

The case of Colombo, Sri Lanka

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. NATIONAL OVERVIEW

1. Location and Climate

Sri Lanka is an island situated in the tropics, between the latitudes of 6 and 10 degrees north just at the southern tip of India. It covers an area of 64,454 km² including the large inland water bodies, which constitute about 1,156 km². The island is pear-shaped, the maximum north-south distance being 435 km and the greatest east-west width being 225 km. The mountainous area in the south-central region, which rises to 2500 metres is surrounded on all sides by coastal plains, narrow in the west, east and south, but broadening to an extensive area in the north. The coastline of the country is about 1,600 km long (Mendis, 1998).

Climatically, Sri Lanka falls into two distinct regions – The Wet Zone and the Dry Zone. The Wet Zone corresponds mainly to the south-western quadrant of the country, which covers about 30 per cent of the land area while the remaining 70 per cent of the land area forms the Dry Zone.

A distinct variation in temperature can be observed between the Central Hill Country and Low Country with minimum and maximum average temperatures of 17.6C and 25.8C in the Hill Country and 24.3C and 31.5C in the Low Country respectively.

The country receives rainfall throughout the year identified by three types: monsoon, convection and depres-

sion. Monsoon rain, which is the dominant type, occurs in two monsoon periods per year. These two seasons have been identified as the south-west and north-east monsoons. Convection rain and depression rain occur mainly during the inter-monsoon periods. The annual average rainfall varies between 1,000 ml in the arid parts of the north-west and south-east of the island to over 5,000 ml on the south-western hill slopes. Relative humidity varies generally from about 70 per cent during the day to about 90 – 95 per cent during the night. In the Dry Zone these values are about 5 per cent lower.

2. Demographics

Sri Lanka's first population census was taken in the year 1871, and was repeated every 10 years thereafter. According to the first census, the total population of the country was recorded as 2,400,400 people (Department of Census and Statistics, 1871). 100 years after the first census, in 1971 the country's population had increased to 12,698,900 people (Department of Census and Statistics, 1971). The subsequent population censuses were taken in 1981 and 2001 (no census was taken in 1991 due to civil disturbances in northern and eastern parts of the country). The total popula-

tion of the country according to the population census of 2001 was 16,864,687 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001).

It was revealed that particularly from the 1980s to the present, the annual population growth rate has been below 1.5 per cent (Department of Census and Statistics, 1981). According to the Human Development Index, life expectancy was 71 for males and 76 for females (Central Bank, 2001) The country has a literacy rate of 91.4 per cent, 94 per cent for men and 89 per cent for women, indicating the benefits of equal opportunities in education (Central Bank, 2001) .

3. Racial Composition of the Population

Sri Lankan society is a multi-racial one in which a majority Sinhalese and several minority racial groups have been living together for centuries. The racial and religious composition of the population according to the 1981 census is indicated below.

4. Economic Trends

Sri Lanka being a developing country, its economy relies mainly on agriculture and service sector activities. Its GDP growth rate has been fluctuating over the years and observed varied between 6.9 per cent in 1993 and 4.7 per cent in 1998 which was moving up to 6.0 per cent in the year 2000 (Central Bank, 2001).

With continuing a war situation in North/East province, since early 1980s , the country's economy was managed to maintain a GDP growth rate of above 5% . This was reflected in the per capita GNP which has ranged from 804 US\$ to 841 US\$ during the period 1997 – 2000 (Central Bank, 2001).

As indicated in the above table, it is clear that the country's GDP is still dominated by the service sector activities and the agriculture sector. The manufacturing sector, although it has received a great deal of attention, particularly since the early 1980s (when the economic liberalisation policies were introduced), its contribution has not yet even reached a quarter of the country's GDP.

5. The Urbanisation Pattern

According to the census of population, the country's population is concentrated into three major economic sectors. These include Urban, Rural and Estate Plantation sectors. According to the 2001 census, 72.2 per cent of the country's population live in the rural sector, 21.5 per cent in the urban and 6.3 per cent in the estate plantation sector (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001) This provides a clear picture of the spatial distribution of population, which is predominantly a rural bias distribution.

In Sri Lanka, there is no clear definition of urban areas. The urban status for an area is statutorily conferred purely for local administrative purposes by the minister in charge of local government. The urban administrative areas are identified by two categories, municipal council areas and urban council areas. Presently, there are about 18 municipal council areas and 37 urban council areas in Sri Lanka. The rest of the country falls under rural councils, which are known as Pradeshiya Sabhas (PSs) "local councils". There are about 254 such PSs in the country. (Source :Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance,2002) The municipal council areas include most of the districts and provincial town centres located throughout the country. The Colombo

Table 1: Racial and Religious Composition of the Population

By Ethnicity	%	By Religion	%
Sinhalese	74.0	Buddhist	69.3
Sri Lankan Tamils	12.6	Hindus	15.5
Indian Tamils	5.5	Muslims	7.5
Moors	7.1	Christians	7.6
Others	0.8	Others	0.1

Source: Economic and Social statistics of Sri Lanka 2001, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Table 2: Economic Statistics / National Accounts

	1978	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Per Capita GNP US \$	175	587	651	709	747	804	826	813	841
Real GDP Growth%	8.2	6.9	5.6	5.5	3.8	6.3	4.7	4.3	6.0
GDP by Sectors									
Agriculture %	30.5	24.6	23.8	23.0	22.4	21.9	21.1	21.3	20.5
Mining and quarrying %	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.7
Manufacturing %	20.0	15.2	15.4	15.7	16.2	16.4	16.5	16.8	17.4
Construction %	4.9	7.2	7.3	7.4	6.9	7.0	7.6	7.6	7.0
Services %	42.9	51.1	51.5	51.9	52.4	52.6	52.8	52.9	53.4

Source: Economic and Social Statistics of Sri Lanka 2001, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Municipal Council functions as the country's primate urban centre accommodating a residential population of about 642,000 (2001) and a daily floating population of another 400,000, making it a city of over one million population (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001).

One of the significant features of the urbanisation patterns of Sri Lanka is its slow rate of urban growth. It is evident that the rate of urbanisation over the past 50 years has been very slow and the share of urban population remains below 25 per cent of the Country's population. Another significant feature is the low level of migration of population from rural to urban areas. This may be due to several factors such as the smaller size of the country allowing people to reach towns and cities within a reasonable time, and then to move back to their place of residence, low transport costs, and above all the reasonable level of infrastructure development that has been taken place in the rural areas of the country. Particularly during the past four to five decades the government's priority has been investment in the rural agricultural sector and plantation sector. Major irrigation and colonisation schemes and developments in district town centres with health, schooling, banking and other services may have held back migration to the cities. In this context, the primacy of city of Colombo remains unchallenged.

6. Nature and Extent of the Informal Sector

The term "informal sector activities" is used in Colombo to describe those income earning activities which are not registered as business activities either in the municipality or in any other government institution. Therefore, by their very nature they do not have official recognition. In addition to business activities, the irregular work that people perform is also classified as informal activities. In Colombo, it is generally assumed that over one third of the city's population engages in informal sector activities. In terms of jobs, they include unskilled workers in the city's markets and establishments, housemaids and domestic helpers etc. In terms of business activities, those engaged in pavement hawking activities, mobile vendors, (fish, vegetable, or ornamental goods and household items etc.) repair and cleaning activities, cart-pullers and many other business activities without recognised status are being called informal sector activities. In terms of people employed both men and women engage in this type of business activity but when it comes to housemaids and helpers it is mostly women. Children below 14 years of age are also found working in the informal sector activities but their number is not significant.

In terms of incomes, those engaged as workers or helpers earn a daily wage ranging from Rs. 200.00 to Rs.400.00 (unskilled & skilled respectively). Those who

work as self-employed people and or running their own business usually earn more than Rs. 500.00 per day. Thus an average unskilled worker could earn about Rs. 4,000.00 to Rs.5,000.00 per month while a skilled worker can earn more than Rs. 6,000.00 per month. It was found through recent investigations carried out in urban poor settlements where SEVANATHA have been engaged in improvement work, that self employed urban poor earn over Rs. 8,000.00 per month (SEVANATHA, 2001). In this context, it can be said that the informal sector activities in Colombo provide reliable opportunities for the urban poor to earn a reasonable income.

However, many of the informal sector activities in the city face problems of integrating into the city's formal sector activities. The pavement hawkers are not allowed to operate in some busy streets. The Urban Development Authority as well as the Colombo Municipal Council are making arrangements to provide them with alternative spaces to operate. In the meantime, the municipal council has launched a programme to introduce movable carts with roofs and spaces for identified pavement hawkers to operate their business activities in a manner acceptable to the council. Thus, the need for integrating the informal sector activities into the city's formal system has been recognised in Colombo. Therefore, large-scale evictions and hostile actions by the city authorities towards informal sector activities have not taken place so far in Colombo. It was also evident that a majority of people who do engage in informal sector activities have organised themselves into some form of associations so that they can approach the officials and politicians to discuss their problems.

