

Description on “Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation & Sustenance of Ecosystem Services in Environmentally Sensitive Areas Project”

“Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation & Sustenance of Ecosystem Services in Environmentally Sensitive Areas” (ESA) Project is a GEF funded project, implemented by the Environment Planning & Economics Division, Ministry of Mahaweli Development & Environment (MoMDE) and supported by UNDP. This 05 year pilot project is implemented during 2015-2020.

This project will assist the Government of Sri Lanka to safeguard biodiversity in multiple land use areas of special ecological significance (high biodiversity values) through the operationalization of a new land use governance framework called “Environmentally Sensitive Areas” (ESAs), which will be primarily outside protected areas. The primary objective of this project is “To operationalize Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) – as a mechanism for mainstreaming biodiversity management into development in areas of high conservation significance”. In order to achieve this objective, the project plans on achieving the two major Outcomes, and four Outputs under these. The two outcomes are:

- **Outcome 1:** National Enabling Framework strengthened to Designate and Manage Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA)

Output 1: Effective national policies and legal instruments on conservation and sustainable management of ESAs

Output 2: National stakeholders’ capacities to support planning, implementation and monitoring of ESAs

- **Outcome 2:** Biodiversity-friendly ESA management for long term integrity and resilience ensured at two sites in the Kala-Oya Region

Output 3: Institutional capacities for biodiversity friendly land-use planning, implementation and compliance at Kala Wewa and Wilpattu ESAs

Output 4: Ecosystems Management and Restoration at ESAs

Project Location:

This pilot project supports the operationalization of ESA concept at two sites within a wider Kala Oya Basin.

- **Site 01** – Kala Wewa falls towards upper reaches of the river basin and includes a large water body (reservoir or tank) called “Kala Wewa”.

- **Site 02** – Wilpattu is located in lower part of the basin and includes marine area including the Bar Reef and the estuary of the Kala Oya River

The Divisional Secretariats Divisions of Wanathavilluwa, Karuwalagaswewa in Puttalm District as well as the Divisional Secretariats Divisions of Ipalogama, Palagala, Galnewa and Kekirawa in Anuradhapura District have been selected for this pilot project.

Government institutes such as the Forest Department, Department of Wildlife Conservation, Department of Land Use Policy Planning, Department of Coast Conservation, Department of Agriculture, Department of Irrigation, Sri Lanka Mahaweli Authority, Central Environmental Authority, Biodiversity Secretariat, District Secretariats of Anuradhapura and Puttlam, Chief Secretariats of Puttlam & Anuradhapura, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Community are the stakeholders of this project.

Project begins with the introduction of an environment friendly livelihood model. By the end of this project will be instrumental in identifying Environmentally Sensitive Areas and adopting sustainable development measures while ensuring the biodiversity conservation and sustenance of ecosystem services in the implementation of national level development projects.

Project Results:

1. National Policy and Strategy on ESA
2. National ESA Scale up Plan
3. Updated policy to address human wildlife conflicts
4. Approved two ESA land use plans and annual ESA work plans
5. Approved 8 annual work plans (one for each pilot ESA) along with joint policy guidance for ESA management
6. Built capacity and strengthened consortium agencies to act as the national lead to promote and manage effective ESAs
7. National guideline to integrate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into land use planning.
8. National guides on how to integrate biodiversity conservation into sectoral plans and actions, (agriculture, forestry, coastal development and tourism)
9. Online integrated biodiversity assessment tool available to identify biodiversity hotspots nationwide, building on national and international data

10. Two ESAs under management with inter-sectoral partnership and quantifiable biodiversity conservation targets
11. Increased stakeholders' support and capacities to implement land use/ seascape plans for conservation
12. Sustainable financing available for ESAs
13. Protected areas management integrated with wider landscapes/ seascapes to minimize threats from outside PA and to mitigate land and resource use conflicts
14. Critical biodiversity habitats outside protected areas under effective management regimes within the ESA for habitat connectivity, integrity and resilience
15. At least 25,000 ha of agro-ecosystems brought under biodiversity compatible production practices within ESAs (including paddy fields, slash and burn land and homesteads/ home gardens)

Major Achievements/Publications so far:

1. ESA Project **Leaflets & Brochures** (S/E/T)
2. Documentary on ESA Project
 - a) **Full Documentary 16 minute** (S/T)
 - b) **Short Documentary 02 minute** (S/T)
3. **Training Manual for Integrating Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable use into land use planning in Environmentally Sensitive Areas** and guidelines. (S/T/E)
4. **Biodiversity Baseline Survey** in Kalaoya Basin. (E)
5. **“Strategic Management Framework for Willpattu Protected Area Complex (2017-2021)”**. (E)
6. **Management Plan for “Kahala Pallekele Protected Area Complex (2017-2022)”**. (E)
7. **Systematic survey done in “Bar Reef Sanctuary” 2017** (E)
8. Prepared **ESA Communication Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020**. (E)
9. Developed **teachers guide on “Kala-Oya Environmentally Sensitive Area” to train the School Environment Pioneer operating teachers**. (S)
10. Surveyed to identify critical biodiversity habitats outside protected areas in Project site 1 - **Four Management Plans** (E)
 - **“Kadiyangalla” forest complex**
 - **Part of “Kahalapallekele” forest complex**
 - **“Nelliyagama” forest complex**
 - **“Kaduboda” forest complex**

11. Sustainable eco-tourism plan for “Manawekanda” proposed forest reserve. (**Leaflets on “Manewa kanda”, Manewakanda Sustainable Tourism Plan(E), Video Documentary(S)**)
12. Ecological farming modules - **“New Models to Ensure Biodiversity Conservation in Agriculture in Puttalam and Anuradapura Districts. (S/T/E)**