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Sabunyo NoahTropical Institute of
Development Innovations, P.O
Box 397, Mukono, Uganda**Esimu Joseph**Tropical Institute of
Development Innovations, P.O
Box 397, Mukono, Uganda**Clet Wandui Masiga**Tropical Institute of
Development Innovations, P.O
Box 397, Mukono, Uganda

Socio-economic status of new casual workers employed under the commercialization of sericulture technologies project in Uganda

Sabunyo Noah, Esimu Joseph and Clet Wandui Masiga

Abstract

This study was undertaken in the eastern and central regions of Uganda with the main objective of documenting the socio-economic status of newly recruited casual workers working on sericulture project at different stations. One hundred and ten casual workers were randomly selected as respondents to the structured questionnaire aspects related to the factors such as sex, household head, education, age, marital status, type of family, size of family, family occupation, saving, household expenditure, housing, land ownership, livestock ownership and household material ownership were collected by well-structured questionnaire through personal interview method. The results obtained revealed that more number of the casual workers (43.6%) were in the age group of 18-30 years, majority of the casual workers (65.5%) were married, the biggest percentage (58.2%) had attended primary level education, (51.8%) had involved in agriculture as the main family occupation, majority (30.9%) earned between 100,000-200,000 per month and (73.6%) of the casual workers had land for agriculture.

Keywords: Socio-Economic status, casual workers, sericulture, eastern and central Uganda

Introduction

Labour is a key factor and crucial resource that should be readily available for successful implementation of sericulture project in Uganda. Sericulture being one a labour intensive agro based industrial needs timely and constant labour flow though out the year to manage different activities along the value chain, this is therefore calls for regular recruitment of the labour force to manage sericulture different activities. Commercialization of sericulture technologies in Uganda is government funded project which aims at providing gainful employment to unemployed/underemployed in the rural and semi-urban areas and facilitates economic development and improvement in the standard of life of the people.

Socio-economic status is a combined measurement of economic and social position of an individual or a group in relation to others in the society. It has a profound role in determining one's accessibility to the common resources, livelihood pattern, household food & nutritional security etc. Socioeconomic status represents one's social and economic position in a society. It reflects living standard of an individual or a group. It can be measured by one's income level, education, and occupation. The commercialization of sericulture technologies has played an important role in improving the socio-economic status of people across the world and it has benefited both rural and urban communities through direct and indirect sericulture employment engaging in different activities such as mulberry cultivation, maintenance of mulberry plantations, harvesting of mulberry leaves, silkworm rearing, cocoon production, cocoon reeling, yarn making, weaving and fabric processing and construction of rearing house. The study are therefore being conducted with the main objectives of documenting the socio-economic status and it will be used to measure the impact of the project on the socio-economic status of the casual workers involved after a period of time.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Eastern and Central regions of Uganda. In Eastern, station in the districts of Kween, Bukedea, Bulambuli and Iganga were selected while in Central, only Kayunga was sampled. A sample of 110 newly recruited casual workers were randomly selected. The pre-tested interview questionnaire was used for data collection and the data collected was analyses using SPSS (Version 26).

Results and Discussion

According to the demographic characteristics studied in Table1, A majority (79.1%) of casual workers interviewed were male while 28.9% were female.

Corresponding Author:**Sabunyo Noah**Tropical Institute of
Development Innovations, P.O
Box 397, Mukono, Uganda

Anathan *et al.* (2002) in their study reported that a majority of workers in Agricultural farms are mainly male who have to provide for their families while women take care of the home affairs. However, several studies have showed that most activities in sericulture farms across the world are done by women who constitute 60% of the labour force, a majority of the casual workers were at a youthful age (18-30 years), meaning that they are energetic enough to perform the manual work in sericulture field activities such as planting of mulberry gardens, management of mulberry gardens, harvesting mulberry leaves to feed silkworms, silkworm rearing, reeling of silk cocoons and silk yarn making. 65.5% of the casual workers were married and 23.6% of the casual workers were single. The results are in agreement with the findings of Saghir *et al.* (2005) [7] who reported that majority (76.5%) of the farm workers in rural areas were married followed by (17.5%) who were unmarried; Most of the casual workers had attended formal education. It was found out that 58.2% of the casual workers had ever attended primary education, 24.5% had attained secondary education though

