

**DFID Assisted, Institute of Development Engineering, WEDC Executed Research Project**

# **Partnership to Improve Access and Quality of Public Transport – Case Study of Colombo, Sri Lanka**

## **Sri Lanka Country Report**

**April 2002**

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April 2002



Winner of IYSH  
Memorial Prize - 2001

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# **PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR THE URBAN POOR**

## **Case Study of Colombo, Sri Lanka**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Project Details**

This report presents the findings of the Research Project R 7866, *Partnerships to improve access and quality of urban public transport for the urban poor*, carried out by a research team of the SEVANATHA Urban Resource Centre, Colombo in collaboration with Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) of the Loughborough University of the United Kingdom. The project was sponsored by the Department for International Development of the British Government.

#### **1.2 Background of the Project**

Poverty is the key factor that affects development worldwide, especially in the lesser-developed countries. A host of factors in social, economic and political spheres have led these countries into destitute situations. Poverty is a vicious circle, which traps and pushes its catchments towards poorer conditions. For instance, unstable economic conditions impair a country's ability to provide a better service to its people, and, lack of access to good services leads that situation to further downturn. In transport, if people are getting a substandard service, not only will it affect their livelihoods, but also the service itself could not sustain as a profitable venture and will lead to its own slump. Efforts to alleviate poverty should thus understand and address both the causes and effects of poverty simultaneously. This should entail actions in widest social, economic and political spectrums.

Thus alleviation of poverty is among the highest political agenda of all developing nations, and, at the same time the key objective of any international development policy forum. In implementing projects that are focused on the alleviation of poverty, international donors play a vital role, helping developing nations with financial and technical assistance. Department for International Development (DFID) of United Kingdom is one such donor, with its key strategy moving along the lines of:

- Policies and actions, which promote sustainable livelihoods
- Better education, health and opportunities for the empowerment of poor people
- Protection and better management of the natural and physical environment

In the process of making actions happen on ground, DFID relies on a holistic approach, to identify the key policies and practices that will improve the livelihoods of the poor. 'Sustainable Livelihoods' (SL) is one such approach, which takes into account the multi-faceted nature of a particular issue to be addressed. This study summarizes the findings resulting from the application of this approach on the issue of urban public transport.

### **Definition of Slums**

Preparation of the Policy Paper on Slum and Shanty Upgrading in Colombo Municipal Council area by the Slum and Shanty Division of the Urban Development Authority of the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction in 1979 was the first ever attempt taken by the government to identify slum and shanties (low income settlements) for a larger development programme in the city of Colombo. The policy paper was the first official document that had categorized slums into different categories and identified them for development purpose. According to the above document the slums are defined as follows.

"Slums are old tenements created to accommodate the influx of a new labour force into the city during a period when thriving plantation industry required labour for processing, packaging, storing, handling and shipping activities. Tenement units normally consist of a single bedroom, a small veranda and a living area with common water taps and latrine facilities. They were usually built in rows on a block of land commonly referred to as a garden. These so called tenements contain anything between a group of two or three units and a few hundreds arranged in rows".

Old residential buildings (slum houses) in former residential areas mainly in older parts of Colombo north and central (e.g. Petta, Hultsdrop, Wolfendhal) later turn into apartments for low income workers. They were subdivided into small units, inadequately maintained and largely deprived of basic sanitary facilities. In local language these types of settlement arrangement is called "Mudukku". People who live in these types of houses do not like calling their houses by official names. They themselves identify them as "Row Houses – Peli Geval".

### **Shanties (Squatter Settlements)**

The shanties are collection of small single units of improvised structures constructed with non-durable materials on vacant lands throughout the city. Shanties illegally occupy on state or private land usually with no regular water, sanitation or electricity supply. The majority of them are built on land subjected to frequent flooding.

In local language these types of settlements are called "Pelpath". This term reflects a group of people who are living in more difficult conditions and poverty than Mudukku or slum settlements.

## **Low Cost Flats, Relocated Housing and Old Deteriorated Quarters**

For the above categories of low income houses, there was no official definition found. However, the officials of urban local authorities, other relevant departments as well as the local politicians used to understand them as follows.

### **Low Cost Flats**

Low cost flats are those walkup apartments (ground + 01 to 02 floors maximum) built by the agencies such as Colombo Municipal Council, the Department of Railway etc. for their workers who are mostly the blue collar workers. These were built during the 1960s and 1970s and were provided with shared toilet and water facilities.

They consist of housing units mostly with two bedrooms, a kitchen and a small veranda allocated to an employee and his family on rent. The agreement seems to have that when the particular employee retires from his job, he has to return the housing unit to the authority. However, in practice what has happened was that when the original employee retires he used to find an employment in the same organization for his son or daughter and thus requests the authority to retain for the house for the family. This way, these low cost flats found to have become inherited houses for one or two generation. Usually, their current status have been very poor due to negligence of maintenance. On the other hand, the occupants pay only a marginal rent, which is not sufficient to make any significant improvement. Thus, they have become neglected low cost flats.

### **Relocated Housing**

Relocated housing are those low income houses affected mainly due to canal improvement, road improvement on other development activities carried out mainly by the government who were subsequently relocated in another location or locations. Most of the relocated housing areas in Colombo were provided with common amenities and individual housing lot and a housing loan for constructing a basic house. Subsequently, over the years, the communities organize themselves to active community groups and through local politicians they request for individual amenities. After about 05 to 10 years time they became developed low income settlements.

### **Old Deteriorated Quarters**

The old deteriorated quarters are to those single storied row houses occupied mainly by the minor employees (sanitary workers etc.) of the municipality. These houses are belonging to the Municipal Council. They have been built over 30 -40 years ago and were not maintained properly and hence neglected. These houses are located mostly within the inner-city areas and have become congested as the families began to grow and occupy in the same housing unit.



### 1.2.1 The Urban Context

The rate of urbanization especially in the developing countries is phenomenal today posing serious challenges to the governments of the respective countries in providing essential urban services for their ever-increasing urban populations. Higher competitions often sideline the urban poor shrinking their ability to access such services, and push them towards more vulnerable situations. What is also noteworthy is that in most developing countries, the poor consists of a substantial percentage of their urban populations, which in some cases even goes beyond half mark.

In an urban context transport is a key service, which directly influences the livelihood pattern of any social stratum. Those with higher levels of income have more options in transport as they could afford private modes, whereas people of lower income levels mostly resort to public transport.

This study examines the accessibility issues relating to public transport by the urban poor in accessing to their daily activities, invariably affect their income and livelihood pattern.

In this context, the main emphasis of the study was to investigate the methods of providing urban public transport, their quality and accessibility to the poor. The focus area of the study was city of Colombo, the capital city of Sri Lanka.

### 1.2.2 Sustainable Livelihood Approach

Poverty is now recognized as a condition that goes beyond mere lack of basic income. It is considered as having multi-dimensional characteristics and causes. For instance in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the slum and shanty settlements (squatters) are now being considered as **‘under-served’** and not solely as a concentration of ‘low-income’ communities. They engage mainly in the informal economic activities of the city to earn their living. In terms of income, they are in par with some of the formal sector employment categories such as peons, clerks, skilled labour etc or may even be gaining more. However, the people living in these under-served settlements are not regarded equals in the mainstream social organization particularly due to social stigma attached to them being deprived communities which has been a prevalent social division in Colombo.

Colombo’s under-serviced settlements have been identified as slums, shanties, upgraded and relocated settlements by different development programmes implemented in the past. Of these, the slum and squatter settlements are concentrated in close proximity to its town centres. Squatters are usually occupied on reservation lands, canal banks or private lands, which are subdivided into small plots over a long period of time along with extended families. Most of these settlements do not have land ownership. Their plot sizes range from 20 m<sup>2</sup> to 50 m<sup>2</sup>. Some of these settlements were ‘upgraded’ under the government housing programmes launched since early 1980s, namely the Hundred Thousand Houses Programme and the million houses programme. Under the same housing programmes those settlements, which had already been located on lands suitable for habitation, were upgraded in-situ by providing basic infrastructure and housing loans, thereby encouraging the dwellers to build their houses using permanent building materials. The relocated settlements are the ones, which have been shifted from their original lands, due to various reasons such as road and canal expansions, flooding, land acquisition by the government for various development purposes. Even on the relocated settlements the maximum plot area a family gets is 50 m<sup>2</sup>.

The legal plot size of a residential plot is 300m<sup>2</sup> in the city as per the prevalent building regulations. However, the government had taken a decision in early 1980s to relax the above plot size requirement to 50 m<sup>2</sup> for upgrading the low income settlements identifying such areas as special project areas. This can be regarded as a progressive step taken by the government of Sri Lanka in its efforts to solve the housing problem of the urban poor. The relocated settlements were mostly located few kilometres away from town centres. At the time of relocation (by a government authority) each family was given 50 m<sup>2</sup> of land lot. Basic settlement layout plan was prepared in consultation with the concerned families by the officials of the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) providing the access roads and some basic facilities such as common water taps and common toilets.

Thus these settlements with or without planned interventions are still called under-served today, as they do not get the desired service standards in terms of the provision of water, electricity, sewage, and garbage disposal. The settlements, including those, which were subjected to planned interventions fall under the category of 'special projects' by the Urban Development Authority (UDA). The major reason that lies behind this categorization attached to the relaxation of legal plot size, set back requirements and width of road frontage etc. Accordingly, the reduced plot size is between 20 m<sup>2</sup> to 50 m<sup>2</sup> whereas it is 300m<sup>2</sup> as per the prevailing normal building regulations in the city.

A majority of the inhabitants of these settlements are unskilled labourers and minor employees of public and private sector organizations. As cited earlier, they resort to a variety of informal income generating activities. These include pavement hawking, working at wholesale vegetable markets, running small businesses in the neighbourhoods such as boutiques, mobile vending, working as housemaids, fish and vegetable vendors, collectors of recyclable materials, repair of household items etc. Some of them even resort to selling and trafficking of drugs, selling of illicit liquor and other socially unacceptable businesses.

The cumulative effects of the causes and the manifestation of poverty are clearer within the context 'under-served', which has eventually pushed these people towards a major social 'segregation'. They lack social identity and recognition, as neither these settlements nor the inhabitants are considered as 'respectable' or 'equals' among the mainstream civil society. Locally they are being called "Mudukku or Watta people which means people from slum communities in the city.

Thus, the plight of the under-served settlements is manifold. First and foremost they do not get the standards of services that exist in other residential areas of the city. Even if they ever make a claim for land ownership that is still much below the standard legal plot size of a residential house in the city. This factor makes these settlements fall under 'special regulations' within the regulatory mechanisms and thus do not gain the same status of other residential neighbourhoods. Therefore, they are not considered 'eligible' to pay rates for the Municipal Council. Consequently, the settlers 'inherit' the lower social ranking both as a group and as individuals and the pressure of this social 'stigma' makes it extremely difficult for them to rise above the situation. However, since about mid 1990s the Municipal Council of Colombo has been seriously discussing the issue of integrating the upgraded urban poor settlements into the main stream housing in the city. As a first step towards this aim, the Council has taken initiatives to collecting property rates from selected upgraded low income settlements on a flat rate basis for all individual housing units. In certain upgraded low income settlements, property rates are being charged on individual property value basis.

Therefore, it can be considered such progressive moves would pave the way in the further for gradual integration of urban poor into the main stream of city life and procedures.

The appropriateness of Sustainable Livelihood (SL) Approach is felt within this context to strengthen the life of urban under-served settlers both quantitatively and qualitatively. It is a holistic approach and in application it begins by a careful analysis of what a livelihood has already got as assets: both material and social by a particular group of households or a community. A livelihood becomes sustainable when it can withstand and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain and improve its capabilities and assets both now and in the future (DFID, 1999).

Ashley and Carney (1999:6-7) provide a working definition of sustainable livelihoods and core principles of SL approach, which have been adapted in this study.

### ***Sustainable Livelihoods***

A sustainable livelihood is a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for development, in order to enhance progress in poverty elimination. A livelihood comprises capabilities, assets and activities required for the act of living.

### **Core Principles of SL**

People centred: it is of primary importance to be people-centred in working for them if poverty elimination is to be meaningful. Thus this research focuses on urban under-served communities and on issues related to transport, which influences their livelihoods.

Responsive and participatory: The research takes the key actors as its research base that includes the people themselves who use public transport, service providers and regulatory personnel. It takes into account the **user-perceptions** on the issues related to urban transport.

Multi-level: Elimination of the causes and effects of poverty requires exploring macro and micro factors, which influences the livelihoods of the urban poor. Thus the research explores issues relating both micro and macro levels on policy and operational aspects of public transport. The linkage between policy and practice is one of the key concerns of the research which is concerned in a historical perspective and in the present context.

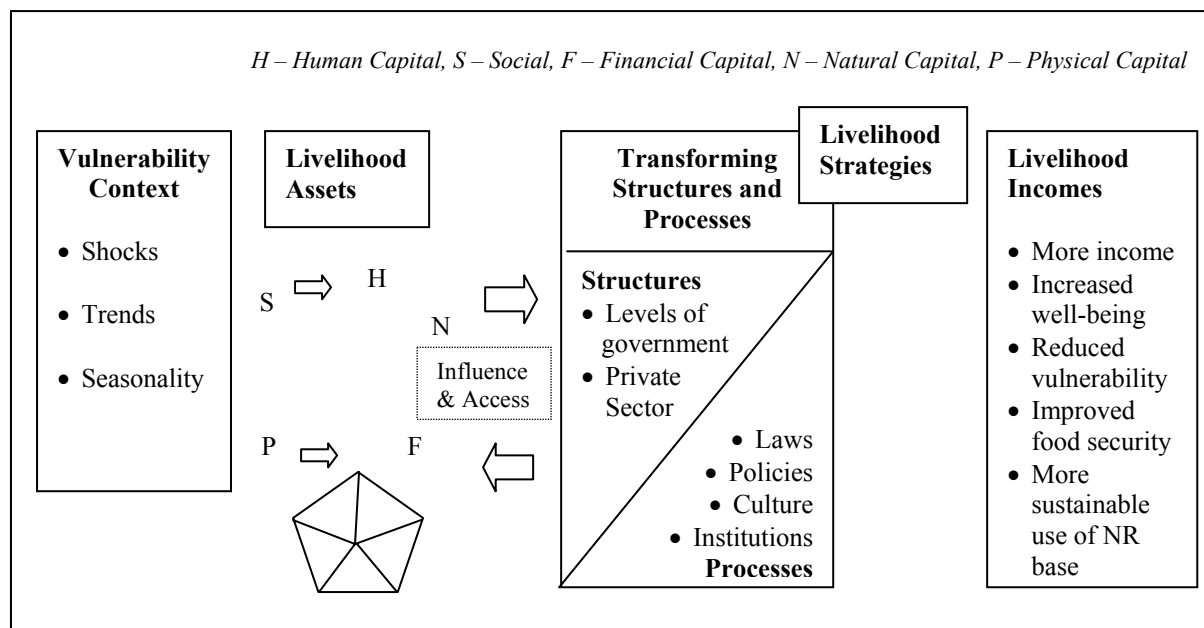
Conducted in partnership: partnerships in public transport are in operation both in the public and private sectors formally and informally (para-transport). Bus transport is operated by both these sectors while rail transport is under the monopoly of the government. Also para-transport modes such as three-wheelers, private school and office vans are in operation.

Thus perspectives from all the key actors under these partnerships are taken into account.

Sustainable: The four key dimensions of sustainability: economic, institutional, social and environmental are envisaged in the study. Evolution of transport policies, their operational aspects and the present context in terms of sustainable development are studied.

Dynamic: The milestones in socio-economic and political spheres that took place over the past and up to the present have direct impacts on the livelihoods of the urban poor and on the provision of urban transport. These were explored in the study to understand what mechanisms might contribute to improve the access to and quality of urban transport, through partnerships.

**Sustainable Livelihoods Framework** (source: Ashley and Carney, 1999)



**1.3 The Study Context**

Public transport has been a hot issue in social economic and political settings particularly since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Sri Lanka, although it does not seem to be taken as a part of a comprehensive vision of a sustainable livelihood approach. It is also notable that less emphasis was paid to take **User Perceptions** with the view to influence and guide the policies of Public Transport. Most studies carried out in the past have shown rather segmented approaches and has thus failed to visualize transport as an integral part of the development process of a given physical setting. The inseparable linkage of public transport with the sustenance of livelihoods especially of the lower income categories needs to be envisaged at depth and any policy forum should essentially take their views and suggestions into account if such policies are to be led to viable solutions.

Urban contexts pose unique challenges in urban transport due to their extreme population concentrations, focused economic activities, highest susceptibility to change, social, economic and cultural diversity and associated issues. Colombo is the largest city in Sri Lanka, with a residential population of about 0.64 million and a about 400,000 daily commuter population.

Despite various measures taken, the public transport continues with its same prolonged issues, both in Sri Lanka and in Colombo. Within the City of Colombo, still nearly 50% of its population lives in urban poor settlements and they are the most vulnerable social category affected by the inadequate supply of urban service including proper public transport service. As per a recent study, it has been found that there are 1614 urban poor settlements scattered in and around the City of Colombo (Poverty Profile, City of Colombo, February 2002).

In terms of No. of families, these urban poor settlements accommodate about 77,612 families. The Colombo Municipal Council area has been divided into 47 municipal wards and these 47 wards are clubbed in to six municipal districts for administrative purpose. The survey carried

out for the Poverty Profile for Colombo City in 2002 revealed that urban poor settlements are located in almost all the 47 municipal wards ranging from 04 settlements to 73 in a ward (see annex 1).

The distribution of urban poor settlements by municipal districts is shown below.

#### Distribution of Urban Poor Settlements by Municipal Districts in Colombo City

District	No. of Settlements	%
District 1	276	17
District 2A	490	30
District 2B	412	26
District 3	229	14
District 4	153	9
District 5	54	4
Total	1614	100

Source: Poverty Profile, City of Colombo, February 2002

As per the above data, it is evident that the District 1, 2A, 2B which are belong to Colombo Central and North area consist of about 73% of all the urban poor settlements of the city. While the Municipal District 3,4 and 5 which are located towards Colombo East and Southern direction contains lesser number (27%) of the city's urban settlements. The primary reason for high concentration of urban poor settlements in the central and northern parts of the city was due to the concentration of major employment and business activities in the above areas since the beginning of the city. In this context, 02 out of case study 06 urban poor settlements have been selected from the Colombo North area as the current research study.

It has been observed that none of the past research studies carried out on public transport have focused on this social stratum to envisage the way their livelihood is sustained by the accessibility needs.

As a result, marginal areas in the city such as urban poor settlements and many suburban areas of Colombo have been not adequately served by from the city's public transport network. However, it can be argued that the availability and affordability of public transport is a decisive factor for economic enhancement of particularly the urban poor. Therefore, the present study can be considered a timely effort to investigate the users' and providers' perceptions on the accessibility and quality of public transport operating in the city of Colombo.

#### 1.4 Focus of the Research Project

The sustainable livelihood approach can be used in understanding the complex relationships of household assets base of the urban poor. In this context, the public transport services can be seen as an important aspect that influences the asset base of urban poor communities by way of providing linkages to income earning opportunities. Because reliable, easily accessible and affordable public transport would no doubt increases the mobility of the poor whereby they can have access to income earning opportunities. In this context, the main aim of the current research study is to find out the ways in which the access and quality of public transport would help improve the livelihoods of the urban poor. The research also aims at investigating the perspectives of the urban poor on public transport service as being the users

of public transport in order to understand their contribution to ensure quality and accessibility aspects. Further more, it deals with analyzing the aspects of partnerships under which the public transport is currently provided in Colombo and in the country as a whole. Because, the public transport service in Sri Lanka is currently provided by involving different parties such as the government, public sector, private sector and individuals. These different arrangements do have different degree of impacts on the quality and access of the public transport. Therefore, it is of prime importance to study both the supply aspects and the user perspectives of public transport and their impacts on the livelihoods of the urban poor.

## **1.5 Research Approach**

A case-study based participatory research approach has been adapted in the study, using interviews and a series of focus group discussions at the urban poor settlement and city level, covering the key actors such as users, regulators and service providers. Six nos. of under-served settlements in and around Colombo were identified as case study locations. Interviews and discussions were held covering all prominent user categories, namely, male and female adults, male and female of elderly and disabled persons, school girls and boys. Members of all the three racial groups i.e. Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims were included under each of these categories in order to ensure racial representation in the study.

