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**ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND
THE URBAN POOR :
EXPERIENCES OF GOVERNMENTAL AND
NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

SEMINAR

CONDUCTED BY THE

SOCIETY FOR PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday, November 10, 1993

at the

Auditorium Samsiripaya.

With Compliments of

**Chairman and Board of Governors
of the
Society for People Centered Development**

**140/24A, Nawala Road,
Nugegoda.**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is indeed an honour for our Society to be entrusted with the task of conducting this seminar. Our organization is comparatively new and we are very grateful to The Asia Foundation (TAF) for supporting us under their program, “NGO Institutional Development” which is funded by NAREPP. Special word of thanks is due to Mr. Stephen Claborne and Mr. Kapila Bandara of TAF for the valuable guidance given to us.

Initially a publication of the proceedings of the seminar was not planned but subsequently TAF agreed to provide funds for same due to a large number of requests received from the participants.

We are grateful to all those who graced the occasion. There is no doubt that the special invitees, guest lecturers, resource personnel, and the participants helped us to make this maiden effort of ours a success. My special thanks are due to late Mr. Victor Ranasinghe, then Secretary of our Society for all the work he did in handling the logistics of this seminar and attending to most of the paper work in connection with this publication. It was very unfortunate that he met with a fatal accident whilst he was working on this assignment. I am also grateful to Mr. H. A. Siriwardena for doing the translation and assisting me in designing the format of this publication. Mr. R. V. L. Wijewardena needs special mention for patiently editing the drafts. Many thanks are also due to Mrs. Ganga Silva for handling the word processing part.

Dr. S. P. Dharmadasa Silva
Chairman

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AGENDA

Session I (Inaugural Session)

- 08.15 a.m. - 09.00 a.m. - Arrival of Invitees
09.00 a.m. - Arrival of the Chief Guest, His Worship the Mayor of Colombo, Mr. Ratnasiri Rajapakse
- 09.00 a.m. - 09.05 a.m. - Lighting of the Traditional Oil Lamp
09.05 a.m. - 09.15 a.m. - Welcome Address - Dr. S. P. Dharmadasa Silva, Chairman, SPCD
09.15 a.m. - 10.00 a.m. - Keynote Address - His Worship the Mayor of Colombo, Mr. Ratnasiri Rajapakse
- 10.00 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. - Tea

Session II

- 10.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m. - Mr.K. A. Jayaratne of "SEVANATHA" on:
"Environmental Problems in Urban Poor Areas and the Role of Developmental Organizations"
- 11.00 a.m. - 12.15 p.m. - Discussion - Participants & Resource Persons
12.15 p.m. - 12.30 p.m. - Summing Up of Conclusions / Recommendations
- 12.30 p.m. - 01.30 p.m. - Lunch

Session III

- 01.30 p.m. - 02.00 p.m. - Mr. Chandrasena Maliyadde - Director General Ministry of Policy Planning & Implementation on " Cooperation Between Government and Non-Government Organizations for Development of the Urban Environment"
- 02.00 p.m. - 03.00 p.m. - Discussion - Participants & Resource Persons
03.00 p.m. - 03.15 p.m. - Summing Up & Conclusions
- 03.15 p.m. - 03.30 p.m. - Tea

Session IV

- 03.30 p.m. - 04.00 p.m. - Mrs. Monica Ruwanpathirana of "PIDA" on Women's Participation in Environmental Issues"
- 04.00 p.m. - 05.00 p.m. - Discussion - Participants & Resource Persons
05.00 p.m. - 05.30 p.m. - Summing Up and Conclusions
05.30 p.m. - Closing Ceremony

INTRODUCTION

Problems associated with the urban poor are much more complicated than those of rural counterparts as many factors like neighbourhood pollution, overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions and poor services affect them to a much greater degree. The urban poor remain largely excluded from the benefits of growth and development because they lack control over productive assets. They also tend to live and work in a policy environment that is often hostile to the largely traditional or informal activities which provide their livelihood. These factors contribute to a large degree towards the very noticeable difference in attitudes and outlooks social workers observe between the urban poor and the rural peasantry.

Statistical data pertaining to the urban poor indicate that: "83.4% of income earners are unskilled or casual workmen and they rely mostly on the informal economic sector for their livelihood. Only about 38% of the total labour force find work at any given time, whilst the balance 62% idle. Family earnings are less than Rs.2,000 a month in respect of about 85% of the urban poor. The average floor area of a house (of an average family having 6 family members) is about 20 sq. meters. There is only one water tap for about 128 persons and one toilet for about 36 persons. Bowel diseases are 80% higher than in affluent segments of the city. Of those attending the free medical clinics of the city, about 40% receive treatment for diseases like typhoid, hepatitis and dysentery. The IMR ranges from 32-54 for 1000 live births (national average 19.4). In general higher mortality and morbidity prevalence is seen in slum and shanty settlements than with the rural poor".

The challenges faced by NGO and CBO assisting the urban poor are therefore much more demanding. It is a fact that a smaller number of the above organizations opt to assist the urban poor. In addition certain international donors are either not mandated to work in the urban sector or focus more on the rural poor and the displaced.

Basically the urban poor groups are located in lands like canal banks, railway reservations, low lying areas or similar locations which have some serious inadequacies as land for proper housing. The inability for NGO and CBO to find solutions to such land related problems at the primary level is one such challenge.

Limited supply of potable water, disposal of human waste and garbage, waste and storm water stagnation are primary problems uppermost in their list of problems related to living conditions. If there is no intervention to help them at least to solve some of these problems it will be difficult to enlist their active participation in any other activity.

To effectively handle these problems there should be (a) adequate financial and other resources (b) technical know-how (c) strong relationships and coordination with the many state agencies dealing with this community in one way or the other. Without the above capabilities NGO and CBO only perform tasks like awareness creation, leadership building, development of community groups, health care and pre-school education which are regarded as superficial activities by these communities.

Our experience (which is primarily with the urban poor) is that mustering community participation in these activities mentioned above is difficult if they are performed in isolation from such pressing needs pertaining to their living condition.

Participants of this seminar are from: the relevant international donor agencies, local NGO working in the urban sector, urban local authorities, other governmental organizations, and slum and shanty locations in the city. They therefore represent the main actors in the scene.

Objective

The objective of this seminar is to bring together the different organizations handling issues pertaining to the environmental problems of the urban poor so that they will

- * come to know policy makers and implementers better,
- * interact more closely with each other,
- * share their experiences, knowledge and resources,
- * develop procedures and guidelines to be more effective
- * and avoid fragmentation & isolation.

WELCOME ADDRESS

by

Dr. S. P. Dharmadasa Silva, Chairman, SPCD

Rev. Dr. Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thero, His Worship the Mayor Ratnasiri Rajapakse, His Excellency Mr. Andre Graffenried Ambassador for Switzerland, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Society for People Centered Development, I warmly welcome you to this one day seminar. I am very pleased to be among a distinguished gathering and take this opportunity to explain to you the origin and the activities of our Society.

SPCD was formed informally around January 1991 by a group of persons having several years of experience in social work and development oriented activities. SPCD was registered as a nonprofit making organization on 4th March 1992, under the Companies Act Number 17 of 1982. The organization has also been registered with the Ministry of Policy Planning, the Department of Social Services and with the Central Environmental Authority. In February 1993 the Society was accepted as an Approved Charity by the Government. The Society is also a member of the National Forum of Peoples Organisation (NFPO), which is a network of small and medium NGO in the country. The primary objectives of our Society are :

- I. To promote activities to develop social, economic, educational and technological standards of the people so as to enable them to attain a better quality of life without harming the ecological balance and the environment necessary for healthy living.
- II. To provide opportunities for people living in rural periurban and other disadvantaged locations in Sri Lanka to develop skills, attitudes and qualities necessary for assuming leadership roles to uplift their communities.

The membership of the society is presently 28 and is open to professionals, social workers, philanthropists and others having an aptitude for social work. Membership will be limited to an 100. The Governing Body and the key members of SPCD are social scientists, academics, and experts in disciplines of social work, medical sciences, human resources development and training.

The full and part time staff include specialists in the fields of (a) socio economic research (b) social mobilization training (c) documentation and information dissemination (d) NGO management (e) project formulation, monitoring, and evaluation.

SPCD has so far worked within the urban sphere only. The activities of SPCD within the city of Colombo have been mainly in the slum and shanty locations where disadvantaged groups live. SPCD has also done work in the field of nutrition and social forestry in the Divisional Secretary's Division of Kolonnawa. SPCD has also implemented program in Kegalle and Ratnapura through GROO attached to NFPO by releasing funds to them and supervising their activities. Donor agencies like the Asia Foundation and the MEPA - NORAD Environment Program have released funds to SPCD to implement urban based activities outside the metropolitan area through member organizations of NFPO. Charman SPCD is also a member in the Board of Management of NFPO, supervising all its development assistance programs in the urban sector.

Our educational programs are structured to promote community awareness among urban poor groups living in congested locations. These programs are on topics like environmental hazards, neighbourhood pollution (waste management), environmental sanitation, environmental conservation,

the preservation of the ecological balance, vice related issues (like addiction to drugs and liquor), sexually transmitted diseases. Our Action programs include assistance to improve the living environment, upgrade common amenities and pre - schools, popularization of energy saving firewood stoves, establishment of women's savings groups, skills development, assistance for income generation, establishment of community managed revolving funds and social forestry.

Awareness building and active community participation are achieved by involving the Community Development Councils (CDCC) and other community based grassroots groups and organizations (GROO) in program identification, planning and implementation activities. Programs are designed to strengthen the capacity of the participating GROO and their leaders to manage their societies efficiently. This would enable them to interact fruitfully with donors and other agencies to lever assistance to their communities.

During the last three years SPCD has been mainly implementing short term projects addressing specific issues. These interventions do not eradicate the main causes of urban poverty but appear to treat only the symptoms. Therefore it is felt that the main actors should get together to share each others experiences and discuss ways and means of attaing our objectives. I am thankful to the Asia Foundation for responding very positively to support our efforts.

I take this opportunity to especially thank His Worship Ratnasiri Rajapakse for the continuous assistance given to us to launch our programs. When he came to know about our organization he requested us to do whatever possible to kindle more interest among the donor community to assist the urban poor. In fact he sponsored a meeting with the donor agencies in April last year and we had a very fruitful dialogue with them. Since then we have progressed well towards levering more support to this community.

May I also thank the British High Commissioner for providing us with furniture initially to start our organization. The Asia Foundation gave us the first grant two years ago to launch our programme of work.

Lastly I invite all the special invitees, resource personnel and participants to share with us all your experiences on the subject under discussion today.

Thank you.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND THE URBAN POOR: EXPERIENCES OF GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

by

Ratnasiri Rajapakse, Mayor of Colombo

Environmental problems associated with the urban poor are interlinked with, lack of: space, proper services, proper basic amenities, proper health care. All these are a direct cause of poverty. Any attempt to improve their concern for the environment without simultaneously addressing their pressing issues is bound to fail. In my presentation I will be touching on who the urban poor are and where they are located, plans to upgrade their quality of life, activities to upgrade their quality of life both by governmental and non-governmental organisations, proposed future activities and the need for collaborative efforts. I will conclude my speech by highlighting the importance of continuing this effort.

My city of Colombo which is 14.5 sq. miles in extent has a population of about 700,000. Almost half the population, amounting to about 350,000, lives in sub-standard or makeshift housing and with no proper basic amenities. These locations are called slum or shanty gardens. Slums consist mainly of permanent structures often subdivided, deteriorated, over-crowded and lacking basic amenities. Subdivisions were either to accommodate family expansion or for renting out. Whatever available empty space in the garden also got built up. Eventually there were a large number of dwelling units having one assessment number. When ownership went down from father to children, the rents had to be divided among several and often the owners were not interested in doing any maintenance as the return to each of the owners on the investment became very low. The owners preferred the occupants out of the premises due to rising land prices. Disputes became a common feature between co-owners and between owners and occupants. The result was deterioration of the buildings and amenities.