In the absence of recent official studies, the views expressed above are based on the experiences of the project staff of SEVANATHA.

B. THE HISTORY OF COLOMBO

Colombo was built by the colonial rulers of the island, who included the Portuguese from 1505 to 1656, the Dutch from 1506 to 1796 and the British from 1796 to 1948. The country gained independence in 1948 from the British rule. In building the city, the colonial rulers seem to have paid greater emphasis on the port and port related activities to support their trade activities and administration. They built a canal network, a rail and road network connecting Colombo with the hinterland to ensure transportation of commodities from the countryside to the port. The development of city activities in the past seem to have been mainly concentrated in the area around the port (presently Pettah and Fort areas) and towards the northern highland area of Mattakkuliya where housing and warehouses were located. The eastern flood plain remained undeveloped while the south-

ern area and coastal belt of the city attracted the middle and high-income inhabitants.

1. Planning History of Colombo

The first city plan was prepared by an eminent British Town Planner, Sir Patrick Geddes in 1921. The concept of the plan was to preserve the rural spirit of the town, and to make Colombo a "Garden City of the East". Though the plan had not been fully implemented in the city, it has had influenced the subsequent planning interventions.

With the enactment of Town & Country Planning Ordinance in 1946, the Colombo Municipal Council embarked on preparing a town-planning scheme for the city. The government had invited a British Town Planner, Sir Patrick Abercromby to prepare the second city plan. Abercromby's plan of 1949 covered the Colombo Metropolitan Region as a whole but it did not translate into detailed proposals. The plan emphasised the decentralisation of the city's activities and creation of satellite towns around Colombo.

The third city plan was the Colombo Master Plan of 1978, of which the main objective was the promotion of balanced regional development and accelerated economic development of the country. The Colombo Master Plan has provided the basis for city planning programmes implemented since 1978 particularly in the Greater Colombo Area.

The next city plan was the Colombo Development Plan prepared by the Urban Development Authority (UDA) in 1985 based on the Colombo Master Plan. This development plan laid the foundations for implementing zoning and building regulations in the city in keeping with the future socio-economic development pattern in the city.

The most recent city plan was the Colombo Metropolitan Regional Structure Plan (CMRSP) prepared in 1998 by the Urban Development Authority, whose overall objective to prepare action programmes for the development of the region with a view to meeting the aspirations of the citizens and improving the quality of life of the people of Western Province and the people of Sri Lanka.

C. THE PHYSICAL CITY

The Colombo Municipal Council was established in 1866 under the Colombo Municipal Council Ordinance of 1865. According to the Centenary Volume of Colombo Municipal Council 1963, (CMC, 1963) the physical size of the city was 24.5 km² in 1871. The amalgamation of adjoining areas from time to time increased the physical size of the city. Such changes occurred in 1901, 1911, 1946, 1953 and 1963. The present city size has increased up to 37.3 km². The changes of the city size is indicated in the table below:

1. Density

The average population density of the city according to the first available records in 1871 was 40 people per hectare. This has reached up to 105 people per hectare in 1940. The current density is 172 people per hectare (2001 census). (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001)

This figure indicates only the city-wide average population density. However, there are some Municipal Wards, which represent higher densities such as 974 people per hectare. The highest population density is in Colombo North, which is predominantly a low-income residential area. The Colombo Southern area represents a low-density distribution of population, which is very much close to the city's current average population density of 172 persons per hectare.

2. Topography

A dominant physical aspect of the city is its harbour and the extensive network of watercourses. A large part of Colombo is below the 30 metre mean sea level and some areas in the east of Colombo are even below the sea level. Rivers are supplemented by numerous canals either draining the rainwater from the low-lying land or constructed for water transportation purposes. The climate of the city is warm and humid for the greater part of the year. The mean temperature is 27°C and the mean rainfall 2,300 mm.

3. Demography

According to the first census of population in 1871, Colombo had a population of 98,847 people. This figure became slightly more than doubled by the 1911. The current city population according to the 2001 population census was 642,163 people. The unique feature of population growth in Colombo has been its slow growth. The annual population growth rate has been varying between 0.5 and 3.7 in the recent past (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001).

3.1 Population by Gender

According to the 2001 census of population, the age group and gender distribution of the city population is as indicated below.

The significant feature of the above distribution is that a large percentage (29.1 per cent male, 30.4 per cent female) of the population was between the age group of 15 – 29 years .

3.2 Ethnic Groups:

Like many other towns and cities of Sri Lanka, the capital city of Colombo is a multi-racial city where Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and other community groups have been living together for generations.

3.3 Income Distribution

There is no data available for income distribution of the population at city level. The consumer finance and Socio-Economic Survey of 1996/97, by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka provides details of income recipients based on major economic sectors such as urban, rural and plantation sectors. The data for the urban sector could be used as the basis for understanding the income distribution patterns of the city population in the absence of city level data.

Table 3: The Area, Population Density & Growth Rate of Colombo (1870 – 2001)

Census	Extent (Ha)	Population	Density (P/Ha)	Growth Rate
1871	2448.6	98,847	40	-
1881	2448.6	110,509	45	1.18
1891	2448.6	126,825	52	.8
1901	2720.6	154,691	56	2.201
1911	3091.1	211,274	68	3.66
1921	3350.3	224,163	73	0.61
1931	3368.4	284,155	84	2.67
1946	3438.4	362,074	105	1.83
1953	3593.9	425,081	118	2.48
1963	3710.4	511,639	138	2.04
1971	3711.0	562,430	152	1.24
1981	3711.0	587,647	158	0.45
2001	3729.0	642,163	172	0.45

Source: Centenary Volume, CMC, 1963 and Urban Development Authority, 1996

Table 4: Population by Age and Sex, CMC, 2001

Age	Male	Female
Less than 4 Year	08.6	08.1
5-14	16.8	16.3
15-29	29.1	30.4
30-44	25.6	24.3
45-64	14.9	15.5
More than 65	05.0	05.4
Total		

Source: Municipal Budget Report, CMC, 2001

II. SLUMS AND POVERTY

D. OVERVIEW OF SLUMS IN COLOMBO

1. Types

Four main types of slums have been identified in Colombo (Upgrading Steps – Ministry of Local Government Housing and Construction, 1984)

Slums: Old deteriorating tenements or subdivided derelict houses. The slum tenements, built mostly of permanent materials, are very often singled roomed and compactly arranged, in back to back rows. The occupants have a definite legal status of occupancy.

Shanties: Improvised and unauthorised shelters, constructed by the urban squatters on state or privately

Table 5: Population By Ethnicity, CMC, 2001

Ethnicity	Population	% Of Total
Sinhalese	265,657	41.36
Sri Lankan Tamils	185,672	28.91
Indian Tamils	13,968	2.17
Sri Lankan Moors	153,299	23.87
Burghers	5,273	0.82
Malays	11,149	1.73
Sri Lankan Chetty	740	0.11
Bharatha	471	0.07
Other	5,934	0.96
Total	642,163	100.0

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2001

Table 6 Income Distribution by Sector

Quintile	Urban	Rural	Plantation
Top 20 per cent	57.3	48.1	37.6
2nd 20 per cent	19.8	22.3	22.0
3rd 20 per cent	12.1	15.2	17.7
4th 20 per cent	7.5	10.0	14.1
Bottom 20 percent	3.3	4.4	8.6

Source: Consumer Finances & Socio Economic Survey, 1996/97

owned land, without any legal rights of occupancy. The areas are badly serviced and very often unsanitary.

Unserviced Semi-urban Neighbourhoods: Badly serviced residential areas in the suburban areas of Colombo and secondary towns. One difference from the squatter areas is that residents of these settlements have definite legal titles and the plot sizes are relatively larger than the shanties.

Labour Lines or Derelict Living Quarters: These are derelict housing areas belonging to the local authority or government agencies occupied by temporary or casual labourers. These settlements are in unsanitary and derelict conditions due to lack of maintenance over a period of long time.

2. Location of Slums

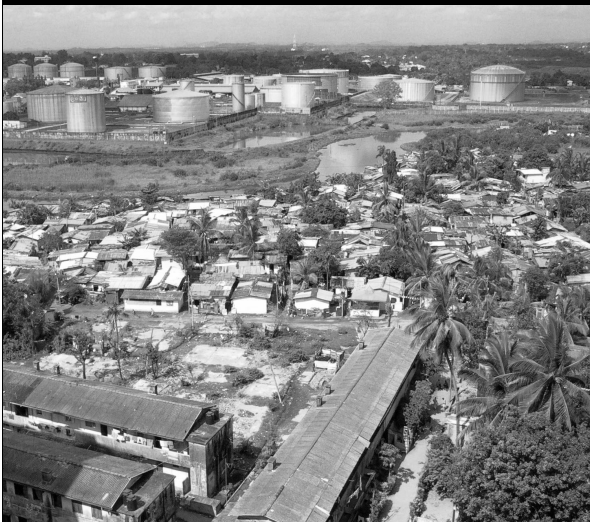
The most common slums in Colombo are the inner city slums and the shanties. Slums are located on highlands in the old parts of the inner city areas. Shanties are mostly located in the periphery of city on road and canal reservation lands that are mostly low-lying areas liable to frequent floods. Other types of slums are scattered through out the city.

