

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers in Urban Poverty Alleviation in Sri Lanka

journal or publication title	Economics & Management Series
year	2005-11-01
URL	http://id.nii.ac.jp/1509/00000363/

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers in Urban Poverty Alleviation in Sri Lanka

By

W. D. Lakshman and N. S. Cooray¹

Abstract: Development strategies based on centralised public investment and profit motivated private sector leadership, without suitable modifications to address poverty issues, have shown limited success in poverty reduction in many developing countries. It is in this background that participatory development programmes have come to be advocated as necessary add-ons to development strategies based on programmes of public and private investment. As part of participatory development strategies, the desirability of the empowerment of the poor has come to be emphasised as a long-term solution to poverty. The importance of opening up avenues for the poor to generate their own sources of income and providing them with basic amenities of life are being highlighted.

Most participatory development exercises are to be found in the setting of poor rural communities. This paper examines a series of participatory development interventions in urban poor settings in Sri Lanka. These interventions have been made with the assistance and involvement of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) programme. The paper explains the contextual background of the work of JOCV members in urban poverty reduction work within selected locations. It reports the results of an extensive interview survey of the programmes' beneficiaries and evaluates the effectiveness, sustainability, and relevance of community participation programmes of poverty reduction in urban settings. The authors argue that a foreign aided programme of this nature could achieve a great deal more in community development if the necessary local institutional adjustments are facilitated and the programme's elements of community participation and collaboration are strengthened.

JEL Classification: I38, J24

Key words: Community development, participatory approach, urban poverty, local institutional capacity, Sri Lanka, JOCV

¹ At present W. D. Lakshman is Professor of Economics, Saga University, on leave from the University of Colombo. He was formerly Vice-Chancellor of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. N. S. Cooray is an Associate Professor of International University of Japan. The second author would like to thank IUJ for providing a research grant.

I. Introduction

Sri Lanka has 19 million people, with a per capita Gross National Product of a little less than US\$ 900. In international comparisons of countries by level of development, Sri Lanka occupies a somewhat higher ranking in terms of social indicators and the human development index than in terms of per capita income. Yet, available data suggest that there is still an unwelcome degree of poverty in the country. Different available studies would place poverty incidence in Sri Lanka at different levels, depending on the poverty line used in the quantification and the primary income/ consumption data used. Overall, many recent studies on poverty in the country would indicate an incidence of poverty of around 25 per cent in terms of the headcount ratio of people below poverty line. Poverty studies in Sri Lanka suggest that the poverty incidence has been the highest in the rural sector and the lowest in the estate sector, with the urban sector lying in between².

Sri Lanka's population has remained predominantly rural. Economic and social policy has been conscious of dangers of unbridled urbanization of a developing society and has therefore deliberately introduced measures to contain the rate of Sri Lanka's urbanization. That these measures have had some success is evident from the urban population constituting less than a quarter of the total even today.

Urban poverty in Sri Lanka is, as compared to rural poverty, smaller in magnitude both in absolute and relative terms. Yet, in terms of intensity and depth, poverty in some urban pockets like slum and shanty settlements remains high, posing tough policy challenges. The urban poor, in these overcrowded and unsanitary slum and squatter settlements, live without adequate access to basic infrastructure facilities and social services. Their settlements are often located on marginal land – along river /canal banks, railway lines, steep slopes and near garbage dumps. These people are, therefore, prone to natural and man-made disasters and, susceptible to disease and generally poor health conditions. As they are engaged in low remuneration jobs, their earnings and consumption levels are sub-standard, preventing them from improving their living standards.

The illegal status of the slums and shanties they live in, the low public noise they can make, inadequacy in information flows to them and the discrimination they suffer from are some of the root causes for backward living standards of the urban poor. As a result, basic infrastructure facilities and services that are available in the towns they live in – e.g. pipe-borne water, electricity, wastewater disposal and solid waste collection facilities - are often denied to them. The lack of basic environmental facilities around the marginal land they live in often translate into higher rates of morbidity and lower life expectancy. Various risks of modernisation processes that are taking

² In the Sri Lankan statistical tradition, the society/ economy is broken down into three sectors – rural, estate and urban. If the more common two sector classification of rural and urban is adopted, then the estate sector in Sri Lanka would become a component of the wider concept of rural sector.

place around them – e.g. increasing vehicular traffic and industrial factory expansion – are added to health risks arising out of poor sanitation, lack of clean water, overcrowded, and poorly ventilated living and working environments. The consequent higher medical bills, lost working days and early deaths of family breadwinners further weaken their earnings and cement the cycle of poverty.

The children of the urban poor are unable to gain access to good education although the best educational institutions of their country are located in cities. Their children attend educational institutions with poor human resources and physical facilities. Rates of early drop out are high among children attending these schools. Similar comments are valid about public health and medical facilities, which these poor urban communities have access to. Educational and health facilities of such poor standards reinforce the cycle of poverty, any one dimension of poverty generally reinforcing other dimensions.

Pushed by the imperatives of a long domestic tradition of electoral democracy and the widespread global interest in poverty reduction in developing countries, the improvement of living standards of the poor has become one of the seriously addressed political issues and challenges in Sri Lanka during the recent past. Poverty alleviation has become an explicitly stated central policy objective since the second half of the 1980s. Despite the strong poverty-alleviation rhetoric, and many different institutional and other mechanisms adopted with apparently that view in mind, issues relating to poverty reduction and improvement of living standards of ordinary masses have continued to remain as policy issues of extreme complexity and difficulty.

At the sectoral level, poverty reduction policies in Sri Lanka have traditionally placed their priority on the sector that has incorporated the largest numbers in poverty and has therefore, been also the sector of the greatest significance from the point of view of electoral politics, namely the rural sector. Through a variety of regional development policies the government has also managed to moderate the rate of urbanization in the country, thereby postponing the emergence of urban poverty as a major political issue.

The pressures of urbanization, however, have become stronger during the recent past and the urban proportion is, therefore, projected to rise to 30 and 40 per cent by 2015 and 2030 respectively³. If this projected trend continues, the country will face, in the next few decades, an exacerbation of the socio-economic and environmental problems related to urbanization. These problems have hitherto been treated as politically not so critical and administratively easily manageable. History of global development is replete with cases of increasing urbanization bringing in its wake a rising level of urban poverty. This has not yet become a serious problem in Sri Lanka but if the rate of urbanisation rises to the above projected levels, Sri Lanka too

³ Table A 2, UN, *World Urbanization Prospects, 2001 Revision*, New York, UN , 2002.

might soon be subjected to such problems of growing urban poverty. Hence, the obvious need to formulate strategies for the proper management of urbanization processes in the country so that the accompanying economic, social, administrative, and environmental problems could effectively be addressed.

Development strategies based on centralised public investment and profit motivated private sector leadership, without suitable modifications to address poverty issues, have shown limited success in poverty reduction in many developing countries. It is in this background that participatory development programmes have come to be advocated as necessary add-ons to development strategies based on programmes of public and private investment. As part of participatory development strategies, the desirability of the empowerment of the poor has come to be emphasised as a long-term solution to poverty. In these strategies, the importance of opening up avenues for the poor to generate their own sources of income and providing them with basic amenities of life are being highlighted.

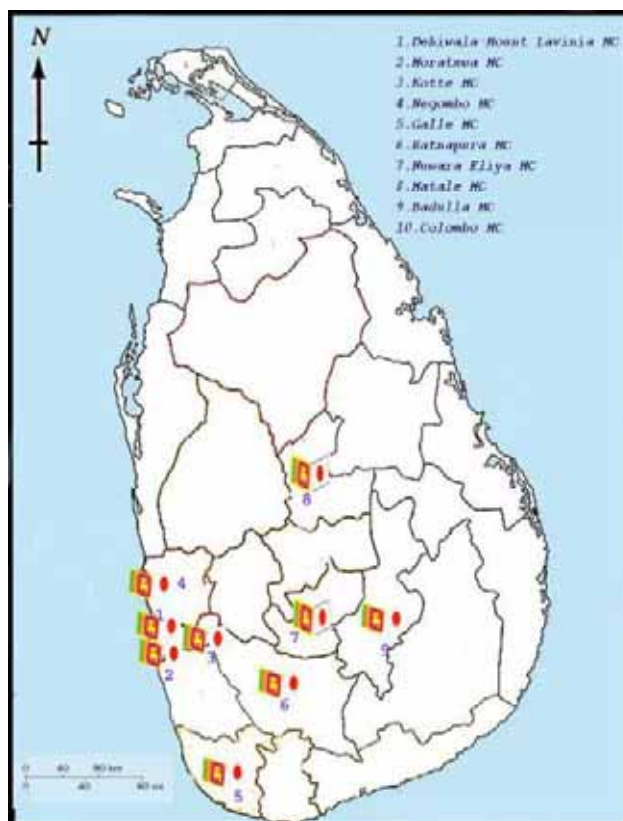
The foregoing paragraphs explain the contextual background of the work of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) in selected locations of urban Sri Lanka in the field of urban poverty reduction work. These are the Japanese volunteers serving in Sri Lanka under the overall supervision of an administrative unit within the Ministry of Housing and Plantation Infrastructure (MHPI). In what follows, this administrative unit – the urban poverty reduction unit – is called the “JOCV urban poor unit” (JOCV-UPU). The volunteer activities are carried out by JOCV members, dispatched to Sri Lanka by JICA. These volunteers, during their stay in Sri Lanka, are affiliated to Municipal Councils (MC), which are supposed to provide them the necessary administrative facilitation to undertake their urban poverty reduction activities.