Tenement gardens are mostly rows of labourers quarters which were put up mainly by shipping companies during the steam ship era to accommodate their workforce. Around 1972, the Housing Commissioner vested these tenement gardens, under the Ceiling on Housing Property Act, with the occupants. The new owners could not afford to maintain the common basic amenities and other common facilities in these locations. With time these facilities broke down altogether. Tenement gardens also fall into the category of slums.

Shanties on the other hand are the temporary dwellings of Squatters' on private, government or municipal land. Usually such lands consist of reservations made for public purposes such as for roads and public buildings or they consist of canal banks, land reserved for road-widening, etc. Shanty dwelling units are typically improvised, temporary structures made of various non-durable material such as wooden planks.

Since the dwelling units of slums and shanties did not have individual assessment numbers others started identifying their occupants as those living in "such and such premises". Thus the word "watta" which means 'garden' was coined to distinguish these premises from other ones. Occupants of a watta' had a very low social status and were in general regarded as criminals, thieves or people with questionable character and questionable means of livelihood. Living in a watta would itself become a social stigma.

Many people who have got displaced from the North and the East have come to the city. Those who could find friends and relations are living with such families. Others who have no such connections or enough money to afford to live in Colombo, are in refugee camps. These too would now come under the category of the urban poor and we have to extend the same help to them as well.

By about 1978 the original policy of the government for “eradication of slums and shanties” got reversed because it became very clear that the slum and shanty population, although disliked by the more affluent, were essential to the city. The city machinery would not function smoothly without the services provided by this category. It also became obvious that due to their limited earning potential they could not afford to commute to the city from even the suburbs. Therefore the government had to accept them as a part of the city population.

The Slum and Shanty Upgrading program (SSU) was undertaken in 1978. Its main target was the city of Colombo and included the following elements :-

- * Permanent upgrading which includes improvements to the physical, social and economic environment:
- * Temporary upgrading where minor improvements are provided:
- * Relocate within the site where improved housing is provided:
- * Relocation to alternative sites where improved housing is provided along with ancillary facilities and community services.

The master plan for the Development of Colombo drawn up in the early 70's identified urban housing for the poor as an essential element of its program. Although this got formulated as a new subject it did not go beyond the preliminary planning stage. With the change of government in July '77 the Housing and Urban Development Program became the second lead project in the country's development strategy. For the low income group two approaches namely, low cost multi-story housing schemes and slum and shanty improvements schemes, were formulated. They were also components of the One Hundred Thousand Housing Program (1978-1983) and the One Million Housing Program (1984 -1989). Presently the 1.5 Million Housing Program (1990-1994) is in progress.

It was the UNDP which released funds to the government from 1972-1979 for preliminary work and pilot project activities. The Netherlands Government and DANNIDA helped UDA between 1978 and 1984 to upgrade locations like Henemulla Camp and Dematagoda Passage as pilot action projects.

In 1985 the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) took over these activities for the Slum and Shanty Development unit of the UDA. The housing activities by this time began to shift towards low cost housing projects on an aided self help basis. In the early 80's USAID also gave the Housing Guarantee to the government of Sri Lanka to the value of US\$100 million. This guarantee included a direct grant of Rs.10,000 for the very poor and subsidised loans at 3% interest. From August '92 this guarantee has been increased to 150 million. From 1988 United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) has assisted NHDA with funds to develop Community Action Planning (CAP) methodologies for housing development. From 1990 WHO has released funds to them to develop environmental health education programs. JICA volunteers are working with the NHDA in these settlements for the last several years and they have helped many of their pre-schools.

Around 1979 the Urban Basic Services (UBS) program was launched by the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) with assistance from UNICEF, to provide required amenities to these families. Funds from UNICEF, amounting to around 10 million annually, were channeled through the government.

The NHDA acted as the National Coordinator for the UNICEF program and their agent to implement the program was the Common Amenities Board (CAB). The needs for each "garden" were identified by the Community Development Council (CDC) of the garden with the co-ordination of the Public Health Dept. of the CMC. The requirements of latrines, bath rooms, water taps etc. were communicated to the NHDA which got the work done by the CAB. Sometimes the work was done by private contractors appointed by the CAB. During the 14 year period of this program, basic amenities were provided to around 600 "gardens". The UBS program, which was originally confined to the CMC area, was extended to other municipal areas by UNICEF. Around 1990 the CAB was taken off the role of co-ordinating the construction work.

UNICEF funds are now given to 14 municipal council areas and the quantum received by CMC now is around Rs.1.25 million a year for upgrading of infrastructure as well as for several other health related programs. The annual amount which could be pledged for repairing toilets and water lines from UNICEF funds now stands around 0.35 million. We are indeed very grateful to the UNICEF for all what they have done within their own restricted budget and look forward to working with them in the future on an expanded scale if possible. In front of this distinguished gathering I must say that UNICEF contribution has been encouraging. They were among the first to help this community. They have indeed done a lot to create cleaner and healthier environments for them. UNICEF Programs in Sri Lanka are funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and we are all grateful to the Government of Canada for this continued support.

The Central Environmental Authority (CEA) which was established in August 1981 plays a very important role in the city of Colombo. The CEA functioned under the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction till 1989. It was then transferred to the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation. With the establishment of a separate Ministry for Environmental Affairs the CEA came under the preview of the same from 1990. The CEA has wide powers to curb water and air pollution, soil pollution, noise control, toxic chemical and hazardous waste disposal. The CEA has started a program to monitor the flow of effluents into the canals in the city and surrounding area. CEA has been, in addition, monitoring the level of air pollution from vehicle exhaust fumes and from industries in the city. The Environmental Protection division reportedly gets around 25 complaints a day from the city alone. The activities of this branch has helped the CMC as they have taken a portion of our original work load.

The Metropolitan Environment Improvement Program (MEIP) is a program funded by the World Bank since its commencement in 1990. The MEIP Colombo focuses on: (a) Solid waste management, (b) Industrial pollution control, (c) Vehicular air pollution, (d) Urban environmental planning, and (e) Community environmental improvement and awareness. The preparatory phase is presently on. I am very glad that MEIP has come forward to help me and the other local authorities in the metropolitan area, with handling the solid waste management problem about which I am sure all of you would have read so much in the newspaper media. The CMC has to handle 550 - 600 tons of solid waste a day. Our collection capacity is limited. The CMC does not have enough garbage trucks to collect them as frequently as one would prefer. Even in the affluent segments of the city people still do not use the garbage bags methodically. Stray dogs and crows tear these bags apart. As a result the offensive odour comes from the places where they are kept for collection by the trucks. The problems from less affluent segments and from slum and shanty locations are worse. Some are still in the habit of throwing them about carelessly without taking it to the point where the CMC vehicles could pick it up. The trading establishments are sometimes very irresponsible. Some of them just sweep their refuse on to the pavement or the roadside. Garbage collection in the commercial areas and the markets have to be done at night. Management of garbage disposal is not solely the responsibility of the CMC. The community must also adhere to certain norms. I am afraid that we have not educated all segments of the city population sufficiently about this aspect.

The amount of organic matter and the high moisture content in the garbage is not very suitable to combustion and incineration is not feasible. Therefore our garbage has to be disposed of in a landfill. The present site at Wellampitiya which the CMC has used from about 1988 is fast reaching its capacity. In another 6 months I will have no space and getting another suitable site has been a real hurdle. The environmental degradation caused by the obnoxious smell around this site has been experienced not only by the locals but also by others who travel through Wellampitiya. The gases like methane generated by the decaying garbage escapes into the air and we have no provision to trap these gases and burn them. What is required is "sanitary land filling" where all problems of odour and related negative aspects are overcome by adopting scientific methods. MEIP efforts to obtain a suitable site for a sanitary land fill has met with stiff resistance from the local communities wherever they earmarked land for the purpose. They failed in Mahara, Welisara and Padukka. They are now trying a second site at Padukka. Sanitary land filling should have three essential measures. They are (a) Controlled tipping, (b) Leachate control, and (c) Gas control. The machinery itself would cost around Rs.300 million. The MEIP has decided to do a demonstration site of one to two acres to overcome resistance. The garbage especially coming from the markets has been found to be very good for composting. The compost could be subsequently used as a soil conditioner in agriculture. Here too still no attempt has been made to do it on a large commercial scale. USAID has recently given a grant to MEIP to design a pilot scale compost plant.

Beira is an artificial lake, presently 175 acres in extent and was probably dug by the Dutch or the Portuguese in the 16th or 17th century. Beira would have acted as a flood outlet of the Kelani river. Beira also served as a waterway for transporting goods from the port during the British period. Today it is the biggest eye-sore in the city environmentalwise. The water is stagnant as it has no outlet. The thick layer of algae forbids light and other nutrient gases to reach the fishlife and vegetation. In short it is a toxic stew of effluvia from both industrial and domestic use, rotting algae, fish and other vegetation.

The Beira Lake Restoration Study, which is being handled by the UDA and funded by the World Bank and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is almost complete. The restoration plan is a ten year plan. There are over 1000 illegal connections to the storm water outfalls entering the lake. These are mainly sewage pipes, drain water from kitchens of eating houses and to a certain extent industrial waste. In addition there are about 600 shanty families in five locations in the Beira Lake core area. Many slum dwellers defecate, and dump their garbage into the lake. Some of their makeshift toilets are built right into the lake. Over 70% of these families have lived in these locations for over 10 years. Many social issues have to be addressed to relocate them. Most of the breadwinners work in nearby locations. Their children now walk to nearby schools. Some of them make fast foods and sell them to the floating population in the vicinity. Some are fishermen fishing in the Beira itself. The plan is to relocate these families as close to their present locations as possible, in multi storied housing complexes.

The Clean Settlements Project under the subject of Community Environment Improvement in the MEIP Program focuses on improving the living environment of communities residing in low income settlements, through their participation. This project calls for strong community participation which in turn needs strong groups. The existing CDCC could be used for this. But many of them lack leadership and commitment. Solving their day to day living problems have to be given the first priority by this population. The environment is secondary to a person who is struggling to make his ends meet. To what extent can they find the time? Can they afford to loose a day's earnings to attend an educational program on leadership or environmental management. Even if there is strong community interest and commitment to improve the living environment will they do it if the land is not theirs, if it is low lying, if the main sewer line is far away, or if the Water Board is not giving the connection unless there is assurance that their bills would be honoured continuously. When the

water taps are common stand posts, who is responsible for making the payments. Do officials from state agencies have the commitment, patience or the authority to sit down with the community to solve these problems. Can an official from one state agency make decisions regarding matters coming under the purview of another state agency. To what extent do CBOO and NGOO have funds to solve primary problems like land ownership. Some of these lands are very valuable like the one in Maitland Place belonging to the CISIR earmarked for some government program, but encroached. There are instances where NGOO have nearly got involved in legal battles on land ownership issues when they attempted to do infrastructure improvements or upgrade basic amenities. In some instances the relevant government authorities may have to vest the lands, pay compensation to the owners and thereafter divest it to the people living there in. All these mean that adequate funds must be at the disposal of implementing organizations, both government and non-government. Some of these aspects are best handled by NGOO and government agencies working together else they will not bring about fruitful results.

A network of canals run through the city and some sections of Dehiwela Kolonnawa and Kotte. They are: St. Sebastian Canals (North, South & East), the Main Drain Canal at Mutwal, Dematagoda Ela, Kolonnawa Ela (Main, North and South), Mahawatta Ela, Heen Ela, Torrington Canals (Main, North & South), Kotte Ela (North and South), Kirulapona Canal, Wellawatte Canal and Dehiwela Canal. The total length of these and other minor canals adds up to about 34 kilometers.

The outlets of these canals are either to the sea or to the Kelani river. The St. Sebastian canal via the North Lock flows into the Kelani River. The main drain falls into the harbour through the Mutwal tunnel. The Dehiwala canal and the Wellawatte canal flow into the sea. Discharge through the North Lock is possible only when the water level in the river is less than that of the St. Sebastian canal. The lock gates are closed by the Irrigation Department when the water level in the river rises above that of the canal. The capacity of the Mutwal tunnel is very limited. The Dehiwela canal outlet is periodically blocked by the formation of a sand bar. The Wellawatte canal is the only reasonably functioning outlet. This too becomes partly blocked at low flows by a sand bar, but generally gets cleared when the water level builds up in the canal. A large part of the canal is in a very neglected condition and is extremely silted. Along the entire length of the canal system the banks have collapsed. In the urban areas domestic and industrial waste is dumped into the canals. The flow of water is blocked by undersized culverts and bridges.

