

Enhanced social harmony through improved infrastructure facilities

A research study for uplifting social harmony

Case Study on Waste Water and Sewage Disposal Arrangement in Sarenthukade Junction and surrounded area in Galle City

D.A.W.S. Delpage and A.K. Somasundaraswaran

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Ruhuna, Galle,

Abstract

In poor or developing countries, people usually have disputes and conflicts among them and such things are happening frequently. In macro scale, tackling this problem is very difficult. Therefore, this study examined this situation from different ways. Specifically, this project concerned with the relationship between inadequate key infrastructure facility and how this condition reacts to the level of social harmony. A residential area at Sarenthukade Junction in the city of Galle in Sri Lanka was selected. Having inadequate accessibility to the basic infrastructure facilities, there are always disputes between groups of people who lived there. The project used a questionnaire survey to examine the related issues from various points of view. It was found that majority of the residents gave highest priority for their earning, while sanitation and immobility issues were their second and third considerations. Therefore living environment is totally in an unfortunate condition. A group of families who concern their living environment had problem with majority of others. These serious family conflicts among groups of families so far ignored by relevant authorities. This study identified many remedial measures, and recommended to form a community based management team to promote accessibility to the infrastructure facilities. Other recommendations were also suggested as practical solutions for this burning problem at Sarenthukade area.

Key words: Social Harmony, Basic infrastructure facilities, social factors

Introduction

Limited infrastructure facilities in a densely populated area create a number of problems for the residents and neighbours^[1,2 & 3]. At least water supply and sanitation facilities should be reasonably organized so that social problems and subsequently conflicts among families will be minimized. Because, when there are only few families concerned about their environment while majority of them are not concerned then problem between communities remains unsettled. A residential area at Sarenthukade Junction in the city of Galle in Sri Lanka has similar characteristics. There are about 500 families living in an area of 0.25 km². The houses in this area are mostly single-storey, situated near the Galle-Baddegama main bus route. The average family size of a household is more than six members and in many houses two or more families lived together. As a result, living floor areas in the most of these residences are not sufficient to support a reasonable living standard to the people and they are over crowded. Closer to this related area, the existing market and trading activities multiple the scale of the problem. It is noted that the population in this area is rapidly increasing, but not the supporting key infrastructure facilities. Limited water supply causes many health related recesses. In addition, limited space originates poor sanitary condition and the kitchen washouts, waste and the leaking water release to the sewer without proper consideration. Ultimately sewage gets spilled on the ground surface and causes many problems to the surrounding environment. Sometimes the waste water drainage system overflow on top of the road surface or walk ways or/and pedestrian path. Residents throw their waste in a bad manner, which also block the drain and the water flow and create bad smell too, but they continue to follow the same style of disposing waste which is quite easy for them. But fortunately very few families are very serious about these issues. These behavioral patterns develop conflicts among the families; as a result there are frequent clashes between them. This study was conducted to identify viable solution for improving social harmony by using, knowledge sharing, education, and focusing "options and opportunities" available in the future.

Methodology

Sarenthukade Junction in the city of Galle in Sri Lanka was selected as the study area. A convenient sample of 100 houses were identified for data collection. This sample size was selected with different family and economic backgrounds. The question-nnaire was prepared considering socio-economic characteristics and other issues such as cultural and educational background to get genuine picture of the area and the behavior of the people. More specifically, the issues that were incorporated for the survey covers family size, household ownership and the floor area, education level, employment level, sanitation facilities, availability of water supply and waste water drainage system and other supporting infrastructure facilities and so on. Priority given by the head of each family towards identified basic infrastructure facilities such as water, waste water and sanitary facilities, transportation, power and energy, communication, housing schools and other education facilities also included in the questionnaire. Further in this questionnaire the families' serious problems were prioritized based on various consideration such as health related issues, earning (money), child education, alcohol and/or drugs related issues and other similar problem with the family members.

Availability of Key Infrastructure Facilities Household Ownership

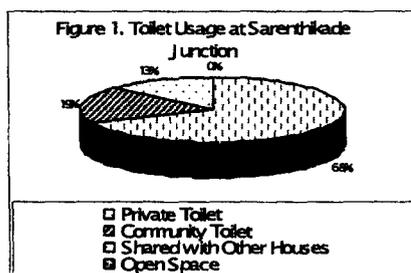
Many people (over 50% of the families) have their own residences. The important issue is that about 10% of the families live together in one house sharing their limited infrastructure facilities as given in Table 1. The collected data and subsequent analysis shows that the available living floor area was about 3 sq.m per person, which is very low for living purposes.

