

**Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on  
Baseline Road Project Phase 1 and 2, Colombo, Sri Lanka.**

*K.A.Jayaratne,  
President,  
Sevanatha – Urban Resource Center,  
Sri Lanka.*

An eight-km-long Baseline Road is one of the main arterial roads in Greater Colombo area. Widening and improvement of this road have been completed in September, 2002 by the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) in two phases with the loan assistance from Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Following is the text of opinion of a third party on the project based on two criteria: relevance and impact.

**Criteria -1: Relevance.**

Baseline Road is located close to the eastern boundary of Colombo city connecting North and South of regions of Greater Colombo Area. Colombo Metropolitan Development Plan of 2002 prepared by UDA and the Western Province Regional Structure Plan of 2004 prepared by BOI, Sri Lanka have identified Baseline Road as a key arterial road serves not only for the region but also for the whole country. Therefore, the improvement of the Baseline Road has been carried out in line with national development policies and urban development plans of the country. Plans prepared for the improvement of southward extension of the Baseline Road will further contribute for achieving the goals of the Western Regional Development Plan. Baseline Road improvement has been carried out as a model of urban arterial road for Sri Lanka with proper traffic management systems, a fly-over to avoid traffic delays prevailed for many years at Dematagoda railway track crossing, underground cross walks to ease congestion at Borella junction, increased number of lanes to accommodate increased volume of traffic and improved, protected and paved side walks for the safety of pedestrians and improved traffic circles for smooth traffic flow at several key junctions located within the 8km-length of the road.

**Criteria -2: Impact.**

Over a very short period like four years since the completion of the project, it has impacted tremendously on lives of population groups identifiable within the project. A significant effect of project is visible on the lives of people who were relocated due to the road widening. Majority of them who were directly affected by the project were in the low income category living illegally on road reservations for many years. These people have been relocated to planned sites and services projects within Colombo municipality area, particularly, close to the workplaces and schools. Currently these people are living contentedly on their own houses with adequate basic services.

Other significant impacts of the project are visible in the urban economy. Lands along either sides of Baseline Road are being converted at a higher rate to the appropriate urban uses. New land uses have been determined by the real market value of lands and rental value of built spaces. Value of land on Baseline Road has increased immensely. As a result, many large real estate projects like luxury apartment housing, high-rise office, hospital and commercial buildings are being built. Value of properties located on roads connected to Baseline too has increased as it provides better access to inner roads as well as to the city center. Higher rental values obviously increase the annual value of property based on which Colombo municipal council determines its property tax or the rates.

Smooth flow of traffic after completion of the project has contributed to ease the traffic jam. It serves for all users of the road for saving time to use for productive purposes. The effect of it is not visible like in real projects, however, time saving on roads in Sri Lanka contributes positively in all aspects of the life of people.