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**Analysis of Socio - Economic & Environmental Problems
of Reclamation of low lands in the Colombo District**

(Based on field survey in Dehiwela -MountLavinia Divisional Secretarial Division)

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography as a partial fulfillment
of the requirement of the Degree of Master of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Scarcity of land is a common problem faced by all urban centers. As a solution, people tend to develop and reclaim low lying lands for their utilization. Low lying lands also play a significant role in our ecological system. Reclamation of low lying land disturbs the balance of the nature of the living environment. The people living in those areas experience the problems related to such activities. The functional imbalance created by these has drawn the attention of the planners and the people who have concerns on urban development.

In Colombo district, most of the low lying lands in urban areas are being reclaimed in large scale by private sector as well as public sector for the benefit of the people, particularly to solve the problem of scarcity of land. If it were the only solution the process should be environmental friendly.

The main objective of this study is to identify the relevant environmental, social and economic problems associated with the process of land reclamation in low lying areas and to identify its harmful effects on the people who live in those urban areas.

All the data used in this study are collected from the people who live in selected urban areas within Colombo, Kotte, Nugegoda, Kaduwela and Dehiwala-Mount-lavinia. I have adopted two methods for collecting of the data.

First, data and facts related to reclaimed land in urban areas were collected. Through a comprehensive literary survey, the historical background of the relevant areas and the existing situation of those low lying lands were collected. The materials used were, the statistical report, magazines and publications. Publications related to the social environment and economic problems in these areas were limited due to improper land development programs implemented.

Secondly, primary data were collected from the selected residents living in three Grama Niladhari Divisions in Dehiwala-Mountlavinia Divisional Secretariat. Through this exercise it was possible to identify the ill effects of the process of land reclamation in low lying lands in these areas. To select the respondents a random sampling method was used. The prime reason for selecting this particular area is Bellanvila and Attidiya are ecologically important areas and the areas mostly affected by land development programmes conducted by government and non-government organizations. Before conducting this field investigation a pilot-survey was done in order to identify the most suitable area to study this problem.

Parallel to the sample survey a data collection from the representatives of selected village organizations and the officers of relevant institutions was done. For the interviews 250 families were selected. Before selecting the families for interviews, verification was done to clarify whether the families live in their ancestral lands or in the lands provided by the government. In order to support the filed data statistical charts, graphs, maps and photographs were also used.

The important facts that could be identified by this research are as follows. As a result of this development programmers, most of the people who did not have shelter for their life or who could not afford to have a land got a plot of land. Infrastructure Development can be seen in some of these areas through these programs. The success of the main objective of reclamation of land is still a question, as these development programmers do not provide solutions to the problem of land scarce city faced by the people who live in those urban areas.

The improper methods of land reclamation or land development has caused problems such as flood during rainy seasons, water logging, haphazard slum development, social hazards caused to local residents, loss of cultivated lands, ground water pollution and generally, damage to the ecology of the area. The ill effects faced by the people living need to be resolved. In order to overcome these problems a well planned development programs must be introduced by the relevant authorities.

This thesis contains six chapters. The introduction to the problem of the study, the research methodology used in the study and the limitations are given in the first chapter. The second chapter gives an introduction to low lying lands, the importance uses of those lands and the authorities involved in reclamation and development programs.

Third chapter discusses the problems cropped up due to these irregular development programmed. Fourth chapter highlights the information revealed from the field research. Fifth chapter highlights the social and environment problems revealed by the field survey. Finally, the last chapter includes synthesis of the problems based on the overall analysis of the problems, and suggestions based on the field survey.