

The slums and shanties problem in sri lanka



Slums including tenement gardens came into existence in Colombo with the expansion of export trade associated with the rubber boom after the Second World War. The character of Colombo changed in keeping with the new economic demands for warehousing, workers accommodation and the road network improvement. The city core became more congested and the city elite moved out into more spacious residential areas in the suburbs. The central part of Colombo became a predominantly low income residential area with many slums, and the northern and eastern parts of the city were occupied by shanties. Half of the population of Colombo has been living for many years in slums, shanties and other types of low income settlements. The 2001 survey carried out by the Colombo Municipal Council has identified a total of 77, 612 families living in 1, 614 low-income settlements in the city. Many of people in slums areas cannot afford the services provided by the formal sector because of their educational background. The slum-dwellers make their livelihood by working as garbage handlers, cleaners, street vendors and other as pickpockets, prostitutes and petty thieves of the migrant population to the main city and people who visit Colombo for various reasons. The informal sector, which is predominantly owned and run by the people in the low-income areas, provides the necessary services and goods needed by the majority of the city in parallel with the formal sector.

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

TAKEN TO IMPROVE SLUMS

The government of Sri Lanka together with the respective local authorities has implemented several programmes for the improvement of slums and

shanties in the city since early 1970s. A summary of these programmes is provided below.

1. Before 1970

Minimum Government Intervention –

No major government involvement in improving the livelihoods of urban poor and people managed their basic needs by themselves.

2. 1970 to 1977

Direct government intervention in preparing and implementing policies and programmes-

Enactment of the Ceiling on Housing Property Law No. 01 of 1973 (CHP Law)

- Introduction of new policies and regulations ensuring the housing rights of urban poor and direct housing construction by government to meet the housing need of urban poor.

3. 1978 to 1994

The government started its interventions through a provider approach and gradually changed towards enabling approach in housing improvement. A number of programmes and initiatives were taken place.

Establishment of the Urban Development Authority (UDA)

Establishment of the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA)

Establishment of the Common Amenities Board (CBA)

Urban Basic Services Programme, 1978 – 1986

Slum and Shanty Improvement Programme, 1978- 1984

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

4. After 1994

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

Established a Real Estate Exchange Limited (REEL) programme under the Ministry of Housing, Construction and Urban Development

Urban Renewal Programme implemented by the UDA/NHDA

Urban Settlements Improvement Programme (USIP), JBIC/World Bank Funded Project

Municipal Councilor's Rs. 1.5 Million Programme implemented by the Colombo MC

5. In 2010

The Urban Development Authority started to evict street vendors from capital city under supervision of Defense Minister and that program was hundred percent completed.

The Sri Lankan government is moving to speed up the military-supervised eviction of thousands of poor families who live in Colombo's slums as part of the City of Colombo Development Plan to attract investors and tourists.

Readings

Mainstreaming Under-Served Urban Communities in Colombo, Sri Lanka by
Marinne Dhakshike Wickrema Illinois Wesleyan University Bloomington, IL
(1996)

In general, slums may be characterized by inadequate access to water, sanitation and infrastructure compared to the rest of the city. Faced with a growing urban slum population during the 1980s, the Sri Lankan government pioneered the participatory approach and achieved widespread urban slum improvements by mobilizing community decision-making, conducting training workshops and providing small loans for on-site slum upgrading. The government played an intermediary role and attempted to incorporate slum dwellers into the mainstream of the economy and society. In spite of successive upgrading efforts, these residents remained marginalized in terms of city services, infrastructure and social mobility.

The two main political parties are still linked to social welfare packages, especially subsidized housing for the urban poor. The political parties, with the support of semi-political institutions and other pressure groups in the society, started using the welfare system as a strong weapon in gaining political popularity and attacking the political opponents. Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) promise to provide houses suitable to live in for everybody and the United National Party (UNP) which ruled Sri Lanka for 17 years before the SLFP came to power in 1994, states in its election manifesto in 2005 that they will work towards giving a house to every Sri Lankan, will encourage house ownership and will erase outstanding housing loans.

Experiences

The Hundred Thousand Houses Program

In 1984, the Government initiated the Million Houses Program (MHP). The National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) was charged with leading the massive nationwide program. The program consisted of six sub-Programs. Fifty thousand houses were built in rural areas through the aided self-help method. Another thirty thousand houses were built in urban areas through direct construction by the private sector. The remaining portion of houses targeted the urban poor in Colombo through a slum and shanty upgrading. The urban sub-Programme, consisting of about 300 housing projects in 51 local authority areas, was launched in 1985.

The MHP was notable because the government completely institutionalized enabling mechanisms through a national policy that encouraged local government, community organizations and the beneficiary households to make decisions regarding housing improvements.

Sri Lanka won the World Habitat Award for the Million Houses Programme in 1987. The Million Houses Program is frequently listed in the literature as a successful example of institutionalized national policy where the Government facilitated housing construction and self-help upgrading by decentralizing decision-making to the community through “community action planning” (CAP) which was pioneered in Sri Lanka.

Finally, the Report stated as conclusion that the Hundred Thousand Houses Programme was objectively successful in improving the social lives of a selected group of slum dwellers.

Participation of private financial institutions in social housing initiatives in Suriname

Thesis Master of Public Administration Program in Governance 2008 - 2009

(MPA Intake III) by Marlon K. Powel

The Government of Suriname committed itself to ensure that the needy households are guaranteed affordable and appropriate housing. As part of its social policy, public houses were built and distributed as rental housing and hire purchase. The house shortage has increased during time because the production of houses has been structurally low and cannot meet the demand. The author focused on the partnership approach in social housing in Suriname and explore if a PPP between the Government and the private financial institutions is an appropriate mechanism to address the housing problem of the low and middleâ€ income households more effectively. The author included as conclusion that Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are not solution for the housing problem of the low and middleâ€ income households in Suriname. He pointed out that there are no lands available for corporations that build social houses and contracting loans for social housing projects is very difficult. Also banks argue that the risks attached to these loans are too high. Low income households have very limited resources, are often not creditworthy, and have a low repayment capacity. The Government had failed to create a sound enabling environment for the actors in social housing.