

## **Socio-Economic Issues due to Urban Development Activities in Negombo, Sri Lanka**

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**Abstract :** It is necessary to carry out sustainable development activities as per the requirements. But it remains an incredibly challenging issue. Therefore, this study is to explore the socio-economic issues and management activities of the Urban development activities. The study was conducted Negombo municipal council area. The objective of the research is to identify socio-economic issues and causes found in Negombo and exploring how the factors of urban development, managed in the study area. To obtain the primary data, 150 questionnaires were provided on a clustered sampling method and unstructured interviews were conducted with the public health officer and the development officers of Negombo divisional secretariat. Meanwhile, some data were obtained through observation. Moreover, secondary data were collected through the divisional secretariate division report, municipal council report, published and unpublished materials. According to the research, infrastructure development (38%) and economic-based developments (28.5%) have been extremely high as urban development activity in Negombo during 2009 – 2019. Thus, socio-economic issues such as traffic congestion, solid waste issues, high-level demand on land, and price increasing for land have identified in the study area. Several suggestions have been proposed to overcome the challenges of this study.

**Keywords:** Development, Issues, Socio-economic, Urban

**Introduction:** Explanation of the terms Urban and Development is essential when researching urban development (UD) issues. Usually, a surrounding region of a city called as Urban area. These are developed, densely populated and More people will engage in non-agricultural occupations. The term ‘Development’ means, the progress of the whole social system towards progress and the complete fulfillment of social needs and growth. Large cities, towns and even small neighborhoods do not spring up overnight. They are the result of careful planning by civil and design engineers, project managers, architects, environmental planners, and surveyors. The integration of these disciplines is known as urban development. Urban development is a system of residential expansion that creates cities. Residential areas are the primary focus of urban development. Urban development occurs by expansion into

unpopulated areas and/or the renovation of decaying regions (Brooks, 2017). Nowadays UD is identified as something that everyone wants and the problems that arise from them are seen as massive challenges. Hence the impetus for this study.

UD issues are seen as closely related to the urbanization process. The urbanization is the increases number of people living in an urban area and the evolution of the nature of a rural area into a city or the integration of a rural area with a major city. So that, all such activities depend on UD activities. Studies show that urban populations are on the rise, especially in developing countries. Currently, 54 % of the world's population live in cities. This amount is predicted to increase to 66% by 2050. It is also expected to be 62 % in Asia, 65 % in Africa and 90 % in Latin America (The guardian paper> 2015). So, the population of urban areas may be larger than rural areas. The main reason for this is that urbanization and UD projects are taking place widely in various countries.

By 2050, the urban population has expected to exceed one billion, and a third of them would be slum dwellers. This is a massive problem of urbanization. Meanwhile, it is an undeniable fact that UD activities in countries around the world are causing various social, economic, and environmental challenges. Various management activities have been undertaken to overcome such challenges. For example, the 1994 conference in Manchester on "Cities and Sustainable Development" with international participation and subsequent conferences at various times. The most important of these is the United Nations Conference on Habitat 3, Housing and Sustainable Urban Development.

In the case of Sri Lanka, extensive UD projects are being carried out in various parts of the country following end of 30-year war. Accordingly, in collaboration with the 100 Days Special Program of the Government of Sri Lanka for Good Governance, the Rural Development Programs covering the entire island have been implemented under the Housing and Samurdhi Government's Village Development Program covering the entire island.

Sri Lanka consists of 23 Municipal Councils (MC) and 41 Urban councils. The Negombo MC, which is the study area, is also included in this. Also, Negombo city is in Great western coastal zone of tourism. Thus, various issues have arisen in the area due to the rapid development activities carried out here. For example, environmental issues such as coastal erosion, canal pollution, wetland issues and climate change have arisen. There is also the land demand, rising prices for land, traffic congestion, solid waste disposal problems, illegal activities along with drainage blockages and health problems. Various activities are being carried out in the area

from time to time to manage such issues. Therefore, the study has been conducted and find on the social and economic issues and their management activities. Also, some of the recommendations have been made to address to mitigate these issues in efficient and effective way in study area.

**Study area:** The study area of Negombo is located in the Gampaha District of the Western Province. The city covers an area of around 30.8 km<sup>2</sup> (5220 ha). It is located is located between 7.06<sup>0</sup> - 7.16<sup>0</sup> North latitude and 79.49<sup>0</sup> - 79.56<sup>0</sup> East longitude, Meanwhile 32.0 km from north of Colombo, commercial capital of Sri Lanka. The region is surrounded on the north by Ma Oya, on the east by DepaEla, on the south by Diyakonda Ela and on the west by sea and lagoon. In terms of regional climate, the average annual rainfall is 122 cm, and the annual temperature is 270 C. Out of 38,060 families, a total of 157,124 live here (Negombo Divisional Secretariat, 2017).

