

PAST EXPERIENCE AND FUTURE PROGRAMMING IN THE SRI LANKA COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

Kalana Cooray¹ and Nora Devoe²

¹UNDP Programme Associate, Sri Lanka Community Forestry Program

²Advisor, Forest Department, Battaramulla

Kalana.Cooray@UNDP.org and Sylvacare@hotmail.com

With Australian government funding, the Sri Lanka Community Forestry Program (SLCFP) became operational in 2012. This external funding will cease in December 2016, but the Forest Department will continue community forestry activities. To inform future community forestry programming, we examine the SLCFP Extension Officers' perspectives on Program results.

From the SLCFP goal and objective statements, these five criteria were extracted for judging "success" of the Program interventions: improve natural resource management, support livelihoods and reduce poverty, reduce deforestation and forest degradation, involve communities in forest management, and build Forest Department capacity in community forestry. Extension Officers' (N=30) evaluations of the Program's interventions, importance rankings of factors thought to contribute to success, and rankings of priority and likely success of potential future community forestry activities were gathered in a questionnaire (individual responses) and at a de-briefing workshop (group discussion) in August, 2016.

These scores and ranks were compared qualitatively with the perspectives of other stakeholders collected separately in semi-structured interviews and focus groups (Karunathilake in prep). A simple form of content analysis, in which frequency of mention was tabulated from transcripts of interviews and discussions with community members, was used to examine congruence of assessments between the two groups. Additional data on Program outcomes taken from quarterly and annual monitoring and evaluation reports were also compared with the perceptions of Program participants.

The perspectives of the Extension Officers were aligned with those of other stakeholders around the Program's most successful aspect, livelihood development. Participation and poverty reduction were emphasised throughout the Program. Among natural resources activities, enrichment planting and creation of farmer's woodlots were seen to deliver the greatest benefits. As expected, perspectives on success of past interventions correlated with Extension Officers' prioritisations for future activities. Promoting community-based monitoring and evaluation of natural forest condition and structuring future Program interventions to more directly link improved forest condition with livelihood benefits may enhance future Program performance around natural forest outcomes.

Key Words: *Community forestry, Program evaluation, Stakeholder perspectives, Program planning*