3. Age

Slums in the inner city areas are the oldest low-income housing in Colombo. These are the old residential quarters built mostly in the 1930s by private landlords for labourers who were engaged in processing agricultural products for export. Houses vacated by middle-income residents and traders in the inner city areas during the Second World War were gradually occupied by the low income population which later became slums. The partitioning of large old residences was done either by the owner himself or by tenants who had rented out the single units at low rents to low-income-people who had migrated to the city searching for new jobs during a period when a thriving plantation industry required labour for processing, packing, storage, handling and shipping. Shanty settlements emerged after independence in 1948 and escalated in the 1950s particularly during the Korean War time due to influx of migrant workers from rural areas to the city looking for employment. Many shanty settlements along the canal banks and road reservations were regularised under the Million Houses Programs and Colombo Canal Improvement projects from 1984 to 1995.

Table 7: Distribution of Low-income Populations by Types in 1999

Low-income Settlement Type	No of Settlements	No of Housing Units
Slums	1,071	25,500
Shanties	183	13,313
Low-cost Flats	103	8,950
Relocated Housing	97	14,814
Old Deteriorated Quarters	31	2,575
Unplanned Permanent Dwellings	21	870
Total	1,506	66,022



E. SLUM POPULATION, SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS

The low income population of Colombo has been identified under different categories in a city-wide survey carried out in 1997/1998, the results of which are shown below:

The 2001 survey carried out by the Colombo MC and SEVANATHA S has identified a total of 77,612 families living in 1,614 low-income settlements in the city. It was estimated by many people and organisations that the total population of these settlements was nearly a half of the city population but many communities enjoy the comfort of improved housing conditions and services. Therefore, it was difficult to categorise all the identified low-income settlements as being slums (CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002).

A unique character of the low income settlements in Colombo was that they are relatively small in size. 74 per cent of them have fewer than 50 housing units while

the larger settlements with more than 500 units account for about 0.7 per cent of the total low-income settlements in Colombo.

F. THE OFFICIALS DEFINITIONS OF SLUMS USED FOR POLICY PURPOSES

The Policy Paper on Slum and Shanty Upgrading in Colombo prepared by the Slums and Shanty Division of the Urban Development Authority of Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction in 1979, was the first ever attempt by the government to identify the slums for larger development programme in the Colombo MC. The terms used are as follows.

1. Slums

As previously explained, the term slum refers to old tenement buildings built for influxes of migrant labour to the city mostly in the 1930s. In the local language this type of settlement arrangement is called mudukku. People who live these types of houses do not like to call their houses by the official name or the popular local term. They usually call these houses 'row houses' (peli gewal).

2. Shanties

The collection of small, single-unit improvised structures constructed with non-durable materials on vacant land throughout the city are shanties. Shanties illegally occupy state or private land, usually with no regular water, sanitation or electricity supply, the majority are built on land subject to frequent flooding.'

In local language this type of settlement arrangement is called pelpath. This term reflects a group of people who live in more difficult conditions and greater poverty than mudukku or slums according to the common usage.

Watta in the local language is the common term used for both slums and shanty settlements in Colombo by the general public. The English translation of watta is garden. Captain Garden, Ali Watta, Kadirana Watta are some examples of the names of Colombo slums and shanties.

In official documents, low-income settlements are mostly identified according to the different types of settlement arrangements as slums, shanties, upgraded settlements, relocated settlements or low-cost flats.

G. UNOFFICIALS DEFINITIONS OF SLUMS USED FOR POLICY PURPOSE

1. Popular Perceptions of Slum Dwellers

A series of interviews and discussions were held with the people from different social classes to find their common understanding about the slum communities in the city. The following were the perceptions shown by the public based on their interaction with the slum communities.

Case 1:

A council member of the Colombo MC, who has been a councillor more than 10 years feels that he has become a councillor because of the support given by slum communities of the area. He thinks that these communities are living in unsanitary conditions because all people in Colombo neglect slum areas. He thinks that politicians are happy if people in slums are living in such conditions, because they can promise people to provide with what they need during the election period and get their votes.

Case 2:

A lady living in an upper middle-income area close to a slum community suggested that slum people are the troublemakers of the area. According to her experience, they always engage in quarrels with each other, do have bad habits, and difficult to protect their own belongings because the people from slum areas sometimes rob or remove others' property. Children in slums follow the habits of their elders and become socially unwanted people. They sometimes take things from others even by force.

Case 3:

A Programme Officer working for a leading NGO in the city, said that slum people are also a part of the city population and economy. Therefore, the city should recognise them as another partner or stakeholder in the development process. The most important thing is the understanding the people and the development of a good relationship by showing commitment to them. Then it is very easy to work with these people. The framework in which slum people are to use to work is called the informal system because the formal system in the city does not recognise them.

Case 4:

A Health Education Officer attached to the Public Health Department of the CMC who works with the slum communities directly says that most of slum people are not educated at high school level and have not gained any training in marketable skills to engage in regular income earning occupations. As a result, they suffer from a lot of problems related to livelihoods. The officials and politicians cheat them most of the time, hence they have no trust in the commitment of the officials and official programmes. She urged that the officials should give priority to the needs of slum dwellers.

2. Slum Dwellers' Perception of their own Status

Case 1:

A community leader in one of the slums in Colombo South said that they had been living in bad conditions without basic facilities for about 20 years. But now they have land rights and improved services with assistance from the government, municipality and NGOs. But, still people who live outside the community identify them as slum dwellers or still called their settlement watta. Residents in his community do not like people to call their settlement a watta. They think that their community is like other neighbourhoods in Colombo.

Case 2:

A young girl who lives in a slum community thinks that she is living in a community that many people outside her community see as a socially backward area where residents are not well behaved. Outside her community she does not like to say her community's real name in public because of the perception of others about her community. She never invites her school friends to her house.

Case 3:

One young girl said that girls in slum communities couldn't find boy friends with a good background from normal society; because they do not like girls living in slum communities. Therefore, most of the girls have to marry boys in the same community or similar ones.

Case 4:

A female shanty dweller in one of the communities comments on the problems her community is undergoing not only with the people outside but also with the authorities that do not provide the basic facilities such as water and toilets.

Case 5:

A shanty dweller comments that they have no problem with their income. But the problem is that the government departments and authorities do not recognise them. According to his experience, they cannot send their children to the nearest popular government school, because they do not have documents that the school requires for admission.

poverty lines, the lower poverty line and the higher poverty line have been defined. For the year 1996/1997, the Central Bank has set the lower poverty line at Rs. 860.00 and the higher poverty line at Rs. 1,032.00 per person per month (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 1997)

Poverty is not only manifested in an inability to afford basic consumption goods but also in terms of a lack of access to basic needs, such as access to education, health care, safe drinking water, safe sanitation facilities and electricity.

Rural poverty in Sri Lanka is more acute than urban poverty. The majority of the population in districts far away from the more urbanised parts of the country is poorer than the people in urbanised areas. In 1996, the provincial poverty level ranged from 55 per cent of the households in Uva province to 23 per cent of the households in Western province where Colombo is located (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 1997)

There have been no conceptual changes to the official definitions of poverty. But the poverty line has been increased from time to time based on the cost of living and the rate of inflation.

Urban shelter improvement and public health programmes have not been identified based on the official poverty lines used in national poverty reduction programmes. Areas where the deficiency of basic services such as drinking water, sanitation facilities and other civic services is high, are commonly recognized as urban poor areas. The income level of the people in such areas varies from high income to very low level of income.

Colombo Municipality along with SEVANATHA, a local NGO based in Colombo has developed a set of criteria to classify the low-income settlements in the city based on twenty indicators (CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002). These indicators are selected in order to measure the level of poverty based on livelihood assets available in the community and the factors that change the vulnerability condition of the people. Using these criteria the settlements were not classified as slums or shanties but were classified into four types of settlement based on the poverty indicators:

- Poor Settlements
- Unserviced Settlements
- Upgraded Settlements and
- Fully Upgraded Settlements.

Poverty in Colombo can not be regarded as one of low level of income. It is considered in a broader sense of social marginalisation in which social exclusion, lack of access to basic services and lack of shelter are all being crucial aspects of poverty. Therefore, the approaches to poverty reduction in the past have been improving access to services, empowerment and integration of the poor into the main stream of city development process.

H. OFFICIAL DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY USED FOR POLICY PURPOSES

The Poverty Reduction Framework Report of Sri Lanka (2000) uses two yardsticks to measure poverty i.e., absolute poverty and relative poverty, in the national context.