dropped out at lower secondary. Noted that the existence of Universal primary education (UPE) since 1996 in Uganda could be the reason for this result. Probed further these reported the lack of school fees and limited family support as the major reasons for their failure to attain higher education. Matata *et al.* (2010) [11] in their study reported that if a large number of farmers can read and write, they would be able to follow technical recommendations. This also implies that uptake of extension information and skills will be high among the casual workers. Majority of the casual workers were living in nuclear family (78.2%) followed by joint family type (21.8%). Srivastava and Singh, (2014) [5] in their study reported that nuclear family system was biggest in the village with (74.14%) and (25.8%) were living in joint family system. Sathyanaryan *et al.* 2010 [6] also noted that joint family system is responsible for low or poor socio-economic status. The results obtained revealed that majority (47.3%) of the casual workers had 0-5 people in their family followed by (43.6%) who had 5-10 peoples in family.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex of the respondents	Male	87	79.1%
	Female	23	20.9%
Age	Below 18 years	4	3.6%
	18-30 years	48	43.6%
	31-40 years	44	40%
	41-50 years	9	8.2%
	51-60 years	4	3.6%
	Above 60 years	1	9%
Marital status	Married	72	65.5%
	Single	26	23.6%
	Divorced	8	7.3%
	Widowed	4	3.6%
Education level	Illiterate	18	16.4%
	Primary	64	58.2%
	Secondary	27	24.5%
	Tertiary	1	9%
Type of family	Nuclear family	86	78.2%
	Joint Family	24	21.8%
Size of family	0-5 people	52	47.3%
	6-10people	48	43.6%
	Above 10 people	9	8.2%

When asked about their sources of livelihoods, 51.8% of casual workers (51.8%) interviewed were engaged in agriculture as the main occupation for their livelihood as shown in Table 2, Uma, (2007) [9]. In their study reported that the farmers major bread earning is only through agriculture by cultivating field. With regards to monthly earnings, a majority (30.9%) of the casual workers were earning between 100,000/= (Uganda shillings) to 200,000/= per month followed by (30.0%) of the casual workers earn less than 10,000/= to 100,000/= this means that they are in position to improve welfare of their families such as access to food to meet daily energy demands. About (68.2%) of the casual workers were saving part of their monthly income and (31.2%) were not saving any money. This means that casual workers who were savings will help them have a reserve saved fund to cater for their needs in case of shortage of funds. As far as borrowing money from association it was due need that 71.8% of the casual workers did not borrow any money to use in the last 3 months, only (28.2%) borrowed money to use. A majority

(9.1%) of the casual workers had borrowed money to use it for buying agriculture inputs and they had borrowed money from SACCO and VSLA. Action Aid Uganda report (2012) [10]. Reported that the arrangement and uniting many members for a common cause including saving and borrowing in a group setting where resources are pulled together and made accessible to the members and members are able to acquire some capital to use and business knowledge from SACCO members. With regards to welfare and family expenditure, it was revealed that the highest monthly expenditure was spent on buying food for the family and paying school fees which constituted 27.3%. Noted that the money they earned mainly helped them to meet family needs and requirements by buying different types of food to improve on their healthier diets and educationing their children are giving them a chance to acquire knowledge on various fields of education and by obtaining knowledge, a person is a better position to help other people in the family.

