GCRF Global Challenges Research Fund

UKRI Economic and Social Research Council

Inclusive Urban Infrastructure

A COMMUNITY PROFILE OF SALAMULLA

SAKEENA ALIKHAN

OCTOBER 2022

COMMUNITY PROFILE NO. 6

CMRD COMMUNITY PROFILES

SEVANATHA Urban Resource Centre

US UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

CMRD

27, Wickramaratne Avenue, Kohuwala, Sri Lanka

E-mail: cmrd.lk@gmail.com
URL: www.cmrd.lk

ISSN 2706-0268

Printed by: Centre for Migration Research and Development

First published: 2022

Inclusive Urban Infrastructure is a project funded by UK Research and Innovation through the Global Challenges Research Fund under the title 'Towards Trajectories of Inclusion: Making infrastructure work for the most marginalised' (grant reference number ES/T008067/1).

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: *Salamulla Housing Scheme view by M.M.Alikhan (2021)*

A Community Profile of Salamulla

Sakeena Alikhan

Sakeena Alikhan is a Senior Assistant Librarian at the University of Colombo, specializing in information visualization employing Geographic Information Systems (GIS). She has worked as a consultant for the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and the Centre for Migration Research and Development (CMRD), developing maps for post-war resettlement, women's development, and inclusive urban infrastructure. She holds an MSc in Environmental Science and an MLS in Library and Information Science, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Geography. She has worked as a visiting lecturer at the National Institute of Library and Information Science at the University of Colombo. Ms. Alikhan’s research interests include information literacy, information visualization, and climate change. She is the author of several articles.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the Centre for Migration Research and Development (CMRD) for assigning her the paper. She expresses her gratitude to the Salamulla community for sharing their insightful knowledge. She is also thankful to Professor Michael Collyer, Principal Investigator and Dr. Danesh Jayatilaka, Co-Investigator of the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure (IUI) research study conducted in partnership with the University of Sussex and the SEVANATHA Urban Resource Centre. Appreciations go to Dr. Rajith Lakshman, Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Abdhullah Azam, Project Manager, CMRD, for their advice and assistance. She would also like to express her gratitude to Malki Rodrigo for the design and layout of the publication.

The CMRD acknowledges the financial support provided by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) to conduct the IUI project.

Table of Content

Contents

1

LOCATION AND PHYSICAL LAYOUT CHARACTERISTICS

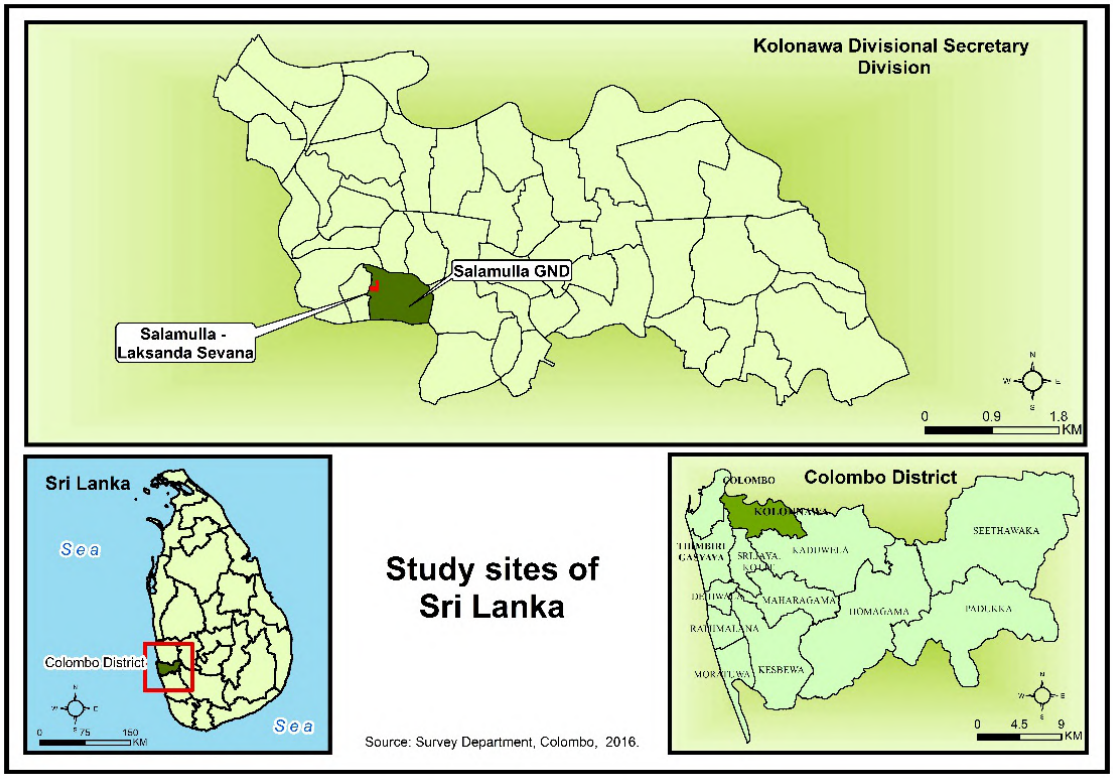

Figure 1 Salamulla GND and location of the Laksanda Sevana Flats

Salamulla is located at 6°55'41" North Latitude and 79°53'40" East Longitude. The Salamulla Grama Niladari division (GND) is an administrative unit of the Kolonawa Divisional Secretariat Division (DSD) of the Colombo District, Sri Lanka (see figures 1/ 2).

