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Lessons Learned from Community-based REDD+ in Sri Lanka

What is CBR+?

A joint initiative of the UN-REDD Programme and the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) — Support to Community-Based REDD+ (CBR+) — has been designed to familiarise stakeholders at the community level with REDD+ and support them to learn about, engage with, and influence on-going REDD+ readiness processes in their countries. Leveraging the respective operational and technical expertise of SGP and UN-REDD, CBR+ aims to inform and build the capacity of indigenous peoples and communities to determine their own involvement in REDD+ processes, and empower them to engage in and influence national REDD+ processes, by testing methodologies and approaches at the local level.

Using the existing SGP grant delivery mechanism, CBR+ grants were provided in six pilot countries to indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities for activities that familiarise communities with REDD+, support communities to determine and organise their engagement with REDD+, and test tools and approaches at the local level, so that local

level insights may inform national REDD+ policy and decision-making. CBR+ Country Strategies were developed in each country to ensure that CBR+ projects complement existing national REDD+ readiness processes and approaches.

Core Objectives of CBR+

- Support the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, communities and civil society in national-level processes related to REDD+, including supporting communities to determine whether and how they see themselves engaging in REDD+.
- Build the capacity and awareness of communities to engage in REDD+ activities and processes.
- Facilitate the integration of community-based activities, knowledge and ideas into national REDD+ processes.
- Develop and share knowledge and lessons learned from community-based experiences to inform national and international REDD+ policies and practice.

CBR+ in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka was one of six selected CBR+ pilot countries. The CBR+ Country Plan was formulated with two expected outcomes:

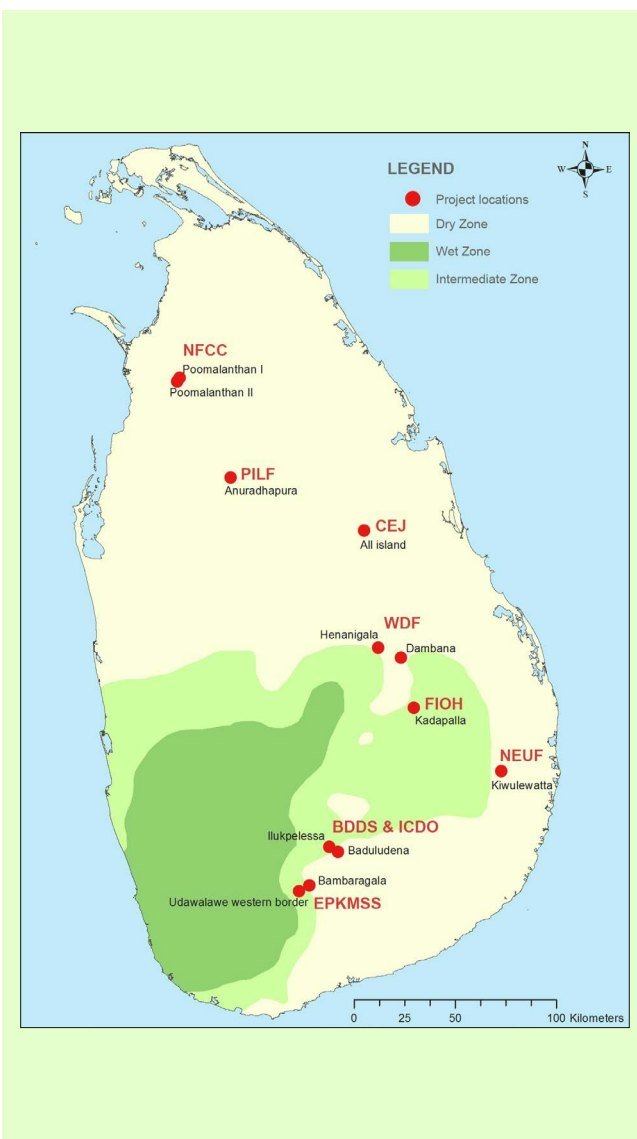
1. *Participatory processes for community engagement:* Informing communities about the risks and benefits of REDD+ and providing other kinds of support to enable effective participation in the planning of REDD+ actions and the REDD+ strategy; and
2. *Community-based approaches to address the drivers of deforestation:* testing approaches for forest-dependent and indigenous communities to address the drivers of land-use change that could lead up to playing a role within the national REDD+ strategy.