Considering the availability of time, resources and the focus of the study six urban poor settlements were identified in consultation with the research coordinator of WEDC, Loughborough University, UK for the current research project. The basis for selecting six settlements included; representation of the different categories of urban poor settlements (i.e. slums, squatter and relocated low income settlements) to represent the entire city and to include the different sizes of settlements in terms of no. of households. The six settlements are thus fairly representative of the types, size and spread of the city's urban poor settlements though not based on a systematic sampling but on pure practical considerations and informed judgment of the local research team.

The entire study was carried out taking **user perceptions** as the key focus. Partnerships of both public and private, and bus, rail and para-transport were covered. It was presumed that the people who use public transport almost daily and the service providers who operate may have better solutions to the problems they face in public transport. This study evolved on this basis, which was taken within the context of sustainable livelihoods approach. The research project has been developed and carried out based on literature review, historical overview, and an analysis of the current situation, case studies and focus group discussions.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations**

The scope of the research was the urban public transport, which covered City of Colombo and its suburbs. Colombo is the commercial capital of the country and is the starting point of all major public transport routes of the country. The study revealed that inter-provincial public transport is under the purview of the provincial councils, which may have their own procedures and mechanisms in the execution, being in line with the national policy framework. However, the study did not go into such detailing, as its focus was the Colombo urban area. Within Colombo area, the study has paid its attention on investigating the issues related to access and quality of public transport through the key actors such as users, providers and regulators. The perspectives of the key actors were framed into issues and recommendation with a view to improve the access and quality of public transport.

## **1.7 Introduction to the Research Process**

This section explains the process in which the research was conducted, the preparatory work involved and the reflections of the research team.

Since the inception the research was guided by Dr. Sohail Khan from the Loughborough University, UK. Through consultation among the research team, a framework for research was developed. Key actors and issues to be addressed were identified through consultation of relevant resource persons by the local research team. Checklists for interviewing key actors were prepared and tested through discussions and brainstorming sessions.

## **1.8 Working Hypothesis**

This research project was initiated based on the premise that public transport is one of the key aspects that broaden access to the available livelihood options by the urban poor. Within a specific situation, once options are available people will make choices and then develop strategies to gain the desired ends. For the urban poor, these choices are comparatively less. The cost of each choice compels them to act in optimizing their strategic actions. The 'location' factor thus becomes primarily important to them, as location is the key point of reference in accessing their basic activities and services such as employment, other informal income generation activities, marketing, education, health, and social networks. Public transport has thus become significant contributor to enhance the livelihood pattern of the urban poor by linking the location to services available for the urban poor. In this context, some central questions such as How is the public transport operate in the city? How accessible is it for the poor? How is it affordable? What is the quality of the services provided? remain to be answered. The present study attempts to investigate the pertinent issues of the above questions and to find out appropriate answers by involving the key actors who are engaged in the process.

## **1.9 Research Process**

The research process, which is indicated below, has been developed based on the broad research framework provided in the inception report of the research project. Accordingly, the key steps listed below were followed in carrying out the research project.

- Step 1 : Understanding the research premise and developing the research proposal to suit the local conditions in Colombo.
- Step 2 : Identification of the type and depth of information and data required based on the key issues, actors and processes involved.
- Step 3 : Identification of main sources of data and informants for the research through review of literature and personnel contact of resource persons.
- Step 4 : Developing the check lists for collection of required data and information
- Step 5 : Carrying out a detailed literature survey

- Step 6 : Identification of urban poor settlements / communities for interviews based on the criteria developed under the study.
- Step 7 : Identification of resource persons for the Project Advisory Committee
- Step 8 : Identification of field research staff and recruiting them for carrying out field data collection.
- Step 9 : Briefing for field research staff on the project and training them for carrying out the field research / informant interviews.
- Step 10: Carrying out a historical analysis related to public transport using available literature and through interviews of relevant resource personnel.
- Step 11: Visit to identified urban poor settlements, familiarization with the community. Briefing the purpose of the research project to the community leaders and getting their help to identify different category of community members for interview (men, women, school children, disable persons etc.)
- Step 12: Preparation of settlement profile for each identified urban poor settlement consisting of basic facts about the community its location and the size etc.
- Step 13: Interview of identified community members (elderly persons, disables, adult men, women, school children) of urban poor settlements.
- Step 14: Interview of other user groups of public transport (i.e. office workers and ordinary citizens).
- Step 15: Interview of public transport providers (bus owners and representatives of owner's associations).
- Step 16: Interviews of operators of public transport (i.e. conductors and drivers).
- Step 17: Interviews of representatives of regulatory agencies of public transport.
- Step 18: Carrying out focus group meetings of urban poor communities and provider groups to further strengthen the issues identified through interviews and literature survey.
- Step 19: Conducting monthly project advisory committee meetings to review the progress of the research study and to guide the research activities.
- Step 20: Synthesizing the information gathered through interviews.
- Step 21: Revisiting the field for verification of information
- Step 22: Translating the synthesized Sinhala version of information into English language.
- Step 23: Computer processing of information.



- Step 24: Preparation of the draft research report.
- Step 25: Presentation of the draft report to the Project Coordinator at WEDC and to the Project Advisory Committee (PAC).
- Step 26: Incorporating the comments if any by the Project Coordinator and the PAC.
- Step 27: Preparation of the final research report.
- Step 28: Presentation of the research outputs at a national workshop in Colombo.
- Step 29: Incorporation of the findings of the workshop with the study outputs.
- Step 30: Handing over the final research outputs to the Project Coordinator
- Step 31: Share the research findings with the local interested groups such as academics, researches and policy makers..

### **1.10 Limitations of the Research Process**

The research process adopted in the project was flexible in terms of identification of key informants as well as urban poor communities. The process did not constraints by consideration of statistical sampling or hypothesis, rather it has paid much more emphasis on identification of regular processes of interaction between and among the key actors of public transport services in Colombo. Therefore, with a view to better understand the perspectives of different actors (i.e. the users, providers and regulators of public transport) a manageable sample of the key informants pertaining to the above categories were chosen. Interviews of community members of urban poor settlements were much easier than that of transport providers, operators and regulators who were busy with their day to day business. However, repeated visits and intermittent interviews had to be carried out to extract the required information from these categories of persons. On the whole, the process of information gathering though took a considerable time (03 to 04 months) enabled the research team to gather adequate data and information on perspectives of key actors.

Most of the information were of descriptive nature which have been analyzed based on key themes, issues and perspectives thus enabling drawing peoples' perspectives on various issues related to public transport.

## **2.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

### **2.1 Background**

Sri Lankan society has been predominantly agriculture based throughout its 2600 years long history. Domesticated agro-crops (mainly paddy and highland crops) were cultivated through a community-based effort and were used mainly for local consumption. The associated accessibility needs of people and the social attitudes to transport thus sprang out of this socio-economic system. Goods were used to carrying bulk on their heads or in makeshift litters, people were used to walking for several kilometres or, bullock-carts were for transport needs.

Distances were not long and speed was not a matter of great concern. Accordingly the resultant road network system consisted of footpaths and gravel roads.

A similar socio-economic structure continued during the early days of its colonial era, too, which spanned nearly four and half centuries, from 1505 to 1948. However, especially during the 150 years of British occupation, the last span of the colonial period, a transition in the agro-based socio-economic system took place with the introduction of “plantation-crops” such as tea, rubber and coconut. These crops were not for local consumption, but were to be *sold out* for economic gains. While paddy and other domestic crops remained for local consumption, and were not encouraged to cultivate, every attempt was made to cultivate the plantation crops for over hundreds and thousands of acres. Firstly coffee and then tea was introduced to the central hill-country, clearing its thick forest cover. Rubber was concentrated mainly in the low-country wetlands and Coconut was re-introduced as a plantation crop in the west, southwest and northwest coastal areas.

This socio-economic structure was more significant towards the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “Plantation economy” was creating a subtle change in the social attitudes and value systems on one hand and on the other, a more visible change in the transportation system. More speedy and efficient means of transport were required and thus new roads and railway lines were constructed, primarily to facilitate the production process and to transport the plantation products to Colombo from other major town centres. The basic skeleton of the present system of road and railway network began to appear, as a result of the prevalent socio-economic structure.

## **2.2 20<sup>th</sup> Century - up to 1957**

The urban and regional physical settings of the country were transformed to cater to the needs of the plantation sector as it got established as the key of the national economy. By early 20<sup>th</sup> century the road and railway network of the country got expanded further. Major railway lines; Badulla - Colombo, Kandy - Colombo, and the southern coastal line from Matara to Colombo were in operation. The railways were state-owned and were under the purview of the Ceylon Government Railway (C.G.R.), which later was referred to as Sri Lanka Railways.

Road transportation too got expanded, with the construction of many steel bridges, across rivers and waterways. The first passenger car was introduced in 1902 and that paved way to construct an all weather, motorable road system. With the increasing mobility needs of the people, T. W. Collet started the first bus-cum-lorry service from Colombo to Chilaw in 1907, which was later extended up to Puttalam in 1910. This marked the formation of the first bus company in Sri Lanka, known as the ‘Ceylon Motor Transit Company’.

The growth of the City of Colombo, at the same time, coincided with the transformation of the socio-economic and physical contexts of the country, based on the plantation sector. Historically Colombo was famed by its port and related trade. Export of plantation crops and the related trade activities, and the growth of light industries, however, created an unprecedented influx of worker population into the city from all over the country in search of jobs. This unplanned growth gave rise to the early forms of slum settlements within the city. At first, they were over-crowded labour quarters, creating severe hygiene problems. Although there were some physical planning interventions by the pre- and post-independence regimes, the city continued to grow with its ever-increasing worker population and transport and other infrastructure networks, which were not well geared to cater to its fast population growth.

Within such national and urban contexts, provision of bus and rail services too continued with hardly any pro-active thinking. From time to time a number of Acts and Ordinances were enacted, Commissions were appointed, which nevertheless were always reactionary measures to a set of preceding issues.

Based on Ranasinghe (1988:04-07), the key events that took place in the transport sector during the pre- and post- independence eras up to mid 1950s and the salient features contained therein, are given in Table I.

It is significant that during this entire period, bus services were under private entrepreneurs while rail services remained under Government monopoly. Private sector dominance in bus services with no direct state intervention had created intense rivalry and malpractices among the private bus companies who operated in the city. Independence from the British in 1948 too had not made any impact on the directions or qualitative enhancement of the transport services in the country.

By mid 1950s, entrepreneurs had formed limited liability companies, within their regions of operation. There were 76 such companies in operation on monopoly route permit basis, which was found to be unsatisfactory. The progression of bus services and the government interventions had finally come up to a stage where recommendations were made by the Sansoni Commission appointed in 1954, to set up a Transport Board to advise and control private operators and establish a joint government-private bus corporation to provide services, starting with Colombo Municipal Council Areas.



**Table 1: Key events in Public Transport – 20<sup>th</sup> Century and up to Nationalization of Bus Services**

	Event	Salient Features
<b>PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD</b>	1891 Ceylon Government Railway Ordinance was enacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceylon Government Railway was formed</li> <li>• Passenger and freight fares were decided, based on this ordinance</li> </ul>
	1907 First recorded omnibus operation in Sri Lanka, from Colombo to Chilaw by T.W. Collett	
	1916 Enactment of the Vehicle Ordinance Act No. 4 of 1916	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration of motor vehicles and drivers by the Inspector General of Police</li> <li>• The licensing Authorities viz. the Government Agents and Chairmen of Local Authorities</li> </ul>
	The bus service to Kandy was introduced after World War II	
	1925 A commission, under the chairmanship of J. Strachan, Director of Public Works was appointed.	Purpose of this commission was to report, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the means of transport already existing, and,</li> <li>• To assist the government to formulate a policy for encouraging the economic development of the Island by roads, railways and waterways.</li> </ul>
	1927 Motor Car Ordinance No. 20 of 1927	This marked a milestone in the history of road transport legislation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It amended and consolidated the law relating to motorcars and,</li> <li>• Amended the Vehicle Ordinance No. 4 of 1916</li> <li>• Created the Department of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles on roads including the insurance of vehicles</li> <li>• However, it did not make any change with regard to the Licensing Authorities.</li> </ul>
	1936 The number of buses in operation had increased to 2500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intense rivalry and cutthroat competition among the bus operators were common. This led to unsafe driving practices and assaults.</li> <li>• Unequal distribution of routes, absence of timetables, lack of passenger comfort and safety were quite notable</li> </ul>
	1937 A Commission headed by F. D. Hammond was appointed to report on the Island's transport system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended to establish a central authority for all forms of transport.</li> </ul>
	1938 Motor Car Ordinance No. 45 of 1938 was enacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided for the Commissioner of Motor Transport with wider powers to be the sole Licensing Authority, Chief Examiner of Motor Cars, Head of Motor Traffic Advisory Board</li> <li>• Provision was made for compulsory insurance against third party risks</li> </ul>

<b>PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD</b>	Early 1940s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase of passenger traffic and growth of investors in the bus industry led to intense rivalry among operators, poor productivity, break of law and order and unsatisfactory level of services</li> <li>• Thus the Government engaged S.W. Nelson to re-organize the transport system of the Island, which led to the enactment of Omnibus Service Licensing Ordinance No. 47 of 1942</li> </ul>
	1942 Omnibus Service Licensing Ordinance No. 47 of 1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocated controlled territorial monopolies</li> <li>• Brought about standardization of buses by way of regulation and control of the use of omnibuses on roads, exclusive road service licences for omnibus services</li> <li>• Made relevant amendments to the Motor Car Ordinance No. 45 of 1938.</li> <li>• Operators had to combine and transform themselves into limited liability companies.</li> </ul>
<b>POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD (UP TO 1957)</b>	Post World War II period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was marked by a steady decline in the railway's fortunes and also a disorganized state in road transport.</li> <li>• Thus, D. R. Rutnam was appointed to survey the position of transport in Ceylon with special reference to road and rail. He was expected to make recommendations with a wasteful competition, to formulate a plan of development and to suggest a framework of legislation to implement the recommendations.</li> </ul>
	D.R. Rutnam Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With regard to passenger transport, Rutnam took the view that no coordination of road and rail is necessary.</li> <li>• Suggested to establish a Transport Board.</li> <li>• Recommended to amend the Omnibus Service Licensing Ordinance No. 17 of 1942.</li> <li>• Resulted in the enactment of Motor Traffic Act No. 14 of 1951.</li> </ul>
	1951 Motor Traffic Act No. 14 of 1951	<p>Made provisions for,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacing the Commissioner of Motor Transport by a Commissioner of Motor Traffic,</li> <li>• Placing the responsibility of issuing licences for motor vehicles and the collection of license fees on the Central Government, and,</li> <li>• Forming the Bus Companies into Public (as against Private) Limited Liability Companies before 1<sup>st</sup> January 1954.</li> </ul>

<b>POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD (UP TO 1957)</b>	<p>1954 Sansoni Commission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the Motor Traffic Act No. 14 of 1951 was intended to ensure successful operation of the Public Companies, this did not happen in practice. Thus the Governor Soulbury appointed a Commission headed by Waldor Sansoni on March 18, 1954 to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Inquire and report on the omnibus companies and the improvements necessary for their proper operation in the public interest,</li> <li>➤ Investigate and report on the fare structure and recommend any revision considered necessary,</li> <li>➤ Inquire and report on capital requirements to establish a public omnibus transport system and methods of forming it.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This commission was concerned only with bus operation, studied in great deal the working of the existing system and dealt at length with individual bus companies. The main aspects it examined were; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Nelson Scheme of route operation</li> <li>➤ The adequacy of buses and services</li> <li>➤ The organization of bus companies</li> <li>➤ The management and financial position of bus companies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A technical adviser was also in the team to examine the standards of service, safety, repair and maintenance of buses.</li> <li>• The Commission recommended amendments to the Motor Traffic Act, reorganization of the Motor Traffic Department and the formation of a Transport Board.</li> <li>• The report of the Sansoni Commission stated that between 1948 to 1953 the number of omnibuses licensed increased from 1502 to 2560 and passengers carried per month from 11, 891,000 to 23, 915,000.</li> <li>• The bus service supplied by 76 public bus companies and other operators on a monopoly route permit basis was not considered satisfactory in the 1950s. The bus operators meanwhile wanted to increase passenger fares.</li> <li>• In its report the Commission recommended inter alia, the setting up of a Transport Board to advise and control private operators and the establishment of a joint government-private bus corporation to provide services, starting with Colombo Municipal Council Areas.</li> </ul>
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### **2.3 Nationalization of Bus Services and Its Operation up to 1977**

After independence from the British on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1948, the first significant change in the socio-political situation of the country took place with the formation of a new government in 1956. The nationalization of bus services too coincided with this change.

The government had appointed three committees – one from local, another from London Transport Executive and the other from Germany to study the ways in which nationalization should take place. All three committees had recommended a phased take-over of private bus companies under government control. Nevertheless, the government decided to nationalize the whole passenger transport industry in one blow by the Act No. 48 of 1957, which established the Ceylon Transport Board. Accordingly, on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1958, the Ceylon Transport Board (CTB) undertook the provision of passenger services throughout the country.

As Diandas (1988: 88) explains, nationalization of bus services into a single operating undertaking, the CTB, brought many changes. These included linking of bus routes into planned networks especially in the cities, extension of services into remote rural areas, operating urban buses late into the night, introduction of ticket machines, improved (for a time) indication of destinations, and provision of bus shelters operational output improved up to the level of 250 km per bus per day, compared to the monopoly companies' performance of 160 km per bus per day. In addition, creation of new bus depots and service stations all over the country, provision of a common wage system and an employee provident fund for the workers along with other welfare facilities were introduced to make the public transport an efficient government undertaking.

Diandas (1988: 90-92) explains that the success of the CTB is mainly threefold. Firstly, it brought into management a mix of management types; a few outside experts, government servants and managers of the bus companies untarnished by ownership interests. Secondly, the workforce was comparatively satisfied and motivated, with better working conditions and required skill training. Thirdly, a new fleet of 1,000 or more buses, designed for passenger transport were bought and was again followed by a gift of 1000 double-deck buses by the London Transport.

From 1958 to 1976, the daily-operated bus fleet increased from 2,318 to 4,600 and the yearly travel distance in kilometres increased from 165 million to 398 million. By 1968 the CTB had been transformed into a profit making public sector institution. However, soon after it showed the signs of downturn mainly due an unnecessary political interference. As a service-oriented venture, the CTB was lenient in increasing its fares. Furthermore, increase of bus-fare was a highly political decision, as the Government would not dare to face a subsequent public outcry. Thus, cost escalations especially after the oil crisis in 1973 were not compensated by equivalent fare increases. Also, a host of other reasons started contributing the CTB's decline in the early 70s. Diandas (1988: 92) sums up three key factors:

- i. Disillusionment of management, workforce, public, press and government
- ii. The financial problems
- iii. Increasing political interferences by way of adding unnecessary numbers to the workforce and interference in the management



Diandas (1988) cited earlier also bears the view that the Government did not accept that urban bus services require tax support. Instead losses incurred were cited as mere signs of inefficiency.

The cumulative effect of all these was CTB's escalating heavy losses for several years and by 1975, it was neither in a position to add new buses to its fleet nor to meet with the increasing running costs. Overcrowding became worse than ever. Petty political interferences forced to indiscriminate intake of unwanted staff and turned it into a grossly mismanaged institution.

However, during this period no private sector was allowed to operate passenger transport on a regular basis. They were allowed to operate taxi services, especial buses and vans for executions and so on. The individuals using cars and motor cycles were also limited due to import resections and high cost of vehicles. However, non-motorized transport modes such as pedal cycles etc. were in operation in addition to the government dominated passenger bus transport.

The economic structure of the country saw little change up to this time. Plantation sector was still the key source of national income, while agricultural sector of the country is getting high government patronage. Self-sufficiency in paddy production – a historical achievement during the pre-colonial era that nevertheless lost its momentum during the British rule – was yet to be re-achieved, and was a high political slogan as well. The physical development of the country as a whole had been gradual, while in Colombo it was comparatively more significant. Port related activities, government offices, government bank headquarters and few private enterprises were concentrated in Colombo, making it attractive for both white- and blue-collar jobs. The increase demand for better passenger transport services generated in both urban and rural areas due to gradual increases in economic activities and the population.

#### **2.4 Formation of a New Government in 1977**

By 1977, the country had slipped into an economic downturn and at the general election of 1997 a new government came to power. This change witnessed a major shift of national economic policies to open up the economy and make private sector actively participate in the mainstream development process.

