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INCLUSIVE URBAN Infrastructure

A COMMUNITY PROFILE OF MAHAIYAWA

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The CMRD Community Profiles display information about a broad range of factors from a specific location. The baseline information helps in researching, planning and analyzing material for studies that are in progress or development. The community data and illustrations are from both primary and secondary sources. Authorship is usually collective, but the principal writers are named. The papers are generally available in the English language, with some in the Sinhala and Tamil languages.

Front cover photograph: *Mahaiyawa Housing Structure view by Sakeena Alikhan (2021)*

A Community Profile of Mahaiyawa

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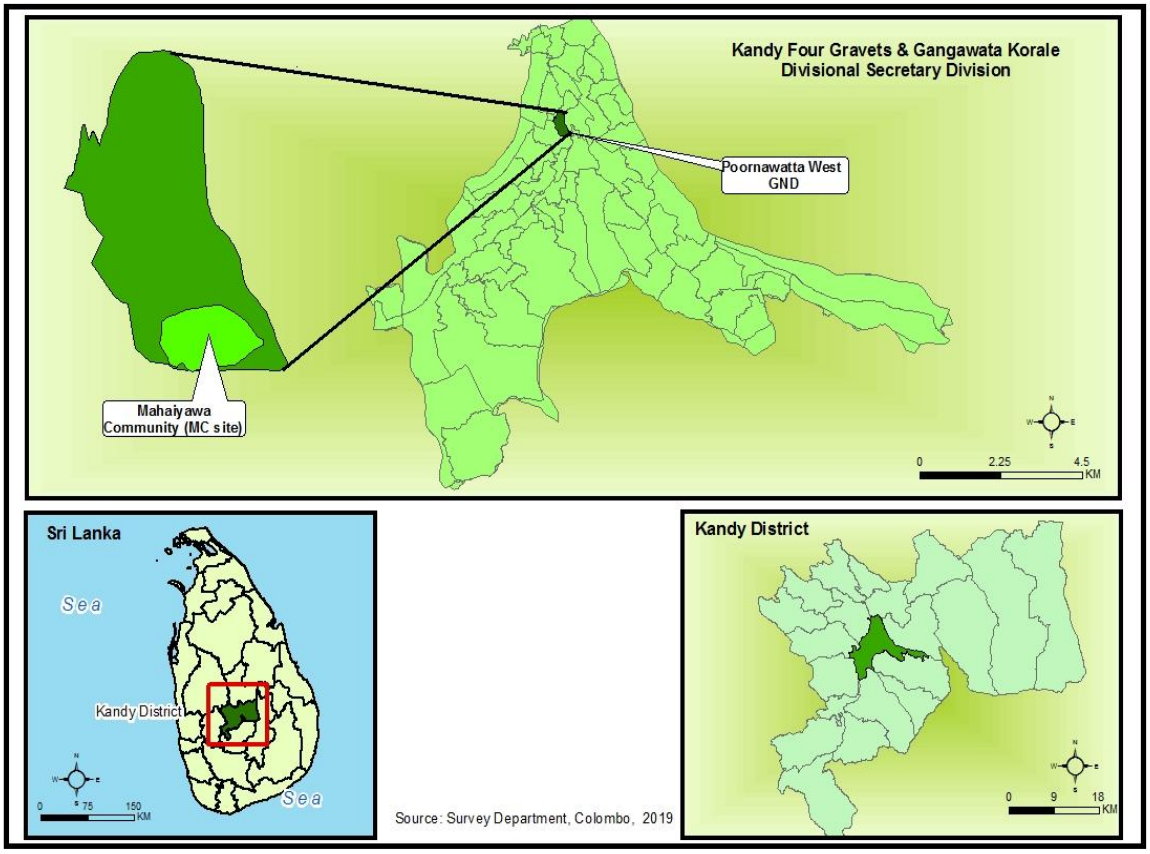

Figure 1 Mahaiyawa Municipal Council Section

Mahaiyawa is located at 7°18'5.16" North Latitude and 80°38'1.55" East Longitude. It is part of the Kandy Four Gravets & Gangawata Korale Divisional Secretariat Division (DSD) of the Kandy District, Sri Lanka (See figure 1). The GND is divided into two main settlement sections – The MC (Municipal Council) and the MT (Model Tenements). This study only focuses on the MC section.

