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Sustainable City Development and its Importance in the Sri Lankan Context: A Review

Jayasinghe G.Y. *, Maheepala S.A.D.S.S.

*Department of Agricultural Engineering, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna,
Sri Lanka*

**victorlion3000@gmail.com*

Abstract

Approximately 70 out of 100 people in the world will live in cities by 2050, as a result of rapid urbanization and population increment. The UN agenda of 2030 identified cities as the key players of the arts and culture, thriving businesses, and innovative ideas. Urbanization leads to different environmental, economic and social issues. One billion urban poor still live in slums and informal settlements, mostly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and are often excluded from access to affordable housing, good-quality basic services, and better jobs. Over 90% of urban areas are located in disaster vulnerable areas (coastal or flood prone) which means that most cities are affected by the climate crisis and natural disasters as sea levels rise, floods, and powerful storms sweep across these regions. Sustainable city concept assures the economically viable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable cities in the world. In 2017, 18.48% of Sri Lanka's population has been living in urban areas and cities. Colombo is considered as the Sri Lanka's largest city with more than 5.6 million metro area residents and Sri Jayawardanapura, Kandy, Galle, Trincomalee and Gampaha are referred as other large cities. Ministry of Megapolis and Western Development has estimated that 43.8% of the Sri Lankan population in 2030 to be living in urban areas and specialized technical support in solid waste management and other urban issues to be prioritized under the urban governance support program. Sustainable development goal No.11 deals with the attributes of sustainable cities, highlighting a range of issues, from the liveability of cities to their resilience to climate change. The sustainable city concept is very much important to national sustainable development program in Sri Lanka with stand of Vision 2025 and the Public Investment Program 2017-2020. The provincial capital of Anuradhapura is a good example of an ancient sustainable city with an abundance of green spaces and practices. Sustainable city development focuses on city planning and management to maintain better infrastructure facilities, high quality drainage systems, better land use practices and reduced disaster risk of the city. Furthermore, it increases public services and utilities, such as sewerage, waste disposal, and public transport to facilitate high living standards for urban communities. Government should be incorporated in sustainable city development in Sri Lanka by developing policies, projects, awareness programs, educational programs and providing funds. This study comprehensively reviews the existing literature on (i) sustainable city concept, (ii) its importance, (iii) sustainable city development in Sri Lanka, (iv) barriers and (v) future perspectives.

Keywords: Disaster risk reduction, Heat island effect, Urbanization, Waste management