The CTB was under severe strain during this period because the demand for travel shot up by 17% by 1978. The Government, over-viewing the situation based on its open economic policy, resorted to two remedies to face this situation: regionalization and de-regulation of passenger transport service (Diandas: 1994:05). The CTB was decentralized by Act No. 19 of 1978, to form nine Regional Transport Boards (RTBs), one for each province and establishing the Sri Lanka Central Transport Board (SLCTB). The SLCTB's main responsibilities was mainly to co-ordinate the supplies, inter-regional services, heavy repairs, to procure sufficient new buses, over-crowding and numerous trade-union related

issues. Under de-regulation, private buses were allowed to re-enter the scene of passenger transport after 1958 exactly 20 years of nationalization of public transport.

## **2.5 Re-emergence of Private Buses**

After two decades of nationalization, in 1979, the government decided to permit private bus owners to operate regular services on all routes in complement and/or competition with the RTB buses. By 1980, there were around 5000 private buses in operation. They were allowed to operate on the routes of their choice, which were invariably the profitable ones and often in conflict with the cash strapped RTB operations.

The decision to allow private buses to re-operate was based on the following presumptions:

- i. Private buses would relieve the RTBs' inability to cope up with the demands and thus complement the RTB services,
- ii. The Treasury would be relieved of its burden of massive annual allocations to purchase new buses and spare parts to meet with the demand, and thus,
- iii. the government would be relieved of public criticism and passengers relieved of difficulties of travel.

This move had its immediate effects to ease passenger travel needs, nevertheless the decision to allow private buses to re-operate seems rather ad hoc and an apparent last resort. It lacked pre-planning on the operational mechanism of private buses or their co-operation with the RTB buses.

The consequences of the lack of pre-planning were evident immediately. There was no central body to manage and control their affairs. Initially no tickets were issued. No standards were specified on the size, capacity or internal dimensions of the private buses. Thus they appeared in all sizes and types that were immediately available in the market. In the mean time, the Government liberalized the import of motor coaches. Eventually, reconditioned vans, mini-coaches of small and medium sizes and with low-roofs etc. were used for passenger transport with no regulations at all. Most of these were not designed for public transport; there were no bells or bars to cling on to, isles were occupied by folding seats, causing passenger discomfort.

For these private buses parking spaces or terminals at least in a rudimentary nature had not been thought of. They were allowed to operate at will, and obviously opted for most profitable routes, which were also of the highest passenger demand. There was no apparent necessity to stop at the designated bus-halting places to take or dispose passengers. Instead the private buses stopped anywhere along the routes for passengers. There were no timetables and therefore, they were mostly operating during peak hours. There was no reliability of the service. Often the private buses competed with the RTB buses and thus cowboy driving, racing or hanging back for a load increased traffic and anarchy on roads became common. However, they were not allowed to take higher fares than what was determined by the government for the RTBs and private buses.

By this time (early 1980s), Colombo had grown into the country's most highly dense urban centre. Open economic policies and the intensified agglomerated economies increased employment opportunities within the city and thus there was a massive daily commuter population into the city from all over the country. Colombo port was transforming into a major container-handling port in the South Asian region. There was always a demand for unskilled or semi-skilled labour and thus urban low income settlements continued to grow, amounting to half of Colombo's population. Heavy inflow of vehicles began to cause traffic at peak hours, for which the private buses of all kinds too were contributing significantly. Road networks and other infrastructure were not developed at the same pace of the addition of vehicles into the roads. Road accidents were on the increase.

The Government soon realized the need to bring in controlling measures to the private bus operation, and in April 1981 a separate Ministry of Private Omnibus Transport was established to administer and supervise the private omnibus sector.

In December 1981, the Minister of Private Omnibus Transport appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of A.C.M. Ameer in order to recommend the establishment of suitable machinery for regulating, controlling and supervising the operation of private omnibus services and the necessary legal requirements for its implementation. In addition, the committee was asked to report on improvements that are necessary for the orderly growth of the private omnibus industry, with special reference for preventing the wasteful duplication of facilities with the other existing forms of transport.

The recommendations of the Ameer Committee were contained in the Private Omnibus Services Act, No. 44 of 1983. Accordingly in January 1984 a separate Department of Private Omnibus Transport was established with a Director to administer the Act, which later was amended as per Act No. 38 of 1985.

Between 1979 and 1985, the number of private buses doubled the number of RTB buses. Yet most of them were under 30-seat capacity. Ranasinghe (1988: 105-107) summarizes the findings of a survey on private bus sector carried out in 1986. Some key factors relevant to this study are cited below:

- 85% of the seat capacity in Private Omnibus Transport was provided by buses with 30 seats or less, and of this, 31% by even smaller buses with up to 19 seats.
- The private bus sector is dominated by one-bus owners. About 94% of the operators own only one bus each, and they own 87% of the buses.
- 85% of the private buses are not new, but imported reconditioned vehicles.

- Most of the owners have bought their buses partly with borrowed money, and of these 88% have been borrowed from Finance Companies on Hire Purchase Schemes.
- 56% of the owners have been in the Private Omnibus Service for 2 years or less.
- 85% of the conductors are 25 years of age or less while only 1% are 40 years or less.
- 13% of the drivers are 25 years or less while 19% are over 40 years or less.
- 75% of the conductors and 34% of the drivers are unmarried.
- 62% of the employees cited unemployment as the principle reason for joining the bus transport generally, but only 32% gave this as the primary reason for joining private bus service.
- No employee reported that Employee's Provident Fund (EPF) is paid on his behalf by their employer.
- It does not appear that owners are making a big profit out their venture.

## **2.6 A Review of the Public Transport Sector (after the re-emergence of Private Buses, up to late 80s)**

Re-emergence of the private buses was an instant relief to some of the long stagnated transport issues such as to ease the over-crowding, reduce waiting time etc, and to reduce heavy government budgetary allocations to support the CTB, which was running at a loss. Yet, the unplanned nature of its introduction had brought about many other issues. Just after six years of operation the private bus industry had already been in a shaky state. While bus fares were kept low, operational cost of buses were rocketing up, without any government intervention to provide tax concessions etc. Thus on one hand, it did not appear to be making a substantial profit and on the other, passenger dissatisfaction was mounting up with the service they were getting.

The effect of re-introduction of private buses on the RTBs was also substantial. Private buses were always on a 'winning race' with the RTB buses. They outnumbered the RTB buses and also they did not have to run within a scheduled timetable. Thus on most routes, the private buses ran ahead of the RTB buses, absorbing a major share of the passengers. Most popular routes were fully dominated by the private buses. The RTBs did not have any strategy to counter this new situation, the cumulative effect of which was the steady depletion of daily income for RTB buses amidst rising costs.

The cynosure of this whole scene, the passengers were also in a dilemma. They were still far from getting a reasonable transport service. The RTBs had been service oriented and during the era of their monopoly it was also a part of State responsibility to provide transport services at off-peak hours, late at nights, remote routes etc. However, with the introduction of private buses the RTBs were letting it go loose. With decreasing income and therefore, increasing losses, and less Government patronage, they were also not in a position to add more buses into their fleet to run on such routes and at such times where only service becomes the priority. Private buses on the other hand were not interested running on less

profitable routes and during off-peak hours, as they were not profitable. Therefore, the passengers were not getting the service they used to get in terms of the total hours of the day.

Colombo was fast being transformed as the major urban metropolitan, with increased population densities. Agglomeration economies continued and the daily commuter population was flowing up. Slum and squatter dwellers represented half of city's population. They occupied rail reservation lands, low-lying areas and other vacant lands, which were close to nodes and town centres where highest accessibility to employment was the key factor.

Liberalized economic policies led to the thriving of the private sector. The monopoly of the plantation sector as the key source of national revenue was being competed by light industries that were mostly concentrated in the free-trade zones, garment industry and the revenue brought in by a massive outgoing work force to the Middle-eastern countries as housemaids and semi-skilled personnel. In addition to the conventional jobs found in Colombo, the low-income groups concentrated in slum and squatter settlements were highly attracted to the Middle-eastern job market. Open economic policies made a rather significant impact on the social attitudes and value systems within a lapse of few years. Money flew into the hands of people from a variety of sources. Television was introduced to Sri Lankan society, which was fast being transformed into a consumerist society. This trend was much faster in Colombo and other urban areas than in the rural settings. Associated social issues were also visible. Drugs such as heroin began to be flown in. Slum and squatter dwellers were more susceptible to this menace due to a variety of reasons.

These complex socio-economic transformations were in turn reflected in people's attitudes towards transport and increasing needs, which spanned into different times of the day. With the increased pace of life, time is becoming a more vital factor of concern. However, the prevalent public transport was not geared to take up these demands. School buses operated by the CTBs and then RTBs, at a very concessionary rate were fast diminishing. All these created a demand for para-transport modes at a significant scale. Trishaws imported from India were flowing into roads, to fill up the lags of public transport. Some people resorted to chartered school/work vans. Bicycles were fast being replaced by motorcycles. Liberalizing the import of motor coaches had also brought all kinds of vehicles onto roads and increased traffic congestions and accidents especially in urban areas. Air pollution rates were on the increase, which was recently considered an important aspects in the city environment.

The road network of Colombo and suburbs along with other infrastructure were also not expanding to cope up with the increasing traffic. Therefore, heavy traffic on the nodal points of the city was quite common. Galle Road, which had the highest traffic density, was almost impassable during peak hours. Similar traffic congestions were common elsewhere. Closure of roads at some points due to security measures since mid 1980s worsened the situation on the city roads.

All the parties responsible for public transport, the Government, the policy makers, the RTBs and the private bus operators and even passengers were in a strange way caught up in a situation in which no one had a clear answer to the issue of public transport. It is again rather strange because the demand for public transport was rising throughout. Nevertheless, there was no well coordinated effort and planned action to capitalize on this demand and provide the passengers with better transport.

By late 80s, the political situation of the country too was at stake. The civil war in the North and East and the youth uprising in the South had been taking their toll. After a brief peak time during 1978 – 82, country's economy started going through a difficult period especially towards the late 80s. The Government brought forward the devolution of political and administrative powers to the provincial level as a solution to the country's political problems that has had impacts on the transport sector as well.

## **2.7 Devolution and up to the Present**

Closer and more active involvement of people in decision making, development of local talent and dispersal of governmental processes were among the key objectives of the devolution of power that took place along with the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution in 1987. However, some years were taken to make the country's administrative setting to adjust accordingly. Provincial Council elections were held much later in 1991 and eight Provincial Councils were formed covering the nine provinces and were vested with the powers to promote, establish and engage in agricultural, industrial, commercial and trading enterprises and other income-generating projects within the province.

The transport sector took a new direction in line with this devolution package. First and foremost, the devolution of control over bus services was shifted from the Central Government to Provincial Governments, viz. for the Provincial Ministry of Transport. Portfolios with Ministerial Positions, similar to those of the Central Government were created in these Provincial Governments. However each Minister had a number of portfolios under his purview and thus, a separate officer or an authority was established. For instance, in the Western Province Provincial Council, a separate Authority, 'The Western Province Road Passenger Transport Authority' was established with a full-time Chairman and Chief Executive and in other Provincial Councils, a Director of Transport or an officer bearing a similar designation administered the operation of public transport within the province.

## **2.8 Peoplization of RTBs**

As mentioned earlier, although the Constitutional changes were made to devolve power through Provincial Councils in 1987, it took some more years for them to operate. By this time, one notable change had occurred. All the 92 bus depots belonging to RTBs were dissolved and converted

into oddly termed, 'Peoplized' Transport Companies as per Act No. 23 of 1987. Employees themselves were made part of the ownership and management of these companies, by selling 50% of shares to them and the rest was held by the Treasury. Thus the responsibility of administration and management of these companies was transferred to the employees themselves, in an effort to get rid of unwanted political interference and make the operation more viable.

## **2.9 National Transport Commission (NTC)**

Along with the devolution of power and formation of Provincial Ministries and Authorities, the National Transport Commission was established as the Agency of the Ministry of Transport and Highways by Act 37 of 1991. Its principal functions included advising the Government on Policy, regulating inter-provincial bus services, guiding and assisting provincial transport authorities on policy etc.

Within few years, the effect of Peoplization was visible. Disintegration of small depots led to uncontrolled competition within themselves. The income diminished even more, the resources were begun to be under-utilized. Thus as per Act No. 30 of 1996, the 'Peoplized' depots were amalgamated into 11 Companies, under the Companies Act No. 17 of 1982.

## **2.10 A brief overview**

The situation of the public transport sector did not seem to improve with the events took place along with devolution of powers to provincial level or formation of various Authorities. None of these had grasped the crux of the issue and had perceived the scenario holistically. All subsections of public transport - the private buses, the Peoplized Bus Companies, the Railway, the road and rail infrastructure – were mounted with increasing issues and continued to run at a loss (except private buses). The reason as was gathered primarily relate to poor management of public transport operations and the difficulty of facing the competition created by the private sector bus owners. On the contrary, the private bus owners operating mostly as an individually owned business activity operate only on profitable routes and active in peak hours to make their profits. The government owned buses while loosing income required to operate as a service which the people expect government to provide. This complex situation has lead to an unorganized inefficient public transport system to exist in Colombo and in Sri Lanka.

Devolution on one hand while giving autonomy for each Provincial Council to decide on its transport sector had led to further disintegration of the system as a whole, mainly due to lack of co-ordination and overlapping of certain functions. Diandas (1994: 33-43) cites that devolution has made no or little contribution on such aspects as scheduling and over-supply (of private buses), enforcement of standards, improvement and maintenance of bus stations, stands & terminals. Nor has it addressed the prolonged issues of over-crowding, safety and comfort etc on the part of the passenger. In fact most of these issues were central to the transport sector and had nothing much to do with devolution.

Thus, in 1996, funded by the World Bank, a study was made by a joint World Bank/ Government of Sri Lanka team, with a view to recommend a strategic framework for the improvement of public transport. This study put forward recommendations on policy reorientation, improving efficiency of public investments, transport infrastructure provisions and environmental and social sustainability. However, it was revealed that the above strategy document remains a study without making it used for any significant changes in transport policy and strategy. The reason being that the policy makers at the ministry level seem to have not made proposals to the government for implementation of such recommendations.

### **3.0 CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS**

According to the Annual Report (year 2000) of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the transport sector has been discussed under broad categories such as bus transport (public and private), rail transport, civil aviation and port services. However, for the purpose of current study, which emphasizes on passenger transport, the bus transport and rail transport was considered most relevant than other categories. In addition to the above, some key transport modes such as three wheelers, school vans, office vans and motor cycles have been used by the people particularly in urban areas to meet their transport needs which are not reflected in the above report. The institutional arrangements and operational aspects of these transport modes vary according to different parts of the country. In the case of Colombo and its suburbs where high concentration of urban population exist, an equally high percentage of passenger transport modes operate. The main constraint to discuss on these different modes of transport has been the lack of data particularly on three wheelers, school vans, office vans, which are being operated mostly on individual basis with no proper authority to control and regulate.

#### **3.1 Bus Transport (Public)**

Currently, public bus transport system in Sri Lanka has been decentralized to be handled at provincial level. There are eight provincial councils exist covering nine provinces of the country. The former Ceylon Transport Board (CTB) has thus been restructured to function as Regional Transport Companies by (RTCs) sharing assets and responsibilities of the regional bus companies among its employees and the state. The state sector retains only 50% of the shares of the RTCs while the balance 50% has been distributed among the employees.

Currently the public bus transport attracts only about 44% of the daily passenger km while the balance by the private sector transport operators. The objective of breaking the government monopoly in public transport was to provide a better service to the public, while improving the management aspects of public transport. However, the biggest challenge faced by the public bus transport sector as of today has been the unregulated competition by the private bus operators, particularly with regard to allocation of routes and time schedules.



The National Transport Commission (NTC) which is responsible for inter provincial transport has prepared separate business plans for 11 RTCs and a consolidation plan for all RTCs with a view to improving their operation efficiency. According to the estimates of RTC they need to operate at least 6,590 buses per day to provide a satisfactory services (this mean additional 1000 buses should be provided to RTCs for daily operation). This reveals that the public sector bus transport service (popularly known as CTB buses) operate far below than the private sector buses which has attracted 66% of daily passenger km<sup>1</sup>. As a result, as has been mentioned elsewhere in this report, most of the profitable routes have been totally dominated by the private buses leaving unprofitable routs to the RTC buses. This unregulated competition has lead to sharp declining of the RTC bus services.

### **3.2 Bus Transport (Private)**

Starting from early 1980s the private bus transport service has now taken over a major share of (66% of passenger km) passenger transport demand of the country. Motivated by earning profits, the private bus transport operators have gradually taken over most the profitable routes into their hands. The private bus operators have been operating on the basis of individual owners till 1996. The government has introduced formation of private bus companies since the year 2000 under National Transport Act of 1996. The minimum requirement for formation of a private bus company (which functions as a cooperative of private bus owners of a particular area) was to organize fifty (50) buses in a particular geographical area. By end of year 2000 there were ten (10) such companies formed in 07 districts in the country. This implies still there is a large majority of private bus owners operate on individual basis. The Provincial Road Passenger Transport Authority (PRPTA) which should be formed under each provincial council regulates the operation of private bus transport service in respective provinces. The first provincial road passenger transport authority was formed in the Western province of Sri Lanka (where capital city of Colombo situated) in 1995. The "regulations under the western provincial road passenger carriage services statue No. 1 of 1992 and as amended by statue no. 3 of 1993 and No. 7 of 1995" has been gazetted in 1996. The regulations in the above law provide the authority with powers and functions to control and regulate all the private passenger transport services within the province by PRPTA.

However, the regularization and control of unregulated private bus transport system (since 1998 to late 1990s) has been an extremely difficult task to accomplish as was expected. This seem to have been particularly difficult due to operation of private buses on individual basis. The government's effort to formation of private bus companies was considered the only way out for controlling the operation of private bus services. The Annual Report (2000) of Central Bank of Sri Lanka states that "the private bus operators, though they provide a greater part of the service, are still faced with a number of problems which need to be resolved early if they are to improve the standards of their services. Non-availability of bus stations and parking spaces, lack of coordination between the private and public bus operations for allocation of routes and time

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank, Sri Lanka Transport Sector Strategy , August 1996

schedules, poor road conditions, untrained crews and revenue leakage are the main problems". Thus, it was clear that the introduction of private bus companies alone would not be able to solve the complex problems associated with passenger transport in Sri Lanka.

Although the government was unable to regulate the private bus operation including the provision of necessary infrastructure, the private sector domination has become inevitable in the competition with the government owned Regional Transport Company buses. The reasons being that the private sector buses operate mainly as a individual business activity with least operating costs. The leasing companies and banks provide lending facilities for purchase of buses, the service crew can be employed with minimum pays and operate with no strict time table which means mainly targeting at peak hours where they can earn more.

### **3.3 The Rail Transportation**

The rail transportation in Sri Lanka is handled by Sri Lanka Railways (SLR) which is a state owned monopoly. The SLR is a government department which provides railway passenger and freight transport services in the country. The contribution of Sri Lanka Railways for passenger transport has always been less significant compared to bus transportation and private vehicular transportation. Due to increase shift in freight transportation from railway to road transport has also registered a sharp decline of goods transportation by rail since early 1990s. As has been described by the Annual Report of the Central Bank, the issues such as late arrivals at destinations, overcrowded compartments, and a low degree of safety and comfort are some of the pertinent problems faced by an average train travelers. On the other hand, the Sri Lanka Railway has made efforts to tackle these problems within the availability of its limited resources outdated rolling stock, weak rail tracks and outdated signaling system particularly since late 1990s.

Considering the importance role played by Sri Lanka Railway, in the area of passenger and freight transport within its inherent limitations, several projects have been implemented to improve its conditions and perform particularly during late 1990s. These improvements have been mainly concentrated in and around Colombo region to cater to rising demand for rail transport services.

Being a state owned service operation, the railway passenger transport service offers people with many concessary services. These included the monthly season tickets for office workers and school children passes valid for three months on pre-paid basis at a lower rate and cheapest compared to road passenger transport charges. The train fares are around 1/3 of the normal bus fares. In Colombo, about 15% - 20% of the working population researches to the city through railways. A majority of these population is from other regional town centres and from suburban areas of Colombo city. Lack of an efficient rail road network to cover the Colombo city and its suburban areas a majority of people rely on bus transport services. Recently, prepared Colombo Metropolitan Regional Structure Plan (CMRSP) has proposals for construction of a circular rail road network to cover the Colombo city and its suburbs. If that proposal becomes operational, the passenger transport system may improve in Colombo.