The volunteer work concerned is carried out under the provisions of a memorandum of understanding signed between the government of Sri Lanka and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)⁴. This JOVC project to assist the urban poor has been conceptualized and implemented as a community development initiative in urban settlements to help the urban poor improve their life conditions. These JOCV-UPU activities are classified into five broad categories of objectives or fields of intervention: (a) community development (CD), (b) environmental management (EM), (c) health and public hygiene (HH), (d) education (ED) and (e) development of women (WD). Every initiative taken by the JOCV-UPU is placed under any one of these five categories (see Table 1). This is merely for administrative convenience. It is abundantly clear that the above five categories are mutually overlapping to a

⁴ The description in this paragraph refers to the current administrative arrangements regarding the JOCV-UPU activities. During the short history of these JOCV activities in urban poverty reduction, administrative arrangements and the local counterpart institutions have changed. These historical details of the institutional development have not been presented here as these details are thought not all that much relevant in the present research exercise.

considerable extent. The major thrust of JOCV-UPU projects is to deliver benefits in the long run on a sustainable basis, although the likely short-term benefits are not denied.

Map 1: JOCV Projects in Sri Lanka



Source: JOCV-UPU

As the largest donor to Sri Lanka, Japan is involved in many assistance programmes, ranging from very large and highly visible to very small and poorly visible programmes. The JOCV-UPU programme is very small in terms of funds spent on it by JICA within Sri Lanka but has a very high visibility of a special kind within the communities concerned, as it is implemented through a group of young Japanese volunteers who are living with the communities they try to help. This paper examines some performance related aspects of these JOCV-UPU activities but it goes beyond a mere performance evaluation. The operations of JOCV-UPU try to learn from, as well as to contribute to several areas of concern in the on-going development dialogue in the world. This paper attempts to address two of these areas of concern through its examination of the performance of JOCV-UPU in Sri Lanka.

First, there are some useful issues of donor – recipient relationships in development assistance programmes, which these JOCV-UPU activities throw some useful light on. The effectiveness of an aid programme would depend on its influences on the recipient organisation, its overall institutional effects and, to repeat the obvious, the commitment of all stake-holders in the relationship. The extent to which a recipient organisation (and the

beneficiaries it represents) participates in planning and decision-making, implementation and sharing of its benefits would influence the success of the aid project. Some of these general propositions about foreign assistance can be examined through this JOCV-UPU study.

Second, over many years the concern has been expressed within the on-going development dialogue about limitations of top-down approaches in achieving human development objectives. In the attempt to find alternative bottom-up approaches to development, various types of initiatives have been taken to establish systems of participatory development. The JOCV-UPU represents an attempt to achieve community development and urban poverty alleviation through community participation. Unlike other foreign funded programmes, this does not inject large externally generated funds into the urban life it attempts to improve. Its main focus is to extend knowledge and awareness to the community, so that the people concerned are empowered to secure access to available institutions. The JOCV-UPU attempts to achieve institutional development through participation without setting up any new large organisations. This paper tries to examine the participation methodology of the JOCV-UPU, highlighting some of its characteristic features which distinguish it from other available participatory methodologies.

The above research objectives behind this paper have relevance and significance beyond the specificities of Sri Lanka and the JOCV programme implemented therein. One attempts to achieve these broader objectives, however, on the basis of an evaluation of the specifics of the JOCV volunteer work in Sri Lanka. Evaluation of a project like the JOCV urban poor project is a delicate exercise, as it has covered a variety of activities, carried out with different specific objectives. In order to design their activities for the sustainable improvement of the well being of target communities, JOCV-UPU had to take into consideration, societal, economical and environmental factors. The evaluation of these activities also therefore, has to take a holistic (multi-dimensional) approach. Furthermore, factors taken into account in the evaluation would include those that have been both internal and external to the project. In the evaluation the short, medium and long run effects of project activities, both direct and indirect, the evaluator is compelled to use qualitative as well as quantitative information.

Section II of the paper provides a brief account of the nature of information on which this study is based and how this information is collected. Section III is an overview of the activities of the Japanese volunteers engaged in urban poverty alleviation work, followed by section IV which presents a profile of the population who have benefited from JOCV-UPU activities over the years. The analysis in this section is based on information collected from a questionnaire survey of a sample of project beneficiaries.

II. A Note on Data

As noted in the penultimate paragraph of section I, effects and impacts of JOCV-UPU activities have been of an intangible and qualitative nature and

therefore, not always amenable to quantification. For instance, programmes intended to create environmental awareness or to improve conditions of health and hygiene, and education, or to encourage participation of women in community activities would produce outcomes that are mostly behavioural and attitudinal. Outcomes of such activities could also be of a long-term nature, impacting on the communities concerned from many sides. The paper, therefore, uses both primary and secondary sources of information in a complementary manner so that the required holistic picture of JOCV-UPU activities can be obtained. The secondary sources used are basically various reports, the bulk of it unpublished and available in the relevant government offices and in the JICA-Sri Lanka office. Primary sources of information included the beneficiaries of JOCV activities, stakeholders, community members and community leaders. In addition, some information was collected also through field observations. Questionnaire surveys, in-depth case studies and participatory assessment have been the methods used to collect the data. Most of the quantitative information analysed in the paper has been collected from the questionnaire survey. Stakeholder interviews and case studies provided very useful supplementary information to complete the analysis in the paper.

Given the manner in which JOCV-UPU activities have developed over the years, there is at present no comprehensive list of all participants/beneficiaries of these activities. The option of drawing and using a randomly selected sample of participants and beneficiaries of these activities in order to obtain data is not therefore, available to the researcher. Methods of selection of the sample of beneficiaries had to be improvised to meet the objectives of the study. The methods so devised, as would be seen presently, are not very scientific, but would, it is hoped, provide us reasonably undistorted results. First, 7 municipal councils (MC) out of the 10 MCs (see Map 1) with JOCV-UPU activities have been chosen for study. These seven MCs incorporated 30 JOCV project locations (Table 1) although only 25 of these locations have been studied (see Table 2). The selection of the seven MCs was purposive. Some locations in Moratuwa and Ratnapura MCs were selected as they are reputed to be very successful JOCV projects. Galle was included in the sample frame because JOCV activities there have already been terminated. Matale and Nuwara Eliya, being up-country cities, were chosen as they present unique problems.

Table 1
JOCV Activities in Seven Municipalities

<i>MC and Location</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Dehiwala– Mount Lavinia MC area	
Hathare (4) Gattuwa Watta	Garbage Collection (HH), Micro Financing (WD)
Tis Hathe (37) Watta	Soap Producing (CD), Lavatory System (HH), Pre School (ED), English and Japanese classes (ED), Micro Financing (WD)
Badowita	Home Gardening (CD), Solid waste (EN), Women's Committee (WD), Dress Making (WD), Cookery Training (WD), Candle Making (WD), Knitting (WD), Micro financing (WD), Handicraft (WD), Drug Prevention Campaign (HH)
Walaw Watta	Micro financing (WD), Shramadana (EN)
Yashorapura	Drainage System (EN), Children Society (CD)
Gabada Watta	Women Committee (WD), Dressmaking (WD), Children Society (CD), Soap Making (WD), Micro financing (WD), Candle Making (WD), Environmental Education (EN)
Moratuwa MC Area	
Visydekee (Twenty Two) Watta	Women committee (WD), Child society (CD), Drainage System (EN)
Nugahawatta	HCDC (CD), Micro Financing (WD), Solid waste management (EN), Lavatory System (HH)
Joslin Antige Watta	Women Committee (WD)
Deewara Niwasa Watta	Women Committee (WD), Children Society (CD), Environmental Education (EN)
Ratnapura MC Area	
Samagipura	Water Project (CD), Micro financing (WD)
Batugedara	Road Construction (CD), Micro Financing (WD), Dress Making (WD)
Pompakele	Women Committee (CD), Shramadhana (En)
Goluwawila	Dress Making (WD), Micro Financing (WD), Home Gardening (EN), My Bag (EN)
Ratnapura Town Area	Pre School (ED)
Kotte MC Area	
Palliya Patumaga	Dress Making (WD)
Arunodaya Mawatha	Dress making (WD)
Bandaranayakapura	Dressmaking+ cookery classes (WD)
Obesekarapura	Dressmaking + Heath activities (WD+HH)
Badulla MC Area	
Badulla Town Area	Nutrition program (HH), Pre School (ED), Environment Education (EM)
Deiyannewela	Micro Financing (WD)
Kailagedara	Handicraft (WD)
Badulupitiya	Bell System (CD), Cookery class (WD), Micro Financing (WD)
Nuwara Eliya MC Area	
Nawagangoda	Micro Finance (WD), Home Gardening (CD)
Sandatenna	Solid Waste (EN)
Nuwara Eliya Town Area	Mobile Library (ED), Naritasun Pre School (ED)
Galle MC Area	
Walau Watta	Dress Making (WD)
Vijithapura	Health Volunteer Training (HH), Dress Making (WD), Montessori Training (ED)
Mahamodara Watta	Dressmaking (WD) Health Awareness (HH)
Wellsonpura	Dressmaking (WD)

Note: CD: community development, EM: environmental management; HH: health and public hygiene; ED: education; WD: development of women.