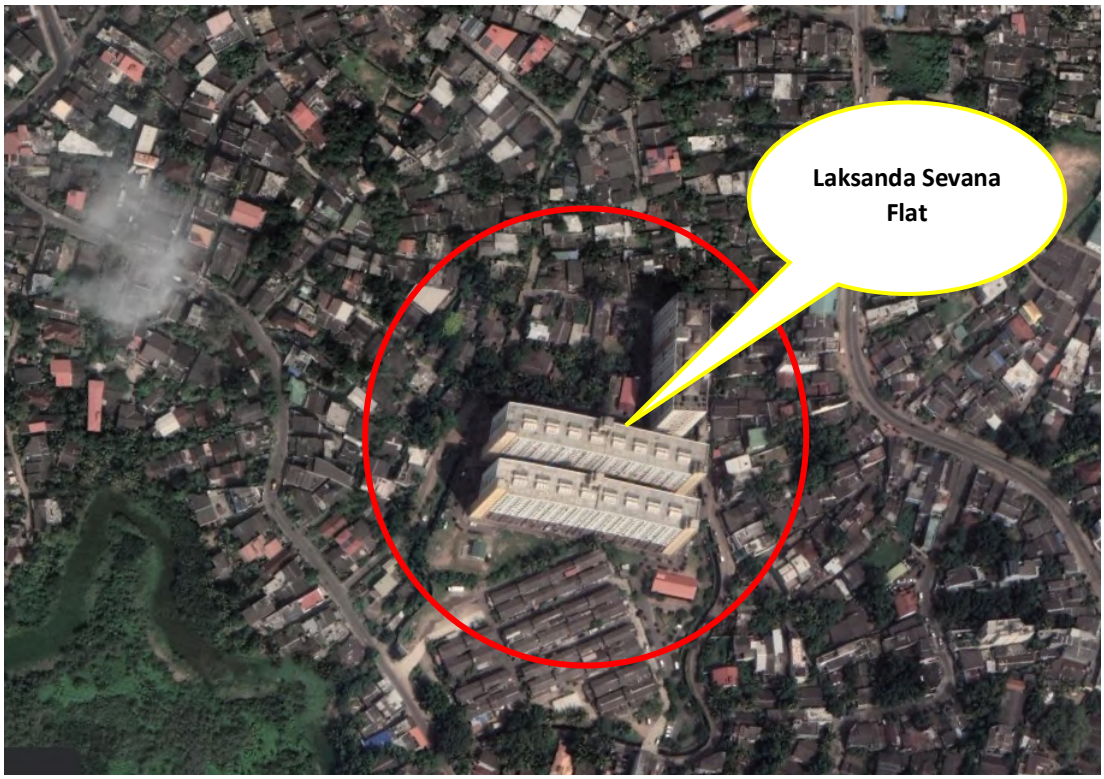

Figure 2 Google Image

1.1 Physical Layout

Occupying over 1.7326 ha of land, the construction on the Salamulla Laksanda Sevana high-rise housing complex of 994 dwelling units began in 2011 and was completed and opened in 2017. Each unit of 450 square feet has a living area, two bedrooms, a kitchen, a balcony, and a bathroom. The housing project consists of blocks A, B, and C. Block A has a total of 216 dwelling units in its twelve floors, with 18 units on each floor. Blocks B and C have 33 residences on each floor and a total of 792 units over 12 floors.

The residents of Salamulla came from several parts of Colombo City. For example, about 329 housing units were handed over to families affected by the Meethotamulla garbage dump collapse. The following figure (see figure 3) includes information on the original locations of the allottees.

