Women in the Decision Making Process:
A study on two generations of women in an urban watta.

Abstract
The proposed study is one that looks at women in the decision making process, it is a study based in an urban watta focusing on two generations of women in the decision making process.

It is over half a decade since Sri Lanka gained independence and still a longer time since the foundation for a democracy was laid. How ever when one examines democracy in practice at the local levels there is much to be aspired. With the process of urbanization within Sri Lanka, Slum dwellings, shanty communities and Tenement Gardens have become part and parcel of urban life.

There are studies that have therefore been carried out regarding the urban shanty and slums in Sri Lanka. However it is timely to conduct a study that pays special attention to Women in these slum and shanty communities with regard to their ability of decision making. Sepali Kottegoda, 2004, in her book “Negotiating Household Politics, Women's strategies in Urban Sri Lanka”, has looked in to the coping strategies of Women in a Watta setting. The proposed study hopes to look at another aspect of women in a watta community which her status in the decision is making process. The proposed study also looks in to two generations of women in the decision making process which hopes to fill in another gap in data in this specific area.

Out of the literature base the proposed study looks at some key concepts which are relevant to it. The concept of power and authority presented by Max Weber “power is the ability of individuals or groups to make their own interest or concerns count, even when others resist”. It also looks at the concept of Patriarchy presented by the feminist writings Sylvia walby in her book “Theorizing Patriarchy, Stevi, Jones Jackie, 1998, (Bhain Kamla, 2003 what is Patriarchy? Frederick Engles in 1884 in his book , Origins of the family, private property and the state. The study also looks at the factors of urbanity and poverty which will both be taken together under the concept of the watta taken from, Silva. K.T, Athukorala, K, .1991 Thee watta dwellers and Kottegoda Sepali 2004 negotiating household politics.

Thereby the proposed study hopes to ascertain Democracy in practice by paying special attention to women and the status she holds in the decision making process within the given watta of the study. In order to do this a sample of slums and shanties from the Colombo municipal Council has been selected. It is an urban watta with a total number of 80 households housing a population of approximately 300 individuals. It is situated bordering a canal and a roadway that is increasingly used by motorists.
The study brings up the following research problem “What are the main decisions that are made in the household and Community levels and what is the status of women of two generations in making these decisions in the given urban watta?”. There will be two units of analysis, one unit will be the Household and the other unit would be the community. In order to study the above Research Problem the Proposed Research poses the following Research Questions:

Research Questions at the Household level:

1.) Do Women and Men have equal opportunity in making decisions with regard to household earnings?
   b.) Is there a difference between two generations?

2.) Do Women and Men have equal responsibility in decisions with regard to Child Care?
   b.) Is there a difference between two generations?

3.) What are the main decisions that are made in the household in both generations with regard to social and cultural events? Is it the same for men and women?
   4) Do Women have equal access to leadership roles in order to make decisions?
   b.) Is there a difference between two generations?

The Research Question at the community level will be looked into by way of political participation and participation in any other organization or society within the watta, to ascertain if women and men have equal access to decisions made in any of these associations, organizations.

In order to carry out the research a triangulation of methods will be used, them being both structured and in-depth interviews, observations and secondary data. There will be a basic Census questionnaire administered to the household head of the entire population, from which data a stratified sample will be selected for in-depth interviews, some of whom will be selected for case studies. Observations will take place at the household and community levels, observing community society behaviour, and any incident, program that takes place during the time of field work. Secondary data will be used from the Gramasevaka records, to records of NGO’s working in the area, as well as theory related to the subject will also be looked at.
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1 INTRODUCTION

Slum dwellings, Shanty communities and Tenement Gardens have become part and parcel of Urban life in Sri Lanka. Owing to this reason there have been many studies that have been carried out concerning them. According to official estimates, as of 1979, as much as 50% of the total population in Colombo lived in slums and Shanty communities defined according to their housing and neighborhood characteristics (UDA 1979, Ministry of Housing 1983).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Urban Population</th>
<th>Urban population as a % of Total Population</th>
<th>Average Annual Increase %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>Urban Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1,023,042</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1,239,133</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>2,016,285</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2,848,116</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>3,192,489</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census Report, Center for population information 1996.

