

**Sri Lankan Community Forestry Project (SLCFP)**  
**Independent Completion Review (ICR)**  
**Management Response for ICR Recommendations**

The ICR Team ***recommended*** that the FD consider:

- Increasing the role of communities in the management of enrichment and buffer zone plantings whenever they can be planted with species useful to communities.

**Management Response:**

This issue was discussed at the highest level with Forest Department (FD) officials. The FD is keen on finding ways to increase community involvement in enrichment and buffer zone areas. Since the ownership of forest reserves and buffer zones lie with the Department and cannot be alienated to farmers, alternate models for continued community engagement should be developed. In response to this the FD has already introduced specific fruit and food trees in enrichment and buffer zones that are useful to communities. Black pepper has been the most successful economic crop for buffer zones. For example, there is a good market for pepper and animal damage is also less. FD will work with farmers to promote other suitable crops for different geographic areas e.g. cashew for sandy soil etc.

- Modifying the planting density of teak woodlots to allow much longer intercropping of annual crops, and including a mix of fruit and nut tree species that generate more regular income.

**Management Response:**

FD has already agreed and acted on this. A special team was appointed to study this requirement and were requested to develop new feasible models. Recommendations provided by the team have been accepted by FD and will be implemented in future community forestry activities. The alternative models proposed by the team include considerations on the financial gains and cost-effectiveness of such models. Rubber is one of the alternative crop proposed (for Farmers' Wood Lots – FWLs) by FD. Interspersed with the rubber plantation, farmers could practice inter-cropping for five years. Rubber tapping also could be commenced from the sixth year onwards which will provide additional financial benefits to farmers.

- Carrying out the analysis of the financial efficiency from the farmers' perspective of alternative models of the FWLs to maximise their benefits, thus reducing threats to forests in the area.

**Management Response:**

This requirement was included in the same study as mentioned above.

- CBOs that have been established under SLCFP have functioned as the link or entry point to the program sites for other agencies entrusted with rural and agricultural development. Strengthening such links is needed to have a scaling up effect and sustain community development outcomes. CBOs should be supported to network with other CBOs locally, and across sites to share the experience and stimulate their work.

**Management Response:**

This recommendation was also accepted by the FD. All CBOs under SLCFP were registered as grassroots level societies with the Assistant Government Agent (Divisional Secretaries) of the area. Therefore, Government rural development programs can now be channeled through these CBOs for implementation, removing the necessity to create new community/user groups for each project. Necessary arrangements have also been made by the FD to establish a 'CBO Network' which will include all forestry related CBOs in the country. As an initial step, the FD has taken action to develop a network with CBOs involved in the community forestry and REDD+ programs.

- Continuing the engagement with communities in conflict affected areas to further build trust by supporting diversified home gardens and inclusion of useful species in buffer zone and enrichment planting areas (which involve farmers in the choice of species).

**Management Response:**

The FD has taken actions to strengthen the management and extension structure in conflict-affected areas. Accordingly, new positions were created such as 'Deputy Conservator of Forest' for the Northern Province and other vacancies were also filled with young foresters. The main responsibility of these officers is to develop trust between extension officers and communities while improving forest cover. In order to diversify home gardens for better income, the FD is working with a local NGO to provide agro-wells. This facility has initially been offered to Female Headed Households in the forestry sites. This is proving to be an effective mechanism to develop better relationships between the communities in the Northern Province and FD officials. The contracted local NGO has sound technical capability and is strong on community mobilization.

- Recruiting Tamil officers for the Northern and Eastern district areas;

**Management Response:**

DFAT has consistently stressed the importance of recruiting Tamil speaking forest officers for the North and East of Sri Lanka. There is a delay in recruiting Tamil officers however due to administrative issues within government systems as well as practical issues such as the lack of qualified candidates available in the area. The FD has acknowledged that this is an issue they need to continuously work on.

- Assessing how to make the establishment of new sites could be reduced to make even more cost effective the future expansion of the program; this could be done by considering the costs of community forestry and reforestation initiatives carried out by other countries in the region;

**Management Response:**

FD is working with the World Bank under the 'Eco System Conservation and Management Project (ESCAMP)' to test cost-effectiveness in new sites in protected areas. The World Bank has considered lessons learned under the SLCFP and incorporated in to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) of ESCAMP. The World Bank also decided to use the 'Operational Guidelines' developed by Australian funded forestry programs to establish new community forestry sites. The World Bank and FD have decided to include a DFAT local officer to work in the "Technical Review Committee" of ESCAMP to improve cost-effectiveness, community involvement and sustainable models in selected areas. This is the best example on policy influence of Australian funded forestry programs. This also proves that World Bank and FD are open to consider and practice successful community forestry models carried out in different programs in different areas. Comparative studies will be done with other community forestry sites and the models from elsewhere in the Asian region.

- The monitoring and evaluation of livelihood impacts should also include compiling and reporting of disaggregated data for relevant variables like percentage participation by gender (dichotomized also for single parent households), activities engaged in, income earned per period and percentage of contribution to household income of CF activities.

**Management Response:**

This was accepted and already included in the field level reporting formats. The district data collection sheets have been revised to include reforestation details, income changes, social impacts and gender equality etc. A new database has been developed to feed and analyse the disaggregated data compiled by district forest officers. Training curricula in the Sri Lanka Forestry Institute (SLFI) have also been revised to include topics on gender, social inclusion, data collection and data analysis.

- Sampling to collect information should be stratified so that fewer sites would need to be monitored. Sampling should include cases of matching non-program communities as control groups so that the impact of community forestry activities can be better assessed.

**Management Response:**

This is a new recommendation for the FD and FD needs more time to discuss this widely within the Department to identify strengths, possible risks and other impacts of the proposal. However, FD has agreed to strengthen the existing monitoring mechanism with the support of the new World Bank Funded ESCAMP program which commenced this year.

- Field staff should be trained to undertake aggregation and simple analysis for them to understand their own performance and set new targets.

**Management Response:**

This is being done with the support of SLFI and other training institutions.

- Seeking funding to further develop capacity in remote sensing research and monitoring.

**Management Response:**

World Bank support through ESCAMP has been obtained for this purpose.

- Carrying out a strategic planning exercise (by analysing all the Range Management Plans that have been prepared) to identify the areas that would need to be targeted through community forestry in order to develop a medium to long term plan for the expansion of community forestry and assess priorities and potential costs.

**Management Response:**

This proposal has been accepted by FD. A strategic planning process will be introduced to develop long-term and medium-term plans for CF expansion in suitable locations with appropriate models. Even now, FD uses Range Management Plans (RMPs) to identify suitable locations for CF activities. The new proposal will regularize the current FD practice in site selection process. However, potential costs will be high in remote and hilly areas than the normal sites.

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