

Glossary

Some words used in this document are not from the English language. A list of these with their meanings is provided below.

aiya – elder brother. Sometimes used to refer in a slightly respectful way to someone older

boarding – any room or lodging taken for payment

chena – a form of cultivation where a brush or forest area is slashed and then burned after which a crop is sown

devala – a place of worship for various deities

ganja – a form of smoked cannabis leaf

kangani – the person in charge of a group of labourers working in an estate

kasippu – the common form of alcohol illicitly brewed and sold

lamaya – a ‘young person’

maldiv fish – form of dried fish (originally from the Maldiv islands) used as an additive in preparing food

resthouse – usually a government owned residential hotel outside of Colombo which also offers food and drink to non-residential patrons

Rs – shortened form for rupee

Rupee – the Sri Lankan currency. At present (1993) converts at around 100 to the US dollar

Samurdhi – state poverty alleviation scheme which offers a small stipend and basket of commodities to those classified as ‘poor’

seettu – an informal scheme where several individuals contribute a sum of money monthly and give the total to each one in turn

Sinhala or Sinhalese – the local language spoken by a majority in our study areas and in Sri Lanka

Tamil – the local language spoken by a minority in our study areas and in Sri Lanka

vadey – a popular fried snack of lentils

yala and maha – two major seasons for cultivating, especially of rice paddy. Corresponds with the monsoon rains