Eight CBR+ pilot projects were selected for implementation, and all but two focused on the second outcome (addressing drivers of deforestation) and introduced alternative livelihood options to wean communities away from illegal forest use and degradation. Another two projects established community-based forest crime reporting methods. All but one project were located in the dry zone of the island, where forest-related drivers of change are reported to be high.

The selected projects were as follows, and the locations are shown in the map in the next column:

CSO	Forest-related issues	Project
Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)	Forest encroachment and localised drivers of deforestation and degradation (for the entire country).	Establishment of the Sri Lanka CSO Forest Monitoring Initiative
Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF)	Encroachment, tree-felling and poaching in important protected areas	Reducing Drivers of Deforestation and Degradation through Awareness of Forest Law and Legal Aid to Forest Dependent and Indigenous Communities
National Forum on Climate Change (NFCC)	Heavy deforestation and destructive practices of earth and sand mining in large tracts inside Madu National Park, which, until 2015, was a sanctuary	Advocacy for Strengthening Community-Based Forest Conservation
Future in Our Hands (FIOH)	Forest fires; encroachment by village communities living adjacent to the forest; encroachment by outsiders for slash and burn cultivation to cultivate maize for commercial purposes	Conservation of Kadapalla Forest Reserve Through Community Participation
National Ethnic Unity Foundation (NEUF)	The targeted forest reserve is under increasing threat of encroachment for the cultivation of commercial crops such as maize, both by the villagers and by outside farmers	Community-Based Protection of the Bakmityawa Thimbirigolla Reserve

CSO	Forest-related issues	Project
Ekabadda Praja Kantha Maha Sanwardana Sangamaya (EPKMSS)	Food availability for elephants within Udawalawe National Park is subject to intense competition because of a large number of cattle that are released illegally by villagers into the Park	Conserve 20 km of the western border of Udawalawe National Park and Bambaragala Mukalana Forest, through participatory community protection actions
Women's Development Foundation (WDF)	Forest encroachment	Empowering forest-dependent indigenous communities to promote sustainable utilisation of forest resources and to document their traditional knowledge, values and practices
Baduludena Death Donation Society (BDDS) and Ilukpelessa Community Development Organisation (ICDO)	Forest fires; collection of non-timber forest products from a forest reserve.	Combat deforestation and forest degradation by minimising forest fires



The UN-REDD Programme in Sri Lanka

In 1993, Sri Lanka ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and became a UN-REDD partner country in 2009. Sri Lanka's vision for REDD+ is that 'Sri Lanka will harness the transformational potential of REDD+ to ensure improved land management practices that protect, maintain and enhance ecological functions and social benefits, while sustaining current economic growth.'

The Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment (MMDE) is the focal point for UNFCCC, through its Climate Change Secretariat. The Forest Department, under the MMDE, is the focal point for all REDD activities and coordination.

In 2013, a UN-REDD Programme Management Unit was set up under the supervision of a Conservator of Forests as the National Programme Director, to prepare the REDD+ readiness proposal and the National Strategy.

Sri Lanka has just concluded a four-year REDD+ readiness process. As outlined in the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ (2013), the four elements Sri Lanka has put in place to access results-based payments are: a) the National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan (NRIFAP), which is a five-year strategy (2018 – 2022). This document presents 13 Policies and Measures (PAMs), which are the actions to reduce emissions; b) a National Forest Reference Emission Level/Forest Reference Level, submitted to the UNFCCC in January 2017; c) a National Forest Monitoring System available at <http://www.nfms.lk/>; and d) a Safeguards Information System — a system for providing safeguard information, including how the safeguards are addressed and respected, to the UNFCCC, as well as to the public. This system is being designed currently.

Sri Lanka's CBR+ projects commenced in 2015, and ended in 18 months, in 2017, before the publication of the NRIFAP.