On the banks of these canals there are about 93 squatter locations consisting of 6000 housing units. These are mostly shanties but there are about 550 permanent and well built houses. These communities defecate and throw their garbage and other waste into the canals.

The escalation of land prices in the city has resulted in marshy lands being filled and developed sometimes in an unplanned manner. The low lying marshy areas along this canal system serve as natural retention areas and prevent floods. The unplanned reclamation of low lying land reduces the available flood storage capacity in and around this canal system.

These encroachments, residential and industrial development along the canal banks have prevented access for maintenance. Flooding of low lying areas of almost the entire city is governed by the water levels in the canals. The many reasons listed above in respect of the canal system have been attributed in part to the frequent floods experienced by the city. The other reason attributed is the disappearance of the traditional outlets for stormwater due to various construction activities which took place over the years.

The Greater Colombo Flood Control and Environment Improvement Project is being now implemented by the Sri Lanka Land Reclamation & Development Corporation (SLLRDC) under the direction of the Ministry of Housing and Construction. The Project has just entered the implementation phase. The project feasibility study conducted in the 80's was funded by the World Bank. The work connected with the detail design and implementation is being done with a soft loan from the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan.

The main work components in this project are (a) Rehabilitation and improvement to the existing canal systems and retention areas to cater to the drainage requirements of the Greater Colombo area, (b) Relocation and upgrading of the squatter settlements located along the canals, and (c) Development of an effective operation and maintenance program for the rehabilitated canal system to avoid deterioration of the system.

Once the canals are rehabilitated about a 30 foot wide reservation area has to be maintained right along the canal banks for maintenance staff and machinery to move about. This necessitates the relocation of all squatter families within this width. Sensitive socio-economic issues are involved around this issue of relocation as in many cases their sources of income and other needs are connected to the resources around the locations they are settled in. The relocation wherever possible will be within the existing site or if not, outside. The social planning and relocation activities are being handled by the NHDA.

The selection and development of sites for relocation has been in progress since 1992. The selected sites are Badowita- Attidiya, Obeysekarapura- Welikanda and Kadiranawatte-Mattakkuliya, Sri Maha Vihara Road and Bathiya Mawatha-Dehiwala.

The relocation deal is as follows; each family will get 2 perches of developed land with title deeds, common basic amenities, approach roads, street lighting etc. A housing loan of a maximum of Rs.20,000 to those earning over Rs.300 a month. An outright grant of Rs.10,000 to those earning less than Rs.300 or to widows orphans and disabled. Rs.1000 to cover moving costs with transport vehicles for moving their goods from the present location to the new location. Those who opt to move outside the city limits will receive an additional incentive. In their cases the SLLRDC will construct the foundation of their new house at a cost of about Rs.28,000.

20% of this population which fall into the "extremely poor" category have willingly welcomed this deal, since they would be better off especially owning 2 perches of valuable land in the city or the greater metropolitan area. 10% of the population in the upper income bracket (mostly those who get an income of about Rs.5,000 a month) and having permanent houses are extremely unhappy and resent this move. However, they have no option other than to move. The balance 70%, mostly from the middle income bracket, have mixed feelings about the change.

The project funds earmarked to assist them to improve their quality of life once relocated is very limited. NGO assistance is very welcome to this community. NGO could help them in areas like housing needs, leadership and skills development, Health education, development activities for women to play more effective roles for their communities, families and children.

The benefits of this project include; savings on health care expenditure, reduction of flood relief assistance and payments, reduction of damage to and the disruption of utilities, reduction in the anxiety and stress experienced by residents who are frequently affected by flooding. The stability which will be attained by squatter families which includes land ownership will raise their self esteem and social status.

SLLRDC has already relocated some families from Dehiwela, Wellawatte and Narahenpitiya. They have done some dredging too to a limited extent. A team of researchers were sent during the first week of November 1993 to Obeysekarapura and Kadiranawatte to find out how these squatters, who were moved to the two locations rather recently, have fared.

It was the general consensus of these families that their living environment is very much better. They have more space and better common amenities. Their children are happy as they have a larger and a cleaner space to play. Although they have come from different places, they grouped themselves by forming Community Development Councils (CDCC), Women's Societies and their kids attend the pre-schools. They have their own places of worship and conduct "Sunday Classes" for the children. There is a marked decrease in drug addiction among the new settlers. They cited the following as problems:-

- (a) Disruption of location based income generation activities due to the shifting,
- (b) The inadequacy of the amount of money given to them to build a house,
- (c) Lack of basic services - e.g. removal of garbage and refuse,
- (d) Overflowing cess-pits due to high water table in both locations,
- (e) Additional travel costs for daily routines like going to work place, marketing, sending children to school, and
- (f) Red tape and delays involved in obtaining housing loans and grants.

The previous settlers in these locations complain that the new-comers have brought certain vice activities like drug addiction and prostitution.

Let me trace very briefly the history of NGO activities in this country. After the invasion of the country by the Portuguese in 1505 and thereafter and especially during the British rule, many missionaries came to this island. They came mainly to spread Christianity and the Western form of education. These could be regarded as the first foreign NGO in the country, although their main aim was not economic development. The Friend in Need Society (1831) is recorded as the first NGO formed in this country during British rule. The YMCA and the YWCA (1882) were also established by them. In reaction to these steps, the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims formed their own associations like the YMBA (1897), ACBC (1919), Sri Lanka Tamil Women's League (1909), Lanka Mahila Samithiya (1930). In tracing the history of NGO, I must make special mention of The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (SSM). The SSM started its activities in 1958 and worked at grassroots level with socially deprived communities to bring about self reliance.

In respect of their activities within the city in the recent past, I have to mention that Sarvodaya as well as the City Mission of the Methodist Church assisted pre-schools from the early 70's. The Centre for Society and Religion and SEDEC too, are organizations which have handled integrated programs in Modera, Mattakkuliya, Summitpura and Maligawatte during the 70's. Save the Children Redd-Barna worked very closely with the UDA and NHDA during the period 1979 - 1985 in the Urban Basic Services Program (UBS). During the late seventies and early 80's, Save the Children Fund (USA) handled two major shanty upgrading projects at Kirulapone and Wanathamulla. From the early 80's organizations like Lassallian Community Education Services, NGO Water and Sanitation Decade Services, Participatory Institute for Development Alternatives (PIDA) have been concentrating on educational programs, organizational development and skills development activities. Save the Children (UK) is concentrating on mothers and children, especially street children. Field officers of The National Dangerous Drug Control Board have been very active in the slums and shanties from its inception in 1984. FORUT started their activities in 1986 with the Vihara Lane Project. Now they are active in a number of pre-schools at several locations including the refugee camps. Samata Sarana initiated their activities in 1988 and is concentrating on health, nutrition, care and rehabilitation. Emergency Relief and Development Overseas (EDRO) and International Child

Care Trust are concentrating on development of clean settlements and healthy people. SEVANATHA and the Society for People Centered Development (SPCD) are concentrating on improving the living environment whilst empowering them to attain a better standard of living. The Lions and the Rotarians have over the years helped this community in many ways. I am also happy to state that donors and development assistance units of foreign missions are channeling funds through these and many other implementing organizations for activities in the city.

There are six refugee camps in the city today housing those who have been displaced from the North and the East. I am glad to state that the Italian Health Cooperation (IHC) has helped me tremendously from last year to improve the living conditions of this population and to overcome the severe strain on the resource of the free medical clinics and maternity homes caused by this inflow. IHC provides drugs, medical equipment on a continuing basis to these health centers which are in close proximity to refugee camps or to locations where the displaced pockets live. The IHC has provided the CMC with a mobile health van and even upgraded buildings and other essential equipment in the clinics and maternity homes. The IHC has effected structural improvements, upgraded basic amenities in the refugee camps, helped them to maintain a clean and healthy environment, assisted in educational and skills development activities. The WHO program "Health and Development for Displaced Populations (HEDIP) functioning in Colombo North Sector from 1992, is also an integrated program to assist the displaced which is funded by the Italian Government in collaboration with the WHO. Some of the other local NGO assisting the displaced are FORUT (pre-schools), SURIYA (health), Integrated Voluntary Service Organization (IVSO) (education), Red Cross Society (health), Women's Development Centre, Family Rehabilitation Centre (health & education), Young Muslim Women's League (skills development for women).

Let me now table certain recent statistics about the urban poor in the city:

- * 83.4% of income earners are unskilled or casual workmen and they rely mostly on the informal economic sector for their livelihood.
- * Only about 38% of the total labour force find work at any given time, whilst the balance 62% idle.
- * Family earnings are less than Rs.2,000 (US\$41) a month in respect of about 85% of the urban poor.
- * The average floor area of a house (of an average family having 6 family members) is about 20 sq. meters.
- * There is only one water tap for about 128 persons and one toilet for about 36 persons.
- * Bowel diseases are 80% higher than in affluent segments of the city.
- * Of those attending the free medical clinics of the city, about 40% receive treatment for diseases like typhoid, hepatitis and dysentery.
- * There are 20.4% more births and 53.1% more infant mortalities than from affluent segments of the city.
- * The IMR ranges from 32-54 for 1000 live births (national average 19.4).
- * 25% of children under the age of six years exhibit signs of chronic under-nutrition and 10% of acute under-nutrition.
- * Hardly 5% of children under 5 years of age have access to day-care centers and pre-schools.
- * 10.3% of 6-8 year olds, and 9.8% of 9-14 year olds have never been to school.
- * 21-23% of children drop out of school before reaching the age of 14 years.
- * Over 50% of the elderly have defective eye sight or conditions leading to blindness and visual impairment.

Although all of you would agree with me that quite a lot has been done, the question is whether enough has been done to help them.

THANK YOU.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN URBAN POOR AREAS AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL URBAN ORGANIZATIONS

by
K A Jayaratne of Sevanatha

I wish to commence my presentation by quoting some statistics.

1.0 URBAN SECTOR - POPULATION GROWTH

Table 1

POPULATION GROWTH AND URBAN POPULATION GROWTH
ANNUAL GROWTH RATES

Population in 1000					Annual Growth Rate		
	1953	1963	1971	1981	1963- 1971	1971- 1981	1963- 1981
Total population	8098	10582	12690	14848	2.3	1.6	1.9
Urban population	1239	2016	2848	3192	4.4	1.2	2.6
Percent Urban	15.3	19.1	22.4	21.5			

Source : 1981 population census,
Department of Census and Statistics.

- In 1981 the total urban population in Sri Lanka was 3.2 million.
- There is an intercensal decline from 4.4 percent to between 1963 and 1971 to 1.2 percent from 1971 to 1981. In 1981, Urban growth was slower than total population growth.
- Factors associated with low growth rate of urban population are:
 - (a) Continued emphasis placed on the rural sector with welfare, education and health.
 - (b) The success of national family planning campaign.
 - (c) Low level of performance in urban economy.
 - (d) Rural settlements and colonization programs implemented successfully under the decentralization policy of the government.
 - (e) Cheap and abundant road and transportation systems in the country.

2.0 URBAN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of urban population of Sri Lanka is characterized by :

- (a) Majority of urban population is concentrated in a small number of large towns located in the south - western part of the country or the "Wet zone". The wet zone which comprises of roughly 25 percent of total land area has accounted for nearly 75 percent of the total urban population .
- (b) The large towns are located in the wet zone. By 1986, there were seven towns over 100,000 of which six were in the wet zone.
- (c) Colombo is the largest town with little over 700,000 population in 1990.
- (d) The population in the second largest town, Dehiwala- Mt. Lavinia which is located adjacent to Colombo, is nearly 200,000 population in 1990.

