantation Tamils, Ambagamuwa Pradehshiya Sabha, Affirmative action