A Contractual Participation:
Self-Help Housing in Sri Lanka’s Plantation Sector

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ABSTRACT

In the early to mid-1990s, the self-help approach to housing was formally implemented in the RPC-managed plantation sector of Sri Lanka through various social welfare programs. The aided self-help method has since then lasted as a major ‘default’ model for addressing estate housing. However, a study on key elements of these specific self-help housing projects reveals the way they are influenced by systemic features of the plantation and its standard norms, which direct the design of such housing schemes. There are some major weaknesses with the current self-help model, as such housing projects have been designed that do not engage the full potential of user participation, while gaining from the process by tying the beneficiary to the estate in the long term both financially and physically. This indentures the beneficiary both financially due to long-term debt (specifically to a corporation), and physically because of mandatory occupation by the participating household. Such shortcomings stem from an effort to maintain corporate interests while attempting to benefit workers through the use of self-help methodology. Therefore, this study attempts to explore how the incongruity between self-help ideals of participation and estate style top-down management have contributed to the way self-help is done in the estates.
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Though it is but a small, undergraduate-level attempt at making a statement of significance on a much larger, complex issue on both plantation theory and self-help methodology, this undertaking would not have been possible and worthwhile without the direct and indirect support of a myriad of people who lent their support and contributed to my overall learning experience, resulting in the completion of this thesis dissertation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB – Asian Development Bank
DS – District Secretariat
EWHCS – Estate Workers Housing Cooperative Society
GoSL – Government of Sri Lanka
HFH – Habitat for Humanity
JBIC – Japan Bank for International Cooperation
JEDB – Janatha Estates Development Board
LRC – Land Reform Commission
MTIP – Medium Term Implementation Programme
NGO – Non-governmental Organization
NHDA – National Housing Development Authority
PCP – Plantation Communities Project
PDSP – Plantation Development Support Programme
PHDT – Plantation Human Development Trust
PHSWT – Plantation Housing and Social Welfare Trust
PRP – Plantation Reform Project
RPC – Regional Plantation Company
SEARO-WHO – South East Asia Regional Office – World Health Organization
SLSPC - Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation
SDD – Social Welfare Division
SWP – Social Welfare Program
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
WUSC – World University Service of Canada
Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION: ‘Lines’ & Limitations

“It is not so much what housing is, but what it does for people”

"...structural factors inherent in the plantation system retard the process of development and structural transformation...
In the circumstances we could hardly expect to find a highly motivated population displaying the kinds of characteristics that development demands."

The above demonstrates an apparent clash of values between self-help philosophy and the plantation system. Thus, in light of recent self-help methods initiated in parts of the Sri Lankan plantation sector to address estate housing, this study explores what these programs offer to its users, and examines the integrity of the program by analyzing some key institutional and historical precepts of the plantation system. It will be seen that such systemic features of the plantation contribute to overriding the goal of ‘housing-related empowerment’ in self-help programmes that have been devised for plantation housing. This research was motivated by an apparent dilemma sensed almost immediately from fieldwork (as part of an internship with a Canadian NGO’s plantation project) of a major dichotomy between visions of self-help objectives, with its characteristic ideals of ‘dweller control,’ ‘user autonomy,’ and ‘freedom to build’ (Turner, 1972; Fichter et al., 1976) within the backdrop of the Sri Lankan plantation context. Thus, what began as an aside inquiry into the self-help experience as part of a co-operative placement fuelled further interest in the apparent irony behind the self-help programs in the tea estates of Sri Lanka. Upon a little more exposure to the plantation system and estate housing projects, it became more clear that the self-help method truly developed in another time and space far removed from the specific cultural history and socio-political realm of the plantation system, which still follows a largely authoritarian and paternalistic form of management, reminisce of its former colonial bearings. Thus, it was this ironic clash between the ideals of self-help theory and the reality of the long established plantation status quo that drew me to further studying this paradox.
In the estate sector there is an urgent need to improve the housing stock as well as the existing sites and services. Estate housing is a national concern for human development in Sri Lanka. It remains in the poorest conditions, inadequate in terms of both quantity and quality, especially when compared to the country’s urban and rural sectors. Despite many development interventions by various stakeholders, barrack-style row houses known as ‘lines’ reminiscent of the British planting period continue to dominate the estate residential areas, barely accommodating larger households within their single room space. These conditions lead to consequential health problems due to poor ventilation and overcrowding, as well as give rise to a myriad of privacy issues for families. Given adequate housing however, people are apt to assume a sense of dignity, which is important for this particular marginalized sector of Sri Lanka. At the same time, the long standing tradition of social provision in the estates has shaped a particular plantation culture in which the estate community lives (Chapter 2). This tradition stems from its original establishment where a vast amount of labourers were mass transferred for plantation work, which also meant accommodating a large number of bodies in a relatively short period. The importation of labour is in fact a common feature of any plantation (Beckford, 1972). Today, much of the Sri Lankan plantation workforce is largely comprised of earlier South Indian labourers that were recruited under the previous ‘kangany’ system, which was a systematic form of mass labour recruitment from South India to Ceylon (then Sri Lanka). As plantations are meant to be highly productive, they also need to be labour-intensive\(^1\). In fact, more than half of an estate’s total cost of production is spent on direct labour costs (Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2006).

To date there have been many initiatives both by government and non-government organizations (NGOs), as well as domestic and international efforts\(^2\) to improve the housing stock in the estates by building more housing units, renovations, upgrading, and the addition of second storeys

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\(^1\) High productivity can be achieved with mechanization which many estates are in fact looking into, however right now the common method is to continue relying on a labour-intensive workforce

\(^2\) These include the GoSL (JEDB), ADB, UNICEF, and others (Puvanarajan, 2002).
Kamalanathan (2006) estimates that approximately 14% of the housing need has been addressed with programs so far, while the World Bank estimates about 15% of households have been reached with various housing programs (this includes Self-help and other projects) out of the total requirement (2007). Estate housing has often made up a large portion of estate welfare efforts, as it has also been estimated that 45% of all funding for estate social welfare programs are allocated specifically for housing (ibid). Thus, as a result of past and on-going interventions, the housing stock – though still dominated by the original ‘lines’ - now include a mixture of different types of housing and shanties, the degree to which vary from estate to estate.

More recently, a major initiative being implemented by the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT), an organization mandated to address social welfare in those estates managed by the 23 Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) in Sri Lanka, has adopted the self-help method for addressing the housing situation. This began in the early 1990s, with the financial support of international donors, in particular the Norwegian and Dutch governments. More than 10 years later, the Self-Help housing program has not met the quantitative expectations which its implementers and overseers anticipated. Also, with respect to the participants of these self-help housing projects, no user to date has yet received ownership. This program, from which the model of self-help housing is currently being employed, is the research subject of this paper. Given such, the objective of this study is to stimulate interest in exploring the contextual factors of the plantation that have shaped these self-help housing projects in more depth, with a specific objective to assess its implications to the intended beneficiaries. Rather than claim a ‘win-all’ solution to the problem, it instead examines some fundamental aspects of the ‘third world’ plantation, which has not been extensively examined recently (since Beckford’s work in the 1970s). Analysis of the plantation system is necessary before solutions may be attempted, and in particular evaluations of such development programs (housing or others) should seek to identify all

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3 Pilot projects began around 1993, with established projects occurring in 1995.
impacts – positive, negative, even ambiguous - on its intended beneficiaries if they are to be improved and made effective. As for the current aided self-help method being employed, this study has found that such housing projects fail to fully engage user participation, while tying the beneficiary to the estate both financially and physically in the long term.

Further investigation into the issues of the program show two major systemic features of plantations, namely the trade off by plantation companies to gain a ‘return on investment’ from their provision of social welfare, coupled with the generally authoritative hierarchical labour structure, which embodies plantation labour relations. These contribute to the aforementioned weaknesses with the housing program in that they reinforce the dependency of workers to the estate. As such, a deep examination of the plantation context are important to study in order to understand the dependent relationships which are supported by this system, and consequently provide the basis of some key problems identified with the program. To do this, investigation into the roots of the housing program (the historical background of social welfare provision and its legacy) can lend insight into program results and outcomes seen today. Though the research topic is on this particular self-help housing program in the tea estate sector of Sri Lanka, this paper heavily focuses on the intricacies of the plantation system as a ‘total institution’ due to the fact that it is this contextual environment which actually shapes self-help housing in practice more so than the principles that define self-help housing. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to emphasize some of the major factors which shape the Sri Lankan plantation system that are important to appreciate with regard to housing development projects aimed at, and effecting, this specific community. With respect to the Self-Help Housing programs in RPC-managed estates of Sri Lanka, the study finds the beneficiary indentured to the estate both financially as a result of long-term debt to his/her direct employer, the estate management, and physically because of mandatory occupation by the participating household.
However, despite such drawbacks of the current program, the self-help housing schemes have worked to establish some new precedents for the participating plantation sector through the increased opportunity for negotiation (specifically in the site selection process), which must be considered when attempting to assess program ‘success’ or ‘failure’ beyond the tangible, quantitative rate of housing output. This type of precedence is a milestone for a traditionally authoritative bureaucracy, and thus increased efforts should be made to improve the prospect of the program, in light of recent discussions to derail self-help efforts towards replacing the method with a prefabricated housing program. The definitions below are central to the subject matter and therefore to the research study.

**Definitions:**

1. **‘Self-Help’**

   The self-help method for housing is generally considered as a “…*system oriented toward people*…” (Harms, 1972, p. 177) and thus can be referred to, more or less, as an alternative to conventional housing processes. There is a large difference however between developed and developing countries when it comes to self-help. The former is said to focus more on qualitative results and ideologies, while the later focuses on quantitative results by producing new units of pre-existing low-quality housing or upgrade them (Mathey, 1992). Generally, there are two types of methods for self-help, defined by Harms (1992) as:

   1. Individual household or group self help, relating to the more technical aspects of house construction
   2. Collective actions around housing, relating more strongly to organizational and political actions in order to improve living conditions beyond housing

Either of these two typologies can be further typified as ‘aided’ self-help or ‘unaided’ self-help. Harms (1992) suggest viewing these two concepts as situated on either end of a conceptual continuum of self-

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4 ‘Conventional’ usually refers to modern, urban means of attaining housing, such as purchasing pre-made dwellings.
help, since any given self-help program will not be strictly of one extreme or another. While ‘unaided’ self-help is associated with being a more ‘pure’ form of self-help, usually characteristic of spontaneous, bottom-up efforts by its user(s), aided self-help is also referred to as ‘state-initiated’ self-help, alluding to its top-down method of implementation by the state or some other authority. The focus of this research concerns aided self help because it better describes the self-help housing programs the estates have adopted. According to Harm’s (1992) definition, state-initiated self help are programs, “where self-help or some form of participation by the ‘beneficiaries’ is required,” but initiated by some other agency on the local, national or international level (p. 35).

2. The Plantation Sector in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, a plantation is also commonly referred to as an ‘estate,’ and so the ‘plantation sector’ is also known as the ‘estate sector’. Today, Sri Lanka provides 10% of the current world tea supply, making it the third largest producer in the world after India and China, respectively (Feasibility Study, 2006). The tea industry at large (both plantation and smallholders) contribute roughly 1.2% of Sri Lanka’s GDP (2005 Central Bank of Sri Lanka in Aheeyar, 2006). The area cultivated for tea on the island country falls just under 200 000 ha\(^5\) of the total 6 500 000 ha (65 610 km\(^2\)) surface area, thus representing about 3% of the country’s land mass. Of Sri Lanka’s 9 provinces, plantations for tea, rubber, coconut and other tree crops areas are found in the Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa, and Southern provinces (See Appendix 1 for a political map of Sri Lanka). The tea (and rubber) plantation areas are classified into three different categories: High Grown, or ‘up-country’ estates, which are plantations situated 1 220 masl or higher; Medium Grown, ‘mid-country’ estates at 610 - 1 220 masl; and Low Grown, or ‘low-country’ estates which are at an elevation of less than 610 masl (ibid). The differences in

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\(^5\) Estimates range from 187 971 ha (Feasibility Study, 2006) to 195 000ha (Bass, 2004) to 212 716 ha (2001 GoSL Census). The extent covered by tea plantations has been declining over the years; this could be attributed to the diversification of the land for other crops or economic ventures, such as tourism.
elevation and varying climatic conditions affect the kind and quality of tea produced, with the cooler, higher elevations producing relatively better quality tea.

Statistics on Sri Lankan industries and other social data are normally classified to fall under 3 different categories of the nation’s main sectors: urban, rural, and plantation. According to the GoSL 2001 Census on Population and Housing criteria, to qualify under the plantation sector, an estate must be at least 20 acres in surface area and employ a minimum of 10 workers. A typical tea estate can be anywhere from 250 to 1,500 ha large, though the average single estate is said to be about 275 ha (Feasibility Study, 2006). Often they are divided into about 2 or 3 ‘divisions,’ though there can be more or less depending on the size of the estate. Agricultural production systems which fail to meet plantation criteria are considered smallholders and regarded as part of the rural sector, whether they are growing monocultures of any kind of ‘plantation crops’ or not. Today, it is estimated that about half the supply of Ceylon tea comes from smallholders (Lakshman and Tisdell, 2002). While plantations are heavily situated in the up-country provinces of Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, and Badulla, smallholdings are found more frequently in low-elevation areas such as Galle, Matara, Kalutara, and Ratnapura (ibid).

3. The ‘Plantation Community’

"Plantation society has properties which distinguish it clearly from, say, peasant society, feudal society, urban society, and other such types which social scientists have isolated for particularly study. Its own special type of social and political organization sets it apart from other kinds of societies in the world today" - George Beckford, 1972

The residential labour force has come to form a population known as the 'plantation community,' distinct from other groups in Sri Lanka due to their atypical history, as well as social and political development separate from mainstream society. The plantation community will be looked at more specifically in the proceeding chapters. For now, it should be known that Sri Lanka uses the terms ‘Indian Tamil’, ‘estate Tamil’, ‘plantation Tamil’, ‘hill-country Tamil’, or ‘up-country Tamil’ to describe
members of the plantation community and to distinguish them from the Northern and North-eastern Tamils (‘Sri Lankan Tamils’), an ethnic minority who have been on the island long before European arrival (Bass, 2004). The ‘plantation community’ usually refers to the general labour class on the bottom of the plantation hierarchy, and normally does not include upper staff.

**Scope**

In Sri Lanka, a plantation is differentiated from a smallholding, though both may be monocultures of commercial cash crops, by two criteria: a plantation has 10 or more workers and at least 20 acres\(^6\). The scope of this study focuses only on those tea plantations that fall under the management of the 23 public limited companies known as Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs), particularly in the up-country districts of Nuwara Eliya (concentrated in Hatton) and Kandy where fieldwork was conducted. Other private and/or state-owned plantations and smallholders are not the focus of the paper, since they receive different kinds of support from the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT), the organization instituted by the Government of Sri Lanka in 1992 to oversee social welfare programmes in the RPC-managed estates. The PHDT is also the main body disseminating the self-help housing projects. For the RPC-managed estates, the PHDT has been involved in implementing these projects since the early to mid-90s. Specifically, this paper will review the self-help methodology in light of efforts by the Sri Lankan plantation industry to adopt socially sound development practices for improving housing conditions in the estate. The objective is to examine the self-help housing model that is being utilized and to analyze the plantation system in order to provide insight on how the plantation affects its own capacity to facilitate participatory development. The industry’s interpretation of the self-help method, that is, the method in practice, will be used as a case study to highlight some key concerns of the process, namely the irony of participation within a hierarchy.