An external desk review of the national CBR+ portfolio was carried out through analyses of project documents, progress reports and the CBR+ Country Plan, as well as other relevant documents. The assignment also required a brief desk review of the status of forest management and



REDD+ policies and actions that relate to communities and indigenous peoples, drawing links to CBR+ and key forest management processes. Through the synthesis of the above, the review was expected to present lessons learned, challenges and innovations relating this to the broader context of sustainable forest management and REDD+ in the country; as well as policy recommendations aimed at forestry and REDD+ decision-makers on how to improve and build upon the outcomes of CBR+ for better sustainable forest management and REDD+ outcomes.

Thirty-one interviews were conducted across a range of people (grantees, beneficiaries, UNDP, SGP and CBR+ staff (global and local), members of the SGP National Steering Committee, the UN-REDD Sri Lanka programme manager, the UN-REDD Sri Lanka technical advisor, the Conservator General of Forests and one of his deputies.

Five site visits were carried out to CBR+ activity sites by the review team, and eight focus group meetings were held.

To assess the progress of proposed activities, the reviewer filled and adjusted a set of logical frameworks developed by two Knowledge Management teams hired to support the selected CSOs. The logical frameworks were analysed in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. SWOT analyses were carried out to summarise information in each logical framework.

The review of the status of forest management traced the history of forest conservation in Sri Lanka. Both the Forest Department and the Department of Wildlife Conservation are mandated to be the custodians of the island's natural wealth. In the past, their management focused on policing, but now, through the implementation of various projects, there has been a slow shift of thinking to include communities, not only as part of the problem, but also as a means to the solution.





Lessons Learned

CBR+ in Sri Lanka was conducted as a pilot effort over 18 months, with the intention of identifying, testing and supporting ways to increase the involvement of indigenous and non-indigenous communities in REDD+. Thus, the time frame was too short for the long-term attitudinal changes required for long-term involvement in REDD+.

However, despite this short duration of implementation, CBR+ in Sri Lanka has yielded some valuable lessons learned. These are categorised into:

1. Lessons learned towards the achievement of core CBR+ objectives;
2. Lessons for future NRIFAP implementation; and
3. General lessons learned.

Lessons learned towards the achievement of core CBR+ objectives

1. **Even in an initial pilot phase, with limited time and financial resources, it is possible to build the capacity and awareness of communities as a primary step for later engagement in REDD+ activities and processes.**

All eight CBR+ pilot projects in Sri Lanka engaged in capacity building, creating awareness about REDD+; forest conservation and governance; soil and water conservation; as well as providing other specific training. It is estimated roughly that up to 4,000 persons were made aware of the above through the CBR+ portfolio. Knowledge Management teams also conducted 17 capacity building programmes for grantees and beneficiaries. These contribute directly to the first CBR+ core objective. It is recommended that planned, concerted and repeated capacity building is carried out throughout the implementation of CBR+ activities, to ensure the engagement of communities and indigenous peoples in REDD+ activities and processes.

2. **Even though the REDD+ strategy for Sri Lanka had not yet been formulated at the time of implementation of CBR+ in Sri Lanka, several of the projects linked directly to PAMs identified later in the strategy, contributing directly to the third CBR+ core objective.**

The CEJ pilot project 'Establishment of the Sri Lanka CSO Forest Monitoring Initiative' contributed directly at a national level to the implementation of NRIFAP's PAM 1 of improving forest law enforcement and monitoring. At a district level, the PILF project 'Reducing Drivers of Deforestation and Degradation through Awareness of Forest Law and Legal Aid to Forest Dependent and Indigenous Communities' also contributed to the same PAM.

Engagement in the REDD+ process and links to PAMs in the NRIFAP were also observed in several other pilot projects: FIOH, NEUF, NFCC and EPKMSS (for example, in establishing home gardens and agro-forestry activities), while WDF worked exclusively with two IP communities. It is recommended that the integration of community-based activities, knowledge and ideas into national REDD+ processes should be ensured by linking projects to NRIFAP PAMs and processes. (See also next section on Lessons for future NRIFAP implementation.)