3.0 URBAN AREAS IN SRI LANKA

Urban area is defined based on the administrative boundaries by the department of Census and statistics in 1981. Areas come within the boundaries of municipal Councils(MCs), Urban Councils(UCs) and Town Councils(TCs) are called "Urban Areas".

In 1987, Town Councils were abolished with creation of Provincial Councils and Pradeshiya Sabha under the constitutional amendment of Sri Lanka. There are 51 local authorities in Sri Lanka, 12 Municipal Councils and 39 Urban Councils.

The use of the existing definition of "Urban Area" is misleading in understanding real situation of Urban population, Urban poverty and other aspects of the Urban economy social life.

According to the Urban sector study done by the USAID Colombo office (1990), if the distribution of Sri Lanka population is classified with a more comprehensive definition, Urban population will definitely increase, "For example, if all areas with a population of more than 5000 inhabitants were defined as Urban areas in Sri Lanka , the Urban population percentage would have been 38.8 percent in 1981.

There are areas which are presently considered as rural or Pradeshiya Sabhas have Urban characteristics and many problems in Urban nature such as high population and building densities, high percentage of non- agricultural employment and high rate of land use conversion from agriculture to small building / residential plots without adequate infrastructure. The form of Urban growth of Sri Lanka is changed in recent years due to the liberalized economic policies and internal civil disturbances. Sub - urbanization since 1970 s around Colombo and other major towns has been a very significant phenomenon. Sub- urbanized areas under official definition is not considered as Urban, but people living in these areas face many problems in Urban nature.

Sub - urbanization around Colombo has taken place at a very rapid rate. The average population growth in Colombo suburbs during past two decades has been well over the national Average.

According to the Urban Development Authority of Sri Lanka's definition 16 local authorities around Colombo including Colombo MC are counted in for Colombo Urban area (CUA) even though some local authorities of CUA are officially designated as Pradeshiya Sabhas or rural areas. The highest population density of 7800 persons per sq.km (1981) could be seen only in Colombo Urban Area. Such a higher density is not available in other Urban centers in the country. In view of the above it is logical to categorise CUA and all other officially designated Urban Local Authorities (10 MCs and 34 UCs) as "Urban Areas".

4.0 POOR URBAN AREAS

Poor areas within the Urban areas have to be identified based on the spatial distribution of poverty.

Generally two criteria are used by many agencies in Sri Lanka to identify urban poor.

- (A) Food stamps : number of the population receiving food stamps or poor relief in Urban areas.
- (B) Physical standard of shelter : number of the population living in semi - permanent and improvised dwellings in Urban areas.
 - (a) Poor relief stamps (food stamps) program is implemented island wide. Families with less than Rupees 700 (US \$22) per month are entitled to food stamps.

Data on number of families receiving stamps are available in district - wise. But the figures are not broken - down for urban and rural areas. According to the Colombo and the surrounding districts have the lowest percentage of people living on food stamps. Districts located far away from Colombo with low population densities have the highest. On the other hand, per capital income of rural peoples is lower than urban in Sri Lanka.

However, it is difficult to earmark poor areas physically in Urban Centers based on the poor relief stamps program because this population is scattered and mixed.

- (b) The incidence of sub - standard housing and lack of access to services is the second criterion to measure urban poverty. This situation in Sri Lanka in 1981 is presented by the following two tables in proportionate terms:-

Table No. 2
Urban Housing stocks by Type - 1981

Type	No	percentage
Permanent	346,600	68.0
Semi - Permanent	124,000	24.4
Improvised	38,800	7.6
Total	509,400	100.00

Source : Census of Population and Housing 1981

Table No. 3
URBAN AMENITIES - 1981

Amenity	Percentage
Piped water supply	46.5
Protected well (within premises)	27.7
Flush and water seal latrines	54.5
No toilets	16.4
Electricity connection	45.9
Tenure :	
Owner occupied	57.3
Rented or leased	29.6

Source : census of population and Housing , 1981.

Areas with semi - permanent improvised dwelling and lack of basic amenities are visible physically in urban areas. These a sub- standard dwellings or low income housing make several types of settlement arrangements which are called as slums, (squatters) line - houses (workers housing) unserviced neighbourhoods and refugee camps.

The 1981 census of Population and Housing indicated that such settlements arrangements accounted for 53 percent of housing stock in other Urban Areas.

As shown in the map of Colombo MC, the Physical locations of areas which are predominantly, occupied by the low income /sub - standard dwelling are indicated in maps of other Urban local authorities also by the agencies responsible for Urban development activities. When these areas are compared with the rest of ULA Areas , following characteristics are well predominant.

- (a) Majority of families earned less than Rs. 700/= per month.
- (b) High rate of unemployment and under employment.
- (c) Poor access to services.
- (d) Mainly depending on the informal sector activities.
- (e) More than 75 percent of family expenditure for food.
- (f) Diseases, social isolation, crimes, misery, drug abuse, malnutrition and psychological stresses are common human problems.

Though the slum and Upgrading program of the Million Houses Program has made some improvements in providing land tenure and housing loans, still there are many communities to be reached and the deteriorated living environment are major problems.

Therefore, the identification of sub - standard human settlements with poor amenities as “Urban poor areas” is appropriate.

5.0 NATIONAL URBAN PROBLEMS.

The Urban sector studies of Sri Lanka done by the USAID -Colombo office (Final report - Urban sector Study - Sri Lanka - Prepared by PADCO , Inc, Washington , DC 20001 - March 1991 and the Asian Development Bank (Urban Sector Profile for Sri Lanka draft for bank and country review by Gillmore Hankey Kirke Ltd. London and resource Development consultants, Inc. Colombo -December 1988 - 200p) have identified following as Urban Sector issues in Sri Lanka.

- (1) Unequal distribution of urban population : The country as a whole experience a slow urban growth , but there is a dramatic increase in urban population in case of Colombo Urban Area (CUA).
- (2) Urban Poverty : In 1984, the country’s GNP per capital was US \$ 300. Though this little above the average of US \$ 260 for all developing countries , poverty in Sri Lanka is experienced by the majority of the population. More than half of the country’s population received food relief stamps in 1988. On the basis of caloric intake , nearly 25 percent of the population are below the absolute poverty line. It is estimated that 37 percent of the pre-school age children suffer from malnutrition and more than 50 percent are affected by nutritional anemia. In case of urban areas the situation sometimes is worse than rural.
- (3) High rate of sub - standard housing (slum and shanties) Growth.

- (4) Urban problems in CUA is due to the Colombo's primacy: Increasing land values, conversion of peripheral land without - proper planning and necessary infrastructure, slum and shanties, traffic congestion.
- (5) Environmental Degradation :

Nearly country's all large industrial complexes and about 80 percent of the medium and small industries are located in and around Colombo (CUA). These activities have caused serious water, air and soil pollution problems. Most industries are located in close proximity to residential areas. Uncontrolled urban growth has already deteriorated urban environment with respect to increased waste water generation, and increased air pollution.

The MEIP - Colombo has identified following as the critical environmental problems in the CUA.

1. Solid waste.
2. Deterioration of water quality.
3. Flooding and stagnation.
4. Traffic congestion and air pollution.
5. Noise pollution.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN POOR URBAN AREAS:

The list given here is the prioritized environmental issues in poor urban areas in Sri Lanka agreed upon at the AP 2000 national consultation workshop by the participants from CBOs, NGOs and Government sector. All participated at the workshop had a fair amount of experience in Urban environmental issues . In 1992 Oct. the MEIP - country workshop on "Human Settlements and the Living Environment" was held at five selected poor urban areas located within the CUA. At this workshop, GO and participants had the opportunity to interface directly with urban poor and to identify the environmental issues. Again at the AP - 2000 national Consultation Workshop, environmental issues in poor urban areas were identified through discussions and iterations took place between the list given below is a participants (NGOs and GOs). The list given below is a combination of priority issues identified at both workshops. It has two parts - issues and their consequences on the community life.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES	IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY LIFE
<p>a. Household level</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 No toilet facilities 2 Lack of safe drinking water 3 No drains for waste and surface water discharge 4 No environmentally sound shelter lack of ventilation, light privacy and safety 5 Indoor air pollution due to the use of fuel wood 6 No space for solid waste disposal 7 Insecurity of land tenure <p>b. Neighbourhood and community level</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8 No pipe water supply 9 No sanitary excreta disposal system (sewerage) 10 Lack of solid waste 11 No proper drainage system 12 No proper roads and streets. 13 Lack of recreational areas and library facilities 14 Lack of enforcement of planning and building regularizations 15 Lack of options for sustainable livelihood 16 No electricity facilities 17 No proper supports for promotion and empowerment of CBos 18 Lack of government and municipal services for health, maintenance, education, sports, skills development, family planning 19 Weak linkages between government, and NGOs to community/CBOs. <p>c. Metropolitan level</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20 Lack landuse zoning and development plan 21 Lack of public services and infrastructure 22 Weak /absent of maintenance system 23 High concentration of low-lands with out proper land use and drainage plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sub-standard housing * Communicable disease * High infant mortality rate * Health hazards * Mosquito menace * Lung diseases * low productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Health hazards * High infant mortality rate * Mosquito menace * Malnutrition * High infant mortality rate * Low productivity * Social isolation, crimes, misery, drug abuse * Psychological stresses * Illegal constructions and extensions Poverty * Unemployment * Dependency * No proper leadership * Socially vulnerable groups (women, children, disabled) are at risk * Deterioration of amenities * Maintenance becomes a developmental priority * lack of operational literacy * Lack of awareness * Resource wastage and duplication of efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Growth of human settlements in environmentally sensitive areas * Health hazardness and degradation of living environment * Flood, stagnation of water

7.0 Role of the Developmental Organization

The urban informal sector is run by low income people. The services of low income people are essential for the proper function of urban centers. Having acknowledged and underlined the importance of low income people in the urban economy, various development programs have been implemented to improve the standards of living of these people. It has always been found that poor communities have the strength and determination to gain a higher status of their life. But development programs have failed to integrate activities and people on a basis of self-help and self-management. This is because these communities lack basic information about formal sector functions, basic management and technical knowledge to run their own organizations and businesses, credit facilities proper guidance for community development, etc. In other words the urban poor, unlike rural poor enjoy a relatively lower level of institutional development and access to information. Without depending on the state or the formal private sector, poor

people in slums and shanties gradually improve their living environment by investing very considerable amounts of their own energy resources and ingenuity. But it is understood that the State or NGOs, or the poor alone cannot directly improve the standard of living for everyone.

In this process, different organizations involved in development activities should recognize and legitimate these constructive efforts and determination of the poor by introducing supportive and enabling policies and strategies in order to solve the environmental issues at various levels and scales. In our context, five different actors can be identified as organization which have been involved in development activities for many years.

1. People / Family
2. Community Based organizations (CBOs)
3. Non Governmental organizations (NGOs)
4. Private - profit - oriented organizations
5. Government

Forbes Davidson and Peterburg have presented the interrelationship of these organization in a graphical form as follows :-

Having analyzed the urban scenario, institutions engaged in development activities and environment problems faced by the poor, the role that each organization has play is very clear. In order to create an environmentally sound sustainable future, supportive understanding and cooperation among different actors are vital. Annex two illustrates actions suggested by Davidson and Peterburg (IHS Netherlands, Working Papers, 1993) broadly related to each actor in terms of policy, attitude, institutional framework and capability for each actor. They look development role of each actor, first inward and secondly outward. It is the opinion of the author of this paper that inter-organizational understanding and cooperation are very vital to solve many urban environmental problems in Sri Lanka.

ANNEX

ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

(Forbes Davidson and Monique Peltenburg, **Governmental and NGOs /CBOs working together for better cities**, IHS, The Netherlands, 1993.)

5.1.1 Small NGOs /CBOs

Looking inward NGOs should improve their performance by :

- * improving their knowledge of and contacts with local government
- * improving the professionalism of their organization by getting training in management, finance, strategic planning and communication in addition to developing and improving their existing technical skills. They need to develop a strategic organizational view.

- * Linking with other NGOs/CBOs to form networks which can provide complementary specializations.