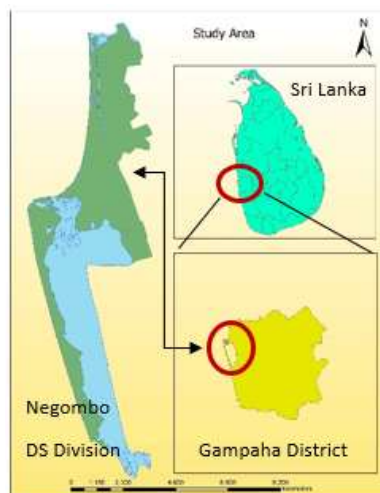


Fig.1: Study Area

**Objective of the study:** This research is structured with a main objective and sub-objectives. The main objective of the study is to identify the urban socio-economic issues and their management activities in developing Sri Lanka, based on the city of Negombo. The study has three other sub-objectives to achieve this main goal.

#### Sub Objectives

- Identifying socio-economic issues found in Negombo.
- Find outs the causes of socio-economic issues.
- Exploring how factors are managed in the study area.

**Methodology:** This is a descriptive statistical study. Quantitative and qualitative data were obtained for this study to achieve the goal and objective of the study. To obtain the primary data, 150 questionnaires were provided on a clustered sampling method and unstructured interview was conducted with the Negombo Municipal Council (NMC) Public Health Officer and the Development Officers in each GN divisions of Negombo Divisional Secretariat (NDS). At the same time some data were obtained through observation. Secondary data were collected by NDS report, NMC report, published and unpublished sources, books, paper articles, research, statistical reports and especially some information gathered from Topographic sheets and Google Earth. Data analyzing for the research done through ArcMap 10, Google Earth Pro, MS Excel 365.

Table 1 - Method of Questionnaire Survey

<b>Stack holders</b>	<b>No. of Questionnaires</b>
Government Organizations	20
Non-Government Organizations	05
Societies	05
Public (3 people/G. N)	120
Total	150

**Literature review:** The book *Cities in stress: A new look at the urban crisis* (Gottdiener, 1986) explores urban crises. It refers to the economic downturn of Boston and other metropolises in the 20th century. In addition, the book explores the construction explosion in metropolitan areas, the expansion of services, the urban financial crisis, development, and economic policies during urban poverty. Also, the effects of the urban crisis have been measured by personal spending and employment. So, it is possible that urban issues are referred to here only economically as urban populism and the urban financial crisis. But there is no mention of other issues that people face.

The study *Urban Community Development* examines Indian cities based on urban social development and urbanization and urban poverty by Thudipara, in 2007. Lack of trust in urban water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, and urban population has been reported. At the same time, it mentions how to develop and organize the community in a city and how to carry out human resource development. In this sense, the study focuses on the social problems in the cities, especially the slum dwellers and their development.

**Result and Discussion:** It can be observed that in recent times there has been a massive demand for land in the city of Negombo and its suburbs. This may be due to the high level of development activities taking place in these areas. The interest of many national and international investors in increasing such development initiatives is seen as a key factor. At the same time, luxury apartments are being built in various parts of the city, attracting many traders and stakeholders internationally and relocating others into the city.

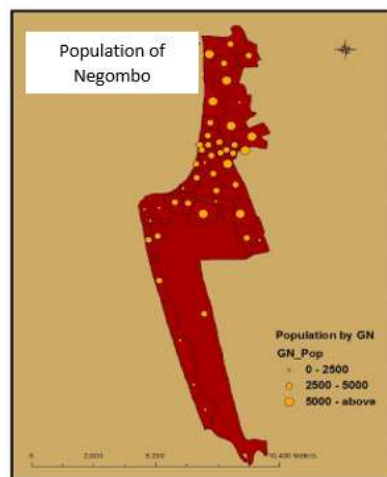


Fig. 2: Total population in Negombo by GN divisions - 2019

Details of the population in Negombo is given in Figure - 02 based on GN Division. According to the research, areas such as Taladuwa, Akurukaramulla and Hunupitiya are inhabited by more than 5000 people and Pitipanna and Dhuwa by less than 2500 people. It is noteworthy that the demand for land in certain areas is increasing due to such increasing population. At the same time, the high cost of living in the city of Negombo has raised the demand of housing in the suburbs as well. That is, the growing population and better public transport service connect the city of Negombo with its suburbs. Meanwhile, various development activities have been carried out in the area from time to time. Figure 2 shows the slowest growth rate of population in coastal and wetlands areas and the fastest growing population in other parts of the city with high infrastructure. The city of Negombo is becoming more prosperous due to the development of tourism. It is noteworthy that tourists are extremely interested in renting houses in the area. Thus, the infrastructure in these areas may be being developed. Based on the data thus obtained, the development activities taking place in the area are indicated by Figure 03.



