

Evaluation Abstract

Title, author and date of the evaluation report:

Sri Lanka Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants, Final Evaluation, prepared by Asoka T. De Silva and Tilak Wettasinghe, October 2004

Name of project, programme or organizational unit:

Sri Lanka Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants Project

Objectives of the project, programme or mandate of the organizational unit:

To conserve globally and nationally significant medicinal plants, their habitats, species and genomes, and promote their sustainable use through (a) *in-situ* conservation; (b) *ex-situ* conservation; and (c) provision of information and institutional support.

IUCN area of specialisation: Biodiversity

Geographical area: Sri Lanka

Project or programme duration, length of existence of organisational unit: June 1998 – June 2004

Overall budget of the project, programme or organizational unit: USD 5.07 million

Donor(s): GEF – World Bank

Objectives of the evaluation:

In accordance with the World Bank's guidelines for Implementation Completion Reports, the evaluation team sought to:

- Assess project objectives, design, implementation and operation experience;
- Evaluate performance during evolution and implementation, with an emphasis on lessons learned;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of donor and co-financier relationships, including lessons learned.

Type of evaluation: Final project evaluation

Period covered by the evaluation: June 1998 – June 2004

Commissioned by: Not specified

Audience: IUCN-Sri Lanka, IUCN-Asia Regional Programme, Sri Lankan government partners at the national and local level.

Evaluation team: External

Methodology used: Not specified

Questions of the evaluation:

The evaluation specifically assessed:

- Project inception (including project goals, objectives, design, and implementation arrangements);
- Project performance and impacts (the extent to which planned objectives were achieved; effectiveness of project management, monitoring and evaluation);
- Performance of state agencies directly involved in implementation (incl. drawing lessons learned);
- Project partners' performance (including identifying lessons learned);

- Sustainability and future operations (assessment of proposed arrangements and identification of future monitoring indicators).

Findings:

- The project objectives are meaningful from both national and global perspectives. The proposed project components and actions seem to be well-tailored to address Sri Lanka's conservation deficiencies.
- The project has achieved significant outputs, including enrichment planting of 205 hectares; 45 kilometers of stream bank planting; establishment of fire lines; zonal demarcation of forests; 4,500 community members trained in natural resources and medicinal plants conservation; development of a medicinal plants database; 2 national nurseries created and 3 improved; development of protocols for mass production of planting material for 22 widely used species; publication and dissemination of information on plant propagation procedures through techno-guides, etc. (*A full list of project outputs is available in Annex I of the report*).
- The socio-economic survey, the ethno botanical survey and the resource inventory survey led to the collection of valuable data. Despite a few shortcomings in the survey process, the data collected has been considered to be of good quality.
- The education, training and extension activities met with unqualified success. Impacts involved 1) building country-wide awareness of the importance of conserving medicinal plants; 2) developing a regiment of field staff, well-trained in social mobilization, data collection and analysis; 3) provoking strong and effective gender awakening and empowerment rarely seen in rural communities; 4) creating clear understanding and awareness of participatory/joint forest management; 5) demonstrating opportunities for better livelihood; and 6) reviving and expanding the system of *Gurukula* education that characterised knowledge transfer the traditional system of medicine.
- Problems related to sustaining project achievements were recognised at project preparation. However, there was a major issue of transferring ownership and management of the project's assets and activities, which had still not been resolved.

Recommendations: Not specified

Lessons Learned:

The following are among the lessons learned highlighted by the Evaluation Team:

- The principal executing agency should be a stable entity that has a strong cadre with extended tenure to ensure institutional memory.
- The need for economic incentives to encourage participation of members of rural communities should be recognized at design stage. Project funds should be available to support local communities to pursue alternative livelihood strategies.
- In planning natural resource management/rural development projects ensure that project beneficiaries are involved in developing the concept of the project, as well as the institutional arrangements devised for the purpose. Participatory needs assessment and planning exercises would promote ownership and facilitate subsequent mobilization of the community.
- Moving from 'protection' to 'conservation and sustainable use' of natural resources entails major attitude/behaviour changes on the part of field level officials of state agencies. Ensure that training programmes are provided to prepare these officers, before commencing community mobilization.
- In countries with little or no previous experience in participatory projects on conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, a pilot project limited to one MPCA would be sensible.

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN Sri Lanka; IUCN Global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, Gland, Switzerland