Table 1: Household Ownership

Type of Ownership	Families(%)
Owned	53
Rented	16
Shared with Relations	10
Owned by a relation (Free)	9
Other (Slum/alley, etc)	12

Sanitation Facilities

Many of them have their own toilets, but some of these toilets were not in good condition. Sometimes the pits spill over during heavy rains which lead to several health problems. People are also using community toilets, which is an arrangement to share toilets among group of houses due to lack of space. As can be seen from Figure 1, from the total families interviewed, 68% had private toilets, 19% used the common community toilets, and 13% shared the toilet with other families or relatives. This is an important issue which highlights that the poor usually live in this area have lack of facilities.



Water Supply and Waste Water Drainage

Less than forty percentages of the families use pipe born water supply directly connected to their household. However, over sixty percentages of people use pipe born water supply at a common place as their water source. From the community's point of view, accessibility for water is not considered as a biggest problem.

Occupation of the Household Head

Collected detail revealed that employment structure was not attractive, the families can just survive. Statistical figures are given in Table 2, which shows that about 35 % of them were laborers. Very few works for monthly income and few of them have permanent employment in

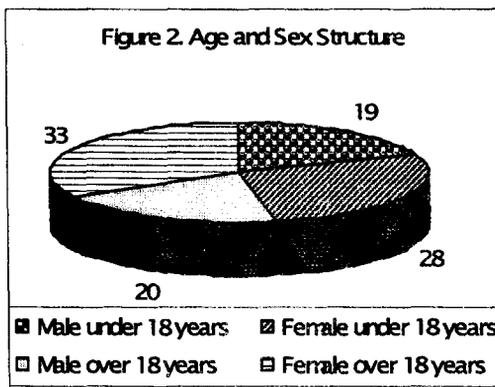
government sector, and unemployment level was considerable (about 9%). Therefore their contribution for improving infrastructure facilities could also been very hard.

Table 2: Employment Structure

Type of Employment	Family's head (%)
Labourer	35
Self Employment	21
Working in Organization	16
Unemployment	9
Government	5
Studies	1
Others (including business)	13

Gender Distribution

The Female population is higher about 61%, which shows an increased number of female members, as shown in Figure 2. Age structural analysis shows there are considerable amount of children in a family. Thus, when considering total population, only 20% of the total population (male over 18 years) could effectively work for survival of their family members.

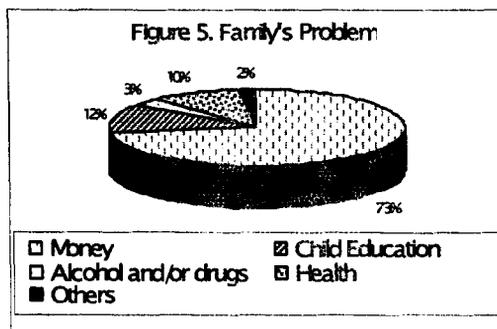


Highest Education Level

Most of the family members studied less than GCE(O/L). A cross classification analysis revealed that the group of family members concern with their surrounding environment has a better educational level than other groups. However, many of them are concerned about education and even to obtain higher educations, but not regularly sending their children to the school. Analysis shows that the education level over the last two decades was improving, but very slightly.

Families' Serious Concern

The common problems in this area were examined. The priorities given by each family are shown in Figure 3. About 73% of the families' major problem was not enough earning for their food and other basic needs, while 12% of the families worried about children's education and 10% were concerned about their health related problem. Although only 3% of them have problem related to alcohol or drugs, this small percentage of the families contributes significantly towards disturbing social harmony.



Infrastructure Priority Order of the Families

The lack of infrastructure facilities contributes to disturb the social harmony. Peoples' concern

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towards these facilities was examined in this section. The population in this study area was more concerned about power and energy in the form of cooking gas, electricity and so on. Most of the people used to spend half of their earnings to power and energy. The water becomes the second in the priority list and this will also become a serious issue and the education stands third in the ranking. Since power, water, education are their major concern. Other issues like waste disposal and health related issues are neglected by majority of them.

Conclusion

This project was carried out to consider the burning social harmony issues at Sarenthukade Junction in Galle City. Results revealed that basic infrastructure facilities were not adequate, income of the majority of the population was low, and thus these issues seriously contributed to social disputes and disharmony. Majority of them gave top priority for earning and survival, but not good education or good environment to live, which creates inconvenient to another group of people who lives in the same environment. As a result these social disputes remain unsettled. Failure to take necessary action will fuel more and more social conflicts in the near future. Therefore, this study recommended frequent inspecting and motivating the people to change their lifestyle specially who have very limited access to proper infrastructure. Arranging short seminars, workshops with the participation of relevant authorizes will definitely help to ease the problem. In addition, a community based management team could be formed to look at the situation, seriously. It could develop appropriate measures and give timely advice as well as it could help to find financial support to enhance the quality of life in slum communities.

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