Fig. 3 - Urban Development Activities in Negombo – 2019

According to the research, residential development activities play a major role (27%) in the city of Negombo and tourism development next to it (18%). Table 2 mentions the development activities carried out in Negombo from 2009 to 2019.

The community development and educational development that took place in research area is 9.5 % in this time. Housing Scheme for the Tsunami affected People, the Reconstruction of the General Hospital and Training for women self-employment program which is carried by NMC are the main community-based development activities in Negombo. As well as increment of school building blocks and improving private and public educational institutions are major activities in educational development. Meanwhile infrastructure development that took place in study area is 38%. Such as road development, expansion of drainage and drainage system etc.

Table 2 - Progress of development activities carried out in the city of Negombo during the period 2009 – 2019.

Type of development	Percentage (%)
Community development	9.5
Educational development	9.5
Economic development	28.5
Cultural development	14.2
Infrastructure development	38

**Urban development issues in study area:** The implementation of a development plan in an area has a variety of impacts there. Unless any development has a lot of positive implications, approval for the project will not be granted. Therefore, the most positive effects can be seen in any development. Despite some of the negative effects found in them become massive problems over time. Thus, the study looks at the socio-economic basis of the impact on the urban development issues identified in the study area.

**Socio – Economic issues**

**Land demand:** The demand for land in Negombo is increasing due to factors such as development activities, employment, and the urbanization. The study found that such highest land demand was more prevalent in urban areas than in coastal areas. Based on this survey, the demand for land in coastal areas such as Vellaveediya and Sethappaduwa is less than in other areas. The reason for this is that the 2004 tsunami and the region are at risk of sea erosion. Based on the data obtained from the people of the area, “these areas have less infrastructure facilities than other areas and the reasons for the low land demand in these areas are the lack of facilities for access to services such as health and education”.



Fig. 4 - Land demand by GN Division, Negombo – 2019

According to the figure – 04, the demand for land is higher in areas like Kochchikade, Periyamulla, Hanupitiya, and Taladuwa. For example, demands of 80 % found in Taladuwa area meanwhile 18 % found in Sethappaduwa area. “Thus, it is possible to observe vertically developed buildings in Taladuwa. Also, it can be observed that the settlements in these areas have become like a ‘tropical island’ due to their high density” said, one of DO of NDS division.

**Traffic congestion:** There is a massive link between a regional development and the traffic congestion that exists there. People from the suburbs, neighboring cities and tourists visit to Negombo daily for several reasons. No traffic congestion was observed in all parts of the study area, but it was observed at Kochchikade junction, Deen Junction, Kudapadu beach road, Dhaluwakottuwa and Periyamulla Junction (A3 Road). The Colombo-Puttalam main road (A3) passing through the city of Negombo is one of the factors in the traffic congestion here. Based on this survey, it is noteworthy that the Public Government Hospital is in the city as another reason for the traffic congestion in these areas.



Fig. 5 - Period of the highest traffic congestion in the study area within 24 hours.

Figure 5 shows, Period of the highest traffic congestion in the study area within 24 hours. According to this, there are two highest peaks in the diagram which are indicate the time of 7 in the morning and 6 in the evening. Usually, these times are heavy traffic in the research area due to those who are going to workplaces and Schools and those who come to the city for other needs. Also, 5 to 6 in the morning and evening are visitor time for patients in GH too. Thus, high percentage (35%) of traffic are recorded in these particular times in the study area.

**Increasing land price:** The price of land in Negombo is generally extremely high, but the price not same in all areas. although prices are lower in certain areas, but its twice as high in many areas due to the direct and indirect influence of the development. This is because development activities are not uniform in all areas. So, the demand and price of the land varies from region to region. As such, areas with modern infrastructure such as Taladuwa, Angurukaramulla and Hangurana Kudapaduwa are found areas where a perch can cost up to Rs. 6 lakhs. Meanwhile areas like Munnakkarai, Dhuwa and Pallansena, the price of land is less than Rs. 3 lakhs. Figure 6 illustrates this.