Absolute poverty is measured with respect to the ability of a household to afford a minimum set of consumption requirements. To measure absolute poverty two

I. OFFICIAL DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY

1. Popular Understandings of Poverty

There are a large number of families suffering from lack of basic services and low-incomes scattered throughout the city. As they are not living in the designated low-income areas called slums or shanties, such households are generally get excluded from the urban poor improvement programmes of the city. People who are unemployed, single-headed households, especially women, disabled, elderly and sick people are also considered poor.

2. The Poor's Perception of their Own Poverty

Community perceptions on urban poverty were reviewed at different community forums held in Colombo by SEVANATHA. One such forum was held under the research project carried out by SEVANATHA in collaboration with WEDC of Loughborough University, UK on Regulatory Guidelines for Urban Upgrading based on the Sustainable Urban Livelihoods Framework and the community assessment survey to review the findings with the communities. (CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002). The poor's perception of their own poverty as stated by them are indicated below:

- Feelings of social exclusion: Low-income people feel that they are poor, because they are socially excluded by the formal sector institutions. Hence, they have no access to the city's services, such as piped water, sanitation, drains and waste collection. They have no access to the formal banking system, hence they depend on the moneylenders in the area. Their children cannot be enrolled in the good schools of the area. They have no faith in the institutions and the officials systems to acquire services due to poor relations with them. Their organisations are not genuinely recognised for planning and development process.

- Lack of land tenure: The urban poor recognise their land as being the single most important asset of their whole livelihood pattern, hence lack of freehold rights to their land has been a major cause of their poverty. Some people responded that they always lived with eviction threats. Sometimes the government introduced some programmes; especially the relocation programme without any consultation with the people and most of these programmes badly affected their livelihood.

- Government victimisation: People in the urban poor settlements think that the government does not want to develop these settlements. Most of the respondents who were interviewed said that the authorities want to evict them from their lands and resell to the private sector.

- Lack of secure sources of income: A majority of urban poor consider that they have lots of income opportunities in the informal sector activities of the city. But lack of opportunities for skill improvements and secure sources of income are a major cause of the poverty.

- Lack of access to credit: A majority of urban poor consider that they are poor, because they do not have easy access to credit. They always rely on moneylenders for emergency credit due to lack of access to the formal banking system. Recognising the above limitations community savings & credit societies have been formed by a section of the poor. Women have been playing a leading role in this process. However, the community savings & credit programmes have not been recognised by the government programmes.

J. THE ORIGINS OF THE SLUMS IN COLOMBO

1. Social, Economic and Political Forces that have Formed and Removed Slums

Slums including tenement gardens came into existence in Colombo with the expansion of export trade associated with the rubber boom (during the Korean War in 1953) after the Second World War. The character of Colombo changed in keeping with the new economic demands for warehousing, workers accommodation and the road network improvement. The city core became more congested and the city elite moved out into more spacious residential areas in the suburbs. The central part of Colombo became a predominantly low-income residential area with many slums, and the northern and eastern parts of the city were occupied by shanties.

2. Social, Political and Economic Advantages of Slums to the City

Half of the population of Colombo has been living for many years in slums, shanties and other types of low-income settlements. The city needs their services for the proper functioning of various sectors of the urban economy. Many people in developing countries cannot afford the services provided by the formal sector. The informal sector, which is predominantly owned and run by the people in the low-income areas, provides the necessary services and goods needed by the majority of the city in parallel with the formal sector. Most skilled and unskilled labour needed for the city comes from the informal sector. Slums are the urban housing providers at cheap rent for those who come to city not only for seeking employment but also for many other purposes.

Even though slum dwellers can not afford formal sector goods and services, they have been able to build their houses and some infrastructure on a self-help basis without being a burden to local authorities and the government. As the slum dwellers are migrants from the rural areas, they socially and culturally maintain their local values. Politically slum dwellers are important because they could elect and select members of the city council as well as the higher political authorities as they hold the majority of votes in the city. Generally, low-income people have close relationships with the elected representatives at all political levels in the country. When these people are aware of the policies and programmes being implemented by the government, they have been able to influence it in favour of poor through their contacts with the elected representatives.

K. BASIC DATA RELATED TO THE SLUMS IN COLOMBO

The key indicators relating to slums presented in the following tables are drawn from the Poverty Assessment Survey in Colombo conducted by the Colombo MC and SEVANATHA in 2001 (CMC & SEVANATHA, 2002)

1. Land Ownership in the Slum Communities

Owner occupancy was considered significant in respect of the SL approach. But it was found that only 23 per cent of families have ownership rights to their land.

A majority (46 per cent) live on government owned land (including the National Housing Development Authority, Commissioner of National Housing, Urban Development Authority, Ports Authority, Sri Lanka Land Reclamation and Development Corporation, Sri Lanka Railway Department etc).

Lack of land ownership for more than 70 per cent of the urban poor families is therefore a critical issue in improving their livelihoods.

2. Secure Tenure

Only 37 per cent of families (a majority of this category in low cost flats) enjoy freehold rights, while 40 per cent have user permits, 10 per cent are unauthorised occupants and the remaining 13 per cent have leasehold agreements. As such, about half of the urban poor families have no security of tenure of their occupancy.

3. Permanent Structures

Seventy per cent of families live in permanent houses of which 23 per cent were two storied (permanent structures are composed of walls with fired bricks or cement sand blocks, roofed with asbestos sheets, corrugated iron sheets and floored with cement, floor tiles and terrazzo finish). Only 30 per cent of houses are semi-permanent and temporary units. This reveals that even without freehold rights to land, people have improved their houses.

4. Access to Water

Thirty per cent of families have difficult access to drinking water while only 44 per cent have individual house connection. 24-hour availability of piped water covers only 56 per cent of the urban poor families in the city. About 10 per cent of the families receive less than 10 hours of water per day. This shows that provision of improved water supplies to a majority (56 per cent) of urban poor is a critical issue in Colombo.

5. Access to Sanitation

The availability of the city sewerage network was recorded for about 70 per cent families (a majority of individual toilets and some common toilets were connected to the sewer network. However, in Colombo North Districts (District 1, 2A, 2B) where a large number of low-income settlements located, a sewerage network connection was available for only 51 per cent families. The remaining 30 per cent without sewerage connection facilities used septic tanks and soak pits while some families directly discharged sewer into canals. As such, improving sanitation conditions in low-income settlements located in Colombo North district is more critical than in Colombo South district where about 70 per cent of families have access to the city sewer network.

Table 8: Land Ownership of the Settlement / Community

Land Ownership	No. of Settlements	per cent	No. of Families	per cent
Owned by Occupants	550	34	19,117	23
Municipal Land	219	14	15,148	20
Government Owned Land	569	35	35,008	46
Privately Owned Land	276	17	8,339	11
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

6. Access to Municipal Waste Collection

These figures show that extending the solid waste collection service to about 66 per cent of the low-income families is necessary.

7. Internal Access Roads

These figures show that about 67 per cent low-income settlements needs improvements to their internal access roads.

8. Source of Income

About 45 per cent of the income-earning household members engage in unskilled employment activities (waged labours, helpers etc.) About 9 per cent of families do not have any source of regular income. As such, lack of a regular source of income is a problem for about 54 per cent of urban poor families.

9. Poor Relief Assistance

The research showed that the CMC spends about Rs.6.1 millions per month on poor relief assistance for about 12,693 families in the city (which is about 16 per cent of urban poor families). Those families whose total family income is less than Rs. 1,500.00 per month are eligible for CMC poor relief. The distribution of these families in the urban poor settlements revealed that only 34 per cent of settlements had more than 10 per cent families receiving poor relief assistance. In this respect it is important to note that between 10 per cent and 25 per cent of families who receive poor relief assistance are present in a majority (89 per cent) of poor settlements.

Table 9 Type of Tenure

Type of Ownership of Tenure	No. of Settlements	per cent	No. of Families	per cent
Freehold Ownership	725	45	28,256	37
Leasehold	296	19	10,169	13
User permit	485	30	31,040	40
Unauthorised Occupation	108	06	8,147	10
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

Table 10 Housing Conditions

Nature of Housing	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Permanent structures with over 50% two storied	404	26	18,033	23
Permanent structures with over 50% single storied	881	54	36,411	47
Semi-permanent	231	14	14,418	19
Temporary	98	6	8,750	11
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

Table 11 Piped Water

Water Supply	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Individual house connection	693	45	34,037	44
Common stand post with easy access	462	28	17,806	23
Common stand post with limited access	396	24	24,026	31
Not available within community	63	3	1,743	2
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

10. Women Headed Families

Women headed families (due to death, abandonment or permanent disability of husband) in urban poor settlements in Colombo were found to constitute a serious social issue.

11. Functioning of Community Development Councils (CDCs)

Most slum and shanty communities have organised CBOs, in the form of Community Development Councils (CDCs). The Colombo MC introduced the system of the CDC in 1979 and they operate at community level to improve the basic amenities of their own slum settlements. Through the mechanism of three-tier development council system (community, municipal district and city level) these communities have been able to participate in the planning of programme activities to enable the municipal authorities to deliver the basic amenities that they really need.