5.1.2 Large and intermediary NGOs

Looking inward they seek to improve their own performance by:

- * Developing clear longer term strategies of action which take into account the aims of significant impact on the urban poor and sustainability of action.
- * Improving knowledge of and contacts with local government , provincial government and where appropriate the National Government.
- * Improving their own organization to achieve a high level of competence and accountability.
- * Developing staff's management skills, especially in areas of strategic planning, communication and training, in addition to improving their specialized technical skills.

Looking outward they should seek to improve the performance of other organizations, particularly smaller NGOs, but may also have a role in training and improving the performance of governmental organizations. The main means are:

- * Working with government on policy, planning and program development.
- * Working to improve the management and planning capacity of smaller NGOs and CBOs.
- * Improving the fund raising capacity of smaller NGOs/CBOs.
- * Stimulating the improvement of the technical capacity of smaller NGOs/CBOs.
- * Advocacy - attempting strategically to influence opinion and policy in a positive manner.
- * Communication-promoting the dissemination of information.

5.1.3 Local Government

Looking inward , there is generally a need to aim to improve its own performance in the following areas:

- * Review of policy relating to relations with NGOs and ensuring that policy is supportive.
- * Take full advantage of opportunities for decentralized decision making.
- * Try to decentralize operations through developing appropriate structures for involving community and CBOs within the city, and give sufficient authority to sub districts local implementation teams to allow to cooperate.
- * Organize or take advantage of training opportunities in the areas of strategic management, participative action planning and working with CBOs and NGOs.
- * Review organization culture and take steps to make the organization more service orientated.
- * Try to minimize transfer of staff who are involved in building and maintaining local community contacts.
- * Improve information flows-share experience with other local governments and NGOs.

Looking outward:

- * Review procedures relating to local planning and development to fully involve NGOs and CBOs. This means ensuring that there should be effective two-way communication and the delegation of certain elements of decision making.
- * Try to support NGOs and CBOs by facilitating their access to special sources of finance.
- * Try to support by facilitating access to training opportunities.

5.1.4 State or Provincial Government

Looking inward the main areas of potentially effective action are:

- * Review policy to ensure that it is supportive of effective cooperation - specially in the area of decentralization. NGOs and local government should be involved in this process.
- * Review legislation to ensure it is supportive. In particular review the operation of measures aimed at decentralization.
- * Review state administrative regulations which encourages the building up of constructive relationships.
- * Review processes of planning and development programs to ensure participation.
- * Organize or take advantage of opportunities for staff training in areas of strategic management and planning , especially related to working with other groups such as NGOs and private sector.
- * Encourage working with large and intermediary level NGOs.

Looking outward , State or Provincial Government has key roles to :

- * Review of policy in areas related to urban development and social policy to ensure that the potential roles of NGOs and CBOs are encouraged. In particular to review policy and implementation related to decentralization. Local Government representatives and NGOs should be involved in this.
- * Review planning processes and development programmes to ensure they allow encourage participation.
- * Review consultation processes to ensure involvement of NGOs.
- * Review legislation and financial framework to make it more supportive of cooperation.
- * Encourage links with international organizations in these areas.
- * Develop capacity of staff in fields of strategic planning and working with non-governmental groups.

Looking outward , Central Government has a critical strategic role as it sets the patten and the example for all other levels of government. Key actions include :

- * Making clear statements of a positive policy in this area.
- * Providing or ensuring guidelines, information and training support for lower levels of government.
- * Stimulate access to training opportunities for NGOs
- * Ensuring the administrative and financial framework is conducive , first in the area of decentralization to local government and second in encouraging the role of intermediary NGOs by building them into relevant policy development and planning processes.

(K.A. Jayaratne, **URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY AND NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS** MEIP-Colombo October 1993)

1.5 DEFINITION AND TYPOLOGY

According to the study proposal, this study is broadly to understand the impacts of urban environmental degradation on the poor. The urban poor in the CUA live in urban low-income settlements called slums , shanties and un-serviced neighbourhoods.

A manual for the improvement programme of urban low-income groups, prepared by the Ministry of Local Government , Housing and Construction (MLGH&C) in 1984 has given the following typology for low-income settlements or the urban poor areas, which are mostly located in the CUA :

1. Slums: Old deteriorating tenements or sub-divided detached houses. The slum tenements , built mostly of permanent and very often single roomed and compactly arranged in back to back rows. A cluster of tenement units with a definite property boundary is called a "Tenement Garden" it often shares common amenity and badly maintained. The occupants have a legal occupancy.
2. Shanties: These are improvised and unauthorized shelters constructed by the urban squatters on state or privately owned land without any legal right of occupancy.
3. Local Authority Labour Lines or Derelict Living Quarters : These are derelict housing areas belonging to the LA government agencies which are unable to maintain the quality of housing owing to financial and property management problems.
4. Unserviced Neighbourhoods:
There are two types under this category-
 - a badly serviced residential areas in sub-urban areas of Colombo are characterized by improvised structures and/or shelters built with traditional, often rural type methods and materials. As a distinction from the squatter areas, the residents, although of low income category have definite legal titles or leasehold rights for the land, and
 - b the second category is the upgraded low-income settlements which have little or no water and sanitary amenities and other basic services. They were originally shanty settlements located in the areas which were legally and technically suitable for permanent shelter upgrading. Under the government sponsored community based housing program these settlements were regularized and the land have been allocated. The distinction between the previously mentioned categories is that the residents are given the public leasehold title for the land.

DEFINITION

Environment:

The physical , social, economic, political and institutional features of the ecosystems that surround and support human life and ultimately determine the quality of life is the definition referred for the purpose of this study. (Bartone 1990)-Yock-Shiu f Lee "Myths of environmental Management and the Urban Poor, 1992".

Local Authorities

(LAs):

At present , there are three types of local government authorities in Sri Lanka. They are :

- a Municipal Councils - (MCs):
- b Urban Councils - (UCs);and
- c Pradeshiya Sabha - (PSs).

These local authorities have been constituted to serve the various needs of the people in their areas. MCs are situated in highly dense and large urban areas (12 MCs in SL) , Urban Councils are in semi urban areas (39 UCs), While PSs established in village or rural areas. The powers conferred upon these local authorities are not of the same degree. MCs have the highest degree of authority while the PS have the lowest . These local authorities are established under three different legislative enactments; they are as follows :

1. MCs under the Municipal Councils Ordinance 29 of 1974.
2. UCs under the Urban Councils Ordinance No. 61 of 1939.
3. PCs under the Pradehsiya Sabha Act No. 15 of 1987.

Discussion

Mr. Willie Gamage of the SPCD, pointed out the need to identify the major issues particularly among the urban poor and the strategies planned out to overcome such issues by the NGO, working in this sphere of activity. Mr. Gamage while referring to the composition of the population area wise, stated that nearly 75% of the urban population is concentrated in the Western Province. It is only in Colombo that an urban population of nearly one million is found. There are another 6 major towns, each having a population of about 200,000. There are a large number of other towns. Still urbanization cannot be construed as a serious issue when compared with other cities in the Asian region. This problem is aggravated by the existence of slums, shanties, lines and even huts, particularly associated with marshy strips of land. Mr. Gamage, elaborating on the factors presented by Mr. Jayaratne, highlighted the major problems that characterize the urban poor; namely meager income, difficulty in getting various services, source of income mainly in the non-formal sector (scavenging, selling goods at fairs or portering). Very often these are not permanent sources of income. Another important factor is that nearly 75% of their earnings are spent on food. Scarcity of good drinking water, lack of sanitary and sewage facilities and the absence of facility for waste disposal, are other related snags. Since in many locations the people do not have a legal right to the land they occupy, they are not interested in repairing deteriorated amenities and make their habitat a cleaner place. These factors create an unhygienic situation leading to such menaces as mosquito breeding and infectious diseases. Ultimately this would also give rise to a drop in the efficiency levels of the production process. As pointed out by Mr. Jayaratne, the high infant mortality rate is also another repercussion of these aspects. Also lack of entertainment facilities, make these people alienated from the society. This is more evident from the children and the youths who become more vulner-

able to crimes, drug addiction and mental depression. Another pressing issue is that their shelters are ill ventilated, making particularly the women prone to respiratory diseases, which in turn contribute to a decline in their working capacity. The next set of problems dealt with the absence of a proper supporting-services network. There is no mechanism to build up the necessary strength and power within the people to pursue their activities. All these contributed to a dependency syndrome. The absence of an integrated development blue print is very evident. Also, there are problems associated with women, children and handicapped people. Opportunities for the emergence of an accepted leadership are disappearing. In this sector of the urban poor, they have less alternatives to build up a long standing stable life style. Unlike in a village, sustainable job opportunities are meager in the city, thereby causing poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, social unrest and social and injustice.

It was observed that there is a pressing need for improved communication, retrieval of information, training and inter-relationships among these people. The goal of SPCD is to have an inter-relationship network among the urban poor, facilitating the supply of resources, exchange of information and investment to maximize the gains from limited resources. Lack of awareness adversely affects this community, in that they fail to get in time the diverse services supplied by the state and this leads to wastage of resources and duplication of work.

Mr. Gamage then touched upon the role of supporting organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, public sector institutions and the NGO. A major part of the burden is shouldered by the state organizations. Also there is a private sector comprising the profit-motivated organizations and the development-oriented institutions. The magnitude of the issue is to determine as to how to intervene in this process and workout modalities to overcome these issues.

At present there are about 1,100 locations in the city of Colombo comprising of shanties and slums ranging from 25 to over 1000 families in each location. About 50% of the city population live in sub-standard housing. Their sources of income are irregular and although some of them earn more than their rural counterparts, most of it is spent on junk food and liquor.

Mr. Gamage added that, although the government is very much concerned about this community, since their problems are many and complicated it has not been possible for the government to give attention to many of their problems. The situation is same with the services provided by the municipality. One factor that contributes to this plight is lack of space in these locations. According to his short experience in this field, he is of the opinion that the issue of the urban poor should be given priority. Unlike in cities Manila and Bombay, during the past ten years, the policy makers in Sri Lanka, inspired by the thoughts of political leadership, have emerged with a comprehensive plan to give recognition to urban community. The problem is more serious in developing nations. The dependency syndrome among this community is more evident because they are aware that they have no legal right to the place they occupy. Yet in Sri Lanka, these people, whether they live in a shanty on a marshy land, or on land belonging to another party, know that they have very remote chances of owning that land. Mr. Gamage stressed the importance of creating alternative opportunities for them. Mr. Gamage cited as an example one of their projects which produced brushes to an available market. The selected trainees numbering 15, who came on the first day left the project gradually and as a result the project failed. The problem of generating job opportunities for the urban poor youth has to be examined analytically and comprehensively. This is an area where experience is lacking. Revolving funds to grant loans too runs into problems when it comes to recoveries. Organizing the urban women towards a cause too is hard because they have more opportunities to earn money more easily through various illegal or dubious means.

Mr. Samarasinghe, from the NGO Council stressed the following points while making his observations.

- * 6-7 decades ago Colombo was known as “the Garden city of East Asia”. Today it is one of the dirtiest cities.
- * 50% of the city dwellers are in sub-standard houses with-out proper sanitary facilities and good drinking water.
- * During the past 5 decades no concrete effort has been mad to surmount these problems.
- * Promises made on various political platforms have not materialized.
- * There had been no concerted effort to get rid of these problems in the city of Colombo which is only 15sq. miles in extent.
- * Has there been a sustained effort to keep the slums going?
- * An estimated 90% of the city dwellers are infected with filaria.
- * Floods in June 1992 very seriously affected the Colombo city. It should have been an eye-opener but has anything substantial happened?
- * Drainage outlets do not function properly and as a result some areas of the city go under water.
- * The efforts of several NGOO for the improvement of the prevailing conditions of a small city like Colombo was not successful due to vested interests of some unseen force which seems to be happy with the status-quo.
- * Poverty of the people in the sub-standard houses should be tackled.
- * There is a need for a process to improve the living standards of the people, such as sanitary conditions.
- * With the increase in population slum areas will proliferate.
- * Traffic congestion and lack of parking space for vehicles is another serious problem.
- * Incidence of air pollution due to the release of carbon monoxide from exhausts of motor vehicles is very high in the city.
- * The two major bus terminals in the heart of the city have been very badly planned.
- * Garbage disposal leaves much to be desired.