However it is necessary to have a study that pays special attention to the status of women in these communities, to ascertain if they are included in the decision making process. This study hopes to look at two generations of women in the decision making process, which will help to see the status of women from two generations in the decision making process. Especially owing to the factor that Sri Lanka is a democratic government with so called democratic policies, the research hopes to look at the level of the household and community and determine the status that women hold there in, the research will concentrate on some major decisions that are made in the household and determine the role that women have in the making of these decisions.

Sri Lanka’s history tells its tales of kings and kingdoms and monarchies, however there has not been a trace of democratic rule in Sri Lanka’s past until the time it was introduced by the British as a separate and new form of government. The foundation of a strong Democracy was laid in the 1930’s, when Universal Adult Franchise was introduced. Sri Lanka achieved independence from the British in 1948.02.04. From the status of Dominion she became a Republic in 1972. (Ancient History of Sri Lanka).

The world today comprises of democratic governments, it is the most widely accepted and popular mode of governing in modern times. The word “democracy"
has its roots in the Greek term demokratia, the individual parts of which are demos (people) and kratos (rule) Democracy in its basic meaning is therefore a political system in which the people, not monarchs or aristocracies rule. (Giddens, A, 1998). Democracy is explained by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address as “government of the people, by the people for the people (Cummings/ Wise 1993). However it is seen that the principles of democracy do not always mesh with the practices. The study hopes to take the concept of democracy into the household and the community level in the urban watta of the study, paying attention to some key decisions that are made there in with a focus on women of two generations and the status they play in the making of these decisions, which will give a realistic picture of democracy in practice at the grass root levels of this particular study.

It is seen that although Sri Lanka holds records of having a female president and has had a female Prime Minister, the rest of the women of Sri Lanka are hardly represented, even to an untrained eye it is clear that both these ladies come form elitist rich families and do not represent the state of women’s affairs in general. According to the Inter Parliamentary Union, on information provided by National Parliaments 184 countries are classified by descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House, according to which Sri Lanka is ranked in the 110th position with women holding a 4.9% of women’s participation in parliament.(Women in National Parliaments, February 2005). This alone shows the less representation of women in the political process.

How ever statistical data show us that political participation of the Sri Lankan people have been good as shown below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Voter turnout %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Laksiri Fernando, 2002)

However does this data give us the true picture of democracy in practice at the house hold level and the community level, do men and women hold the same status. What is it that confers upon some men the right to command, upon others the obligation to obey? Why should any one exercise this right, any one owe this duty? How does authority contribute to the order which all the members of a society desire, those who obey as well as those who exact obedience. (Sampson. E. Edward., 1971).
As is seen below statistical data show us that the number of women employed has increased over the years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Total Number ('000)</th>
<th>Male ('000)</th>
<th>Female ('000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>2611</td>
<td>2041</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>2993</td>
<td>2268</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>3452</td>
<td>2736</td>
<td>716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Labour force survey</td>
<td>4138</td>
<td>3147</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969/70</td>
<td>Social Economic Survay</td>
<td>4169</td>
<td>3124</td>
<td>1045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>4488</td>
<td>3312</td>
<td>1176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Labour force participation..survay</td>
<td>4560</td>
<td>3267</td>
<td>1293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Survey land and labour utility</td>
<td>4957</td>
<td>3490</td>
<td>1467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980/81</td>
<td>Labour force and social economic survey</td>
<td>5595</td>
<td>4059</td>
<td>1536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985/86*</td>
<td>Labour force and social economic survey</td>
<td>5972</td>
<td>4015</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990*</td>
<td>Labour force and social economic survey</td>
<td>6968</td>
<td>4374</td>
<td>2595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991*</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Labour force survay</td>
<td>5877</td>
<td>3768</td>
<td>2109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992*</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Labour force survay</td>
<td>5757</td>
<td>3880</td>
<td>1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993*</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Labour force survay</td>
<td>6032</td>
<td>3989</td>
<td>2043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994*</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Labour force survay</td>
<td>6079</td>
<td>4073</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source- for the relevant year the source in given above

Yet has this increase in women’s contribution to the labour force increased her ability of decision making. Also statistical data depict a high level of literacy among the Sri Lankan people; Women hold a very high percentage of it. Yet what the proposed study hopes to look at is with these types of positive statistical data of women’s employment, education, political participation, when taken in practice at the grass root levels has this improved the status of women’s decision making ability at the household and community levels between two generations of the selected sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of census</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The given study will thus look at a shanty community in an urban area to locate the status that women hold in that community when major household and community decisions are made, which will give us a picture of democracy in practice at the grass root levels.

