

## **F-11: Investigation of workers' accommodation in the Katunayake Export Processing Zone**

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The Katunayake Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) was established under the Greater Colombo Economic Commission Law No. 4 of 1978. The objective was promoting export oriented foreign investment to create employment opportunities, increase export earnings and to develop the 415 km<sup>2</sup> coming under its authority. The KEPZ has functioned since 1980. It has generated about employment for 14,000 within 2 years. Continuous attraction of industries such as garment, footwear leather production has strengthened the workforce to an estimated figure about 42,500 at the end of 1989.

A large number of workers of the KEPZ were from areas outside the Katunayake area. About 95% come mainly from the districts of Gampaha, Kurunegale, Kegalle, Matara, Kandy, Galle and Ratnapura. Another significant feature of these workers is the requirement of accommodation: young females about 87% required accommodation in and around Katunayake.

It has been found that, there were no steps taken to provide accommodation upto now. As a result the demand created by these workers for accommodation has been met largely by the private house owners in and around the Katunayake area. The residents of the area wish to get the benefits from the opportunity and arrange the accommodation for boarders. In most cases this accommodation was built without local authority approval or supervision, therefore the existing buildings did not cover the requirements of building regulations. Majority of this accommodation are characterized by improvised and substandard structural conditions, as per capita floor space is concerned. Provision for light and ventilation as well as essential services such as water, toilets etc, are of very low standards. Due to these reasons, it has given rise to many problems in physical and social nature. These problems seem to be crucial, as the need for accommodation is increasing in the area within a radius of 3km from the factory zone (i.e. about 80%).