Nevertheless, 67 per cent of the urban poor settlements do not have CDCs at present. Only 9 per cent of the settlements do have properly functioning CDCs. As such, organising the urban poor communities is to be considered a critical issue in improving their livelihoods.

The CDCs fulfil several important activities at community level. They provide the channel through which the urban poor communicate with governmental and non-governmental organisations, The CDC is a forum of people at which the community can take decisions on the settlement improvement activities. Once a CDC is formed by an urban poor community it has to be regis-

tered with the public Health Department of the Colombo Municipal

Council so that it gains recognition by the municipal council. Some common activities performed by CDCs are as follows.

- To represent the community at different forums and agencies
- To promote collective feelings in the community regardless of religion, ethnicity, sex, age or cast differences
- To help community realise that overcoming poverty is a common target
- To support the community to get rid of attitudes of dependency on others and help raise community confidence
- To co-ordinate development activities implemented by agencies and people coming from outside
- To co-ordinate communication between outside agencies and the people in the community to share information
- To assist the municipality and other support organisations to carry out their project activities (health awareness campaigns, environmental improvement work etc.)
- To assist in community development activities initiated by different organisations in the following areas
 - ◆ Housing advisory/information services
 - ◆ Income generation activities
 - ◆ Environment protection
 - ◆ Maintenance of common services
 - ◆ Health and nutrition
 - ◆ Pre-school education
 - ◆ Skills development
 - ◆ Women's development programmes
 - ◆ Savings and credit programmes
 - ◆ Cultural projects
- To take initiatives in the operation and maintenance of the common amenities.

Table 12 Sanitation Facilities

Sanitation	No. of Settlements	per cent	No. of Families	per cent
Individual toilets	503	33	25,905	33
Common toilet with easy access	577	35	21,347	28
Common toilet with limited access	470	29	28,583	37
Not available within community	64	3	1,777	2
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

Table 13 Solid Waste Collection

Type of Solid Waste Collection	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
House to house collection	561	36	26,716	34
Communal bin	793	49	38,380	49
No regular collection	169	10	8,360	11
No regular collection	91	5	4,156	6
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Table 14 Internal Access Roads

Type of Internal Access Roads	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Tarred / paved with side drains	459	30	23,706	31
Tarred / paved without side drains	409	25	20,886	27
Gravel	298	18	14,906	19
No proper access roads	448	27	18,114	23
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100



12. Access to Community Centres

Community centres are buildings usually located within an urban poor settlement which the people of the particular community use for their common activities. Mostly, the management of the community centres becomes responsibility of the municipal council if the building belongs to the municipality. If it is owned by the community (gifted by a project), the CDC undertakes the management of the community centre. Different CDCs use their community centres for different kind of activities.

13. Availability of Community Saving Programmes

Given that the majority of poor households do not have access to community savings and credit facilities, the introduction of such programmes for the urban poor is a necessity.

III. SLUMS: THE PEOPLE

L. SHORT LIFE HISTORIES OF SLUM DWELLERS

Case 1: Mrs. Velaudan Vilasani in Samagiwatta, Narahenpita

Mrs. Velaudan, 55 years old, mother of three children (one son and two daughters) lives in a low-income shanty settlement variously known as Samagiwatta, Elvitigala Mawatha, Narahenpita, and Colombo 05. She is of Indian origin, and migrated to Sri Lanka with her parents when she was a child. They received support from her uncle to find a house in Poorwarama (another shanty community) and a job for her father. When she married Mr. Madhawan, they faced a lot of problems finding a place to live at a reasonable price. They rented a small room near to their parents' house and started a new life. They were very poor at that time and did not have a comfortable life.

While her husband was searching for a job and a suitable place to live, they heard about a plot of land situated on the railway reservation close to her parents' place. This land lot was then used for vegetable farming. They heard about the land from a neighbour. At that time this land was owned by a businessman called Mr. Edwin from Maharagama. Edwin had divided this land into several plots for cultivation. About 7 families were able to take lots, and they paid a rent of about Rs.140.00 per month. They lived in a small house, which was made of timber planks and tin sheets. It was a very small room more than a house, where her small children grew up. She worked hours in the farm to support her husband's business. Not only that, she had to

Table 15 Source of Family Income

Source of Family Income	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Over 50 % of family income from permanent job	218	15	9,342	12
Over 50 % of family income from self-enterprise	654	40	26,325	34
Over 50 % of family income from unskilled labour	626	38	34,639	45
Over 50 % of family members not employed	116	7	7,306	9
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

Table 16 Poor Relief Assistance

Range of families receiving poor relief	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Below 10 %	42	66	33,189	43
10 per cent – 25 %	377	23	26,104	34
25 per cent – 50 %	140	8	14,165	18
Over 50 %	55	3	4,184	5
Total				

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

Table 17 Women Headed Families

Range of Families in the Settlement	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Below 10 %	1,239	78	49,844	64
10 per cent – 25 %	238	14	17,373	22
25 per cent – 50 %	98	6	6,392	8
Over 50 %	39	2	4,003	6
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

take the produce to the nearest market for sale and she went from house to house with a vegetable basket on her head selling produce. She was very committed for earning money. Her husband died in 1980. Another 20 families were settled in her community by the government. As a result, she could not continue farming and her family suffered due to the financial crisis. In order to overcome these difficulties she started to work as a house maid for one of rich families in Colombo. In the meantime, women in her community started a small savings programme under the Women Bank. She joined the CBO formed by the members of community and

Women's Bank. Gradually she and her other community members received the temporary permit from the government to stay in the same community and improved the community into a small shanty improvement scheme. This is a great achievement in her life and changed her life style too. At present, all of her children are married and live in their own houses in the same community.

Households in her community have not received legal title for their land yet, but they have private piped water and electricity. Now her children have become active members of the CBO and the savings group.

Case 2: Mr. Mahathun, a community member of Bakery Watta shanty community.

Mr. Mahathun is 53 years old, and the father of five children. He was born in Matara district, 150 km away from Colombo. He came to Colombo in the 1960s looking for a job, when he was 18 years old. He was a plumber by profession and worked for a private contractor for 30 years. At the beginning it was difficult to find a boarding house in a decent area within the city due to high rent. Then he lived with his uncle close to the Narahenpita Junction, in Colombo 8. He met his wife who was living in Bakery Watta close to his uncle's house. He settled down with his wife's parents after the marriage. In 1995 his left leg was badly injured. As a result, he couldn't continue his job as a plumber, because the doctor advised him to take a rest. This situation created a lot of financial problems. They didn't have any savings to face emergencies. Their relatives provided some assistance. Then he started a business at his house. He sells commodities that his community members need for their daily life. He earns around Rs. 10,000.00 per month. The income he gained from his business is quite sufficient for his family expenses. Four of his children are married and live in their own houses in the same community. Mahathun's community is still not regularised. Part of their settlements is affected by the road widening. The Urban Development Authority (UDA) has informed them that no family will be allowed to stay on the same location as they are currently living on the road reservation. Hence, they organised into a Community Development Council to negotiate with UDA for a better relocation project. Now, Mahathun is playing a leading role in negotiating with the relevant agencies to get an alternative land for their houses.

Table 18 Functioning of the CDCs at Settlement Level

Level of Functioning	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Functioning as institution	126	9	10,131	13
Functioning irregularly	100	6	8,662	11
Not functioning	296	18	19,036	25
No CDCs at community	1,092	67	39,785	51
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

Table 19 Access to Community Centres

Availability	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Available with easy access	81	7	7,563	9
Available with limited access	40	2	5,844	7
Not available but easy access	435	26	18,840	24
Not access	1,058	65	45,365	60
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

Table 20 Community Savings & Credit Programmes

Coverage	No. of Settlements	%	No. of Families	%
Over 50 % of families	47	3	3,391	4
25 % - 50% of families	39	2	2,074	2
Less than 25 % of families	87	6	8,263	11
Not available	1,441	89	63,884	83
Total	1,614	100	77,612	100

Source: Poverty Profile, CMC and SEVANATHA, 2002

M. ASPIRATIONS, PLANS AND BARRIERS

Case 1:

According to Ms. Velaudan, she had a lot of aspirations and plans when she was young and settled in her community (Samagi Watta). She aspiring for a comfortable life with her husband and the children like other families who live in the city. Her dream was to build a new house for the family and to give a good education to her children, because she understood that it is the only way that she can avoid her children going into socially unacceptable life. It has been very difficult to fulfil her dreams due to the absence of regular and sufficient income, insecurity of land tenure and untimely death of her husband. After her husband's death she took over the responsibility of maintaining the family. The money that was earned from her jobs was just enough for survival. When she needed more money for the children's education or any other family matter, they approached the moneylender in the area. She borrowed money from them and had to pay back with an interest of 20 per cent per month. This system kept both she and other members of her community perpetually indebted to the moneylenders.

