

Youth Employment in the Post-War Northern Economy

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Unemployment and/or underemployment rate has been identified as one of the causes of the civil war in the Northern Province. Because unemployed youths tend to join forces working against existing socio-economic-political establishments it is of paramount importance to make sure that youth aspirations for employment are met. This study aims to analyse youth employment and unemployment in the post-war Northern Province of Sri Lanka to share some insights regarding these issues. Data was gathered from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) – 2013, conducted by the Department of Census Statistics of Sri Lanka. One of the issues faced by employed young people is the wide-spread prevalence of underemployment. Agriculture and fisheries are the primary occupations in these areas with the highest rate of underemployment. In the Northern Province, compared to national averages, a larger share of employed people engage in informal labour market activities. There is a higher level of unemployment among youth with higher educational qualifications and some formal vocational training, and they tend to work under informal working arrangements. This reflects the fact that the number of suitable employment opportunities created during the post-war period was not sufficient to absorb youth in the Northern Province. Moreover, we found that the unemployment rate is relatively higher among the younger groups compared to higher age groups. We also found that unemployment among females is relatively high in all age groups. Our findings indicate the absence of quality jobs created for youth living in the Northern Province. This reflects the fact that the region is yet to attract much needed private, domestic, and foreign investors to start-up businesses. A greater degree of youth out-migration may also reflect the fact that youths find it difficult to find suitable jobs within the region or the country. This situation needs urgent attention since economic vulnerability may have adverse impacts on the socio-political stability of the region.

Keywords: Economic activity, Northern Province of Sri Lanka, Unemployment, Under-employment, Youth