3. **Though CBR+ in Sri Lanka had limited time, some projects served to empower communities and to make them visible, feeding into the first core objective of CBR+.**

One important consequence of the lack of proper direction by one grantee is that two CBO beneficiaries took over and managed these activities, resulting in the empowerment of these two communities.

In Kadapalla, before CBR+ interventions commenced, the forest officer did not visit the village and that allowed farmers to clear forest land and cultivate maize. After the CBR+ activities, the officer comes to the village and interacts with the farmers and these visits serve as a deterrent to deforestation. It is recommended that through the extensive capacity building discussed above, and the linking of projects to the NRIFAP's PAMs, the engagement of indigenous peoples and communities in the NRIFAP implementation is assured.





Lessons for future NRIFAP implementation

1. **Forging links with the REDD+ Stakeholder Fora established during the REDD+ readiness phase will benefit CBR+ in Sri Lanka and, in turn, provide insights for REDD+ implementation.**

During the REDD+ readiness phase, the UN-REDD National Programme established several fora to engage a range of stakeholders. Establishing links with some of these fora will be extremely beneficial to CBR+ in Sri Lanka. By doing so, CBR+ activities can, in turn, provide insights to REDD+ implementation.

It is recommended that CBR+ in Sri Lanka forges links with the recently established REDD+ stakeholder fora, as this will not only strengthen the CBR+ portfolio but serve as a conduit for influencing policies, strategies and programmes related to forest conservation.

2. **Aligning CBR+ activities with the NRIFAP's Policies and Measures will be useful for both CBR+ and the REDD+ implementation phase.**

The NRIFAP (2017) has 13 policies and measures and 10 of them are those in which communities are integral or can provide considerable assistance in their execution. In some, communities are essential. Tailoring CBR+ activities to align with these PAMs, will establish and strengthen the links with REDD+ implementation. It is, therefore, recommended that CBR+ activities are aligned clearly with the NRIFAP's policies and measures in order to pave the way for CBR+ uptake into the REDD+ process.

3. **Linking CBR+ proposal development to the NRIFAP's Safeguard Information System (SIS) will ensure that all risks are considered and addressed.**

Even though REDD+ activities are predicted to deliver a suite of social and environmental benefits, in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, there may also be attendant risks. The NRIFAP, according to Sri Lanka's national context, further defined the Cancun safeguards into thirty-four nationally-clarified safeguards criteria. Linking the CBR+ proposal development to the NRIFAP's Safeguard Information System (SIS) will ensure that all the risks (for example, drought, mentioned in several projects) are considered, and the proposed activities reflect ways to mitigate and manage these risks. It is recommended that CBR+ proposal development be aligned with and linked to the NRIFAP's Safeguard Information System (SIS), to mitigate and manage risks.

4. **The CBR+ pilot portfolio serves to exemplify the NRIFAP's mainstreaming of gender into stakeholder engagement.**

Part of the NRIFAP's implementation focus is to ensure the mainstreaming of gender into stakeholder engagement. Gender balance in participation in committees, workshops, consultations and decision-making is targeted at 30%, at least. The CBR+ portfolio in Sri Lanka is an excellent example of such gender integration into the CBR+ activities, as across the board, there was a 50:50 representation of men and women. In some cases — such as Weligapola and Madu — the majority were women. It is recommended that gender balance remains a criterion for selection of proposals for CBR+ activities.





General Lessons Learned

1. Strong leadership, engagement of communities and short-term benefits combine to result in effective implementation.

All the activities proposed by EPKMSS were completed. The CSO head is strong and has the capacity to engage community members effectively. The CSO head's strategy of providing short-term benefits has ensured that even those unwilling to participate at the beginning are now thoroughly involved. Issues were examined from several angles, and activities designed so that all needs were addressed. A baseline survey allowed for meaningful, quantified assessments of the impacts of activities. The impacts of profits earned are visible in the improvement of housing. The active environmental task force works at a regional and national level. It is recommended that this model is regionally and nationally replicated in future CBR+ activities.

2. Goals and activities must be tailored to the capacities of grantees and beneficiaries.

Given the time frame of 18 months, the goals and activities formulated by certain grantees were too ambitious. It is recommended that goals and objectives be scaled-down to suit the capabilities of the grantees, to be achievable in the given time frame.