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\(^{6}\) This is the standard defined by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) in 2001 Census on Population and Housing.
which compromise the concept of ownership within the estate context. Also, some important merits of
the self-help program will be discerned which deserve mention.

**Methodology**

During an undergraduate cooperative placement year in the hill country of Sri Lanka, I interned
with the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) on their Plantation Communities Project (PCP),
which collaborates with various stakeholders of the estate industry to implement programs that will
enhance the quality of work and non-work life of the estate community\(^7\). Through this experience, I was
exposed to various aspects of the plantation industry with regards to social welfare, and during the
latter half of my placement I began a research inquiry into one of the industry's major housing programs
since the early to mid-1990s, the 'self-help' method. I conversed with several members of the industry
from managers and other office staff of the estate management, and interacted with various Plantation
Human Development Trust (PHDT) workers while visiting their regional offices throughout my
placement. The 'Trust', as they are frequently referred to in the industry, is the main organization
responsible for coordinating social welfare activities in roughly 450 estates\(^8\) of the 23 Regional
Plantation Companies that manage them. By collecting documents in the field on these programs,
speaking with the aforementioned and other knowledgeable colleagues at PCP with prior experience in
the housing schemes, helped in formulating my research study. In the final part of my placement from
May to August 2007, I began conducting interviews with estate residents who had participated in a self-help project in the Nuwara Eliya District Secretariat (D.S.), from estates mostly of the Hatton area in
order to capture a sense of the project from the viewpoint of various stakeholders. Thus, my fieldwork

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\(^8\) This number is approximate (450 estates) under the RPCs, as a division of one estate may detach to become their
own estate, or a smaller estate can be conglomerated into another larger estate as a new division.
remained within the districts of Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, which are part of the greater Central Province. I frequented 3 regional PHDT offices (Kandy, Hatton, and Nuwara Eliya) to speak with different staff members and collect documents, largely facilitated by the fact that much of PCP staff and programs worked closely with these offices, making visits convenient. For the interviews, I visited 4 up-country estates in the Nuwara Eliya District Secretariat (D.S.) and always spoke with the managers to seek authorization (Appendix 5). I also visited a regional Habitat for Humanity (HFH) office in Hatton who were disseminating similar self-help housing schemes whose initiative also worked closely with the management though they were not as involved with the PHDT. The model used by HFH-Hatton however, generally follows the same scheme as the Trust. The research study was initially prompted by an earlier interest to learn how self-help was being perceived by its beneficiaries in the Sri Lankan estate sector, and in general what they thought of the process. I was curious to learn how participating estate workers were identifying with the projects and what changes it brought to their lives and/or perceptions.

From this open and exploratory inquest, my research method became increasingly ad hoc as I learned more and more from speaking with various actors, and especially the benefactors of the self-help housing schemes. Earlier interviews began with a set of questions to lead the conversation⁹, but these questions were continually revised after each day’s interviews in the field, and were never strictly adhered to in order to ‘go with the flow’ of the conversation as best as possible. I would resort to my prepared questions when the topic came to a halt. Additionally, a major language barrier was present since my attempts to learn Tamil were less than rudimentary, so I worked with various translators. Translators also freely asked questions as they came up during the interview. Most of my interviews with estate residents took place in their homes, usually with a husband and wife. Later, some group interviews (varying 6 to 10 people) were conducted that consisted of a mix of male and female

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⁹ See Appendix 4 for sample interview questions
interviewees, and some gender specific group interviews due to their different working hours. Additionally, I also wanted to learn how the self help housing scheme was being perceived by its implementers, i.e. estate management and PHDT staff, to get a sense of the entire implementation process. These were all conducted as individual interviews in each of their respective field offices in Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, and Hatton, which gave me opportunities to collect various documents about the project, such as promotion pamphlets designed for potential beneficiaries. My somewhat haphazard approach did allow me to observe and grasp a sense of the wider processes behind this development initiative, which led me to discover the contextual influences steering the Self Help process. The study also makes wide use of information and documents collected from the PHDT website online, as well as other papers providing information about the structure of relevant institutes in the industry, highlighting their social welfare goals. The study also makes use of data regarding projects in the up-country estates of Nuwara Eliya District, where the PHDT regional office manages 66 estates. The study is inspired and informed by data collected in Sri Lanka (pamphlets and other documents on the self-help programme and speaking with various plantation industry actors), as well as online resources such as newspaper articles, reports, and secondary sources on the Sri Lankan estate sector, supported by the wider literature on plantation theory and self-help housing. As for key philosophical and theoretical background information, Beckford's (1972) work on the underdevelopment of third world plantation economies was extremely pertinent, along with the ethnographic/anthropologic field studies of (Bass, 2004) and Alawattage and Wickramasinghe (2003) in their paper, 'Appearance of Accounting in a political hegemony' due to similar work comparing accounting as a ‘first world’ concept and how it plays out in the ‘third world’ context of the Sri Lankan plantation. Thus, many parallels could be drawn from their experience and ethnographic depictions of a typical work day in an estate, which I also observed in the field.
When referring to the ‘estate community’, ‘estate population’, or ‘estate labourer’ or ‘worker’, it is in reference to the pluckers and other bottom rung workers (sundry, factory, field) of the labour hierarchy, exclusive of any supervisor-type or field officer positions, or the mid-level estate senior and junior level staff. The research inquiry was initially driven by my background as a student studying social science who was almost overtly concerned with using theory to explore different perceptions of participatory development from interviewees. The more I spoke with participants however, the more I began to realize my initial expectations were largely out of sync with their concerns or realities. It is probable however, that issues of personal financial constraints – which often heavily dominated some interviews - were especially emphasized to me due to my relative positionality as a western university student. Another effect as a result of my positionality was the attempt by many gatekeepers to steer me towards the best developed self-help houses. However, even with the more practical problems of the self-help process, there is still a major ideological and conceptual mismatch in such a method imposed in this distinct institution of the plantation. Initially disillusioned by my encounters of a great lack of knowledge, concern and/or care for the conceptual underpinnings of Self-Help, the realities of the various stakeholders allowed me to redirect focus to the more significant, wider processes of self help housing development in the estates.

**Limitations**

Interviews with various actors of the program helped shape the direction of, and give insight to, the conclusions of the research but do not, on their own, substantiate a significant sample of the study area. The language barrier, other logistical issues such as availability of translators, and other time constraints, plus the real effect of researcher positionality in influencing the arrangement of interviews are all problems encountered which affect the data and present limits of the overall study. Thus, it is not a comprehensive evaluation of the program, but instead addresses some concerns regarding its long-term effect, which in the opinion of the author has failed to be critically thought through by those
who initially conceived and funded the design of the program. Moreover, recent work on plantation theory is lacking, though older work (particularly Beckford, 1972) on the topic is still relevant today. As such, this thesis hopes to stimulate more research in both plantation and self-help theory, in light of increasingly popular concerns by the estate industry for marketing their corporate social responsibility in the neo-colonial era. The arguments put forth should and need to be more deeply investigated, so that future housing projects realize and may foresee the systemic social and political context of this industry in Sri Lanka. Lastly, the ideas presented in the study are the sole opinions of the author derived from independent research apart from the work of WUSC.

Road Map

This paper is structured so that first, a general overview of the history of Sri Lankan plantation system is provided in Chapter 2, as well as a description on estate housing. Thus, the context will be set under which the self-help program occurs, to provide the basis to analyze some systemic causes that contributed to the way the self-help housing program developed and operates. In Chapter 3 will provide a description of the process of the general Self-Help housing project in the RPC-managed tea estates with particular attention to the degree and quality of participation that the program demands. It will be seen that such systemic features of the estate environment have produced some key qualities of the programme which are important to delineate as they run somewhat contradictory to self-help methodology. These will be examined in order to assess potential impacts on the ‘beneficiary’ from participating in such a project in accordance with some principle tenets in self-help housing theory that allow for a critical analysis of the program, namely to induce what the program offers for its participants. In Chapter 4, an acute emphasis on the estate social welfare policy that has been a feature of plantations since the advent of a residential labour force will be analyzed in order to discuss how this has motivated the self-help housing projects, while similarly shaping the plantation community, labour relations, and norms of the estate. Chapter 4 will do this by investigating the particular history and
development of the Sri Lankan plantation sector. This will form the basis of discussion in Chapter 5 on the adoption of self-help methodology in the estates by the PHDT and the influence of the plantation as an institution.

With this however, the study will proceed to address the easiness - and potential danger - of viewing such program in terms of western standards of participation, autonomy, and empowerment within the estate context. Thus, the last portion of the study will include some self reflection on project progress perceptions and evaluation in the wider context. Such exercise will require again, an examination of the plantation background (employment hierarchical relations, community ‘characteristics’ and estate culture in general) to be revisited so that some key milestones made by the self-help program be realized and appreciated. I will use a reflexivity of my personal in-field and post-field experiences to examine my own evaluative lens on self-help, as prompted by the real sense of urgency of the project’s implementers, and how this also runs contrary to self-help methodology.
A plantation is generally defined as “an estate on which crops such as coffee, sugar, and tobacco are cultivated by resident labor” (Oxford Pocket Dictionary, 2007 – emphasis added). More importantly, the plantation represents a capitalist mode of production originally designed by colonial enterprise. As a result, plantations are atypical agricultural systems compared to peasant farming or small scale cultivation practices. First, they are highly productive: Sri Lanka for instance is the 3rd largest producer of the world’s tea supply, yet only about 3% of its island’s surface area is devoted to tea plantations. This illustrates its high-intensity production which in order to fuel requires a substantial labour pool. Because of this, one predominant feature of plantations universally is its residential workforce, as emphasized earlier. In Sri Lanka specifically, plantations were developed over large tracts of land in the central hill areas where once virgin cloud forests stood and were thus geographically isolated, far removed from the more populated areas and services along the coast. As a result, plantation-provided welfare for the masses of labour lived on-site, as this was not only convenient but practical for the efficient production of the plantation. A policy of social welfare provision beginning with basic necessities such as housing and roads was adopted, gradually increasing its sites and services provision, such as latrines, communal water supply for residences, some food rations, and then eventually adding shops and temples to create ‘pocket’ estate communities that would reduce the need to leave the estates. From this establishment of the tea plantation industry in and around the early 1900s by the former British colonial regime, a specific plantation culture developed. This all-encompassing welfare state that embodies plantation culture reveals itself in current self-help housing practices in the estates.

The Plantation System in Sri Lanka

With the establishment of the plantations sector, this new industry effectively opened Sri Lanka to the world capital market. Plantations are predominantly monocultures, found in the tropics, and
meant to satisfy commercial purposes in the global capital market (Beckford, 1972). Beyond these characteristics, plantations contain complex socio-historical, economic and political spheres that interact to create a total system with its distinct estate populace, culture, and set of labour relations which dictate plantation norms. Hence, they are more than economic systems of production; they are equally social institutions (Beckford, 1972). In his work on the underdevelopment of plantation economies, Beckford (1972) describes the plantation system as “*instruments of political colonization*” that bring “*capital, enterprise, and management to create economic structures which have remained basically the same*” (p. 3). And so the Sri Lankan plantations are the product of British capital, Sri Lankan land, and (largely) Indian labour (Wickramasinghe and Cameron, 2005). This chapter seeks to explore the particular history of the Sri Lankan plantation sector further, which is important to understand in order to discuss the self-help housing method currently being employed in the estates. Thus, in this review of the history of the Sri Lankan plantations, specific attention to the predominant feature of social welfare provision to plantation labour will be emphasized. The purpose of this section aims to set the context of the estate sector and its population from the earlier plantation era to the present, so that the roots of current housing practices can be identified.

**History**

The island country was first subject to colonialism by the Portuguese in the early 16th century, then by the Dutch by the mid-17th century, and finally the British in 1795. It was not until 1815 however, when the British took over the Kandyan Kingdom and soon cleared the original cloud forest areas that were suitable for coffee plantation. In 1823 the first coffee bushes were planted (Peebles, 2006), but it was not until 1840 when the British colonial government issued the Crown Land Ordinance (for coffee) and the 1897 Waste Land Ordinance (for tea) to officially make the ‘new’ land available for plantation development at 5 shillings per acre, bought by various British entrepreneurs (Hollup, 1991; Jilani, 1998). The government also built roads and other infrastructure as well to help facilitate the process. By the
late 1830s and 1840s, coffee plantation expansion peaked and continued to thrive until the late 1870s (ibid). The coffee cash crop lasted only until about the late 1870s and 1880s due to a fungus plight, and was soon replaced by tea to sustain the plantation industry. Tea was first tried out in 1867 in an estate in Kandy and proved to be a commercial success: by 1900, tea bushes covered 120 000 ha of former coffee plantations (Plan Sri Lanka, 2006, p. 2-1).

Given that plantations are large-scale ventures with high productivity, an ample supply of labour is required to meet the intensity. Initially, colonial administrators presumed that by eliminating the traditional Kandyan Rajakariya system, in which Sinhalese peasants were service-bound to landlords that this would free up the peasants for their supply of labour (Peebles, 2006; Jilani, 1998). However these villagers were not in fact completely landless by the abolition and further, were “unwilling to accept a military-like discipline and poor wages” (Meyer, 1990, p. 170) in trade of their subsistent lifestyles. Alternately, the British looked to India, where they also had colonial control and knowledge of where labour could be easily deployed. Southern India was targeted due to its geographic proximity and the fact that many people in overpopulated regions were stricken by one, or a combination of: poverty, landlessness, and/or famine (See Appendix 2 for specific locales where labour was recruited). The severity of these factors dictated the influx or lulls of labour migration. Because of this, competitive wages were not necessary to entice people to plantation work and, once far removed, labourers would have to stay around long enough to comply simply because ‘turning back’ was not likely a viable option (Jilani, 1998). There was however, plenty of movement of labour during the coffee period since employment was seasonal. With the conversion to tea plantations, more stable populations of labour and their families (women and children) became necessary since tea can be harvested year round, as well as cultivated in more areas than coffee. Further, Jayaraman (1975) reports that more than half of

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10 From the 1911, 1921, and 1931 Indian Census Reports
the Tamils who came to Ceylon from South India were of the Pallan and Paraiyan castes, who belong to the Adi-Dravida class, the ‘Untouchables,’ who are not allowed to own land.