Having chosen the locations, the research team has selected the households to be surveyed through a random search. Households were visited

in each location at random until a household having had experience in participating in any of the JOCV programmes was encountered. Once the first household with that experience was identified, we have obtained from that household information about other JOCV project participants/ beneficiaries. On this basis we visited as many households as we could during the days allocated for field survey, i.e. about 3 to 4 days per location. The sample size has varied from one location to another. Depending on different conditions of accessibility of respondents, we were able to interview from a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 62 respondents from different MC areas. Altogether our sample consisted of 196 respondents from 7 MCs and 25 project locations. Distribution of the sample by MC and project locations are summarised in Table 2. There were quite understandable difficulties of obtaining information from respondents, the main problem being that of recall lapse, particularly in respect of events that occurred many months ago. In selecting respondent households from project locations, effort has been made to select, wherever possible, recent participants in JOCV projects.

This sample, though it was not selected strictly on a random basis, incorporates adequate numbers of projects from different activity groups and locations. The sample contains both successful and unsuccessful activities, which are important to distinguish between internal and external factors behind successes or failures. We found it necessary to understand whether the activities undertaken by JOCV members were demand-driven (true priority ranking) or are motivated by narrow personal/ political factors. In addition, future possibilities of these activities should also be evaluated. JOCV location based sampling is useful to understand individual, locational, and institutional factors, influencing the JOCV performance in different localities. We have made an attempt to ensure representation of the geographical diversity, which activities of the JOCV urban poor unit reflected. Direct beneficiaries of JOCV activities have been selected through methods of random sampling so that we could accurately assess the real impact of the programmes and projects concerned. Municipal Councils based junior JOCVs have also been interviewed for information about their experience and impressions about their programmes / projects / activities.

A few brief comments are in order about limitations of this study. Although JOCV-UPU claims to have chosen the activities undertaken in such a way as to incorporate five objectives/ fields of intervention, the overwhelming majority of projects actually implemented have been in the territory of community development. The sample used and conclusions derived in this study are therefore also likely to be biased in favour of community development projects. Furthermore, the uneven spread of tiny projects within any given MC area, which is quite vast in extent, makes it difficult for an evaluator to fully identify impacts of any individual project. The difficulty is exacerbated by a number of different agencies simultaneously carrying out similar projects. There are various voluntary organizations and public sector agencies operating in the field to achieve goals similar to JOCV's.

Table 1
Distribution of Sample by MC and Project Locations

Municipality and JOCV Project Areas	No. of households
Badulla	
Badulupitiy	5
Deyanwela	5
Kaylagedara	5
Badulla MC	5
Sub-total Badulla	20
Dehiwala Mt.Lavinia	
37 Watta	13
4 Gatewatta	7
Badowita	10
Gabadawatta	18
Walauwatta	7
Yashorapura	7
Sub-total Dehiwala Mt.Lavinia	62
Galle	
Vijithapura	5
Walawwatta	7
Sub-total Galle	12
Kotte MC	
Aruno.Mawa.	9
Palliya Pat	7
Sub-total Kotte	16
Moratuwa	
22 Wata	18
Deewa. N.W.	9
Jos.antiwat	5
Nuga:watta	13
Sub-total Moratuwa	45
Nuwara Eliya	
Naritasun N	7
Nawagango.	6
Sub-total Nuwara Eliya	13
Ratnapura	
Batugedara	7
Goluwawela	7
Ratnapura MC	4
Pompakale	3
Samagipura	7
Sub-total Ratnapura	28
Grand Total	196

Source: Survey 2003

Some limitations of the study are also related to the nature and quality of the data used in the study. Given the shortcomings under which the data collection on field was carried out some biases are unavoidable. Furthermore,

as the number of respondents from each project location is not large enough, the information provided by the respondents interviewed cannot be used to make conclusive judgements about individual project activities. Another data bias has been created by our inclusion of only very recent project activity participants in order to address the recall lapse problems. What needs to be noted, however, is that adequate caution has been exercised to avoid these data biases from affecting the conclusions presented in the paper.

III. Volunteer Activities: An Overview

As already noted, the activities undertaken by the JOCV members in urban Sri Lanka have usually been of a tiny character, both in terms of their visibility and the amount of resource inputs utilised on them, although some of them are observed to have produced significant long term social impacts. Tables 1 to 3 present listings of these activities under different systems of classification.

Table 3
More Common Activities of Volunteers of JOCV-UPU

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Community Development	Strengthening Community Development Councils (CDC); Coordination between community and governmental line agencies; Promotion of participatory community development activities; Evaluation of social resources; Promotion of schooling in low-income settlements; Support for the development of socio-economic infrastructures etc.
Environmental Management	Coordination of and involvement in various activities on municipal solid waste management (SWM), recycling and composting; Environmental education; Cleaning and awareness programmes, Environmental friendly marketing activities (e.g. My Bag Campaign); Promotion of use of compost fertiliser etc.
Health and Public Hygiene	Health consultation; Provision of cookery requirements; Health volunteer training; Improvement of clinic services; 1 and ½ year old infant examination; Sexual education (for teenagers); Cookery training classes; Establishment of pre-schools (for disabled persons) etc.
Education	Promotion of schooling among children; Literacy class (for adults); Improvement of pre-schooling; Training for pre-school (e.g. Montessori) teachers; Development of societies of children and the youth; Development of library societies and sports clubs; Provision of mobile library services; Positive thinking training etc.
Development of Women	Micro finance programs (through Women's Bank); Training in dressmaking, candle-making, handicrafts, knitting and fabric painting; Beauty culture classes; Training and awareness programs on home gardening; Formation of business groups; etc.

These JOCV activities have been cooperative efforts involving a number of stakeholders – from the JOCV side, the Senior Volunteer in charge of the

JOCV-UPU located in the local counterpart Ministry and the other volunteers, from the local government side, the Community Development Officer / Community Development Assistant (CDO/CDA) of the MC concerned, and from beneficiaries' side, various community based organisations (CBOs) such as women's, children's and youth societies, working together with JOCV personnel. In certain instances, there is evidence of participation of community leaders as well – e.g. religious leaders and senior citizens – in these joint activities. Further, JOCV volunteers have also developed the practice of working with other NGOs and CBOs. The success or failure of any JOCV project would thus depend on commitment, capacity and mutual understanding of all these stakeholders.

Literature reviews and stakeholder interview show that JOCV initiatives have been very strongly bottom-up in nature, in the sense that the initial idea in any activity had come from the beneficiary-communities. The primary mechanism, which most of these projects have used for community development and other purposes, has had three main elements:

- transfer of knowledge, awareness and skills to beneficiary community members;
- facilitation of organisation of social groups and community action programmes; and
- the build up of links between community members and service provider organisations, on the one hand, and between Sri Lankan partner organisations and donor agencies (usually those in Japan), on the other.

JOCV workers are expected to work with a small budget. The most valuable resource they have is their own time, skill, competency and energy. Generally speaking, the JOCV workers in urban Sri Lanka appear to have quite effectively used their skills and capabilities to play the above three-fold role for community development, winning the hearts of the target communities in the process.

IV. A Profile of JOCV-UPU Beneficiary Households

This section is based on questionnaire responses received from 196 persons representing that number of households/ families who have directly benefited from JOCV projects. The average family size in this sample has been slightly less than 5. The total number of persons in these 196 households/ families was 858. Table 4 shows some basic structural characteristics of this sample.

First, women constitute the majority of direct beneficiaries of JOCV initiatives, comprising of over 85 per cent of sample. The majority of project participants have been married housewives, widows and/ or divorced/ separated women. Participation by household heads and the youth in JOCV project activities has been relatively low. The average age of the respondents is nearly 30 years and the average period of education they have gone

through is 8 years. Out of 196 respondents in the sample, nearly 70 per cent have participated in projects for development of women (WD), again indicating the dominant presence of women among these project participants.