2

HISTORY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

2.1 Origin of the allottees

LAKSANDA SEWANA - SALAMULLA

Date of commenced	Jul 2011
Opening Date	2017.11.08
Extent of Land	1.7326 Ha

	Residential	Commercials
No of Units`	994	21
Relocated Units	971	21
Vacant Units	21	-
Reserved (CEB)	2	-

Common	
Purpose	Units
UDA Office	01
Police post	01
Community Hall & Commercial	06
Pre School	01
Day Care Centre	01
RDA Office	01

Allocation of housing units - Summery

Location / To Whom	Housing Units	Remarks	
Methatamulla	329	Block	Vacant Units
RDA	317	Block A-216	
GCWM Project & MCUD Project	21	Block B-396	
87 Watta - Vauxhalle Street	108	Block C-396	
Apple Watta, Veluppila Watta, 54/66 Watta & other	87		
Bo Sewana Watta, 31 Watta, Coopershill & other	63		
Pasal Mawatta & Colombage Mawatta & other	46		

Figure 3 Allocation of flats in Laksanda Sewana

Source: Urban Development Authority, 2018

3

SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1 Water

Enormous plastic tanks located on top of the buildings supply water to the housing units. A sizable cement tank is placed on the ground floor of the flat and is used to fill the plastic tanks. The water is provided by the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB). However, the water bill is paid by the residents to the Urban Development Authority (UDA). The monthly water bill is between Rs. 1800 and Rs. 1900 per unit (2021). Since the tanks are not cleaned frequently they tend to corrode. As a result, people typically tie a cloth around the tap's mouth to filter the water before drinking it (*see figure 4)*.

> ***"There is rust in the water since the tank wasn't properly cleaned. I once experienced allergies as a result of that. A rash also appeared. And a few others also experienced this issue because of the water. The water is not purified, which is why it occurs. Some people may be allergic to residue and sludge, making it impossible for them to drink the water. The water is a dark brown colour, and we have tied a piece of white fabric over the tap to filter it."***
>
> (*FGD, Salamulla*)

Figure 4 A cloth attached to a tap to filter the rust

3.2 Hygienic conditions

Each flat has its own toilet. However, when there are many members in the household, especially three or four children, it is extremely difficult for mothers to manage with only one bathroom. The long waiting time for the bathroom results in the residents being late for school or work.

The units have no drainage-related problems. People frequently clean the drain. They occasionally receive support from the Urban Council. However, some people throw the trash into the gully (ditch). Thus, during the rainy season, the gully overflows with water. Many parts of the flats' public areas are stained with betel spit (see figure 5), and drug addicts urinate without considering their surroundings. On the other hand, some floors of the flat appear quite clean and tidy, indicating that people's attitudes and characteristics determine the hygienic conditions of the places. (See figure 6)

Figure 5 Betel spittle on the stairwell and the walls of common areas

Figure 6 Clean and tidy areas of the flat

3.3 Garbage Disposal

There is a lack of appropriate garbage disposal. Even though the garbage collecting tractor collects trash twice a day, in the morning and the evening, some residents do not carry the garbage to the tractor on time. They sometimes throw trash over windows or leave it on stairwells or other public areas (See image 7).

> ***"I always reprimand those that I observe putting trash everywhere. They still continue to act in such a way and have no shame. They are unwilling to go and load the garbage onto the tractor because they are not considerate of other people. This results in a stench emanating from flats."***
>
> (*Interview, Salamulla*)

Figure 7 Trash on the pavements

3.4 Energy

The National Electricity Board provides electricity to each home in the apartment building. The average monthly bill is between Rs. 2500 and Rs. 3000 (2021). Because the residents spend the majority of their time inside the house, utilizing electrical equipment (such as fans and lights), their electricity cost is greater now than it was in their previous residence.

The majority of homes have gas and kerosene burners for cooking. They lack chimneys; therefore, they are unable to use wood for cooking.

3.5 Transportation

Residents mostly use buses for public transportation in their daily lives. In comparison to their previous location (shown in Figure 3), they must walk a few kilometres to get public transportation. There are also scheduled buses that do not arrive regularly. Initially, the Salamulla residents took several side roads to get to the main road and access the buses. However, as time passed, the area residents closed the shortcut roadways due to the unruly behaviour of the Salamulla residents. For example, people who stroll along the shortcut routes leave rubbish on the road, thus the villages restricted the roads. As a result, flat residents must now walk a substantial distance to access buses.

People who can afford it, use three-wheelers as a form of transportation. But the majority of flat dwellers take the bus since it's cheaper for them.

3.6 Communication

Prepaid mobile phone connections are used by the majority of the population. They have little interest in using landlines or post-paid connections. Since most school classes were converted to online mode during the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of mobile telephones increased significantly during this period. As a result, people spend more money on data acquisition.

4

SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS

There is no Community Development Council (CDC) in Salamulla. It is challenging to maintain the community centre or social interactions because the flats have been divided to blocks and floor-wise. Residents rarely come together for social gatherings. However, they had a society at the block level initially (2018s). They mostly worked to raise money (monthly Rs. 100 from each family) and used it for communal purposes, such as paying for funeral costs and painting public spaces. Lack of responsibility caused the collections to shrink and eventually go inactive.

5

REFERENCES

Thilakarathna, K.A.A.N. (2018). A sociological perspective on the laksanda sevana (third stage) housing scheme project. Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities, [online] 4(2), pp.39–46. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348881930_A_sociological_perspective_on_the_laksanda_sevana_third_stage_housing_scheme_project [Accessed 28 Sep. 2021].