### 3.4 Three wheelers

Three wheelers which are being imported mainly from India have been a recently added (since mid 1980s) mode of passenger transport particularly used for short trips in urban areas as well as rural areas of Sri Lanka. The three wheelers are operated as individually owned hiring vehicles with no control of operation such as number of vehicles permitted in certain locations, fixing of meters for fares and the number of passengers etc. The only regulating factor is the registration requirement with the Motor Traffic Department of Sri Lanka for annual revenue license issued by the government and the need for annual insurance coverage of the vehicle. The three wheeler operation in the city has become a self employment for many unemployed youths as well as those who have retired from their jobs. Many people who own three wheelers rent them out to known operators on an agreed daily rent (for example the person who rent a three wheeler has to pump in fuel and attend to minor repairs and at the end of the day to pay up Rupees 200 or 300 to the owner). Therefore, the operation of three wheelers has become a significant self employment activity in the city.

According to the statistics of the Motor Traffic Department, there has been a sharp increase in the registration of three wheelers during the period 1992 to 2001 (i.e. from 15,252 in 1992 to 112,302 three wheelers in 2001).

Although there is no reliable data on the number of three wheelers operating within the city of Colombo the interviews with the key informants revealed that around 50,000 three wheelers are operated daily in the city as at 2002.

Most of the times three wheelers are used by passengers to reach to a point at a relatively shorter period of time than passenger buses. In Colombo, three wheelers are famous for emergency running. The three wheeler operators have themselves formed into small associations based on particular street or market place where they have regular operation. Due to non-regulated operation, the three wheeler operators used to exploit passengers by forcing to pay high fares. Normally, their minimum hiring charge is Rs. 20.00 per km which in the absence of a fare-meter sometimes the passengers will have to pay up to Rs. 30.00 per km. During the night as well as during rainy season three wheeler drivers charge unreasonable rates from passengers. Generally the three wheeler operators are not been recognized as respectable service providers. Since they are being used by thugs, drug dealers, and others who engaged in social malpractices, the three wheeler drivers have lost their reputation in the society. Passengers though look for the service of three wheelers drivers in the absence of other transport modes, the passenger tend to always look at them as being problem creators. This has been primarily due to lack of parking spaces for three wheelers, lack of fare control system, as well as violation of traffic rules and regulation by three wheeler operators. Therefore, the operation of three wheelers in the city may not be regarded as a reliable transport mode for passengers but more of adding to the problems in the transport sector.

However, if the government can negotiate with the three wheeler operators, their service can be well integrated into the city's public transport system. Though above mentioned deficiencies exist at present the three wheelers provide efficient service at places such as hospitals, markets,

banks and near major employment centres of the city. The three wheeler operation also available during off peak hours of the day and particularly during the night where private and public bus services are not available.

### **3.5 School Vans and Office Staff Transportation**

Along with the privatization of passenger transport services in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s, school vans and vans for office staff transportation too began to enter into the passenger transport service. The school vans and office staff vans are operated by individuals, mostly on owner operate basis or operated by employing drivers.

**Table 2: Total Vehicle Population in Sri Lanka (Passenger Vehicles only)**

<i>Class of Vehicle</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>%</i>
CTB buses	13927	1.76	14083	1.24	16546	1.16
Hiring buses and private buses	32235	4.1	42630	3.76	49715	3.48
Dual purpose vehicles (vans)	38909	4.91	99407	8.82	141496	9.98
Motor cars	17225	22.0	202451	18.0	241399	16.88
Motor cycles	516205	65.3	709825	62.96	868610	60.74
Three wheelers	15252	1.93	59119	5.24	112302	7.85
Total	790753	100.0	1127515	100.0	1430068	100.0

*Source: Adopted from a statistical record of the Statistical unit of Department of Motor Traffic, Sri Lanka (2001)*

Considering the issues such as convince, reliability, safety (the available government school buses are too crowded and sometime school children used to travel hanging on to foot-board risking their lives) and many other factors, those people who could afford to pay used to send their children in school vans. The school vans are smaller in size having seating capacity of 08 to 16 seaters. The school vans and office staff transport vans are also not regulated by any authority other than registration requirement with the Department of Motor Traffic for annual revenue license by the government as well as obtaining annual insurance coverage. The rates are agreed by the users and operated usually on the basis of a monthly fee depending on the distance (usually for a 20km distance for up and down trips per month per school child the rate would be around Rupees 1200 which is approximately 20 times of a monthly school season ticket of a CTB bus). For office staff for the same distance the rate would be around Rupees 1500 per month which is about four times of normal monthly bus fare per person. However, many people tend to use these passenger vans due to inefficiency of the existing public passenger transport services in Colombo. For these hiring vans, there is always a defined group of users who pay an agreed monthly amount as mentioned above.

The government has not introduced any regulations to regularize the operation of the above mentioned vans. However, it has been highlighted by many informants of the research that allowing of a large number of passenger vans to enter to the city every day has further aggravated the city's traffic congestion. As for the three wheelers, for office and school vans too there is no reliable data on the number of vans entering to the city. However, again our key informants (particularly the traffic police and municipal officials) have estimated that their are about 10000-12000 school vans and staff transportation van are entering to the city daily. After unloading their passenger over 90% of such vans used to stay closer to their passenger destinations (near schools and office complexes) until the passengers return after their day business. However, due to lack of

proper parking for these vehicle, they used to encroach the pavements, the way side and others keep on moving place to place as being chased by city traffic police.

### **3.6 Motor Cycles**

Motor cycles have become a cheapest and quick transport mode for many people in urban as well as rural areas. Use of motor cycles begun to increase particularly after 1988 with the liberalized economic policies introduced by the government at that time. Removal of import restrictions and various tax incentives contributed to importation of motor cycles to Sri Lanka. According to the data available with Department of Motor Traffic, the registered total no. of motor cycles in the year 1992 was 516,205 which has risen to 709,825 in 1997 and 868,610 in 2001. Among the total passenger transport vehicles, motor cycle account for over 60% in these years. Most of the working population in Colombo use motor cycle as family vehicle carrying 02 to 04 passenger (rider + 03 passengers). Due to reckless and undisciplined driving of motorists including the private bus drivers, the motor cyclists become the frequent victims of road accidents (in the year 2000, 247 motor cyclists had died due to road accidents in the city of Colombo out of 2,140 total accident death). In this context, although people tend to use motor cycles as a convenient mode of transport for their daily travel, the vulnerability to face accident is always very high. One other important factor is that in Colombo and other parts of Sri Lanka, the motor cycles are not been used for hiring purpose. Motorcycles are used primarily for individual or family transportation needs only.

In the case of low income settlements it was observed that motor cycles are very rarely used by the low income people. Most of them used to walk up to the nearest bus route and use buses for their transport needs. When inquired the reason, a majority of them said it was too risky to use a motorcycle in the congested city roads and use of public transport is cheap and less risky. Also the use of three wheelers is more popular among low income communities as a family vehicle than motor cycles.

### **3.7 Motor Cars**

Motor cars are primarily used by middle class and upper income category people including those official cars, which constitute a major part of the city traffic. Among the total passenger vehicle population the percentage of motor car varied between 22.0% to 16.88% during 1992 to 2001. However, in absolute numbers there has been a significant increase of motor cars from 174,255 in 1992 to 241,399 in 2001.

The increase of motor car population in the total passenger traffic may have been partly attributed to inefficiency in the public transport system to attract more passengers particularly to cater to the demand of different category of people. Insufficient passenger load capacity of the Sri Lanka Railway as well as the poor public bus services might have contributed people to resort to more individualistic modes of transport such as motor cars and motor cycles.

Increasing use of motor cars too contributes to the increasing city traffic particularly during the peak hours of the day. Further more, lack of proper parking facilities within the city has compelled motorists to park their cars along wayside by occupying pavements and street corners. Therefore, the government has to pay serious attention to regularize the use of motor cars too in a overall city traffic management plan in the future.

### **3.8 Pedal Cycles**

It is significant to note that the people of case study settlements, neither use motor cycles, nor pedal cycles to travel to their places of work or other destinations. (It was found that in each case study settlement less than 10 people were using pedal & motor cycles). The reasons given by the people for not using the above mode of transport included;

- i. Non affordability for a motor cycle and risk of being faced with accident when riding in the city.
- ii. High risk involved in using a pedal cycle on the city roads in Colombo for two reasons. One is lack of separate track for cyclists, the other is heavy traffic congestion on city roads. Therefore, people prefer to walk about ½ to 01 km distance form their home to the nearest bus stop to catch a bus or in certain cases to reach their place of work. Some of the adult women and school children have indicated that they did not want to take the risk of walking along the pavement of city roads due to congestion and potential risk of facing an accident and therefore always prefer to take a bus even for a shorter distances. The lack of understanding of people's perspectives on their modes of travel by the authorities seem to have abandoned the cheep and environmentally friendly options of transport such as pedal cycles in Colombo.

## **4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

For the purpose of this study, issues related to public transport have been identified based on the key themes. The themes are considered as those that emerged by the interaction between the user and the available service provisions of public transport and with respect to the key actors namely the users, service providers and regulators.

Under each theme, specific issues have been identified for convenient analysis of the research findings as detailed out in the Research Methodology. The identified key actors, themes

and issues are indicated below.

## **4.2 Key Actors, Themes and Issues**

4.2.1 Key Actors: The key actors involved in public transport provision and the use of transport services as identified by the present study are indicated below.

Users of public transport: one of the major user groups considered under the study includes people of urban poor settlements in the city of Colombo. Firstly, the broader group include people of three major racial groups in the city i.e. Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. Secondly, different categories of persons such as adult men, adult women, disable persons, elderly persons, school girls and boys were included in order to cover the wider user groups of public transport services.

In addition to the above, urban poor population, the office workers and members of general public who use public transport were interviewed. The details of these different categories are indicated in the following section of this report.

### 4.2.2 Service Providers

The service providers of public transport included in the study are owners of public transport, the operators (drivers and conductors).

4.2.3 The regulators: The regulators included authorities making policy and planning decisions, the regulators who issue permits and licenses and those who regulate operation of public transport (such as City Traffic Police and the Traffic Management Department of the Municipal Council). The last category included programme implementation institutions.

4.2.4 Key themes raised by the users and providers and issues related to key themes are discussed in the following section of the report. This section describes only the key themes as identified by the key actors during the process of information gathering.



Key Actors	Key Themes
i. The users of public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedestrian travel</li> <li>• Frequency and period of operation of public transport</li> <li>• Conditions of the transport mode/s</li> <li>• The service crew and their performance</li> <li>• Traveler information</li> <li>• Terminal facilities</li> <li>• Passenger rights</li> <li>• User satisfaction</li> <li>• Suggestions for service improvements</li> </ul>
ii. Service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation behind investment made</li> <li>• Institutional support</li> <li>• Operational aspect of the service</li> <li>• Overall gains and satisfaction</li> </ul>
Drivers and conductors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training /technical competency</li> <li>• Knowledge on the service</li> <li>• Facilities available</li> <li>• Job satisfaction</li> <li>• Suggestions for service improvements</li> </ul>
iii. Regulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy and planning and planning provisions</li> <li>• Regulatory (conformity measures) adopted</li> <li>• Regulatory (operational measures)</li> <li>• Programme implementations</li> </ul>

The analysis of the research findings were carried out based on the above framework in order to better focus on the objectives of the study. Summery of interviews carried out relating to above mentioned key actors are indicated under the 4.3 summary statement.

### 4.3 Summary of Interviews & Meetings Carried out

#### a. Members of Urban Poor Communities

Name of Urban Poor Settlements (Case Study)	Category of Informants						Community Leaders	Total
	Adult		Elderly / Physically handicapped		School			
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Boys	Girls		
Poorwarama Settlement (Relocated Community)	05	05	03	03	04	04	02	26
259 Watta (Shanty Community)	05	05	03	03	04	04	02	26
Kadiranawatta (Relocated Community)	05	05	03	03	04	04	02	26
121 Watta (Slum Community)	05	05	03	03	04	04	02	26
Badowita Settlement (Relocated Community)	05	05	03	03	04	04	02	26
43 Watta, Bars Place	05	05	03	03	04	04	02	26
Total	30	30	18	18	24	24	12	156

#### b. Passengers of Public Transport

- Bus passengers - 08 Nos. (03 m, 03 w)
- Rail passengers - 08 Nos. (03 m, 03w)

#### c. Public Transport Providers

- Bus owners - 05 Nos.
- Bus owners association's officials - 02 Nos.
- Bus conductors - 06 Nos.
- Bus drivers - 06 Nos.

#### d. Para Transport Providers

- Three-wheeler drivers - 05 Nos.
- Office vans - 04 Nos.
- School vans - 04 Nos.

#### e. Representatives of Regulatory Agencies (one responsible officer from each agency)

- Ministry of Transport
- Urban Development Authority
- Western Province Transport Authority
- National Transport Commission
- Sri Lank Central Transport Board
- Colombo Municipal Council

- City Traffic Police

**f. R&D Personnel (one from each category has been interviewed)**

- Transport Planners
- Urban Sociologist
- Economist
- Research on Public Transport
- Women Association in the city in urban poor settlement

**g. Research Advisory Meeting**

Consisting of seven persons representing relevant organizations and 03 from SEVANATHA meet and review the project activities. Their inputs at various stages of the project have been very significant.

**h. Focus Group Meetings**

Two Focus Group Meetings involving community members (men, women, children, youth and elderly) were held in Poorwarama and Badowita settlements and discussed their view points on access and quality of public transport. The focus group meetings helped reinforcing the findings of the interviews of user groups' information while identifying new issues on the related themes if any proposed by the partnership.

**4.4 Selection of Case Study Settlements for the Project**

Based on the scope of the research project, emphasis was paid to include users of public transport from the urban poor communities in Colombo. For this purpose, identification of urban poor settlements become an important task of the study. Considering the various factors influencing the existence of urban poor communities, a set of criteria was developed for identifying appropriate settlements for the purpose of carrying out interviews with different user groups of public transport in urban poor settlements.

The criteria included;

- Type of settlements (i.e. in Colombo there were five major types of low income settlements exists; slum settlements, non-upgraded squatter settlements, upgraded squatter settlements, upgraded slums, relocated settlements and low cost floats) Of the above, the upgraded squatter settlements relocated settlements and upgraded slums form the majority of urban poor settlements in Colombo. Therefore, communities belonging to the above three categories were chosen.
- Geographical distribution within the city (in order to represent the main areas of concentration of urban poor settlements within the city).
- Size of the settlements (average household size of urban poor settlements as well as lower and higher size).
- Distance to nearest public transport route.

- v. Age of the settlement (consolidation factor / linkages with the city's development activities).

Based on the above criteria, already available data on urban poor communities in Colombo was used for identification of appropriate settlements.

**Table 3: Distribution of Urban Poor Settlements in Colombo City**

<i>Settlement Type</i>	<i>No. of Settlements</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No. of Housing Units</i>	<i>%</i>
Slums	1071	71.1	25500	38.6
Shanties (squatter settlements)	183	12.2	13313	20.2
Low cost flats	103	6.8	8950	13.6
Relocated housing	97	6.4	14814	22.4
Old deteriorated quarters	31	2.1	2575	3.9
Unplanned permanent	21	1.4	870	1.3
Total	1506	100	66022	100

*Source: Survey of Urban Low Income Settlements of Colombo, Sustainable Township Programme (STP) under the Ministry of Urban Development & Housing, 1997/98*

The opinion of the municipal officials, the members of research team as well as the research advisory committee was sought in finally identification of urban poor settlements for the research study. The number of settlements thus identified was limited to six settlements. This number was agreed between the research team and the Research Coordinator of WEDC considering the factors such as available time, resources, no. of interviews to be completed and depth of information to be collected for the purpose of the study.

The six settlements satisfying the above mentioned criteria were then called case study settlements where different categories of public transport users (i.e elderly and disable, adult men, adult women and school children) were interviewed. A summary of selected settlements are indicated in the table below.

**Table 4: Settlements Selected for Case Studies**

	<i>Name &amp; Location of Settlement</i>	<i>Type of Settlement</i>	<i>Size of the Settlement (household size)</i>	<i>No. of Persons Interviewed</i>	<i>Distance from the city centre (km)</i>
1.	Kadirana Watta, Mattakkuliya, Colombo North	Relocated Community	840	26	04
2.	Poorwarama Settlement, Colabage Mawatha, Colombo East	Relocated community	170	26	08
3.	259 Watta, Ferguson Road, Colombo North	Shanty Community	123	26	03
4.	121 Watta, Maligawatta, Colombo 10	Slum Settlement	102	26	03
5.	43 Watta, Barnes Place, Colombo 07	Slum Community	56	26	05
6.	Badowita Settlement	Relocated Community	1141	26	08

*Note:* The word "Watta" is used in local language to identify an urban low income settlement

#### **4.5 Profile of Case Study Settlements**

In order to familiarize with the identified case study settlements, the research team has visited them and prepared a brief settlement profile of each settlement prior to carrying out the survey. The information gathering exercise for preparation of settlement profile paved the way for developing relationship with the community leaders and members. The message of carrying out the interviews of identified community members for this study was also passed to the community during the process of preparing the settlement profile. Thus, the preparation of profile of case study settlements has been a useful beginning of the study process in urban poor settlements. The completed settlement profiles are presented below.

**Profile of Case Study Settlement - Kadirana Watta**

- 1.0 Name and location of the settlement: Kadirana Watta, Falm Road, Mattakkuliya.
- 1.1 Year of origin : 1950
- 1.2 Type of the Settlement : Relocated Settlement
- 1.3 No. of Households as per year 2001 : 840
- 1.4 Municipal Ward : Colombo North
- 2.0 Land Ownership of the Settlement : Sri Lanka Land Reclamation and Development Corporation
- 2.1 Available of Basic Infrastructure
- Water Supply : Individual water connection
  - Toilets : 12 common toilets and 05 individual toilets connected to soak pits
  - Access roads : 20 ft wide tarred road
  - Storm water drain : Open masonry drains
  - Electricity : Available for individual houses
- 3.0 Availability of Public Transport to the Settlement: Not available
- 3.1 Distance to nearest public transport route: 1/2 kilo meter
- 4.0 Type of employment of the majority of community: Informal business activities and unskilled labourers
- 4.1 Distance to work place of a majority: 06 km
- 5.0 Distance to other services
- School - 3 km
  - Market - 4 km
  - Hospital - 8 km
  - Post office - ½ km

**Profile of Case Study Settlement - Poorwarawarama Settlement**

- 1.0 Name and location of the settlement: Poorwarama Purawaraya,  
DC Colambage Mawatha,  
Kirulapone, Colombo 05
- 1.1 Year of origin : 1998
- 1.2 Type of the Settlement : Relocated Settlement
- 1.3 No. of Households as per year 2001 : 170
- 2.0 Land Ownership of the Settlement : Road Development  
Authority
- 2.1 Available of Basic Infrastructure
- Water Supply : Individual connection
  - Toilets : 02 Common toilets (but majority  
has individual toilets) Planes are  
underway for construction of a  
sewer scheme for the settlements
  - Access roads : 15 – 20 ft wide tarred road and all  
inner roads are gravel roads
  - Storm water drain : Not available
  - Electricity : Available for individual houses
- 3.0 Availability of Public Transport to the Settlement: Not available
- 3.1 Distance to nearest public transport route: ½ kilo meter
- 4.0 Type of employment of the majority of community: Skill and  
unskilled labours, self employment activities
- 4.1 Distance to work places of a majority: 05 to 06 km
- 5.0 Distance to other services
- School - 1/2 km
  - Market - 3 km
  - Hospital - 4 km
  - Post office - 1/2 km



**Profile of Case Study Settlement - 259 Watta**

- 1.0 Name and location of the settlement: 259 Watta, Ferguson Road, Colombo North
- 1.1 Year of origin : 1971
- 1.2 Type of the Settlement : Shanty Settlement
- 1.3 No. of Households as per year 2001 : 123
- 2.0 Land Ownership of the Settlement : Private owner (original owner had died and a his representative used to collect rent from the occupants)
- 2.1 Available of Basic Infrastructure
- Water Supply : 06 Common taps and some houses have individual connection
  - Toilets : 06 male and 06 female common toilet units available
  - Access roads : 15 ft wide tarred road
  - Storm water drain : Not available
  - Electricity : Available for individual connections
- 3.0 Availability of Public Transport to the Settlement: Not available
- 3.1 Distance to nearest public transport route: ½ kilo meter
- 4.0 Type of employment of the majority of community: Unskilled labours
- 4.1 Distance to work place of a majority: about 05 km
- 5.0 Distance to other services
- School - 1 ½ km
  - Market - 2 km
  - Hospital - 6 km
  - Post office - 1/2 km