Case 2:

According to the Mr. Mahatun's experience, all slum dwellers have their own dreams of a decent family life. But, it is very difficult to achieve this dream, because the others in the city neglect people in slums or shanties. Many poor people who live in low-income settlements do not own the land. The price of the land and housing rent in the city are very high so that they cannot afford them. Hence the alternative that they have is to encroach on the marginal or rent out a small room available in the informal settlements in the city. As these settlements are considered illegal, no state or local government agency is willing to provide the basic services like water, sanitation, electricity and waste collection.

"The government officials think that we are troublemakers. Officials make a lot of legal barriers as an easy way to bypass our requests. Officials and the business sector always try to evict us from the city. Therefore, we recognised the need for an organisation of our own. In my community we have formed a Community Development Council (CDC) and I am the President of our CDC. Now, we are negotiating with the Housing Ministry to get a block of land for our community from the city. The government has promised alternative land for our people but we do not know when they are going to allocate it, or where".

N. HOUSEHOLD INDICATORS FOR WOMEN-HEADED AND OTHER HOUSEHOLDS

The information in this section was taken from a sample of Bakery Watta. This data was gathered by SEVANATHA under its research project on Public and Private Partnerships for Transport and the Poor in Colombo in 2001.

1. Overview of the Community

Bakery Watta is one of the oldest shanty communities on government owned land in Narahenpita ward in Colombo South. This community originated in 1956, by encroaching the area by a group of nine poor households. By now it has grown into a shanty settlement of 64 housing units. The community is now threatened with eviction, because the area was declared a commercial improvement zone under the development plan of the UDA. But no one has a clear idea of the date and process of the development and the people have formed a CDC to negotiate with the UDA for requesting alternative land within a reasonable distance of their working places and other social activities.

The main social indicators for this settlement are given below.

2. General Household Information

- Over 90 per cent of economically active inhabitants of Bakery Watta are unskilled labourers and small and petty traders.

- Almost all-housing units are single story houses of which 95 per cent are temporary built with corrugated iron sheets for roof, timber planks for walls and cement rendered floors.

- It was found that 5 per cent of households are women headed.

3. Income Sources and Levels

- The main sources of income are from activities such as three-wheel driving, working in construction sites, cleansing work and small trading or hawking (fruit, fish and vegetable etc) and especially the women work as maids in high income houses in Colombo and in overseas.

- The unemployment rate is as high as about 60 per cent among the youth in the community

- Twenty per cent of families including women headed families receive public assistance from the government

- The average income per family about Rs. 5,000.00 per month.

4. Household Size

- Sixty per cent of families have 5 to 7 members.
- Eight per cent of households have more than 10 members per unit.
- Twenty per cent of housing units have more than 2 families. Often when children marry they also settle down in their parents' house. Some families have rented out a part of their house to earn additional income.

5. Birth/Fertility Rate

- It is very difficult to collect accurate data from the community about this matter. The information collected showed that 2 babies had died at birth during last 3 years in the community. Illegal abortion is also common.

6. Types of Tenure

- No households have proper legal title for the land. The land that they occupy is belong to the Urban Development Authority (UDA)

- In 1989, households received an enumeration card from the NHDA and CMC during a slum enumeration survey. People use this card for many purposes: to show their length of stay in the area, to get applications to have a water supply from Municipality, to enrol their children in schools and also they are considered as tenure entitlement certificates. At present the community is negotiating with the UDA to obtain permission to stay in the same location or an alternative site close to the present location.

7. Literacy Rate

- Over 90 per cent of people are literate. The younger generation is more literate than older.
- Some people are capable of using more than one language. There is no significant difference between male and female literacy rates in the community.

8. House Sizes

- The floor area of the housing units vary between 20 m² and 50 m²
- The average floor area per person is 5 m²
- Most houses have 3 rooms: a sleeping room, a dining/living and a kitchen.

9. Length of Residency in Slum

- People have been living in the settlement for the last fifty years.

O. THE COSTS OF LIVING IN SLUMS

Data for this section were taken from the Swarna Road Stage II community in Colombo South, collected by SEVANATHA as part of its pilot project on Community Infrastructure Improvements in Urban Poor Communities, in 2001.

1. Overview of the Slum Community

Swarna Road Stage II community is one of the urban poor communities located along the Dehiwala canal in Colombo. The settlement was a shanty community. The settlement has been upgraded with the assistance of the government and an NGO during 1999/2000. There are 89 housing units in the community and they have both individual and common services.

2. Commuting to Work

As in other low-income communities in the city, a majority of inhabitants of the Swarna Road Stage II are unskilled workers some of them are engaged in, running small businesses and operating three wheelers. Most of their activities are located or based within a 5 km radius distance from the community. Most people walk to their workplaces while others use public transport. According to the survey, the highest bus fare spent per journey was around Rs.20.00 and the average fare is Rs.5.00 per journey.

3. Price of Water and Other Services

All the households in the community have individual water, toilet and electricity connections. Previously they used the common water taps and toilets provided by the municipality, for which they did not want to pay. The community sometime collected money for the operation and maintenance of common amenities in an emergency. The households now pay monthly bills for water and electricity. Average water bill per month was about Rs.200.00 (4 per cent of the family income). The average electricity bill is about Rs.250.00 per month. The community does not need to pay for waste collection or sanitation officially. They pay rates (property tax) to the municipality on a quarterly basis. These vary from Rs.50.00 to Rs.100.00.

4. Rental Rates

This is an upgraded settlement located in a very good residential area about 4 km from the city centre. The average rental value of a house in the settlement is between Rs., 5000.00 and Rs.7,500.00 per month.

5. Availability of Housing Finance

Most of the families have already improved their houses with permanent materials, and 30 per cent are two-storied. People spend their own savings for construction of the houses when they have permission from the government to improve their housing. Apart from that the community has received finance from the following sources:

- Housing loans from the National Housing Development Authority, with a maximum loan package of about Rs.20,000.00 per household.
- Some families have received a sum of Rs.10,000.00. in materials grants from a charitable organisation.
- Community members who work in the private sector have obtained loans from their employers for house construction.
- The members of the Women's Bank (a Community Savings Group registered as a Co-operative) of the city have obtained loans up to a maximum of Rs.100,000.00.

6. Health Problems

The most common sicknesses that people in the community suffering were fevers and coughs. According to public health inspectors, the following infectious diseases can be seen from time to time in the low-income communities: chickenpox; typhoid fever; dysentery; viral hepatitis; food poisoning; encephalitis; and dengue fever.

7. Discrimination

Men and women in the settlement have equal rights and opportunities in terms of property ownership and employment opportunities. Because of the women's savings program and the Community Development Council system in Colombo, women have taken the leadership in many community development programmes. They participate in CDC elections, community workshops and program implementations. Women do not have any legal or cultural constraints to formal education. They can study up to university level free of charge.

8. Victimisation and Insecurity

People in Colombo slums have not suffered from any severe threats by the state agencies or the private sector regarding evictions. In the past, development projects had provided opportunities to discuss the issues with the people if they were going to be affected. For the people who were living on land reserva-

tion land along the city canal network, roads and for major urban development no secure tenure was available.. But in many cases in Colombo, people in such situations have obtained alternative land for resettlement from the government reasonably close to their existing workplaces.

9. Psychological Trauma

There were no figures on suicide rates in the community. But, certain indications of violent behaviour can be seen in the community, especially in terms of drug addiction and alcoholism, and violence against women and children in the house.

10. Financial Expenditure for Households

In Colombo, the families in slums and shanty communities spend a large proportion of their income on food, generally about 50 to 60 per cent. People who rent their housing have to spent about 25 per cent of their income for this purpose.. Other regular household expenditure items are water and electricity. People spend about 5 to 10 per cent of their monthly income on children's education and for health. Another major expenditure item is transport. On average this costs about 10 per cent of income. If people have no organised savings program in the community , they do not make savings from their monthly earnings.

P. TYPES OF ASSETS AVAILABLE TO SLUM DWELLERS

Data on community assets presented below were collected by SEVANATHA in 2001 from an upgraded shanty settlement in Colombo called Bosevana and the low-income shanty settlement called 259 Watta under a research project called Sustainable Livelihoods and Urban Upgrading.

1. The Bosevana

1.1 Overview of the Bosevana Community

Bosevana is a small shanty community located on a canal bank close to the high-income housing project at Manning Town, Narahenpita, Colombo. In 1987 the NHDA has reclaimed this area and allocated 50 m² plots to each of the 37 families. Now, all the families have built permanent houses and enjoy individual services.

1.2 Physical Capital

The land lot is the inhabitants' most important asset. Each household has received 50 m² size land lot . The houses are mostly built of permanent materials, about



20 per cent of the with two stories, and all households have piped water and electricity, with individual connections. A telephone service is available in the area, and about 5 per cent of households have obtain telephone connection. The settlement has a well maintained access road which links with the area road network, and the community is closely located to services in the area - workplaces, hospitals, markets, schools, railway and bus stations, banks, private and government offices etc.