Labour was systematically sought through the ‘Kangany’ system, which saw local men (and frequently their sons) known as ‘kanganies’ appointed by planters to recruit labour from South India (Tamil Nadu) for the plantations in Ceylon. They would pursue members from their own caste as well as from the untouchable castes (Jilani, 1998, p. 21). This migration movement began in 1839, though it was not until after 1900 when kanganyes began to wield a great deal of power from their recruitment system, which was not organized by the kangany system up until 1900 (Jayaraman, 1975). As both planters and labourers heavily relied on their kanganyes to provide labour for the former, and to look after the latter, kanganyes were vital to the maintenance of a stable labour force and thus held a strategic position between the two dependent groups (Heidemann, 1992, p. 6). Kanganyes were often given financial advances from planters for travelling expenses to and from Southern India to recruit labour. Thus, kanganyes had the financial capital to – if necessary - pay off debts that low caste people may have had in India that would free them to leave and migrate to Ceylon, as well as provide any other type of loan. Kanganyes essentially had the capital to create such entrepreneurial opportunities, for example siphon some of their advance for themselves instead of investing it in travel expenses for the migrating labour (such as for food or other health provisions on the journey as they rose) (Jilani, 1998).

In the plantations, kanganyes were in charge of supervising the labour gangs, and acted as an intermediary between planter and the labour. Though kanganyes are still part of the plantation system today, their role and position is not near the same status as before, a role which will be revisited later on in this chapter.

Before independence in 1948, when Sri Lanka became a self-governing territory of the British Commonwealth, tea cultivated lands were owned by private planters and later by corporations: Sterling Companies (registered in Britain) and Rupee Companies (registered in Ceylon) which managed several
estates (Feasibility Study, 2006). These major corporations were managed through Agency Houses in both Colombo and Britain to connect the British Empire and the plantations in the hinterland with any machinery or other administrative support necessary. During the 1960s, 150 small companies were managing 329 large (more than 500 ha) estates and 530 smaller estates (Shafer, 1994). This management regime was eventually replaced due to the mounting nationalist movement which led to the development of a new Constitution in 1972, in which ‘Ceylon’ officially became its own nation state: the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. This marked the first major ‘wave’ of nationalization as the country took control over many enterprises. The Land Reform Act at this point however, still left the larger corporate holdings intact and it was not until 1975 when the plantation industry was affected at large by nationalization as corporate tea holdings were transferred over to the state with the new Land Reform (Amendment) Law No. 39 (Shafer, 1994). As a result, previous plantation land owned by companies came under state control and ownership, which saw the nationalization of 240 000 acres of privately owned tea plantations previously exempted in 1972 (Hollup, 1991). The change bestowed the Government of Sri Lanka’s (GoSL) Land Reform Commission (LRC) with more than 415 000 acres of plantation area (majority of it tea, but also other tree crops) from the private companies (Peebles, 2006). Though this was a dramatic shift, at this point, many foreign plantation owners had already sold their land to local Sri Lankan investors in anticipation of the imminent nationalization process (ibid). During the change in regime, Agency Houses were also gradually phased out as two Central Boards took their place. From these Boards, two government corporations: the Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation (SLSPC), and later in 1976, the Janatha Estates Development Board (JEDB) were established\(^\text{12}\) to manage the land by the LRC. Only about 15% of total tea areas still remained under the management of other state agencies (Hollup, 1991).

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\(^{11}\) The largest of these companies were Lipton, Brooke Bond, and Tetley (Shafer, 1994).

\(^{12}\) These two state entities were established by the Sri Lanka State Plantations Act of 1958, and the State Agricultural Corporations Act No. 11 of 1972, respectively (Loh et al., 2003).
As time passed, it became clear that the government controlled plantation industry was not performing viably as a result of high costs of production and growing debt from wasteful practices, general mismanagement, lack of planning, occurrences of theft, and overall corruption in the corporate structure (Loh et al., 2003; Peebles, 2006). In 1992 the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) privatized 449 out of 552 state-owned plantations (tea and rubber) so that approximately 45% of the total tea cultivated areas were transferred over to the private sector (Feasibility Study, 2006; Peebles, 2006; Aheeyar, 2006). The plantations (318 tea and 131 rubber estates) were leased to 23 different public limited companies called Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) for a 53 year period, but with ownership still remaining under the State\(^\text{13}\) (Feasibility Study, 2006; Loh et al., 2003; Aheeyar, 2006). Thus, only the management of the estates was privatized, while the land and jurisdiction remained under State control. These RPCs each took on a Managing Agent/private managing body (essentially a larger enterprise to adjoin to for support (World Bank, 2007). In 1995, the respective Managing Agents of the RPCs gained controlling interests, though this did not remove the GoSL completely out of the picture, as there are still several limits on the companies’ jurisdiction over their estates (World Bank, 2007). While RPCs do manage a great extent of the estate area, some plantations are still privately owned (small holders and other private entities) and a small portion of estates remain under the JEDB and SLSPC as public estates.

**Plantation Sector Housing**

The estate sector contains only 5% of Sri Lanka’s total population of approximately 19 million, yet constitutes 8% of the country’s total poor (World Bank, 2007). The total labour force on private sector tea estates number 259,149 workers, as well as having a total residential population of 867,084 (Aheeyar, 2006). By the end of 2005, the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) (UNCRD/JICA slideshow, 2005) reported that the estate resident population stood at 912,110. The plantations are

\(^{13}\) Initially, the lease was only for 5 years under a profit sharing management contract (Peebles, 2006), but this was later extended to be more conducive towards long-term investments (Feasibility Study, 2006).
said to lag behind the rest of the country in many quality of life indicators, particularly in the areas of health\textsuperscript{14} and sanitation, education, income, literacy, and housing (World Bank, 2007; Hettiarachchi, 2006) to name a few. Although there has been an overall increase in consumption poverty in the estates from 1990-1991 to 2002 (World Bank, 2007), in the past few years some improvements to those quality of life indicators mentioned have occurred due to various endeavours by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) with the help of other development agencies (NGOs, plantation industry companies and other affiliates) (World Bank, 2007; SEARO-WHO, n.d.). Many of these initiatives have targeted estate housing, and so the housing stock varies due to the outcome of several different projects over the years. Today cottage-type single homes, two-storey houses, shanties, and a variety of attached housing and annexes are found amongst the estate housing stock, which is still heavily dominated by the standard ‘lines’ that characterize estate sector housing (Feasibility Study, 2006; Aheeyar, 2006). Each line normally comes with a communal standpipe and latrine, though the functional quality of each may vary greatly.

‘Lines’ are barrack-type structures first introduced by the earlier British planters in the colonial period (Feasibility Study, 2006; Stockholm profile, n.d.). They are also known as ‘line rooms’ or ‘row houses,’ the original structures of which continue to house many workers today (Hettiarachchi, 2006). A study by Plan-Sri Lanka (2006) found that over 95% of the labour force lives in housing provided by the estate and that the common line rooms make up about 70% of estate-provided housing. Lines are long rectangular dwellings divided into portions of 4 to 10 (depending on the length of the line), each typically having 2 - sometimes 1 – bedroom(s) per unit and a small footpath and/or veranda (ibid). From my own observations in up-country estates, ‘double lines’ (two attached rows) were more common than single lines. The average dwelling is typically 10 x 12 feet with household size ranging between 4 – 7

\textsuperscript{14} According to a 2000 national news article, there has been less incidence of illness in estate children over the past 10 years, while incidence of child illness has risen in the urban sector (The Sunday Times, Dec. 24, 2000).
members (Hettiarchachi, 2006; Jilani, 1998; Selvaratnam, 2001; Bass, 200-). The 10 x 12 lines are the old, original type of line rooms. During the nationalization period, attempts for more ‘cottage type’ lines were made that were slightly bigger (Jayaraman, 1975). Thus, overcrowding in estate housing aggravates health problems by promoting the spread of illnesses, and the conditions of these houses – often described as dilapidated and having weak infrastructure, poor ventilation, and common leakage problems, all contribute to the urgency of addressing adequate housing (ibid). In addition to physical/medical health problems that are prone to arise, Jilani (1998) reports:

"The labourers also referred to conflicts which occur due to the lack of space in the line rooms. In a focus group one laborer remarked, "We have boxes, furniture, and beds – everything in the room and because of these problems (prachanai), sometimes we have to send some family members in another line room of a friend because of a friend or a relative and this starts rumours that there is an affair going on" (p. 135).

Thus, difficult living conditions have made the housing issue a source of concern for all stakeholders in the industry.

These kinds of circumstances have put housing at the forefront of social welfare concerns for major stakeholders of the plantation industry. Jayawardena (1984) reported there were roughly 184 000 line units on the plantations during the nationalization period, and that high levels of investment for housing can be maintained only with external assistance. The government had plans to substitute them with cottage-type homes of 2 bedrooms including a kitchen and latrine. It is estimated that when the RPCs began their managerial role in 1992, almost 70% of the housing in the estates were mostly line rooms in need of improvements (Kamalanathan, 2006). Though these are rough estimates, they serve as quantitative indicators of no major change to the overall housing stock has taken place. It also means that roughly 30% of the households (at the time of privatization) were in liveable condition, and that more were in need of renovation and/or upgrading (ibid). According to one Sri Lankan national

15 Aheeyar (2006) reports that typical estate household size is 4.56 persons, slight over the national average of 4.31.
newspaper article (Sivaram, The Island, Dec. 2000), approximately 8 500 new houses have been constructed since around 1995, with 10 000 more in progress. Additionally, almost 35 000 housing units are being upgraded. Improvements to estate housing stock range from partial (extensions, upgrading, and reroofing) to new housing units. Despite these efforts, the estate housing stock is still largely marked by a deficiency in both quality and quantity.

**Background of the Estate sector Self-Help Program**

With the change in plantation management shifting from state control to the designated RPCs, a change in administration of the social welfare aspect of the estates also occurred. During the nationalized period, the Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation (SLSPC) and the Janatha Estates Development Board (JEDB) managed estate social welfare issues through the Social Development Divisions (SDDs). Under the RPC-managed estates, SDDs were replaced by a new institution initiated and established by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) in 1992, the Plantation Housing and Social Welfare Trust (PHSWT) (SEARO-WHO, n.d.), and was officially incorporated by the 1982 Sri Lankan Companies Act No. 17, under section 21. This later became the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) in 2002 and is made up of various members of the 23 RPCs and their affiliate Managing Agents, Planters’ Association (senior-level company managers), and representatives of the GoSL line ministries (Ministry of Plantation Industries, Health, and Housing) through which the PHDT receives funding via a levy from the comprising companies. Thus, the Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) are responsible for providing health and social welfare facilities to their workers and the workers’ families (SEARO-WHO, n.d.). The Trust – as the PHDT is often referred to for short – also includes members from two of the major trade unions Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union (LJEWU). The PHDT coordinates international and national funds for a variety of social welfare activities regarding estate workers’ health, housing, nutrition, child development, and related services. Given the wide
extent of the plantations, the Trust has just one office in each of the 7 regions under its jurisdiction: Kandy, Hatton, Ratnapura, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle, Galle, and Badulla (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Coverage of the Plantation Human Development Trust and corresponding number of estates

Prior to privatization of the industry, the estate sector in Sri Lanka received support from agencies such as UNICEF, UNFPA, and other international bodies in various development schemes towards increasing the general health conditions in the estates. Additionally, foreign donors such as the Norwegian and Netherlands governments had already been active in this sector, funding a major initiative known as the ‘Social Welfare Program I’ (SWP I) in 1985, which ended in 1992, prior to the establishment of the Plantation Housing & Social Welfare Trust (PHSWT). The first major program of the PHSWT then was in 1993 with their ‘Social Welfare Program II’ (SWP II), a sequel to SWP I. SWP II was also funded by the Norwegian and Dutch government and finished in 1997. It was SWP II that marked the first major endeavour in aided self-help housing by the Trust, but the program also included other initiatives for health, nutrition, child development, and the like. This self-help method was generally a new concept introduced in the estates, though some degree of aided self-help estate housing projects did occur in 1990 through the Medium Term Implementation Program (MTIP), a 1983 government
initiative to boost the suffering productivity of its export economic sector – essentially, its plantations – through a variety of schemes to improve the state of the industry (Shafter, 1994). This first aided self-help estate housing effort also gave way to other programs for self-help latrines and self-help community water supply projects (PHDT informants, personal communication, 2007).

When SWP II drew to a close, the next major program with a large focus on aided self-help housing was the Plantation Develop Support Programme (PDSP) in 1998. The Dutch and Norwegian governments continued their financial support by committing 12.4 million Euros and 50 million Norwegian kroners respectively. About 45% of the PDSP funds were allocated to the housing component, with a target of 6,000 housing units per year (PHDT slideshow, n/d; PHDT UNCRD/JICA Mini-workshop slideshow, 2005). The PDSP self-help housing programs included funds for site preparation, latrines, and water supply related infrastructure as part of the housing construction (PHDT slideshow, n/d). By the end of 2004, PDSP had 8,408 houses completed (Ministry of Finance and Planning). When the project finished in 2005, the Norwegian and Dutch governments decided not to continue funding for further housing programs. However, various actors of the plantation industry have cited the international influence as the primary proponents of the Self Help method for estate housing during my interviews. To date, no major international donor has taken up a similar major housing scheme since the demise of PDSP (Kamalanathan, personal communication, 2008), and funding for estate housing (mainly in the form of loans) is currently divided between the Ministry of Estate Infrastructure, the Trust, and the NHDA as well as some private banks. However, according to the PHDT, financial support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) is continuing through the Plantation Reform Project (PRP), which caters to other private estates outside the RPCs for 2004-2008 (PHDT website).

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16 Taken from Ministry of Community Development and Estate Infrastructure chart, www.erd.gov.lk/publicweb/LOANINFOR/Community.pdf; The Island newspaper lakdiva.com/island/i9800920/mon/islnews.htm)
The Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) is therefore the main body responsible for coordinating and implementing the self-help housing programs (though they may have much less of a role in regional and local NGO initiatives such as the HFH self-help program), and in charge of administering social welfare services, as well as facilitating various projects (such as short-term eye clinic camps and the like) from external development agencies. Hence, since the mid-1990s plantation areas under RPC management have made use of the self-help method to tackle its housing issue. This saw the combined effort of the plantation companies, PHDT, Line Ministries, and funding support from various donors of the international community, specifically the Dutch and Norwegian governments, among other NGOs such as Habitat for Humanity (HFH), to undertake a series of social welfare projects with the objective of enhancing the participation of its target beneficiaries, the estate workers. One early method - by way of the ideal for community development - was the aided self-help concept for housing that was previously proven to be a fruitful practice in the slums and squatters of many developing countries (Harris, 1997). Additionally in 1994, the plantation industry set up the Estate Worker Housing Cooperative Society (EWHCS) for each estate to create a community based cooperative through which estate workers could access a number of different services, mainly financial such as personal loans and other banking services. By the later stages of the self-help program, some of the loans for the self-help program were made available through the EWHCS for workers to access. However, many EWHCS are still not at the stage or have the present capacity to channel and manage the amount of funds. In this case, the estate management and/or PHDT issue the next loan. Later, during PDSP, the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) and other private banks began to contribute loans for the program.