**Conceptualization**

**Household**

At the broadest level, the household is defined as a residential unit which is usually formed around kinship. Household members share not only living space but also a certain set of activities, propinquity being the key factor. The family is seen as based on kinship which is genealogically defined. In most such families property is controlled and transmitted according to the kinship structures in specific societies. (Kottegoda, 2004, p21)

The Department of census and Statistics of the Ministry of Plan Implementation in 1987 define it as “The household consists of one or more persons, living together and having common arrangements for food and other essentials for living.”

**Marriage and Kinship**

Kinship, particularly amongst the Sinhalese and the Tamils is reckoned through cognatic or bilateral descent, i.e., an Individual can be a member of at least two groups of kin- the fathers and the mothers. (Kottegoda, 2004, p28)

In Thorbek’s study where she compares a slum area in Bangkok and Colombo, compared to the area in Bangkok, the outcome of the gender struggle in the slum in Colombo was worse for women. Marriages were unstable and nearly half the women were no longer in their first marriage. Later marriages were even more unstable and often not considered as real marriages. The distribution of income within families was generally more skewed. Many women did not know how much their husband earned or even how much they would be given so insecurity was very high. The women did not complain much about other women and their husbands relationships with other women but rather than about drinking and drugs, especially when combined with beating and scolding. (Thorbe, 1988)
Urban Watta

Unlike the inner-city neighborhoods which may be commonly referred to as slums, the shanty communities mostly evolved since 1948 so as to accommodate excess population from slum areas as well as several kinds of new arrivals in the city. In terms of location, these communities radiate along canals, river banks, sea coasts, railway lines and roadside with their heaviest concentration in the out skirts of the city. (Silva. K.T, Athukorala, K.,1991)

slums are old tenements erected to accommodate the influx of a new labour force into the city during a period when a thriving plantation industry required labour for processing, tenements consists normally of a single bedroom, a small verandah and a living area with common taps and latrine facilities they were built in rows on a block of land commonly referred as the garden (Kottegoda Sepali2004).

Whether it is a Tenement Garden, Slum Garden or Shanty Community it is commonly referred to as a “watta” (Silva. K.T, Athukorala, K.,1991).

Many scholars on slums emphasize the “anti-social” nature of slums. They describe slums as a place generally associated with problems such as crime, delinquency, prostitution, gambling and regard them as a special type of disorganized and disintegrated area. Contrary to this notion, there are classic sociological studies of slums reveal that the slum is well knit and organized. Many scholars have rejected negative assumptions about the urban poor i.e., that they suffer from a culture of poverty, that slum life is socially disorganized and that there is a duality between the slum and non-slum people. They confirm the existence of organized social and political life among slum dwellers. ( Niriella, 2005 p 56)

The heterogenous slum neighbourhood exhibited different types of social relationships in comparison to the homogeneous neighbourhood. Thus, friend and neighbour relationship ties are displayed at a higher level in Kirulapura. However, crimes and crime related activities played a major role in Magazine Road, which basically increased fear among the residents and restricted their social relationships to their families or kinship networks. As a result, day-to-day life and other important social relationships like friendships, neighbourliness, have weakened in Magazine Road. ( Niriella ,2005)

