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EXPERIENCES OF A RELOCATED COMMUNITY IN COLOMBO

Case Study Of Sinhapura, Wanathamulla



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Experiences of a relocated community in Colombo: Case Study of Sinhapura, Wanathamulla

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Executive Summary

This report is about a relocated community in Sinhapura, in Wanathamulla, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Sinhapura is a government housing complex in two phases, each with 60 apartments built for relocating residents from two shanty communities in Colombo, namely *54 watta* in Wanathamulla and *186 watta* in Colombo 7. These relocatees have been displaced from their *watta* communities due to developmental projects undertaken by the Government of Sri Lanka.

The community profile was undertaken as part of a three-year longitudinal study funded by IDRC and DfiD under the Safe and Inclusive Cities (SAIC) project (107361-001). A survey that took place during the first year of the project, covering over 800 relocated households in Colombo, provided the background necessary for the community profiling exercise that took place during the second year of the project. The objective of the community profile was to explore the issues and concerns identified during the survey in more depth, and to identify the mechanisms adopted by this group of people in adapting to their new location and (sometimes) new issues and problems. The community profile paid particular attention to how relocated people adapt their livelihood, education, service accessibility and economic, social and political life to suit the new physical and social environment.

In-depth interviews with residents, government officials and key informants, and focus group discussions with males and females of different age groups were the key methods of data collection. Observation data was also gathered during frequent visits made to the community. Given the generally accepted view of Wanathamulla as a place of violence, the research team was particularly concerned about the safety of the researchers and the political culture of the community in designing a framework for data collection. Care was taken to ensure that data collection activities would have zero or least disturbance on the residents' livelihood activities, mostly casual labour for a daily wage.

Sinhapura comprises two phases; Phase 1 being constructed in 2007 and Phase 2 in 2011. Residents of Phase 1 come mainly from *54 watta*, an ex-shanty community that was located very close to Phase 1. The majority of the residents of Phase 2 have come from *187 watta*, in Torrington, Colombo 7. The displacement and relocation experiences of the two groups have been different. Phase 1 residents can be said to be experiencing the least amount of culture shock as they have only changed their house and not their geographical location. However, the residents of Phase 2 have had to change both their house as well as its location. They have more complaints and unpleasant memories of having to adapt to a culture very different to that of Colombo 7. Wanathamulla is notorious for violence and criminal activities whereas Colombo 7 is known for a more affluent lifestyle (though *187 watta* residents would have occupied a more marginal area within Colombo 7).

Displacement experiences for Phase 1 residents have involved some amounts of violence as they had been forced out of their houses by the military. Parts of their houses had been broken down, compelling them to leave their houses. Phase 2 residents have experienced violence during displacement in the form of false promises from politicians and government officials. They had been promised a housing complex at the same location as *187 watta* and were paid Rs. 200,000¹ as rent money to find a house for two years till the complex was built.

¹ The exchange rate was Rs. 127 and Rs. 131 for US\$ 1 during the period, 01.01.2013 and 01.01.2015 (<http://www.oanda.com/currency/historical-rates/>).

However, they had been offered houses in Sinhapura instead. Phase 1 residents have had to make a payment at the time of moving in, while Phase 2 residents have received their house completely free of charge as compensation for the house they lost. Many Phase 1 residents are still struggling to settle the overdue payment for the house.

A majority of residents in both phases are happy about receiving a house in Sinhapura. The level of happiness differs, however, according to the size and quality of the house they had lived in previously. Those from bigger houses with better facilities are unhappy as they find the floor area and facilities available in Sinhapura to be inadequate. In contrast, residents from smaller houses with limited facilities are very happy about the current status of their life as the new house offered them more comfortable living. The biggest grievance of Phase 1 residents relates to the quality of construction of their housing complex and the overdue payment which exceeds Rs.100,000 (with added interest) for many. These construction errors have been rectified in the construction of Phase 2. Grievances of Phase 2 residents are mostly associated with a nostalgic attitude towards their previous residence. However, both groups of relocatees are relieved about not having to live illegally on government land anymore and about the possibility of 'owning' a house one day when they are given title deeds to the houses.

The majority of Sinhapura residents are blue-collar workers either in casual or permanent employment. Livelihood activities of Phase 1 residents have not been severely disrupted due to relocation, as their area of residence has not changed. However, for some Phase 2 residents who have worked in places close to Colombo 7, their livelihoods are affected due to the added distance between their home and workplace. The added expense of commuting and the practical inability to easily attend to the needs of their families, have made some residents, particularly females who worked as domestic helps, give up their jobs. Those who had shops in bigger houses on the ground floor have lost these shops due to relocation. Youth unemployment seems to be one of the issues faced by Sinhapura residents. This seems to be the result of several factors, such as the improved aspirations of youth created by higher levels of education, which discourage them from doing 'any' job for the sake of earning, employers' reluctance to employ individuals from Wanathamulla because of the negative social connotations attached to the area and the lack of political support.

In the case of both phases of Sinhapura, the establishment of community-based organizations (CBOs) has been a debatable issue since the time of relocation. Even though CBOs have been very effective and active in 54 *watta* and 187 *watta*, the experience of displacement has led to a loss of trust in community leaders. Female participation in CBOs had been impressive in 54 *watta*, but now these females have withdrawn from such activities due to the false allegations made against them as having misused CBO funds. *Swadhipathya Samithiya*, which has been defunct for many years since relocation, has recently been revitalized with the support of the Urban Settlement Development Authority (USDA). Although Phase 2 residents have re-established their *samithiya* with a new set of office bearers who are all female, Phase 1 is still reluctant to establish the *samithiya* as there is no agreement about its necessity or effectiveness. The majority of Sinhapura is identified with a certain political party. However, there seems to be tolerance among residents regarding political affiliations, and individuals were freely expressing their political views during elections. However, there seems to be a lack of interest in politics and the benefits it could bring, particularly among the youth.

The social life of Sinhapura seems to have several elements that hinder the development of a strong sense of belonging. This poses certain threats to the formation of a 'true' community

in Sinhapura, with common goals and means for achieving them. The condominium lifestyle has brought in competition and individualization while eliminating some common problems such as flooding in *wattas* where community support becomes essential for survival. The community profile highlights this issue of a lack of sense of belonging to be one of the major challenges facing the Sinhapura residents.

The most commonly cited issue faced by the community was that of drug dealing and consumption within the Sinhapura complex. The perpetrators were mostly trespassers who enter Sinhapura to enjoy its open spaces. These trespassers who were mostly from an adjoining shanty community were accused of playing loud music, speaking loudly in groups and using obscene language, getting into frequent arguments and fights, and engaging in petty theft to meet their need for purchasing drugs or alcohol. The police seem reluctant to intervene as they sometimes assault the police and also because the 'real' perpetrators who are the large scale drug dealers would not be caught in Sinhapura. The absence of a strong community network seems to make the residents even more vulnerable to these issues, which were identified as having a negative impact on the socialization and education of children in Sinhapura. As a result, parents discouraged their children from engaging in community activities or even associating with peers in the community. This further exacerbated the issue of the low sense of belonging prevalent in Sinhapura.

Residents of Sinhapura largely agreed that it was a safe place for females, where they could move about freely even during late evening. The commonly identified issue that affected females was that of being mocked and teased on the streets. Many community members blamed the victims for this, as it was perceived that females should know to engage in 'appropriate behaviour' and dress in 'appropriate clothes'. At the same time many residents, excluding a few mothers of young daughters, saw this as inevitable and normal. This attitude shows a lack of awareness in the community about the freedom and rights of females. Educating the youth and implementing measures to help the development of a sense of belonging seems necessary to overcome this, and many other issues, in Sinhapura.

Acronyms

CBO	Community-based Organization
CTB	Central Transport Board
CMA	Condominium Management Authority
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GND	Grama Niladhari Division
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
REEL	Real Estate Exchange (Pvt) Ltd.
SAIC	Safe and Inclusive Cities
USDA	Urban Settlement Development Authority

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Methods and Techniques of Data Collection	1
3	The Community	3
3.1	History of the Community	5
3.2	Relocation, New House and the ‘New Life’ in Sinhapura	8
4	Livelihood and Economic Activities within the Community	13
4.1	Livelihoods	13
4.2	Youth Employment	15
4.3	Female Labour Market Participation	17
5	Political Participation and Activities of the Community	18
5.1	CBOs and Community Leader	18
5.2	Political Participation	21
6	Social Life of the Community	23
6.1	Nature of Social Life	23
6.2	Sense of Belonging	26
6.3	Neighbourhood Issues	29
6.4	Educating and Raising Children	32
6.5	Drugs and Alcohol	33
6.6	Being Female in the Community	35
6.7	Happiness and Wellbeing of Sinhapura Residents	37
7	Summary and Concluding Remarks	38
	References	41
	Appendix A Themes Identified for Discussion during Semi-structured Interviews	42
	Appendix B Detailed Occupational Categories of Sinhapura Residents	45

List of Tables

Table 1: Occupation categories of Sinhapura residents	15
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List of Figures

Figure 1: The location of Sinhapura	3
Figure 2: Sinhapura community and its surrounding area	4
Figure 3: Timeline for displacement and relocation history	6
Figure 4: In 2004, construction of Sinhapura and evacuation of 54 watta had not begun	7
Figure 5: In 2009, Phase 1 of Sinhapura was complete	7
Figure 6: In 2014, both phases of Sinhapura were complete	8
Figure 7: Inside a Sinhapura house	9
Figure 8: Current state of the children’s play area	10
Figure 9: The play area	11
Figure 10: Cracks and seepages	12
Figure 11: Garbage disposal	31

1 Introduction

During the past few decades, the relocation of shanty communities has become a developmental concern across many developing countries. After 30 years of internal conflict, Sri Lanka is currently undergoing rapid infrastructure related upgrading particularly in Colombo, where some of these changes have led to the relocation of several shanty/slum communities. This community profile is an attempt to understand the social, political, economic and cultural experiences of these communities during and after relocation, by way of an in-depth case study of a selected community, namely Sinhapura, relocated for development reasons. This community profile is one important outcome of a three-year longitudinal study conducted in Sri Lanka and in India. In-depth inquiry into the lives of these internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been the central objective of the community profile.

The IDPs in the study have been displaced from an urban location to a different urban location. Thus, the previous residence, and residence at the time of the survey, of the IDP households are both urban locations. The IDPs in Sinhapura are now living in a permanent multi-storey housing complex that has been constructed and given to them by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL).

A community profile looks at needs, resources and the whole range of issues affecting communities within an area and looks at that area as a place to live, as a social community, as an economic community, as a political community, as a personal space, and as part of its city (Christakopoulou, Dawson and Gari 2001). The community profile also gave us the opportunity to ensure community participation/involvement in this project. Participatory techniques have been found to be extremely efficient in bringing sensitive issues to the surface, particularly relevant to inequality and violence which cannot and should not (for ethical reasons), be covered using the survey tool.

2 Methods and Techniques of Data Collection

Given the urban nature of the community chosen for study, the team of researchers had several concerns in developing a framework for gathering data. Some of these concerns derived from the historical and general understanding of Wanathamulla, long perceived as an area of criminal activity and violent behaviour, low-income levels and low social status. These characteristics are usually attributed to areas where shanties and slums are concentrated (Niriella, 2012; Daily mirror, 2012; The Nation, 2010). Furthermore, as urban dwellers, the resettled people mostly depend on paid permanent or casual work, so requesting appointments for interviews or focus group discussions had to be done in a manner that did not affect their livelihood activities. A further challenge faced by the researchers was the residents' tendency to assume that the researchers were there to provide financial assistance and/or the tendency to misunderstand the researchers as being affiliated to the Government. Given their experiences during displacement, these concerns were not without reason. Therefore, the researchers had to be careful in building rapport and trust. Displacement and relocation are inevitably processes directly related to the political culture of the country. Therefore, certain politically sensitive information had to be dealt with carefully and probing beyond certain limits was impossible (See Section 5.2).

As a result of the above concerns, the research team paid attention to the safety of researchers while conducting fieldwork, the impact of data collection on the livelihood activities of the

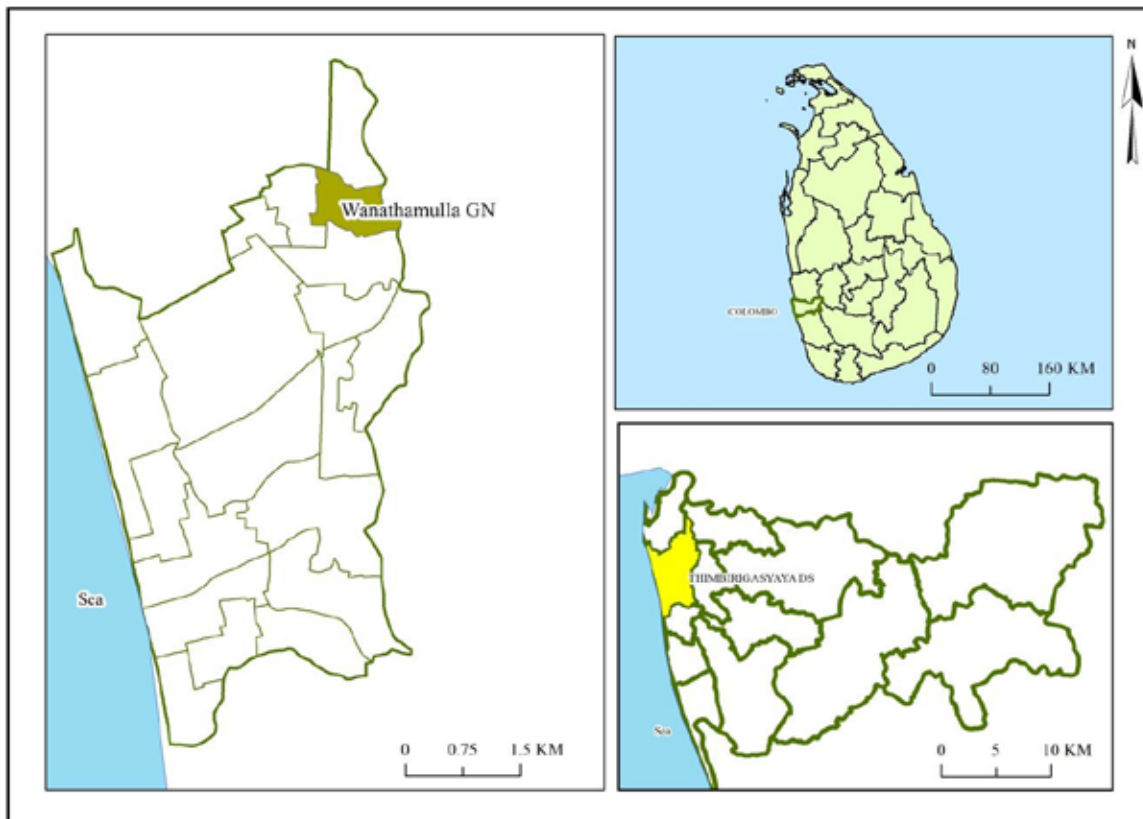
residents, and data collection activities during politically sensitive times such as during elections. Research activities were suspended during the presidential election in January 2015. The ethics and safety protocol of the project was instrumental in making reasonable decisions during such times. In order to not disrupt the residents' livelihood activities, attempts were made to conduct data collection during the weekends and after work hours during weekdays (May 2014 to February 2015). Some respondents were more aware of the idea of 'research' and were happy to support us with our research activities and they became useful intermediaries in building rapport and trust with the community.

