

**F-19 : ADAPTATION PROBLEMS OF VEDDAH COMMUNITY TO
SETTLEMENT AGRICULTURE PROJECTS**

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The Veddah community of Sri Lanka is facing tremendous pressures from outside for cultural, social and economic changes in recent times due to the competing use of dry zone lands. One strategy adopted is to integrate them to the mainstream society by moving them into major agriculture settlement schemes. An attempt was made to examine the extent to which the Veddahs have integrated to the settlement economy and to identify problems in this process. A study was undertaken in the Mahaweli System C. A sample of settled Veddah families were interviewed. Supplementary information was collected from settlement officers in the area. It was found that the Veddah community was persuaded and at times coerced to make the decision to move to the settlement area. Although the standards of living have improved since moving to the scheme, the lifestyle and economic activities in the scheme were very alien to them. Their knowledge of irrigated agriculture, general know-how of economic activities and life skills were low. Their living standards as well as the adoption of improved agricultural practices were comparatively below that of other settlers. An effective agricultural and human services delivery system that is sensitive to the cultural and social background of the Veddahs and special programmes to assimilate them into the mainstream of life are needed to help make the transition from an aboriginal lifestyle to a settler farmer.