Peter Saunders explained that the result is a crisis in the provision of collective consumption. The basic problems-lack of housing, poor health care, inadequate schooling, poor transportation facilities, shortage of cultural amenities and so on-that led the State to intervene in the process of consumption thus reappear. What is different, however, is that the whole area of consumption has now become politicized; the more the State assumes responsibility for the provision of social resources, the more
In Thorbek’s study, by contrast, in the slum areas in Colombo, Thorbek (1988:117) talked about wife battering. The women did not talk about conflicts with their husbands or fathers although the men were very offensive and often used physical violence, occasionally resulting in hospitalization. Help from other women was less evident, or rather it came very late in the conflict, when a wife fled from her husband and was naked at a neighbor’s door. Women’s contacts with other women outside in the family were unusual. There was talk about friendships but also much talk about gossip and envy between the women, and the men certainly opposed gossiping among their wives. Women mostly fought for their needs in private and were generally not inclined to talk about such conflicts. (Thorbek 1988)

**Poverty**

The study will look at the concepts of poverty as presented by A. Sen and Chambers Sen suggests that an index of poverty should embrace what he calls a “constitutive plurality” – a basket of attributes such as the ability to do something or be something. (Kottegoda, 2004)

Chambers in his survey of literature on rural poverty in India, outlines four broad characteristics of the poor: ascribed deprivation by caste, gender and age; dominant livelihood strategies; spatial deprivation (whereby the poor can be found to be regionally concentrated) and the lack of access to goods and services. (Kottegoda, 2004)

**Power/ Domination /Authority**

According to Karl Marx, Powers may be defined as the faculties, abilities and capacities of people. Even the most microscopic notions of human powers and needs cannot be discussed without taking into account the larger setting of society as a whole. (Ritzer.G., 1996, P50-51)

According to Weber domination is the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons”. Domination can be legitimate or illegitimate, the legitimate forms of domination he calls “authority”. Authority legitimized on traditional grounds is based on” an established belief in the sanctity, of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them” (Ritzer.G., 1996, 127-128)

**Division of labour**
Marx and Engles traced the origins of the modern division of labour to the early family, “where wife and children are the slaves of the husband”. (Ritzer.G., 1996, P66)

**Ideology**

An ideology can be defined as an integrated system of ideas that is external to and coercive of people. (Lefebvre, 1968, taken from Ritzer.G., 1996, P70)

**Gender Inequality**

Four themes characterize the theories of gender inequality. First men and women are situated in society not only differently but also unequally. Specifically, women get less of the material resources, social status, power and opportunities for self actualization than men do who share their social location- be it a location based on class, race, occupation, ethnicity religion, education, nationality or any other socially significant factor.

(Ritzer.G., 1996, P449)

**Gender Oppression**

All theories of gender oppression describe women’s situation as the consequence of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men have fundamental and concrete interests in controlling, using, subjugating and oppressing women- that is in the practice of domination. By domination, oppression theorists mean any relationship in which one party (individual or collective), the dominant succeeds in making the other party (individual or collective) the subordinate, an instrument of the dominants will, and refuses to recognize the subordinates independent subjectivity.

This pattern of oppression is incorporated in the deepest and most pervasive ways into society’s organization, a basic structure of domination most commonly called patriarchy.

(Ritzer.G., 1996, P457-458)

**Patriarchy**

Part of a system- the system of patriarchy.- looking at patriarchy as we experience it in our lives and a concept which explains women’s subordination.

The word patriarchy literally means the rule of the father or the “Patriarch” and originally it was used to describe a specific type of mal dominated family- the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. It is used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways.
Sylvia Walby in her book “Theorizing Patriarchy” calls it “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate oppress and exploit women”

The control over and exploitation of Woman’s labour means that men benefit materially from patriarchy, they derive concrete economic gains from the subordination of women; there is a material bias for patriarchy.

In modern times the patriarchal state tries to control women’s reproduction through its family planning programmes.

Engels explanation of the origin of patriarchy

A very important explanation for the origin of patriarchy was given by Frederick Engles in 1884 in his book, *Origins of the family, private property and the state*. Engles believed that women’s subordination began with the development of private property, when according to him; *the world historical defeat of the female sex took place*.

He speaks of three phases of society Savagery, Barbarism and Civilization, in the 3rd phase when men started domesticating animals, they also understood the principal of impregnation….all this led to the formation of private property. Men wanted to retain power and property, and pass it on to their own children. To ensure this inheritance, mother-right was overthrown. ….because surplus was now produced in areas controlled by men, women became economically dependent.