This chapter delved into the history of the tea plantation industry in Sri Lanka with a focus on the historical development and framework for social welfare services in regard to estate housing in order. By providing background information on the plantation environment, the estate can be better
appreciated as “*a distinct form of enterprise*” (Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2006, p. 3), which is important to appreciate in order to effectively discuss how the self-help housing method plays out and affects its beneficiaries, who are members of this particular plantation community. As this community is surrounded physically by its work environ (tea bushes and factories) and relatively isolated geographically (World Bank, 2007), socio-economically, and racially, these variables require sufficient consideration when undertaking development efforts in the plantations. If concepts foreign to estate norms such as ‘self-help’ are to be taken on, a deeper analysis on project implementation and impact is indispensable. Such is the topic of discussion for the following chapter.
The last chapter illustrated the intimate labour relations in the estates due to the comprehensive provision of social welfare, on top of and as part of employment, in the estate sector by the management for workers. Resources and support (technical and financial) from the greater plantation bureaucracy are generally necessary and beneficial, but this has created a paternalistic tradition that contradicts "...the meaning of housing and the significance of autonomy..." as two intertwined variables in the self-help methodology (Turner, 1972, p. 163). In this section, with the background context of the estates in mind, the process for estate self-help housing currently in use will be described to illustrate how it formulated with the influence of pre-existing institutional and cultural norms of the plantation. However, the "New professional-community relationships" required of participatory strategies (such as self-help) in an authoritarian environment “need to be built on something other than paternalism and elitist professionalism,” (Harms, 1972, p. 192) if they are to increase user autonomy and the capacity of the plantation community at large. However, findings of this program raise some questionable concerns regarding the integrity of this program’s self-help methodology and benefit to the user due to: 1) the limited degree of participation demanded from the user (in terms of quality), as well as 2) some conditions and limitations that the user is subject to which exploit the given circumstance of the worker. Thus, this section will build on the previous chapter to gauge the effectiveness of the self-help program within the specific context of the estate.

The Self-Help Housing Method in RPC-managed Tea Plantations

There has been what Carmen (1996) deems a “... quasi-universal consensus around participation...” (p. 46) in contemporary development thinking (Eversole, 2003; Mohan and Stokke, 2000). Along such lines, the aided self-help method for housing development became a popular method for urban areas, particularly in developing countries by the early 1980s (Mathey, 1992) especially after
state-initiated self-help was formally adopted by the World Bank in the 1970s (Pugh, 2001). In Sri Lanka, one of the most significant use of aided self-help was part of Gam Udawa, or the ‘Village Awakening,’ project which was a major national effort targeting Sri Lanka’s rural sector in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was hailed as being both productive and cost-effective and saw the construction of hundreds of houses in the face of major cutbacks to program funding, according to Richardson (2005). While limited estate sector involvement in self-help housing had previously been piloted (PHDT interviews, 2006; 2007), it was not until the mid 1990s when aided self-help became formally adopted as a principal method for the housing component of ‘Social Welfare Program I’ (SWP I) and its successor ‘Social Welfare Program II’ (SWP II). These wide ranging social development programs were fuelled by the financial support of the Norwegian and Dutch governments soon after privatization of the estates by the RPCs (UNCRD/JICA slideshow, 2005), which formally induced self-help as the chief method for tackling estate housing.

The Self-Help Housing Process

Today the Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs), with the responsibility of the tea estates, also inherited the responsibility to maintain health and social welfare provision for workers and their families (SEARO-WHO, n.d.). Though international support for the main social development programs (SWP I & II and PDSP) have come to an end, the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) continues to employ the same general self-help scheme in its housing efforts, with sporadic support provided by different private institutions (banks) and state agencies (line ministries and the National Housing Development Authority). Other NGOs like Habitat for Humanity are using the self-help method in their projects as

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17 For example, the Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development supported PHDT self-help housing projects in 2006 which saw, by the end of the reporting year the beginning of 2,243 units starting construction (PHDT Annual Report, 2006, p. 9).
well. A summary of the general process in the estates follows this standard procedure\textsuperscript{18}: first, the management of an estate will normally send a request for a housing project to the PHDT, who will respond favourably depending on the availability of resources and units requested. The management and/or staff (such as the Family Welfare Officer or the estate Medical Assistant) usually have an idea of where the crowded or problem spots of the residential areas are. Sometimes the management office is directly approached if a worker needs to renovate his home (e.g. new roofing), and workers can make use of the Talaivar (trade union leader) to issue housing complaints as well. The exact channels vary, as it depends on the particular dynamics of each estate, division, and/or other regional politics (managerial styles, degree of trade union influence, and so forth).

After the problem is identified and a project is agreed to, PHDT informants (Kandy and Hatton) provided the general description of this initial process in two stages: the first was referred to as the ‘Project Preparation Stage’ where the PHDT conduct ‘awareness programs’ on the new self-help housing opportunity for estate staff (including members of senior management) and potential beneficiaries. During these meetings, the beneficiaries are to form a housing committee by electing representatives. The objective of this first stage is to establish the final beneficiary list for the housing project (which can range from 20 to 25 units per scheme\textsuperscript{19}) and also to identify the location for the project and the size of the location. Sometimes beneficiaries are pre-selected depending on the need, as the management targets younger workers (in their 20s and 30s), especially if they are newly wed. Workers in their mid- to late forties are not likely to be selected.

The second stage was referred to as the ‘Project Planning Stage’ where more meetings with the estate staff and housing committee are conducted. Here, the beneficiaries select the block that they

\textsuperscript{18} This is drawn from interviews with PHDT staff in the up-country areas, field observations, as well as documents collected on the programs.

\textsuperscript{19} This is a normal quantity for the project at the planning stage; I was told that some participants ‘dropped out’ of the program in the very early stages, so one project saw 4 less homes than initially planned for. Again, it depends on the different needs and circumstances of the estate or division.
want and choose from 3 designs (e.g. for a typical project in Kandy, during the SWP project) though the number of plans vary and it is possible for a project to have only one plan, especially without foreign support. These housing plans are basic structures that usually include 2 rooms, a sitting area, an indoor kitchen and a bathroom, which can be constructed inside or outside\textsuperscript{20}. Informants indicated the idea is that once the basic structure is set, the beneficiaries can make what they will of it, any changes with their own resources within their allocated land plot\textsuperscript{21}. Thus, all housing structures for a given project generally are of the same design, with small differences in height, roofing and construction materials and such, depending on varying weather conditions or skill of the worker and his mason.

\textit{The Loan Scheme for the Self-Help Housing Project}

One key feature of the self-help program in the estates is that the process of transferring ownership of the housing unit to the beneficiary is conditional upon the participant paying off their loan in full (which is scheduled to take about 15 years), as well as a 15 year physical occupancy of the house (interviews with PHDT staff, 2007; PHDT slideshow). To date, no beneficiary has reached this stage, but the industry is anticipating for some in the near future. The Land Reform Commission (LRC) (with the estate management) has the authority to release the land formally, the details of which still need to be ironed out (Kamalanathan, 2006; PHDT, 2006). As for the loaning process, housing loans are normally broken down into about 3 separate instalments, which the beneficiary receives after he completes each step in construction. Typically, the first step is to clear the land for the foundation for the first loan, which is followed by putting up walls and so forth for the next loan instalment. Each task is inspected by a staff member from the regional PHDT office, according to the schedule of the particular project plan.

\textsuperscript{20} See Appendix 3 for a sample plan
\textsuperscript{21} I did observe this in the households I visited despite the interviewees’ loan not being fully repaid; since after the total loan is issued no follow up occurs (the households I visited had their repayment deducted from the payroll). Whether this idea was articulated to them or they were simply making changes on their own volition is unclear.
It is common for the estate management to provide other kinds of support during the program, such as internal transport of materials. Figure 2 provides a sample of typical loan schemes below:

Figure 2. Sample loan schemes for the PHDT Self-Help Housing Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL LOAN (Rs.)</th>
<th>INTEREST per annum</th>
<th>GRANT (Rs.) (not to be repaid)</th>
<th>RECOVERY PERIOD</th>
<th>AREA FOR HOUSING UNIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>100 000/=</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>125 000/= (40 000/= of which is set aside for roofing sheets)</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>15 000 to 20 000/= (+ 3 800/= for a latrine)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15 years (with 5 &amp; 10 yr. options)</td>
<td>5 perches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>40 000/=</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>54 500 (for both housing construction &amp; sanitation infrastructure)</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Variable (See Appendix 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>60 000/= (Kandy), 100 000/= (Nuwara Eliya)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>70 500/= GRANT ([roofing: 37 500; Purlines: 13 000; doors &amp; windows: 20 000] + services (latrine: 12 500; water: 20 000; site preparation: 10 000; access road: 10 000]) = 121 000 (sites &amp; services fund not directed to beneficiary)</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>7 perches; 507 ft²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1995 Source: Tamil copy of PHSWT brochure / program advertisement
2000 Source: Tamil copy of PHDT brochure / program advertisement
1993 & 2006 Source: Kamalanathan, unpublished document

Normally, the loans are broken down into 3 instalments, which the beneficiary receives one at a time after he/she completes the requisite step. The first step is to clear the land to set the foundation, usually followed by putting up walls and so forth for the next instalment. Each task is inspected by a staff member from the regional PHDT office according to the project plan. Initially 22 x 18 ft of land was set for the house (396 sq. ft.), but later increased to 507 sq. ft (Kandy PHDT, personal communication, 2006). This self-help procedure can be defined as aided self-help, or state-initiated self-help as it depends on following guidelines developed by the PHDT. A 1995 promotion pamphlet for the project, details the process as such to explain the steps of the procedure to potential beneficiaries. The procedure in 1995 is described here as it provides a simple summary, and because the procedure has
generally remained the same, with the most significant changes made to the project’s physical dimensions (i.e. costs, size) (See Appendix 3 for a more recent (2000) project):

"After the land is cleared and you acquire raw building materials, a loan of Rs. 8 000/= is given. Then you complete the walls, to receive the next instalment of Rs. 10 000/=. When you finally construct the roof, doors, and windows, the next instalment of Rs. 2 000/= is given, so that the total loan is equal to Rs. 20 000/=. The monthly premium on this is as follows: for 15 years, Rs. 285/mth; for 10 years, Rs. 332/mth; for 5 years, Rs. 497/mth, with an interest rate of 15% per annum. The payback begins after 6 months of the final loan. The payment can be fully made before the expiry date, in which case the ..... In addition, a Rs. 3 800 loan will be provided for building a toilet." - translated from Tamil to English (also available in Sinhala and English)

The PHDT further recommends using easily available and cheap materials, on the basis that a bigger house may be built. They provide some examples of materials to use, such as stone bricks and cement bricks. They also provide drawings of what the house could potentially look like. Then a brief explanation states the self help housing project is a part of the welfare services implemented by the Trust, with funding by the Government of the Netherlands and of Norway.

Actors, their roles and responsibilities

The specific roles by each stakeholder have been described by the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) and other industry directors as a tripartite initiative. Interestingly enough, the PHDT, in a slideshow presentation made categories of 3 actors of the self-help project: the estate management, the Trust, and the EWHCS (with the beneficiary being included under the EWHCS category). This can be an honest reflection of the fact that the capacity of either can vary (the EWHCS and a beneficiary) from estate to estate. Given that the EWHCS is not yet fully (though in the process of) a total ‘peoples’ cooperative’ (the Chairman and other management staff may feature on its committee) using the EWHCS at this stage obscures the stake of the participating household in the project.

Documents from the PHDT (n.d.) and Kamlanathan (2006) have described the roles for each stakeholder, as illustrated in Figure 3:
Figure 3. A general breakdown of roles in the Self-Help Housing Schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiary/Family</th>
<th>EWHCS</th>
<th>PHDT</th>
<th>Estate Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Making a request for housing and be willing to participate in the whole process from start to finish</td>
<td>1. Endorse the request of the beneficiary, and participate in reaching an agreement on land selection</td>
<td>1. Take part in selecting the land for housing and the beneficiaries</td>
<td>1. take part in land selection and agree to release; allocate plots for each housing unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agreeing to the land plot allocated</td>
<td>2. channel project funds: distribute loans, recover payments, procurement, and other financial transactions; also provide additional loans where available and appropriate</td>
<td>2. Design and providing the layout plan for the house; provide project information and procedures</td>
<td>2. select the appropriate beneficiaries (confirm the need); sign the agreement with the beneficiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Obtaining the loan and following through with repayment of that loan</td>
<td>3. Provide and grant funds (for materials such as roofing sheets where available and required)</td>
<td>3. Provide and grant funds (for materials such as roofing sheets where available and required)</td>
<td>3. survey the area; monitor progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organizing (such as seeking a mason to hire) and assisting with the construction of the house where and when he and/or his family can (clear the site, excavate the foundation, search for 4 by 9 rubble stones for the foundation, dig the toilet pit)</td>
<td>4. Manage the appropriate contracts/certification (claim and process); obtain land approval from the appropriate Line Ministry (e.g. Ministry of Plantation Industries)</td>
<td>4. Manage the appropriate contracts/certification (claim and process); obtain land approval from the appropriate Line Ministry (e.g. Ministry of Plantation Industries)</td>
<td>4. help prepare the site and provide logistical support (e.g. internal transportation of materials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. make decisions such as windows and doors placement of the new house</td>
<td>5. Provide technical supervision through periodic field visits; keep project on track towards completion; help survey, prepare the site, and give technical support in water supply facilities</td>
<td>5. Provide technical supervision through periodic field visits; keep project on track towards completion; help survey, prepare the site, and give technical support in water supply facilities</td>
<td>5. provide on-site administration of the project; channel project funds, recover the loans; report progress and necessary procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Have the whole immediate family move into the house when it is complete (unless there is some extended family needing care in the old line room)</td>
<td>6. Mobilize the workers (aid and encouragement)</td>
<td>6. Mobilize the workers (aid and encouragement)</td>
<td>6. Mobilize the workers (aid and encouragement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Conduct progress reviews with the NHDA, if they are involved</td>
<td>7. Conduct progress reviews with the NHDA, if they are involved</td>
<td>7. Conduct progress reviews with the NHDA, if they are involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from sources: PHDT (slideshow document, 2005); Kamalanathan (2006)
A General Indication of Project Outcomes to Date

The slow start of the project has been remarked by some plantation industry actors (Kamalanathan, 2006; PHDT staff, personal communication, 2006), especially with regard to its early years in implementation. Both reason that because the self-help method was a drastically new idea at the time of initiation for not only estate residents, who were used to being dependent on the estate for fully carried out provision of services, but also to those responsible for implementing such programs, such as the managers and PHDT staff who also endured a learning curve. Still, a real sense of frustration exists amongst project implementers with regard to the slow progress of the program and other constraints due to delays and lapses in loan issuances and payback, in choosing both beneficiaries and sites, Housing Committees not functioning, lack of support for both households beneficiaries and the PHDT project teams working in the field (PHDT 2001 Annual Report, p. 6). To respond to these issues, they hired more animators to enter the field and work with individual families, which they claim was a fruitful endeavour. Such immediate and direct support is most likely deficient due to the limited number of staff per regional office. From Figure 1, it was seen how one regional office oversees roughly between 50 to 70 estates. With only one social mobilizer per office, more direct technical support for these projects are found to be lacking but could benefit a great deal with improvements to staff capacity (PHDT officer, 2006, personal communication).