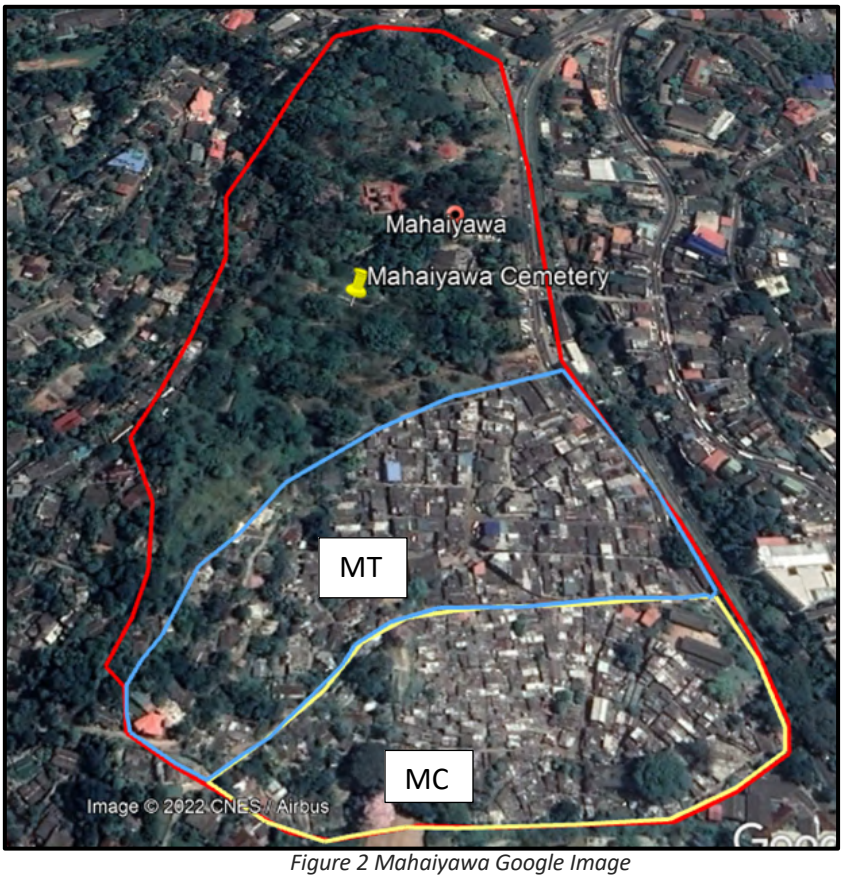

Figure 2 Mahaiyawa Google Image

1.1 Physical Layout

Mahaiyawa is situated between 950 and 1100 metres above sea level. The majority of the land is used for dwellings, with the remaining 2% being used for grocery stores and religious sites (churches, Hindu and Buddhist temples and mosques). The settlement is situated on a slope, with some places having a high elevation. The MT area is located in the northern side of the community. The seniors' home and Trinity Cricket Grounds are located in the southeast and southern parts of the community (see figure 2).

1.2 Housing structure

The earliest housing on Mahaiyawa was primarily overcrowded barracks-style line rooms with few common utilities. These units lacked adequate lighting, ventilation, water supply, toilets, and drainage. What was available has deteriorated over time due to overpopulation. Based on the observations made during a field visit in March 2022, due to a shortage of space and congestion, the majority of the construction has taken place vertically, without the use of solid foundations. The housing units were mostly constructed on illegal and encroached lands. Furthermore, the majority of the housing units was built without sufficient planning or trained labour. As a result, the dwelling units are shaky and could fall apart at any time. (see figure 3).

Figure 3 Congested houses

Residents of Mahaiyawa did not have a deed or land title to prove their ownership but instead used Enumeration Cards (see figure 4) issued by the Urban Development Authority (UDA) (Govt. of Sri Lanka, 2018)