Table 2: Family occupation, monthly income, saving, borrowed money reason for loan and source used

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
Family Occupation	Income from agriculture	57	51.8%
	Income from livestock	2	1.8%
	Business	10	9.1%
	Shop	4	3.6%
	Working on peoples farms	17	15.5%
	Builders	13	11.8%
	Security Guard	3	2.7%
	Boda boda riders	4	3.6%
The monthly income	10,000-100,000	36	32.7%
	100,000-200,000	32	29.1%
	200,000-300,000	24	21.8%
	300,000-400,000	10	9.1%
	Above 400,000	8	7.3%
Monthly saving	Saving	75	68.2%
	Not saving	35	31.8%
Last 3 did you borrow any money	Borrowed money	31	28.2%
	Not borrowed money	79	71.8%
Reason for loan	To buy food	5	4.5%
	Pay for health care	3	2.7%
	Pay school fees	3	2.7%
	To buy agriculture inputs	10	9.1%
	Losing a parent	1	0.9%
	Doing business	8	7.3%
	To build a house	2	1.8%
Which sources did you use	Friends/Relatives	7	6.4%
	VSLA	9	8.2%
	SACCO	12	10.9%
	Money lenders	2	1.8%
	Bank	2	1.8%
Monthly expenditure	To buy food	30	27.3%
	Pay for health care	12	10.9%
	Pay school fees	21	19.1%
	To buy agriculture inputs	19	17.3%
	To buy clothing	12	10.9%
	Investment	8	7.3%
	Drinking	3	2.7%
	building a house	5	4.5%

Asset wise, a majority 73.6% of these casual workers are land owner. 25.5% of the casual workers had small pieces of land ranging between 0.50-1 acre, followed by 22.7% who have land between 0.25-0.50 acre, 3.6% of the casual workers had big acreages of land above 3 acres and majorities (48.2%) of the land were individual ownership, 26.4% were landless. Land is a key drive for investment and in most of the places surveyed; it is owned entirely under freehold tenure system/individual. About 66.4% of the casual workers had possession of different livestock's whereas 33.6% were not possessing any livestock. The majority 26.3% of the casual

workers reared goat and 22.8% had birds/poultry. This shows that casual workers engaged themselves in rearing of different livestock's to earn additional income to support their family. A majority of the casual workers possessed different household materials, 22.8% of the casual workers possessed cell phones, followed by radios (21.9%). This shows that casual workers having mobile phones, radios and televisions could easily receive timely information. Casual workers who possessed assets such as solar panels, bicycles and motorcycles were used to extend the reading hours of their children's and eased transport means to go and work.

Table 3: Possession of household materials

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
Landholding	Have land	81	73.6%
	Have no land	29	26.4%
The ownership of land	Individual	53	48.2%
	Rented	7	6.4%
	Borrowed	5	4.5%
	Communal	16	14.5%
Acreages of land	0.25 - 0.50 acre	25	22.7%
	0.50 - 1 acre	28	25.5%
	1 - 2 acres	14	12.7%
	2 - 3 acres	10	9.1%
	Above 3 acres	4	3.6%
Livestock possession	Have livestock's	73	66.4%
	Not have livestock's	37	33.6%

Type of livestock	Cows	7	6.1%
	Goats	30	26.3%
	Sheep	3	2.6%
	pigs	6	5.3%
	Birds	26	22.8%
	Rabbits	1	0.9%
Household material possession	Motorcycle	1	0.9%
	Bicycle	10	8.8%
	Cell Phone	26	22.8%
	Radio	25	21.9%
	Television	5	4.4%
	Solar panel	12	10.5%
	Sofa sets	3	2.6%
	Mattress	23	20.2%
	Bed	5	4.4%

Conclusion

Commercialization of sericulture technologies aims at provides employment opportunities for rural and urban communities. This study focused on socio-economic status of newly recruited casual workers. The results obtained revealed that more number of the casual workers (43.6%) were in the age group of 18-30 years, majority of the casual workers (65.5%) were married, the biggest percentage (58.2%) had attended primary level education, (51.8%) had involved in agriculture as the main family occupation, majority (30.9%) earned between 100,000-200,000 per month and (73.6%) of the casual workers had land for agriculture. Documenting the socio-economic status has to be considered first before measuring the impact of the project on the socio-economic status of the casual workers involved after a period of time.

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