

I Field Visit to Sri Lankan CBMS Sites

As part of the regular general assembly of the CBMS Network, its members visited CBMS sites of the host in Sri Lanka. For the June 2005 meeting, the visit took place in the Colombo Municipal Council in the New Town Hall of Colombo and in the community of Badovita.

On hand to welcome the group in the Colombo Municipal council were Mr. Shantha Jayasundara, Deputy Commissioner of the Colombo Municipal Council, and Mr. Kesara Lal Gunasekera, opposition leader of the Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia Municipal Council. Both of them highlighted the importance of the CBMS in the community as well as for the urban council. Also present were Dr. Markus Mayer and Prof. S.T. Hettige, CBMS-Sri Lanka Co-Directors, who warmly welcomed the participants.

Two presentations were given. The first one (Annex 1) was by Kumudini Samarasinghe, Engineer from the Colombo Municipal Council, wherein he highlighted the importance of CBMS in evaluating the different project interventions in the Colombo Municipal Council. He stressed the importance of understanding the characteristics of the settlements as well as the development of an impact monitoring system in the Colombo Municipality.

The second presentation (Annex 2) was delivered by Ms. Melani Gamlath, Secretary of the Community Development Society of Badovita, the site of the CBMS visit. She explained how the support

of the CBMS project has changed the way of development in their community. She also noted how useful their training in data collection had been and how they now keep all the required data of the community in a booklet. They have also done data mapping which enables them to easily identify the households affected by each of the problems. This has facilitated the formulation of intervention of project, especially in the three major areas they have identified, namely, education, health and employment. Hopefully, she said, they could get support from the government and other NGOs. She also mentioned that they are hoping to carry out the survey at least once in two years

After the visit to the Colombo Municipal Council, the group proceeded to the community of Badovita, which consists of approximately of 5,800 households.

Once in the field, the CBMS group was divided into subgroups of 4-5, with one translator from the Social Policy Analysis and Research Centre (SPARC), and one community development member of the community development society in each group. Each subgroup visited one household in Location Two (one section of Badovita community), which consists of approximately 380 households. The group interacted with household members. Afterwards, the group went around the village and interacted with the community members to know more about the actual way of living in an urban poverty pocket of Sri Lanka like Badovita.

Joining the members of the CBMS Network were representatives from the SPARC, the University of Colombo, the Colombo Municipal Council and the community. The field visit was coordinated by Nishara Fernando of the SPARC, under the supervision of Dr. Mayer and Professor S. Hettige.

Annex 1

Importance of Community-Based Monitoring System to Evaluate Different Interventions by the Colombo Municipal Council

Kumudinie Samarasinghe

The Colombo Municipal Council is actively engaged in activities geared towards improving the living conditions of citizens staying in underserved settlements in the city. The council contributes to these efforts through its own funds and also through external sources. It has implemented the following projects as part of its overall poverty reduction strategy:

1. Urban Poverty Reduction Program through Community Empowerment (in partnership with UNCHS / UMP / DFID);
2. Participatory Improvement of Underserved Settlements in Colombo (in partnership with the German Technical Cooperation – GTZ);
3. Solid Waste Management Improvement in Underserved Settlement Areas (self-financed by the Colombo Municipal Council);
4. 2.5 Million Rupee Annual Member Allocation for Improvements in Underserved Settlements (self-financed by the Colombo Municipal Council); and
5. Poverty Assistance Programme for the Needy in the City (self-financed by the Colombo Municipal Council)

These projects are very similar in that the focus groups are the underserved settlement population in the city. The term *Underserved Settlement* refers to those areas in Colombo which have a

concentration of residential units built on state or private land that is not owned by the residents. These projects also share the same objective: i.e., to reduce urban poverty by enhancing access to services and livelihood opportunities. The approaches employed by these projects in combating poverty differ along the following aspects: settlement selection, types of services provided, level and mode of service delivery.

In order to increase the understanding of the dimensions and dynamics of poverty in these areas, a system should be designed to monitor the impacts of these projects. Specifically, impact monitoring should be able to determine whether the abovementioned projects bring the intended results and should likewise be able to rationalize the decision-making process in redesigning poverty interventions.

However, this activity entails a revisit of the definition of poverty and its various dimensions. This is important since interventions can have impacts not only on targeted but also on non-targeted dimensions of poverty. Moreover, it is also important to determine the dynamics of poverty or the various factors that come into play which create the cause and consequences of poverty.

This can be done by using the following approaches or tools:

- Testing impact chains with different focus groups in pilot settlements and re-modifying through open-ended questions (e.g., did you participate in the CAP process? How did you feel about it?); and
- Collecting the views of the residents of the community in relation to interventions in sample settlements through structured and descriptive questions (e.g., focus group interviews, household questionnaire, key informant interviews, etc.).