## **Profile of Case Study Settlement - 121 Watta**

- 1.0 Name and location of the settlement: 121 Watta,  
Maligawatta,  
Colombo 10
- 1.1 Year of origin : 1960-1965
- 1.2 Type of the Settlement : Slum Settlement
- 1.3 No. of Households as per year 2001 : 102
- 2.0 Land Ownership of the Settlement : Private businessman  
who had died about 20 years ago. Owner's relative collect rent from the  
houses.
- 2.1 Available of Basic Infrastructure
- Water Supply : Only one common tap
  - Toilets : Individual toilets
  - Access roads : 22ft wide tarred road
  - Waste water & Storm : Open masonry drains  
water drain connected to a nearby canal
  - Electricity : Available – individual house  
connection
- 3.0 Availability of Public Transport to the Settlement: Not available
- 3.1 Distance to nearest public transport route: 1/4 kilo meter
- 4.0 Type of employment of the majority of community: Informal  
business activities and unskilled labour work
- 4.1 Distance to workplaces of a majority: about 03 to 04 km
- 5.0 Distance to other services
- School - ¼ km
  - Market - ½ km
  - Hospital - 4 km
  - Post office - 200 m

**Profile of Case Study Settlement - 43 Watta**

- 1.0 Name and location of the settlement: 43 Watta, Barns Place,  
Kurunduwatta,  
Colombo 07
- 1.1 Year of origin : 1959
- 1.2 Type of the Settlement : Slum Settlement
- 1.3 No. of Households as per year 2001 : 56
- 2.0 Land Ownership of the Settlement : Private (The original  
owner has died no one is  
collecting the rents at  
present)
- 2.1 Available of Basic Infrastructure
- Water Supply : 04 Common taps and  
04 individual taps
  - Toilets : 04 common toilets and  
03 individual toilets
  - Access roads : Gravel road
  - Storm water drain : Not available
  - Electricity : Available for individual houses
- 3.0 Availability of Public Transport to the Settlement: Not available
- 3.1 Distance to nearest public transport route: ½ a kilo meter
- 4.0 Type of employment of the majority of community: Informal  
businesses and daily labour work
- 4.1 Distance to work places of a majority: 03 to 04 km
- 5.0 Distance to other services
- School - 1 km
  - Market - 1 km
  - Hospital - 1 km
  - Post office - 1 km

**Profile of Case Study Settlement - Badowita Settlement**

- 1.0 Name and location of the settlement: Badowita, Attidiya, Ratmalana
- 1.1 Year of origin : 1991
- 1.2 Type of the Settlement : Relocated Settlement
- 1.3 No. of Households as per year 2001 : 1141
- 1.4 Municipal Ward : Attidiya North  
Municipal Ward of Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia Municipality
- 2.0 Land Ownership of the Settlement : Sri Lanka Land Reclamation and Development Corporation (SLLR&DC)
- 2.1 Available of Basic Infrastructure
- Water Supply : Individual connection
  - Toilets : Individual toilets
  - Access roads : 20 – 30 ft wide tarred road
  - Storm water drain : Available but not functioning properly
  - Electricity : Available for individual houses
- 3.0 Availability of Public Transport to the Settlement: Available two private vans but service is not regular
- 3.1 Distance to nearest public transport route: 02 to 03 km
- 4.0 Type of employment of the majority of community: Men involve in informal business activities while women do engage in housemaid work in nearby middle income houses
- 4.1 Distance to work place of a majority: 04 km
- 5.0 Distance to other services
- School - 3 km
  - Market - 4 km
  - Hospital - 6 km
  - Post office - ½ km

#### **4.6 Interview of Community Members of Case Study Settlements**

Community members of selected six (06) case study settlements were interviewed in order to obtain their perspectives on current status of public transport used by them. The community members included;

- i. **Senior Citizens and Disable Persons:** Senior citizens included both men and women who were above 65 years of age. The disable persons were considered those who suffer from permanent disabilities and who need others help to move about. Under these two categories, 36 persons (18 men, 18 women) were interviewed.
- ii. **Adult Men:** Adult men included those who were above 25 years of age, married and living with a family. 30 men were interviewed from the six case study settlements.
- iii. **Adult Women:** Adult women were those whose age was above 25 years, married and having children. 30 adult women were interviewed from the six case study settlements.
- iv. **School Children** (included both girls and boys who were above 10 years or more): 24 school girls and 24 boys were interviewed from the six case study settlements.
- v. **Community leaders:** community leaders both men and women numbering to 12 persons were interviewed.

In addition to the members of urban poor settlements, the bus and rail passengers, public transport providers, para transport providers and representatives of regulatory agencies were interviewed. The key issues raised by these informants were summarized and are presented below.

### **5.0 COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES OF EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

#### **5.1 Senior Citizens and Disable Persons**

##### **5.1.1 What Senior Citizens say about Pedestrian Travel**

- We do not go out of the home except for an essential purpose because now the roads are too dangerous for us to walk. Even if we go out, we have to seek help of our children or some one known.
- We walk along the pavements very carefully, because we are scared of the reckless drivers, three-wheelers, pit holes, and uneven surfaces.
- Most of the time we use the yellow coloured pedestrian crossings to go to the other side of the road, but even on the pedestrian crossings, drivers, motorcyclists and three-wheeler drivers do not slow down their vehicles.
- We have to wait for a long time until the road gets cleared and the drivers slow down their vehicles to cross the road.
- Indiscriminate stopping of buses to take passengers in is a real nuisance for us while walking, as the buses almost come onto us unexpectedly.
- Most of the roads are too narrow to absorb the vehicles and some times vehicles run over the pavements too when they overtake another vehicle.

- Pavements are encroached by pavement hawkers, and the boutiques and shops have extended their businesses up to the pavements
- Pavements are also used often to park cars, vans and three wheelers so we have to get down to the road to walk, which is really dangerous.
- I travel about by my wheelchair. I am very careful and go by my side of the road, but private bus drivers blow the horns to push me to a side.

### **5.1.2 What Senior Citizens say about Bus Shelters**

- We can't stand and wait for a long time for a bus so we need a place to sit. But there are no proper bus shelters. The available bus shelters were not properly maintained. They also do not have roofs and seats.
- Bus shelters are often occupied by beggars, drug addicts, and are made dirty.
- Bus shelters do not provide any Traveler information
- They seem to be not maintained by anyone

### **5.1.3 What Senior Citizens say about the behaviour of Bus Drivers**

- Private bus drivers often do not take us in, when they see us at the bus-halt; they stop the bus a little away from the halt, either in front or behind, they treat us as a nuisance. We feel very embarrassed.
- They do not stop buses for the school children too.
- We have to wait at the bus-halt for CTB buses. They do not come very frequently.
- Private bus drivers do not give us enough time to get in or get out of the bus even we had a chance to get in.
- Some times the private bus drivers do not stop at the right bus halt for us to get down. They take us further up, some times one bus halt or more, and when we protest they ask us why we had not come near to the door to get down.
- They go racing and apply sudden breaks without thinking of the passengers. If we do not get a seat, it is difficult for us to keep standing inside the bus.
- Some drivers are drunk.
- I seriously doubt whether some of these private bus drivers are capable of driving such heavy vehicles. I do not know whether they have licences or enough experience.
- The private bus drivers clog at the bus-halts or drive very slow to get more passengers. The moment they see the next bus coming behind, they start racing.
- We have seen quite often that they simply disregard traffic rules and regulations. They pass colour lights even when the red light is on.
- CTB bus drivers are better compared to private bus drivers. But some times they too do not give us enough time to get out of the bus.
- Although smoking is prohibited inside the bus and signs are displayed, some drivers do smoke while driving.

### **5.1.4 What Senior Citizens say about the behaviour of Bus Conductors**

- Private bus conductors keep shouting at passengers to move forward or to go behind even though the buses are already crowded.
- They cheat and do not give our balance. When we ask for it, they scold us.
- Some times the private bus conductors delay giving balance and when we are about to get down, give us the balance money in small coins. There is no time for us to count the money, we get down and often find that they have cheated us.

- They do not issue tickets forgetting that we have paid, keep asking for money. When we say that we have paid, they do not believe it and use rough and filthy words.
- Private bus conductors encourage the drivers to stop anywhere on the road and take passengers.
- Some bus conductors pull the bell to signal the driver to take off, even before we get down. I once fall on down and got injured.
- When we ask for the bus route, some private bus conductors tell lies to avoid us and say that it does not take that route.
- When we talk against them, the private bus conductors have one definite answer! They say, “If you have any problem, get out and take another bus. We have enough people to take in”. On such occasions most of the time other passengers too keep quiet, without supporting us.
- I have witnessed that some private bus conductors harass women and girls. They touch women and ladies when they get in or get out, and creep in between isle of crowded bus, pressing against women.
- The private bus conductors keep silent even when they know that pick-pocketers have got in.

### **5.1.5 What Senior Citizens say about the facilities available inside the buses**

It was observed that most of the senior citizens do prefer to use CTB buses for their journeys than private buses. Therefore, their views on CTB buses are listed below.

- CTB buses are more spacious and usually less congested.
- The CTB bus conductors do not cheat us and they issue tickets for the journey.
- In CTB buses, some seats are allocated for clergy, pregnant women and disable people but not for elderly. However, when we get into a bus the conductor usually helps us find a seat.
- We can easily identify CTB buses as they are painted with colour and do have CTB emblem.
- We remember there were Double Deckers running in Colombo normally they were less crowded. Those days we did not have problems in travelling by bus.
- We can identify buses looking at their destination board and route number.
- In CTB buses the passengers usually offer seats for elderly people.
- CTB buses generally do not go on raising.
- Some years ago there were checkers who checks tickets of CTB passengers but now we do not find them at all.
- We rely on CTB buses, because they are government buses. They are large in size and usually can get a seat.
- I consider playing cassette recorders inside the buses is a good thing because drivers will not fall on sleep (BD/ELRD/FMS/58/1/3).

- Prior to 1960s, CTB buses were allocated on the **basis** of people's demand. But at present it has become a political activity.

**Story of Mr. Pushpakumara, a disable person in Poorwarama Community - *No hope of moving about fearlessly***

Mr. Pushpakumara is a 29 years old disable person who lives in Poorwarama community. Both his legs are non-functional and he uses a wheelchair for all his daily movements within the settlement and around. But for longer distance, he depends on relatives to accompany him. According to his experience, there is no consideration for the disable people like him in preparation of designs and operation of the public transport. The disables are being neglected by the society. No designated seats or space for disable people inside a bus. But, some times, people offer their seat for me voluntarily, it is not happening at peak hours. It is so dangerous in getting in and getting off the bus even with a helper due to impatient of the bus crews. Most of the times, the conductor rings the bell before I getting in and off the bus. One day, the driver took off the bus before I was getting off and fallen down from the bus and badly injured. Conductor and all passengers blamed me, because they were getting late for their travel.

Besides travelling on buses, I can not use my wheelchair to move along any of the city streets. Because the pavements are so narrow and the surface is uneven. There is no place on the pavement to take in my wheelchair onto the pavement. Therefore, I have to run my wheel chair by the side of the pavement, which is very dangerous too. Because, motorists have encroached the pavement side of the road and sometimes the reckless drivers do not give me room to use my wheelchair. Therefore, it was a real frustration and a risk for people like us to go out of our home to the street. I feel we are being discriminated, knowingly or unknowingly by the present arrangements and planning of public transport in our country. I feel really sorry for myself and the people who are responsible for managing our transport service.



## **5.1.6 Suggestions made by Senior Citizens**

### **On Pedestrian Travel**

- Pavements should not be blocked; they need to be made spacious, and maintained well thinking of the very large number of pedestrians who use these common spaces.
- Pedestrians too should be well informed that they use pavements only to walk and use yellow pedestrian crossings to cross the roads. If not they should be fined.

### **Bus Shelters**

- Bus halting places should be provided with bus shelters. They should include seats, roof covers, and traveler information. Also they need to be well maintained.

### **Bus Drivers and Conductors**

- There should be a system to catch those drivers who go on racing and they should be fined.
- Continuous training programmes for drivers and conductors are necessary to make them aware on traffic rules and regulations as well as how to treat passengers.
- They need to be made aware that they are providing a service for which passengers are paying.
- Driver licenses should be checked regularly as some of them may have bogus licenses.
- A set of standards should be introduced in recruiting private bus conductors, such as education levels, age, number of years of experience etc. The government or relevant agencies should intervene into this matter.
- TV advertisements should be introduced to make drivers and conductors and passengers aware that senior citizens and persons with physical handicap need to be treated equally, like other passengers.
- Issuing of tickets should be made compulsory.
- When an issue has propped up inside a bus concerning a particular passenger, others too should intervene and fight for the common rights. This means, there should be programmes to create and enhance passenger rights.

### **Facilities inside the Buses**

- The existing roof bells should be removed. They are too high. Easily visible bells at arms length should be fixed (preferably pull type bells).
- One or two seats should be allocated for elderly people. They should be located at the rear side of the bus.
- Must provide spacious hood racks for keeping the bags of passengers.
- Elderly people should be allowed to get in and get down slowly and carefully.

### **Regulating the Public Transport**

- Government must obtain the views of general public on the status of public transport facilities on a regular basis.
- Drivers and conductors must be made aware of their responsibilities to ensure safety of the passengers rights.
- Buses should be operated on a proper timetable.

- The bus boards should be in all three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English) and must be large enough to see from a distance.
- Buses should be stopped only on specified bus halts.
- Clogging of buses at certain places should be stopped.
- Notice must be displayed inside the buses indicating when and how passengers can make complaints against any injustice they face during their bus journey.

## **5.2 Adult Women**

### **5.2.1 What adult women say about pedestrian travel**

- Pedestrian travel is a real problem for us because the three-wheeler drivers and young boys make bad jokes. Sometime they purposely turn their vehicles towards us to get our attention.
- We used to walk on the right hand side of the road and cross the road only on pedestrian crossing. However, motorists do not care about us even when we use the yellow crossing line.
- Normally, we have to wait at the pedestrian crossing for five to ten minutes till the road is clear to cross over to the other side of the road.
- Most of the three-wheelers are parked on the pavement or by the side of the pavements blocking the way of pedestrians.
- Some three-wheeler drivers use filthy jokes and we have to avoid them very carefully.
- Sometime not only three-wheeler drivers but some passengers too used to utter filthy words when we walk along the pavement.
- During the peak hours (morning from 7.00 to 9.00 a.m. evening from 4.30 – 7.00 p.m.) it is very difficult to cross the city roads. When we stepped onto the pedestrian crossing some motorists used to scold us. They do not care for passengers.
- Most of the street pavements are encroached by businessmen, vendors and vehicles were parked on them, therefore, we can not use the pavements at all. We can not walk with our children too. Because the pavements are too narrow and crowded.
- It is dangerous to walk in the night along the inner access roads to the settlement by women. Thieves snatch our bags and jewelry. They also harass young girls. Sometimes they attempt to rape the girls.
- The thieves normally damage the street lights to make the road dark in the night.
- During the rainy season it is difficult to use the access roads in our settlement. They become water logged muddy holes.

**Story of Ms. Salgadu, Badowita Urban Poor Settlement- Explains about a dissatisfied community due to lack of reliable public transport service**

Ms. Salgadu is a forty-four years old community activist in Badowita relocated settlement. Before her family came to this community, they were living in a shanty community located on a canal bank reservation near the Pamankada area in Colombo city. This location provided easy access for their daily travelling. It was only a walking distance for her children's school and to the bus stand. But, all members of her community were relocated to the Badowita by the government under its Canal Rehabilitation Project. At the beginning, there were no proper access roads to the community. They had to walk one and a half kilometers daily to the nearest bus halting place. It was very difficult to walk on our access roads in rainy days due to poor road conditions and floods. Our community has made several requests to the relevant officials in order to improve this situation, but nothing has happened. Therefore, we have discussed this problem at our community meetings. One community member who had saved some money from his job in overseas agreed to purchase a small vagan for providing transport. It was a big celebration on the first day of getting the van service for Badowita community. But, it was functioned just only for two months, because, owner did not show interest to continue with the service due to bad conditions of the access roads and heavy running costs. Subsequently, community invited the Minister of Highways and Transport to participate for one of their meetings during the election period.

The Minister has realised the poor condition of access roads in the community and he has promised to improve the main community access road and to provide a CTB bus especially for Badowita community. As a result, the community of Badowita received one CTB bus for their travelling. It was functioning according to a timetable and was making two trips per day at 7.30 a.m from the community to the city and 2.30 p.m from the city to the community. The service was not adequate for more than 1000 families who live in the community. Therefore, there was a huge queue for the bus during these time periods. However, after a several months, that bus too did not operate as has been scheduled and was ceased to function. Gradually, few community members invested their savings for engaging vehicles for transport services in the community. Now, community has two private vans and about ten three wheelers, which are owned by the community members. However, with this competition the CTB bus has with drown from Badowita. People have to now depend on private transport operators. They are not punctual and reliable. Also the community members have to spend more on transport. This is an unnecessary expense when compared to their early location. Since the Badowita settlement is located far away from all the services (market, school, hospital, post office and the urban local authority). People will find it extremely difficult to visit these places due to inadequate transport facilities to the community. The private vans do not operate on a fixed time schedule, they wait for hours for a full load of passengers. Therefore, I think most of the community members used to walk about one and half a km distance to the public bus route, said Ms. Salgadu.

### **5.2.2 What adult women say about bus shelters**

- There is no properly covered bus shelters. Therefore, we face many problems such as
  - difficult to protect from rain and sun
  - passengers can not identify the bus halt
  - Bus drivers stop buses at places they like
  - The available space for bus halts are encroached by three-wheelers
- Some bus halts are used by drug addicts, beggars and prostitutes especially in the night. Therefore, women usually do not wait at such bus halts.

### **5.2.3 What adult women say about regulatory aspects of the public transport**

- Passengers do not know where to complain when they face problem while they were travelling on buses.
- There is no passenger association or any other known civil society organization where passengers can make a complaint.
- We do not have faith in police too because we believe the police take bribes from the bus crews and do not listen to passengers.

### **5.2.4 What adult women say about behaviour of bus drivers and conductors**

#### ***Behaviour of conductors especially (private bus conductors)***

- They always shout at us saying move backward and forward
- The conductors do not talk politely to passengers. They used to scold passengers if any passenger raised an issue.
- The conductors help only when we get into the bus and when we get down from the bus they shout at us to quickly get down. Sometime they signal the driver to take off the bus before we get down.
- Normally, private bus conductors do not issue tickets. When we ask for ticket they say not to worry and move forward, will give you the ticket later.
- When the conductors get to know that ticket checkers are going to get into the bus they quickly issue the tickets to passengers which do not correspond with the trip that the passengers are making.
- Private bus conductors purposely delay returning the balance money to passengers. Usually, we forget to ask for the balance money.
- There is no limit to loading of passengers particularly in private buses. Usually, in private buses, the conductors keep on loading passengers disregard of the inconvenience caused to the passengers.

- Conductors usually touch the women and young girls unnecessarily when they get into the bus.
- When they see an old person, disable or even a clergy awaiting for a bus, the private bus conductors signal the driver either not to stop at the point or to stop away from the particular passenger.
- Sometimes the private bus conductors involve in conflicts with other bus drivers & conductors. They exchange filthy word disregards of the passengers.

#### ***Behaviour of conductors (CTB buses)***

- Conductors of CTB buses are not so bad as private bus conductors.
- Sometimes the CTB conductors too do not issue tickets particularly for short trips.
- They normally do not cheat the passengers and return the balance money.
- CTB conductors do not shout at passengers unreasonably inside the bus.
- They also help those passengers who need help such as elderly, disable and children when getting in and getting down the bus.

#### **5.2.5 What adult women say about the drivers of private buses**

- Private bus drivers usually go on racing with other buses on the road risking the lives of passengers.
- Most of the times when passengers want to get down at a particular bus halt they do not stop at the bus halting place, instead they stop the bus where they can pick another passenger.
- The private bus drivers used to clog at junction centres which is a real nuisance for passengers.
- Some drivers also used to shout at passengers asking them to move forward and backward.
- Some drivers blow the horn unnecessarily irritating the passengers.
- We usually come a cross drunken drivers who drive recklessly risking our lives.
- The private bus drivers are not polite. They are up to blame the passengers if the passengers raise an issue.

### **5.2.6 What adult women say about the facilities available inside the buses**

- We like travelling in CTB buses. They are less crowded.
- Sometimes we prefer playing cassette recorders inside the buses. Passengers can enjoy music and nice songs.
- In private buses there is no seats allocated for disabled, clergy, and pregnant women. Therefore, such passengers have to wait till someone offers a seat.
- Route number and name of destination (bus board) is not large enough to read from a distance.
- Name of destination has been written in Sinhala only which should be in all the three languages.
- Some private buses use similar exterior colour of those CTB buses therefore we can not identify them. Regular CTB passengers get confused and face difficulties (especially monthly season card holders and school children).
- The interior of most of the private buses and CTB buses are very poor. The seats are torn, the side mirrors are broken and inside is not cleaned.
- Some private buses are small coaches of which roof level is low, space between seats are narrow and no space to keep luggage.