Quantitative expediency is a priority for the PHDT and the estate industry, as seen in the PHDT Annual Report (2003): "Our Housing and Latrine project packages were enhanced in 2003 based upon the actual price levels, with a view to speeding up progress without compromising on quality" and "We took steps to speed up the progress on housing projects by developing sites upfront, in order to motivate worker families" (p. 3). Further, in one brochure of the project, reward incentives were being advertised for the first few who complete the construction and repayment owners (see Appendix 3). While swift
progress is ideal, one must be careful not to rely heavily on numeric results solely, as the human
development aspect of self-help, especially in populations marked by a low level of capacity is present.
Because of such, quantitative indicators will not alone be sufficient. However, self-help methods tend to
take on a different emphasis from their ‘First World’ counterparts in that their utility in the ‘third world’
are often based on increasing the housing stock, or adding to the existing housing (Mathey, 1992).
Though a low level of capacity is generally found within marginalized groups at large in developing
countries, much due to the on-going colonial legacy and systemic features of authoritarian states, this
focus then often finds self-help evaluations to be heavily assessed by quantitative units rather than
processes which work to increase user community capacity and user autonomy. Turner (1972) stresses
this importance of the capacity building aspect above standardized procedures to achieve a designated
number of housing units: "Their collective small savings capacity and their collective entrepreneurial and
manual skills (and spare time) far surpass the financial and administrative capacity of even the most
highly planned and centralized institutional system, whether dominated by the state or capitalist
corporations" (p. 170-171). This touches upon the ‘incremental build’ notion precedent in self-help
methodology. The following section elaborates on this concept.

Findings

- The Importance of ‘Incremental Build’ in self-help housing

In self-help, the user is to become involved in more than purchasing his or her dwelling by taking
part in all aspects of the building process, including the planning, incrementally. The rationale behind
this principle in self-help methodology is said to be crucial since people who are poor often have erratic
income levels or fluctuating circumstances, meaning they cannot make steady contributions towards the
development of their housing. Thus, the rate of the incremental build is based on personal
circumstance, which hailed as a major benefit of self-help (Mathey, 1992), because the poor then get to
decide the amount to be invested in which part of the house and when. Aided self-help can accommodate incremental build, but in a much more stringent, structural format, depending on the degree of its ‘aided-ness’ (Recall Harms’ conceptual continuum of self-help in Chapter 1, under ‘Definitions’). Though Marcuse (1992) believes this is an effective way to ensure steady progress, one would think that in the estates, where there is a much greater opportunity for steady income at one’s disposal, that steady contributions would not be a problem. However, this is more the exception than the rule: “...due to pressure of work on the estates, families could not ensure steady progress on construction” and acknowledge that some workers “find it difficult to maintain a steady construction regime” (PHDT Annual Report, 2003). I also sensed this to be the case in my field observations and interviews\textsuperscript{22}. This highlights that personal circumstances can arise, and for any given reason, people can be less keen on seeing it through. Such change in aspirations is supposed to be accommodated by self-help methodology, due to the allocated ‘freedom to build’ and element of choice in the process (Turner, 1972; Fichter et al., 1976).

However, the highly structured form of aided self help which has taken shape does not leave much room for this type of freedom and therefore benefit. In fact when such prerogatives change, blame is often placed on the ‘dependency syndrome’ of workers, which is essentially to be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. The dependency syndrome is explained by Beckford (1972):

"...the [plantation] system creates a legacy of dependence because the locus of decision making concerning fundamental economic issues resides outside of plantation society, so that a chronic dependency syndrome is characteristic of the whole population," which is then used to account for their lack of motivation as a group. Bass (2004) however, claims this tendency by estate management, trade union leaders, and NGO workers as being misinterpreted of what are actually issues of agency, alienation, and apathy amongst members of this population. In any case, the structural format of the self-help process is supported by the greater framework of the estate.

\textsuperscript{22} This is anecdotal; again, a representative sample was not achieved.
Rough schedules are planned, though not always followed on a case by case basis and people do fall behind as material prices rise over the course of the project. The incentive for the beneficiary is in the next loan issuance, to which more capital can be bought towards completing the next step of construction. One major problem – emphasized personally to me most likely due to my apparent appearance as a ‘foreign donor’ - was the appreciating costs of such materials, which meant that there is great potential for the allocated loan for the project to ‘run dry’ before all the materials can be bought. PHDT staff and other estate industry actors also identified rising costs to be a very great, if not the greatest, challenge for project participants. The highly regulated structural, bureaucratic channels and processes of the self-help program can be the consequence of the similar environment under which the program is being executed. Additionally, the design, layout, loan schedule and amount are predestined by estate authorities without consultation with the beneficiaries until the initial meetings take place. Hence, as a final remark on the overall drawbacks of the project:

"In authoritarian or hierarchic systems, the user has no significant control over the nature of the process or the form of its products, yet certain processes and the life of the product nevertheless depend on the users' willingness to support the maintenance costs of the original investment" (Turner, 1972, p. 161).

A Discussion on the Value of Ownership

In the plantation context, taking part in a self-help project means forgoing estate provided rent-free housing, as dismal as such line rooms may be. With self-help, one of the benefits endorsed (See Appendix 3) for taking part in such a project is the end reward of ownership upon project completion. As explained, a deed for the house is given over to the participant after a 15 year mandatory occupation period, an agreement between the Cooperative, the PHDT, and the worker, which stipulates that the worker cannot sell the house during this period. However, there are some key issues on how ownership is perceived by the project. Burns (1983) states the benefit of housing ownership, which is supposed to
pave the way for ‘spontaneous investment,’ as: “With the security accompanying ownership, ... people will invest in their dwellings confident that the improvements are theirs to enjoy” (p. 299). It is the security of ownership that is the incentive for the poor to invest in their homes. In the case of the estates however, ownership does not come until the completion of investments and debt repayment. Moreover, in the estates, such security is not an issue since they are required to occupy the house. This does not negate the ‘benefit’ of ownership, though it may definitely decrease it. This may also contribute to reasons for late debt recovery.

The transfer of ownership was also a major concern for the PHDT: “In an effort to ensure that housing projects meant to benefit the plantation worker do not end up in the hands of unauthorized outsiders [who do not work for the estate, in other words] the Trust has sought legal advice as to how best to proceed against errant families who have illegally disposed of their properties” (PHDT 2005 Annual Report, p. 4). There is reason to believe that the project implementers have more of a stake in the ownership transfer than the participant. These projects specifically cater to workers and only workers. The land could technically be used for general tenancy (by workers or non-estate workers), but the estate and industry benefits more from providing housing if their tenants are also their workers in that they can be contractually obliged to the estate in the form of debt and mandatory occupation of the property by the worker and his/her family. Hence, the original motivation for the provision of social welfare continues in new forms, and has not been lost over the series of changes in the plantation industry from colonial to state to private management. The estate motivations for this social welfare policy will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

- On Participatory Development

Participation as a tool of development in itself is not valued in self-help methodology, but rather the autonomy which is to accrue from the process of participating (Turner, 1972; Fichter et al., 1976). Thus, participation is not beneficial simply because one is physically building a house. Turner (in
Mathey, 1992) advocates self-management as more important than self build. Yet, the emphasis on having the user physically construct the house is a rather common misconception of self-help that has also gained currency in the plantation industry: “In general, the Trust encourages the workers themselves to get involved with the construction process and has only stepped into assist those workers who find it difficult to maintain a steady construction regime” (p.4). The plantation industry’s interpretation of self-help then has become what Fichter et al. (1972) cautioned against: “Of course freedom to build cannot mean that every household must, literally, construct a dwelling in order to exercise autonomy” (p.246). Not that self-building is wrong, but this is not the actual value of self-help; the benefit of user autonomy is that people get to work at their own pace, and make out their own priorities. Emphasis on ‘dweller control’ in this respect is key because they choose when, how and on what they will build their homes based on their situation (financial, political, social, personal, and so forth). With this program and aided self-help housing projects in general, there can be a potential tendency for giving too much prominence on physical construction.

Thus, participation without the benefit of an increase in autonomy (through increased power or choice) is seen as token practice. If participation is only measured by the number of people taking part in the service, even if that service is ‘self-help’, an effective evaluation of its degree of ‘self-help’ are obscured (Smith, 1998). As such, in reviewing Figure 12 above, attention need be paid not only to the quantity of the responsibilities, but the quality in terms of key planning roles and decision making tasks. Roles of the beneficiary are limited compared to the roles of other stakeholders. Also, this difference is normal for state-initiated or aided self-help schemes, though it negates the motivation behind participation (that is, beyond tokenistic roles) as an ideal tool for empowerment. As for tokenistic participation, note that the tasks listed in Figure 3 do not carry equal weight. For instance number 2 of the beneficiary (agreeing to the land plot) is not even participatory, especially compared to number 2 of the PHDT: “design and providing the layout plan for the house; provide project information and
In other self-help experiences, Burns (1983) found that “Working through community organizations, self-help participants enjoy opportunities for laying out their communities, designing their dwellings, and managing their neighborhoods after occupancy” (p. 300). Such advantages of self-help fall short in the estate program. Thus, while beneficiaries ‘participate’ in the participation process, a significant increase in user autonomy will be more difficult, or slower to come by from such low level of participation.

Though it is necessary for estate authorities to play a large role in the initial period, perhaps part of the reason for the slow, non-reproductive housing process is that there are no mechanisms in effect to help redistribute planning capacity or power. This is one of the major criticisms made of self-help by Marcuse (1992), who claims that “Outside the circle of participants, self-help produces no redistribution whatsoever” (p. 19). This holds true of schemes based on individualized housing projects by the unit. In Harms’ definition of the two types of self-help: individual versus collective, he also speaks of their differing ideological roots (1992). The first – the individual household or group self-help (such as the estate programs, where groups of households take part), this is said to have capitalist derivations, as well as coming from a Puritan kind of work ethic which emphasizes personal responsibilities (ibid, p. 34). Harms cites Turpijn (1988) as noting that this kind of self help is shaped by values of 'English utilitarianism' and 'laissez-faire liberalism'. The self-help housing programmes in this case study have clearly taken on the form of the first definition by Harms (refer to Chapter 1, definitions), as the programs focused on households and lacked much collective action, except for committees made up of the beneficiaries, which were mandated as part of the program package and developed by external planners. There is definitely a strong element of paternalism (a concept explored more in Chapter 4), as these self help projects, from conceptualization to design of the house, are developed largely by the PHDT and other actors before reaching potential participants in the meetings to select committee

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23 See Chapter 1 – Introduction, definitions
members (if a special housing committee is required, such as in the absence of a functioning EWHCS) and beneficiaries. Therefore, this type of provisional self-help by authorities with a specific budget (often heavily dependent on foreign funds) is “likely to provide more limited help to fewer persons” (Marcuse, 1992, p. 17).

On the other hand, the second kind of collective form of self help identified by Harms (1992) is said to come from Utopian-type socialist ideals, as well as social anarchism (ibid), also due to the fact that major proponents (i.e. Turner) were followers of the latter ideologies. It is different from the first form of self-help where the individual household has a stake only in its own progress. Collective forms of self-help can also be aided self-help initiatives where a greater emphasis is made on the whole effort of the ‘community’ involved. ‘Mutual self-help’ is an example of collective self-help where ‘families work together in groups building their own houses” (Stein, p. 22) and provides the aided self-help experience in El Salvador by the NGO FUNDASAL, which was financed by the World Bank as a mostly positive model (ibid). Therefore, the program could do more to readily capitalize on the available ‘plantation community,’ further supported by the trend of extended families and same caste groupings living among the same residential lines (Jayaraman, 1975). This could provide a good basis for collective action, though it would not necessarily guarantee it. On the whole, the estate self-help housing programs do not maximize the capacity of participation or of collective forms of self-help, though there is potential to do so. Thus, the kind of self-help employed in the estates “does nothing to redistribute social resources...” (Marcuse, 1992, p. 19). This is unfortunate as major socioeconomic, historical, and political status of the ‘plantation community’ could benefit from a more socially cohesive model.

In sum, the self-help program contains a number of weaknesses. First, incremental build is limited due to the set structure of the loan scheme and design plan. Second, the value of ownership is

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24 See Chapter 1, Definitions
questionable, since it occurs as ‘an award,’ as incentive in itself, rather than as an incentive to invest. Lastly, the quality of participation of the user is low and does not require much decision-making planning on their part. Such uses of higher levels of thinking are left to the upper rungs of the labour hierarchy. Nor is the program designed with any plans to increase capacity, as focus remains on the number of housing units. At the same time, the lack of personnel (one mobilizer per PHDT regional office) is a real problem to reach and deliver projects for roughly 50 to 60 estates. However, criticisms or the current model remain in effect because there is a possibility to establish more mutual forms of self help that incorporate collective action, in order to foster more meaningful roles, action, and participation. Though it is normal for businesses to provide ‘perks’ for their employees to gain from such; this becomes somewhat of an exploitive practice due to the lack of housing alternatives for resident workers of the estate. Therefore, it is apparent that the adoption of the self-help method in a modern hierarchy highlights a major clash of ideals and objectives, and to attain a better understanding of the derivatives of why and how such would be the case requires an analysis of Sri Lankan plantation culture and modus operandi to be recognized. The next chapter attempts such analysis.
Chapter 4 - The Estate and its Social Welfare Policy: A Perpetuating Dependency

Thus far, the housing project has been criticized for falling short in goals important to the social development tenants of self-help methodology. Chapter 3 highlighted the importance of building incrementally, so as to suit the situation of the user while emphasizing his/her prerogative to choose; while participation was discussed to highlight its role in increasing autonomy of the user. "We need now to consider how the structural characteristics of the plantation system influence the pattern of development in plantation economies" (Beckford, 1972, p. 183). Plantations feature a peculiar tradition of having residential labour on site, deriving from its colonial beginnings which took place on large tracts of land in remote areas difficult to access. Today, Sri Lankan plantation workers are provided housing, including sites and services by their employer, as well as other kinds of support such as food staples. The management of the estate also looks after the main infrastructural necessities, such as communal toilets and roads. This has created a characteristic paternalism that marks estate culture, making it a challenge for adopting sound self-help methodology. This dichotomy can be better grasped with an investigation into the motivations for a social welfare policy in the estates. In terms of investing in social welfare, the ‘return’ is in a secure labour force that is readily available for work on-site, in the estate for years to come. As a result, an attempt and policy to provide a comprehensive welfare system became tradition and is now a normal feature of the plantation system (Meyer, 1990).