Radical Feminist and revolutionary feminist explanations

According to the radical feminists, patriarchy preceded private property. They believe all women to be a class. According to their analysis gender differences can be explained in terms of the biological or psychological differences between men and women. They say there are two systems of social classes 1.) The economic system which is based on relations of production 2.) The sex-class system which is based on relations of reproduction. According to them patriarchy is based on the second factor, based upon men’s ownership and control of women’s reproductive capacities. Women have become physically and psychologically dependent on men.

Social Feminist Position

Social feminists accept and use the basic principles of Marxism. They take economic class and sex class as two contradictions in society and try to see the relationship between them. According to them patriarchy is related to the economic system, to the relations of production, but it is not causally related. There are many other forces which influence patriarchy; ideology for example which has played a very important role in strengthening it.

( Bhasin Kamla, 2003 )
Harden Marxists insisted that women’ oppression was rooted in capitalist social relations; for them the analysis of patriarchy was a product of “bourgeois feminism” and antithetical to class struggle. Marxist feminist on the other hand recognized male domination as a systematic feature of modern society and did not generally reduce women’s subordination to a side effect of capitalism—although some were reluctant to conceptualize patriarchy as a separate social system co-existing with capitalism. (Jackson Stevi, Jones Jackie, 1998, p 12-13)

**Objectives**

- To be able to understand if Women and Men do get equal status in the decisions that are made at the household level.
- To be able to understand if Women and Men do get equal status in the decisions those are made at the Community level.
- To be able to understand if Women of two generations hold the same status when decisions are made at the Household and Community levels.

2. **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

What are the main decisions that are made in the household and community levels and what is the status of women in making these decisions in the given urban watta.

In the above context is the status of Women in the decision making process the same between two generations?

The study will categorize three main decisions that are made in the household and ascertain the contribution that women hold regarding the making and taking of these decisions, as well as the study will concentrate on one particular area of decision making at the community level to determine the status of women therein as well. Women will be taken as married women with child/children within the household.

**Unit of Analysis**

There will be two units of analysis 1.) household – a household will be determined by three factors, firstly do they live together as a separate household, do they cook and partake of their meals as a separate unit, and are they recognized by the people of that community as a separate household.

2.) Community – community activity, various events that take place in the community during the time of research, meetings of various organizations within the community and the participation that takes place there off.

**Research Questions**

1.) Household Level
The research concentrates on three major decisions that are made in the household and the status that women hold in the making of these decisions.

1.) Do Women and Men of two generations have equal opportunity in making decisions with regard to Household Earnings and Expenditure?

b.) Is it the same between two generations?
   a.) Household earnings
   b.) Expenditure
   c.) Resource Allocation

Earnings and Expenditure in the watta economy and the decisions taken there off. Who is the main bread winner, who managers the money. How are the earnings distributed, do women and men have the same freedom in spending. Resource allocation for men and women are they the same. Indirect methods of earning and saving such as the seethu, house hold industry, and economic decisions for future development.

2.) Do Women and Men have equal responsibility in decisions with regard to Child Care?

b.) Is there a difference between two generations?

Who is responsible for the day to day child care, Who takes the decisions regarding the major events of the Childs life, like choosing a school, which religion the child will take up etc.

3.) What are the main decisions that are made in the household in both generations with regard to social and cultural events? Is it the same for men and women?

What are the Educational levels of Men and Women in these watta communities, and the acceptance for women to be educated and better her skills.

Does the educated women have a better status, and has she a better opportunity in decision making.

   Health -nutrition factor, who is the last to be fed and kept healthy within the household. Decisions of birth control and the number of children in the family.
   Decisions of religious observances and practices.
   Social relationships, and the relationship with the extended family

2.) mmunity Level

4.) Do Women have equal access to leadership roles in order to make decisions?

b.) Is it the same between two generations?

Who holds positions of responsibility in political and other organizations in the given watta, how does one use ones vote can women independently deicide upon
it, the factor of representation, are women’s needs really met and addressed in the wattha, do women have a voice in the decisions that are made. Is there a difference between two generations of omen regarding this.

In all of the above given factors the Concept of Power and Authority prevails as in Who holds the power and authority, how are decisions made in the above given areas in the household and community and the status of women regarding them are looked at.