### **5.2.7 Suggestions to improve the access and quality of public transport**

#### **Facilities inside the bus**

- The hand rail of all the buses found to be too high it is very difficult for women to hold the hand rail. They should be fixed at lower elevation for the convenience of passengers.
- The roof bell also found to be too high to use. It should be fixed close to the seats and should be visible.
- The bus operators should not be allowed to pack too many passengers inside the buses. They should be regulated to take passengers on the basis of the seating capacity of the buses (over crowding of passengers should be controlled).
- The bus crew and passengers should be made aware to respect women passengers. There should be mass awareness programmes to educate people on this issue.
- Passengers should be educated not to smoke, inside the bus as well as not to throw trash inside the buses.

#### **Regulating the public transport**

- Women have no knowledge about taking any action against the harassment they faced as passengers. Therefore, there should be programmes to raise awareness on their rights and authorities to make complaints / suggestions.

## **Pedestrian travel**

- Most of the pavements were encroached by vendors and motorists, therefore, pedestrians have no space in the pavements. The pavements should be wider enough and made available for pedestrians.
- Pedestrians are used to cross the busy roads from wherever they like which should be regulated by providing designated pedestrian crossings and road barriers.
- The pavements should be properly planned and constructed to ensure convenient travel especially for women, children and elderly persons.
- Other facilities such as waste bins, benches along the pavement side, shady trees etc. be provided to encourage pedestrian walk along city's streets.

## **Drivers and conductors**

- There must be a proper procedure and minimum qualifications for bus drivers and conductors.
- The job of bus drivers and conductors must be recognized and promoted as a profession.
- There must be regular training programmes for drivers and conductors on traffic rules, regulations, the rights of passengers and how to treat passengers.

## **Bus shelters**

- Bus shelters should be properly planned and constructed to provide adequate protection from sun and rain for passengers.
- At bus shelters in junction centres, there should be facilities for the passengers to form into queues to ensure women and children are not discriminated in getting into the buses.

## **5.3 Adult Men**

### **5.3.1 What adult men say about pedestrian travel**

- During the peak hours (7.00 to 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 – 6.00 p.m.) pedestrians can not walk along pavements due to heavy congestion as the pavements spaces are encroached by vendors.
- Normally, many passengers do not care about traffic regulations. They ignore traffic signs and try to cross over road ignoring the pedestrian crossing.
- Most of the low income community people are like to use pedal cycles to go to their work places but there is no designated space for peddle cycles on our roads. Therefore, it is dangerous to use pedal cycles.
- Some pedestrians crossings are not provided at proper locations. Therefore, passengers used to cross the road from the places convenient to them.
- Heavy congestion of vehicles had resulted in pollution of city roads with smoke and dust and also due to dangerous driving of motorists, pedestrians do not feel like walking freely along street.

### **5.3.2 What adult men say about regulatory aspects of public transport**

- Passengers have witnessed that a majority of drivers and conductors do not respect traffic rules and regulations.

- It was observed that the flying squad usually check along the documents of the bus i.e. route permit etc. but the conditions of the buses are not inspected by anyone i.e. tyres, signal lights, interior conditions, cleanliness, and even exterior conditions. Because of this situation the buses not fit for passenger transports are operated on street risking people's lives.
- Most of the buses do not operate on a fixed timetable. Some buses used to clog at junction centres for about 10 to 20 minutes taking valuable time of passengers. When passengers resist at such occasions the conductor and the driver blame the passengers by depending themselves.
- Passengers are not aware and information was not available for them where to make a complaint on any injustice faced during their bus journey.
- Passengers are aware that there are several government organizations exist for managing the public transport. But they have doubt whether these organizations perform their duties entrusted. There is no relationship between these organizations and passengers.

### **5.3.3 What adult men say about the bus shelters**

- Because there were no specific bus shelters, passengers used to get into the buses from everywhere on the road. The bus drivers too used to stop buses accordingly which results in traffic congestion and causing inconvenience to passengers.

### **5.3.4 Facilities inside the buss**

- In most of the buses, the bell is not available. Passengers will have to shout when they want to get down from the bus. In certain buses the available bell is not conveniently fixed. People can not locate the bell.

### **5.3.5 What adult men say about conductors and drivers**

- The conductors of private buses normally do not return the balance money. They keep postponing it when we ask for the balance money.
- Most of the private bus conductors are not regular employees, they are not trained. Therefore, they seem to work irresponsible manner, their objective is to make a day earning.
- Sometimes we come a cross private conductors and drivers who were drunk. They used to scold passengers and drive buses recklessly.
- Most of the private bus conductors and drivers behave like thugs. Therefore when the passengers or police take action against them they go on strike. They used to operate on a monopoly. But passengers do not have such an influential position.

### **5.3.6 Suggestions to improve the access and quality of public transport**

#### **Pedestrian travel**

- There should be some control on the volume of traffic during the peak hours in the morning and in the evening. Heavy vehicles such as container carriers and trucks should not be allowed to travel during the peak hours on city roads.
- Most of the pavements were encroached by businessmen and motorists. Pavements should be clear and provide for pedestrians.



- Colour lights should be installed at pedestrian crossings in order to ensure safety of pedestrians.
- Notices should be displayed along pavements as well as at important places such as pedestrians crossing providing pedestrian information.
- The Road Development Authority must take quick action to repair the roads when they were broken /dug by Water or Telecom Authority for their service lines.
- Unnecessary bill boards and displays should not be allowed on the streets because it is a nuisance for the pedestrians.
- Most of the pavements are too narrow. Pedestrians can not use them safely. Therefore, pavements should be constructed to some reasonable standards where pedestrian especially women and children could walk safely.
- Roads should be kept clean and traffic be controlled properly like what we can see on TV in other countries (KDR/ADULT/ ML/43/S/4/6).
- Pedestrians used to cross the roads wherever they think which should be regulated. In the city streets people should be allowed to cross roads only at designated pedestrian crossings.

### **Bus shelters**

- The existing bus shelters are too small and are poorly maintained. They should be provided with space sufficient for at least 10 – 15 people to stay on. They should have a strong roof cover one or two seats for elderly people and pregnant women.
- Most of the existing bus shelters are dirty. People used to throw rubbish around the bus shelter. Therefore, they must be provided with appropriate bins to put rubbish.
- Due to lack of a proper bus shelters passengers used to wait all over the street and used to stop the buses which is a real nuisance for passengers which is also contributing to create traffic congestion too.
- Bus shelters should not be covered by sides because the beggars, prostitutes and drug addicts used to occupy such bus shelters.
- They should be provided with information related to passenger transport, the buses that are stopped at that shelter, the time table and other passenger information. They should not be allowed to use for communal advertisements only (PR/ADLT/ML/S/33/1/8).

### **Regulating the public transport**

- Private bus drivers must be trained to observe traffic rules and regulations.
- Excessive fines must be charged against those drivers who break traffic rules and engage in reckless driving.
- Pedestrians must also be charged when they break traffic regulations.
- Flying squads must be employed to carry out regular cheque of private and CTB buses in order control the break of traffic rules and regulations.
- There must be strict procedures to ensure mechanical fitness of the passenger transport buses before permitting them to operate on road.
- We understand that there are many rules and regulations to control the public transport in the country but we are worried why the authorities do not implement them (KDR/ADLT/ML/T/20/3-6).
- Most of the private bus conductors do not issue tickets to passengers. These should be regulated.
- The private bus drivers used to go on racing and reckless driving risking the lives of passengers. High speed driving should be controlled.

- In the meantime, certain buses used to clog at junction centres taking the time of passengers. There should be a definite time schedule and speed limits for the passenger buses.
- I understand that the government is not paying sufficient attention to private bus, operation, school vans, three-wheelers and other hiring vans etc. that transport passengers. Therefore, passengers suffer a lot. This situation must be rectified (KDR/ADLT/ML/43/S/14/6).
- Most of the buses that operate in and around Colombo do not operate on a time schedule. Therefore, especially in the evening and night there are no buses on street. People have to hire three wheelers and or vans paying large sums of money to meet their transport needs. Therefore, proper management of existing buses should be considered as a priority of the government.
- The city traffic police must employ more police men particularly at junctions and market places during peak hours to control the traffic. Where there is no traffic police especially private bus drivers drive their buses completely on wrong side of the road.

### ***Story of Nimesha, a school girl in Kadirana Community - A girl who wishes to travel in a school bus but no luck***

Nimesha is 15 years old school girl of Kadirana community. She uses the public transport to go to her school, which is 5 kms away from her community. There is a small school very close to her community, but the parents believe that this school does not have good facilities and teachers. Therefore, they send Nimesha to a school in the city. According to the Nimesha's experiences in travelling the public buses, she find it is very difficult to get into the buses during school hours. Because, conductors consider the school children as a headache. They do not stop the buses for school children because most of us are half a ticket users.

I find it is difficult to carry my school bag inside the bus during my travel, because there is no space to keep the bag. Normally, I do not get a seat either in the morning on my return after the school. Me and my friends all of us used to travel standing in the bus. We prefer travelling standing too when there was no big crowd. With heavy crowd we get always crush between people. My clothes get dirty. One day I have lost my water bottle inside the bus. I think someone must have stolen it during the rush. I feel tiring after travelling in the bus. I wish if we have a good school bus we can travel freely.

## **5.4 School Children**

### **5.4.1 What school children say about the bus shelters**

- Existing bus halts are not clean. They are not properly maintained. They are made dirty by displaying various posters.

- When we get into the bus especially in the morning, adults do not care of us. They push us a side and rush to the buses. There is no organized queue at the bus halt for people to get into the buses.
- School children do not like to throw waste papers, rappings on the road or at the bus halts, but since there was no waste bins provided we tend to throw them on the road.

#### **5.4.2 What school children say about regulatory aspect of buses**

- The schoolchildren are harassed by other passengers inside the bus (physical harassment). They feel there is no place to make their complaints and hence compelled to tolerate and keep quite.
- Most of the school children are not aware of their rights as passengers of public transport. Therefore, they feel they should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- School buses are available only for some recognized schools in the city. The children of poor settlements who attend to less prominence schools do not have school bus service. Therefore, they have to use ordinary passenger buses which is difficult but no alternative.

#### **5.4.3 What school children say about pedestrian travel**

- When school children cross the road on pedestrian crossing, the drivers normally do not give the way for children.
- Some pedestrian walkways are not properly constructed therefore children tend to fall and get wounded.
- Most of the pavements are narrow, hence I can not catch hold of my mother's arm and walk together along the pavement says one school boy.
- During rainy days, our uniforms get dirty due to flashes of muddy water of fast moving vehicles.
- Road names are not properly displayed on streets, therefore, sometimes we get lost our way. Therefore, proper name boards of roads are necessary.
- Most of the three-wheeler drivers harass school girls. They also pass filthy remarks and suggest bad things.
- We can not walk along pavements sometimes due to thick vehicle smoke around us. Our cloths get dirty and difficult to breath too.

#### **5.4.4 What school children say about bus conductors and drivers**

- Some of the bus conductors and drivers wear dirty clothes. They appear very dirty people. When a conductor who wears dirty clothes and pass through passengers our clothes too get dirty. We prefer them wearing clean clothes preferably a uniform.
- Sometime conductors do not like us occupying a seat. They ask us to travel standing.
- They conductors normally do not like us carrying our school bags. They always shout at us to keep the bag aside the buses.
- They never help us inside the buses.
- When we (girls) give money to conductors they keep pressing our fingers. When we act against such incidences, they usually scold us on some other issues.
- When bus drivers go on racing and when they suddenly apply breaks we get pushed away since we can not hold the hand rail which is too high.
- The private bus conductors always cheat us. They do not return balance money to us.

- They bus drivers sometime do not stop the bus at the halting place instead they take us away from the bus halt which is an inconvenient to us.

#### **5.4.5 What school children say about the facilities inside the buses**

- The school children can not clearly see the name board of the buses.
- The hand rail is too high to hold. Therefore, we have to hold the seat edges while we are standing.
- There is no space for us to keep our school bags.
- We school girls do not like to sit on dirty seats because our frocks get dirty.
- The bell is fixed on the roof, which is too high for us to push.

#### **5.4.6 School Children's Suggestions**

##### **Pedestrian travel**

- There should be signal lights at yellow pedestrian crossings to ensure safe road crossing by school children.
- A clear section of the pavement should be designated for pedestrian travel, which should not be allowed to encroach by vendors and motorists.

##### **Bus shelters**

- Buses should be stopped at bus halting places only. Otherwise school children will have to walk or run to catch a bus which is always dangerous for children.

##### **Bus drivers and conductors**

- There must be minimum qualification and training for drivers and conductors.
- The bus drivers and conductors must be forced to wear uniforms.
- The conductors must be instructed to issue tickets to passengers.

##### **Facilities inside the buses**

- The facilities such as the seats, racks, the bell inside the buses should be designed and fixed for convenient use by children.
- The inside of the buses should be provided with information and messages that pleases the children (at least these can be provided in school buses).
- The doors of the buses must be able to close to protect children falling from the bus.

##### **Regulating the public transport**

- Awareness programmes should be launched by the government by suing the mass media focussing on "how to safeguard children's rights on the road".
- More school buses should be provided in the morning and at the time of closing the schools to ensure convenient transport facilities for school children.
- Bus name boards should be large enough to read from a reasonable distance and be visible to children.
- Bus queues should be constructed at halting place so that children can get equal access to buses.

- There must be regulatory limitations to prevent over loading of passengers.
- There must be rules to insist that tickets must be issued to passengers. The school children are usually blamed and are cheated by conductors due to non-issue of tickets.

## 5.5 Office Workers who Use Public Transport (buses)

### 5.5.1 What office workers say about the facilities at bus halting places

- There are no facilities such as telephone booth near bus halts.
- Exiting bus halts are not properly maintained. Therefore, passengers used to stay at every convenient places for them to get into a bus.

### 5.5.2 Rules and regulations

- During peak hours most of the buses are crowded and therefore passengers used to travel on the foot-board.
- Passengers do not know whom to complain when there is a problem related to their travel.

#### **Story of Ms. Sunethra, a young working women in 259 Watta community – One of the *silent worriers who use public transport***

Ms. Sunethra is a 23 years old lady who lives in 259-watta community. She works in a Garment Factory, which is located about 20 km away from her residence. Everyday she has to travel standing in the bus, there is a space only for one foot. Because of the rush for getting into the bus, there is a lot of pushing and shouting and the passenger's end up by getting into quarrels with each other. The conductors do not care about the passenger's safety, they keep on loading the people in his greed for money. They always shout at us to step on quickly, so as to not waste the time of the other passengers. But at certain places the bus keeps lagging for ten to fifteen minutes. In some buses, there is a seat allocated for pregnant women. But, most of the times, men occupy this seat too. As a workingwomen, it is necessary to wear a decent nice looking clothes. But, men pass indirect remarks and try to make jokes at us. Most of the conductors ask for the bus fare from women by tapping on their shoulders. But there are notices too inside the bus not saying to harass women passengers. I think because the information are not widely known to people and also passengers do not know whom to complain the women face many problems inside the buses. Due to lack of passengers' voices women become the frequent victims among bus passengers said Sunetra.

### **5.5.3 What office workers say about pedestrian travel**

- Traffic congestion is experienced during peak hours due to uncontrolled traffic movement (i.e. allowing container carriers, lorries, trucks along with passenger transport ) which delay their office journey.
- It was observed that the passengers and motorist bluntly violate traffic rules and regulations.
- Due to lack of proper vehicular parking facilities in the city, motorists encroach pavements and use road side parking of vehicles which is an inconvenient to pedestrians.
- Sometime garbage is dumped on certain points on the pavement, which is an inconvenient to the pedestrians.

### **5.5.4 What office workers say about the behaviour of drivers and conductors**

- The conductors do not respect passengers. They do not issue tickets. The private bus conductors usually keep on loading passengers. They normally cheat passengers by not handing over the balance money.
- The private bus drivers used to go on racing with other buses. They keep blowing the horn unnecessarily.
- They do not wear a uniform. Most of the private bus conductors wear dirty clothes.

### **5.5.5 Facilities inside the buses**

- In most of the buses interior conditions are very poor. The seats are dirty, rusty and floors are not cleaned.
- Usually, the insides of the buses are noisy due to shouting of conductors as well as playing of cassettes.
- The broken shutters make unpleasant noises inside the buses.

## **5.6 Railway Passengers**

### **5.6.1 What they say about terminal facilities**

- In small stations there is no visible name board of the station.
- There is no adequate toilet facilities in the station (Kirulapone)
- The railway workers do stage strikes frequently causing sever inconvenience to passengers.
- The announcement of train movements at most of the stations is not clearer. The passengers can not hear the announcement properly.
- The train time schedule is not always reliable. Delays and cancellation of trains are regular events faced by passengers.
- Women are usually harassed at stations particularly during the night.
- In most of the suburb stations, platforms are not properly constructed. Therefore, children and women find it difficult to get in / get down the train.
- Women are harassed in side the train. Sometimes women are offered seat by men and they stand and greedily look at women's features.

## **5.7 Perspectives of Private Bus Conductors relating to their Job**

Representing different points of the city five conductors were interviewed. They were all between age 26 and 31. Except one person others have not reached up to secondary level education. Four out of five were unmarried. The views express by these conductors on their employment and the knowledge of legal aspects of their job, difficulties they faced as well as their suggestions for providing improved public transport services were very interesting.

### **5.7.1 The reason for selecting this job**

- Since there is a difficulty to find a job for their qualification they have chosen the job of a bus conductor.
- They did require only some contact with bus drivers to find this job.
- There is no job security since it is a temporary arrangement between the driver and in some cases with the owner.
- There is also a competition to enter into this job particularly in the city. In such situations personnel relationship will help funding a place to work.

### **5.7.2 Legal aspects of the job**

- The job is offered only based on verbal agreement hence no documents were exchanged between the owner and a driver and or conductor.
- The conductors were aware of the need for obtaining a license for conductors. But since there is no compulsion to do so they have not bothered to obtain a license.
- The conductors also have a knowledge about the existence of Passenger Transport Authority of the Western Provincial Council is the main institution responsible for regulating the private bus services.
- They have a knowledge on passenger loading limits, speed limits within the city and other general traffic rules and regulations. However, they said they are compelled to ignore those regulations due to competitiveness of the bus service and the need for earning a target amount per day to pay back the rental charge to the bus owner.
- The conductors say that due to increase in number of route permits issued on Colombo city routes, the buses do get limited turns per day. Therefore, they have to earn maximum possible income per turn to meet the daily target. This has compelled them to over load the passengers at every turn they get.
- The Provincial Road Passenger Transport Authority has issued a log chart on which the time keeper at the point of origin and destination enters the time and puts his signature.
- The Authority has also instructed us to issue bus tickets to each and every passenger. But it is practically not possible to issue tickets due to heavy crowded conditions. The other issue is that passengers do not ask for ticket. Therefore, we do not issue the ticket said some conductors.

### **5.7.3 Difficulties faced in performing their job**

- The unregulated system of private bus operation has been the root cause of many difficulties they faced (i.e lack of a time schedule, over supply of buses on same routes etc).
- Lack of designated bus halting places. This encourages passengers to wait at every corner of the streets and trying to get into buses.
- Managing passengers, particularly at peak hours is a difficult job. When the bus gets loaded with passengers, issuing tickets become a real problem. Many passenger try to avoid paying their fee during the peak hours.
- Majority of passengers prefer to stay close to the doors. Therefore, conductors are compelled to shout at them to move away from the doors.
- The conductors have to work for long working hours (i.e 12 to 15 hours per day) which was tiring. If they do not work hard for long hours they will not be able to meet their income targets.
- They do not have an assurance of job security. Therefore, self respect and self discipline are not matters that worries them.
- The passengers too do not respect the conductors although they are performing an important job of taking people to required destinations.
- The traffic police usually try to find fault with the bus conductors and drivers even if they do not commit a mistake.
- The conductors have not been provided with any training on their job. It was only a hard and difficult experience gathering exercise for them.
- Many passengers do not think about the passengers' responsibilities when they got into a bus, rather they expect only conductors' behaviour to be favourable for them.
- We are not satisfied with this job at all. Because, we have to always work under severe tension and heavy pressure from passengers and traffic police said some conductors.
- Increasing traffic congestion in the city as well as road side parking of motor vehicles made it difficult for buses to operate as the way that passengers wish them to operate.
- We have to assist the driver too in addition to managing the passengers. Therefore our job is really a difficult one.