The longitudinal study and the data gathered by the survey in the first year of the project was useful for identifying themes, issues and concerns to probe into during the community profile. Forty-eight households were interviewed during the first part of the survey in Sinhapura Phase 1 and Phase 2. The majority were Sinhalese (52%) by ethnicity (Sri Lankan Tamil 25%, Muslims 19%) and Buddhist (48%) by religion (Hindu 13%, Islam 19%). Issues and concerns raised by residents of four resettled communities (namely Sahaspura, Sinhapura, Wadulusevana and Lunawa) in Colombo were identified during the survey. Our research techniques for community profiling used focus group discussions, informal and semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A) with residents of Sinhapura (42), relevant government officials (5) and Buddhist priests (2) in the area as key informants. These qualitative techniques of data collection are informant-oriented and allowed us to triangulate data. Further, we also used direct observation and mapping in the community profiling. Frequent visits allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of some of the issues. These techniques are highly effective in understanding relative social positions, livelihoods, sources of support, infrastructure and the social vulnerabilities of people from their own perspectives. Focus groups discussions were conducted during the weekends when it was easier to meet with children, youth and working adults (1 FGD with Males, 3 FGDs with females and 1 FGD with school children). In addition to recording the interviews and the FGDs, written notes were taken by an assistant who accompanied the researchers.

The objective of the community profile was to explore the issues and concerns identified during the survey in more depth and to identify the mechanisms adopted by this group of people in adapting to their new location and, sometimes, new issues and problems. The community profile paid particular attention to how relocated people adapt their livelihood, education, service accessibility and economic, social and political life to suit the new physical and social environment.

Sinhapura, located in Wanathamulla Grama Niladhari Division consists of two housing complexes identified as Phase 1 and Phase 2 (See Figure 1 & 2). Data was collected from households and individuals. Data was gathered to compare their life experiences in the previous location with those of their new location. Residents of Sinhapura, government officials, and community leaders who directly and indirectly interacted with Sinhapura community were interviewed. FGDs were carried out with both male and female residents of different age groups. The intermediaries mentioned above and the survey data was useful in identifying suitable respondents for in-depth interviews. Direct and non-participant observations made during follow-up visits to the community and the surrounding area supplemented the data generated through interviews.

Figure 1: The location of Sinhapura

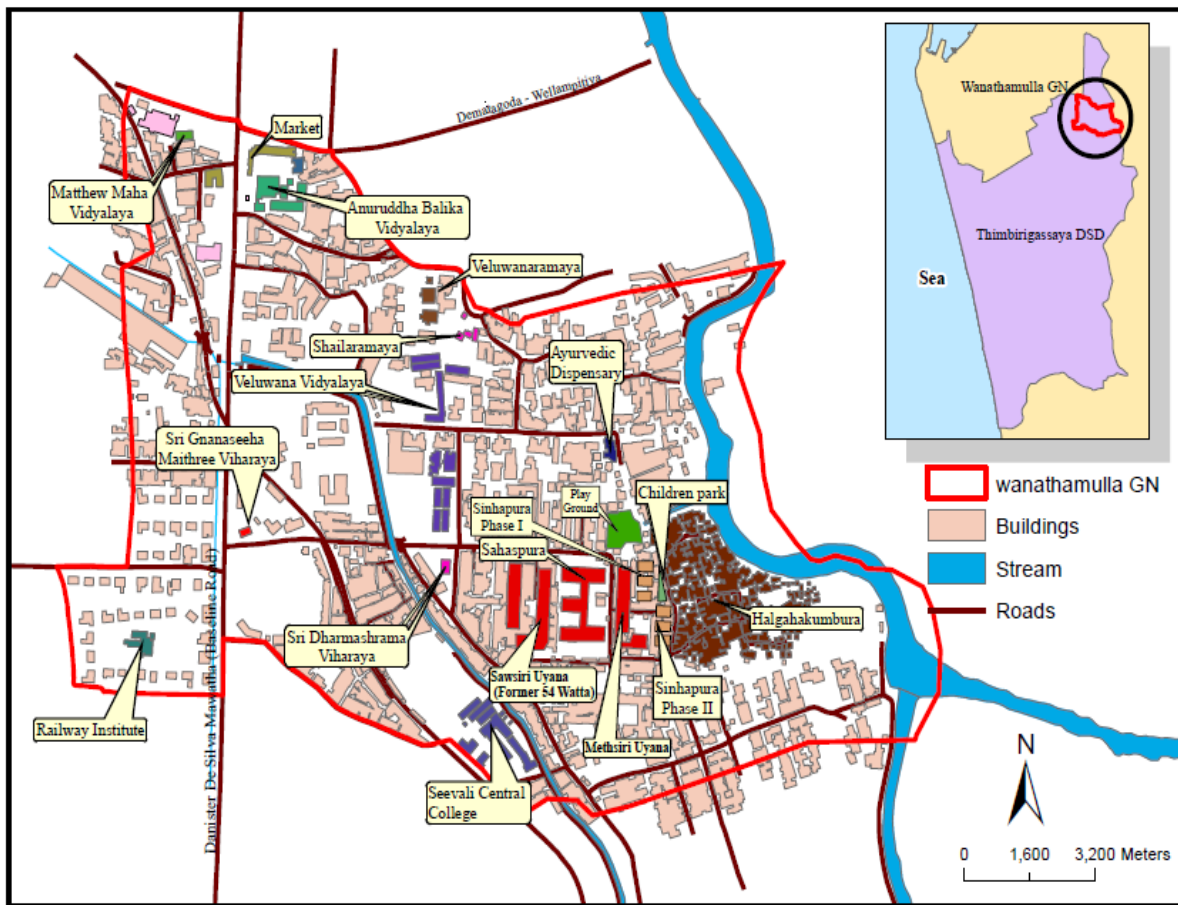


3 The Community

Sinhapura Phase 1 and 2 are located in the Wanathamulla Grama Niladhari Division (GND), which is administered by the Thimbirigasyaya Divisional Secretariat Division (See Figure 1). It is located next to Sahaspura, which is a thirteen-storey housing complex. Sahaspura is home to a group of people displaced (and then relocated) due to development projects in Colombo. Phase 1 of Sinhapura, which consists of 60 housing units (running through 5 floors), commenced in 2007 under the supervision of Real Estate Exchange (Pvt) Ltd. (REEL). Phase 2 of Sinhapura, also a five-storey building of 60 units, was constructed in 2011 under the supervision of the Urban Settlement Development Authority (USDA).

During the household survey conducted in 2013, 48 households from Sinhapura were interviewed. Phase 1 of Sinhapura comprises mostly those who have been removed from the adjoining *54 watta*. Phase 2 is home to families removed mostly from *187 watta* in Torrington, Colombo 7. Some houses in Phase 2 have been given to families through what is known as the 'Minister's List'. According to the occupants, the houses have been given to supporters of either the Minister of Housing or the governing political party or to artists who did not own a house. As a result, Sinhapura is not entirely occupied by families who were evicted from their houses due to developmental projects; rather, it is a collection of families affected and non-affected by developmental projects.

Figure 2: Sinhapura community and its surrounding area



Residents of both phases of Sinhapura were generally happy about the quality of the houses they have received in place of their previous, mostly illegal, shanty constructions. However, residents of Phase 1 had concerns about the lack of attention paid to their convenience and comfort in construction. For example, they were unhappy about the placement of their individual utility meters (electricity and water), and water tanks, which were almost inaccessible. Such concerns were not expressed by Phase 2 residents, which suggests that these “construction errors” were rectified during the construction of Phase 2. Phase 2 residents, however, had other concerns; especially in relation to the location of Sinhapura, which was farther away from the life they were used to in Colombo 7. For Sri Lankans, ‘living in Colombo 7’ represents a prestigious and privileged kind of lifestyle lived by a rich and sophisticated class of people. Although these ex-shanty dwellers from Colombo 7 do not represent this rich and sophisticated lifestyle, living in Colombo 7 also meant having easy access to many social amenities that are of a high quality. For example, some of the most prestigious government schools in Colombo are located in Colombo 7. Phase 2 residents were unhappy about losing access to these social amenities due to relocation. This was not a concern for Phase 1 residents as they had always lived in a location very close to Sinhapura.

Residents of both phases had common concerns about the social environment of Sinhapura, which allowed free access to any kind of ‘stranger’. They were concerned about the selling and use of drugs, largely engaged in by outsiders. In the case of residents who have come from Wanathamulla, they were somewhat used to this culture and were able to deal with such trespassers. Instances of such residents using counter-violence in the form of verbal or physical fighting will be discussed later. Residents new to the social scenario of

Wanathamulla, were worried about its identification as a violent place. Even though the data gathered showed a clear decline of violence, new residents seemed reluctant to accept such claims, as the level of drug-associated violence was still high compared to their previous location. They felt helpless as they were unsure about community support if they engaged in any such fighting with the drug abusers. These new residents do not seem to feel comfortable in Sinhapura due to issues of recognition and acceptance into the community. Residents who are originally from Wanathamulla seem to be clearly distinguishing between ‘us’ and ‘them’, making it difficult for Phase 2 residents to fit in. This made their aversion towards the location stronger.

3.1 History of the Community

People who currently reside in Phase 1 of Sinhapura have come from 54 *watta*, a shanty community that was located in the same area as they are now (See Figure 3). They had to move from 54 *watta* due to the government’s new housing complex project (Sirisara Uyana). Affected people were compensated by replacing the lost house with a new house. Those in Phase 2 came from Torrington in Colombo 7, an area of general affluence. However, this particular community had been living in a marginal location within Torrington. Our respondents reported that this *watta* community had received an offer from a government politician to build an apartment complex in Torrington in place of their existing housing units. Nevertheless, according to the respondents, these promises were not kept and they were forced to relocate to Wanathamulla.

Residents of former 54 *watta* have been subjected to violent and forceful actions by politicians, army personnel and government officials during their eviction from 54 *watta*. They have not moved out of their houses willingly even after several reminders and warnings. Eventually the Government, with the help of the military, had forced them out of their houses by breaking down parts of the houses and making them difficult to live in.

“The government moved us here before they completely demolished our house in Wanathamulla. They removed our roof and then we had no choice but to move. Of course there was no obvious violence where they pulled us out with our belongings. But how can one live without a roof on top of one’s head?” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“No, we were never officially consulted about eviction or relocation. First a group of people claiming to be university students doing a survey gathered all the information about our house. The only thing they asked us was whether we would like to move to a better house, and of course we said yes. Who wouldn’t want a better house? We never thought it would be flats like this. We thought it would be on the ground. Anyway, we all had to leave and come here eventually. We didn’t have a choice, the army came and removed our roof and disconnected the power supply.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

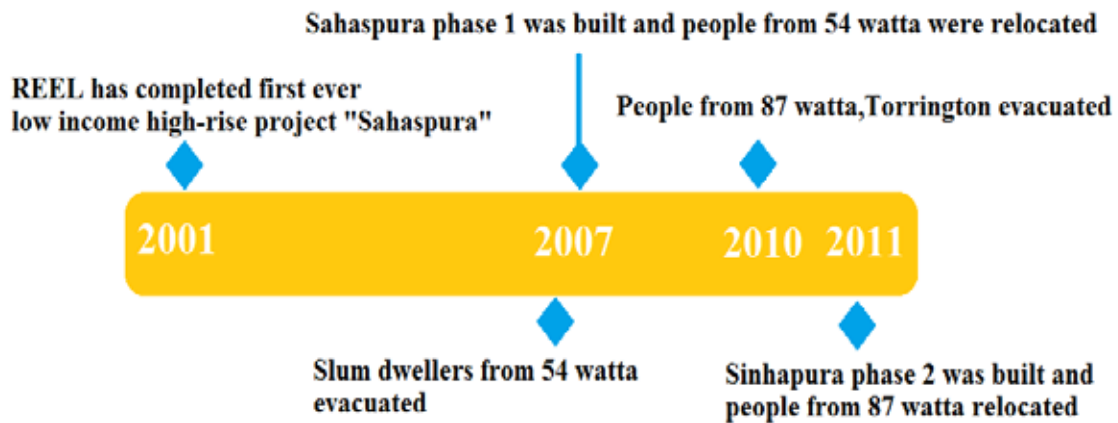
Similarly, the army had broken down walls of houses, compelling the occupants to leave.

“We didn’t come here willingly. They demolished a section of our house and I dragged my children like animals and came here. My husband wasn’t at home when they demolished a part of the house, he had gone out of Colombo for work. I called my husband. He came as quickly as he could. We asked for two days to move, we weren’t granted that. We cleared the house and hired a vehicle and came here. Everything had to be rushed. I was very cross and yelled at the officer who came with the removal order. My youngest son who was only a few months old at the time was covered in dust.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

The residents of Phase 1 who have been evicted from 54 *watta* talked of their memories of the eviction process with a lot of bitterness. However, many of them, particularly those who

lived in smaller houses with less facilities, are now happy with the houses they have received from the Government, though not about the overdue payments they have to make.