Table 4
Characteristics of Respondents and Their Families

Table 5.3: Characteristics of Respondents and Their Families

	<i>No.</i>	<i>per cent</i>
Gender Composition		
Male	24	12.24
Female	172	87.76
Average Level of Education of Respondent (Years)	8.05	
Average Age of Respondents (Years)	29.45	
Ethnicity		
Sinhala	154	78.57
Tamil	32	16.33
Moors	9	4.59
Project Involvement		
Community Development (CD)	65	33.16
Environmental Management (EM)	30	15.31
Health and Hygiene (HH)	25	12.76
Education (ED)	42	21.43
Women Development (WD)	134	68.37
Residence of the Settlement		
From Birth	122	62.24
Migrated	74	37.76
Marital Status		
Currently Married	144	73.47
Never Married	24	12.24
Widow/Divorced	8	4.08
Separated	6	3.06
Other	14	7.14
Relation to Head of the Household		
Head of Household	31	15.82
Spouse	121	61.73
Other Elderly Members	17	8.67
Children	27	13.78
Family Type		
Nuclear Family	156	79.59
Extended Family	40	20.41
Family Size	4.85	
Average Income Rs.	5,821	
Average Level of Education (years)	6.41	
Unemployment Rate	0.22	

Source: Survey

Sri Lanka has had many participatory development projects, with or without foreign aid involvement. Such participatory initiatives have been promoted by public sector institutions as well as NGOs/ CBOs. The spread of these programmes could be traced to the well known failures of top down bureaucratic approaches to development in regard to the much talked of trickle down of benefits of development to reach the poor and the vulnerable in society. A characteristic feature of these participatory development initiatives has been the dominant participation of married women with little

children in the projects concerned. In this sense, the beneficiary profile of JOCV-UPU – particularly the dominance of married women among beneficiaries – as revealed in Table 4 is not at all surprising.

The average family income is less than Rs. 6,000 per month. For an average family of 5 persons, living in an urban setting where almost every basic living requirement (except the services like education and medical care, freely provided by the state) has to be obtained in the market, this is likely to be mere survival income. On top of this, an average rate of open unemployment of 22 per cent is reported, indicating another side to the difficult lives these people are living. Although the extent of under-employment is difficult to measure, the casual work that most workers in poor urban settlements are engaged in implies high rates of under-employment.

Table 5
Education Background of Members of Project Beneficiary Families
above 5 Years of Age

Years of schooling	Per cent of the total sample above 5 years of age		
	Male	Female	Total
No Schooling	6.7	3.6	10.2
1 to 5	10.5	6.4	16.9
6 to 8	8.3	10.6	18.9
9 to 10	9.2	10.1	19.3
Ordinary Level	13.0	13.2	26.2
Advanced Level	2.6	5.2	7.8
University	0.2	0.5	0.7
Post-graduate	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	50.5	49.5	100.0

Source: Survey

Excessively high rate of open unemployment⁵ and low level of income per income earner are reflections, among other things, of the low general level of educational attainment among the population in these urban settlements. Table 5 summarises the pattern of educational attainment within the sample population of 5 years and above in age. The data indicate some prevalence of early drop-out from formal education. This pattern, particularly in urban areas, is a matter for concern in a country, which boasts of implementation of compulsory education laws for quite a long period of time in the past. Only about a quarter of the sample above 5 years of age have had education up to GCE (Ordinary Level) – the first national examination for the school going population in Sri Lanka⁶.

⁵ During the period when the survey was conducted in these urban settlements, the rate of open unemployment in the country was at 8 per cent. In the urban sector of the country as a whole, the rate of unemployment was even slightly less than the national average.

⁶ No doubt many in this total are still undergoing school education. The respondents to the questionnaire survey have indicated that their families have 297 students (34 per cent of the total sample population 5 years and above in age).

Table 6 deals with members of the sample families who form the “labour force” of the communities concerned. It refers basically to the persons other than those below 5 years of age, those who are counted as “students” and those who have opted to remain voluntarily unemployed. The percentage of labour force who are technically or otherwise skilled in the community is very small. Table 6 shows that nearly half the labour force participants in the selected communities are casual labourers. Over 20 per cent open unemployment combined with 50 per cent casual workers together defines the quality and the potential of workers in these communities and also their labour market needs. Women’s conditions in regard to the human capital endowment are slightly worse than that of that of their male counterparts.

Table 6
Labour Force in Beneficiary Families: Pattern of Employment / Skills

	Number			Percentage		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Masons	27	0	27	9.68	0.00	5.14
Carpenters	27	0	27	9.68	0.00	5.14
Mechanics	13	0	13	4.66	0.00	2.48
Tailors	3	10	13	1.08	4.07	2.48
Teachers	5	21	26	1.79	8.54	4.95
IT workers	2	0	2	0.72	0.00	0.38
SME/Traders	22	9	31	7.89	3.66	5.90
Unskilled & Casual Labourers	138	135	273	49.46	54.88	52.00
Unemployed	42	71	113	15.05	28.86	21.52
Total	279	246	525	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample Survey

Table 7
Distribution of Family Income

	No.	per cent
Less than Rs. 3,000	21	10.71
Rs. 3,001 to Rs. 5,000	47	23.98
Rs. 5,001 to RS. 8,000	99	50.51
Rs. 8,001 to Rs. 10,000	27	13.78
Over Rs. 10,000	2	1.02
Total	196	
Average Family Income	5,821	

Source: Sample Survey 2003

Table 7 summarises the pattern of distribution of responding family incomes. The low average level of family income has already been referred to. About 35 per cent of responding families have reported monthly incomes of less than Rs. 5,000. As the sample here is not a random one, it is not quite

correct to make inferences about the pattern of income distribution in these urban settlements. What one expects to find in this sort of urban settlements, however, is a reasonably equal distribution of incomes around the median that is at the survival level. This sample too seems to show just that type of distribution.

Indicators of poverty can be found also in the level and composition of expenditure. Table 8 summarises the story. Out of total expenses, 80 per cent goes for food – a factor showing the widespread conditions of poverty among respondents. On average, the average consumption expenditure is higher than the average income – an average propensity to consume at 1.17 – yielding a pattern of dis-saving on average. Borrowing for monthly family expenses appears to be widely prevalent and on average, 2 per cent of monthly expenditure is on loan repayment. That indebtedness is high among responding families can be seen also from the fact that more than 40 per cent of respondents have prioritised financial difficulties among problems they face (Table 9).

Table 8
Expenditure Pattern and Savings

	Mean	per cent
All Food	5435	79.59
Education	305	4.47
Health	283	4.14
Loan Repayment	107	1.57
Clothing	233	3.42
Entertainment	34	0.50
Other	431	6.31
Overall Average Consumption	6828	
Overall Average Income	5821	
Net Average Savings	-1007	
Average Propensity to Consume	1.17	

Source: Survey

Table 9
Main Problems in the Community

	per cent
Health Related	36.73
Drainage Problem	62.76
Education	30.10
Solid Waste Management	41.33
Finance	42.86
Housing	9.18
Other: Alcoholism/Drugs/Negligence	13.78
Total Number of Responses	

Source: Survey

Table 9 summarises the perceptions of survey respondents about the major problems they are faced with in their urban settlements. Each respondent was given the option of indicating three major problems, although some of them have marked less than three problem areas. For the majority of respondents, the major problems are related to inadequacies in community services such as drainage, solid waste management, health and related services and housing. Poor sanitary conditions seem to be the most burning issue for most of them. The lack of finance for business/ self employment activities and the low quality of education imparted from schools they have access to have also been identified as major problems. The low quality of available education facilities has identified as a major problem particularly by respondents in Badulla, Kotte and Nuwara Eliya MC areas. In interviews, women respondents have expressed concern, in particular, about domestic violence, male alcoholism and drug-addictions etc.

To summarise, people of the target population of JOCV projects are poor, with a low level of education and skills. There is widespread under-employment and unemployment among them. The quality of public utilities available to them is poor, violence and the level of crime amidst the community is high. They are neglected by the rest of the society. Young population is relatively high in these areas. In the field visits, it is further observed that these are highly isolated communities, separated from the rest of society. The low educational attainment, the lack of economic, social and political power, lack of respect from and stigmatisation by the rest of society all contribute to this sense of isolation. In general, the people in these settlements appear not at all satisfied about their living conditions and quite displeased about the existing political and administrative set up around them. In fact, this sample is an ideal representation of how a community of urban poor people would look like.

V. JOCV Activities: An Evaluation

In the above type of general context of the settlements of the urban poor, a group of foreign volunteers, genuinely committed to objective, intentions and guiding principles like the those in the three points highlighted toward the end of section III, would be able to do a lot to ease conditions of the poor people concerned even without the backing of large volumes of financial resources. To begin with, the impressions of the questionnaire respondents has indeed been that the JOCV volunteers who have served and those who are still serving them have been/ are rendering an extremely valuable service to their communities. . As shown later, they have expressed a great deal of satisfaction about these JOCV members and their work. It has often been mentioned that the municipal and other officials whose job is to serve these communities are hardly visiting them and on some instances, the respondents credited JOCV members as the only service provider/ facilitator regularly visiting these communities. Table 10 summarises the respondents' assessment of JOCV volunteers. The majority of respondents have been generally happy about the overall performance of JOCV volunteer system.

Only 3 per cent have expressed the opinion that JOCV activities were useless. Such dissatisfaction is reported in respect of cookery classes and micro finance loan schemes. Those who were critical of cookery classes were so dissatisfied either because they were taught what they already knew or because they could not understand how these classes could assist them in resolving their immediate problems related to low incomes.