Mr. Premaratna from the Urban Development Authority expressed his views: The urban poor is only one aspect of the poverty assailing the whole country and the factors that cause poverty in urban areas have to be correctly understood. City here means both the place of living and the place of work. In a technologically developed situation where transport plays a major role the emphasis shift from the periphery to the city. Sri Lanka has immense resources which have not been properly identified. Other towns should be developed into cities to attract people and check the migration to the Colombo city. Apart from the Colombo city there are five other towns, large enough to be called cities. But these towns do not attract those who want to migrate into the urban areas. In the semi urban areas land resources are fast depleting with fragmentation. Town planning blueprints have failed to consider the question of absorbing this excess or the migrating rural population. The situation needs a network of small towns, emerging from a sound settlement policy.

Another factor Mr. Premaratne pointed out was the shortcomings in the transport system. Our railway system is under utilized. City dwellers prefer to use their own transport. Not more than 7% travel by train which implies a waste of resources. In conclusion Mr. Premaratna also highlighted the following issues:-

- * Land value in Colombo is exorbitant.
- * More people can be made to travel to Colombo for work from rural areas, releasing the congestion in the city if the rail transport system is improved.

- * The immediate suburbs like Kolonnawa and Maharagama should be improved to attract more people from the Colombo city to move out.
- * Attention should be paid more to poverty as a whole than to the poor.
- * There is a need for a comprehensive national settlement policy.
- * Sri Lanka's problem is slow urbanization unlike in some other countries which have confronted problems of speedier urbanization.
- * Town planning approach is defective. Very often attention is focused on selected sites, ignoring other areas of the city. Hence the wider objective of city development is sacrificed.

Mr. D.S. Liyanage of the Sri Lanka Canada Development Fund, made the following comments :-

Different zones of the Colombo Municipal area are treated in different ways by the same governing authority, namely the Colombo Municipal Council. For example in zones 3,4,5,6,7 (Kollupitiya, Bambalapitiya, Wellawatta, Cinnamon Gardens) the basic amenities provided by the Colombo Municipal Council are of a very high standard. But in other zones like 13, 14, 15 (Kotahena, Grandpass, Mattakkuliya), it is the opposite - waste disposal is not functioning well, unhygienic conditions prevail, shanty areas lack power supply and water supply is poor.

Also there had been instances of enforced settlement. People are shifted from one place and settled in another. Some of these places are swamps with no electricity. The students are uprooted from their schools. They have not been given assistance even to transport their household items. In such development tasks, it is imperative to consider the human angle. Materialistic development should co-exist with spiritual development. Mr. Liyanage added that when they questioned some of the mothers in those areas for their needs, their reply was that they would want nothing but to rid their children from drug addiction. The voluntary organizations can play a vital role in these areas because they can create awareness among the people. There are water tanks in some of these areas which are filled from time to time with water brought in bousers as the water supply lines are all damaged.

Ms. Neela Gunasekara from The Rural Housing Development Authority, made the following observations :-

- * The government has a policy to reduce the concentration of the low income population in cities.
- * Settling them on reclaimed lands had resulted various other problems.
- * Media has highlighted the various repercussions of such settlement strategies.
- * National Housing Development Authority while working in close contact with those in the low income groups, has settled them on reclaimed land to facilitate the maintenance work of canals like Heen Ela and Bolgoda Ela.
- * They face many problems when they are uprooted from their original places and re-settled in other places.
- * The new settlers are settled not in isolation, but in existing residential areas. Yet the new settlers tend to get into isolated groups since the old settlers resent them.
- * NGOO should be able to intervene and settle such problems in association with the state.
- * Crime has increased at an alarming rate. In areas like Ratmalana which is fast becoming an industrial zone, there is a large influx of young girls from rural areas for jobs. The low income settlers are engaged in various acts of vice.
- * According to police reports, the crime rate has increased by 36% after the new settlements. Police do not get the necessary assistance from the other residents to combat these crimes: Social issues of this nature emerge.
- * NGOO can think of ways and means to help the police to control crimes.

Dr. Kingsley Heendeniya - Director of Sri Lanka Red Cross made the following comment :-

Due to the industrial revolution the environmental problem has assailed all parts of the world for over a 100 years. Sri Lanka is no exception. Environment means not only the physical environment, but it also includes physical, social and economic components. The funding agencies fund a cause depending on how they perceive and define that particular cause. Very often they define a problem in terms of a preconceived solution.

Mr. Gunaratne - Chief Health Education Officer, Colombo Municipality mentioned the following points :-

- * The problem of environmental health is of prime importance.
- * One good forum to discuss this issue is the monthly meeting of the municipality which is open to voluntary organizations. The low income groups in the municipal area are also represented at this meeting.
- * Different NGO work with different goals and move towards different directions. Some mechanism is necessary to co-ordinate their activities.

A participant who claimed to have over 16 years of experience in the area of urban poor, specially at grass-root levels made the following observations:

- * Rehabilitation of urban poor has made great strides. Activities to assist those living in low lying areas are receiving priority attention.
- * Distribution of lands, putting up houses and shifting of people to areas with more development potential have all being pursued vigorously.
- * Yet the problem remains to a certain extent because of one drawback: the poor remain isolated from the rest of the community, specially those in power. They must have greater sensitivity to the needs of the poor.
- * There are situations where the urban poor poses a threat to the rest of the population, because of environmental pollution, etc.
- * These problems are not caused by the people. It is the planners who create structures for the people and create problems. These structures are not equipped to solve the problems of the people.
- * More of the NGO resources should be mobilized to iron out this problem.
- * Waste disposal, lack of space for the playgrounds are other issues that plague the shanty dwellers.
- * Sensitivity to the needs of the mass of these people has been abandoned. In this context the human content, the suffering of these people, compassion for them warrants more attention.
- * The NGO should command more recognition, their role and their functions need be understood better.
- * Since the government agencies and the NGO are playing mutually benefiting roles the inter and intra links between the government agencies and the NGO need be strengthened. A better understanding of their vital roles is imperative.

Mr. M.S. Fernando from the Sri Lanka Land Reclamation Corporation, presented his views :-

Some are of the view that the government organizations are not sensitive to the needs of the people. This is partly correct. But another constraining factor is that they are hampered by lack of funds. Funds allocated for a project has to utilized for that project only. A way out of this problem is a concerted effort by both the state organizations and NGO. For example, in one project, when the

engineering aspect is looked after by a government organization the NGO can attend to the human development aspect. The Sri Lanka Land Reclamation Corporation would undertake the rehabilitation work of the Serpentine Canal where there will also be a relocation component. The interested NGO could join.

Mrs. Gamage of the NGO, Water Decade Service, made her contributions to the discussions highlighting the following points :-

- * The forum created for a dialogue among the interested organizations is a step in the right direction, so that one would know what the other is doing.
- * This course of action will foster a better understanding between those who work in these organizations.
- * Public sector officials working closely with the NGO can do a better service for the good of the people.

Mr. David Morgan, Consultant on the Greater Colombo Flood Control Environmental Improvement Project, W.S. Atkins International, joined the discussion at this stage.

He stated that he had been involved for the past 3 years in upgrading and relocating shanty communities. People were impressed with the progress made so far. For this part of the project over Rs.400 million was required and funding was a problem which impeded the execution of all the community development work of the project. The project dealt with 5000 - 6000 housing units involving over 40,000 people. The project naturally depended on funding agencies. The NGO can come out with smaller projects within this sphere of community development.

Mr. Neil O'Sullivan - Community Water and Sanitation Project joined the discussion.

He stated that he was assisting the World Bank to prepare the Clean Settlements Project. He added that in this task much stress would be laid on people's participation, to ensure that they had greater control over the development of their community. Mr. Sullivan wanted to know whether any mode had been made use of with the people's participation as the basis of development.

In response to the above request, Mr. Jayaratne traced the origin of the Clean Settlement Programme and stated that it was the outcome of a mini-research project conducted by "Sevanatha". The research conducted, developed a community action planning approach which was being promoted by the National Housing Development Authority. He added that on the basis of this approach an action plan to develop some settlement in Colombo was evolved, targeting community involvement in environmental management programme. The government had already upgraded 100 settlements in Colombo and state intervention was by way of providing land ownership and housing loans. Additional resources can be pooled with the intervention of NGO and other community based organizations. The short term needs can be looked after by the people. But for long term needs such as provision of infra-structure, international funding agencies will have to assist.

Mr. M. Hosaka - United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, brought the following points to the notice of the participants :-

- * Community action plan was primarily developed by the National Housing Development Authority and the community leaders.
- * This plan aims at mobilizing the services, not only of the participants but also of the NGO, other institutions and communities.

- * The plan also earmarks community workshops corresponding to the needs and priorities of a particular community.
The modules of these workshops are meant for community members to analyse issues affecting them and formulate strategies.
- * This strategy is sometimes modified according to the situation and executed with the participation of the people.
- * Before a housing loan is granted, another workshop is organized for the people to discuss and design the building according to guidelines. Even the procedural implications involved in obtaining the loan from the NHDA are explained.
- * Such community workshops are the main elements of community action plan approach.

Mr. Nandasena Madugoda - IDEA, Kandy made his observations.

He was critical of the fact that more talking was done with less work. He was of the view that the parliamentarians should attend these seminars where problems of low income groups in the urban sector are brought to light. The people suffering in miserable poverty in the urban areas are treated only as voters at elections, but not as human beings. The NGOO come across various stumbling blocks when they work with people in slums and shanties. The public sector officials and the politicians are not sensitive to these obstacles.

Another participant brought the following points to light :-

- * Influential people use their clout to obtain the best out of the different supporting services at the expense of the poor.
- * It is essential that organizations should rally round and create a public concern with regard to the plight of the urban poor.
- * Environmental problems increased with the increase of population.
- * The factories should be cited in industrial zones set up for the purpose, away from the cities.
- * Factories concentrated within the city attract more of the poor into the city leading to congestion.
- * Although there are factories and various other sources of income, the poverty situation still prevails in the city.
- * Some people in the city are not worse off financially. They are poor in certain other aspects. they earn Rs.250 - Rs.300 per day at times. Most of them squander their money on drinks and eventually give their families a meager sum, hardly sufficient for their maintenance.
- * The poor badly need training in financial discipline and management of maintaining the family budget.

Mr. Ravi Kandiah - Dangerous Drugs Control Board, brought to the notice of the participants of the following :-

The Board is equipped with a counseling service and in-house treatment centre for drug addicts. Trained officers from the Board work in close relation with the municipal health authorities for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts and the Board was ready to work in collaboration with the NGOO as well.

Mr. Jayaratne while summing up highlighted the following points and concluded the discussion.

- * Our attention should be focused on environmental issues affecting the urban poor.
- * In this effort the public sector, the private sector and the NGOO should work together.

- * It transpired during the discussion that no single organization could tackle the urban environmental problem by itself.
- * The discussion shed light on as to how assistance could be obtained for our programmes of intervention.
- * The clean settlement concept and the relocation of shanty communities need further discussion and elaboration.
- * Most of the NGOOs are aware of the functions of the state organizations.
- * In the area of land alienation the NGOOs are helpless and the state sector is well equipped with the necessary legal arm to intervene.
- * The state sector programmes in the urban areas have their own shortcomings.
- * Under the 10 million houses programme about 64% of the shanty dwellers in the city of Colombo have been given the ownership right to their lands - about 2 perches in extent for each.
- * But beyond this stage too problems prevail, such as the environmental issues where NGOOs can more effectively intervene, in association with community based groups.
- * It should be noted that the clean settlement concept emerged as a result of a pilot project handled by a NGO.
When the state sector is stuck for funds, the NGOOs can suggest a way out or alternatives, on the basis of their wider experience.
- * If the problem is clearly identified, the resources cannot be much of a problem. One example is Gajabapura Bo Sevana settlement.
- * In the case of Gajabapura Bo Sevana Settlement, after the state sector completed its part of the project, the voluntary organizations took over, prepared an action plan in collaboration with the community, procured the funds in assistance with the other NGOOs and improved the sewage network, community halls, lavatories etc. and did even the road network. This is a striking example where the concerted efforts of the state sector and the non-governmental sector paid dividends.