As such, the purpose of this Chapter is two-fold. First, the historical, political and economic basis of welfare provision in the plantations as they stem from their colonial origins will be detailed. In doing so, it will be alluded that the plantation - as a corporate enterprise - is inclined to invest where a return is expected. This context will show how there is a lack of alternative housing means on the estates. The second portion will present characteristics that make up ‘plantation culture,’ which has been attributed as the major underlying contributor to weaknesses in the self-help housing package. An
examination of the plantation community as a distinct group in Sri Lankan society will be detailed, including a description of work life to illustrate this group’s position in the plantation hierarchy. Then, the labour hierarchy is described to illustrate their position in the plantation hierarchy. All of which, combined, make up the status quo of an on-going tradition of the plantation. Such features of the estate work to reinforce the ‘dependency syndrome’ of plantation communities. Combined, they contribute to sustaining the marginal status of the plantation community that stems from a history of discrimination and ongoing social stigma. The utility of this exercise will emphasize the importance of increasing the availability of options (and thus, greater freedom of choice) for such a community, as well as the need for an overall increase in autonomy for this particular marginalized group.

- Eric Meyer, 1990

When British colonialists began the plantation system in Ceylon, British planters were vested in finding ways to not only recruit labour, but to maintain a steady labour force population, and of course to maintain one at minimum cost (Meyer, 1990). Such an endeavour began first with the initial coffee plantation expansion that peaked during 1830 to 1847 (ibid; Peebles, 2006). Due to the seasonal nature of the coffee crop, Meyer (1990) claims that planters were specifically worried about a ‘leakage’ of labour, meaning recruited labourers would find work in neighbouring villages or elsewhere in the off season and not return. The workers were not technically indentured due to many ‘push factors’ from their dire conditions in southern India, so managing a steady population to fuel the plantation was a source of concern (ibid, p. 173). This was mitigated by a focused effort to provide all of the needs of workers on the estate so that there would be less reason to leave. This effort and its intentions is what Meyer (1990) refers to as a ‘symbolic fence’ to keep the labour within the estates, as well as having the possibility of enticing additional labour to their particular estate. This was the driving force behind “...the development of a welfare policy on the estates” (ibid, p. 176) and provided plantation labourers
“rent free housing, free medicine, estate schools, crèches (child centres), food rations, temples and churches, and for larger estates, a maternity ward and midwife” (Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2006). Much of this was funded by government welfare measures more so than plantation companies, though both agents (Ministries of GoSL and plantation corporations) have worked closely since privatization regarding social welfare of workers of the estate.

Since plantation labourers were sought mostly from poor, low caste communities, the estate were made responsible for them in the newly established, remote plantations (Puvanarajan, 2002; Bass, 2006; Jilani, 1998). As the workers were recruited and required to work for the production of tea exclusively, basic needs were met for them by the plantation authorities (as they were there to serve as plantation workers, and not carve out a subsistence livelihood). Thus, basic amenities for health, housing, and education were provided for (Puvanarajan, 2002). This included medical centres established specifically for plantation labourers to address their dire health conditions from the journey to, and for living within, the estates (ibid). However, Hettiarachchi (2006) claims the colonial record shows that this was not only to ease the poor health conditions of estate workers, but to contribute to having a steady pool of labour. The provision of such services to workers and eventually their families helped to keep the labour population intact while discouraging mobility out of the estate (Aheeyar, 2006; Plan Sri Lanka, 2006; Meyer, 1992). Beyond such basic necessities, the estate built temples for festivals and other facilities so that the community could hold funerals, marriage ceremonies, and other events to further reduce the need to leave the estate (Feasibility Study, 2006). Thus, because of the residence of its labour on the estate, and its relative isolation from more populated areas, workers have long been provided with social welfare including housing and basic ‘sites and services’ among other needs such as roads and even some food staples.

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25 Especially as tea replaced coffee and demand for services increased with a more permanent labour force.
The Sri Lankan ‘Plantation Community’

Before embarking on the series of political events which for the most part, ostracized the estate populace in many different ways, the idea of this group as a distinct community must first be addressed. Categorical concerns of the Sri Lankan population were rather entertained and stimulated by the British, through the census process (first in 1911 which created separate categories of Ceylonese) and then by treating such groups differently (Peebles, 2006). For a census in 1921, Indian Tamils were prevented from registering as Ceylon Tamils despite that being second and third generation residents in Ceylon (ibid). Thus, the standard ‘divide-and-rule’ policy typical of colonial administration was also employed here as the British polarized what they believed made up the different ‘races’ of Sri Lanka: low country (coastal) Sinhalese, to be distinguished from Kandyan (central highland) Sinhalese, Tamils (of the North and Northeast), and the Moors (Tamil-speaking Muslim population) (ibid, p. 8). Other minority groups exist in Sri Lanka, such as the Burghers, Veddas, Malaysians and so forth. Likewise in other colonized countries, the colonial legacy cemented feelings of superiority and inferiority between these ‘races’ (and castes/class), which became naturalized in the state of mind. This ultimately helped foster the diverging sets of nationalism between the Sinhalese and Tamil ‘communities’ in the years prior to Independence and continuing thereafter (ibid). Thus, the plantation population became caught in the ethnic-driven nationalist politics which shaped Sri Lanka.

Throughout this period of reducing colonial presence and authority, increasing ethnic tensions gave rise to two different directions of nationalism, one driven for the Sinhalese cause and the other for the Tamils, as politicians drew on the ethnic appeal. When Sri Lanka achieved Independence in 1948, a series of new national laws came into effect, disenfranchising many Plantation Tamils (Hollup, 1991), whether living and working in estates or surrounding areas. Specifically these were the Ceylon Citizenship Act No. 18 in 1948, the 1949 Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act, and the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act of the same year which restricted voting rates and resulted in
the statelessness of many Indo-Ceylonese, regardless of whether they had been born and living in the island for generations, without a home or any such ties to India. It was not until 1964 when Sri Lanka made an agreement with India (under the Shastri-Sirimavo Pact) to provide citizenship for 300 000 Indo-Sri Lankans. Another 525 000 people were to obtain Indian citizenship, and later the countries negotiated to provide citizenship to an equal number of the remaining 150 000 stateless people (Peebles, 2006). Thus by 1970, more than 450 000 people were forcibly repatriated to India, and some 50 000 others left on their own volition simply to avoid residence taxation (ibid). Still, more than 630 000 remained stateless and only 375 000 were to receive citizenship status gradually over the years.

The 1970s saw political and social antagonization between the ethnic groups expressed in violence, and the Plantation community was not immune to such assaults and rioting. The 1978 Constitution allowed Plantation Tamils to participate in local elections (Peebles, 2006). It was not until 1988 when the Grant of Citizenship to Stateless Persons (Special Provisions) Act No. 39 was passed in parliament could this population enjoy more citizenship rights. Hence, the estate population faced much discrimination in politics and society throughout history, which effectively increased their marginalization as a group in Sri Lanka.

The current estate populations are free to engage in other forms of labour in and out of the estate, working or not working for the estate in nearby towns and villages, or to Colombo and other metropolitan areas. In fact, they were never legally or formally ‘indentured labourers’ in colonial legislation, however the kangany system of labour recruitment – out of practice since around the 1920s (Shafer, 1994) - and the immense power and control he possessed did lead to debt bondage and other forms of dependency that created circumstances similar to indenture labour (Heidemann, 1992). Since 1999, almost this entire group has received citizenship (Lakshman and Tisdell, 2002), but many are still in need of proper forms of identification (National Identity Cards, Birth Certificates, and so forth) in order to have access to civil services such as banks and other services which require license (Feasibility.
Study, 2006). Some of this group still has Indian citizenship, and under the current political climate, the distinction of being Indian-Tamil may work to their advantage, to distinguish them from those considered Sri Lankan Tamils (Peebles, 2006). Generally speaking, the estate population has been able to gain more attention in the national political agenda due to the activity of trade unions and the political clout they possess with their 'bloc vote' from the plantation community. Alawattage and Wickramasinghe (2006) describe how the mainstream (Sinhalese) population is often equally divided between the two major political parties hence, “Plantation trade union leaders are commonly known as ‘king makers’ as their support ultimately decide which political party would come to the government in national elections” (p. 13). The estate population contributes more than 25% of union membership in some of the strongest unions in the country such as the Ceylon Workers’ Congress (Shafer, 1994).

Regarding the plantation industry within the politically volatile nation state, this is especially important as change in political parties are frequent, which then effect power of the different trade unions.

To summarize, the plantation labour force are not only typified and positioned at the bottom of the stratified class formation within the estate labour structure, but also at the heavily stratified class, caste, and ethnic stratification of wider society. Many plantations are severely geographically isolated compared to others, making physical access to outside the estate difficult to come by. These present barriers to the estate worker population becoming more integrated in mainstream society (World Bank, 2007). The ethnic categories greatly impressed upon the population are also of importance as they affect the island’s politics and societal perceptions. It has been reported both anecdotally (conversations in the field) and officially (World Bank, 2007; Heidemann, 1992; Bass, 2004) that negative perceptions of estate work can be so severe that people in need of the wages are still unwilling to take up estate work. The problem is most likely to be more severe with estate youth, who show more agitation with plantation work and authority (Jilani, 1998) as cited by many different actors associated with the sector – plantation industry and NGO community – during my time in the field. Thus, the
combination of some features of this group: the stigma attached to their more recent\textsuperscript{26} ancestry that is known to come largely from a pool of low castes/class; a history of discriminatory legislation which disenfranchised, repatriated (1964-1983) and withheld citizenship rights (up until only 1988); and finally overall relatively lower socioeconomic conditions found in the estates contribute to a real sense of cultural stigma by mainstream society.

Effect of the Plantation Hierarchy

The employment structure dictates the hierarchical nature of the estate. It is a prominent feature of the plantation system as it defines and determines daily estate functioning, as well as maintaining the long established estate labour relations in the estates, which can be “...best described as top down, hierarchical, and male dominated” (Jilani, 1998, p. 108). Jilani (ibid) goes further to emphasize that “the present management structure of the plantations in Sri Lanka is essentially the same as the one created by the British” (ibid), while Selvaratnam (2001) describes “The layers of employment [as] rigid and separate” (p. 49) and attributes this hierarchical organization due to the specific roles given in the estate based on gender, caste, class, and ethnicity. Typically, upper class/caste Sinhalese men (and infrequently, some upper caste/class Tamil males) fill the managerial positions. Jilani’s (1998) description of estate hierarchy is pretty typical of many RPC-managed tea estates, based on my own field observations and the wider literature. See Figure 4 below for an outline of a generic labour structure in a ‘typical’ estate.

Figure 4. A generic estate organizational labour hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Estate Manager/Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Organize, amalgamate, and report various physical data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Manager</td>
<td>amalgamates all physical data of the estate – field,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>office, and factory – to report to the estate management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>company’s head office in Colombo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{26} ‘Recent’ meaning comparatively to other Sri Lankans due to the fact they were systematically brought into the estates by the colonialists.
There are generally three levels of this estate hierarchy: at the top of the estate hierarchy is the managerial staff, followed by the senior and junior level office staff, and then finally the general labourers. The management style of the estate has become less strict and dictatorial as the years pass, though the formal chain of command is still omnipotent (Jilani, 1998). Usually the estate manager (or superintendent as he is also referred to) has assistant managers to aid him; though this is not requisite. Estate managers work closely with the Chief Clerk, who is the administrational backbone of the estate.

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In one interview with the manager of Uda Radella estate, he stated that having assistant supervisors only increase the efficiency to which problems are reported, but not mitigated, to the manager (i.e. himself).
(Jilani, 1998). All the tallying of payroll, which comes from data collected on attendance, work hours, and daily tea weights, are required in order to report these to the respective company head office in Colombo to review and approve (Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2006). Below the managerial staff lies the senior staff, all of whom have various assistants that make up the junior staff. From this information, the Head office develops a plan based on these ‘guidelines’ to make estimates for the following year. Doubly, they also serve as government statistical data.

Finally, there is the general labour, which today includes the Kangany at the top of this rung above the rest of the pluckers, factory workers, and sundry labourers who often work in manageable gangs for him to directly oversee. Though the former glory of the kangany recruitment system has diminished, his role continues to influence “… the plantation labour control [which] is still based on a gang structure with paternalistic relations of supervision” (Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2006, p.13). Bass (2004) found that “though some of these staff positions do not pay much more... they come with much higher status...” (p. 45). Thus, despite significant changes by the plantation industry – from colonialist to state owned to privatized – “not much has changed in the management regime since the British presence in the plantations” (Selvaratnam, 2001, p. 44-45). The fact remains that the plantation is still a unit of production which, according to Alawattage and Wickramasinghe (2006) is “Similar to a typical transaction processing system [whose] calculative rituals capture ... in a hierarchical manner... day-to-day realities” (p. 15). This structure can be perceived as reflective of the participation aspect in the current self-help housing technique described in the previous chapter. The general labourers are engaged in more monotonous, repetitive, ‘grunt work’, and take up a similar role in the self-help housing programs. This idea will be explored in more detail in the next section.

**Routine Estate Work**

“...the community owes its being to the unit of production... a reflection of the type of economic organization that governs production."
"For those living on the plantation, the institution is not just a place of work; it is the whole life."
- George Beckford, 1972, p. 53-54

The above are statements on plantation culture; how its whole environment and society is shaped by the factors of production. Alawattage and Wickramasinghe (2005) describe plantation labour control as “...rather communal and ritualistic and reminds us many of colonial artefacts” (p. 9) based on the mundane work involved and the nature of the chain of command which has changed little.

With outmigration and the increasing influence of mainstream society, the situation today in the Sri Lankan plantation sector is – at least on the surface – less severe. However, Beckford’s analytical remarks still remain applicable, so long as the plantation continues its standard order, structure and modus operandi. Thus, this section will review labour duties and assess its role in shaping the intimate labour relations and therefore plantation culture.