Table 10
Overall Assessment of JOCV Volunteers by Respondents

MC Area	Excellent	Good	Useless
Badulla	64.10	35.90	0.00
Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia	51.11	48.89	0.00
Galle	68.18	31.82	0.00
Kotte MC	87.50	12.50	0.00
Moratuwa	65.45	25.45	9.09
Nuwara Eliya	0.00	81.25	18.75
Ratnapura	68.42	31.58	0.00
Total	58.70	38.41	2.90

Source: Survey

Table 10 depicts, on the whole, a very satisfactory story. However, the story does not end there. The impressions of questionnaire respondents and others who have been interviewed in the research process repeatedly highlighted the high level of commitment of JOCV volunteers. It has also been said over and over again that these volunteers have become very close to persons and their families of communities they were serving. However, the research findings clearly indicate that the commitment of the volunteers alone is not sufficient to produce satisfactory results. Commitment of all stakeholders, as well as their vision, strategy, leadership and capacity are required for success of a programme of this nature. In addition, adequacy of resources is also needed for successful community development effort. The validity of this hypothesis comes out throughout our detailed examination of various aspects of JOCV activities.

Table 11
Respondents' Ranking of JOCV among all Available Community Service Agencies

	No	%
JOCV is superior to any other NGO serving the community	44	22.45
It is good. But not the best one	33	16.84
It is as good as others	15	7.65
JOCV is inferior to others	29	14.80
No Idea	75	38.27
Total	196	

Source: Survey

The respondents' views were also obtained about the JOCV programme in comparison with other social service providers like NGOs within the project area. The superlative participant evaluation found in responses analysed in Table 10, however, does not find support from the responses analysed in Table 11. As many as 38 per cent of respondents have not had any opinion to express about the JOCV programme in comparison with other social service providers, may be because they have had no knowledge about any such other social service provider NGO. Perhaps no such other organisation exists in some communities. Only about 36 per cent of respondents – much less than the percentage with superlative evaluations in the preceding Table – are of the view that JOCV is the best or as good as other service providers.

Those who did not believe that JOCV is the best had three main criticisms against the JOCV approach. First, JOCV is very slow compared to other NGOs. Second, JOCV always goes for very tiny projects. Third, JOCV has not been able to obtain the full participation of the community. In fact, these criticisms are closely related to personal experiences of respondents with specific projects. The slow implementation process and tiny size of projects are criticisms related often to the nature of specific projects concerned.

A detailed evaluation of JOCV activities is made in what follows. More specifically the following aspects of these activities are examined: relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. In the process of this analysis, we would observe how important the commitment of recipient organisation and stakeholders is for the success of any foreign aid funded project. For such projects to succeed internal institutional changes are needed within the aid recipient organisations. Simultaneously, the evaluation of these JOCV-UPU projects would enable us to examine the importance of community participation in these aid-funded activities for community development and poverty alleviation.

Relevance through Community Participation

Relevancy of JOCV activities depends on the priorities of the communities they serve. Table 9 indicates the major socio-economic problems and, through these problems, the prioritised community needs as respondents perceived them. The relevance of JOCV initiatives can be assessed from different perspectives and at different levels of aggregation using these prioritised needs as the basis. Given the deprived nature of the communities served by JOCV members, the activities of the latter within poor urban communities in the areas of community development, environmental management, health and hygiene, education and women development would appear to be of very high relevance when viewed at a high level of aggregation.

Table 1 has provided a list of JOCV activities undertaken in various locations of the five MC areas. This Table has also indicated the broad objectives (CD, EM, HH and so on) which JOCV-UPU tried to achieve through each of those activities. Table 12 presents some more activities undertaken

by JOCV members in the recent past within the MC areas concerned. No specific locations within MCs are indicated as most of these were carried out more widely among the target communities. In the activities in the two Tables, there are many educational programmes. Background conditions – low level of educational attainment and skills acquisition, leading to high rates of unemployment, under-employment and low incomes – would make such educational initiatives highly relevant. The role education can play in development of human skills and attitudinal changes cannot be over-emphasised. Further, the JOCV programmes have been highly biased in favour of development of conditions of women in the communities concerned. Given the fact that women form one of the most vulnerable groups in these communities, it is very pertinent that priority has been given to programmes targeting women. The bulk of participants in JOCV projects consisted of married women of a low level of education. JOCV members, working with community members, have correctly aimed at addressing the vulnerability of women in planning of their small project activities. Women would indeed have become change agents within these poverty-ridden communities.

However, considered at lower levels of aggregation, some JOCV activities may appear to be of questionable relevancy, and widely criticised so at the individual programme level. The guidebook programme, for example, is a case of an activity, which appear to be of great relevance at a theoretical level, however, turned out to be not so relevant to achieve the targeted objectives within the social milieu the people concerned were living. The guidebook, as planned, would include in it the required details of administrative regulations and procedures and instructions about where the community members should turn to in order to secure the rightful services from public and other agencies around them. For example, it instructs the reader about what has to be done in case of water supply or child health problems. This was obviously an innovative strategy of high relevance to improve the lives of members of target communities. Yet to make effective use of information that may be provided by the guidebook, the community members must be reasonably well educated and “empowered”, with a clear conscience of their rights. Furthermore, if these community members were to get the officials in various service organisations to positively respond to their requests, the former must belong to a segment of society with a “voice”, respected by the latter. Without these necessary underlying conditions, the guidebook project has turned out to be, at the practical level, of dubious relevance.

Table 12**Some Major JOCV Activities in Selected MCs in Recent Years**

	Programmes	Period
Dehiwala-Mt.Lavinia MC	My Bag campaign; Health awareness for youth (drug prevention and rehabilitation); English and Japanese classes; Children's societies; Guide Book pilot program; Solid waste management programme; Identification of traditional and non-traditional community leaders; Strengthening social capital through health and environmental programmes; Strengthening networks among relevant organisations; Capacity building of the community members and self-employment workshops; Nutrition programmes; Library corners; Schooling promotions; Community news paper; Networking of social resources; and Japan-Sri Lanka cross-cultural meetings	2002-2003
Kotte MC	Juki machine training, Handicraft training; Knitting training; Child personal development programmes; Beauty culture courses; Support for day care centres; Fabric painting courses; Health and environmental awareness programmes; and Women awareness and capacity building programmes	2002-2003
Ratnapura MC	Awareness programme for water usage and sanitation; Training programmes for pre-school teachers; Road construction; Home composting programmes; Orientation programmes for elders; Self-employment training programmes; Setting up a main women bank; Study tours.	2001-2003
Badulla MC	My Bag campaign; Shramadana programmes; Dental clinic for pre-school children; English and music training; Educational tours; Sewing courses; Home science programmes; Health awareness programmes; and Training programmes for pre-school teachers	2002-2003
Galle MC	Dress Making Classes; Health awareness for youth (Drug prevention and rehabilitation); Training programme for pre-school teachers; Women's saving programmes; and Environmental awareness programmes.	1999-2000
Nuwara Eliya MC	Workshops on development and strengthening of CDCs; Environmental awareness campaign; Workshops on nutrition for mothers; Mothers' seminars; Workshops on child awareness; Workshop on pre-school teaching; Non-formal education programmes; Knowledge exchange programmes; Micro finance programmes; and Self-employment workshops.	2002-2003

Source: Stakeholder Interviews

The JOCV-UPU has offered various types of training programmes, offering training facilities in activity areas like beauty culture, home gardening, Japanese language, English language, soap making and cookery. Some informants are of the opinion that training programmes in beauty culture, home gardening, Japanese language and Japanese cookery were not activities of very great relevance to them. However effective these would

have been as training programmes *per se* their relevance has been questioned because they have the dubious capacity to resolve the immediate problems of participants. It is rather doubtful whether the trainees involved gained from these training programmes competencies to compete with those already established as competent workers in the fields concerned. Urban poverty, as already noted, is concentrated in slums and shanties. People living in slums and shanties are not recognised as equals by the rest of the society. Therefore, it is very unlikely that people living in slums and shanties could compete with the other skilled personnel in the personal services market at least in the short run. Undoubtedly, training given by JOCV members imparted various non-market benefits to participants, e.g. the ability gained in home gardening classes could have been used to improve whatever little garden space in the possession of the trainees. No evidence however, is available from observations about any such widespread use of skills gained from training programmes, for non-market practices like, for example, the improvement of home gardens.

The above is how a researcher from outside would interpret the relevance factor of JOCV activities. The members of the target communities do not appear to be that critical of these JOCV activities (Table 13). The majority are of the opinion that JOCV-UPU activities have been extremely relevant for them. Responding to probing questions, these respondents expressed that JOCV programmes were relevant in respect of both individual and community needs. Project-wise details of information (not presented in this paper) behind Table 13 shows that, in general, most people are happy about almost all types of project activities. The percentage of respondents who consider the project to be extremely relevant varies from 56 per cent for women development activities to 100 per cent for health and hygiene programmes. As Table 13 shows, only 6 per cent of respondents were negative about the relevance of JOCV-UPU activities. In respect of those who were not highly impressed by JOCV activities in regard to relevance, there seems to have been a conflict between perceptions based on individual needs and those based on social needs. For example, the respondents expecting financial benefits such as soft loans or subsidies through JOCV-UPU intervention, would tend to make disparaging comments about it when they realise that the project is not extending such personal benefits.