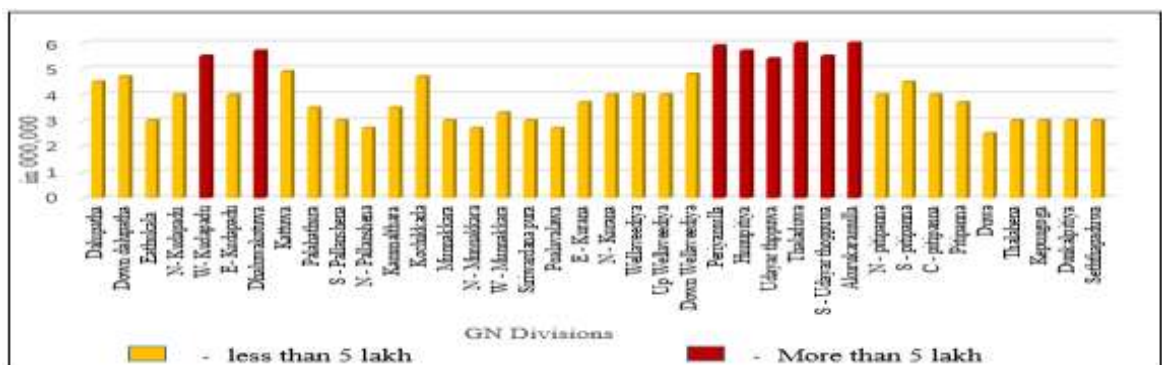


Fig. 6 - Price of land by GN Division, Negombo – 2019



The opinion of a resident regarding the increase in the price of land: "People are not able to build their own houses and most of them are living in rented houses, Others are setting up illegal residences. Often the rent of houses and shops varies according to the development of the respective areas" he said.

**Management activities and practical challenges:** Developments are essential in any area to meet the needs of the times. However, it is also essential to disparage the problems caused by them. The results are intended based on an analysis of the management activities related to urban development issues in the city of Negombo. In addition, some of these management activities are currently being implemented in the area and some are planned to be implemented soon.

**Reducing the pressure on the ground:** One of the most important of the identified issues are the demand of land and the increase in prices. People living in Negombo face various difficulties due to this issue. As a result, the number of people living in rented houses is high and the rent is increasing continuously. To manage this, bank loans, land grants and government housing schemes can be carried out for the homeless in densely populated areas. This will prevent the formation of illegal settlements and slums. It can also prevent the formation of urban heatwaves. It is noteworthy that such management activities were carried out in the early days.

- During the period 1988-1989, the late President Premadasa handed over lands to the permanent homeless in Negombo - Kadolkela.
- Establishment of multi-storied block apartments in Kudapadu and Taladuwa GN Divisions by a non-governmental foreign organization for the coastal people affected by the 2004 tsunami.

**Controlling traffic congestion:** Traffic congestion and road accidents are on the rise due to the increasing number of vehicles in study area. As a result, more lives and more human time are lost. As management measures in study area to control these,

- Increased the width of the roads and number of paths.
- included traffic lights with timer.
- created new rules when issuing a vehicle license. For examples include increasing the duration of training and the age limit, medical examinations and taking written exams are some of them.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:** Through this study, Negombo MCA has explored. Further development activities such as Community development (9.5%), educational development (9.5%), Economic development (28.5%), Cultural development (14.2%), and Infrastructure development (38%) carried out in the study area during the period from 2009 to 2019. Over time those development activities start to make trouble in Negombo MCA. Thus, those issues are presented as socio – economic issues such as traffic congestion, solid waste issues, high-level demand on land, and price increasing for land have classified in terms of impact in this study. It also outlines the management measures which is taken in the study area to address these issues and the constraints contained therein.

Therefore, alternative measures in the study area are recommended here. Such as a cost-effective way to increase the availability of social housing and mortgages could offered by various banks to prevent the formation of illegal settlements and homelessness. Increasing the number of public transport and improving the quality of rail transport and water transport. Also making them more efficient to attract people, like placing the electronic board on each bus stops or providing app for the android that shows buses' location and arrival time. The number of private transport vehicles can be controlled by arranging staff transport services by public and private institutions. Meanwhile could reduce the traffic congestion, by divert the heavy vehicle to alternative way (Negombo to Colombo via Pitipanna beach road). These are not only at the Government level but also at the private sector level. Appropriate benefit can also be achieved through implementation with the participation of the public.

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