Estate work at the lowest common denominator of the plantation make up 90% of the labour hierarchy (Plan Sri Lanka, 2006) and can be considered as those in ‘unskilled’ positions such as plucking (‘Pluckers’), bush maintenance (‘Sundry workers’), and factory operating. To review the systematic process of the estate - a ‘unit of production’ - Alawattage and Wickramasinghe (2006) describe the daily routine as beginning early in the morning, when all the workers gather and ‘sign in’ at the muster shed to get their attendance recorded and receive the day’s instructions. After forming into respective ‘labour gangs,’ the pluckers (mostly women) set out at their designated plots. Sundry men undertake ground work activities to keep the tea bushes and surrounding area in optimal conditions (ibid, p. 9), and factory workers to begin loading and unloading the machines, which they may neither set nor meter, as this is done by the ‘factory management’ (ibid). Hence, general labourers require a very low level of skills to carry out their routine tasks, and they need only report on time and be vigilant of their superiors.
Thus far, the estate modus operandi has been described as authoritative, bureaucratic, paternalistic, and as “A top-down management style inherited from the colonial era,” which is a significant characteristic of the estate sector (Plan Sri Lanka, 2006). This production process is essentially unchanged since the inception of the plantation sector, though “… this structural dimension has been … through the evolution of structures from colonial despotism through postcolonial hegemony to neo-colonial hegemony” (Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2006, p.31). It is generally agreed that the estate historical context – the political, economic, and social features – continue social norms of the estate. The work of the labour clearly does not demand much in terms of skill and, what is more, due to the nature of the work (repetitive and not for household consumption), the estate has also created a systematic dependency sustained by this process. "Socially, they belonged to the lower stratum of society in the prevalent caste system which is woven into the fabric of community of life there. Hence, the management which undertook to employ them on the plantations was able to satisfy them with the provision of the basic amenities of life in respect of health, housing and education" (Puvanarajan, 2002, p. 24-25). Likewise in the estate labour system, while Field Officers or the Factory management develop plans for the work day, manage and oversee labour gangs, the general labour are involved in simple, repetitive tasks that do not require much skill or decision-making, yet they are still ‘participating’ in the estate production process. Also, if the estate EWHCS is not functioning or without sufficient capacity, their responsibility is often split between the management and PHDT, disconnecting the beneficiary further from management type roles. Therefore, through this apparently participatory and empowering method of helping oneself, the programme - while reproducing status quo procedures, does little to deviate from its standard, normative administrative procedures that would enhance the capacity of its users. Thus, the status of the recruited labour was taken advantage of and this shaped the plantation community.
This tradition of estate managers providing essential needs has established a set standard of style, a norm necessitated by the atypical lifestyle and environment of plantation labour, and enhanced by its relative geographic isolation. However, this also meant that housing was rapidly constructed without much mindfulness of privacy, ventilation, and other health concerns or social sensitivities such as gender (Hettiarachchi, 2006). In fact, the issue of who was to provide social welfare as well as the extent required to maintain a healthy enough labour force was continuously debated between the government and the estate company/planter. Though, the British government in Ceylon was of the view it was the planters obligation to bear all health costs of their labour, justified by the fact that their recruitment cost almost nothing compared to the other colonies having to import indentured labourers at greater distances (Hettiarachchi, 2006, p. 15). Throughout history, social welfare provision has been funded by a combined support from both parties. Regardless of who was providing the bulk of the financial support, welfare services were distributed from upper management to the labour masses, which helped create a micro-‘welfare state’. Such feature has contributed to the overall paternalism embodied by the estate as well, which lends itself to the apparent ‘dependency syndrome’ that is said to be common in all plantation systems (Beckford, 1972). This created a situation of dependency by the labour population, and those responsible for providing welfare services throughout the years after colonization have continued, thereby normalizing this protocol. Before discussing the effect of the ‘dependency syndrome’, first the elements of what makes the Sri Lankan plantation community a distinct populace must be elaborated. The next section will examine this community’s history, position in the labour hierarchy, and the social status in wider Sri Lankan society.

The ‘Dependency Syndrome’

“Because the history,” or some form of reference to ‘their history’ is often what I came across - whether or not I was specifically inquiring about the estate community. ‘Their history,’ is in reference to the apparent ‘dependency syndrome,’ which is said to plague the estate population and in the current
context, is said to serve as a major obstacle in alleviating social and other development problems. Thus ‘dependent’ is used quite liberally in reference to the group. The phenomena, as I later learned, is not particular to the estate sector in Sri Lanka, but has been recognized as a staple feature in plantation communities the world over (Beckford, 1972). More specifically, Beckford (1972), in his work on the underdevelopment of plantation economies in the Third World, explicitly refers to it as “a chronic dependency syndrome […] characteristic of the whole population” (p. 215). The estate labour hierarchy and daily operations described above contribute to an atypical way of life where

"The labourers depend on the superintendent for practically all their basic needs, including housing, work, medical facilities, and salary advances, to name just a few. In addition, the labourers depend on the superintendent for treating them fairly" (Jilani, 1998, p. 145).

This shows the estate maintains a very paternal role in the life of a worker – providing basic necessities and pay advances, as well as serving as a judge where necessary.

This has been the norm since the inception of plantations and Jilani (1998) argues it was actually an easy transition from the low caste cultural tradition of Panchayat (an appointed council of village judges) to play peacekeeping roles among the low caste populace. In the plantation system, a very similar figure was taken over by the Kangany, though now this role is executed by the superintendent or Talaivar (lead trade unionist) (Jilani, 1998). Hollup (1991) refers to it as “vertical or hierarchical ties of patron-client relationships [which] have fostered a dependency…” (p. 197). This tradition of a small group of higher caste authorities to mediate low caste disputes or any sort of problems does not deviate much from the practice of estate management or union leaders interceding with similar judgement calls. This way of mitigation has been standardized, and what this means for the present is that when development projects do not progress as smoothly, estate agencies who are attempting to provide ‘development’ services attribute this dependency characteristic as being in the way of progress.

Throughout my inquiry of the programme, I sensed from project implementers something similar to Selvaratnam’s (2001) encounter with an assistant manager: “In his view, efforts are being
made to improve the welfare of the workers on the estate but the workers are not taking advantage of the services due to their lack of literacy and education” (p. 47). Many times during my interviews with the PHDT, I would ask why participation was limited to construction. One social mobilizer (July 13, 2007 interview), explained it as a result of the dependency syndrome: attitudes, low education, alcoholism, the influence of trade unions (which make implementing anything difficult), and logistic constraints. He is more hopeful with estate youth however, and believes they show less ‘signs’ of such dependency. The notion is a popular one in the plantation industry.

- An Exploitation of the baseline situation: a lack of alternatives to housing

From examining the self-help methodology that has come to define the default estate housing program, there are good grounds to contend that the self-help model employed in the plantations are effectively long-term arrangements which benefit the estate by guaranteeing the user’s residence for the next 15 years, the usual time period of obligatory occupation. In return, the user receives a relatively inexpensive housing opportunity in the estate, with the promise of eventual ownership when repayment on the housing loan is complete. This problem can be better appreciated when examining elements of the standard method of housing provision in the estates, (which can be thought of as ‘non-self-help’ housing programs) to serve as a baseline for comparison of the current self-help method. A statement by the Sri Lankan Ministry of Housing Construction and Public Utilities in 1996 (in Jilani, 1998, p. 118) describes standard (non-self-help) estate housing as “… provider-based and tied with employment. Housing is provided free, without any form of tenancy arrangement and on the basis of one housing unit per worker family” (p.5). The current self-help method employed in the estates is also ‘provider-based’ (from the PHDT and management), as well as ‘tied with employment,’ (the beneficiary must be a younger worker who must pay back his housing loan over a period of 15 years with

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28 relatively young (20 to 30 something years of age) so that they are not near retirement by the end of repayment/ownership
mandatory occupation during those years, with increased chances to be selected as a project beneficiary\textsuperscript{29} if the worker is married to another worker in the estate). The difference however, with the self-help housing program is in fact that because of the participation component, such housing is not ‘\textit{provided free}’ like conventional estate housing, yet still coming with a ‘\textit{form of tenancy arrangement}’. The participating worker is expected to provide his labour, as well as pay back the loan, over the course of the period in which he/she cannot sell or sublet the property. Hence, the self-help project in the estates causes concern on its real value and impact to the user.

In the previous chapter it was argued that the housing program takes advantage of the situation in the estate sector. First, to review the objective of estate self-help housing programs: a way to create change by seeking worker participation and transferring ownership of the housing to the participant. Ideas of such ‘\textit{housing-related empowerment}’ is defined by Somerville (1998) as “\textit{any process by which people gain increased control over their housing situation}” (p. 234). However, in a situation where:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“All decisions, in this authoritarian system, flow down from the peak to the base, at which level the products are received by consumers whose decision-making role is limited to a possible choice between a very limited number of prepackaged alternatives”} (Turner, 1972, p. 156-157)
\end{quote}

such as that of the estates, workers are not free to simply start building on their own. Jilani (1998) found "\textit{According to the labourers, if a labourer is seen cultivating a piece of vacant land, the management immediately prohibits them to continue}” (p. 146). The company of the estate and GoSL have a shared proprietorship over the land. Hence, self-help projects such as the ones studied in this paper can take advantage of this situation, especially since projects occur in bouts of 15 – 25 units at a time. This further supports Marcuse’s (1992) claim that such self-help programs do little to redistribute power, especially given the individualistic nature of the project (per household rather than collective).

Sometimes, because housing units often do not provide enough space, families will begin to make additions or extensions to their line unit, especially in larger households. Some management is

\textsuperscript{29} If there is more demand for the project than available plots for housing
supportive of such endeavours, while others are not: Jilani (1998) reports of an instance when “The management punishe[d] labourers who extend or build a temporary shed on the plantation” (p. 138). He recites a story of one veteran worker, an old woman, whose family wanted to build a kitchen. People living nearby reported such act to the manager - out of jealousy, she recalls. So, they went to the Talaivar (trade union leader) to speak with the manager on the family’s behalf. The Talaivar’s defence to the management was that many others have done the same and so this family should be treated no differently. The manager apparently did not agree (ibid). Thus, estate workers – as a population - are dependent as a result of the plantation structure. Limit on housing opportunities is a good example of this case. They could build elsewhere, but need permission first. Thus, the type of manager will also influence this, which goes to show his power. To elucidate, an account with one assistant manager Selvaratnam (2001) on had spoken found: “Therefore, despite the use of the term ‘empowerment’ in relation to power sharing on the estate, there has not been a significant change in the hierarchy of the estate” (p. 47).

The information presented shows that it is more the carrying over of plantation norms vis-à-vis using the same bureaucratic and management patterns which have resulted in the current shape of the program. Additionally, the original motivation for social welfare provision is also carried over unto the project, which is problematic because self-help is supposed to empower those using it, not those implementing it. The origins of a social welfare policy in the estates stems from this very objective, to maintain a good labour force (Meyer, 1990; Hettiarachchi, 2006). Thus, it is the structural environment, the well-established labour hierarchy, social traditions and norms which contribute to a society that is often referred to as a ‘dependent’ group as a result of its unique history from the rest of Sri Lankan society. This chapter aimed to describe estate culture through detailing labour roles and relations to set the context of the hierarchical environment. By providing information on the work structure, the social stratum of the estate is better understood as the production system defines the basis for plantation
society. The plantation, as a corporation and in light of a declining steady labour force (World Bank, 2007) invests in workers’ housing as a way to invest back into the estate has utility. In fact, the estate – as part of a larger corporate entity, have long invested in social welfare provision with the intention of receiving a return on investment, which is the maintenance of a labour supply for plantation production (Hettiarachchi, 2006; Beckford, 1972).
Chapter 5 – CONCLUSION: the Irony & the Potential of a Self-Help Method in a Plantation

“...analysis is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the change envisaged...”
- Beckford, 1972

This study began with an interest to investigate some of the weaknesses of a self-help model being widely used in an estate housing program. It was soon realized that such an undertaking required a deeper examination of plantation culture with a focus on its tradition of social welfare. It was seen how the plantation’s social welfare policy influences the new form of social welfare delivery – self-help – and how it will configure as a result of pre-existing norms and paradigms, as well as guard corporate interests. Though both plantations and self-help methodologies strive to achieve housing for its benefactors (i.e. the workers), the rationales behind such aim are rather contradictory. The estate has continued to provide housing (and other basic services) relatively free of charge as an assurance that their labour force be well maintained, and well maintained within the estate. A residential workforce was not only convenient given the geography of plantations, but also served an economic utility by being there, on site and on hand. Conversely, principles of self-help methodology attempt to be an empowering process for the user through the housing process by increasing ‘dweller control’ (Fichter et al., 1972) and provide a means of enablement. Such a dichotomy between the two objectives has thus created an interesting program, bringing insight to plantation culture and the utility of self-help in such an environment.

As the plantation system today continues to serve its original purpose of providing housing for its workers, it is generally motivated with the same reason to do so since the advent of the plantation industry. This bias is one where, common with aided self-help programs, “...the supplier has incentives and rewards other than satisfying his client; the client, meanwhile, has no effective way of enforcing his request” (Fichter et al., 1972, p. 246). Thus, the existing context needs to be given sufficient consideration when undertaking any kind of development scheme for the plantation community. As
evident, the self-help model has come to take on a technocratic form typical to the status quo of the estates. The plantation, as ‘a distinct form of enterprise’ (Alawattage and Wickramasinghe, 2006, p. 3), has influenced the shape of the program so that the hierarchical labour relations are reproduced. Likewise with the estate employment structure, general labourers on the bottom rung of the hierarchy partake in repetitive tasks requiring little skill or higher thinking. The participation required by the user is similar in that the beneficiary contributes in the same kind of mundane ways. This affects the quality of participation by the user of the project. Further, the self-help model in the estates have been criticized for negating the incentive of achieving ownership due to enforced conditions on the program in terms of the specific housing construction model, timeline, and loan scheme. This highly structured program provides little room for its participants to choose what to invest in, when, and how much, thereby restricting autonomous incremental building by the user. Lastly, the program is exploitive of the circumstances of the residents, since they cannot officially build their own housing means without permission of the estate. Thus, this housing model – or another development project that may come around – is often the only alternative to housing, if it is granted to an estate. This highlights the overall lack of choice and opportunities prevalent in the plantation, which runs coutner to teh self-help principle to achieve dweller control over decisions, as well as the freedom to contribute to all aspects of the housing process (Fichter et al., 1972; Grenell, 1972).

Though changes to these programs are necessary: “The estate management incentives to facilitate such changes may be limited, because of perceptions that these may further reduce the availability of labor for the estate” (World Bank, 2007, p. 106). To review some of the concerns uncovered from research and interviewees, the self-help housing scheme is designed in such a way that: 1) the user’s ability to invest when he or she wants is constrained due to the set schedule established by the program; 2) the security incentive normal to having ownership is somewhat negated by the mandatory occupation of the house for the beneficiary’s household only; and lastly 3) the quality of
participation remains low and relatively unchanged from earlier methods and does not seem to maximize or demand more meaningful participation of the user. Instead, due to the limited number of plots and projects, it is exploitive of the lack of housing alternatives in the estate, since workers do not have rights to the land. Additionally, earlier motivations for social welfare provision remain, that is, to gain from investing in workers’ housing, which may explain the contradictions of self-help values in this program. Thus, Eversole’s (2003) statement rings truth in regard to this self-help housing scheme:

“Part of the difficulty is that participation tends to mean different things to different people. Behind the apparent consensus that participation is desirable, there is a wide range of reasons for supporting participatory approaches, with often unacknowledged contradictions” (p. 782).

The current self-help program in the estates underscores how the self-help concept was developed out of a completely different time and space from the plantation institution. Though the British administration has long exited, the operational structure and culture of the estate remains largely unchanged. Likewise with the self-help method, as the Dutch and Norwegian financial backing terminated by the end of 2005, the self-help model remains largely unchanged. A major issue with adopting foreign methods, such as self-help in the particular context of the plantation system are the:

“...inherited problems with lack of critical reflexivity of the Western/Northern strategy perspective [which] limit its applicability in understanding the Sri Lankan tea industry context where broader and direct sociocultural and political interactions and power relations are important...,” (Wickramasinghe and Cameron, 2005, p. 3).