3. The time frame for CBR+ activities must be sufficient for assessment of meaningful impacts.

Six of the eight grantees selected focused on community-based approaches to address the drivers of deforestation. Many activities involved

establishing home gardens to wean villagers away from using forests for the collection of non-timber forest products; others attempted to reforest degraded forests/catchments. Eighteen months to two years is insufficient for these impacts to show. It is recommended that the time frame for CBR+ activities in Sri Lanka be increased to extend over at least four years, so that seasonal cycles can be captured, and the impacts of such activities can be assessed meaningfully.

4. The sustainability of project interventions will only be achieved through an in-built and self-sustaining exit strategy.

In two projects, micro-credit schemes have strengthened and stabilised the established CBOs, while in another two, introduced livelihood activities brought in dividends to the CBO. Therefore, these CBOs and the implemented activities are very likely to be self-sustaining. In contrast, another two relied more on giving handouts. The recommendation is to ensure that exit strategies are embedded in project proposals and also to ensure that activities focus on a mixture of capacity building and training, to empower communities, rather than making them donor dependent with handouts. Co-financing with other partners, such as the private sector or other organisations, is imperative for the sustainability of CBR+ activities (see Lesson 5).

5. Income-generating activities will only be successful if there are pre-arranged market linkages, for which corporate sector engagement would be ideal.

In several projects, introduced livelihood options generated marketable products, but market linkages had not been established.

Given that corporate sustainability reporting and corporate social responsibility programmes (CSR) are now common in Sri Lanka, linking the CBR+ activities with reputed private sector companies will allow for the establishment of market linkages needed for the sustainability of income-generating activities. It is recommended that safe market linkages are pre-arranged with reputed blue-chip companies before the implementation of income-generating activities.

Conclusions

It is hoped that the lessons learned presented in this document will contribute towards the fourth CBR+ core objective.



Elements of selected CBR+ projects in Sri Lanka, which

CSO	Project title (location in parenthesis)	Issues in the project area	Main Achievement(s)
Ekabadda Praja Kantha Maha Sanwardana Sangamaya (EPKMSS)	Participatory community protection actions to conserve the western border of Udawalawe National Park and Bambaragala Mukalana Forest (Weligapola)	Many cattle are released illegally into Udawalawe National Park, reducing food availability for elephants.	Twenty families were trained in dairy farming techniques and no longer release 180 cattle into the park.
Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)	Establishment of the Sri Lanka CSO Forest Monitoring Initiative (islandwide)	Forest encroachment; infrastructure development projects; large scale deforestation by private agriculture ventures; localised drivers of deforestation scattered around the country.	CEJ established a hotline, website and social media for citizens to report forest crimes, providing a means by which communities could provide alerts on ongoing forest crimes. This is a first for Sri Lanka.
Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF)	Reducing Drivers of Deforestation and Degradation through Awareness of Forest Law and Legal Aid to Forest Dependent and Indigenous Communities (in the Anuradhapura District of the North Central Province)	Encroachment, tree-felling and poaching in important protected areas.	A legal aid help desk has been established, and training on forest governance has been conducted.
National Ethnic Unity Foundation (NEUF)	Community-Based Protection of Bakmitiyawa Thimbirigolla Reserve (in the Ampara District of the Eastern Province)	The reserve is under increasing threat of encroachment for the cultivation of commercial crops such as maize, both by the villagers and outside farmers. The encroachment has expanded vastly with large-scale clearing of forests to grow maize, on a commercial scale.	A community-based organisation was formed. The project was successful in initiating small businesses — such as a grinding mill, a retail grocery shop, poultry management and tailoring — and the establishment of a micro-credit scheme to strengthen the financial capacity of the CBO and its members. It also formulated agreements between communities and the FD and these have led to an effort of establishing agro-forestry plots in hitherto cultivated lands in 50 acres of degraded forest.

