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Pattern of cooking energy in Sri Lanka: A comparison among residential sectors

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Energy for cooking is an essential component of all households. Sri Lanka depends on outside sources for energy and an understanding about the current energy use pattern is important in planning for future energy options. Objectives of this study were to a) document different cooking energy sources used by households in Sri Lanka, b) to quantify costs for cooking energy and c) to understand the differences of cooking energy use and expenditure among different residential sectors of the country.

Data were collected from 30 households each in Colombo, Nuwara-eliya and Gampaha. These areas represent three residential sectors of the country; urban, semi-urban, and rural respectively. Sample households were selected using the stratified random sampling technique. Data on monthly income, demographic and education information, expenditure on different energy sources were collected using the structured survey schedule. Descriptive statistics were generated to show the current status of cooking energy use by the sector.

100% of the households in the rural sector use firewood as the main source of cooking energy. However, the percentage of households that use firewood only is about 45%. 50% of households in semi-urban sector use both firewood and LPG. 85% of households in the rural sector collect firewood while only 45% of households in the semi-urban sector collect firewood. 97% of the households in the urban sector use LPG. About 87% of households of the urban sector use multiple energy sources. The rural sector has the lowest expenditure (SLR 492.16) on energy while semi-urban sector incurred a monthly expenditure of SLR 1654.79 for cooking energy. The urban sector reported the highest expenditure of SLR 2221.88.

The findings indicate that firewood continues to play a vital role as a source of cooking energy in the rural households. Cash costs of energy for cooking differ significantly among sectors. Urban sector households spend more on cooking energy but their source of energy is non-domestic indicating that higher spending potentials of the urban sector households do not necessarily contribute to the growth of other sectors of the economy.