

ADMINISTRATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN SRI LANKA

D.N.D. Hettiarachchi (Hetti)

Survey Department, Sri Lanka.

hettiarachchidnd@gmail.com

Country: Sri Lanka

What is the official language(s)? Sinhala and Tamil

What other recognized indigenous, minority or regional languages are used? None

Is there a names board/committee/authority to standardize names? Yes

a. If YES: - What is its name?

Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names (CSGN).

- To what institute/government department is it attached?

Survey Department.

(Survey Department is the national Surveying & Mapping organization in Sri Lanka.)

- When was it established? Is there a law/statute/regulation involved?

CSGN was established by the Cabinet of Ministers in December 2014 for three years period, and later extended by one year till end of 2018. CSGN has limited authorities. Necessity of establishment of a permanent committee, its functions, requirements of new legislations, etc., should be identified by the CSGN, and a proposal should be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers accordingly.

- For what types of names is it responsible?

There is no limitation. Currently, names of administrative division, air port, cave, dam, estate, forest, fort, harbour, hill, island, lagoon, marshy land, range of mountains, plane, populated place, park/ sanctuary, tank/ reservoir, junction, river/ stream, rock, road, religious place, railway station, ruin, archeological site, spring, valley, village, water fall, etc., are collected and processed.

- Describe the membership of the board

CSGN consists with following 16 members.

Surveyor General (chairman)

Snr. Deputy Surveyor General (Mapping & Geo Names)

Snr. Superintendent of Surveys

Linguistics expert (Sinhala)

Linguistics expert (Tamil)

Expert in History

Expert in Geography

Representation from Postal Department

Representations (two) from National Languages Department

Representation from Ministry of Lands

Representation from Ministry of Home Affairs

Representation from Archeological Department

Representation from Ministry of Cultural Affairs

Representation from Agrarian Services Department

Representation for Marine Geography (not appointed)

- Is the board currently active? **Yes**

- What challenges does it face, and how are they resolved?

Challenges: Lack of experience in standardization,
less interest of important parties, use of two official languages in Sri Lanka, etc.

Resolved: Referring UN documents, make aware important parties.

b. If NO: - When new features (natural: hills, rivers or manmade: airfields, dams, etc.) are named, or when name changes occur, which institution, ministry or local government agency decides on these names?

Manmade features are currently named by the institution which is responsible for construction/ maintenance of it. CSGN has no authority to name new features. This is under discussion. Proposal to be submitted by the CSGN for future naming and re-naming activities.

- How are names decided for use on maps?

Collection of names from field while field data collecting for revising maps.

- Apart from on maps, how does the public find out about correct names?

There is no officially accepted method. Public may refer to old documents, publications, etc.

- Would a names authority be useful? Is this a possibility for your country?

Current CSGN is useful. It is possible to establish a permanent committee.

One of the tasks of the current CSGN is to submit a comprehensive proposal covering areas such as

- continuation of standardization,**
- methodologies for introduction of new names and name changes,**
- methodology for names dissemination,**
- identify new legislations required, etc., before end of year 2018.**

At the national level is there a list, gazetteer and/or a database of geographical names?

There is a database of geographical names in English as part of topographic database. These names have not been standardized or officially accepted.

Is it based on a particular map scale?

Yes, 1:10,000 scale topographic maps. However, names are only in English language.

Is the data available to the public? Yes

Is there a policy to disseminate names for government and public use?

Currently there is no policy to disseminate names. Policy is being prepared by the CSGN to disseminate standardized names.

Do you have any comments about the main uses of geographical names in your country?

Geographical names are mainly used in land surveying, mapping, GIS, administration, legal sector, postal services, etc. There is no officially accepted names to use in above applications. Therefore, users adopt various methods for collecting names to use in their applications.

Romanization of Sinhala:

- Introduction of Romanization method for Sinhala is also vital for local and international applications (UN accepted Romanization method for Tamil is available).
- Currently working with local experts, IT professional and UNGEGN working group on Romanization to introduce a Romanization method for Sinhala.

Original name	Name in English (current writing)	Sinhala transliteration	Romanization
මැවැල්ල	Mewella	මීවෙල්ල, මේවෙල්ල	mævælla

Current status?

Name collection almost completed (except marine toponymy).

- Standardization will be done in two stages**

Initially estimated 30,000 names but we collected nearly 300,000 names.

Thank you