Figure 3: Timeline for displacement and relocation history



Evicted families of 54 *watta* were offered houses in the newly constructed apartment complex Sahaspura. Some people moved to Sahaspura and some people who did not get a house moved to other places. Some rejected houses from Sahapura because it has 13 floors and the houses were small. The remaining residents of 54 *watta* demanded a complex with less floors and with bigger (in terms of floor area) houses. Sinhapura Phase 2 was built as a response to these demands (See Figure 4, 5 & 6). However, occupants of Sinhapura Phase 1 complain that the promise of bigger houses has been breached. According to one respondent,

“We knew nothing about a plan to move us from our homes. One day a group of young people claiming to be university students conducting a survey, like the two of you (pointing to the interviewers), came and started surveying our homes. We didn’t know what it was for. When they surveyed our house there were 875 square feet. They said they will give us 500 square feet to compensate for the 875 square feet and claimed that this house has 500 square feet. The standard of a Sinhapura house is 400 square feet. Since we have been given extra 100 square feet we were asked to pay Rs. 100,000. This house does not have 500 square feet.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“Our old house was 400 square feet and this house is 500. We were asked to pay for the extra 100 square feet. My husband didn’t agree to that. But since we were made to pay two instalments at the time of moving in, they claimed that it was an indication of voluntarily moving to these houses and therefore we were forced into paying the remaining amount. However, I have not been able to pay. Recently the real estate company sent me a letter saying that I owe them Rs. 108,000 as interest. Of course I have no way of paying this. Now my husband is also dead.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

In the case of those who moved from Torrington into Sinhapura Phase 2, the eviction process involved a lot of promises by politicians and government officials. The president of the 187 *watta* at the time described how they were convinced to move out of their houses until they were built ‘better’ houses in the same location. Politicians including the President of Sri Lanka and his family members have had various kinds of interactions with this community, helping them in their community activities. Members of the community have been taken to similar housing complexes built in other areas to show them what they will be given. As a result, these politicians managed to win the trust of the residents. To add to this, several engineers from the Colombo municipal council has also got involved, making the promises

even more convincing. In the end, these families were offered Rs. 200,000 each for paying rent in other places till the new housing complex was constructed in Torrington. At the end of two years, they were asked to move to Sinhapura in Wanathamulla. The residents have moved reluctantly as they did not have any other choice.

“Oh my gosh! It was like war. We were told that we would be given new houses in the same location in Torrington, which is why we agreed to move. We agreed because our houses flooded when it rained in Torrington. Government paid us money to pay house rent for the temporary houses that we found. We were paid Rs. 100,000 per annum for 2 years as ‘rent money’. At the time, our daughter wasn’t married (she is now married and lives in Italy). So we had to find a decent place for us to live till we were given houses. So we managed to find a house for rent in Polhengoda. The rent money paid by the Government wasn’t enough for us to pay the rent there. We had to live in misery because of financial problems. All our gold had to be pawned. Half of my daughter’s salary had to be spent on rent. My husband also fell sick.” (Female resident, Phase 2)

Figure 4: In 2004, construction of Sinhapura and evacuation of 54 *watta* had not begun.



Figure 5: In 2009, Phase 1 of Sinhapura was complete.



Figure 6: In 2014 both phases of Sinhapura were complete.



3.2 Relocation, New House and the ‘New Life’ in Sinhapura

The majority of families living in Phase 1 are from 54 *watta* and they received the houses in Sinhapura as compensation for their lost houses, but at a cost. It was claimed that the new houses would be 500 square feet in area. Although they received this house as compensation (house to house) each family had to pay for the additional 100 square feet compared to their previous house which was calculated to have had 400 square feet. REEL claims that the houses offered at Sinhapura are bigger than their previous houses (See Figure 7). The residents reject this claim. A female respondent stated: “Earlier we had a house of 400 square feet. Since this house is 500 square feet, they asked to pay for the extra 100 square feet.” This respondent complained that their previous house was also a ‘good house’ with a sitting room, a big room, a kitchen and other facilities such as electricity and pipe-borne water. Another female respondent stated:

“We still have to pay money for this house. The size of this house is 500 square feet. They told that our previous house was 400 square feet and asked us to pay for the extra 100 square feet. I have to pay 50,000 rupees more.” (Female respondent, Phase 1)

Like her, many Phase 1 residents are still paying money for the ‘extra’ space in their new houses. This issue has been repeatedly raised throughout the interviews by Phase 1 residents. “We still have to pay Rs. 200,000 - 250,000 for the extra square feet we are supposed to have received.”

According to official records, each house in Sinhapura is 450 square feet in floor area. According to official claims, houses in Phase 1 are bigger than the houses these residents previously occupied. In addition to paying for the extra 100 square feet, they had to pay a fee for building maintenance. Initially, they paid Rs. 40,000 as maintenance charges. Disabled people were given priority treatment during the distribution of houses and were offered houses on the ground floor. Others who paid the initial amount for extra space were given the opportunity to choose their preferred floor in the Phase 1 apartment complex.

Figure 7: Inside feature of a housing unit in Sinhapura



People who are from 187 *watta* in Torrington, and now occupying houses in Phase 2, were not requested to make any payments for the house. They have been compensated house-to-house literally with no additional costs. A raffle system was adopted in allocating houses in Phase 2. Non-affected people who got the houses from the Minister's List in Phase 2 were requested to pay Rs. 5,000 per month over a period of five years. Unlike Phase 1 residents, they did not have to pay any fees for maintenance. Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 residents in Sinhapura have not yet received deeds to their houses. People in Phase 1 are of the opinion that they will receive the deed only after they complete the payments.

All 120 houses in Sinhapura are 450 square feet in floor area and have the same structure. A house contains a living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom (See Figure 7). There is a small playground for children between the two housing complexes (See Figure 8). However, this playground has become unsuitable for children due to lack of maintenance and the presence of adults who engage in smoking and/or speak in obscene language in or near the playground (See Figure 9).

“No one is concerned about this play area. This is the only space that is available for children to play. Some play area equipment (such as swings and seesaws) is broken and unusable. No one wants to come forward and repair it. Some people are trying to use that space to build a community centre which I am totally against.” (Male resident, Phase 1)

Figure 9 shows the current situation of the kids' play area. Some play equipment is broken. The surrounding environment is not clean and parts are damaged due to improper maintenance (See Figure 2). This could result in injuries to children. Some families are using part of the play area for drying clothes.

The play area is the only common space available for Sinhapura residents for gatherings and special occasions. Lack of space for recreational activities is an issue faced by residents of both Phase 1 and Phase 2. It was observed by the researchers and mentioned by many residents that young boys in the community like to ‘hang out’ mostly in common spaces like corridors and open spaces between apartments due to the lack of space in their houses. This issue was raised during a focus group discussion (FGD) with a group of young boys. They explained:

“Earlier we had shanty-type houses. Compared to those, now we have good houses. But space in these houses is not sufficient to accommodate a big family. That is why we are always staying outside the houses.” (FGD with young males)

Figure 8: Current situation of the children’s play area in Sinhapura



Residents had diverse opinions about the quality of housing and amenities available to them in Sinhapura. These opinions differed among those who claim to have had better houses in their previous location, and those whose houses had been worse than Sinhapura.

A female respondent from Sinhapura 1 stated that she previously had a big brick house with a living room, two bedrooms and a kitchen. Another male respondent from Sinhapura 2 claimed that he had a bigger house with a wall around it and a gate. People who had bigger houses previously were not very pleased about the house that has been given to them in Sinhapura. Their dissatisfaction was largely regarding the floor area or space of the present house. On the other hand, families that lived in shanty-type houses (mostly temporary timber-constructions) and used public toilets, common taps for water, and electricity from illegal connections to the power lines on the roads, had different opinions. This group of people

were happy and content with the current house as being more comfortable compared to their previous houses. However, both groups of people shared a sense of assurance and safety about their new house as it was no longer constructed illegally on government land and also because of the hope of receiving an ownership deed someday. A female respondent from Phase 1 stated, “Compared to our previous house, this house is good. That is the best thing here.” Earlier they used a common tap for water and toilet but now they have all these facilities in their house.

“I think it is good we came to this flat. Children also like this house. We couldn’t invite outsiders to our houses in the previous place (187 *watta*). The houses were very densely located. We did not have much space in our previous house but here we have sufficient space.” (Male resident, Phase 2).

“We had plank houses in 54 *watta*. We did not have electricity. So we got electricity illegally. Many people obtained electricity through the same method. This house is better than that. This house has a prestige value and a proper system” (Male resident, Phase 1).

Figure 9: The play area in Sinhapura



Residents of Sinhapura had complaints and concerns regarding the construction of the apartment complex. The rainy season brings out most of these issues because of the improper system of drainage which causes puddles. Overflowing sewage adds further unpleasantness and a bad smell to the water puddle that appears at the entrance to Phase 1 during the rainy season.

“Sewage water from all the housing complexes in this location is brought to one pit close to our complex. Obviously the pit lacks capacity to retain the sewage water of that many houses. We have a drainage pit right in front of our house. That too overflows. We can’t even step outside the house when that happens. I’m the one who collects money from the neighbours and get people from the municipal council to clean it. Imagine having drainage water overflow right in front of your house. This is a hell (*Meka apayak*). We didn’t have this kind of dirt flowing in front of our house previously.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

Figure 10: Cracks and Seepages



Likewise, the houses lack a chimney or exhaust fan through which smoke from the kitchen can be sent out. Due to the lack of ventilation it becomes difficult to breathe inside the house when food is being prepared in the kitchen. Further, cracks and seepages have been observed in some houses during field visits. Residents complain that these cracks and seepages have occurred during the two years they have been living in these houses (See Figure 10). The pictures above show the cracks and seepages in a house in Phase 2.

In summary, people's satisfaction about the houses and surrounding environment in Sinhapura is determined largely by their experiences in the previous location. Residents who had a 'better life' in the previous location complained about the new house. But people whose living conditions were not as good as they are now have mostly a positive attitude about their new houses. In general however, the majority of families and individuals captured in the community profile were happy about the new houses. During the FGD with a group of school children, they said, "Now it is better than earlier. The earlier environment was not clean. We have been able to overcome that because of these new houses. Now we can live as we wish."

This relocation scheme has helped underprivileged people to escape from shanty environments, which, however, may pose bigger concerns and issues for them. It has also given them the possibility of owning a house. Compared with their houses in the earlier location these families are now having a comfortable life in a house with includes bathroom, pipe-borne water and electricity.

4 Livelihood and Economic Activities within the Community

Relocation can impact on the livelihoods of the relocated in positive or negative ways. Impact on their livelihoods in turn impacts on other aspects of their lives and the general quality of life enjoyed by them. Relocation to Sinhapura has affected these families' capacity earn and find work.

4.1 Livelihoods

The livelihoods of residents of Phase 1 had been largely in the areas of driving, cleaning, etc., and residents of Phase 2 had been engaged in the areas of manual labour related to the government and corporate sectors. These livelihood activities have not changed much after coming to Sinhapura (See Table 1), particularly for those in Phase 1, as their general location has not really changed. However, livelihood activities of some in Phase 2, though not very different from what they did in Torrington, have been disturbed due to the changes in their clientele, location of business etc. In some cases they have completely lost their ability to engage in their livelihoods due to the increased distance to work caused by relocation. One female respondent who had worked as a domestic help has had to leave her job. She now has to do her daughter's school drop off and pick up which makes it difficult for her to go for her job. Her daughter attends a school close to their previous location and had been transported to and from school by a hired three-wheeler when they lived in Torrington. However, now the distance between school and home is much further, making it a bit 'risky' for her daughter to travel alone in a three-wheeler.

“Expenses have gone up after coming here. I have to go to Narahenpita for work. This is too far for my son to travel to work every day... Many women in our *watta* worked as domestic helpers. They go in the morning and return in the evening. They earn about Rs. 15,000 month. Many men did casual labour kind of jobs. These jobs are still available. But commuting has become a problem now. Returning late in the evening has also become a problem. Thieves snatch gold necklaces. In our previous place, if such things happen, we usually know who did it. With the help of the police we are able to get the thief to return the necklace. But here we don't know anyone and such things are not possible. And anyway, we are afraid to do or say anything to anyone here.” (Male resident, Phase 2)

Apart from a few cases like this, livelihood activities of many in Phase 2, according to the Government Officer 2 of the Library in Wanathamulla, have not been adversely affected due to relocation because those in permanent government employment can still access their workplace from their current residence. A similar comment was also made by a resident:

“Actually it has not affected our jobs. In fact it has improved, in terms of income, after coming here. The earlier place my father worked in used to give him work on one day and then no work the other. But now he goes to work every day.” (Female resident, Phase 2)

However, some small-scale businesses such as shops have been affected or been completely shut down due to relocation.

“My daughter had a shop in our previous house. We earned about Rs. 1000 per day as profit. It was a fruit shop. Pawpaw, bananas, pineapple, we had all the fruits.” (Female residents, Phase 1)

In addition to losing a house of about 1200 square feet, this family has lost their fruit shop, along with the income it generated, as a result of relocation. They have been promised compensation for everything they lost. But the only thing they have received so far is the house in Sinhapura, which is very small. They have failed in all their attempts to get in touch with government officials concerning what has been promised. However, the respondent seemed content about her new living arrangements apart from having lost her shop and the bigger house. The respondent's husband seems to have found a new job in Pettah as a security officer after losing the shop.

"We only have the loss (of the shop) and not receiving one more house. These houses are good for those who had small houses. But they have to pay monthly. We paid Rs. 45,000. So now we have nothing more to pay... Those days it was one house on the side of the road. So it was easy to open a shop. But now, the house is small, plus I lost my shop.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

It is evident that she is not particularly unhappy about her current living condition; in fact she says that it is not very different from what they had in the previous location. Government Officer 2 also stated that some residents have lost shops that they had in their previous houses and that their Sinhapura houses are too small to have such shops.

Table 1 shows the occupational categories of the individuals residing in Sinhapura Phase 1 and 2 (See Appendix B for a detailed list of the occupational categories). According to the table, the majority of them (57%) are blue-collar workers doing manual labour including cleaning, helping, driving etc.

Table 1 - Occupation Categories of Sinhapura Residents

Occupational Category	Frequency
Government sector employee (skilled or semi-skilled)	17
Government sector employee (unskilled)	9
Private sector employee (skilled or semi-skilled)	6
Private sector employee (unskilled)	14
Self-employed (skilled or semi-skilled)	18
Self-employed (unskilled)	20
Total	84

Government Officer 1 commented on the poverty prevailing among the general population of Wanathamulla, i.e. both shanty dwellers and Sinhapura residents.

“The problem of poverty is not one of not having money. It’s mismanagement of finances. They can do all sorts of things in this environment and earn. People in this area will always travel by three-wheeler. I walk. I walk because I want to. But these people will take a three-wheeler to travel the distance of a single bus stop. Poverty exists because of this kind of unnecessary expenses. See, they look poor from outside. But look at the TV inside the house; it’s worth Rs. 50,000 or Rs. 60,000. First thing is, they look poor but they are not. Their minds are not developed. They don’t know how to manage their income.” (Government Officer 1, Colombo 8)

Government Officer 1 is of the opinion that relocation of shanty dwellers can result in inculcating better practises of financial management among them. According to him, the demand placed on them to make a payment of Rs. 50,000 as the first instalment for the house motivates these individuals to earn more and save more. He further added that living in housing complexes like Sinhapura is also likely to develop a competitive attitude among residents to want to live a life better than their neighbours. This sense of competition would also promote thrift among these residents and eventually lead to the successful management of finances. In fact, for many residents of Phase 1, the pressing financial issue is that of the payment they have to make to the real estate company. For all residents, the amount has now exceeded Rs. 100,000 with the accumulation of interest. Even though many claim that they have no way of paying up, they do identify it as a priority financial concern in their families.