Table 13
Relevancy to Community of JOCV Activities

	No.	per cent
Of very high relevance	118	60.20
Relevant	66	33.67
Of somewhat low relevance	7	3.57
Not relevant at all	5	2.55
Total	196	

Source: Survey

An important perspective of the relevancy issue is the mechanism of project identification and implementation. The JOCV-UPU programme has

been conceptualised and developed on the recognition that project planning and management should be bottom-up rather than top-down. Theoretically, in a participatory context, initial project ideas must come from the beneficiary community. However, given the backwardness of the communities concerned, a certain degree of guidance and leadership is unavoidable and therefore accepted. It appears that the majority of JOCV members were able to remain in an intermediary position in this regard. It has been said that JOCV volunteers spend nearly half a year to understand the communities they would be working with, before they start concrete work on any projects. On certain occasions, this system was criticised because it disturbs the continuity of activities. As a result of the very JOCV process, a new JOCV member is sent in replacement of an outgoing volunteer only after the latter had departed. Many stakeholders identified this as one of the major reasons for the discontinuity of JOCV-UPU initiatives. This practice on the part of JICA also militates against the participatory principles on which the whole JOCV-UPU system has been conceptualised.

The JOCV members, it appears, would normally consult community leaders, community organisations such as women’s societies and the MC before decisions are made about activities to be undertaken. However, it seems that the decision making process has not always been that smooth. The respondents to our questionnaire survey do not, however, appear to be overly impressed by such a participatory approach of JOCV members (Table 14).

Table 14

Person/ Institution Responsible for Initiation of Project Activities

	No.	per cent
JOCV Volunteers	84	42.86
MC and JOCV Volunteers	42	21.43
Women’s Committee in the Area	22	11.22
JOCV Volunteers together with MC and Women Committee	25	12.76
Municipal Council	14	7.14
On the Request by Community	9	4.59
Total	196	

Source: Survey

Table 14 shows that only 29 per cent (rows 3, 4 and 6) of respondents were of the opinion that ultimate beneficiaries were consulted before deciding on JOCV project activities. For the remaining 71 per cent, the project was decided upon by the JOCV member or the MC or a joint effort of these two parties. In fact, this raises an important issue regarding the project selection mechanism as it shows inconsistency with the claims of JOCV-UPU that its operating principle is a bottom-up one. Table 14, however, does not provide sufficient evidence to arrive at very strong conclusions one way or the other. Respondents in a survey of this nature may have provided inaccurate responses because of lack of adequate knowledge about the details of the

decision making process in respect of JOCV activities. It is also likely that they would have presented their personal opinions without making the effort to find out details of the actual decision making process. In the course of research, several instances, however, could be identified with extremely good community consultation. The JOCV member's initiative in the late 1990s in Badowita in the Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia MC, to form CBOs and to construct a Community Centre, thereby leading to successful community participation is a case in point⁷. Given the backwardness of the communities concerned, complete reliance on community decisions has not been feasible and therefore, understandably, the JOCV members had to take leadership in decision making on many occasions⁸. It is practically difficult for anyone to determine the right balance between community consultation and leadership of the JOCV members.

For purposes of successful participatory community development, it is important that the JOCV members are able to effectively communicate with the communities they serve. This was not the case in Nuwara Eliya, for example, where the JOCV member was expected to work with communities consisting largely of people originally from the plantation sector. The Japanese volunteers there have experienced difficulties of acquiring adequate competence in the medium of communication of these people, the Tamil language. Furthermore, the opinion has been expressed that further familiarisation research is needed about the behaviour of the target communities in Nuwara Eliya with plantation sector affiliation, for the Japanese volunteers to be able to better understand their needs⁹.

⁷ This JOCV member initiated and successfully carried out many community development activities initially (to alleviate problems of drug addiction, alcoholism and crime) with active community participation. Her efforts in these activities and later to develop the Community Centre were partially funded by JOCV/JICA co-operation funds. She was later able to organise cooperation among major stakeholders who could and were willing to support the Badowita development project. She managed to secure support of Government authorities, NGOs, OECF and JICA. Finally, the JOCV member and the CBOs in the area were able to get support from OECF and the National Water Supply and Drainage Board to construct a water supply and surface drain system for the Badowita settlement area.

⁸ Another good example for community consultation and leadership is the guidebook campaign. This programme was initiated at Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia MC area. The relevant JOCV member explained how this programme was conceived in her mind. In her long experience with people, spending much of her free time with them, she realized that one of the main reasons for poor public services was people's ignorance about responsible authorities to present their problems to. Whenever, a problem arises the people therefore, would tend go behind local politicians or simply do nothing. Therefore, she decided to conduct a programme to increase the awareness of communities about authorities and areas of their responsibilities. The guidebook concept has been the final outcome of this process. This is a good example to demonstrate the facilitating role of a JOCV member or any other agent working with these communities. One has to correctly understand the causes of a problem to be able to come up with effective practical remedies.

⁹ In Badulla (in respect of the Badulupitiya project) also the informants have criticised the JOCV member for not correctly understanding the true problems in the area. This location was saddled with sanitary and housing problems, with over-crowded

The research indicates certain factors favouring greater community participation, thereby increasing the relevance of the activities undertaken by JOCV members. A major factor here has been the nature, attitudes and approaches of the person found in the volunteer at the field level. MC areas where one volunteer has maintained a high degree of participation have turned into areas of low community participation with the change in the volunteer. It was often the volunteer's insight and ability, which would guide people to select and recommend project activities best suited for the area concerned. The JOCV member stationed in Nuwara Eliya at the time of the research has been criticised for the football practice lessons started during her tenure. The critics were of the view that activities chosen must be suitable for the area, e.g. floriculture in Nuwara Eliya rather than training in football¹⁰.

Institutional development at the level of beneficiary communities is another important factor behind success or failure of JOCV activities to facilitate community participation. In interview, JOCV members and other stakeholders have highlighted the point that the lack of development of a Community Action Plan (CAP) in some MCs as a factor, which hampered the effective transfer of the community's ideas and suggestions and their perceptions about community needs to the JOCV member and, through her/him, to the JOCV-UPU. In a number of MC areas, JOCV members have been able to promote community participation in their activities through active encouragement and guidance of institutional development activity at the community level, e.g. by facilitating the formation of women's societies or youth centres¹¹.

Table 15
Participant Perceptions: Reasons for Participation in JOCV Projects

	No.	%
I liked this activity very much	30	13.76
It agrees with my skills and talents	84	38.53
It offered very good market opportunities	8	3.67
I had no other choice	74	33.94

Source: Survey

Another aspect of the relevancy issue is addressed in Table 15. It summarises the reasons which have made survey respondents participate in JOCV-UPU projects. The answers analysed in this Table are to a pre-coded

conditions of the population. Thus the Japanese cookery classes initiated in this area came under criticism. This training, according to this criticism, has become totally irrelevant for the trainees as that knowledge could not be used to earn money.

¹⁰ However, social benefits of football lessons should not be understated. The majority of the trainees coming for football lessons are found to be Tamil boys from the estate sector. This has been a useful way to build up good habits among them to promote social relations.

¹¹ See the brief details above (footnote 6) on the Badowita development project.

question with four alternative responses. Nearly 34 per cent of respondents have expressed that they participated in a JOCV-UPU project not because it was relevant to their skills or because they liked it, but because they had no other alternative. Partly, there is a question here of the capacity and competency of JOCV members in the field. This suggests that the mere language training and six months on-the-job training do not produce, out of an educated Japanese youth, a social worker who would be fully competent in organising activities that would be considered relevant by the people they serve in urban areas of a foreign country like Sri Lanka. Yet, in spite of the insignificant time and effort spent for their training, these volunteers appear to have been able to initiate activities, which as many as 66 per cent of our respondents liked or have considered relevant to their talents or thought could improve their labour market opportunities. As noted, projects offered by JOCV members have been very simple ones, intended to enhance basic skills. They would not enhance the labour market opportunities of participants in any significant sense¹². But there is an important aspect to these JOCV-UPU activities. Given the socio-economic background of the communities concerned, not firmly integrated as they are with the larger society, even projects imparting simple skills are likely to be very valuable to participants from those communities.

Effectiveness

As noted elsewhere, JOCV-UPU is to improve living standards of the poor people living in the urban sector. Money incomes of the urban poor, the survey has indicated, are very low and unlike many poor people in the rural sector, they have no 'income in kind'. They have to purchase almost everything from the market. Increasing their incomes through self-employment programmes and improving their employability through training programmes aimed at skills development would therefore, be major strategies of helping them to uplift their conditions.

In addition, improving living standards also requires social programmes. As noted, the urban poor are not recognised as equals by the rest of society as the latter have built up a stigma against the former, who remain isolated. High crime rates and low levels of educational attainment among them aggravate their social conditions further. Measures to empower them with knowledge and information would, therefore, help improving their living conditions.

The quality of public utilities – public sanitation facilities including waste disposal and drainage, and other services like water supply, electricity and communications (e.g. telephone) facilities – in urban poor enclaves often remains in rather deplorable conditions. Similarly their housing leaves a great deal to be desired. While carelessness and ignorance of the people concerned are critical factors, the rundown state of the infrastructural and sanitary facilities available to these urban poor settlements is largely due to negligence

¹² Note that some of the trainers themselves have declared that the training they had given cannot be considered as a marketable skill.

of relevant authorities. The authorities are so negligent because of the lack of power and voice in the people of the communities concerned.

