Relocation Experience of Urban Under-served Households

Abstract

The study objective was to understand the lived experience of families that were moved from urban under-served settlements to government built low-income high-rises. 735 households were surveyed, which included households that had moved into allotted apartments in the high-rises, and for comparison purposes, those still living in under-served settlements awaiting allotment of houses in high-rises. The data collected from these households comprises of perceptions and lived experiences of the surveyed population. This data provides an exhaustive list of explanatory variables, relating to housing and respondent characteristics, social connectedness, the perceptions of security and vulnerability to external shocks.

This particular dataset, therefore, is useful for researchers, policy makers and urban planners to understand prevailing issues in relocation processes and to enhance the well-being of existing dwellers in high-rises. This dataset is equally useful for planning future resettlement processes with "lessons learnt" from existing resettlement processes. It is also useful for researchers to identify patterns and trends visible within the community to prescribe policy solutions for urban under-served settlements.

Background & Summary

Half of the population in Colombo, the business capital of Sri Lanka is assessed to be living in under-served settlements (Biller & Nabi, 2013). Those living in under-served settlements endure varying quality of housing, poor environment due to poor quality drainage/ wastewater management and frequent flooding hazards. Although contested, both in Sri Lanka and overseas (Herzfeld, 2017; Wijayasinghe, 2010; Fernandes, 2004), settling such persons in high-rises has been pursued (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, 2019; Resources Development Consultants (Pvt) Ltd, 2011).

In early 2015, a Committee consisting of relevant government institutions and civil society organisations was established to assess the relocation that had been carried out until then. CEPA agreed to carry out a survey to gain insights on experiences of those who had been relocated and the database to be shared consists of data collected for this purpose.

Methods

The objective of this study was to understand the lived experience of those settling from urban under-served settlements to government built low-income high-rises. For this purpose, we attempted to carry out a census in two locations which were selected in consultation with the government institution that was responsible for the relocation of the residents. In one location, families had moved into their allotted high-rises. For the purpose of comparison, households in an adjacent area, living in an underserved settlement, but awaiting relocation to a high-rise was surveyed. Altogether there were 971 households in these two locations, we could survey only 749 households. This was because some of the households were unoccupied at the time of the survey; adults (aged 18 and above) or adults who could respond to our questions not being at home; and refusal of some of the households to participate in the survey. In addition to these two locations, a third set of households, 53 in total were also surveyed for comparison purpose. This third group of households had been moved into an adjacent high-rise and were originally from the under-served settlement that we had surveyed.

The tool was developed in consultation with the community, government institution that was responsible for the relocation of the residents and a non-governmental entity that was responsible for the social mobilisation of the people being moved into the high-rises. We obtained the views of the community through focus group discussions on advantages and disadvantages on living both in high-rises, as well as, in under-served settlements. We used the sustainable livelihood framework to organise the questionnaire as several elements of the framework that included shocks, assets, the residents' interactions with service providers and outcomes that included income, well-being, vulnerabilities, and their agency were important to understand the living context of surveyed communities. The developed questionnaires were presented to the government and non-governmental entities that were engaged in the process and improved based on their comments. The questionnaire was then tested on 12 households to understand coverage of issues and the reasonability of the time taken to carry out the survey. One of the prime concerns expressed by the respondents during the pilot survey was the time taken to carry out a survey, hence, the survey questionnaire was finalised by removing questions that were not related to the survey subject, such as respondent's history of settling in the underserved settlement.

The enumeration was carried out by students who were receiving training on urban planning and sociology. They were trained over a period of three days on the questionnaire, and the data collection was carried out between December 2015 and January 2016. Electronic tablets were used to improve the efficiency of data collection.

Data Records

The data was collected from 802 households from three locations in Colombo. This included households living in two separate high rises and an adjacent under-served settlement. During the cleaning of the database, 67 records were eliminated. The main reasons for such elimination were incompleteness of the data and/or the respondent person stating lack of knowledge of household information (usually people over the age of 65). The male to female respondent ratio, when considering all the households surveyed, is almost even (Table 1).

Table 1: Surveyed Households

Location	Number of surveyed households	As a percentage of the households surveyed	Female Respondent
Under-served Settlement	236	32%	43%
High rise1	446	61%	55%
High rise2	53	7%	66%
Total	**735**		**52%**

Source: Survey data

For those currently living in high rises, data was collected on their lived experience in both in high-rises (current) and when previously they lived in urban under-served settlements (previous location). For those currently living in under-served settlements, information was collected only of their current living condition.

The dimensions and the variables for which data is published from each household is in Table 2. The purpose for which each of the dimensions was included in the questionnaire is described below:

- Physical assets (Dimensions II & III) – Housing characteristics amongst household in the under-served settlements, even within the same settlement, varies considerably. These

houses can range from houses constructed with unstable material to permanent large houses. During relocation, all households were moved to high-rises and hence housing characteristics and household asset questions were asked to understand prosperity and/or vulnerability of the households.