1.3 Social Capital

The community recognised the importance of organising into a Community Based Organisation (CBO) in demanding improvements. The Community Development Council (CDC) plays a leading role in settlement improvement while the Women's Savings Group (Women's Bank) organised women into small groups and equipped them by forming a community fund. The office of the Primary branch of Women Bank is located in Bosevena. The community has strong links with the CMC, NGOs, the Government, and other CBOs. It is a mixed community with different religious and races, and is calm and friendly.

1.4 Human Capital

Community members have different kind of skills to pursue different livelihood strategies, such as carpenters, plumbers, electricians, drivers, garments makers etc. The community gained leadership skills and community-based project management skills through involvement in community improvement projects. Large numbers of people have small scale business enterprise skills. The educational level of the younger generation is higher than that of their parents and most of them completed their secondary education.

1.5 Financial Capital

The community has a strong savings and credit network that provides easy access for credit. Over 75 per cent families became members of the bank. The location of the settlement provides different livelihood options for people, including small business in the nearby markets of Borella, employment in houses in high income areas, work in private companies around the settlement hire of three-wheel vehicles at nearest three-wheel stands, small catering services to government officials and informal business in and around the area.

2. The 259 Watta

2.1 Overview of the 259 Watta Community

259 Watta is one of the low-income shanty communities located in Municipal District No 1- Mattakkuliya. The community has originated by encroaching t on a privately owned land by six families in 1971. At present, there are 128 families living in this community enjoying minimum levels of communal services.

2.2 Physical Capital

The people have encroached on a privately owned land and are living on unregularised plots. The average size of the plots is 25 - 50 m² More than 75 per cent of the houses are constructed on a temporary basis due to the absence of legal ownership of their land. But almost all the families plan to build their houses as permanent structures if they receive the legal commitment or a guarantee to the land. The community has six common water taps, but a few families have obtained illegal individual connections. Mains electricity is available in the community, and 25 per cent of households have obtained individual connections. There are no proper access roads within the settlement, hence during the rainy season, the existing foot paths become impassable. The community is located close to many services in the area, work places, hospitals, markets, schools, railway and bus stations, banks, private and government offices etc.

2.3 Social Capital

The community does not have any strong community

based organisations. There are few informal leaders active in the community. It is a mixed community with different religious and racial groups and like the previous one, it is a calm and friendly community.

2.4 Human Capital and Financial Capital

These are the same as in the Bosevana Community.

IV. SLUMS AND POVERTY: THE POLICIES

Q. POLICIES AND ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE SLUMS

The government of Sri Lanka, together with the respective local authorities, have implemented several programmes for the improvement of slums and shanties in the city since early 1970s. A summary of these programmes is provided below.

1. Before 1970

Minimum Government Intervention.

Impacts:

- Slow rate of urbanisation
- Lower numbers of slum and shanty settlements located in the city
- No major government involvement in improving the livelihoods of urban poor
- People managed their basic needs by themselves

2. 1970 to 1977

Direct government intervention in preparing and implementing policies and programmes. Enactment of the Ceiling on Housing Property Law No. 01 of 1973 (CHP Law)

Impacts:

- Introduction of new policies and regulations ensuring the housing rights of urban poor
- Direct housing construction by government to meet the housing need of urban poor
- Provision of tenure rights to slum dwellers
- Regulation of ownership, size and cost of construction of houses
- Recognition of the impotence of improving the basic amenities in urban poor settlements
- First ever government effort to recognise and act on the housing problem of the urban poor

3. 1978 to 1994

The government started its interventions through a provider approach and gradually changed towards

enabling approach in housing improvement. A number of programmes and initiatives were taken place:

- Establishment of the Urban Development Authority (UDA)

- Establishment of the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA)

- Establishment of the Common Amenities Board (CBA)

- Urban Basic Services Programme, 1978 – 1986

- Slum and Shanty Improvement Programme, 1978 – 1984

- Hundred Thousand Houses Programme and One Million Houses Programme, 1978 – 1994

Impacts:

- Recognised the need for comprehensive development programmes to improve urban poor settlements
- Recognised the participation of local authorities in implementing the projects at municipal level
- Prepared a policy paper on slum and shanty improvement and obtained cabinet approval for implementation (by Slums and Shanty Division of UDA).
- Created legal and institutional conditions favourable for community participation
- Promoted the concept of self help and beneficiary participation in planning and implementing low-income settlements projects
- Recognised occupancy rights of shanty dwellers in regularised settlements and improved the basic services
- Country wide housing programmes with many alternatives to improve the poor peoples' housing

4. After 1994

In 1994, the Government appointed a Presidential Task Force on Urban Development & Housing to make policy development which:

- Established a Real Estate Exchange Limited (REEL) programme under the Ministry of Housing, Construction and Urban Development
- Urban Renewal Programme implemented by the UDA/NHDA
- Urban Settlements Improvement Programme (USIP), JBIC/World Bank Funded Project
- Municipal Councillors' Rs.1.5 Millions Programme implemented by the Colombo MC

Impacts:

- Prepared a government housing policy to promote private/business sector participation in improving the housing stock of the city
- Created legal and institutional conditions favourable for private/business sector participation
- Encouraged the direct construction housing by the NHDA and UDA
- Constructed high rise apartments for the urban poor and planned to relocate all the slum communities under the REEL Programme
- CMC has taken a policy decision to spend their ratepayer's money for improving the living conditions of urban poor
- Uncertainty of security of tenure of urban poor as a result of policy inconsistency in housing

R. POVERTY REDUCTION AND SLUM IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS OF COLOMBO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The Colombo MC has implemented a number of innovative programmes to improve the health and sanitation, housing and socio-economic conditions of the urban poor particularly since the early 1980s. Among its fifteen functional departments, the Public Assistance Department and Public Health Department are key departments that implement programmes to improve the life of slum dwellers in the city. They have concentrated on the provision of basic services (with the UNICEF assisted Urban Basic Services Programme) and the provision of public amenities, including especially educational and health services, poor relief grants, and social services. There is also a recently introduced "councillors' fund programme" under which each councillor is allocated a sum of Rs.1.5 millions annually for improvement of amenities in low-income communities.

S. NGO / CBO INTERVENTIONS

Historically, there was no policy to encourage NGO/CBOs to engage in urban environmental and housing issues in Colombo. For the first time the UDA had invited local and international NGOs to undertake community development activities under its pilot phase of slums and shanty upgrading projects from 1978 to 1985, but for several reasons such as high overhead costs, delays in procedures, absence of policies to encourage NGO/CBOs as partners in the development process, it was not expanded beyond the phase of the pilot project.

Although the Urban Housing Sub Programme of the Million Houses Programme was a support based programme implemented through a decentralised government mechanism, it did not persuade NGOs to work as facilitators or partners in the poor urban areas.

However, since 1990 several local NGOs have gradually been engaged in environmental issues with grassroots level organisations like CBOs for a number of reasons:

- The limited success of government programmes
- The increase of environmental problems in urban areas
- Changes in donor policies to promote NGOs and private sector participation in the development process
- Influence to change government policies from state dominated delivery process to collaborative participatory approach

Since 1992, two major government programmes, ie; national poverty alleviation programme and community water supply and sanitation programmes, have recognised local NGOs as partner organisations for programme implementation. Both of these programmes were based on the rural poor. As far as the role of NGOs in urban shelter and environmental management are concerned, the pilot programmes implemented by SEVANATHA and Women's Bank stand as examples. The various efforts carried out by the NGOs, CBOs to reduce poverty in the city can be grouped into the following categories.

1. Community Managed Slum Upgrading (Sites and Services) Projects:

In selected low-income communities, programmes were introduced by NGOs and CBOs to improve the basic infrastructure in the community. These programmes have incorporated the inputs of the community as well as their contribution of part of the capital cost of the services and labour requirements. In many such instances, the community was involved in the activity right from the beginning from the identification of the problems, designing, making decisions to implementation and operation and maintenance.

2. Environmental Management Programmes:

In some of the low-income areas the community and NGO initiatives were directed at developing community based environmental management programmes, especially waste collection and disposal systems. Here too, participation of the community in the designing, implementation and carrying out the work was ensured. Some projects have introduced systems of developing small community projects such as waste recycling and paper making while some communities engaged in making compost out of biodegradable waste.

3. Awareness Programmes in Community Health:

Many NGO initiatives in their early activities aimed at awareness creation in the low-income communities. This work has been especially carried out with women, who often stay at home during the daytime. These programmes involve health awareness programmes, family planning programmes and programmes for HIV/AIDS/STDs etc.

