

## **“IT’S A MARRIED WOMAN’S DUTY” : THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN ENHANCING FAMILY PLANNING IN THE LIVES OF RURAL WOMEN IN SRI LANKA**

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Both in developed and less developed countries, achieving well-being in reproductive health is identified as a critical objective in the future of human and social development. Especially, the situation regarding sexual and reproductive health is very complex. This is proven by the data which highlights that at least one in eight married women in developing countries have not received any facility to access family planning. This situation is made more complex as the great majority of women live in the rural areas of less and least developed countries. In this background, the main objective of this research was to examine the awareness of rural women regarding family planning. The secondary objectives were to identify impacts on family health due to the issues in family planning and to identify different levels and forms of intervention of the social worker in facilitating the problem solving regarding family planning. A field study was conducted on three selected Gramaniladhari divisions’ areas in Hambanthota district. Based on purposive sampling, case studies and in-depth interviews were utilized for primary data collection and the key sources of secondary data were official documents. As the study reveals other than socio-economic factors, a key contributor to women being categorized as a vulnerable group is lack of awareness in family planning. Further, it was revealed that awareness of rural women on the necessity and importance of family planning was in an insubstantial level and the myths and beliefs of women regarding these methods have been nurtured by the culture of the society. As a result of power imbalance caused by gender, males have dominated the decision making on family planning and females have considered family planning as a duty of the married women. Therefore, the role of social workers who work based on social justice to the betterment of underprivileged individuals and communities have become a prominent need in the society. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people. Social work interventions are purposeful actions undertaken by workers based on knowledge and understanding acquired, skills learnt and values adopted.

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