Co-operation between Government and Non-Government Organizations for Development of Urban Environment.

by

Mr. Chandrasena Maliyadde

*Director General, Ministry of Policy
Planning and Implementation.*

Despite the fact that the theme of this seminar is the urban poor, I would like to share my experiences in the area of integrated rural development. Organizations, donors, projects and programmes for the benefit of the rural poor are many. But the more acute problem is the urban poor seems to have been overlooked for two reasons: Firstly the government and the NGO are more interested in coping with the problems of rural poverty. Secondly the rural poor have access to resources like land, tanks, agriculture for survival even if income from employment gets disrupted unlike their counterparts in the urban sector who have to depend totally on cash incomes.

My experiences with international NGO are associated with the Liaison Unit of our Ministry which register these organizations and offer them certain facilities and services.

The Mayor detailed certain environmental problems prevailing in the city of Colombo. The first census of the city was taken in 1881 when the city had a population of 111,000 which shot up to 585,000 in 1981 or a hundred years later. Now it is close upon one million registering an increase of 500% whereas the extent of the city has grown only by 50% from 24.5 sq. km. to 87.2 sq. km. The population density has grown from 4516 to 16755. The figures are self-explanatory of the problems facing the urban poor in Colombo. The city has developed as the administrative, political and commercial centre of the country. The public transport system finds it difficult to cope up with the increasing number of commuters to and from the city. Also, the import liberalization policies adopted since 1977 have contributed to a sharp increase in the vehicle fleet and it is reported that 35% of this fleet is registered in Colombo. This includes heavy vehicles too. The repercussions are air and noise pollution. The continuous road construction and repair work causes disruption to the smooth flow of traffic.

Large and small scale industries are located in Colombo and of these the bakeries which mostly use fuelwood produce heat and smoke. The high-rise buildings are said to be absorbing heat in the daytime and releasing it during the night, and such buildings destabilize the wind patterns. Industrial and domestic waste, and garbage have polluted the water in the city causing problems not only to the people but also to the animals, plants and fish. These are the environmental issues facing the urban poor.

To ease this situation and develop the environment two courses of action are available: the curative method and the preventive method. In the prevention process certain mistakes done in the past can be undone. NGO can play a very constructive role here.

The NGO have no legal authority whereas the government can bring in legislation, set up institutions, pass acts into law in order to preserve the environment. Urban Development Authority and the Central Environmental Authority are examples. In certain instances permission has to be obtained from these authorities to do businesses and such like which could have an adverse impact on the environment. However, the government cannot ensure that the regulations are adhered to for the simple reason that no government can monitor each and every activity. This is where the NGO and the other donor agencies could intervene. There are a large number of such organizations both local and international, working in the area of environment.

In certain spheres of activity, the NGOO have an edge over the other organizations, and even the government. They can gain access to the poor better than government institutions. The NGOO can facilitate community mobilization and their activities. They are adopting low-cost as well as innovative approaches. The NGOO can share these experiences as well as assist other institutions. Another important role the NGOO can play is that of a mediator between the government and the people. Generally the initial reaction of the public to a government approach is resistance. Even the projects launched by the government for the benefit of the people are not readily accepted. But when such projects are launched by the NGOO, people do not show any resistance. The NGOO can convince the people better than government institutions. In one of my experiences where we worked with the NGOO, we got the NGOO to work closely with the people whose feelings were better understood by them. They work like the representative of the people.

Even some donor agencies prefer to reach their target group through NGOO, and channel funds through NGOO. This sort of flexibility, autonomy and efficiency are some of the positive aspects of the NGOO vis-a-vis, the bureaucracy in particular.

The NGOO have another very important function: to create awareness of this theme - environment for the benefit of the urban poor. They can educate the public and alert them on the relevant issues through training, orientation and community mobilization.

In the case of organization and mobilization of people, caution has to be exercised. There is the tendency for NGOO to become the voice of such groups, put together by the NGOO themselves. There is a possibility for certain interested parties who are keen on voicing their ideas against the government, to rally round the NGOO and get more organized. It is this situation that has prompted certain countries to introduce legislation for exercising control over the NGOO. Despite the opportunities available for the NGOO to voice the people's interests and their needs these organizations have to accept the fact that they have to work in collaboration with the government. The government and the NGOO have a role complementary to each other. Imposition of state authority is possible only up to a certain extent, beyond which the state may need the assistance of other organizations. To cite one example dumping of garbage at every street corner is not legally allowed. But it is being done. This is an instance where NGOO can intervene and create an awareness among the people. This is not to undermine the role of NGOO restricting it to awareness creation or community mobilization. The stress should be on the fact that the government does the hardware part and NGOO the software part.

While the roles of the government and the NGOO are complementary to each other, it should avoid the hazardous area where the NGOO can turn out to be a government apparatus. The NGOO should jealously guard their independent status. Understanding and co-operation between these two is an indispensable condition for co-existence.

Where the functions of the government and the NGOO are concerned only the process differ but not the goal. In this process the NGO seems to be closer to the beneficiary or the target group than the government.

In Sri Lanka NGOO of three different categories operate: International NGOO, local NGOO receiving funds from local sources and the local NGOO funded by foreign sources as well as local sources both. The Ministry is more concerned about the international NGOO. With the liberalized economic policies introduced in 1977, a large number of international NGOO expressed their willingness to work in Sri Lanka and at that time there were no laws or regulations governing activities of such organizations. In this situation the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation intervened mainly to facilitate their operations in the country. Their activities are not supervised or monitored

by the Ministry. Statutory provision is available for local NGO to be registered under the Department of Social Services. The government is keen on getting the services of NGO specially in various projects funded by them and a question has now emerged as a result of the recommendations of the NGO Commission, as to whether the government should exercise a supervisory function over the NGO. There should be some organizational structure to co-ordinate the activities of these organizations.

After the presentation of Mr. Maliyadde the next discussion session commenced with **Mr. Willie Gamage** making his observations and elaborating on the following points:

- * This workshop is aimed at creating a forum for an exchange of ideas among state organizations dealing with environmental issues, NGO and other donor agencies.
- * The theme of the workshop is environmental issues that crop up when dealing with the urban poor.

Mr. Chandrasena Maliyadde, answering a question said that there are a large number of organizations and donors in the country, who are assisting activities, projects and programmes for the rural poor. But the urban poor receives less attention as their problems are more acute, often beyond the capacity of an NGO. Another factor to note is that the rural poor have more avenues and opportunities but in the case of the urban poor it is a struggle for survival. Mr. Maliyadde said that the Ministry has a separate unit where the international NGO can register and utilize the facilities and services offered to them by the Ministry.

Mr. Maliyadde stressing on a way out of the air pollution problem, referred to the curative methods and the preventive methods that can be adopted. He said that an attempt is now being made to undo the mistakes committed in the past. In order to establish the fact that NGO can mediate between the people and the government and they are more acceptable to the people than the government agencies, Mr. Maliyadde cited his experience at Muthurajawela where he had mobilized the services of the NGO to work closely with the people whose pulses are better felt by these organizations. He further stated that they worked in this project as the representatives of the people. Mr. Maliyadde clarifying certain issues stressed the following:

- * In channelling funds it would be a more appropriate mechanism for the donor agencies to channel the funds through the NGO. Some donors can reach the target group quickly in this manner.
- * In this way NGO enjoy flexibility, autonomy and efficiency.
- * The NGO can play the extremely important role of creating public awareness on environmental issues.
- * This process includes training, orientation, community mobilization and forming awareness groups among the people.
- * Extreme caution has to be exercised in forming these groups because there have been instances where in this task of organizing people, the NGO have become the voice of such groups and become a sort of threat to the government. People may rally round a NGO to become a more organized voice against the government. This fact has to be taken care of.
- * The NGO have to work in the interest of the people with due recognition extended towards the existing government. Also it necessitates mutual understanding between the government and the NGO.
- * Conversely the NGO should not become an agent of the government and should be able to work independently.

A participant expressing his views stated that in the case of the two institutions, the government and the NGO, their roles do not differ, but only the process of achieving their objectives are different.

The difference is also of a personal nature, the state official tends to adopt an authoritative attitude where as the NGO have innovative approaches. There should be a mechanism for these two organizations to understand each other. In IRDPP the state has relied heavily on NGO. Particularly in community mobilization programmes NGO are more effective. The communication gap that exists between the government institutions and the NGO in certain instances can be surmounted by creating a forum for a dialogue.

NGO commission will look into this aspect of registration to consider whether it is really necessary. With the decentralization process the activities of the Social Services Department have been decentralized and in that context registration is now not handled by a central office. In addition to registration with the Social Service Department which is considered basic there are other ways like obtaining the status of an approved charity etc.

It was also pointed out that it would be a difficult task for a NGO to implement a general development programme which consists of technical, social and even political components. In certain programmes, particularly those directly concerned with the government there are no opportunities for NGO and the government to work together.

Ms. Seha Tornquist observed that the NGO sector is more organized. There is the need for co-ordination between the NGO at different levels. The NGO should be involved both at the beginning (implementation level) and at the end (monitoring level).

The discussion was followed by a question and answer session:

It was revealed that the Red Cross Society had not been registered as a NGO. About 45 international NGO are registered with the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation. NGO that are registered with the Ministry, have recognition and also the Ministry acts as a facilitator.

In the absence of co-ordination between the NGO there is overlapping of work. For better co-ordination there should be some mechanism to register all the NGO. There are also some organizations masquerading as NGO, but with vested interests.

The government programmes very often lacks a social dimension. The social component, the people, the communities and the groups should be taken into consideration in making decisions.

It will not be an easy task to bring together the NGO with diverse interests. At the planning stage itself, the roles and responsibilities of the NGO should be identified and defined.

“Women’s Participation in Environmental Issues”.

by

*Ms. Monica Ruwanpathirana of PIDA
(English translation)*

I wish to dwell on the subject of “Environment, Women and Development”. Presently I am involved in a project related to this subject and work with about eight women. I have observed that they have a flexibility in their attitudes and have a high degree of dedication to the task.

The themes: environment, women and development, slums & women in semi-urban areas cannot be detached from its historical perspective. We have to trace back to the beginning as to why this importance has been attributed to women in relation to the environment. Even at the time of evolution of man, the tribal community was closely wedded to the environment. In this community there was no close communion between man and woman. The man who came out of water, climbed trees, dropped his tail, got used to share the space with his peers and live as a tribe. They created different civilizations according to the type of environment they got adjusted. They worshipped the sun and the moon and there are such tribes even today. Such tribes who derived a pleasure in this beautiful combination of man and environment, developed an attitude of ‘live and preserve the environment’. These characteristics are visible even today among Maori tribes in the Central American, African and Pacific Regions and the Aborigines in New Zealand. In this social order where environment was worshipped, development was environment - related and the people grouped together in an eco-friendly stream of life. It is this philosophy that was profounded by the Red Indian Chief, Seattle in his book “The Sacred Land”.

Man and woman both were inter-related to the eco-system in which they lived. The legendary tales and folk tales about mountains and rivers such as Himalayas and Ganges, portray the inspiration and strength, the people derived from the environment.

With the evolution of man, from the tribal age through the age of slavery to feudalism, we can see two major events, the expansion of capitalism and the evolution of the family as a unit. In this scenario the roles of the male and the female changed and the man became outward-oriented and the woman inward-oriented. Woman at home had the responsibility to bring up children and prepare food while the man went out in search of food. Due to the preparation of food the woman gets involved with the task of preserving the environment. She had to depend on the environment for fuelwood, vegetables, water and herbal medicine.

As a result the woman became entrapped in the house and her major role was to bring up children. She had less exposure to other activities which were mainly done by men. Common sayings we hear, “Women’s brain is limited to the handle of the ladle”, “Woman knows only to add salt to the soup”, reveal that women throughout have been confined to the kitchen. However, the role in the house demands a close communion with nature.