On the issue of expenses, some residents felt that their utility bills and general cost of living has increased as a result of relocation.

“Earlier our utility bills were around Rs. 100 or so. But here the electricity bill is really high and I have switched off the fridge also. Still, it’s very high. You can’t do much with your income after you settle the utility bills. It’s around Rs. 2000 or Rs, 3000.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

While some agreed that this may be a result of general inflation in the country, others thought it was due to the new location. The above respondent, for example, thought that they were being issued forged electricity bills because the electricity meter was placed in a location that was difficult for the residents to reach and check personally. Some others from Phase 2 said that their expenses have gone up as a result of their increased transportation costs (see above).

4.2 Youth Employment

Youth unemployment is widespread in Sinhapura and in the general area of Wanathamulla. Lack of job opportunities in the private and the government sector lead young people to move

away from Sinhapura in search of jobs. These youth are also at high risk of getting attracted to drugs and alcohol, which is freely available within the compound. Several factors contribute to this general lack of employment opportunities. Lower levels of education among the youth, employers' reluctance to employ these youth due to the negative social connotations attached to their place of residence, namely Wanathmulla, and the youths' reluctance to take up 'any job' that is on offer, particularly the ones that pay little, seem to be at work here.

Government Officer 2 identified two types of young individuals in the community. One group was very keen to access information about suitable jobs or at least vocational training courses, while the other group was not happy to take up "small jobs that paid very little". Government Officer 2 pointed out that there is a growing awareness and interest among the youth about employment opportunities, compared to several years ago. Government Officer 2 was particularly critical of the latter group identified above and said that they did not realize the value of experience and training they could gain through these small jobs.

Sinhapura parents were clearly concerned about educating their children in a manner that enhances their employability. Although parents had little or no academic background to support their children's education they are evidently trying their best: sending the children to government schools with a 'better' reputation, encouraging them to study at home, sending them for tuition classes for additional academic help, and providing the necessary amenities. As a result, the majority of the children and adolescents interviewed during the study have been successful in achieving 'better' educational qualifications when compared to their parents. These higher educational levels seem to have given them higher aspirations which makes them reluctant to take up 'any job' for the sake of being employed. Additionally, the social stigma associated with being a resident of Wanathamulla seems to worsen this situation by discouraging employers from employing these individuals. A young boy who is currently studying for his General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) explained the scenario as follows:

(Talking about a theatrical performance recently organized by the Government where children from Wanathamulla participated ...) "The announcers went on describing that it was children from these communities (as in underserved communities in Wanathamulla) that are performing. That may be true. What they did even at that time is confirm and re-establish our 'unpleasing' identity as boys of Wanathamulla. That is where the problem lies. So even if you create heaven down here, the title will continue to be 'Wanathamulla'". (Young boy studying for GCE A/L examination, Phase 2)

Likewise, mothers spoke of how some 'leading' schools in the neighbourhood do not want to admit children from Wanathamulla into their schools. These social and personal perceptions and beliefs seem to be responsible for the lack of employment opportunities for the young.

These unemployed youth also make up a group of individuals who are likely to be attracted to drugs and alcohol, which was the most commonly cited 'menace' by the participants. If this were the case, the unemployed youth seem to be contributing towards the communities' so called 'unpleasing' identity. Breaking the vicious cycle seems difficult and it may require governmental or non-governmental intervention to change society's attitude to Wanathamulla. Keeping the unemployed youth engaged in community activities would be one way of supporting the youth (discussed later).

The youth do not seem keen on exploring avenues for self-employment. When questioned on the matter, their response often reverted to lack of capital for such a venture. However, there

seem to be opportunities for obtaining loans through *Samurdhi* for self-employment. According to Government Officer 3, the most common self-employment activity among residents of Sinhapura is the making and selling of takeaway food items such as hoppers, string hoppers and pittu. There seems to be a lack of information available to these residents or a lack of interest to explore all possibilities for developing new livelihoods.

Striving to get a job made the youth more vulnerable as they sought help from politicians in the area. Some of them even worked for politicians during elections with the intention of being rewarded with suitable employment after the candidate's victory. However, more often than not, they failed in achieving this. According to them, these politicians cajoled them during the past with their false election promises. As a result, some of them are determined not to support any party or follow any politician in the upcoming elections.

“Politics do not help youngsters find jobs. These children also just stay in the house. They can at least find some casual labour job. But they don't. They steal something from a house, sell it and get about Rs. 500. Then they get together with about four others and have fun.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

4.3 Female Labour Market Participation

Some women who moved to Sinhapura from Torrington had to give up their work as domestic helpers or cleaners, mostly to care for and look after their daughters. As one mother explained, her daughter could no longer travel to school on her own or together with others in a three-wheeler as the distance between school and home was much more than it used to be. Mothers who considered this to be a risk opted to leave their jobs and spend more time with their daughters.

Apart from these few cases, a majority of women who were in salaried employment said that their income or job did not get affected by relocation. In fact some of them thought that it has improved after relocation. However, the women who participated in the FGD were of the opinion that this may not be the case with women who were self-employed. No such cases of self-employed women were encountered during the community profiling activity.

The women also said that their life in a housing complex was not very conducive towards establishing small shops in their houses. According to them, the issue was not entirely related to the availability of space, as explained by one respondent.

(Interviewer: Have you not thought about earning an additional income?) “No. We are five floors above the ground. So you can't even start a shop. No one will climb so many floors to shop.” (FGD with female residents)

Apart from opening a shop, these women did not have many other ideas for self-employment. For those who are new to Wanathamulla, the area's general social reputation seemed to be giving them reasons to be more concerned about their families and children, which inhibited them from exploring their capacities to the fullest. Furthermore, the women interviewed were not aware of the loan schemes available to them for self-employment. However, all of them were aware of the women's CBO, which offered them loans at low interest rates. Exploration of this possibility was also debarred by the fact that none of the women believed that this CBO or the loan scheme would be beneficial to them. Consequently, the membership of the CBO constantly changed due to lack of trust. Small loans were obtained mostly for meeting day-to-day household needs.

5 Political Participation and Activities of the Community

Underserved communities are noted for not having a very strong capacity for forming unified groups for representing themselves. Residents of Sinhapura were no exception. Their inability to mobilize themselves in the absence of a strong leadership has made them ineffective at resolving the issues they have been faced with during and after relocation.

5.1 CBOs and Community Leaders

There seem to be a lack of interest, particularly among the young, to form strong community organizations that could play a key role as mediators between the community and the government and within the community itself. A government officer had the following observation to share:

“There is no second-order leadership to take over after the first group. We need to develop a second-order leadership. If not, these associations/societies will collapse. Any society will last for a maximum of 5 years. That’s my guarantee! I have been working in this area for 14 years now. No society lasts more than 5 years. There are some boys who think that it should collapse with their resignation. Some want to change something during their time in office. We need to fix this attitude.” (Government Officer 1, Colombo 8)

The story of CBOs and their leadership weakening and eventually becoming ineffective was shared by many residents.

The Condominium Management Authority (CMA) (*Swadhipaththya Kalamanakarana Samithiya*) was established under the guidance of the Ministry of Housing. The objective was the maintenance of the housing complex by the residents, with support from the relevant authorities. However, residents of Phase 1 and Phase 2 refused to get together and form a common CMA for Sinhapura. This was largely due to the issue of “us” and “them” that was discussed briefly earlier. As a result, two separate CMAs had to be established. However, the CMAs were functional only for a very short period. According to residents, the CMAs became inactive and ineffective due to improper conduct by the members of the executive committee. Some claimed that the members of the executive committee represented their personal interests rather than the interests of Sinhapura residents. It was alleged that some executive members tried to get more than one apartment for his/her family by misusing the political alliances they developed as executive committee members of the CMA. As a result, the CMA failed to meet its objective of working as an intermediary between the residents and government officials. Therefore, Sinhapura residents were unable to make demands from relevant authorities through the CMAs. The lack of unity between the two phases also contributes towards weakening the possibilities of Sinhapura developing into a community with common goals and interests (a point that will be taken up for discussion later).

Residents of Sinhapura Phase 1 and Phase 2 have had effective community organizations and leaders in their previous locations. Residents of Phase 2, i.e. those who moved from Torrington, have continued to have the same CBO along with its office bearers even after relocation. However, residents seem to have become sceptical of or lost trust in the office bearers largely as a result of the relocation process which was ‘involuntary’ to some extent. Politicians and government officials had got together with these same community leaders to convince the residents that they would be given houses at the same location and managed to

gain the residents' consensus for the evacuation. However, these promises were not kept and the evictees had been left with no option but to move to the houses in Wanathamulla. Although the office bearers too have been victimized, they are also accused of supporting the politicians.

'We had a community society there. It is because of the society that we had to come here. Others like us who were in Torrington are still there'². Some of them have built two-storey houses.' (Male resident, Phase 2)

According to one female respondent in Phase 2, the CBO and the leaders in Torrington had been effective. The president of this organization had good networking with local politicians, business leaders and so on. The leaders were effective in maintaining peace in their *watta*. The area police office also knew the society well and other government officials also liaised with this organization for matters relating to the community. However, this CBO is largely defunct now and does not perform any social function. In Phase 2, the Urban Settlement Development Authority (USDA) has managed to re-introduce the '*Swadhipathya samithiya*' which acts as the representative of the residents especially when it comes to dealing with USDA and other government institutions. The office bearers of the previous CBO have been now replaced with younger leaders. The current president and all of the office bearers are women. However, the voluntary character of this organization is limited as it is mainly driven by the officials of the USDA.

In Phase 1, though there have not been any 'invisible' links between community leaders and politicians which disadvantaged the community, the CBO they had in 54 *watta* has become ineffective after relocation. Here, the reason for becoming ineffective has been attributed mostly to the individualized lifestyle introduced by condominium living. As one respondent identified, they had shared problems in 54 *watta* which were largely related to issues such as the quality of housing and natural disaster (e.g. floods). The new housing scheme has taken these common issues out of their lives, resulting in lesser need for community mobilization. Their current common issues seem to be identified as problems they cannot solve by themselves. The need for Governmental or USDA intervention in solving these problems seems to be emphasised to the extent of discouraging the formation of any CBOs within Phase 1. For example, residents of Phase 1 have not agreed to the formation of the *Swadhipathya Samithiya* which was initiated by the USDA. They do not seem to believe that such an organization would help them solve their issues such as leaking drainages, 'unreachable' utility meters and the unclean environment. Every family has paid a sum of Rs. 45,000 upon entering the housing complex as a maintenance fee. The residents are unhappy that this money has not been used for maintenance purposes. The lack of a proper system to ensure that funds are spent for maintenance is criticised. The residents are not convinced that the forming of any formal CBO would bring this 'proper system' into place. There seem to be a lack of trust in community leaders in terms of misusing public funds. This is another reason that demotivates them from forming any CBO with (or without) governmental intervention.

Female participation in CBOs seems to have been at an impressive level in their previous locations, particularly in the case of Phase 1 residents. However, they have now become inactive as community leaders mainly due to allegations made by other members of the community. These females have organized cultural festivals spending their own money when contributions by the community have been inadequate. However, at the end of these festivals

² According to USDA sources, the then government intended to relocate only a part of the shanties in Torrington. Therefore, the other shanty communities are still living in Torrington.

these females have been accused of misusing funds generated by the community. As a result, they have opted to withdraw from any community level activities. They claim that the older members of the community who have held leadership positions were unhappy about others taking over their job. Some others claimed that it was women who made it difficult for them to be active in community work. However, these women are still active at a lower level of community involvement in sorting out the more day-to-day issues such as keeping the area clean and hygienic.

“We were active in the *samithiya*. But then people began blaming us for everything that went wrong in the complex. Older community leaders didn’t like us becoming active. Now they are too old to organize things. When they organized things maybe they stole people’s money. So they accused us of doing the same. So, many of us who were very active left.” (FGD with women)

“A Muslim girl used to look into our issues in 54 *watta*. She did a lot. She used to look into everything and sort out our problems. She could get us all together and get us involved in community level activities. She tried to continue it here too. But the idiots here wouldn’t let her.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“I don’t get involved in community activities as I used to in 54 *watta*. The thing is the people here aren’t all the same people we used to live with. Some people have come from other areas. They demand a lot. If they give money for an *avurudu* festival, then they want gifts for all their family members. If they give for a *dansala*, then they want more for their families.” (Former female community leader, Phase 1)

“Women are difficult to work with. There were few women with whom we got together and did some community activities. But after the last *avurudu* festival we don’t even talk to them. After that festival we decided not to do anything. Women are not at all united. With men, you can do things. It is difficult with women.” (Former female community leader, Phase 1)

In Phase 2, women have got formally and officially involved in CBO activities with the re-establishment of the *Swadhipathya samithiya*. All office bearers of the CBO are women; a result partly caused by circumstance.

“All of them are women. The meeting was called on a Friday. It’s a work day and most men were away at work. The majority who joined the meeting were women. Anyway, it’s usually women who come forward for everything. Men do too, but it’s the women who get involved.” (FGD with women, Phase 2)

Residents of Phase 2 seemed hopeful of positive change with the election of the new office bearers. It was too early for the new leadership to talk about their issues related to working with and for the community. Their only pressing problem at the time was the need to build a community hall, which was being hindered by the residents of Phase 1. Lack of unity between the two Phases (discussed further later) seems to affect the effectiveness of community leadership.

Phase 1 also has a women’s organization which aims to provide low-interest loans for its membership. Though based in Phase 1, the services of this women’s organization was accessible to all residents of Wanathamulla. These loans helped women deal with their monthly/daily financial crises by providing loans as small as Rs. 500. Almost all female residents interviewed mentioned this loan facility, indicating its popularity.

The *Maranadhara Samithiya* (a funeral assistance society) in Phase 2 of Sinhapura provided financial assistance for its membership on the death of a family member and also physical

amenities such as putting up tents and banners for the funeral. Members also supported bereaved families by way of providing the physical labour necessary during a funeral. However, the fact that Phase 1 does not have a *Maranadhara Samithiya* raises important issues pertaining to social integration within Sinhapura in general, and Phase 1 in particular (discussed later).

“Right at the beginning we had *samithiya*. They fought and the *samithiya* was dissolved. In our previous location we had a *maranadhara samithiya*. Here we have nothing of that sort. Even if they start a *samithiya* now, they will fight and then cancel the *samithiya*. There is no unity. This is because residents here are strangers to each other. It’s very difficult to build that sense of unity when people don’t know each other.” (Female resident, Phase 1).

