

F-26: The transition process of an evacuee settlement in Kotmale

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About 3100 families were evacuated with the commissioning of the Kotmale Project which constituted a part of the Accelerated Mahaweli Programme. Nearly 50% of the evacuated families were resettled in the region itself while the rest opted to go to Systems B, C and H of the Mahaweli downstream areas. The total number of families settled amounted to about 3260 by early 1998. Purpose of the present study is to analyse the transition process associated with a selected settlement (Halgolla) in the Kotmale region with particular reference to the declining yields of tea, increasing dependence on government assistance and changing roles played by women. Collection of primary data was on the basis of a 20% random sample of the settler households and was supplemented by RRA techniques and interviews with officials, key informants and settler groups.

A new tenurial structure was created with resettlement whereby the landless and those who owned holdings of different sizes in the old villages were given equal allotments. Further, the predominantly subsistence economy of the villages were transformed into a market-oriented tea based economy. Experience of the last decade shows that the yields of the tea lands are declining owing to bad maintenance and absence of the investments required. People still depend largely on government assistance. Although it is planned to hand over the settlements to normal government administration, social and economic development stage, stage III envisaged in Scudder's model, is not clearly evident.