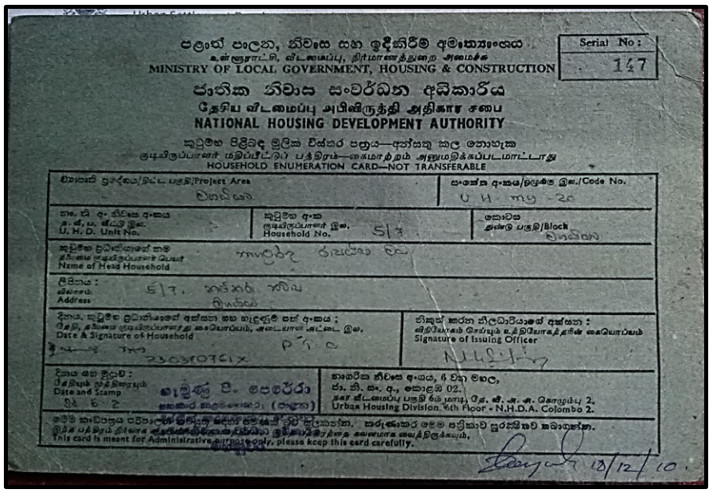

Figure 4 Enumeration Card

1.3 Tenure rights

According to a community leader of Mahaiyawa, the people do not have any documents to prove the ownership of their houses. However, around 196 houses were recorded in the Kandy Municipal Council (KMC) with 30-year leases. The people of the area assumed that housing units which are registered in the KMC are the only ones authorized. As a result, if the government undertakes any regularization or relocations, just 196 houses and their occupants will receive the benefits. However, the 30-year lease agreements have also expired. The following layout map indicates the MC area's authorized and unauthorized housing distribution in the settlement (see figure 5). It was drawn by Bhanjee in 1999.

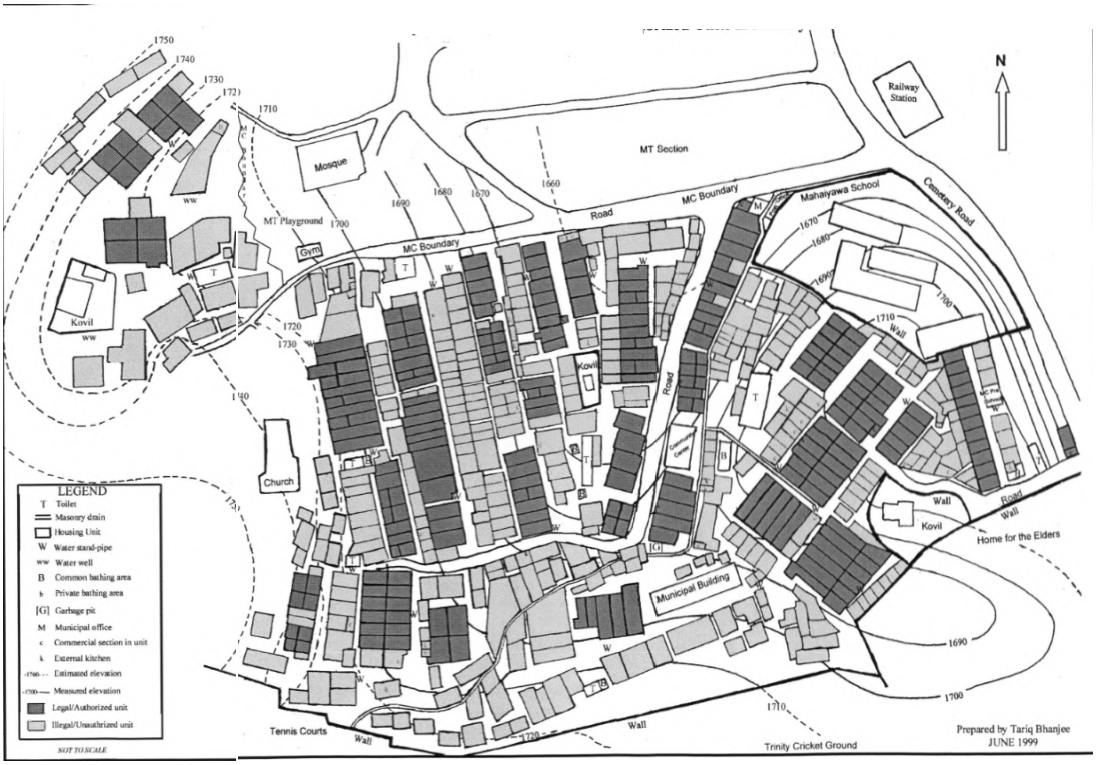

Figure 5 Mahaiyawa Layout

2

HISTORY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

2.1 Origin of the allottees

The Mahaiyawa settlement has its origins in the year 1865. The people mainly consist of the Kandy Municipal Council employees who worked as labourers, having been brought from South India by the British colonial government. They were primarily employed as "barrel boys" who emptied bucket-style toilets in the city. Also, they were responsible for the maintenance and cleanliness of the Kandy city (Silva, Sivapragasam & Paramothy, 2009). These labourers were eventually given some housing. This was row housing in the style of barracks, with single rooms and shared facilities. Individual shanties were later constructed by the residents themselves. With the exception of a population surge during the communal disturbances in 1983, Mahaiyawa has developed mostly through natural growth rather than immigration (Bhanjee, 1998)

3

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

3.1 Demographic profile

According to the population and housing census of 2012, the total population is 5238 for both the MC and MT areas. However, according to the MC site's community leader, the MC area currently consists of 900 houses, 1200 families, and approximately 4500 people. Tamils, including Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils, make up over 90% of the population, with Muslims and Sinhalese making up the rest.