- Shocks (Dimension IV and V) – under-served settlements largely consist of people settling in reservation areas in urban localities such as on the banks of canals/ waterways and along railway tracks. During the initial discussions with the community, they expressed that the main shock they experienced was flooding. Hence the questionnaire includes questions related to the impact of flooding.
- Basic services by services providers (Dimension VI) – In general, under-served settlements have weaker services in relation to sewerage, sanitation, and access roads due to informality of these settlements. These services are integral part of the high-rises and the questionnaire includes questions to understand whether there is difference in the services.
- Living environment (Dimension VII and VIII)
    - The community living in under-served settlements stated that the proximity of the living arrangements and the proximity of the land they live to water bodies affects their living arrangements, hence, proxy indicators are included in the questionnaire.
    - In focus group discussions, the community living in high-rises were concerned of management of public areas (e.g. corridors) and facilities (e.g. lift) and hence is included in the questionnaire. Similar facilities are not available in under-served settlements and therefore, this question was not asked from those in under-served settlements.
- Security (Dimensions IX, XIV)– Under-served settlements, due to proximity of houses, collegiality of neighbours and the house entrance being visible to many houses, provide informal security for women and children, but they also consist of pockets that are dens of vice. High-rises provide security in private spaces, but it required understanding about public spaces and therefore, security questions were included in the questionnaire.
- Capabilities (Dimensions X, XI)–Questions were included on access to education facilities for children and on health to understand current health related status. The health related questions were only asked for the "current" period.
- Social connectedness (Dimensions XII) –Proxy indicators to understand respondents level of influence, agency and relatedness are included in the questionnaire.
- Recreation facilities for children (Dimension XIII) – Questions on recreation facilities for children were included to understand availability of such common facilities as part of the high-rises as well in under-served settlements.
- Dimension (XV) asks a single question on overall satisfaction of the respondents of their current living conditions.
- Dimension (XVI, XVII) – Control information on the household characteristics and the financial status of the Household.

Table 2: Description of variables in the database

Dimensions	Variables
I. Location	Currently in High-rise/ Underserved settlement
II. Current and prior to move housing characteristics and facilities	Roof material
	Wall material
	Floor material
	Number of rooms (any permanently partitioned space considers as a room)

Dimensions	Variables
	Number of Levels of the house
	Floor area (sq feet)
	Toilet type
	Water Supply type
	Electricity supply availability
III. Current and prior to move Assets - availability	Radio
	TV
	Telephone
	Computer
	Motorbike
	Three-wheeler
	Vehicle
	Refrigerator
	Fan bed
	Table chair
	Sofa
	Gas cooker
	Other houses own
	Other land own
IV. Does your current / previous location affect by flood	Does flood affect your scheme/ settlement area
	Affects House
	Access to other areas from home
	Affects drainage system
	School Attendance
	Work Attendance
V. Costs associated with current previous location due to floods	Cleaning the house and surrounding
	Repairing or replacing cost (new furniture, repair the drainage system)
	Missed/forgone income
VI. Current and previous Services	Water
	Sanitation
	Sewerage
	Electricity
	Service Road
	Garbage Collection
VII. Current and previous housing environment	Living space
	Floor - dampness
	Mosquitoes/flies
	Noise
	Ventilation
VIII. Common area's current location in high rise (similar facilities are not available in under-served settlements)	Corridors
	Staircase
	Lift
IX. Security in current and previous location Security	Overall Security
	Security at the entrance
	Security of children
	Security of vehicles
	General access to transport

Dimensions	Variables
X. Access to Education – Current and previous location	Access to additional education – tuition
	Access to schools
XI. Disease and treatment (only current are available)	Vector borne Diseases
	Infectious diseases
	Skin disease
	Non-communicable diseases
	Ability to treat
XII. Current and previous Membership/ involvement	Member of Trade organization
	Member of housing complex organization
	Office bearer of housing complex
	Member of political party
	Member of other associations
	Member of Community based organisations
XIII. Availability of play area in the current and previous location	Children park
	Playground
XIV. Social Issues – Current and previous location	Alcohol and drug related issues
	Women's safety
	Noise
	Fights
	Robbery
XV. Overall Satisfaction in current location	Overall Satisfaction
XVI. Respondent Characteristics	Ethnicity
	Respondent Gender
	Age of the respondent
	Respondent education
XVII. Financial Status	Have borrowing
	Samurdhi recipient (government assistance programme)
	Family income (Rs)– *summation of all sources that were indicated by the respondent*
	Family Expenditure (Rs)
	Family Expenditure prior to moving to high-rise

The above variables are only part of the information that was collected from the household during the survey. Sensitive data in terms of private information, including household member details have been removed from this shared database. This will result in some of the dimensions, especially women's economic activity, not being available for analysis.

Technical Validation

The design of the data collection was fashioned to be able to compare and contrast lived experience of those who had moved into high-rise buildings, as well as, still continuing to live in under-served settlements. The following comparisons are possible:

- Between those living in under-served settlements and high-rises.
- Between those living in high-rises, as a second smaller sample from a nearby high-rise is available.
- For the families that had moved into high-rises, their experience of living *previously* in under-served settlements and *currently* in high-rises.

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