The study will try and ascertain the status that women hold in the decision making process taking in to consideration the above given factors, have women been excluded, from certain areas of decision making, and why and how this happens. What it all boils down to is who holds the power “the ability of individuals or groups to make their own interests or concerns count, even when others resist” Max Weber ( Giddens. A, 1998).

3. THE SETTING

The study hopes to take an urban wattha in the Colombo Municipal Council, which houses a heterogeneous community. The Setting will be termed a wattha, the inner-city neighborhoods are commonly referred to as slums, the shanty communities mostly evolved since 1948 so as to accommodate excess population from slum areas as well as several kinds of new arrivals in the city. In terms of location, these communities radiate along canals, river banks, sea coasts, railway lines and roadside with their heaviest concentration in the out skirts of the city. (Silva. K.T, Athukorala, K,.1991)

slums are old tenements erected to accommodate the influx of a new labour force into the city during a period when a thriving plantation industry required labour for processing, tenements consists normally of a single bedroom, a small verandah and a living area with common taps and latrine facilities they were built in rows on a block of land commonly referred as the garden ( Kottegoda Sepali2004).

Whether it is a Tenement Garden, Slum Garden or Shanty Community it is commonly referred to as a “wattha” ( Silva. K.T, Athukorala, K,.1991). The urban wattha of the study is situated by the side of a canal with an influx of people from slum and other areas congregating in the city.

The selected wattha of the study is situated in the Colombo South gramasevaka division. It has a total number of 80 households with approximately a total of 300 adults and children above the age of five years of age. It is a heterogeneous community with an ethnic backdrop of 180 Sinhalese, 96 Tamils and 17 Muslims. The houses are unauthorized structures, which use the boundary wall of the adjoining affluent houses as their back wall. The front of the houses is open to a roadway that connects to Galle Road and which is increasingly used by motorists. This road is boarded by a canal around which this wattha of the study and clusters of other slums are situated.
Methodology

A triangulation of tools will be used. Initially there will be a simple census questionnaire distributed to the household head’s of the entire population to gain an overall, average understanding of its population, with this data the sample for indepth study will be selected.

Selection of sample

Total Population: 80 House Hold Heads

Variables: Age

Ethnicity

Out of the total population a selection of 20 women below the age of 50 and 20 women above the age of 50 will be selected. They will be selected representing the ethnic representation of the total population.

Total Population ethnic backdrop

Sinhalese 180
Tamil 96
Muslim 17

Ethnically Stratified Sample (taken for a number of 40, which is half the number of the household heads)

Sinhalese 28
Tamil 10
Muslim 2

Statified sample with the inclusion on the age variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>50&gt; age group</th>
<th>50&lt; age group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala – 14</td>
<td>Sinhala – 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil - 5</td>
<td>Tamil - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim – 1</td>
<td>Muslim – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 20</td>
<td>Total 20</td>
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</table>

An interview Guide will be used thereafter to be administrated to the sample population. In –depth interviews will be carried out in this sample group, there will be a selection of females within the community to do case studies with., during the six months period of field work both men and women will be interviewed , men will be interviewed by way of informal interviews. Observations will also be done and secondary data will also be collected. In- depth interviews will be carried out with the women of the community. Community level leaders irrespective of gender will also be interviewed.

Community level
Community level leaders will be interviewed, as well as NGO’s in operation in the community, officers in charge of the community and religious leaders of the community will also be interviewed.

**Observations**

House Hold level observations and community level observations will be done. Observation at house hold level will be done to ascertain if what the respondents say mesh with their practices. Observations of any event that takes place within the community at the time of field work, as well as observation of any meeting (society, political party…) that takes place within the community will also be observed.

**Secondary Data**
- Past Records
- Gramasewaka List
- Literature and records

4. **MEASUREMENT PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS**

The study will try and determine the position of women in the decision making process within the areas stated above, to ascertain if women have a voice when key decisions are made at the house hold and community levels of the selected sample. Which will give us a realistic picture of democracy in operation at the grass root levels. Analysis will consist of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

5. **WORK SCHEDULE**

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