Education attainment in the MC area is considerably low and school dropouts are high, particularly among males. Lack of financial resources, social networks, and motivation among many parents, and low educational ambitions among the children, are some of the main reasons for low education attainment (Silva, Sivapragasam & Paramothy, 2009). As a result, most community members work in the informal sector, working in KMC as city cleaners etc.

4

SERVICE DELIVERY

4.1 Water

The primary source of water for the Mahaiyawa community is the tap line directly connected to their premises. The National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) provides this service. However, for drinking and washing clothes, the majority of the households in the MC region rely on community water standpipes. To save money on their own water bills, many women utilize the public standpipes to wash their clothes and utensils.

Figure 6 A woman washing her clothes with a water standpipe

4.2 Sanitation: Toilet

The lack of private toilets is a major issue in the Mahaiyawa community. The space constraint is a major reason to build the public toilets (Govt. of Sri Lanka, 2018). As a result, the majority of the community uses public toilets and public bathing areas (see figure 7), with only a few having in-house toilets. These houses do not have the proper sewage system for their toilets. Therefore, some of them directly connect to the open sewerage canal.

Figure 7 Public toilets

4.3 Hygienic conditions

The Mahaiyawa community does not have a proper drainage system. The communal latrines are connected to septic tanks with the Kandy Municipal Council (KMC) responsible for emptying the septic tanks. The capacity of the septic tanks is inadequate due to overcrowding. There have been repeated cases of sewage overflow and septic tank leakage. As a result, the area is surrounded by a foul odour. Furthermore, stagnant water from household activities, such as washing clothing, occasionally lingers in open drains, exposing individuals to dengue fever and other mosquito-borne diseases, while flooding of homes was also a typical occurrence during the rainy season (Government of Sri Lanka, 2018).

> ***"Although it is inconvenient, we use it because we do not have a separate toilet. When we go to the public toilet, there are a lot of boys there. As a result, we are uncomfortable. Some guy's drink and smoke in the area, which makes it inconvenient for us to use the toilet. What should I do? We don't have any other options."***
>
> (Community member, Mahaiyawa)

4.4 JICA Project

Septic tanks (see figure 8) were installed in every individual dwelling in Mahaiyawa as part of the Kandy City Wastewater Management Project, which was sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The septic tanks are connected to the main sewerage drainage system. The project began in 2015 and is yet to be completed. Furthermore, if a household has enough space to construct its own toilet, JICA will provide a grant of 16,000 rupees for toilet construction.

Figure 8 Septic tanks for individual houses

4.5 Energy

Electricity is the principal source of lighting for the community. About 99% of houses use electricity from the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), while 1% use kerosene lamps to light their homes (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012). Because the location is located in the city centre (Kandy), power outages are normally uncommon. Further, about 70% of households use gas as the primary source of cooking fuel. Also, 25% have firewood. However, 5% of households use kerosene for cooking. Some households use both gas and kerosene to limit the gas usage.

4.6 Transportation

Mahaiyawa has no transportation issues because it is located in the heart of the city. Residents can get around quickly by taking public transit, which is very convenient. People in the community also have unrestricted access to public facilities such as schools, markets, hospitals, and administrative offices.

4.7 Communication

The majority of the residents in the area use their mobile phones as their primary means of communication. The community in the neighbourhood has no coverage concerns as a result of its location.

5

SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS

5.1 Women Organization

'Janarukula' is a women's group established in the community in 2003 as a community-based non-governmental organization (NGO). Its major purpose is to help and empower underprivileged women alleviate poverty. In Mahaiyawa, there are around 15 community members in the organization, with members serving as the leader, vice leader, treasurer, and so on. They primarily deal in microfinance and collect Rs. 5 per week. They provide loans to pay electricity and water bills and build toilets and kitchens. The organization served as the entry point for the JICA project that built Mahaiyawa's sewerage system.

6

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