### **5.7.4 The positive aspects of the job of conductors**

- We did not have to go through all those government rules and regulations to find this job. It was an easy job for not so qualified people like us.
- We can gradually learn driving too while working as conductors.
- If we work hard there is always a possibility to earn about 500 to 600 Rupees per day after spending for our meals and paying back the day's rental for the bus.
- When we have about 4 to 5 years of experience we can always find a job in the passenger bus service.
- In certain days of the week we can well exceed our daily target and make additional savings for drivers and ourselves.
- Because we used to handle money every day we do not think that any other job might make us happy.



### **5.7.5 Suggestions to improve the job of conductors and the bus service**

- Government must take steps to recognize our job and take steps to make it a permanent job.
- Regular training / awareness programmes should be conducted to educate the conductors and drivers on traffic rules, regulations and the ways to improve their performances
- Awareness programmes should also be conducted to make passengers aware as to how they should behave in a public bus. Their responsibilities and rights must be known to them.
- Government must take initiatives to organize private bus sector into companies so that the workers would be able to get a better recognition and security of their job.

### **5.8 Perspectives of private bus drivers on their services**

- There is no job security for the private bus drivers.
- The owner used to change the driver and conductors regularly.
- The private bus drivers and conductors are not regular employees (mainly in Colombo) and they take over buses on daily hire basis. Hence, they have to earn the daily hiring charge for the owner as well as some income for the driver and conductor. This situation has compelled them to earn more money even violating traffic regulations and over loading of passengers.
- There was no any training given to private bus drivers. They have to learn rules and regulations through practice.
- They feel that their job is not recognized by the passengers and general public.
- The transport ministry and traffic control authorities never consult drivers and conductors when introducing traffic rules and regulations.
- Since they have to work to achieve a daily financial target they have to work for more than 12 hours a day.
- There is no strong relationship between the owner, driver and conductor of the buses. Therefore, the maintenance of the vehicle (particularly cleaning the inside) and aspects of reckless driving become normal issues.
- The private bus drivers used to violate traffic regulations because they have experience that when they break traffic rules about 10 times they get caught only once or twice by the traffic police. The benefit they acquire through break of traffic regulations is much more than the fine they have to pay when caught by the traffic police.
- In most of the private buses in the city, drivers and conductors are just casual operators of the services. Hence, they have no real obligation to the bus owners or passengers (some drivers who come to the city from the country side for work for 05 days and get back home during the weekend when they come back again they do not get the same bus to work).

### **5.9 Perspectives of private bus owners**

Five bus owners were interviewed who operate their buses within Colombo city and suburbs. Their views on the private bus service, its operational difficulties , legal aspects and suggestions are described below.

### **5.9.1 Entering into running private bus service**

- Three of them said they were attracted by the incentives offered by the government during 1980s to start the private bus service. Particularly minimum legal and procedural requirements at the initial stage have attracted many of the investors. The other two informants said that they have seen the attractive return enjoyed by this investment by some of his friends. Therefore, they have also decided to invest to purchase a single bus.
- They all have utilized part of their own savings and the leasing arrangements to purchase of the buses.
- Initially three of the owners were operating the buses by themselves with conductors. However, later all of them decided to employ a driver because it was realized that driving a bus on busy streets of Colombo and suburbs have been a extremely difficult job. On the other hand, they have to work for long hours to earn a sufficient income to pay back the loan instalments and the maintenance costs of the bus.

### **5.9.2 Legal aspects of the bus operation**

- They all were aware about the regulations imposed by Road Passenger Transport Authority of Western Provincial Council (i.e issue of route permits, sub route permits, surcharges for delay to renew passenger service permit, permit label, special hire permits etc.)
- They have also attended one or two workshops conducted by the Passenger Transport Authority about few years ago.
- The owners also aware of government traffic rules and regulations enforced by the city traffic police.

### **5.9.3 Difficulties encountered by private bus owners**

- One of the main difficulties was to earn sufficient monthly income to cover all the running expenses and paying lease instalments to finance companies.
- During the first 02 to 03 year period they were able to make regular monthly payments to the crew and operate with a reasonable profit. Subsequently, when the running repairs becomes more frequent it was difficult to operate at a reasonable efficiency.
- Currently, three out of five owners rent out their buses on daily basis to the drives known to them. The drivers used to return the bus with agreed daily rental to the owner. They said this was a convenient arrangement for them . However, it is always a high risk option as the drivers who rent out the buses operate with least care and indisciplined manner.
- The operating of buses in congested city routes has become a problem due to loss of fuel as well as limiting the number of turns that the buses can acquire among many competing buses.
- The government is not prepared to offer incentives to the private bus owners in terms of fuel quotas or spare parts without levying taxes etc.
- Most of the city bus routes are already crowded with over supply of passenger buses. However, the authorities have not properly understood this situation.

### **5.9.4 Suggestions to improve private bus services**

- Government must re-allocate the number of buses on city routes in consultation with the bus owners and users.

- Government must also regulate the traffic flow in the city by allowing specific lanes for passenger buses.
- Provision of concessions to private bus owners particularly on fuel prices or allowing to increase bus fares must be granted.
- Necessary road infrastructure must be improved i.e. colour lights, wide pavements for pedestrians, undisturbed street by way of providing the off street parking for motor vehicles etc.

## **6.0 PARA TRANSPORT PROVIDERS**

### **6.1 Perspectives of Three- wheeler operators on their service**

- There is no proper place on the street to park three wheelers.
- There has been a three wheeler drivers' association in Colombo but it was not functioning at present due to fragmentation of its membership.
- It is dangerous to operate three-wheelers in the night due to thieves and high jacking of three-wheelers.
- There was no training and awareness programme on traffic rules and regulations for three wheeler drivers.
- There was no social recognition for three-wheeler drivers due to involvement of illegal action by some three wheeler drivers.
- Some passengers pressurize the three-wheeler drivers to reach at destination quickly which compel them to take on a risky journey.
- Due to language barrier they most of them are not able to provide transport facilities to the foreigners who visit Colombo.
- Sometime policemen used to exploit three wheeler drivers by using them for free of charge trips.

### **6.2 Perspectives of school van drivers on their job**

- There are no proper parking spaces for school vans. The van drivers have to found their own parking spaces. There are no toilet facilities in the city for these people.
- There is no government involvement in managing school vans.
- Although they carry school children there is no priority for these vehicles on the streets.
- There is no government organizations to discuss and report on the problems of school van operators.
- The operation of school vans has not recognized by the government as a useful service although they feel they are performing a responsible duty.

## **7.0 ISSUES RAISED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AT FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS**

Two focus group meetings were held in Poorwaramaya and Badowita case study settlements inviting some of those persons who were interviewed as well as from among others who were not interviewed under the research in order to discuss issues related to public transport facilities they use.

- In Poorwarayamay, 41 persons participated while in Badowita settlement 33 persons attended the focus group meeting.

- The group discussions were facilitated by 03 members of research team of SEVANATHA. The focus group meetings were conducted in December 2001 at Poorwaramaya and in January 2002 in Badowita settlement. The issues raised at the meetings on specific themes are listed below.

### **7.1 Perspectives on the existing bus shelters / halting places**

- Bus shelters are not properly constructed considering the needs of passengers. The existing bus halts are not properly maintained. The roof covers have damaged, therefore they do not provide shelter to passengers.
- No seating facilities in the bus shelter. Bus shelters are badly maintained dirty places.
- During the night the existing bus halts were usually occupied by beggars, drug addicts and thieves. They make it dirty and no one is responsible for maintaining the bus halts.
- Lack of a proper bus halt is a problem for elderly, sick people and school children when they need to wait for long hours to catch a bus.

### **7.2 Perspectives related to pedestrian travel**

- We have to walk about 20 – 30 minutes to reach at the main road. The access road is a gravel road, which is difficult to use during the rainy days due to water logging.
- In the evening too the young girls and women find it unsafe to walk along these roads due to thieves and other people who harass women.
- Usually street pavements are very narrow, further they are encroached by vendors and motorists. Therefore, we have to get down to the road and walk along side the pavement, which is risky.
- Most of our roads are also narrow and difficult to accommodate the increasing volume of motor vehicles.
- There is no adequate pavements for pedestrians and separate track for cyclists. We prefer to use pedal cycles but the road is too congested with motor vehicles.
- Women are being harassed by three-wheeler drivers and some people who use the street.

### **7.3 People's perspectives on regulations related to passenger transport**

- Passengers have no idea about where to make a complain when bus drivers and conductors do some injustice to passengers. Passengers know only about complaining to the police. But they believe that it will take long time for the police to take action or sometimes it will go unheard by the police.
- Since the passengers are not taking action against any wrong doing by the drivers and conductors they tend to break the traffic rules and regulations and do not pay much attention to the passengers.
- People have no idea about any passenger association or any other civil society organization where they can discuss their problems and make suggestions for improving the passenger transport service.

### **7.4 Perspectives about the behaviour of bus conductors and drivers**

- Normally, private bus conductors never use a polite language. They always see passengers as problems creators.

- It is a usual thing to observe that the conductors of private buses keep on shouting at passengers to move forward / move backward while moving himself through passengers inside the bus.
- The conductors usually delay returning the balance money to passengers purposely to cheat them.
- The private bus conductors do not issue tickets to passengers. Passengers too got used to that system and do not bother to ask for a ticket.
- A majority of private bus drivers drive recklessly as they were always on competitive race with other buses on the route.
- The drivers normally do not give sufficient time for passengers to get down from the bus. They are in a hurry to go on racing with other buses. Women, elderly persons and school children suffer the most due to such unacceptable behaviour of bus drivers.

### **7.5 Difficulties faced by people while travelling in buses**

- In most of the private buses, tickets are not issued to passengers which becomes a problem as the conductors repeatedly ask for money. Sometime they do not give us balance money and we can not ask for it since we do not have a ticket to show them.
- The hand rail is too high to hold on for women and children.
- In most of the buses, the bell can not be seen. The roof bell was not working. Therefore, the passengers will have to ask some one to help them.
- The steps were fixed too high above the ground level. Women and children can not quickly get in or get down the buses.
- Interior of most of the buses are dirty. The seats are dusty and the floor fill with rubbish.
- The buses are always overcrowded and hence children and women are the one who suffer most in overcrowded buses when they travel standing among other passengers.
- There is no notices inside the buses with the useful passenger information or awareness for passengers.
- Due to lack of proper goods rack people suffer a lot when they carry heavy baggages.

### **7.6 Participants' suggestions for improving the passenger services**

- The existing buses should be managed properly by allowing them to run on a time table.
- Strict regulations must be enforced to issue bus tickets to passengers.
- There should be limits to loading of passengers.
- Overloading should be banned.
- Bells and hand rails should be fixed at a convenient high for women and children.
- The bells must be visible enough for all passengers.
- Those bus owners and bus crews who do not keep their buses cleaned must be fined.
- The bus seats must be fixed with proper distances and be of proper standards.
- The steps should be constructed at lower level than at present.
- Passenger awareness programmes must be carried out regularly for drivers and conductors to educate on their rights and responsibilities.

## **8.0 ACTIVITIES OF PASSENGER ASSOCIATIONS**

It has been observed that there were no active passenger associations in Sri Lanka. The only single passenger movement was found to have been formed in the year 1957, soon after the Peoplization of bus transport in Sri Lanka in 1956. The first passenger movement was named as "All Ceylon Passenger Movement". Later it was renamed as "All Ceylon Congress of

Passenger Associations". Presently, this association is known as Sri Lanka Congress of Passenger Associations.

The Sri Lanka Congress of Passenger Associations was very active during the period of early 1970s under an able chairman of the Ceylon Transport Board (CTB). The Transport Ministry has provided required institutional and infrastructure support for carrying out the activities of the association. The chairman of the CTB has allocated one day of the week to meet the officials of the passenger association. Further, he has encouraged the officials of the passenger association to visit other regions of Sri Lanka and to form passenger associations since the original association was formed in Colombo. The Ministry of Transport has provided free tickets / passes to those officials of the association to visit other parts of Sri Lanka for the above purpose.

Starting from Colombo Central Passenger Association about 180 associations were formed throughout the country during early 1970s. Those days the issues relating to CTB passenger transportation were discussed with the concerned officials.

Subsequently, with the shift of government policies towards Privatization and open economy, the importance given to passengers / users of public transportation began to fade. No government support was provided to the passenger associations.

After the private buses began to dominate the road passenger transport service since early 1980s, the difficulties faced by passengers became almost the order of the day. Therefore, the Sri Lanka Congress of Passenger Associations become more active. However, it was disappointing to note that the passengers who face difficulties did not show much interest in joining the association or to support its activities. Also the government's support to the association was not very significant.

Thus as at present, only about 60 passenger associations were in operation in Sri Lanka of which about 21 were located in Western Province.

### **8.1 Specific activities performed by the Sri Lanka Congress of Passenger Associations**

- Publishing newspaper articles on passenger related issues.
- Organizing public seminars and workshops to discuss the problem aspects of passenger transport in Sri Lanka.
- Representing the passengers' views at the Ministry forums.
- Participate in advisory committee meetings and forums.
- Receiving complaints and requests from passenger from all parts of the country and submit them to relevant authorities.

### **8.2 The limitations faced by the Congress of Passenger Association**

- There is no government support like in the past (particularly during 1970s) to the activities of the passenger associations.
- The association has no funds and manpower resources to organize the passengers throughout the country.
- The passengers who face the difficulties in using the public bus transport do not show interest in initiating local actions instead they have become passive users.

- Passengers have no faith in the regulatory system of public transport, hence they tend to find different alternative such as organizing own transport and or suffer though the system.

## **9.0 PRIVATE BUS OWNERS ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA**

Views expressed by the president of the Association.

### **9.1 How was the association formed?**

The organization was formed in March 2001. The Private Bus Companies operating in different parts of Sri Lanka got together and formed it. At the initial stage the private Bus Companies operating in Nugegoda, Negambo, Kaduwela, Kurunagala were participated in forming the association. Later many other companies were also joined. They included private bus companies of Galle, Kandy, Kandy North, Mahiyanganaya, Matara, Kundasale, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura, Awissawella, Bulathsinhala, Kegalle, Maharagama and Kottawa.

The bus owners are connected to the Association only thought Private Bus Companies formed in different areas. Each bus company has to pay One Hundred Rupees to the association to become a member of Association.

### **9.2 The Meetings of the Association.**

Monthly meetings are being conducted involving official representatives (President, Secretary, Treasure) of the member companies. The problems faced by bus owners and companies were discussed at the meeting and agree on how to find solutions to them. The Association has been registered under the Western Province Road Passenger Transport Authority. It has the powers to discuss the issues with Ministry and concerned government institutions. The association has estimated that about 70% of the passengers of Sri Lanka do rely on private bus transport. However, majority of passengers have negative attitudes towards the quality of private bus transport. Therefore it is very important to carryout programs to change the attitudes of general public towards private transport services.

### **9.3 The Difficulties faced by the Members of private Bus Association as owners of the passenger transport buses**

- One of the key difficulties was to pay a heavy instalment to finance companies. Most of the private bus owners had purchased buses on finance company guarantees. They have to pay large sums of money (about 30,000 to 40,000 rupees per month) to finance companies. Therefore the bus owners keep trying meting maximum daily targets. This leads to many complaints by the passengers.
- Secondly, the poor management of private sector buses by the government creates problems for earning the targeted amounts, lack of a specific time table and control of journeys have lead to loss of income as well as creating conflicts among the bus drivers too.

- Government and the provincial council have not paid adequate attention to manage the inter provincial transport systems to provide better services to the passengers.
- Lack of reliable and trained drivers and committed conductors has been another severe problem for running the private buses. Therefore most of the bus operators have become casual workers. They do not have serious attachment to their job, because of the casual nature of their work. They always pay attention to earn their day target only. This leads to dissatisfaction of passenger.
- The rules for issue of conductor license by the government has created problems due to proof of occupation within the locality. Those people who came from outside areas of Colombo can't get a license due to lack of their occupancy in the area they work. These regulations should therefore be changed.
- There are no adequate space on most of the city roads to park the buses till their turn is ready. Most of the roadside space were encroached by three-wheelers and other motor vehicles. Therefore lack of parking spaces has become a serious problem for the private bus owners of the city.
- There are no facilities such as toilets, water and waiting rooms etc. for private bus drivers at the city transport terminals.

#### **9.4 Suggestions for improving the quality of private bus services**

- Government must recognize the importance of the private bus service and provide proper legal support to operate it with dignity.
- Facilities must be provided for parking and other facilities for drivers at large and small terminals.
- Programmes should be introduced to recognize the jobs of private bus drivers and conductors as professional employment.
- Financial support must be provided to private bus owners to purchase new buses and to maintain the condition of the existing buses.
- There must be some control over the overall traffic of the city and must provide space for passenger transport buses.

### **10.0 AFFORDABILITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICE**

It is significant to note that a majority of informants have indicated that the existing bus fares are not too high for them to afford. At present the starting bus fare is Rs. 3.00 (Three Rupees) which is increasing by 50 cents per section. On an average, the ordinary bus fares in Sri Lanka is around 50 cents per km. Semi luxury buses charge about 1 ½ times of the normal rate while luxury buses charge two times of the normal bus fares. The bus fare structure is controlled and decided only by the Ministry of Transport on recommendations by the National Transport Commission and other related institutions and hence the bus owners and



operators can not decide on the bus fares. This was an important aspect of regularization of one aspect of public transport.

It is accepted that existing bus fares are generally affordable by every section of the population of Sri Lanka. This may be the reason that none of the interviews pointed out that the bus fare as an issue of concern. Rather all of them commented on the poor quality of the buses and the bus services. In order to understand the relative importance of transport expenditures among other expenditures have been examined using the data available on consumer finances and socio economic survey of Sri Lanka in 1996/97. It was found that overall average percentage on transport expenditure was about 12.4% for all sectors (rural, urban and plantation sectors) in the country.

**Table No. 6: Percentage of Expenditure for One Month on Non-Durable Items by Income Groups**

Item	0-300	301-600	601-1200	1201-1800	1801-02400	2401-3000	3001-4500	4501-6000	6001-7500	7501-9000	9001-12000	12001-15000	15001-30000	Over 30000	Overall Average
Housing	6.0	3.2	12.6	19.3	16.6	16.9	18.1	19.8	23.4	26.1	25.1	26.7	28.7	30.0	25.2
Clothing	12.3	10.8	19.9	14.7	17.2	17.7	18.7	16.1	15.5	16.6	16.1	13.4	13.7	10.0	14.7
Fuel & Light	5.8	3.7	12.0	17.3	15.3	15.4	14.4	12.5	11.3	10.8	8.6	8.0	6.5	4.3	9.0
Transport	11.2	3.5	8.5	8.4	10.5	8.2	8.0	9.6	8.8	11.1	11.9	11.0	15.6	17.6	12.4
Education	-	0.6	2.6	4.1	4.5	3.7	5.0	5.7	5.6	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.7	5.0	5.4
Recreation	6.7	1.0	3.1	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.9	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.9	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.3
Social Expenses	4.0	0.4	2.4	5.9	7.9	7.2	9.1	10.7	11.8	8.1	10.5	13.1	8.4	11.9	10.2
Personal Expenses	11.9	42.9	5.0	6.9	6.9	8.0	7.5	7.3	6.6	6.4	5.5	5.3	4.5	3.1	5.5
Servants / Drivers	-	-	2.1	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.6	1.6	6.3	1.4
Medical	0.4	4.4	6.2	8.1	6.4	6.6	5.8	6.1	6.1	4.9	5.6	5.5	6.2	3.5	5.5
Other Non-Durable	41.7	29.4	25.6	12.4	12.2	13.6	10.6	8.8	7.3	7.0	6.9	7.4	5.9	4.9	7.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

An analysis of randomly selected 30 households from all the six case study settlements have illustrated that the percentage share of transport expenses as against their monthly income was in the range of 2.7% to 8.9%

**Table 5: Comparison of Monthly Income and Monthly Transport Expenses of 30 Households of Case Study Settlements**

<i>Income category (Rupees per month)</i>	<i>Monthly Transport Expenditures</i>	<i>%</i>
Up to 5000	444	8.9
5001 – 8000	573	8.8
8001 – 11000*	686	8.1
Over 11000*	300	2.7

*Note: The households whose income were above 8001 were those who run small boutiques and those who have their family members working abroad. The boutique owners said they do not need to travel outside the settlement since the delivery vans and mobile traders brings items to the boutique. Hence, their transport expenses were said to be low. They do not own motor vehicles too.*

The above information revealed that the affordability of public transport has not been a major problem for the low income communities in Colombo. However, they are much more concern about the quality of the bus services and the operational problems. The information gathered through the present survey on bus fares spend by households do correspond with the

findings of the other reports such as the Annual Report of Central Bank which says the public bus fare of Sri Lanka is affordable by every low income category people since the bus fares were relatively lower compared to most of the other services.