5.2 Political Participation:

Resettled people do not stand out for their political participation. People of Phase 2 tried to reach various politicians to find a permanent solution to the issues that affect their community. Prior to relocation they maintained connections with several powerful politicians. Once relocated, they were not able to retain those political relationships. Loss of trust in politicians due to unrealized promises, individualization which inhibited mobilization and the absence of pressing common issues such as the ones faced in their previous location (floods, leaking roofs, threat of eviction etc.) seem to have played a role in this regard. Common problems in their previous location could be sorted out to a larger extent by way of community support. For example, members of the community could help each other during times of flood. However, their current common problems require intervention from the government rather than from other community members. Factors such as loss of trust in politicians and the individualized condominium lifestyle seem to be stronger than their desire to unite for the common cause. Furthermore, their current problems were common only to segments of the community. It is mostly the people on the ground floor that are affected by overflowing sewage, trespassers and obscene language. Residents on upper floors were affected by issues such as lack of space to dry clothes, to have a funeral or function, to have pets etc. This fragmented nature of the ‘common problems’ affected how they mobilized themselves to solve them.

In the current location, there are representatives of political parties who engage in party campaigns, canvassing and seeking private benefits. By and large the majority of the people have limited their political participation to election voting. People do have links with members of parliament who once in a while provide certain handouts. Members of parliament representing the district of Colombo, especially those hailing from the same area as the flats, try to mobilize people for various political activities.

Older residents seem to have faith in politicians’ capacity to help the residents improve their life circumstances.

“Some politicians spend their own money and provide services for us. They have tarred and concreted our roads. But this problem of the leaking drainage... May be it’s a problem they cannot fix. No one seems to want to do anything about it. We can’t wait till they fix it. It’s filthy, germs and flies will spread. So we pay a man and get it cleaned ourselves. (Interviewer: Do politicians visit your community even after elections?) Oh yes, they all come. They come for funerals. Not only for elections.” (FGD with women)

However, this view of politicians does not seem to be shared by younger members of the community. Commenting on the issue of emerging young political leaders, Government Officer 1 explained:

“I wanted to send someone for the youth parliament. So I managed to get one boy to join the youth parliament; they are really not keen about politics. They just want to get together and help someone and get a bat and ball for themselves. The environment here isn’t really very conducive towards the development of strong political leadership... Youngsters don’t get involved in politics. You know when they get involved? When they are promised a packet of rice or Rs. 100 during party processions. They will rush into such activities. Because for such activities, there is already a leader. So all they have to do is gather around him/her.” (Government Officer 1, Colombo 8)

“No, the youth are not very politically inclined. If someone promises them a job, these children will go. There will be so many people to take what is given. There are some who don’t go for jobs. Such children don’t have a party. They just go after anyone who comes and then do or say what they are expected to do or say. Many go after politicians now with the hope of getting a house.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

This opinion about political participation and leadership was shared by several other participants. A group of young boys expressed their displeasure in party politics and politicians.

“We were involved in political activities, but not anymore. (Interviewer: Why?) Because politicians only make use of us. We don’t get anything in return. I don’t say I alone should benefit from that, but if 10 people join me in working for them, at least one should get a job. They promise so many things when they seek our help, but then give us nothing in the end.” (FGD with young boys)

These potential future (political) leaders seems to have no trust in what politics can offer them which in turn might be causing their reluctance to join active politics. This lack of trust in politics may indirectly affect the community’s capacity to form effective CBOs in the future as CBOs would require political affiliation for successful implementation.

Political affiliation also seems to inhibit certain community projects that intend to support the community and improve its circumstances. The community is largely known to support the political ideology of Party X. Government officer 1 reported an incident where a community project to teach English to children had to be abandoned due to this political culture.

“I wanted to start an English class in School ABC under the patronage of Mr. X. This was to teach English free of charge to the children of Wanathamulla. However, the Principal said that he would only support and allow it if Mr. Y approves of it.” (Government Officer 1, Colombo 8)

Patterns of female political participation is not different to the general patterns identified in the community. They supported political parties of their preference but not necessarily with an interest in active politics.

“Everybody knows we support Party X. Sometimes they tease when we walk on the road saying, “There goes” but nothing beyond that like fights or arguments. There were 11 in my family. All 11 married Party X supporters. We have been Party X since those days. Many politicians along with some of their supporters changed their party, but we never did.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

The above statement also expresses the political freedom enjoyed by the community compared to earlier when people were reluctant to reveal their political identity due to fear of discrimination.

People seem to be enjoying the benefits offered to them by the incumbent political party without the pressure of having to support them in the next election. One male respondent who claimed that he was politically victimized and lost his job in the Central Transport Board (CTB) is now enjoying a flat offered by the same government. He claims that the government could not deny what was ‘rightfully’ his as all residents from his previous community were given houses in Sinhapura. Ironically, the same government is accused of violating his ‘rights’ to engage in a job. The mismatch in this story required more data gathering which was difficult due to the political nature of the issue; the researchers had to restrict themselves to the information provided by the relevant individual. As things stand today, this particular individual seem to be holding the same political views and supporting the same political party but living under a roof given to him by the opposing political party; a clear indication of political freedom enjoyed by these people.

“ The majority in this area are Party X supporters. On election day, they do what they want to do quietly. Some have begun to support the incumbent president. People who can’t afford to build houses like this by themselves, they like this. So there are people who praise him (incumbent president) too. But it’s always Party X that wins. So I feel that people keep quiet about their political identity and then vote for Party X when the time comes.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“I will never change my political party. I am still what my father’s generation was. We have only one mother, one father and one religion. It’s the same with politics. I will never change, that is my principle. I don’t know about others.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

This political freedom is an expression of political tolerance that prevails in this community, a fact confirmed by many residents. There were no reported acts of violence caused by political affiliations even after the elections that were held during the time the community profile was being carried out.

6 Social Life of the Community

The social life experienced by residents of Sinhapura Phase 1 and 2 is very different to what they have experienced in the past as shanty-dwellers. The difference is brought about mostly by the permanent houses in which they live now, and the more individualized lifestyle that is demanded by condominium living.

6.1 Nature of Social Life

It seems appropriate to claim that the relocation experience for Sinhapura Phase 1 residents has been a change of house while for those in Phase 2, it has been a change of house as well as location. As a result, the social life currently experienced by Phase 1 residents is somewhat similar to that of their previous location. However, those in Phase 2 claim that their social experiences are very different as they have been relocated to a new area. Phase 1 residents are more used to the negative social connotations that are associated with Wanathamulla, whereas the Phase 2 residents have come from a comparatively more sophisticated location with better social recognition.

Families in Sinhapura, irrespective of the Phase, claim that they have become very individualized compared to their times in the shanties. They have been in control of their neighbourhood in their previous locations and have been able to control who entered ‘their territory’ by way of polite or aggressive informal control mechanisms mostly because everyone in the neighbourhood was known to them (See Section 4.1). Furthermore, they also

had the assurance that their neighbours would support them in ‘chasing out’ any unwanted intruders. However, in the current location, they seem helpless against the large numbers of trespassers entering their premises mostly to engage in troublesome activities such as the abuse of drugs and alcohol. They are also afraid to use the same informal mechanisms that they had used in the past in their previous location, as they are not confident that the community would support them in implementing such measures.

“We had to go through a lot of difficulty at the time of displacement. But that’s not important any more; we are in difficulty now. All sorts of people have come here and it’s a nuisance.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“Neighbourhood relationships have weakened since moving here. They stay in their houses and I stay in mine. We smile when we meet each other on the road. That’s about it. In 54 *watta* also I had my own tap in my house. But there was a public tap right in front of my house. So when people come for a shower we used to go there and chat. We don’t have that here.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“We used to be free those days. When we leave the house and meet people we know who they are. But now there are more people that we do not know. Our parents were born and raised there. So we used to know each other. Now fights have become more frequent because of the strangers that have come in.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“We still live in unity. If we meet someone somewhere we always talk to them. Earlier our houses were like line houses, so we used to see and meet people very often. We used to visit each other all the time. But these houses are flats. We talk with others only when we go down the stairs.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“In the *wattas* there are all kinds of problems. For example, lack of space makes it difficult for people to find a place to have their own clothesline to dry their clothes. No such problems here. Even the people living on the upper floors can keep their own racks to dry clothes. People gather for public events like the New Year celebrations. At other times they go for their jobs and then stay in their houses with their family. This is condominium living (‘flat life’).” (Male resident, Phase 2)

“54 *watta* was a place with a unique group of people. If someone is treated unfairly, or if someone is sick, everyone will gather in that house. If there’s a funeral people will come for anything. I feel that it would have been better if such people were given improved conditions in the same shanties rather than build this kind of houses. Then unity would have prevailed.” (Male resident, Phase 1)

All residents interviewed during the community profile were concerned about the social environment in which they have to live and raise their children. Abuse of drugs and alcohol, the common use of obscene language, petty theft and quarrels in the neighbourhood were identified as some of the frequently arising issues. According to the residents, these issues were mostly caused by individuals or groups who are not residents of Sinhapura, i.e. trespassers. Drug abusers and alcoholics who are most likely to be in need of fast cash stole clothes from their clotheslines (See Figure 9), slippers removed at the entrance to their houses, tires from parked motorcycles and three-wheelers and even the carpet at the entrance to their houses. These trespassers who gathered in shady spots in the open spaces within Sinhapura, mostly for smoking drugs, were loud and used a lot of obscene language in their conversations and frequently got into arguments with residents of Sinhapura mostly when residents protested against their behaviour. The residents did not feel that they could depend on the police for protection against these abusive actions conducted by trespassers. Phase 2 residents reported an individual who was ‘brave’ enough to complain about a group of such trespassers to the police and eventually got severely beaten up by the trespassers and was compelled to leave the neighbourhood. As a result, many families opt to suffer in silence and wait till they are given the title deeds to the house, so that they could sell the house and move to a ‘better’ environment; some others have already moved out to rented apartments.

“It is difficult to live here. So some people have given their house on rent and moved out to other rented places. Some have given this out on rent for Rs. 7,000 - 8000 and have moved out to rented places paying Rs. 10,000 -15,000 as rent.” (Former president of the *Swadhipathya Samithiya*, Phase 2)

“People here are difficult to control (*Naheta ahannathi minissu inne*). We want to sell this and leave this place as soon as we are given the deed.” (Male resident, Phase 2)

“These houses are much better than where we lived earlier. But the issue is the (social) environment. Drugs. We are made to live in an environment where it is difficult to raise children. We can’t send a child out of the house. There are frequent fights. People are always running with batons and swords. We didn’t have all this in 54 *watta*.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“We lived in Torrington for 23 years. There was absolutely no problem. The houses they gave us are fine, but the locality is absolutely terrible. It was like been shown the younger sister and giving the elder sister in marriage (*Nangi pennala akka dunna wage seen ekak thamai une*). It was like falling out of the frying pan and into the fire. (*Kabalen lipata watuma wage wadak thamai une*). You can’t bring up children here. I bring my children here because my father is here. Otherwise I don’t even like to come here. I couldn’t get my son admitted to Royal College³ because we had to leave Torrington and come here.” (Son of male resident, Phase 2)

All families and individuals interviewed were pleased about receiving a house from the government. Residents of both Phases had similar concerns about the social life they were compelled to live. However, residents of Phase 2 had stronger concerns and grievances about the new location, Wanathamulla, as they have previously lived in a more ‘socially accepted’ area, i.e. Torrington.

“When we were there in Torrington people knew us. They know who’s who you are. Here, the police have no respect towards us. They call people “come here bastard” (*mehe enawa paraya*).” (Male resident, Phase 2)

The name Wanathamulla carries many negative social connotations as it has long been known for its shanty areas and the delinquent lifestyle of some residents. In addition to not being immediately recognized as a shanty area or an area of delinquent behaviours, Torrington is an area with much better facilities. For example, the area is located close to several leading government schools, national television and radio complexes, embassies, hospitals and several other important government offices. Residents of Phase 2 had the most complaints about the location as they did not have any prior experience in Wanathamulla. However, some residents were hopeful of the situation improving for their children as they get used to the new environment. Government Officer 1 who said that the social conditions of Wanathamulla have improved, explained how drugs is still a problem:

“There are no gangsters, as we knew in the past, in Wanathamulla now. There are some but they are hiding. These gangs are formed around the business of drugs. I don’t think Wanathamulla has drugs as it used to, particularly after the killing of Mr. X. The underworld we once knew is no more. Now everyone wants to protect their families and educate their children. Wanathamulla today is far better than what it once was.” (Government officer 1, Colombo 8)

As pointed out earlier, individualization is one consequence of relocation. It has resulted in weakening the bonds between neighbours and families of Sinhapura, while at the same time improving the possibilities of individual development, which in turn may result in community development.

³ Royal College is a leading boys’ school in Colombo.

“The sense of community weakens. People begin to think that they must develop as individuals. (Interviewer: why do you think that is the case?) Earlier they didn’t have any dreams. The environment in which they lived did not support such dreaming. Now they have dreams. Because now their lives are more methodical. Let’s buy a vehicle, a three-wheeler. In a shanty, none of these thoughts come. People get ideas depending on the environment they have to live in ... Moving into a housing complex will undoubtedly create competition among the relocated because now they begin to compare their lives with that of their neighbours. They begin to think ‘why can’t I, if he could’. This is a society that is sure to develop, not fail. All thanks to this competition.” (Government officer 1, Colombo 8)

Individualization has made it difficult for residents to mobilize themselves as a group with a strong sense of community in order to address common concerns or issues. No community organizations or associations have been observed in Phase 1 over the two years that the research team was there. Even attempts to re-establish the *swadhipathya samithiyas* succeeded only in Phase 2 (See Section 5.1). Residents of Phase 1 have not been able to re-establish their *swadhopathiya samithiya*, as coming to a consensus about the need for such a society seems to have been difficult. Unlike Phase 2, Phase 1 residents have several complaints about the construction of their houses (See Section 1.3). These issues include inaccessible electricity meters, overflowing sewage, leaks from overhead tanks, inaccessible water tanks that have lids which get blown away, and the cleaning of the surrounding area and the children’s park. Phase 1 residents are of the opinion that the government or REEL should help them resolve these issues. However, they do not see the *samithiyas* as a suitable means for achieving this end by way of pressurizing the government. They have arrived at the conclusion that they would commit themselves to establishing their *swadhipathya samithiya* if and when the authorities help resolve these issues for them.