This study aimed to critically reflect on a ‘Western/Northern strategy perspective’, the self-help methodology and its applicability in this certain context. On a conceptual level, the problem of such applicability has been identified by Beckford (1972) as well:

“Political ideologies that relate to those ... developed out of the feudal-capitalist systems of Europe, the settler-home-stead-capitalist systems of North America and elsewhere ... are not adequate for the social and political realities of plantation society” (p. 232).

This does not however, mean that self-help is a hopeless method but, rather an extremely challenging one which in this case, falls short in incorporating the cultural framework of the estate.
Though the paper is critical of the capacity of plantation systems to adopt participatory approaches, it is with agreement that such effort should be taken. Selvaratnam (2001) acknowledges reports showing attempts to decentralize and redistribute power in the estates; however the management regime remains essentially the same. Thus, though it may be recognized, at least in rhetoric, by many in the plantation industry that moving away from the structural hierarchy and modus operandi can be beneficial, arriving at such a point is evidently not being tackled well. Plan Sri Lanka (2006) claim that “efforts are now being taken to transform this colonial system of administration into a more participatory management system...” (p. 2-8). For a system that has helped shape a traditionally ‘dependent’ population, to move ahead will mean larger, systemic reforms to the plantation industry so that effective participation may ensue.

Returning to the ‘Western/Northern’ perspective, I have quickly sensed discrepancies with this self-help program due to my own positionality. The ease to which I have found the program criticisable stems from the different standards of self-help methodology. In western nations, when self-help is pursued or “new-build solutions are advanced at all, this is mostly for qualitative rather than quantitative gains,” (Mathey, 1992, p.4) however,

“In the context of Third World countries self-help housing is primarily regarded as a way to produce new housing, and a way for its occupants to upgrade substandard shelter. If it contributes to solving the housing problem, it is expected to do so in quantitative terms” (ibid).

The effect would be rather unhelpful in my analysis, and I would be amiss not to point out some real benefits of the program.

To demonstrate, a key outcome of the program has been the increased (negotiation) opportunity workers have with estate authorities. In the early stages of the process, site selection for the housing project was chosen largely by the estate management and PHDT. Today, beneficiaries have more voice in the site selection process (Kamalanathan, 2006). Though this does not automate to a perfectly ideal situation, it does present a major achievement for benefactors which initially did not exist
– where the estate worker could enter into the debate of site selection. This is a real achievement that has been previously acknowledged: “Self-Help housing projects and policies are now understood to be an entry point for the poor to enter into the ‘negotiation’ processes with the ruling classes, and not just a political claim...” (Mathey, 1992, p. 2). This idea is supported by Focault (in Sommerville, 1998) and the notion of the opportunity to negotiate in official self help programs are given by Burgess, Castells, Harms, and Pradilla among others (in Mathey, 1992). Therefore, it is said that even the most bureaucratized and administrative programmes have benefit since users must engage in even small ways with authorities, whether or not the authorities began with purely good intentions. Thus, these programs demonstrate potential with this setting of a new precedent through the use of self-help methodology.

Further, among even the harsher of self-help critics (Marcuse, for example) still remain with the strategy despite many objections to its weaknesses. Thus, both self-help as a theory, and the plantation system, is in the gradual process of change and learning. This benefit however, of increased opportunity for negotiation that previously was not in place, cannot be accounted for in terms of the number of new housing that has arisen. This addresses another concern regarding the evaluation aspect of housing programs. To reiterate: “It is not so much what housing is, but what it does for people” (Turner, 1976). Recent discussions in the plantation industry to change from self-help to pre-fabricated housing provision are being deliberated (Kamalanathan, 2008, personal communication). Such a move would only find management practice to stagnate as oppose to evolving. The other benefit of self-help is that it encompasses goals beyond the provision of housing, with the value-added benefit – if conducted appropriately – of empowering its users. On the other hand, prefabricated housing would be expedient and produce quantifiable units; however it would not induce the gradual capacity building that could be of real benefit to the estate community in general. Further, companies should commit to claims of “socially responsive management practices” (Kelanie Valley Plantations Ltd., Annual Report 2006), and
professed emphasis on “promoting the participatory and demand driven mechanisms and ensuring that ... all programmes contribute towards the human development of the plantation community,” (PHDT Annual Report, 2005) for example. The propensity for such social goals by pre-fabricated housing provision is doubtful.

Revisiting Positionality

Readdressing the Western/Northerner perspective, my own such position as a western student has enabled me to criticize the programme with ease. Earlier it was mentioned how ‘first world’ versions of self-help focus on its qualitative ideologies, hence my lens when I first confronted the ins and outs of the estate housing program under study. The estate housing stock has a quantitative deficit, which makes a quantitative evaluation of housing programs necessary. Still, especially when dealing with poor and/or marginalized groups, housing should not be looked solely qualitatively or solely in quantitative terms, as both need great attention. However, it is important to acknowledge the real technical and logistical constraints, such as lack of personnel in the PHDT. To illustrate, there is only one PHDT social mobilizer per regional office (recall Figure 1, there are about 50 to 70 estates per regional office) is a real matter of concern that contributes to the slow progress. However, the RPCs and other affiliates of the Trust could do more to strengthen and increase the capacity of this organization. In an interview with one PHDT mobilizer, where as a researcher I thought I was being quite ‘value-neutral’), the interviewee was explaining project outcomes when he suddenly objected with teh fact that there have been major improvements to not only the stock, but in terms of general capabilities and an overcoming of learning curves, though these may not seem like much improvements to ‘big western countries’. The incident stayed with me as I realized that the effect of researcher positionality; ....

Therefore, both implementor on the ground and funder (initiator of such projects), and even observing foreigner/researcher – are all criticized here; the first for taking advantage of the situation due to the lack of housing alternatives, thereby creating a somewhat exploitive self-help practice; and
the second for not devoting enough attention the particular labour structure and socio-historic context, which evidently demonstrates a large need for capacity building both on the individual and system level (and as stemming from the need for a shift in practice and ideology from colonial style authoritarian and paternalistic management to participatory development and empowerment). Both of these could have been easy oversights because with the first case, the rationale for social welfare provision has always been for the estate to get a ‘return on their investment’. This has utility and is practical for a corporation; whether conscious of the ethics of such motivations is realized or not. As for program implementers, it is easy to overlook capacity building in such a specific environment, when housing projects can be so easily seen in terms of its units, despite self-help scholars (Turner, 1972; Grenell, 1972) raising much issue against having this dominant view of housing progress. Finally, for the foreign observer/researcher, it is coming to terms with the impact of the ‘western-derived’ perspective and how such informs program standards and ensuing critiques. In sum, the estate is a particular and complex situation and as such, requires more investigation into labour relations and the functioning of its employment structure to better understand the self-help processes and results, however favourable or not. As well, this also requires background research into the socio-political history of the plantation community to be better understood and incorporated into programs which aim to instigate change. Thus, it can be concluded that while there are some major shortcomings of the self-help program in the estates, such programs should be evaluated both by its intended outcomes and unintended outcomes.


Appendix 1. Geo-political Map of Sri Lanka

Source: PCL Map Collection
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/sri_lanka_rel00.jpg
SOUTH INDIA
Sources of Immigration to Ceylon and Recruiting Agencies 1921-35

AVERAGE ANNUAL NUMBER
OF IMMIGRANTS
(ESTATE LABOURERS)

Build your dream house to suite your pocket

Individual estate housing scheme organized by the Plantation Human Development Trust

- A land in extent of 7 Perches with all public amenities to build your house.
- A Grant of Rs. 34,500/- for construction and a loan of Rs. 40,000/- at concessional rates.
- Build your house within 6-8 months and get qualified for the prize scheme. First 3 house owners are entitled for valuable prizes.

Source: PHDT Regional Office
+ Applicants who enter this scheme are entitled to a land of 7 purchase at no cost.
+ A housing loan at the interest rate of 10% per annum repayable in 5-15 years.
+ The following amounts can be obtained from the Plantation Human Development Trust for construction which you need not pay back.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial expenses to prepare the land</td>
<td>Rs. 5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For sanitary facilities</td>
<td>Rs. 7,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To obtain water facilities</td>
<td>Rs. 5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of roofing materials</td>
<td>Rs. 22,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For doors and windows</td>
<td>Rs. 8,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For roof construction</td>
<td>Rs. 7,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 54,500.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ Free technical advice can be obtained for construction from the beginning.
+ It will be a new experience in your life as you are going to own a house, complete with all facilities.
+ You can select the house you intend to construct, to suit your budget and according to your way of life.
+ Monthly loan installments for a loan of Rs. 40,000/= with interest at the rate of 10% per annum are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repayment period</th>
<th>Monthly loan installment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 years or 60 months</td>
<td>Rs. 849.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years or 72 months</td>
<td>Rs. 741.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years or 84 months</td>
<td>Rs. 664.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years or 96 months</td>
<td>Rs. 606.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years or 108 months</td>
<td>Rs. 563.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or 120 months</td>
<td>Rs. 528.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years or 132 months</td>
<td>Rs. 500.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years or 144 months</td>
<td>Rs. 478.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 years or 156 months</td>
<td>Rs. 429.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years or 180 months</td>
<td>Rs. 429.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SHAKTHI
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. FOR PAST BENEFICIARIES OF SELF-HELP

1. How did you learn about the Self-Help Housing project?

2. How was the Self-Help Housing project described to you?

3. What were your expectations of the Self-Help Housing project?

4. What did you like about the Self-Help Housing project?

5. What did you not like about the Self-Help Housing project?

6. How many people lived in your house before the Self-Help Housing project? How many people live in your house now?

7. If you had the chance to choose whether or not to participate in the Self-Help Housing project, would you do it again? Why or why not?

B. FOR NON-PARTICIPANTS OF SELF-HELP HOUSING

1. Were you aware of the Self-Help Housing project when it took place?

2. How did you hear about it? How was it described to you?

3. Why did you not partake in the project? (Was it your decision?)

4. Do you know people who participated in the Self-Help Housing project? How do you think they feel about it?

5. If you had the chance to choose to participate in a future Self-Help Housing project, would you?

6. How would you want a new Housing project to be different than previous ones?
GATHERING DATA DIRECTLY FROM PEOPLE

I am working on the topic of Self-Help Housing in the estate sector, so that can find out what implications, impact, and effect - if any - this has had on resident mindsets, attitudes, or behaviors. This is because I want to better understand its impact on estate residents.

What I am hoping to learn from you is

1. The background: when? where? (division?)
   - How many houses?
   - Who implemented spearheaded the project? What organs?
   - How many participants?

2. Do you have any documents?

3. Personal: why did
   - How do you feel it went? How would you rate the success of it?
   - Would you be interested in more similar projects in the future
   - How did you go about choosing which residential areas would receive proj?

4. Describe the kind of people that apply for this project (age, gender, older, active, etc).
   - What are their expectations from you?
   - How does this project compare to those you've done outside of estates?

www.phdt.nl
Appendix 5. Request for Authorization

Research: Self-Help Housing

Researcher Information

Name: Diana Chang
Academic Affiliation: Undergraduate student, University of Toronto in Canada
Current employment: Junior Programme Officer, WUSC-PCP

Request for Authorization

This letter is a request to grant the above researcher and her translator authorization to conduct research (in the form of surveys and group interviews) on your estate.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is for me to learn about participation levels in previously implemented Self-Help Housing projects in the estates. I will use the data collected for my undergraduate research thesis. I have chosen your estate because in the past, there have been Self-Help housing project(s) here.

Study Procedures

With your approval, my translator and I will disseminate a questionnaire in residential areas. This will be filled out by research subjects which I will collect upon completion. Every potential participant I approach will be given an Informed Consent letter, which is attached. The second part of the research will be conducted with a smaller number of subjects through a group interview. Names of participants and their resident estate will be kept confidential, and will not be used in the publication of the study.

Possible Risk

There is no foreseen risk in allowing me to conduct research on your estate. If you feel there are risks I am unaware of, please let me know.

Possible Benefits

There are no direct benefits that your estate or participants of the study will receive. I have no influence on any type of authority regarding housing or other social welfare.
Confidentiality

To conduct my research with the utmost confidentiality, I cannot share the raw data that I collect with you or anyone else in the estate. Research subjects' identities will be kept confidential. All information will be stored in my residence in Kandy. When interviews are written out, subjects will be referred to by an invented name, and their estate will only be classified by geographic description (up-country vs. low country, proximity to town, etc.). I will not share with other people of the estate (management, staff, other workers and residents, etc.) and/or other affiliates (trade unions’ people, other companies) which participants have told me what. In the publication of the study, real names of participants and their residential estates will not be used.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my proposed research study. Your authorization would be greatly appreciated. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Diana Chang

Mob. Phone: (077) 766-5681
Work Phone: (081) 220-2363
(081) 447-2970
Appendix 6. Informed Consent

*English version (to be translated into Sinhala or Tamil)*

**Experiences with Self-Help Housing: Survey and Group Interview**

**Researcher Information**

My name is Diana Chang. I am a student from Canada.

**Your Participation is your Choice**

You are being asked to take part in a study to learn about people’s experiences with Self-Help Housing in the estate sector. This consent form gives you information about the study and explains what is being requested of you. If you agree to participate, you can keep the first 2 sheets of this document. I am telling you this because in Canada it is the law that before we talk to people for research, we must tell them what the research is about, and make sure they want to talk to us.

Deciding to be interviewed for this study is completely up to you. In order for you to decide, I would like to tell you about the purpose of this study (deleted text). Once I have explained this, you can tell me if you would like to participate.

**The Purpose of this Study**

The main purpose of this study is for me to learn more about Self-Help Housing projects in the estates of Sri Lanka from the views and opinions of those who were involved of such projects. In particular, I am investigating the levels of participation and control that was had by the different actors involved. I am asking for your participation because of your prior experience with a previous Self-Help housing project.

**Study Procedures**

Attached is a questionnaire for you to answer should you decide to participate. Please review it to understand what will be asked of you. The length of time it takes to fill it out depends on how much or little you want to elaborate on your answers.

**Confidentiality**

When you finish with the questionnaire, I will collect it as part of my raw data. This will not be shared with anyone else. When the information is published, your responses will not be directly linked to your job title and organization. For instance, there won’t be something like, “the
person who once worked as a contractor for the NHDA on X estate stated that ….." All data collected for this study will be kept secured in my residence in Kandy.

Possible Risk

There is no foreseen risk to you from being part of this study. If you feel there are risks I am unaware of, please let me know.

Possible Benefits

You will not receive any direct benefits from being in this study. The researcher is not connected to, nor influential to, any kind of authority in any way. She also does not have the monetary or other means to compensate you for your time. The publications of this study will be read by her teacher in Canada. She cannot guarantee that other influential persons will or will not read her research publication.

Voluntary Participation

Therefore, participating in this study is your choice. The extent of your participation is also up to you.

Contact Persons

If you have questions about this study, you can contact:

Ms. Diana Chang or Mrs. Rathna Jeganathan

Phone: (081) 220 - 2363