## **11.0 MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Through interviews of key informants, resource persons as well as review of available literature, a multitude of issues have been identified relating to public transport services. Different categories of persons under key actors (i.e. the users (passengers), the providers, the service crew and regulatory personnel) have been interviewed in order to obtain their perspectives of the current situation of public transport and what would they perceive to see or experience in the future as improved service. All these issues are listed in the previous section of this report. Hence, this chapter is devoted to list most common issues raised by the informants. Because it is believed that those issues which are raised by many persons at several occasions would be the most felt problems or situations as far as particular groups are concerned. In this context, the issues raised by the informants of the research are listed under the following key actor groups.

- i. Users (passengers) of public transport
- ii. Providers of public transport
- iii. Service crews
- iv. Regulators of public transport

### **11.1 Major issues related to users (passengers) of public transport**

- i. Lack of properly planned and maintained bus halting places / bus shelters on the streets. This major issue has contributed to several sub issues which in turn affect the quality of passenger transport, causing inconvenience to passengers, accidents, traffic congestions and so on.
- ii. Lack of properly designed adequate road side pavements for pedestrian travel. The existing pavements are too narrow, poorly constructed and not maintained and are mostly encroached by pavement hawkers and motorists. Hence, the children, women, disabled persons and other ordinary pedestrians face a risk of walking along existing pavements. Lack of proper pavements discourages even those who wish to walk mainly due to inconvenience and risk of meeting with accidents.
- iii. Poorly planned pedestrian crossings on busy streets do not serve the purposes. Due to poor understanding of pedestrians rights and the responsibilities of motorists, the pedestrian crossings do not provide the intended benefits to the pedestrians.
- iv. Lack of passenger information at bus halting places, on street crossings and other public meeting points on passenger safety as well as available transport services were highlighted by all the different categories of passengers interviewed.
- v. Passengers have no knowledge and awareness as to whom they should complain when they face any problem while travelling on buses.

- vi. Lack of safety for pedestrians (especially for women and girls) who walk along streets due to potential accidents, theft and harassment by thugs has been a major concern by almost all the informants interviewed.
- vii. Competition among bus drivers leads to reckless driving causing road accidents and risking the lives of passengers who use public buses.
- viii. The interior conditions of the buses and the facilities available were described as being totally inadequate and inappropriate for passengers. They feel that the interior design of buses have not planned considering the needs of passengers of different age groups and their abilities. Hence a majority of passengers were unhappy about the facilities available inside the buses.
- ix. The passengers have identified indisciplined behaviour of private bus conductors by way of particularly harassing women, children, cheating of passengers' money and shouting at passengers for no reasons. All such acts seem to have related to lack of proper training and self respect for the job that the conductors are performing.
- x. Reckless and indisciplined driving habit of private bus drivers have been a major concern by majority of informants. They relate it to poor law enforcement on the part of government as well as poor training for the drivers of private buses by concern authorities.
- xi. Lack of limits for loading of passengers, particularly in private buses has been a growing concern raised by many passengers. The women, school children and disabled persons were the worst affected categories of passengers due to uncontrolled loading of passengers in private buses.
- xii. The poor street planning, control of motor traffic, lack of parking and air pollution created due to motor traffic seem to have severely discouraged the use of more environmental friendly, cheap and affordable transport modes such as walking and pedal cycling.
- xiii. A large majority of passengers have pointed out the lack of knowledge on their rights and responsibilities as passengers and pedestrians have also been contributed to inactivity of the government.
- xiv. None of the informants were worried about the bus fares since they consider it was affordable to them rather they were worried about the quality of the buses and bus services and bus services as well as the operational problems particularly relating to bus crews.

## **11.2 Major issues raised by the providers of public transport (owners and owners associations)**

- i. A majority of bus owners seem to have engaged in providing bus service as an individually owned business. Their motivation has always been to earn an income that makes a profit of their investment. Due to competition with uncontrolled number of buses and high running costs their profits margin become thinner and weaker. Therefore, operating on a strict time schedule, keeping the bus crews on permanent

basis and, providing a decent service to passengers have become matters of less concern for them.

- ii. Lack of government subsidies and or incentives to private bus owners seem to have prevented them from providing an efficient, reliable transport service to passengers.
- iii. Lack of proper guidance, rules and regulations at the initial stage of introducing the private bus operation has lead the private bus owners to begin their operation with no proper knowledge and responsibility. Reversal of that situation with controlling measures has now become a difficult task for the government.
- iv. Lack of properly planned streets, bus halting places, parking and terminal facilities for operation of passenger bus service in the city has lead to severe traffic congestion, road accidents, loss of time of passengers, loss of income for bus owners and need to incur heavy operational costs.
- v. Due to poor management of passenger transport services by the government most of the city routes have become too congested with over supply of passenger transport vehicles, which leads to indisciplined driving as well as difficulty in controlling the city traffic.
- vi. The three-wheeler operators who provide service to city population too have become a problem as far as the city traffic volume is concerned. Lack of designated parking spaces and lack of regulation of fares and undisciplined driving behaviour of three-wheeler drivers contribute to road accidents and traffic congestion and exploitation of passengers.
- vii. Due to poor school bus services provided by the government , the private individuals have started operating school van services. Lack of proper planning and infrastructure for these category of vehicles in the city has further aggravated already congested city traffic as well as rising accidents. It was estimated by the informants that there were about seven thousand school vans enter into the city of Colombo daily. Imagine the situation created in the city traffic with no proper parking and no designated lanes for such a large number of vehicles.

### **11.3 Major issues raised by the service crew of public transport service (mainly bus drivers and conductors)**

- i. The private bus conductors and drivers have identified their service as being a temporary occupation. There is no sense of permanency of their job and therefore there is no professional value and respect attachment to it.
- ii. A majority of drivers and conductors hire out a bus for daily rental basis and operate it to earn an income to cover the rent and a profit. This situation has lead to indisciplined driving, breaking of traffic rules and regulations as well as no respect or sympathy towards passengers.
- iii. Poor social recognition of bus crews and ineffective law enforcement in turn compelled them to behave in an indisciplined manner.

- iv. Private bus owners employ a limited number of bus crews and hence the drivers and conductors will have to work for long hours (12 to 15 hours) of the day (i.e. starting from 4.30 or 5.00 a.m. till 7.30 – 8.00 p.m.) for about five to six days per week. Under such a hard working arrangement, they seem to have become impatient, indisciplined and irresponsible.
- v. Lack of proper training on their job and monitoring of their performance has led to unsatisfactory performance by the bus crews which in turn is reflected in their poor customer relationship and irresponsible behaviour.

#### **11.4 Major issues raised by regulatory bodies and personnel**

- i. The main concern was that there are a number of regulatory agencies exist in Sri Lanka to guide and regulate public transport services. However, due to lack of proper co-ordination at national as well as city level these agencies were not able to properly address the problems relating to public transport and to provide a quality service to the public.
- ii. The privatization of public transport came as a political decision around 1980s which was seemingly implemented with no adequate considerations to potential problems, that it might create.
- iii. The intended benefits of competitive operation between government owned bus service and private bus service never become a reality due to difficulties of running these two services with a similar objective of providing better services to passengers. Because the private bus service always pay greater emphasis to make a profit rather than providing a service. Therefore, the private bus service compete with the government buses on the same route for getting more passengers. Eventually, wiping out the government buses completely from such as bus routes.
- iv. Organizing the individually operated private bus service into companies for smooth operation has become a great difficulty.
- v. Lack of strong political commitment to regularize the operation of private bus services due to pressure from businessmen and influential people who engaged in the private bus operation contributed to worsen the situation.
- vi. The above mentioned unregulated system of operation of private bus services has compelled the government owned buses to operate on non-profitable routes while most profitable routes are being taken over by the private bus operators. This situation has eventually resulted in non-operation of buses on non-economical routes at all, by discriminating passengers from using any form of public transport service.
- vii. The traffic police and the Colombo Municipal Council have been engaged in controlling the traffic conditions in the city of Colombo. However, due to increasing in flow of motor vehicles (according to the city traffic police over 300,000 vehicles entering to the city daily) with no adequate road / traffic infrastructure to cater to this demand has naturally increased the road accidents, air pollution, loss of working hours and above all causing sever inconvenience to the citizens.

- viii. The regulatory agency personnel have emphasized on the issue of lack of cooperation of general public who use city streets and public transport as well as the motorists in implementing the existing traffic rules and regulations. The civil society groups do not provide any suggestions to overcome the current crises of public transport. Therefore, it has become difficult for the regulatory agencies alone to solve the problems relating to passenger transport services in Colombo.
- ix. With respect to partnership among the transport providers, it has been observed that there is no any significant partnership arrangements in operation. The intended partnership between the CTB and private bus operation has proved to be unrealistic. The other para transport modes (school vans, three-wheelers, office staff transport vans etc.) are also operated mostly on an individual basis with no proper partnership arrangement. Therefore, the issue of partnership arrangements among different modes of transport operators as well as the users and regulators must be considered seriously in the future.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **12.1 Recommendations made by the informants on major issues**

The respondents not only raise the issues related to various aspects of the public transport service, but have made recommendations as to how these issues be tackled. For the purpose differentiating the emphasis of key actors, the recommendations made by the informants are presented under following category of actors.

- i) Users (passengers) of public transport
- ii) Providers of Public Transport
- iii) Service crews
- iv) Regulators of Public Transport

#### **i) Recommendations made by users (passengers) of Public Transport.**

- The bus halting places must be properly planned and bus shelters with seating facilities should be constructed. They must be properly maintained and be provided with passenger information.
- The city streets must be constructed with wider pavements, free of obstructions and be devoted for convenient use of passengers of all ages paying emphasis to the needs of disabled, elderly persons, women and children.
- Pedestrian crossings must be planned at convenient places to passengers. Pedestrian crossings at busy junctions must be provided with colour lights in order to ensure safety of pedestrians. The pedestrian crossings must be used to display passenger related information.
- Continuous awareness programmes to educate passengers on traffic rules and regulations, responsibilities of passengers and motorists as well as the places and persons to whom complaints and requests be made must be carried out using mass media and other

appropriate communication methods through which a greater number of passengers could be reached.

- Passengers have especially recommended that those reckless drivers of public bus services and other motorists who purposely violate traffic rules and regulations must be fined. If the current laws are not adequate the authorities must introduce new laws to control the indisciplined behaviors of motorists.
- Programmes must be implemented to develop a good relationship between the conductors, drivers and the passengers of public bus transport. Particular attention should be paid to change the attitudes of private bus conductors towards the passengers.
- The authorities must take action to impose the passenger load limits of private busses, since the passengers who pay a bus fare must have a right to travel conveniently in the buses.
- Serious attention must be paid to redesign the interior facilities of passenger transport buses, such as seats, the space between seats, the hand rail, the bell and the steps etc. Because the present design standards seem to have not considered the convenient aspects of elderly persons, women, children and even disabled persons. Therefore, a majority of passengers do suffer while traveling in the passenger transport buses.
- The informants have emphasized the fact that our cities are poorly planned. Therefore, they prefer streets with wide pavements , less congested streets with appropriate parking spaces for vehicles. (Some of the informants have mentioned that they would like to see development of our streets similar to those shown in T.V.'s in developed countries.)

## **ii) Recommendations made by providers of Public Transport**

- Government must intervene in coordinating the private bus operation in order to provide efficient services to the public while providing opportunities to the owners to earn a sufficient income.
- Public transport related infrastructure facilities must be developed (Particularly parking spaces for passenger buses.) for smooth operations of private bus services in the city.
- The route allocation system must be streamlined in order to prevent over supply of buses in some routes while others do not get sufficient buses to operate.
- Concessionary loan repayment schemes and or fuel subsidies must be provided to private bus operators in order to cover up increasing running costs.
- The private bus transport service must be properly guided and be recognized as an important service since it contribute to take up over 60% of the road passenger load in Sri Lanka at present.

**iii) Recommendations made by service crew (Conductors and Drivers)**

- The employment status of private bus conductors and drivers must be upgraded with proper training, recognition and a system of assuring permanency of their employment.
- The working style of the private bus crews must be streamlined so that stress of long working hours and dissatisfaction of their employment could be changed to more accommodating job of work.
- Need for awareness raising among the passengers too has been emphasized particularly with respect to use of public streets, pedestrian crossing and helping the bus conductors in performing their duty.

**iv) Recommendations made by regulators of Public Transport**

- The regulators of public transport service have recognized the complex nature of operation of public transport services in Sri Lanka. Improving better coordination of activities of various agencies involved in the sector was emphasized.
- Provision of adequate infrastructure facilities that are required for public transport should be given high priority in consultation with the user groups.
- Introducing rules and regulations to ensure proper management of city traffic with strict enforcement of traffic regulations to minimize purposeful violation of traffic regulations.
- The regulators have recognized the importance of creating public awareness particularly involving passengers of public transport including the school children on the traffic rules and regulations and to improve the road discipline of passengers and motorists.



## 12.2 Framework for Policy Recommendation

Based on the perspectives of key actors on current statuses of public transport services, and the issues identified through the process of the research, it was considered appropriate to develop a framework for policy recommendation, which eventually could lead to strategic actions to improve access and quality of public transport. The proposed policy framework does not attempt to address the complex issues of the transport sector policies in a holistic sense. However, in keeping with the scope of the current research project it attempts to emphasize on hitherto neglected aspects of user perspectives in formation of a holistic transport policy. Because it was revealed important to consider the views of the users who are the real target group of public transport. In this context, the proposed policy framework can be developed considering the following aspects.

Key principles of the policy framework

- Issue based
- Target oriented
- Consultative process
- Partnership actions
- Participatory monitoring

### **Issue based:**

The proposed policy framework should be based on the key issues raised by the users as well as the other actors who are engaged in the public transport services. This will prevent the policy makers resorting to identification of perceived issues through non-consultative process of using hard data relating to key actors.

### **Target oriented:**

It was disappointing to note that most of the conventional policy documents only spell out policy issues with no reference to specific targets to be achieved. Hence, the proposed policy framework must emphasize to be based on specific target issues, time bound actions and results to be achieved in the transport service.

### **Consultative process:**

The target population should be consulted prior to identification of issues and the activities. Public consultation should be considered as a process. The users, the providers, and regulators of public transport must be given opportunities to continue the process of consultation by individually and among groups. The government must genuinely promote the process of consultation among the key actors by way of institutionalization of the consultation process as part of the policy formulation process so that real issues could be identified and practical solutions be formulated.

### **Partnership actions:**

As at present, there was no partnership arrangement in operation in the transport sector. Hence appropriate legal and institutional actions must be incorporated within the transport

sector in order to promote workable partnership arrangements between different actors/partners engage in provision of public transport services.

### **Participatory Monitoring**

Impacts of policies should be monitored through a participatory monitoring process of policy implementation. This would allow actors at different levels to provide live examples of successes and failures of implementation. Forums of specific groups of actors can be used as an effective and efficient approach to participatory monitoring of policy implementation.

The policy makers at National and Provincial level may consider the above framework in order to create a sustainable interaction between the government authorities and different categories of actors including the users of public transport services who ultimately will experience the real life situation of policy directives and actions.

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9	<b>Mrs</b> Mandrie J. Sahabandu, No. 19, Charlemont Road, Colombo 06 (former Director General of the National Transport Commission)	Transport Expert/ Researcher	582741 (r)
10	Mr. Kumudu Kusum Kumara Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Colombo.	Sociologist	500452 (o) 522045 (r)
11	Mr. Sunil Colambage, Committee member, All Ceylon Private Bus Owners' Association (Home Address: 75 A, Dutugemunu Street, Kalubowila, Dehiwala)	Service Providers	956427 (r)
12	Mr. K. A. Jayaratne, Chairman, SEVANATHA Urban Resource Centre, 14, School Lane, Nawala, Rajagiriya	Urban Planning/ management	878893 (o)

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**RESEARCH TEAM OF SEVANATHA – URBAN RESOURCE  
CENTER WHO ENGAGED IN THE PROJECT**

**Core Research Team**

- K.A.Jayaratne – Overall Guidance
- H.M.U.Chularathna – Research Project coordinator
- D.G.J.Premakumara – Assistant Project Coordinator
- K.K.R.P.Kulatilake – Project Coordinator (from 1<sup>st</sup>  
October 2001 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2002)

**Field Research Staff**

- H.M.D.S.K.Senaviratne - Research Assistant
- I.G.S.Jayasooriya - Research Assistant
- Y.P.Liyanage - Research Assistant

**Support staff**

- Dilrukshi Silva – Computer Processing of the Report

**Overall Guidance and Supervision**

- Dr. M.Sohail Khan – Research Manager, Institute of Development  
Engineering WEDC, Loughborough University, U.K

## **RELEVANT ACTS, ORDINANCES AND GAZETTES**

1. Ceylon Government Railway Ordinance, 1891
2. Vehicle Ordinance Act No. 4 of 1916
3. Motor Car Ordinance No. 20 of 1927
4. Motor Car Ordinance No. 45 of 1938
5. Omnibus Service Licensing Ordinance No. 47 of 1942
6. Motor Traffic Act No. 14 of 1951
7. Ceylon Transport Board Act No. 48 of 1957
8. Regional Transport Boards Act No. 19 of 1978
9. Private Omnibus Service Act No. 44 of 1983
10. Peoplized Transport Companies Act No. 23 of 1987
11. Motor Traffic Act (Chapter 203) (Incorporating Amendments up to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1990) 1990
12. National Transport Commission Act No. 37 of 1991
13. National Transport Commission (Amendment) Act No. 30 of 1996
14. The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka No. 912/ - Monday, February 26, 1996 – Part IV (A) – Provincial Councils (Regulations under the Western Provincial Road Passenger Carriage Services Statute, No. 1 of 1992 and as amended by Statute, No. 3 of 1993 and No. 7 of 1995)

### Distribution of Low Income Families by Wards in Colombo Municipal Council

Ward	Total No. of Families
Milagiriya	135
Havelock Town	227
Kotahena East	312
Bambalapitiya	360
Cinamon Garden	463
Pamankada-east	468
Wellawatta South	579
Borella-south	620
Tibirigasyaya	709
Aluthkade West	736
Pamankada-west	785
Suduwella	960
Kochchikade South	971
Kollupitiya	998
Kochchikade North	1003
Maradana	1019
Kuppiyawatta-east	1075
Masangas Street	1121
Kuppiyawatta-west	1183
Wellawatta North	1300
Keselwatta	1304
Aluthkade East	1436
Lunupokuna	1521
Kirillapone	1630
Newbazar	1650
Maligakanda	1699
Maligawatta East	1714
Aluthmawatha	1738
Modara	1835
Wekanda	1952
Slave Island	2088
Narahenpita	2166
Jinthupitiya	2231
Maligawatta West	2272
Dematagoda	2370
Borella-north	2433
Wanathamulla	2476
Hunupitiya	2538
Kotahena West	2586
Bluemandel	2816
Kirula	2836
Grandpass North	2998
Mattakkuliya	3085
Grandpass South	3214
Panchikawatta	3310
Mahawatta	6692
Total	77614

### Distribution of Low Families by Wards in Colombo Municipal Council

No. of Families	Ward
Less than 500	Milagiriya
	Havelock Town
	Kotahena East
	Bambalapitiya
	Cinamon Garden
	Pamankada-east
501 - 1000	Wellawatta South
	Borella-south
	Tibirigasyaya
	Aluthkade West
	Pamankada-west
	Suduwella
1001 - 1500	Kochchikade South
	Kollupitiya
	Kochchikade North
	Maradana
	Kuppiyawatta-east
	Masangas Street
	Kuppiyawatta-west
	Wellawatta North
1501 - 2000	Keselwatta
	Aluthkade East
	Lunupokuna
	Kirillapone
	Newbazar
	Maligakanda
	Maligawatta East
	Aluthmawatha
2001 - 2500	Modara
	Wekanda
	Slave Island
	Narahenpita
	Jinthupitiya
	Maligawatta West
	Dematagoda
	Borella-north
2501 - 3000	Wanathamulla
	Hunupitiya
	Kotahena West
	Bluemandel
	Kirula
More than 3001	Grandpass North
	Mattakkuliya
	Grandpass South
	Panchikawatta
	Mahawatta

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