6.2 Sense of Belonging

The nature of social life in Wanathamulla, individualization and social networking among residents of Sinhapura undoubtedly impacts their sense of belonging. The development of a strong sense of community would require each member/ household of the group to feel that they belong to the community. Rather than having a sense of belonging, there seem to be two separate senses of belonging for the two Phases of Sinhapura.

“Phase 1 and 2 are still divided even after so many years of being here. Initially, there were fights between the two, because some boys on our phase had teased some girls from their phase. These things lead to fights. No mother would keep quiet when their daughter is being teased.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“Residents of Phase 1 are mostly originally from Wanathamulla. They call us parachutes. We have been dropped from above. We cannot talk about anything here. We must stay quiet. It’s their rule.” (Former president, Phase 2)

“When we moved here we were called ‘minster’s people’ (*amathige minissu*) and the flat was called ‘elitist flat’ (*dhanapathi flat*).” (Male resident, Phase 2)

The residents seemed to possess a clear sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’, which inhibit the development of a sense of belonging. Each member seemed to identify more strongly with members from their former community: 54 *watta* or 187 *watta*.

“None of ‘our’ people are there in Phase 2. All are outsiders/ strangers.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“We only know what their president says and he says that they do not like to mix with us. Maybe they think we are from Wanathamulla (we are less than them). There are 3-4 actors/actresses in Phase 2, apart from that they are very similar to our families. Sometimes I feel that their status is lower than us.

These actor families have lot of problems in their families. One family has a son who uses drugs. The wife is always drunk. There are another two sons who are not very good. Generally speaking, we seem to be better off than them, but they think they are better than us. May be all the residents in Phase 2 have adopted this kind of thought.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

Residents of the two Phases do not seem to unite for and during community activities as well. This raises important concerns about the integration of members into the community now and in future. The current adult members seem not only to dislike ‘mixing’ with their fellow members from the other community but also object to their children getting involved in community-level activities.

“There are all kinds of people here. It is difficult to get them to come to one table for discussion. If there are 500 youth in Sinhapura, only 50 will come for these activities. They will start some activity casually and then finish it. It won’t last more than one activity. Then there is another category of children who don’t leave their houses. Parents don’t allow them to.” (Government officer, Colombo 8)

“We organized an *Avurudu Uthsawaya* and we invited Phase 2 also to join us. They said they don’t like to do it with us. They said they will do a separate festival. I tried to convince them that this was one Sinhapura although there are two phases, but they insisted on doing their own festival.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

The most current issue that seems to concern both Phases is the proposed construction of a community hall using the existing children’s park located closer to Phase 1.

“Residents of Phase 1 feel that they belong here and that we are strangers/ outsiders. There is a clear distinction like that. That is why they opposed our plan to build a community hall. We are the ones who initiated it. So they think these are 2 different complexes and we think we are one.” (Male resident, Phase 2)

“Those originally from Wanathamulla feel that this is their village. They don’t really like it if others from outside try to do something. They don’t even think whether what they do will bring good or bad to the community. Whatever it is, they don’t like us doing anything or getting involved.” (Girl, Phase 2)

Residents of Phase 2 seem to ignore the fact that Phase 1 residents have more exposure to and more experience in Wanathamulla. One Phase 1 resident explained through her experience why they opposed the community hall; a view shared by some other Phase 1 residents.

“I’ll tell you what would happen if we have a community hall. All the drug addicts will go there and live there. And then all sorts of things I don’t want to talk about will happen there. It’s much better we retain the ground we have, at least our children will have a place to play.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

An incident similar to the one described above was reported by a resident of Sahaspura, the housing complex adjoining Sinhapura. Sahaspura has a hall within the complex for community activities. This hall has been occupied by a group of people for their personal needs without allowing other residents to use it. The Phase 1 resident’s above statement could be a reflection of this kind of experience. However, Phase 2 residents seem to have lost their capacity to pay attention to these warnings because of the hostility that prevails between the two phases.

The sense of belonging felt by Sinhapura residents differs not only between the two phases but also among members of each phase. Those who have been relocated from Torrington report that their sense of belonging to the Torrington community has weakened since relocation. The respondents believe that they had a closely-knit community in Torrington. However, various disputes emerged among them in the process of relocation. Initially there

was a division within the community as to whether they should accept the offer from the government to build multi-storeyed houses for them in the same 187 *watta*. Some were prepared to accept while others objected. In their desperate attempt to evict these people from 187 *watta*, the politicians and officials offered them money to rent out houses till the new complex was built (See Section 3.1). This brought about some divisions within the community which also affected the functioning of the community organization around which they had organized themselves. Some people did not support this organization after the relocation and some held its leaders accountable for the loss of their original habitat. They argued that it is the leaders of the CBO who encouraged them to accept the offer of the government and that they had persuaded them to give in.

Within each phase, there seem to be a class-related distinction made between ‘those who lived in good houses’ and ‘those who lived in small houses’ in their previous locations (See Section 3.1).

“Our houses of course were made of brick and we had electricity and pipe-borne water. We had toilets inside the house. It was a good house.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“Moving here from 54 *watta* was good. I mean we lived in small houses made of planks. Didn’t have electricity. We had an illegal power connection. Compared to that this house has importance. They are more organized. This house is 200% good.” (Male resident, Phase 1)

Though not often made explicit, this distinction seemed to create something similar to a class hierarchy leading to issues of integration within each phase. As has been already noted, residents’ level of expressed satisfaction about the relocation and their current houses differed according to this distinction. Although both categories are happy about their current houses, the first category had stronger complaints about the house in terms of construction and space. These attitudes about one being superior to others either in terms of previous place of residence (Torrington vs. Wanathamulla) or quality of previous house (good house vs. small house) had serious implications for the development of a sense of community among the residents of Sinhapura.

The sense of belonging also seems to be affected by the competitive attitudes introduced by condominium living. Although these competitive attitudes may lead to personal and family development, the same may negatively affect the development of a sense of belonging.

“After coming into Sinhapura, people are very keen to buy things such as furniture because they set their standards against other families in the complex. Everyone wants to imitate the other. You can’t really find any family who ‘doesn’t have’. Every house is not what it used to be.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

A sense of belonging can be seen to have two aspects to it: (1) sense of belonging to the location/ area and (2) sense of belonging to the community. Residents of Phase 1 were undoubtedly familiar with and well connected to the area. They did not feel like strangers. However, they encountered difficulties of mobilizing themselves as a community because even in 54 *watta* they had maintained somewhat distant relationships with their fellow *watta* members. Each family had associated closely only with the few families who lived in close proximity to their own house.

“People on the ground floor here are people known to us from the previous location. Our relationships are still only with them.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

This kind of ‘restricted/ reserved’ social networks carried forward from their previous housing made it difficult for them to get together to resolve common issues and to form community associations to address these issues (See Section 1.5.1). One resident noted that she once collected money and hired labour to clean the surrounding area, but could not continue as the others did not seem very keen about it. As a result, Phase 1 residents seem to be waiting for government intervention for simple things such as cleaning the surrounding area.

In contrast, residents of Phase 2 seem to share a higher sense of belonging to the community, i.e. the community of Phase 2. The majority in Phase 2 originated from the same location and their social networks held over from Torrington seem stronger. Though there have been some disputes between these residents during the displacement and relocation period, the same disputes seem to have made their social ties stronger because of a common foe/ issue. They have worked as a group in their attempt to get the politicians and officials to reverse their decision to relocate 187 *watta* residents in Wanathamulla. This kind of group mobilization against relocation was not mentioned by Phase 1 residents. These circumstances have undoubtedly contributed towards the re-establishment of the *samithiya* during the past few months. However, Phase 2 residents have more grievances regarding the location, as they score low on the sense of belonging to the area.

Many residents, irrespective of their phase, stated that they wished to sell their Sinhapura house and move as soon as they are given the title deeds to the property. Phase 2 residents wished to do so mostly because of their difficulties of adjusting to the location. Phase 1 residents desired so because of issues related to structure and/or construction of house, inadequacy of space and difficulties of settling the overdue payment for the house. Whatever the reasons maybe, this desire to move away from Sinhapura is not at all conducive to the development of a sense of belonging.

6.3 Neighbourhood Issues

In Sinhapura, noise, trespassing, petty crimes and pets are issues that lead to disputes among neighbours. The noise created by groups of boys who sit in the open spaces and chat till late at night, loud music from parked three-wheelers and from televisions in the houses were highlighted as a menace.

“There are many issues. Groups of children are seated just over there and they chat till late night. When 10-12 people talk, it is not easy for people in the close by houses to sleep. Children in the houses cannot study. They drink beer and leave the empty cans here and there. Sometime they play loud music on the three-wheel stereo. Petrol is stolen from parked three-wheelers. Chairs kept outside the houses are stolen. The house downstairs has lost about 15 chairs like that.” (Male resident, Phase 2)

The structure of Sinhapura is such that there are many small and narrow roads running in front as well as the back of the complex. Halgahakumbura is an underserved community (*watta*) adjoining the Sinhapura building (See Figure 9). Residents of Halgahakumbura are often found meeting-up with friends and or walking across the Sinhapura compound. These individuals and others who use the Sinhapura complex for purposes such as meeting friends, drinking or parking their three-wheelers are the trespassers causing many neighbourhood issues. Drug addicts can also wander through these narrow lanes and gather in open spaces within Sinhapura. When people from Halgahakumbura move across Sinhapura, people there usually view it with uneasy feelings. It is interesting to note that people in Sinhapura view

those in Halgahakumbura with the same set of attitudes which middle class people used to view the underserved communities. They mention that people from Halgahakumbura are not so 'well behaved' and are aggressive towards other people. They also mention that their compounds are used as a spot for drug activity.

"We don't have any problems with our neighbours. It's the trespassers who are troublesome. You hear all sorts of filth from all corners. We can't sleep at night. Three-wheels stop right near our bedroom window and then there are arguments in which filth is exchanged. We don't even open that window any more. It is useless complaining to the police. They come and tell the perpetrators that 'it is the people in that house who complained'. In the end my children will be in trouble." (Female resident, Phase 1)

Another neighbourhood issue was that of some residents having pets in their apartments. According to the USDA regulations, pets are not allowed in Sinhapura. However, some residents raise dogs and cats which at times become a nuisance to other residents. The houses do not have adequate space to keep pets. There are also several Muslim families who consider dogs as unclean animals due to their religious beliefs. One Muslim family was convinced that their children fall sick because of the dog in their neighbour's house. The grandmother of this family gets into frequent arguments with the neighbour because of this. This family agrees that people could not leave the pets they have been having for years at the time of relocation. This family was annoyed because their neighbour brought a new dog after the death of their older dog. However, for many families with pets, it has been a case of not being able to leave behind or give away their pets at the time of relocation.

"I agree it's difficult to have pets in these houses. But what can we do with the pets we already had at the time of relocation. Honestly I am very angry about these kind of policies." (Female resident, Phase 1)

"The neighbours are against us keeping this dog. When stray dogs come in and poop on the top floors, they hold my dog responsible. Once they even complained to the police and the police came over to question us. Well, I told them I can't kill the dog. It's actually three houses on the top floor that constantly fight over the dog. Two houses have somewhat stopped fighting now. But the remaining house still fights over dog issues. It is actually the Sinhala neighbours who fight like this. Once they said I keep the dog because my husband is not home during the nights." (Female resident, Phase 1)

The issue of cleaning the surroundings was another neighbourhood issue because no one was willing to take the responsibility of cleaning it (See Figure 11 re. the issue of garbage disposal). As pointed out by Government Officer 4 in the area, when the same residents were shanty dwellers it was easy to tell them to clean the area around their house. But now the residents seem to be of the opinion that cleaning the surrounding area was the responsibility of the USDA and were therefore unwilling to do it themselves. The issue is aggravated because of the inefficiency of responsible officers.

"A gully has been overflowing for three days now in a nearby school. I personally told the responsible engineer. The school principal has personally gone to the engineer's office twice. I am sure there have been 10-15 telephone requests made regarding the same. But the gully is still overflowing ... Now in these communities, when the engineer is not responding to similar requests they pay some money to our labourers and get it cleaned by themselves. But with this school, I am sure the principal doesn't have that kind of money approved by the education ministry. So things don't get done. It's difficult to say where the problem lies, but there certainly is a problem when it comes to getting this kind of thing done... I can only make the complaint to the relevant authorities. I do not have the manpower or the equipment to attend to this kind of request. My main concern is about the issue of dengue." (Government Officer 4, Colombo 8)

Government Officer 4 clearly pointed out the need for some authority responsible for the overall supervision of these activities. However, he also pointed out that Sinhapura residents are far more aware of and careful about the need for a clean environment compared to those from the bigger housing complex Sahaspura or Sirisara Uyana, where the more recent group of relocatees live.

Sinhapura residents do not have much faith in the police in resolving violent acts in the area. As a result, violence and petty crime have become publicly visible activities.

“In Piliyandala (where I came from), small boys hide and smoke a cigarette whereas here they do it in public. These activities can happen anywhere in Sri Lanka or anywhere in the world. The percentage of violence in Wanathamulla is higher than in other places.” (Young male resident, Phase 2)

“Once I went to the police with a complaint after an argument with some people here. They said you go and get beaten and then come and complain.” (Nephew of a female resident, Phase 1)

“Even if we did complain to the police about the problems we face due to trespassing, they would arrive late. And by the time they come the damage would be done. A man might be dead by the time they come. About a month ago two boys were walking here and they were drunk. One of ‘our’ boys was returning from work at the same time. The two boys beat this boy for no particular reason. He was wounded in the fight. Now how can we go to the police with a complaint like this? We are afraid to go to the police, so we keep quiet. But sometimes the police can be of help too. Once a girl (actually a married woman with kids), complained to the police about some boys teasing her on the road. A constable arrived and warned the boys. However, after making such a complaint to the police one lives in fear. You never know when ‘they’ (the trespassers) will strike back.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“Police create unnecessary problems. They take bribes. They know everything but they bother us. Ask us where the drugs are. We just want to stay home after work and they come and bother us. They just take us away even if we don’t do anything. You can’t argue with them. So we are very careful.” (FGD with children)

Figure 11: Garbage disposal methods in the Sinhapura Community



The community seems helpless in getting police support for resolving neighbourhood issues that relate to breaking the rules of condominium living, violent acts and petty crime by trespassers. A police officer agreed that they adopt a reserved attitude towards petty crimes that are reported to them because of the perpetrators' capacity to be violent towards the police or towards others in the presence of the police. The situation is aggravated by the absence of a strong community leadership and a tightly-knit community which can pressurize the police for action against rule breakers.