4. Community Empowerment Programmes:

Empowerment programmes for women by the NGOs and CBOs were seen as a common feature of activities carried out by the civil society organisations working in the low-income areas. These included teaching techniques of know-how particularly in the sphere of dealing with the wider society. Many efforts are now widely known by the women in the low-income communities and they can obtain information and assistance from bodies such as the Urban Resource Centre maintained by SEVANATHA and the Women's Bank

5. Training and Capacity Building Programmes:

Training and Capacity building programmes carried out by the NGOs are primarily of two kinds. Firstly, training and capacity building for officials from the relevant agencies, who work closely with slum dwellers. Secondly, employment training, leadership training, and technical training for community leaders. Employment training programmes including training of women on self-employment activities were carried out by the NGOs. Many of these programmes are also linked with credit programmes, so that trainees can obtain credit facilities to start off self-employment activities after being trained. The Women's Bank and Sakasuru Aramudala (Community Fund) operated by SEVANATHA are some of the community managed funds that are available for the urban poor.

T. BEST PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY BASED SLUM UPGRADING IN COLOMBO

1. Community Action Planning and Management (CAP)

This is an approach developed to implement the urban housing sub-programme and was called the Community Action Planning and Management approach or CAP. The approach sees people as the main resources for development rather than as an object of the development efforts or as mere recipients of bene-

fits. The objective of the approach is to motivate and mobilise the people of urban low-income communities to take the lead in the planning and implementation of improvement activities for their community. At a CAP workshop, community members interact as partners with the staff of NHDA, the local authority and the non-governmental organisations. They discuss the problems of the community, identify common solutions and formulate plans of action. The first step in the process of CAP for urban low-income settlements is the two-day community action-planning workshop. Following that a number of half-day workshops are organised along the same lines, as issue specific workshops for dealing with any problem or issue which the community wants to raise.

2. Community Development Councils (CDC)

In order to facilitate the interaction between the residents of the community and external agencies, all low-income communities involved in the urban housing sub programme first have to go through a process of community organisation which results in the establishment of a Community Development Council or CDC. The CDCs are established to reduce a sense of over dependency on the external agencies and to develop confidence in the communities' ability to solve their own problems. The CDC fulfils several crucial functions related to the community.

3. Community Construction Contract System (CCCS)

The NHDA understood the importance of a speedy delivery of urban infrastructure services to the urban poor, because better infrastructure can quickly improve the sanitary conditions in a settlement. It was also understood that the active involvement of the community in the provision of infrastructure could enhance the sense of responsibility of the community for the operation and maintenance of the amenities and this would result in a longer life span for the amenity. As a result, a new approach with extensive community participation in the planning and construction of infrastructure was required and the community construction contract system was formulated. In principle, the NHDA decided to recognise CDCs as institutions, with potentials and qualifications to act as contractors.

The community contract construction system has become a standard procedure to get people's involvement in the provision of infrastructure in human settlement development not only by the NHDA by also by many government organisations and local authorities: Kandy Municipal Council, National Water Supply and Drainage Board, Common Amenities Board and NGOs involved in urban and rural poverty reduction programmes. This procedure has already made big

impacts on the World Bank funded community water supply and sanitation projects in Sri Lanka aimed at designing new procedures to get construction work through CBOs. So far the Treasury of the Sri Lanka Government has issued three circulars relating to community-based work, stating that government agencies can award contracts valued up to Rs.1 million to CBOs. Most NGOs in Sri Lanka have been using the CCCS with some modifications in community based development activities.

4. Experiences of Public and Private Partnerships to Address Slum Related Problems

Many examples can be found in Colombo where the urban poor communities improving their settlements working in partnership primarily with the public sector. The example described below is a recent community improvement project in which the community was able to receive individual water meter connections to the houses, waste water connections to a drainage system, individual toilet connections to a sewer network and in which the Community Development Council performed its role as a contractor to carry out the these improvement work.

U. THE COMMUNITY

The community which illustrates this example is called Poorwarama Settlement, in Colambage Mawatha in Kirula Ward of Colombo. It is a resettlement site, for families removed from a roadside squatter settlement in a nearby town centre, with about 109 families. Each family was given 50 m² size plot of land with Rs. 15,000.00 as cash compensation for their houses. The community was removed to the new site in 1999.

When the people were asked to move to the new location there were no any facilities. The people had to walk about ½ km to fetch water from a street stand post in an adjoining community. No toilet facilities were available and no guidance was given on how to build the houses. Subsequently, the community made an appeal to the Minister of Transport and Highways requesting to provide basic services. Eventually four stand posts and two common toilet blocks were installed. However, there was no organised effort to develop the community. The community has organised into a Community Development Council and started making requests for support to improve their community.

UN-Habitat has informed the SEVANATHA organisation that it could help SEVANATHA to work on community mobilisation activities to start a Community Action Planning Methodology and Community Construction Contract System for improving the basic amenities.

SEVANATHA identified two communities one of which was Poorwarama. During this period the Japan Bank for International Co-operation (JBIC) provided financial and technical assistance to the government of Sri Lanka to the Ministry of Urban Development & Housing to improve basic amenities in urban poor settlements. A project cell called Urban Settlements Improvement Programme (USIP) was established under the Ministry to implement the JBIC assisted project. SEVANATHA has requested the USIP to include the community of Poorwarama in the USIP's list of settlements for improving basic amenities. The Community Development Council approached the USIP and was subsequently able to obtain JBIC – USIP support to obtain services for the community.

The main actors of the project included the Community Development Council (CDC) of the settlement, Colombo Municipal Council (CMC), National Housing Development Authority (NHDA), Road Development Authority (RDA), Urban Settlement Improvement Project (USIP) and SEVANATHA.

As the first step, in July 2000, a Community Action Planning (CAP) workshop was organised in order to identify the problems faced by the community and to formulate appropriate actions. Representatives from relevant agencies were invited to participate in the workshop. Of the community members who participated in the workshop, over 50 per cent were women. At the workshop, the community has identified a list of problems in the settlement with possible solutions.

Subsequently, SEVANATHA and CDC organised another meeting to identify the roles and responsibilities of each and every partner who were involved in the project.

It is interesting to note that the partnership approach which was adopted in the pilot project provided a platform for all the stakeholders to agree on their responsibilities and to perform them accordingly. Such a partnership approach seems to have been more appropriate than that of a provider based approach generally preferred by the government. As a result, the community itself has taken over the operation and maintenance activities for their infrastructure on a self-help and self-finance basis.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Importance of the Context

During the period from early 1980s to early 1990s, Housing and Urban Development has been one of the key target areas of the government's development agenda. Implementation of national level programmes and strategies to improve the country's housing and human settlements sector was thus undertaken during

the above period. The one Hundred Thousand Houses Programme (1978 - 1983), one Million Houses Programme (1984 - 1988) and 1.5 Million Houses Programme (1989 - 1994) were the national programmes. The strong political commitment and support right from the Cabinet level to the local authority and village levels were available for implementation of these programmes.

2. Importance of Enablement

The principles of the Million Houses Programme clearly stated that creating enabling environment for people to improve their own houses was the core characteristic of the programme. Enabling environments in the context of legal, institutional, financial and technical support were erected in order to support the implementation of the housing development programmes.

Particularly, the institutional mechanism created by the government to implement the national Housing Programmes was very effective. The establishment of National Housing Development Authority under the Ministry of Housing and Construction, establishing district offices of the Authority for each administrative district of the country and linking the programme activities at local level through Urban and Rural local authorities were notable initiatives in this context. Bottom-up information flow and decision-making process were encouraged.

3. Importance of Various Types of Capital

In addition to the creation of government lead institutional machinery, the programmes supported the strengthening of people's organisations - Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) and invited them to participate in the housing development process. Participation of the beneficiary communities and the civil society had contributed immensely to bring down the costs of the programme activities.

4. Importance of Correct Targeting

The involvement of people's organisations in the identification of beneficiary families in the planning of village and local level housing improvement activities and in their implementation had paved the way for a genuine process of people's participation in the housing improvement projects. Such a people-centred process enabled identification of correct priorities and target beneficiaries for the programme. ■

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

ACHEO	Assistant Chief Health Education Officer
CAP	Community Action Planning
CBA	Common Amenities Board
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CCCS	Community Contract Construction System
CDCs	Community Development Councils
CHEO	Chief Health Education Officer
CHPL	Ceiling on Housing Property Law
CMC	Colombo Municipal Council
CMRSP	Colombo Metropolitan Regional Structure Plan
CSPU	Clean Settlements Project Unit
DFID	Department for International Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GNP	Gross National Products
HCDC	Housing and Community Development Committee
HI	Health Instructor
JBIC	Japanese Bank for International Corporation
LIs	Low-income Settlements
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
NHDA	National Housing Development Authority
NWS&DB	National Water Supply and Drainage Board
PO	Programme Officer
PS	Pradeshya Sabha
RDA	Road Development Authority
REEL	Real Estate Exchange Limited
Rs.	Sri Lankan Rupees
SLLR&DC	Sri Lanka Land Reclamation and Development Corporation
STP	Sustainable Township Programme
TUGI	The Urban Governance Initiative
UBSP	Urban Basic Services Programme
UDA	Urban Development Authority
UK	United Kingdom
UMP	Urban Management Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USIP	Urban Settlements Improvement Project
WEDC	Water, Engineering and Development Centre
<i>Watta</i>	A derogatory name for a slum

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