With the emergence of capitalism wealth came to be concentrated in the hands of a few. They gradually became the owners of the means of production. They owned land and paddy fields but did not cultivate themselves’. They owned houses but did not live therein. They led a life of indolence and luxury. This paved the way for the rise of the two social strata, the rich and the poor; the former in the minority and the latter in the majority.

Even the scientific advancement that followed the Industrial Revolution catered to a selected few and not to the mankind as a whole. As a result a large number of people got used to luxuries and a

multi-product system spread all over the world thereby forming themselves into a separate group. These new life styles of the rich led to production on a large scale. But the development that arises in this context is not the one that is balanced relative to the people but one that collapses soon since it is distorted and not in keeping with the life styles of people. The repercussions are, large scale clearing of forests, overproduction and the use of unnecessary products. The concept adhered to is, not consumption for consumption but consumption for marketing. In the whole production process marketing takes pride of place with price factor receiving more attention. This development does not tend to preserve the environment but lays more emphasis on the quantity of goods produced.

The overproduction has its adverse effects. In New Zealand chemicals are used to grow apples on a large scale whereas in Australia, grape flowers are destroyed to control prices if a glut is likely. Due to overproduction in garment industry, quite often a dress remains in vogue for a couple of months and it gives way for a dress of the latest fashion. Such distorted development occurs.

Because of this imbalance in production in relation to man, the balanced life style the man has practiced for a long time has started to change.

Not only in our country, in India, Nepal, Thailand, or in the whole of South-East Asia in general, the clearing of forests had seriously affected farm production driving the peasants away from their farm lands. They migrate to the city in search of jobs and exert a heavy pressure on city life. They find it difficult to get adjusted to the city life. In Sri Lanka those who have migrated to the city have settled down on lands belonging to others or on state property (by the rail track or near a canal) where they can have easy access to water. Away from their roots they spend a comparatively disorganized life and succumb to various influences.

The pervasive theme that envelopes these low income group urban settlers is their feeling of uncertainty especially uncertainty in their ways of earning. They get work for two or three days a month and not for the rest of the month. If a ship is anchored they get continuous work for about 10 days. Unloading and loading goods, working as hired labourers are their uncertain sources of income. They live on a daily basis and in conditions of uncertainty. They are therefore forced to develop a different way of living to make both ends meet within the very meagre earnings they get.

This sense of uncertainty and their way of living give rise to a sub-culture. One example of this sub-culture is the marriage which very often collapses after sometime. In this atmosphere marriage has become very flexible; marriage and separation are rather easier. Ethics, customs, education, and such like are influenced by this uncertain economic base. The urban poor woman is quite different from her counterpart in the rural area in that the former leads a life of uncertainty in a family supported by an uncertain source of income. She sometimes has to put on a hard struggle to earn a few rupees to supplement her husband's income. Yet they have less opportunities for jobs in the non-formal sector. In areas like Ratmalana, Dehiwala, Maharagama, Kolonnawa and Dematagoda, job opportunities in factories, etc. are minimal for the urban poor males and females. Those who come from outside are in occupation of these jobs and they reside in the city. There is a large labour surplus among the slum dwellers. This is a paradoxical situation.

Another damaging factor is the sanitary aspect of the jobs, if any, the urban poor get. Examples are the tea blending stores where the workers are exposed to the tea dust and the joss stick factories where very often the girls have to work under insanitary conditions with their hands covered with the thick dust. In unloading onions from ships men work with the stinking smell of onions, some who are in the building trade and handle concrete work use polythene foil as gloves. In short they do anything that come in their way to eke out their existence.

Trapped in this atmosphere, the women at an early age get into marriages and give birth to children. Among those communities child marriages are very common. Such marriages quite often have no legal base and either they are just living together or it is an elopement. They marry early, bear children and soon become older for their age. Malnutrition plagues these women.

Being less educated these women have faith in myths, certain infectious diseases are considered as 'god's curse' and the victims are isolated for several days. They have little concern for sanitation as they are ignorant of basic health care and personal hygiene.

In my experience with the urban poor for a period of about 5 years, I have observed drug addiction on a large scale. In addition to illicit liquor, the use of heroin increased alarmingly, making a dent into the earnings of these people. One drug trafficker has 30-40 people around him to work as informants, to do the packaging and transport, and also to take the place of the trafficker if detected by the authorities and serve a jail sentence in his place if prosecuted in courts. All these social ills indirectly affect the urban poor women folk.

This is a general picture of the slum-dwellers. It would be interesting to find out what factors have contributed to the emergence of such problems in this environment. These communities live in places closer to the hotels and factories around the city. The waste materials of these hotels and factories are dumped in or around their dwelling places. The paradox is that the slum-dwellers themselves work in these factories or hotels. Hence the polluter is the employer of these people. The dweller is forced to live there because the hotel or the factory concerned is his source of income. This is an atmosphere that gives rise to a large number of diseases and malnutrition. The problem that emerges is how the women in such a situation can be persuaded towards a subject like the preservation of the environment. How can the NGO get the women involved when the problem is not that straight forward? Most of these women are very keen on going to West Asian countries in search of jobs. Some have leased out a part of the 2 perch block they had received from the government and used that money to finance her job abroad.

Despite all these unfavourable conditions, the smooth functioning of the city depends on these urban poor communities. As waste disposal, sewage work, manual labour in the many vegetable markets are all done by them and without their services the cities will in a way, collapse. In town planning they are just pushed into a corner in the city from where they see the 'paradise' in the heart of the city. It is this paradox that makes them slaves to consumer items in a glittering sales society motivated by the desire to acquire and they themselves confuse their priorities. In a house put up on an extent of a 2 perch block of land they fill up their houses with cabinets and other unnecessary furniture which they cannot afford. They also purchase crockery, porcelain and even television sets, which again creates 'a dream world' for which these people yearn to enter. Thus they develop a mentality to imitate.

In this social set up, the urban poor women are not concerned with environmental issues. One way to educate them on this crucial problem is to conduct long-term awareness programmes. Also their services can be geared for permanent long-standing development programmes. With such women playing a central role, their husbands, children and the other men too should be involved in these projects. They can be organized into groups to identify the barriers they come across and the social injustices they confront. They have to be guided to a level where they can fight for their rights collectively. The problem will not be solved unless this course of action is resorted to, as no solutions would be forthcoming through a political approach.

Mr. Dayaratna presented a summary in English of the speech of Mrs. Ruwanpathirana. This was followed by a discussion.

One of the participants requested Mrs. Ruwanpathirana to elaborate as to how the drug addiction affects women. She replied that addiction by males brings in misery to the family as most of the family income is used to sustain the habit. When the level of addiction increases, jewelry and other family belongings are pawned or sold to raise the money. She also said that comparatively there are very few women addicted to drugs.

The women involved in drugs generally act as couriers or perform other supportive roles for peddlers to earn an income. After sometime these women or their family members are likely to become addicts. In response to a question by Mr. Prem Hettiarachchi, she said that most women who receive a low income get involved with drugs to increase their income and get into the vicious circle. Obviously the income they receive in this manner is much more than what they would receive by doing any other job.

Self employment ventures for women are faced with capital as well as marketing problems. It is difficult for them to effectively market items like joss sticks, pappadam or cheap laundry soaps. Dr. Dharmadasa Silva states that women in the shanties prefer to work on a daily paid basis performing tasks like packing tea bags, rather than learn a skill for which they have to undergo a training. Mrs. Ruwanpathirana also said that the men in slums are comparatively very irresponsible than their rural counterparts. They spend most of their earnings on themselves. They are less bonded to their family and prefers to get their children to drop out of school early and seek employment to support the family. Their income is mostly from odd jobs. They have no income from land or other sources. Another problem they are faced with is that, the girls have to undertake domestic routines like cooking and looking after the younger brothers and sisters while the boys idle.

It is observed that the rural women take a keen interest to educate their children. That degree of interest is lacking in the urban counterpart because of the availability of menial jobs in the city requiring no high level of education or skills. The problem with these two groups is their attitudes towards education and skills development. These two groups have two different sub-cultures. The two groups differ from each other in their social values, norms, ethics etc. Early marriages are common in both groups, but family disputes seem to be more among the urban poor. Other problems are due to lack of links with the formal sector of the city such as access to credit from lending institutions etc.

Father Catalano said, that his experience is that in the shanties women lack the necessary support to overcome pressures discussed by the speaker. He said that the approach should be holistic and study the position of the women in the environment and the sub culture they live in.

Dr. Heendeniya posed the question: Why do they prefer to live in this filthy and degrading environment? Mrs. Ruwanpathirana said that in her opinion it is mainly due to economic insecurity. When there is insecurity, such environmental factors are not given much consideration. One solution to the problem provided by the government is relocation. But there are many other problems which surface due to relocation. Such as disruption of schooling of children, adjusting to new living environments etc. They were originally a cog in the city machinery and fitted into a place, but when displaced from that position they get detached from their sources of income amidst other problems.

Father Catalino said that, they lead such a life because they have no other alternative and this is his answer. Mr. Prem Hettiarachchi said that if they could be provided with better sources of income, then on their own they will be out of the degrading living environment.

With regard to relocation, it was pointed out that the emphasis should be on high-rise buildings. Valuable land is wasted by relocating them in the present form.

It is very difficult to involve the urban poor in social development or self development activities due to their way of life. They should be pushed gradually to involve them in active participation, financial discipline, educational activities etc.

Mr.Hettiarachchi further stated that in the male dominated society the husband comes first, then the children and lastly the wife. What happens is the husband uses up most of the daily income he earns on himself and gives his family only a very small amount.

WINDING UP SPEECH

by

Mr. Willie Gamage

Mr. Willie Gamage while summarizing and speaking on behalf of SPCD, apologized for the lack of time and said that an interesting discussion had to be cut short.

SPCD is comparatively a new organization and this is the first seminar organized by the society. All of us were able to exchange our views and share the experiences. One important aspect of today's seminar is the frank and free exchange of ideas between government officials and others. We have also seen how different people and different organizations look at the problems of the urban poor. It is a human tendency for anybody to stress areas which affect them adversely and soft peddle other areas.

In this forum all of us have been able to get some exposure to criticism, hear new ideas and suggestions, understand each others problems, see the strength and weakness of each organization.

We are extremely happy that almost all the organizations we invited have responded to our invitation. There was very active participation in the deliberations. We also hope that those who have met here and established contacts will develop such contacts and improve on their approach to bring in better results for the benefit of the urban poor.

We also apologize for any shortcomings on our part which you may have observed and request you to bear with us. Although not a recommendation per-se the following important issues got highlighted today :-

- * Whilst the problems of, the urban poor are more, they are less organized than their rural counterparts to receive assistance.
- * The dependency syndrome is more obvious among the urban poor.
- * The urban poor receives less attention from NGOO than the rural poor.
- * No single organization could tackle the urban environmental problem by itself.
- * In the area of land alienation the NGOO are helpless and the state sector is well equipped with the necessary legal arm to intervene.
- * The state sector programs in the urban areas have their own shortcomings.
- * If the problem is clearly identified, resources to assist them could be found without much of a problem.
- * Urban women are a more neglected lot than their rural counterparts.
- * The government agencies and the NGOO are playing mutually benefiting roles,

However a better understanding of each other is essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the unanimous view of the participants to set up a coordinating body which link all governmental, non governmental and other organizations handling the subject of upgrading the quality of life of the urban poor. To start with such a body should function covering the area falling within the city of Colombo. It will:

- (a) bring together the present organization
- (b) prevent duplication of efforts
- (c) create better understanding of each others roles

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05. Maliyadda, Mr.C. - Ministry of Policy Planning & Implementation
06. Mendis, Prof.Willie - Urban Development Authority
07. Nesiah, Dr.Devanesan - Ministry of Environment & Parliamentary Affairs
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09. Ratnapala, Prof.Nandasena - University of Sri J'pura
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11. Ruwanpathirana Ms.Monica - Participatory Institute of Development Administration
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