The community faces further issues that may directly or indirectly affect their safety due to the absence of a Grama Niladhari⁴ for the administrative area of Sinhapura. At present, there is no Grama Niladhari for the Wanathamulla GN division. The previous Grama Niladhari was interdicted and convicted for taking bribes (Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, 2009). Since then, the residents of Sinhapura have to go to a Grama Niladhari of a close-by division for making their complaints and resolving their issues.

“There was a Grama Niladhari located in the temple. He left this area because of a bribery case. It happened about 3 or 4 years ago and until now no one replaced him. We have been asked to meet a GN from another division (Punchi Borella) for our needs. Whenever we go there he gives priority to residents of his division and not to us. We have to wait until he finishes the work for people from his division.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

6.4 Educating and Raising Children

Relocating to Sinhapura has helped several school-going children to overcome education related difficulties they encountered as *watta* residents. During a FGD with school-going children, they unanimously agreed that their lives have improved after coming to Sinhapura. The peaceful environment facilitates their academic improvement, allowing them to engage in academic work and study more peacefully at home. Having a room for themselves or a room to study in their house was highlighted by the children. They complained that frequent fights and arguments in their previous location made it difficult for them to study. They did not deny the existence of such fights in Sinhapura, but said that its prevalence has dropped considerably. They are also happy that they are now in an environment free of floods, leaking roofs and overflowing drainage systems (except ground floor residents of Phase 1) during rain.

“It used to always flood during heavy rain because those locations were low lands. We become helpless when floods come. Our books get wet. But here that is not a problem because these are flats.” (FGD with children)

“This area makes it possible for me to study with a peaceful mind. Earlier, I used to always be worried about floods ruining our books. Not only education, earlier we were reluctant to buy something (such as furniture) for the house because of floods.” (Girl, Phase 2)

A girl, who is currently reading for a degree, explained how the environment in Sinhapura was more supportive towards academically inclined children.

“In our previous *watta*, children in general and girls in particular were not very keen about education. Girls get married by about 18 or 20 and go away. Those keen about education were discriminated against and treated as if they were ‘big heads’. Nobody likes our company. Compared to that, this area is very good and supportive of those keen to study.” (Girl, Phase 2)

⁴ Grama Niladhari (Village Services Officer) is the village-level administrative officer of the government.

Sinhapura parents who do not have high educational qualifications were however very keen to educate their children.

“Most mothers are uneducated. But they try their best to educate their children. They want to send their children to leading schools in the vicinity and send them for all kinds of tuition classes for additional academic help.” (Government Officer 2, Colombo 8)

Amidst these positive changes to the lives of school children, there however were two interrelated factors that negatively affected their education. Issues of school enrollment, distance to school which added to the cost of education, low-income levels, lack of academic support from family or community, and health concerns (caused by unclean environment and pets) were identified as having a direct impact on children’s education. Issues pertaining to the social environment and parental and community attitude towards education were recognized as factors that affected the socialization of children.

Potential threats from the social environment that may negatively impact on children’s socialization were a concern to all parents.

“We lead a peaceful life inside our house. In that sense, our living conditions have improved. It’s the environment that is worrisome. Our grandchildren will grow up watching and seeing these things. This is our only concern.” (Female Resident, Phase 1)

Adults in the community have developed their own mechanisms of resilience to this issue of socialization. Many parents restricted their children’s free movement in the community while others encouraged their children to engage in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities ensured that children’s attention would be focused on matters outside of the community and children would have little or no time to mingle with ‘bad company’ in the community. These mechanisms, though useful for resolving the parents’ immediate concerns, are not conducive to the development of social ties among community members in the long run. This is the issue of non-participation raised by Government Officer 1 (See Section 5.2). Restriction of children’s free movement within the community will not facilitate social integration between members of the younger generations. This is an important sociological issue that concerns the well being of Sinhapura residents and threaten its long term existence as a community.

Offering more permanent housing to former shanty or slum dwellers is a promising initiative, improving the educational outlook for low-income children. The permanent house has ‘organized space’ (e.g. rooms for studying) and is more convenient (e.g. attached bathrooms). However, further governmental or non-governmental intervention is necessary to supplement this initiative in order to link permanent housing to improved education levels among Sinhapura children.

6.5 Drugs and Alcohol

Violence and petty crime in Sinhapura is always linked to abuse of drugs and alcohol. However, as discussed earlier, the residents receive little or no support from the police, making it difficult for them to speak against these abusers. Such confrontations have had serious consequences in the past. Therefore, residents remain silent in the face of such abuse. The weak community relationships also make it difficult for residents to stand up to these abusers.

Drugs and alcohol have, unfortunately, become a defining feature of underserved communities in Sri Lanka, especially in Colombo. For some people drugs and alcohol are almost synonymous with underserved communities. While this is in fact an exaggeration, it nevertheless reflects the public attitude towards such communities. We find that this view does have some element of truth. As reported by our informants, drugs and alcohol are the two most significant social and economic issues that confront Sinhapura. The key question here is whether abuse has declined after relocation. As far as those who have been relocated in Sinhapura are concerned, there is a clear decline in substance abuse. The prevalence of drugs in general is also seen to have declined.

“When I was given a house in Wanathamulla, I actually got worried. But after coming here I realized that this place has changed a lot. We didn’t encounter any problems that we anticipated. There is a big change in Wanathamulla. These housing complexes have had a lot to do with it, I am sure.” (Male resident, Phase 2)

The condominiums have made it difficult for drug dealers to hide drugs and sell as the building structures do not provide them with many escape routes in the event of a police raid. In underserved communities, the labyrinth of lanes and alleys, confusing even to the police, provides the drug peddlers ample opportunities to escape. This is probably why there is a marked reduction of drug related issues within the Sinhapura complex compared to *54 watta*. Yet, there is another important dimension to the drug issue. Halgahakumbura is a nearby underserved community which still reels under the issues of drugs and alcohol. According to Sinhapura residents, individuals from Halgahakumbura use Sinhapura as a place where they consume drugs in groups. The youth from Halgahakumbura seem attracted to Sinhapura because of the open spaces, trees and benches. This has resulted in Sinhapura becoming unsafe for its own residents.

“Recently some people came to clean the area just before the opening of the other housing complex. You know what I did? I befriended them and offered them tea and asked them to chop down the jam tree next to my kitchen window. I also got them to push away the piece of concrete that was kept under the tree as a bench by those who come there to smoke. Now that nuisance is no more. I am so relieved. That was one of my biggest concerns. They come there smoke, drink and shout in filth. I have girls in this house.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

Drunkards loiter around the Sinhapura complex in the evenings. According to residents, a host of problems come hand in hand with this, including excessive noise, trespassing, use of foul language, and physical fights among themselves, or between them and the Sinhapura youth who get dragged into these fights. Therefore, until Halgahakumbura finds a permanent solution to its own problems these problems are likely to spill over to Sinhapura. Here too, the police were largely ineffective and uninterested about resolving the ‘drug issue’. The police officers at the Sahaspura police post explained why they do not intervene in drug related fights. According to them these are the small-scale dealers and users. They are worried about locking up these individuals because the large-scale dealers are still at large and are usually connected to powerful individuals in the country.

“There was a fight here just last week. They continued fighting and beating each other in the presence of the police. The police post at Sahaspura is useless. I think they should put the army or military police here. The thing is the police also have hidden links and monetary exchanges with certain groups and when a fight or something happens they side with those groups. Even if there’s a killing here nothing will be done by the police.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

Petty theft was committed mostly by drug abusers who needed fast cash. The chances of such petty theft diminishing seem bleak unless the drug dealers are dealt with.

“You can’t even park your own vehicle with ease. These petty thieves steal the petrol from the petrol tank. My son has a three-wheeler. Twice his tyres were stolen. They also steal the carpets that⁵ are put in the vehicle.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

6.6 Being Female in the Community:

Sinhapura residents identified the area largely as one that is ‘safe’ for girls and women. Apart from one incident where a husband was beating his wife, no acts of violence against women, even within the household, were shared by our informants.

“Even the police can’t control fights here. They are more like patrolling. On New Year's Day a man was beating up a woman in a car. Police came and they asked us, ‘When there are so many other problems in Wanathmulla, is a man-woman dispute your biggest problem?’ The man said, ‘I am beating my wife.’ Then the police just left.” (FGD with women)

However, the husband and wife in question were not Sinhapura residents. Therefore, it is difficult to take this as an incident of violence against women in Sinhapura. The husband may have picked a convenient location for beating up the wife; a place where he knew the police would not intervene.

When asked about difficulties faced by women in the community, the most commonly cited example was that of mocking girls on the roads. However, what is interesting to note is that mocking or teasing of girls on the roads and corridors was described as an act encouraged by female behaviour and not one initiated by men as an expression of their power; a typical Sri Lankan explanation for such acts against women. Except for a few mothers in Phase 2, the issue of mocking girls was seen largely as a trivial issue.

“Women and girls enjoy a lot of freedom in this environment. Girls walk on these streets even after 7 or 8 in the night. I live in Katubedda. I can’t do that. I take a three-wheel from the bus stop to my home. In these surrounding, even I haven’t experienced any difficulties. People, even children, are very polite when you meet them on the road.” (Government Officer 2, Colombo 8)

“If we maintain good conduct at all times, we can last forever. There is no vulgarity here. Nobody peeps through our windows. We recommend this place in that sense. The biggest problem is drug abuse.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“Girls can freely go about around here. I am now 29. I have never had such an issue in Wanathamulla. But the thing is, we should also behave well on the road. The way we have been brought up and our discipline matters. Everyone knows my husband and my father is a very senior member here. That also helps. But even otherwise girls can move about without any problem. Sometimes there is teasing.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“You can’t really say this is a bad place for girls. On the other hand, you can’t say this is a haven for them either. A girl can’t be in a skirt and walk across the three-wheel park. Or speak on the phone while walking. Such girls are likely to be teased. It’s actually entirely up to the girl and her upbringing. Girls who have been here for a long time know how to behave and protect themselves against such teasing. It’s the newcomers who face such issues.” (Young male resident, Phase 2)

“Anyone will talk about the drug problem. But no one will be able to talk about problems, particularly against females. That is the only good thing about this place. But I am a bit careful as there are all sorts of people who have come from different places and backgrounds. We go here and there on the roads all the time, but we have never encountered any such issues.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

⁵ Three-wheelers do not have doors. Therefore, one can get into the vehicle even when it is locked making it possible for thieves to take the carpets or anything else that is in the vehicle.

“I never had or have trouble walking on the roads here or there (previous *watta*). I think that depends on our behaviour. Whether someone will follow us and then turn the other way or whether he would continue to follow us depends on how we walk, how we associate with others, how we react to others, I think. I have seen many such incidents and thought it’s because of the girls’ ill behaviour. So I fixed my ways accordingly.” (Girl, Phase 2)

“The social environment there (previous residence) and here is the same. My children are exposed to the same kind of environment here and there. Nobody teased my daughter there and nobody does it here. Children who know how to behave on the road will have no issue.” (Male resident, Phase 2)

“There is absolutely no teasing here. Of course we should know how to maintain good relationships. We are new here and we don’t know anyone. But everybody knows us. There is no teasing.” (Two women, Phase 2)

There were however, some mothers who did not believe that they could let their daughters walk on the road by themselves. They ensured that they or their husbands escorted their daughters whenever they left the house. This seemed to be a result of the general anxiety experienced by Phase 2 residents based on the reputation of Wanathamulla. However, the above comment made about ‘newcomers’ not knowing the ways of this community is noteworthy. Girls in Phase 2 may require some adult company on the roads given their lack of experience in Wanathamulla. Abusive behaviour going beyond mockery against females in public spaces has not been reported.

Families, individuals or groups interviewed did not report any aggressive discrimination against women within families or in the general community. One female respondent reported, “It’s normal for a husband and wife to quarrel, but we don’t know of any men who really beat their wives here or even quarrel often in an unreasonable manner.” The respondents thought that women in the community were stronger than men. The commonly cited example was of a moneylender woman (allegedly to also be a drug dealer) who lent money at exorbitant interest rates and then took away the borrower’s house when they could not settle the loan on time. She has acquired (of course not legally) about six houses in this manner and has rented them out. She was actually seen as a strong woman gone astray to the extent of becoming a menace to the community.

There were also other, more positive, examples. The president and all the office bearers of the recently re-established *swadipathya samithiya* of Phase 2 are women. Likewise, there are two single mothers who raise their children amidst the greatest of financial problems but without getting involved in any unruly activities. Interviews were conducted with the two single mothers in Sinhapura to see if they faced any special issues as ‘women without husbands’. One of them (mother of three sons) said that she found Sinhapura to be a much safer environment compared to her previous residence where she was constantly bothered by one (married) man. She said, “I feel free here. I don’t pay any attention to what others may say. I wear what I have nicely and go nicely.” The other woman has faced some problems as she came to Sinhapura. Some men have regularly knocked on her door at night, according to her, to see if she would open her door and let them in. She has then got her brother who is an army officer to make a visible presence at her house particularly during the night and successfully managed to scare these men away. Her teenage daughter was once teased by a boy on the street while returning home after a dance recital at an army function. The army officer who was accompanying her home at the time has later got hold of this boy and beaten him. The mother claims that nobody dare say anything to her girls thereafter. She confidently says, “I’m anyway a loud woman, which is why we have managed to survive here in this

way.” For both these single mothers, their pressing issues were related to financial difficulties as they had to earn for the family all by themselves. The community seemed to be helping them by looking after their children while they were at work (as domestic helpers).

Mocking young girls on the roads and the corridors/ stairways by trespassers, three-wheel drivers and other young men who gather in public spaces within Sinhapura was the only gender-based concern raised by female respondents, particularly mothers with daughters. Many mothers made sure that their daughters never walked the streets in the area alone in order to avoid such teasing and also to avoid their daughters getting into any sort of conversation with such men/ boys. No one felt the need for some sort of community-level action to remedy the situation particularly because they did not perceive this kind of teasing as a problem or an issue. In fact they were of the opinion that it was ‘normal’ or ‘unavoidable’.

However, there was at least one young girl in Phase 2 who saw this as a problem and wanted to do something about it, mostly by quarrelling or arguing with men who mocked her. Her approach was not at all effective. The quarrelling led to more harassment. In fact, the two families who discussed this incident with the researchers saw the young girl as ‘the problem’. They argued that she was the only one continuously subjected to such acts of ‘loud’ teasing and quarrelling in a housing complex where there were several other girls. She was criticized for dressing differently, walking and talking differently and for ‘going here and there’ during late hours. During the last argument she and her mother had with these teasers who had blocked her on the staircase leading to her house, the boys have threatened that they would undress her in public the next time. In the absence of strong social ties or networks, this mother and daughter seem to be alone in this fight. The community is accusing the victim and not the perpetrators; a situation likely to not help girls deal with the problem of mockery in the community.