ch can contribute to the Implementation of the NRIFAP

Impact	How the project can contribute to the implementation of the NRIFAP
There has been a 55.5% reduction in cattle grazing within the park as a consequence of the project. Increase in income per month through milk production is LKR 10,350. A micro-credit scheme has been established, making sustainability likely. Overall, the project interventions delivered short-term, tangible benefits, and served to catalyse community members who were not yet engaged.	The model of this project, discussed in the first lesson learned, can be used for implementing PAM 4 (Strengthen sustainable forest management — natural forests), where the goal is enhancing collaborative management opportunities with local communities.
Reported crimes for 11 years before the introduction of hotline and website numbered 100. After project interventions, from 2015 to date, (in about 18 months) there were 175 forest crimes reported.	This project has already contributed to PAM 1 (Improve Forest Law and Monitoring) where part of the goal is strengthened forest protection and monitoring mechanisms, through improved information sharing and coordination between national and local authorities and local stakeholders. This established mechanism should be supported and continued. The CSO is also ably positioned to contribute training to achieve the rest of the goal of this PAM, which is increased capacity and resources for law enforcement.
One hundred and twenty-three complaints have been received to date, and 22 lawyers and 101 community members from the district have been made aware of forest and wildlife laws.	As with CEJ, this project also feeds directly in to the implementation of PAM 1. It can be expanded to other districts, during the implementation of the NRIFAP.
The CBO earned a net income of LKR 40,000 within four months for the fees paid for use of the mill. A micro-finance scheme was established from these profits and benefited 28 people, who have received loans of LKR 13,000 each. A 12% interest was paid into the fund. An established shop earns a profit of LKR 8,000 per day, and the shopkeeper is now willing to give five acres of his land back to convert into forest. Such monetary benefits reduce the need for clearing large tracts of forests for the cultivation of maize, which had been the main source of income for these villagers.	This project directly supports PAM 4 (Strengthen sustainable forest management — natural forests), where the goal is enhancing collaborative management opportunities with local communities, as well as PAM 10 [Improve the tree cover of non-forested lands (home gardens, urban centre, public lands and settlements)], where the goal is increased biomass and productivity of home gardens and strategically organised CSR-related afforestation. The replicable elements of this project are the provision of alternative livelihoods and built-in sustainability through the established micro-credit scheme that will make the project sustainable. These elements can be used during the implementation of the NRIFAP. The other important element that this project demonstrated is a change in attitudes of the villagers, bringing them into a position of agreeing to protect the forest for their own benefit. Such formal agreements between the FD and villagers, after suitable capacity building, is something that can be used in the implementation of the NRIFAP.

Captions & Photo credits

Page	Column	Caption	Credit
1		A woman picking gourds from her home garden, Baduludena	© Shehani Peris
3	1	Intermediate forest in Sabaragamuwa, where one CBR+ pilot project was located	© Shehani Peris
	2	A farmer shows his home garden, Kadapalla	© Shehani Peris
4	1	Capacity building of youths in Kadapalla	© Asitha Weweldeniya
	2	Women weaving with reeds, Dambana	© WDF
5	1	A community awareness programme carried out by the CEJ	© CEJ
	2	Women, Poomalanthan I, Madu	© Shehani Peris
6	1 & 2	The IP chief gifts a plant to a child, Dambana	© TERN
7	1	Top: UN-REDD staff visit the Weligapola pilot project site	© TERN
		Bottom: The shop that was renovated by the CBR+ project now provides additional income to the shopkeeper, Bakmitiyawa	© Shehani Peris
	2	Top: A farmer surveys his home garden in Bakmitiyawa	© Shehani Peris
		Middle: An environmental task force member collects baseline data, Weligapola	© EPKMSS
		Bottom: Pepper being grown in home gardens, Kadapalla	© Shehani Peris
This page	Top left	A vista showing the forests of Sabaragamuwa, where one CBR+ pilot project was located	© Shehani Peris
	Top right	Training lawyers in Anuradhapura	© PILF
	Bottom left	A rainwater collection pond, Weligapola	© EPKMSS
	Bottom right	Women clearing debris to set up a room for solid waste, Bambaragala	© EPKMSS
Next page		The hope for our future, Poomalanthan	© Shehani Peris





