

Viabale approach to uplift the socio-economic condition of the rural community around Dambulu-oya reservoir

W.A.D.V.Weerathilake^{1*}, U.Edirisinghe², B.P.A. Jayaweera¹ K.G.M.C.P.B.Gajanayake³

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Abstract

Dambulu-oya reservoir is a perennial reservoir in dry zone of Sri Lanka located in Matale District with multiple benefits to the surrounding community. The community around this reservoir, who resides in three villages' viz. Pohoranwewa, Ibbankatuwa and Tennekoopura experienced many socioeconomic constraints associated with poverty. A socio-economic upliftment program for sustainable development and management of common pool resources of this community was developed by identifying Fisheries Co-operative as a nucleus, with the assistance from the Regional Economic Advancement Project (REAP), Matale.

The programme was implemented by selecting 403 families whose monthly legal income was lower than 6000.00 LKR. In this study both primary and secondary data were collected and primary data collection was done using pre tested semi structured questionnaire in two phases. During the first phase data were collected, prior to implementation of the project in 2002. Second phase was conducted at the completion of the project in 2004.

Participatory Rapid Implementation (PRI) Model was employed in this study through Aquatic Resources Development Project (ADP). PRI utilizes all resources available in the area by common agreement with all the stakeholders.

The problems identified prior to project implementation within this community were categorized into three as agriculture related, fishing related and livestock related. It was found that the problems related to agriculture are fluctuations of market price, high cost of agro-chemicals and fertilizers, high pest and diseases incidence, financial problems and lack of land available for farming. Among the major problems related to fishing are, unavailability of fishing crafts and nets, low fish production and illegal fishing. High incidence of diseases, low feed availability, low milk yield and non availability of suitable breeds were the major constraints found in livestock sector.

Post project data revealed that the contribution from Socio-Economic Upliftment Project was significantly high through training programs followed by, provision of loans, assisting children's for education and motivation and guiding ($p < 0.1$).

The results revealed that the monthly income of 52% of community has exceeded 6000.00 LKR. In addition the number of integrated farmers (from 39% to 49%) and motivation of children towards schooling (60%-100%) have improved significantly. It also revealed that the alcoholism which as significantly reduced from 90 to 5 percent. Functioning of co-operative society as a micro credit institution or a bank have strengthened the socioeconomic condition of the community. The holistic approach of the PRI model has shown to be a success in Dambuluoya reservoir area and would be possible to apply to the rural communities in developing countries.

**Correspondence:* dammika_kandy@yahoo.com