6.7 Happiness and Wellbeing of Sinhapura Residents

Most residents of Sinhapura are happy about the house they have received from the government in place of the temporary and/or illegal constructions they have lived in (See Section 3.2). The possibilities for developing one’s self in the comforts of a ‘proper’ house were highlighted.

“People now want to live like ‘decent’ people. I think that is good. Those who lived very disorganized lives in their previous location are now trying to live properly. Some didn’t even have electricity in those houses. Now they live good lives.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“These houses have definitely changed the lives of these people. They now have a proper house. You have your own toilet inside the house, this is way better than having to line up at a public toilet with a bucket of water. This is enough comfort to organize their lives. The issues of space, broken tap lines, overflowing sewages are issues that arise after being given a house and something can be done about them.” (Young male resident, Phase 2)

“Life here is very good compared to our former *watta*. It used to constantly flood there. And it wasn’t a good house like this one, it was small. Houses were very close to each other. There were so many problems. Here, it is convenient for everything including education.” (Girl, Phase 2)

At the same time, some residents raised issues that made them dislike Sinhapura or prefer a similar house in a different location.

“I would have preferred if we were given houses in our previous location. I don’t like this area. I feel we have gone backward. It’s like we’ve been caged. Even in our previous location we lived mostly inside the house. But they were single-storey houses.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

“I have witnessed a lot of violence after coming to Sinhapura. For the first time in my life I saw a man being killed. I have never seen that kind of thing in the *watta*. This is why I don’t like it here. We didn’t have such experiences even in the shanties. People are subjected to a lot of injustice here. Police arrests the person who smokes drugs, but not the one who sells it.” (Female resident, Phase 1)

In 54 *watta* we didn’t have any fighting like this. People lived very courteously. Here, it’s people from all over the place. These people are also good, I won’t deny that. It’s the outsiders who come here and hang around. We have to keep our doors closed and stay inside. (Female resident, Phase 1)

“We cannot talk about or get involved in anything here. We must stay quiet.... Even if we hear a noise we stay inside, don’t even open our door. The ones upstairs look through their windows, but we stay inside. We do not want to be witnesses at the police station. It is difficult to live locked up like this.” (Former president, Phase 2)

“Everything is good here. But caged. No freedom. We have no land. Five storeys. No lift. If there’s a funeral we have to carry the coffin and climb down 5 floors.” (FGD with women)

Based on residents’ positive and negative thoughts about their new life in Sinhapura, two different levels of happiness was identified for the two phases. Those who have been relocated from Torrington are largely unhappy. Most of them find that the new housing units are of reasonable quality in comparison to the units they had before. Yet they are highly unhappy about the social environment, physical amenities, security, distance to work, access to ‘leading’ schools etc. 187 *watta* was situated in an affluent area in Colombo. They had access to leading national schools, efficient transport to work, social contacts with people that matter etc. They believe that they were much safer as they were born and bred in that location and everyone knew everyone else. Occasionally there would be a small fight but people were largely a cohesive group. Apart from a nostalgic feeling about a community that once existed, they feel they were much better off in where they were. They also feel cheated by the government authorities.

However, a different picture emerges from Phase 1 which houses people from the same area. Here, the majority of residents interviewed during the community profiling exercise reported that they are happy about the new houses. To some extent they were also worried about the impact of Halgahakumbura as mentioned earlier, but they had experienced these issues for a long time and they have always lived in this community. Most of the people in Phase 1 mentioned that they previously had substandard houses and problems which are associated with houses in underserved communities such as public water supply and public latrines. They now have a better house which has pipe-borne water, attached bathrooms, and so on. They no longer have the uncertainty of eviction which always loomed large over their heads.

“This is good. People developed after coming here. We didn’t have that when we were there. Now at least we have a house and that is development.” (Former female community leader, Phase 1)

7 Summary and Concluding Remarks

Sinhapura is a housing complex built for the relocation of families from shanty communities displaced within Colombo due to development projects. This community profile was conducted to explore in detail the lives and issues of the relocated people. Sinhapura, located in the Wanathamulla Grama Niladhari division, has two sections, Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Families from different locations in Colombo have been relocated in both phases of the complex. However, Phase 1 is home mostly to displaced families from former 54 *watta*, which was also in Wanathamulla, very close to Sinhapura. Phase 2 is home mostly to displaced families from the former 187 *watta* in Torrington, Colombo 7.

The displacement and relocation experiences of residents in both phases have not been pleasant. Both groups of *watta* residents have not made a voluntary or informed choice to relocate. In the case of 54 *watta* the residents have been forced out of their houses by demolishing parts of the houses, making it impossible to live in. With no option, these families moved into Sinhapura Phase 1. In the case of 187 *watta*, residents had been tricked into moving out by way of a false political promise. They had been promised a housing complex in Torrington itself. Here, politicians have managed to lure the 'reluctant' residents by way of offering them Rs. 200,000 for renting out a house for two years, until the promised housing complex was built. In both phases, ex-*watta* residents have been offered houses on a 'house for house' policy. However, Phase 1 residents were requested to make a payment at initial entrance and later in installments. Officials have claimed that Sinhapura houses had an extra 100 square feet compared to their houses in 54 *watta*. The payment was for these 100 square meters and maintenance of the housing complex. In contrast, Phase 2 residents were offered houses free of charge.

Residents seem largely satisfied with the quality of housing received in Sinhapura. The possibility of owning a 'proper' house in place of a temporary and/or illegal house, added a dimension of social recognition and importance to their lives. This sense of satisfaction was stronger among those who lived in small, plank houses with limited or no facilities such as electricity, pipe-borne water or attached bathrooms. In contrast, those who had bigger houses with tiled roof, tiled floor, pipe-borne water, legal power connection and attached bathrooms, sometimes with deeds of ownership, were unsatisfied about the quality of housing they received. The former were more common in Phase 1 while the latter were more common in Phase 2. Residents of Phase 2 had issues concerning the location, Wanathamulla, as it is associated mostly with underserved communities and delinquent behaviour patterns usually associated with such communities. Torrington was associated with a higher social recognition. Relocation has affected some residents' livelihood activities though not of a majority. However, youth unemployment seems to be a serious concern. Related to this issue of unemployment is the inadequacy of a strong community leadership and community-based organization to represent the needs of the community.

In addition to the above grievances, residents of both communities encountered issues pertaining to the social environment of Sinhapura. The range of issues includes petty theft, obscene language, trespassing, noise and difficulties in educating and socializing children. All these issues revolved around one bigger issue, i.e. substance abuse. These abusers, who are mostly trespassers, engaged in petty theft in order to purchase drugs and/or alcohol, gather in public spaces within Sinhapura, making a lot of noise and shouting in obscene language. Halgahakumbura is an underserved community located in the adjoining block of Sinhapura. The issue of drug abuse seem to be directly linked to this community. The police seemed to be of little support in resolving or avoiding these issues connected to the abuse of drugs.

In general, the residents, particularly from 54 *watta*, perceived Sinhapura and its immediate surrounding as a 'safe' area for girls and women to walk in. Everyone interviewed was aware of boys and men mocking girls and women on the roads. However, they considered it

‘insignificant’, ‘normal’ or ‘unavoidable’. The majority of residents, except one girl and her mother, blamed the girls’ upbringing and undisciplined behaviour for being victimized. The cohesion and integration of the community would significantly improve if ideals of mutual respect can be inculcated in the youth of the community instead of the traditional patriarchal values. Given the already existing belief that ‘women in Sinhapura are stronger than men’, such an awareness seems like a promising initiative towards improving respect for women in the community.

Residents of Sinhapura seem to be divided in several ways, weakening their capacity to form a closely knit community capable of developing community-level coping mechanisms for the above issues. The nature of condominium living, competition, presence of relocatees from two different *ex-watta* communities, perceptions about one group being superior/ inferior to the others in terms of their previous location and nature of previous house seem to cause divisions within this community. As a result, residents’ have developed coping mechanisms at the family level. These mechanisms, which protect either the individuals or the families, lead to further weakening of the sense of belonging. This weak sense of belonging has implications for the integration of young community members into the community, leading to the formation of a cohesive group.

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Appendix A

Themes Identified for Discussion during Semi-structured Household Interviews

1. Introduction and purpose of the interviews
2. Family details
 - a. Members
 - b. Occupations
 - c. Education levels and ages
 - d. Civil status
 - e. Where they live currently
 - f. Any other information
 - g. The quality of the house, including building material used, equipment, facilities, etc. (ask about drinking water, sewerage, and overcrowding)
3. Displacement history
 - a. Where did you live before relocation/resettlement?
 - b. When did you get relocated/resettled?
 - c. Can you describe your experience when you were displaced and resettled/relocated?
 - d. Were you informed? Consulted? (For Conflict Induced Displacement (CIDs) displacement or relocation is not a choice.)
 - e. Did you like the move? If not why, if yes why?
 - f. What did the officials promise?
 - g. Were there any threat of force or actual force? Were you evicted?
 - h. What sort of actions did you take? Who have leadership for these actions?
 - i. Was there any politicians involved in any way?
 - j. Did you receive any compensation other than the house?
4. Experiences of violence

Did you or your family members experience any kind of violence during the displacement or resettlement/ relocation process?

 - a. What was the nature of violence?
 - b. What actions did you take to remedy it?
 - c. What sort of impact did it have on you and family?
 - d. Did you lose any property other than land? What was the value of loss?
5. Changes in the environment

How would you compare the former and present locations socially, spatially, culturally and economically (use appropriate words and sub questions to make them understand)

 - a. Are you happy or unhappy with the present house? Explain.
 - b. Do you have a deed or some form of ownership?
 - c. Do you encounter any problems in the present location? If yes, explain.
 - d. Do you have the same facilities (education, health, access to jobs, transportation etc) as you did in the former location? Is it better or worse?
 - e. Was finding schools difficult for your children? Why?
 - f. How did your children follow the school curriculum during the time you spent in IDP camps? (for CIDs only)
 - g. Is the new environment conducive to your children's education? Explain.

- h. Are children treated differently by teachers and other students because of their displacement history?
 - i. How are the children performing in school? Do they like school? Explain.
 - j. Did you have to encounter any violence, drugs etc., in the former location? Why?
 - k. Do you think the present location has less social problems or more? Why?
6. Civic behavior and networks
- a. Were there any CBOs in your former location?
 - b. Do you continue to have them?
 - c. Do you think people are more active or less active in CBOs now?
 - d. How would you compare voluntary participation in mutually beneficial activities in your current and previous locations?
 - e. Did you have lot of friends and known people in your former location?
 - f. Do you continue to have them? Have you made many new friends in the new location? How are these new friends useful to you?
 - g. Is it easy to maintain connections?
 - h. Do you think you could/can trust most of the people in your past and present locations?
 - i. Are there people whom you can rely on to get help in case of an emergency in this building?
 - j. Is there a change in the number of people who can help now compared to the past?
 - k. If you want to find a job is there someone or some people who can help you? Is there a difference in the number of people compared to the past?
7. Wellbeing, happiness, satisfaction
- a. Are you/your family happy about the present conditions of your life? If not happy, why?
 - b. What are your/ your family expectations/ aspirations of life?
 - c. Have your aspirations changed after displacement and relocation/resettlement? If so, in which direction? Positive? Negative?
 - d. Have your expectations about your children's future changed after displacement and relocation/ resettlement?
 - e. Is there anything that you would like changed in your present life? What and how?
8. Poverty
- a. What does poverty mean to you?
 - b. Educational achievements and literacy
 - c. Childhood and youth conditions (child labour, school attendance and access to child care services)
 - d. Labour conditions, unemployment and underemployment in the urban locations
 - e. Health (health insurance and access to health services)
9. Questions on inequality.
- a. Their perceptions regarding their relative position (economic, social) in society before and after displacement
 - b. Gender inequality (social, economic and within the house)

10. Questions regarding drugs and alcohol
 - a. Do you think there are people who use drug or alcohol here?
 - b. Where do they usually buy such stuff?
 - c. Do you face any problems from those who use drugs or alcohol?
 - d. Did you have the same problem in your previous watta?
 - e. If you did, do you see a difference now? Reduced or increased?
 - f. Do you think there are gangs in this location?
 - g. Did you have the same problem in your previous watta?
 - h. If yes, is there a change now?
 - i. Do the police come here in search of drug addicts or sellers?
 - j. If you have any problems do you complain to someone?
 - k. Does the complaint solve your problems?
 - l. Do you think the overall social environment has changed due to resettlement in this building?

Appendix B

Detailed Occupational Categories of Sinhapura Residents

Occupation categories	Frequency
Technicians & associate professionals	2
Government officials	1
Teachers	2
Health professionals	1
Science and engineering associate professionals	2
Business and administration professional workers	1
Teaching associate professionals	3
General and keyboard clerks	6
Other associate professionals	1
Office clerks	4
Personal service workers	2
Personal care workers	1
Sales workers and demonstrators	11
Protective service workers	2
Food processing, wood working and garment manufacturing	1
Handicraft and printing workers	4
Drivers and mobile plant operators	15
Stationery plant, machine and plant operators	1
Cleaners and helpers	18
Labourers in mining/construction	6
Total	84

EXPERIENCES OF A RELOCATED COMMUNITY IN COLOMBO

Sinhapura is a housing complex in Wanathamulla built for the purpose of relocating individuals and families displaced due to developmental projects undertaken in Colombo. A majority of the relocatees are from ex-shanty or slum communities from Wanathamulla and Torrington. For those from Wanathamulla, relocation has been mostly a change of house because their original houses were only a few yards away from Sinhapura. For those from Torrington, relocation has been both a change of house as well as location. Therefore, adapting to Sinhapura has been a bigger challenge for the latter.

The relocated families are largely happy about receiving a house in place of the temporary and often illegal houses in which they lived. However, they have many grievances related to the social environment of Sinhapura which is made unpleasant mostly by drug and alcohol abusers. These abusers are the ones usually accused of causing some of the day-to-day problems encountered by the residents, i.e. petty theft, noise, obscene language and frequent fighting.

The community profile identifies the issue of a weak sense of belonging as the biggest challenge facing the community. The community is segmented on the lines of their previous place of residence and the social recognition attributed to each location, and the type and quality of previous housing. This weak sense of belonging makes them vulnerable to and ineffective in resolving the problems outlined above. The social networks that once existed when they were shanty dwellers seem largely shattered due to the individualized lifestyle introduced by condominium living, absence of common problems such as flooding which require mutual support to overcome, new common problems which cannot be overcome entirely through mutual support, absence of strong community leadership etc. As a result, the future development of Sinhapura into a cohesive group seems challenged.



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