The five fold activities of JOCV-UPU – i.e. those falling into the groups, CD, EM, HH, ED and WD – have incorporated a series of projects to improve living conditions of the urban poor taking into account this multi-faceted causation of such poor living conditions. In the survey rounds, the respondents were asked to inform us about the gains they accrued from the JOCV project they had experience in. Table 16 is a summary of their responses to this question. Due to multiple responses, the number of responses exceeds the number of respondents. Altogether seven types of gains (see col. 1 of Table 16) have been referred to in the questionnaire, from which the respondents could mark any number they wished. There are directly economic (e.g. income, skills, loan etc.) and directly social (e.g. habits, recognition, and discussion forum) benefits among these. All seven types of benefits noted would provide joint socio-economic gains, direct as well as indirect.

According to this table, the society-building aspect of JOCV activities seems to have been more effectively implemented. As much as 82 per cent of respondents were referring to the positive effects of these activities in developing good habits among participants. Talking about such “good habits”, the beneficiaries would refer to reduction of criminal tendencies in people, development of non-violent and non-alcoholic behavioural patterns, keeping people away from hard drugs, improvement of social skills and so on. The population of participants in JOCV activities, as noted above, has been dominated by women. In so far as these JOCV projects promoted such good habits, women would naturally have highlighted it. A careful observer would also note that the male youth are only marginally found among project participants. It is particularly among this population group that some of the good habits noted above have to be promoted. One of the JOCV volunteers attached to Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia MC was of the opinion that most programmes organised for the benefit of the youth, however, have been relatively unsuccessful because many youths were addicted to illicit alcohol. Among the other social benefits noted in Table 16, there are the 30 per cent of respondents referring to social recognition they gained through these projects. Though minor in significance, there is also a group believing that JOCV members have created a forum for them to discuss their problems. These are essential ingredients of society-building components.

In addition, a large number of respondents also believe that the JOCV programmes generated economic advantages for them (see rows 1, 2 and 7 in particular). The row 7 percentage is rather low, but it indicates that the credit-worthiness of at least a small proportion of participants improved as a result of participation in these projects. One of the major obstacles to poverty reduction in Sri Lanka is the vicious-circle associated with unavailability of secure finance. Formal lending institutes are reluctant to give loans for the poor because they are not recognised as good customers. This is again an issue also of social recognition, in addition to the pure economic viability of

their loan projects. The Women Banks promoted in some MC areas as JOCV projects have been of particular significance in making credit available to members.

Table 16
Personal Gains from JOCV Projects

	No.	% of total sample of 196
Increased Income	33	16.84
Improved Labour Market Skills	25	12.76
Developed good habits in me	160	81.63
Gave me social recognition	60	30.61
Helped me to correct my misconceptions	62	31.63
Provided a forum to discuss problems	3	1.53
Security for a loan	4	2.04
Total	347	

Source: Survey

Regarding the effectiveness of JOCV initiatives, the JOCV volunteers and officers at the MC have mixed opinions. Sometimes there were “clashes” between JOCV members and officials in MCs. They complained about each other’s weaknesses. While JOCV volunteers were complaining about the lack of commitment on the part of MC officials, the MC officials were complaining about the disturbances from JOCV members to the performance of their routine duties. Some volunteers, for example, the one at Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia MC, would express concern over the low level of effectiveness of programmes due to lack of community participation. Reference in this regard is often made to youth societies, wherever such societies were initiated as part of JOCV activities. Such societies are rated low in terms of effectiveness as only a few youth could be attracted to participate in these JOCV programmes, indicating the weakness of the participatory mechanisms used to attract the youth, particularly the male youth. The cold-war conditions between the MC officials and JOCV volunteers work against programme effectiveness. In certain cases, JOCV members have even recommended cancellation of some projects due to difficulties of working with MC officials.

On the other hand, MC officials and sometimes also the beneficiary community members would highlight limitations of the JOCV members and the JOCV system for the low effectiveness of some of the JOCV activities. One such highlighted weakness is the JOCV members’ inability to follow up the activities commenced to their logical conclusion. The JOCV members, for example, would facilitate the formation of various societies – for children, for youth, for women etc. – but due to reasons like the unavailability of time, they do not take the necessary follow up action to ensure the success of those societies. Another critical factor contributing to low effectiveness of JOCV-UPU activities, as noted by beneficiaries and stakeholders, is financial in nature. Many informants were of the view that some JOCV-UPU programmes have provided valuable vocational training. However, the participants have not been able to use the skills so acquired for economic benefit due to lack of

capital in their hands or access to loan capital. No attempt has been made systematically by JOCV workers to combine these training programmes of self-employment value for participants with effective and sustainable micro credit schemes in collaboration with institutions committed to such purposes like the Women's Bank.

The analysis of the effectiveness of JOCV projects would help in highlighting the importance of overall institutional effects brought about by, and the commitment of all domestic stake-holders to, any foreign aid funded programme for the ultimate success of that programme. As noted in the Introduction, participation of the recipient organisation (and beneficiaries it represents) in planning and decision-making, implementation and sharing of benefits would influence the success of any aid project. In technical assistance programmes like the one examined in this study, the commitment of domestic stakeholders and institutional changes that correspond to the JOCV-UPU programme are of particular significance as the very idea of the JOCV-UPU activities is to bring about community development through suitable social and institutional changes with minimal injection of financial resources.

There is clear evidence emanating from the interviews of and discussions with stakeholders, as well as the case studies carried out, that the effectiveness of JOCV-UPU activities depended on the ability of these activities to change the attitudes and behaviour patterns of the implementing agencies at the lowest institutional level, namely the municipal councils (MC). In bringing about such changes the presence of JOCV members in MC offices, in itself, would have been of great significance. There were cases however, where the JOCV programme and the volunteer activities concerned failed to bring about institutional changes of long-term significance. In field visits, it was observed that in some MCs, JOCV volunteers were being used to carry out the day-to-day work of the MC. For example, one volunteer complained that from the inception, her services were used to prepare progress reports of the MC and therefore, she did not find any time to carry out her mandated tasks. Such institutional inertia on the part of MCs was responsible for minimising the effectiveness of the JOCV-UPU programme. The excuse given by MC officials is that they have their own work schedules, to be carried out according to the prevailing regulatory framework. Problems of the above type could have been easily solved by the MC concerned, employing an additional officer with adequate qualifications and training so that the JOCV member could have been left to carry out her mandated responsibilities.

The solution to this type of institutional problem requires adjustments from both sides. From the JOCV-UPU side, it is important to understand the practical difficulties faced by MC officials. In fact, we have observed that in certain cases, the JOCV members have helped in resolving some of these difficulties. For example, when the MC officials have to coordinate with other institutions such as the Water Board, the JOCV members themselves had attended to necessary coordination work. However, further cooperation from

JOCV-UPU side may help in building up a more harmonious working environment in the MC areas.

It appears, however, that institutional adjustments from the MC side have not been readily forthcoming. Almost all MC officials are used to the traditional office culture where work is hardly considered as a service. They do only the jobs earmarked for them during office hours. It is hard to expect a high level of commitment from personnel who are imbued with such norms and values. The volunteers, on the other hand, have a different psychological mould and work culture. If they are to work harmoniously with the local officialdom, there should be substantial attitudinal change at least among MC officials – the immediate local counterparts of the JOCV members – and particularly the community development officers (CDOs)¹³, among these MC officials. Such attitudinal change is required in what they consider to be the principles and methods of community development¹⁴. Furthermore, the CDOs have official work other than supporting the work of the JOCV member associated with the MC.

An issue often raised by JOCV members is that the MC is excessively a political institution. They are of the opinion that, therefore, whenever they initiate a project through the MC, a part of the community is reluctant to support it due to political divisions within the community. Some JOCV-UPU projects have become ineffective due to political divisions in the beneficiary community. One typical example is the Pompakele-water project in Ratnapura MC. Implementation of this project was delayed due to political divisions. Some JOCV members express their concern over the lack of cooperation from the members of the MC. Many projects initiated by the JOCV-UPU are tiny in nature and to MC members these are of low attractiveness from their political point of view. Therefore, cooperation between JOCV members and members of MC seems not to be sufficiently strong.

In addition to problems emanating from the MC regulatory framework, the MCs have been found to suffer also from a capacity problem. There are administrative and support staff shortages in MCs. The inadequacies of financial provisions¹⁵ and capital equipment, including vehicles, aggravate this capacity problem. In certain places, the MC has even failed to provide proper office space for JOCV volunteers¹⁶. In fact, it is observed that JOCV members

¹³ These are the counterpart officers for JOCV members at all MCs where JOCV members are placed.

¹⁴ However, the reader should not misinterpret this statement to mean that all the MC workers including CDOs are of low commitment. In fact we met in the course of research a number of CDOs with a high level of commitment. This is a criticism only of the system. Service oriented norms are not being developed in this culture due to the inherent weaknesses of the system.