Annex 2

How to Make Use of CBMS Data to Improve our Livelihoods?

Malanie Jayalath

To begin with, I will introduce myself. I am Malanie Jayalath residing at Badowita Stage-2. I work as secretary of both Badowita stage-2 Community Development Society, Integrated Community Development Society and as a Local Coordinator of the Community-Based Poverty Monitoring Project.

The first part of my presentation will focus on the development of the Badowita Low Income Housing Settlement and some community-involved infrastructure related development activities that were carried out within this settlement. The second part will focus more on how our livelihoods could be improved based on the Community-Based Poverty Monitoring Project.

The Badowita low-income housing settlement is spread across 35 acres of land in Katukuruduwaththa Grama Niladari division within the Dehiwala-mount Lavinia Municipal Council area. Before this settlement, it was an abandoned paddy land.

When we arrived at this place from our previous abodes of canal banks in and around Colombo, the Officers did not give consideration to children's schooling problems, settlers' occupational problems, water, sanitation and other such issues. Common toilets were allocated and water from bourses was distributed. Owing to this situation, school children and settlers who go to work encountered problems such as waiting in long queues for common water and toilets.

Under the guidance of Japanese volunteer workers, the Sustainable Township Program assisted us to build individual toilets. Later, members of the Shanthie Foundation and Urban Councils also helped us to build individual toilets. Common toilets were removed when people gradually started to build their own toilets.

The Municipal Council, JAICA and People's Bank helped us to get individual water connections. The front drainage system was rebuilt by the Land Reclamation Board while the back drainage system was rebuilt using community contacts with JAICA assistance. This does not mean, however, that all households in the location have individual toilets and water connections.

Garbage disposal in this settlement was a problem at the beginning due to the absence of a proper disposal system. The Sevanatha organization donated barrels to each house in which to store garbage for making compost fertilizer. During this period, I got an opportunity to go to Bangkok and the Philippines for a study tour. This helped me to initiate a waste collection centre with financial assistance from the Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia Urban Council and JAICA. The Land Reclamation Board provided us with a plot of land to construct the office, which we did using the community contracting method. Now, we buy waste from every household in the settlement. Still, this does not mean that one hundred percent of the garbage disposal problem is over. Nevertheless, in this way, the Community Development Society officers and community members jointly worked towards the development of infrastructure facilities in the location. Yet, there is a need for some common facilities such as a community centre, children's park and street lamp posts in this location.

We gained a different experience by working with the University team on the Community-Based Poverty Monitoring project as a group of community members collected socio-economic data from households in this community. The University team members first explained to us the project objectives and then educated us on data collecting tools. Thereafter, within a period of one month, we collected

data from each and every household in the location, under the supervision of graduate research officers of the Colombo University. On the basis of the collected data, maps and codebooks were constructed and handed over to us. Now we have information of each and every household in Stage 2 of the settlement, something that we did not previously have and which we are hoping to update every two years.

We can use the information to identify important areas in order to design new programs to improve our livelihoods. We would also need the assistance of government and non-government organizations on this regard.

We have identified three areas that require intervention such as education, health and livelihood to formulate different action programs on the basis of the collected data. We would like to appeal to the Government and non-government organizations to develop some relevant programs in the above areas in collaboration with community members. For instance, 13 percent of the community members neither read nor write in any language and only 2 percent can either read or write in English.

As for educational attainment, one can observe a significant proportion of people with a low level of educational attainment (5% with O/L's and only 2% with A/L's). The school dropout rate also increases owing to economic difficulties in the families. There is therefore a need to develop some proper programs to assist these families.

A significant proportion of household members smoke cigarettes, inhale hard drugs and consume alcohol. As a result, nearly 45 percent of community members suffer from chronic illness. It is evident from the average monthly expenditure data that a reasonable proportion of household members spend twice the amount or even more for drugs, cigarettes and alcohol as against the monthly expenditure on education. Institutions that work in these areas thus need to intervene to minimize this problem.

A significant proportion of household members who participated in our interviews pointed out the cleaning of canals as another important area that requires immediate attention as it creates health-related problems due to air pollution and breeding grounds of dengue and filarial mosquitoes. On this basis, we have requested the Land Reclamation Board to clean the canals.

We also organized a meeting with officers of government and other non-governmental organizations at our location in order to discuss our findings and create awareness on the above areas that require intervention. We likewise plan to organize another follow-up meeting at the end of June to discuss some programs in detail. We are hopeful of their positive response.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who helped us make this project a success.