

Participatory Land Use Planning in Development

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Most of the development activities in Sri Lanka are land based, particularly in the rural sector. Therefore, use of land use plans is crucial in development but unfortunately it has not been given due consideration. However, based on the recent experience, village level land use planning with the participation of rural community has shown promising results in development. It basically proved that bottom up approach is more effective than the top down approach specially in micro scale development planning.

Land Use Policy Planning Department (LUPPD) has mainly focused on preparing land use plans for villages by using participatory approach since 2018. In this exercise entire planning process was handled by the villagers as a group with the facilitation of officers. Existing issues in the village including land use issues, opportunities, weakness, threats and strengths were identified and prioritized by villagers. The village group was able to formulate the recommendations to address the issues with the help of officers. All findings were presented to relevant stakeholders by the group leader selected by the group. Development decisions were taken by stakeholders based on the issues identified by the people and its recommendations. In some cases, funds were allocated to resolve some identified issues by different projects and local political leaders after presenting the plan. This exercise was comparatively effective than the previous planning exercise which was basically had the top down approach. This planning methodology was effective very much since people are more aware about their plans and the coordination mechanism. At present more than 200 land use plans at the village level and 100 land use plans at the mini watershed levels have been prepared covering selected Divisional Secretary Divisions in all districts. These plans also cover main agro-ecological regions in the country.

Using these land use plans, some of the critical issues have already been addressed by different stakeholder institutions. With this experience it can be concluded that participatory land use planning helps to promote the use of the land use plans in development activities especially at micro scale. Since the methodology has been tested and provided good results it can be replicated all over the Island to plan the land use in the rural sector.

Key Words: Land use planning, participatory approach, development, village level