¹⁵ According to current arrangements, 50 per cent of total cost of JOCV projects comes from the MC, with the balance coming from the Ministry. Difficult financial regulations governing the MC activities are also highlighted as a major problem area.

¹⁶ According to the MOU signed between JOCV and the Ministry, it is the responsibility of the MC to provide office space and material, and a counterpart officer for the JOCV

do certain activities, which indeed have to be carried out by the MC – e.g. coordination with other organisations. The JOCV member attached to an MC would do it to expedite the process of his/ her own activities. However, because of its capacity problem, the MC is quite happy to see the JOCV members performing what is in fact the MC's work. Wherever this becomes a regular pattern, the JOCV members get saddled with administrative jobs, which are really somebody else's responsibility. They would, therefore, fail to attend to the activities they are expected to perform. In one place, a JOCV member told us that she is exhausted with those routine jobs and she feels that her labour is wasted. In the end, the victim of the inefficiency at the MC is the effectiveness of JOCV initiatives.

New JOCV members take nearly half a year to familiarise themselves with the community they have been assigned to work with. Until this familiarisation process is completed, no project activities are usually undertaken. The efficiency and effectiveness of their activities are further affected by the complicated nature of the problems they have to tackle, largeness of the geographical areas each of them is made to work in and the unavailability of convenient modes of transport. Usually the volunteer dispatch principle is one JOCV member per MC. As this is generally inadequate, the strict application of this principle often results in inefficiency in programme implementation.

The JOCV members are not working in an institutional vacuum. Rather, there were many public sector organisations and NGOs in existence ostensibly to serve the people, both rich and poor. The problem, however, is that the poor are neglected by many of these organisations in their service delivery. Part of the role of volunteer workers from JOCV-UPU, perhaps a very important part, was to intervene between existing service providers and the urban poor, so that the latter could get a better deal from the former, thus alleviating their difficult life conditions. Even more than many foreign aid funded projects, the JOCV project depended on institutional adjustments in the aid recipient environment and the commitment of whole series of stakeholders, from both donor and recipient sides, for implementation success. The very nature of this programme was such that the programme success demanded collaboration among many agents. The MCs could serve the people only with the assistance of a gamut of other public sector organisations - the Road Development Authority, the Water Supply and Drainage Board and the Electricity Board etc. There were serious problems in coordination among these organisations, so vital for the success of MC activities. The importance of the work of JOCV members in promoting proper coordination between service providing organisations in existence and the MCs cannot thus be over-emphasised.

In addition, assistance from NGOs on the field would on many occasions be critical for the success of JOCV activities. Again, in terms of securing service from these NGOs to the people, the role of JOCV members

member to be stationed there. The MC should also recommend lodging for the volunteer.

would become one of facilitation and coordination. In respect of obtaining people's participation, the formation of community based organisations (CBOs) becomes crucial for community development work. JOCV members have been active in organising forums for people to meet officials from the MC and from the government and also to discuss and articulate their needs. In these forums, people would present their complaints about their difficulties to officials although responses in terms of action from them are rather slow. People's complaints are not speedily attended to by the officials sometimes because of sheer lack of interest, and sometimes, limited resources or administrative bottlenecks.

According to present arrangements, JOCV members work only with MC officials. As a result, they do not have the opportunity to work closely with other government officers at the local level – e.g. the *Gram-seva* officer, *Samurdhi Niyamaka*, the Assistant Government Agent (AGA) and the Divisional Secretary (DS). These officers often complain that they have no clear idea about what the JOCV members are doing in their areas. And without their cooperation, the JOCV members would find some of their objectives difficult to achieve.

The JOCV members themselves complain that they are overloaded and cannot perform the work at hand well. In many places, JOCV member indeed becomes the sole representative of the community in official places. She has to go to the MC on behalf of the community to discuss their day-to-day needs. With their time taken for these activities they cannot perform the work pertaining to the activities they have commenced. If the community itself can deal with those issues with the guidance only from JOCV member, the JOCV members can save their time for more important things they can do for the society. They could then use their full potential to start any serious project. One JOCV member, a qualified computer specialist, thinks that due to this situation she has become idle in her profession.

All in all, it is worth reiterating that JOCV-UPU programmes are not implemented in isolation. They are joint ventures requiring participation and collaboration of JOCV-UPU, MC, NGOs, other community level organisations and individuals in the community. However, as a result of inefficiencies found in the working of other stakeholders and also some practical difficulties faced by JOCV members, the project implementation could easily become ineffective.

Sustainability

Sustainability means many things - maintenance and continued use of physical facilities produced by project, continued ability to plan and manage similar development work, continued production of outputs of the kind created by project, maintenance of impacts created, and multiplication of effects and impacts. Targets have to be achieved in such a way as to secure a long standing presence without artificial/external support. Interpreted thus, many JOCV-UPU initiatives might be of doubtful sustainability. In many cases, they initiate a project but do not find the time to continue it. They hardly use

market strategies to ensure sustainability of their projects. One of their well known projects involved the designing, producing and popularising a shopping bag as alternative to polythene made shopping bags. This project is known as the “My Bag campaign”. They initiated the project and now bags are available but without a market for it.

Another issue that reduces project sustainability is that, in some places, participants were given useful training by JOCV members – e.g. sewing machine operation, tailoring etc. – but without any financial support for the trainees to set themselves up in some self-employment activity later. As a result, trainees are not in a position to use the acquired skill in the labour market and hence the outcome of the project does not sustain beyond the training sessions.

Dispatching mechanism of JOCV members also has some implications for sustainability. The maximum length of time a JOCV member is allowed to serve in one place is two years. After this period, he/ she is usually replaced by a new JOCV member. It is reported that on many occasions, the new JOCV member does not necessarily continue the projects initiated by the predecessor. Above all, 6 to 8 months familiarising period and 3 months gap between departure of the outgoing volunteer and assigning a new one have also caused some damage to the continuity of many projects. Prevailing systems at JICA end do not allow the outgoing and new volunteers to work together even for three months and if a proper action plan for their activities is available at the MC, we might reduce the extent of this problem.

VI. Conclusions

JOVCV-UPU discussed is a Japanese ODA funded technical assistance programme to improve living standards of the poor people in selected urban areas of Sri Lanka. It has been conceptualised as a collaborative programme working with a number of other stakeholders to accomplish this task. From the Japanese side, its implementation involved a Senior Volunteer in charge of the programme and young JOCV members dispatched to Municipal Council (MC) areas falling under the programme. In addition, the stakeholders included Community Development Officers and other officers in MCs, NGOs, politicians, relevant ministries, community leaders and project beneficiaries. This paper shows how significant the commitment and involvement of all stakeholders has been in the success of this programme.

JOVCV members are working among deprived sections of Sri Lanka's urban poor. Of a low level of education, these people do not have access to good public utilities. They are neglected by the rest of the community. The main strategies used by the JOCV programmes/projects to improve their economic conditions included measures to improve their incomes and employability, to improve the target communities' access to publicly provided services, to empower them and to enhance their social standing. The improvement in the quality and reliability of public utilities available to them would have gone a long way to alleviate poverty among these groups. These were the activities which were used by the JOCV members for purposes of

community development. Participation and involvement of beneficiaries has been a major element in their community development activities.

Since the JOCV programme operated within the Municipal Council system, the strengths and limitations of this system affected the programme success or failure as well. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that, when the JOCV system was introduced into a particular MC, that MC and other associated governmental organisations have failed to quickly and smoothly adjust to the needs created by the newly introduced JOCV system, its community development activities, the new work culture of JOCV members and the participatory methodology of the whole programme. This absence of adequate institutional adjustment has been responsible for many of the failures of the JOCV programme, in spite of the high level of commitment of the majority of young volunteers involved. The low capacity and low commitment of other stakeholders discussed in the paper were indeed reflections of this lack of adjustment on the part of local programme partners. Most of the failures of JOCV-UPU activities were due to the lack of commitment and capacity of these other stakeholders, mainly the MCs.

At the macro level, the beneficiary community evaluates JOCV projects as of a high degree of relevance. However, considered at the micro level, the relevancy of some of the project activities is being questioned. This also casts doubt about how practically collaborative and participatory the JOCV project decisions have been. For example, many training programmes were considered as irrelevant due to their incapability to address the true issues at grass root level. For example, Japanese language training or training in beauty culture/ Japanese cooking have been rather irrelevant for the solution of bread and butter questions of participants.

Capacity of JOCV members is also questioned on some occasions. We identified that there are several occasions where the nature of skills and the knowledge possessed by the JOCV member has constrained the choice of training programmes. In these cases, programmes offered are not the ones really needed by the community. It is the only thing the volunteer could provide.

Despite limitations, the JOCV-UPU has its own strengths as a social service agent. One of the major plus points of the programme is that the JOCV members have been able to build up an enormous degree of trust among the people. They are often referred by the people as a group more trusted than other community development agents working in those localities. The JOCV workers live with the community, sharing their joys and sorrows with them and communicating with them in their own language. They have shown ability to organise CBOs and other community development agents to achieve developmental goals. A foreign assistance programme of this nature would be able to achieve a great deal more in the areas of community development if the necessary local institutional adjustments are facilitated and the programme's elements of community participation and collaboration are strengthened.