

Notes of the Conservation Community Consultation Forum

Date : 25th September, 2018
Time : From 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm
Venue : Saptha Parisara Mandapaya, Sampathpaya, Battaramulla
Moderator : Dr. Sumith Pilapitiya (the World Bank Consultant for ESCAMP)

A community consultation forum was organized by the Ecosystem Conservation and Management Project (ESAMP). The purpose of this discussion was to obtain the views and opinions of the community, and also to gather information from experts in the field.

Participants of the Forum comprised of members from different community groups. Introduction to ESCAMP was done by Mr. Anura De Silva, the Project Director of ESCAMP. His presentation covered the outline of the project which included the components and sub-component of the project, and key interventions under each component and sub-components. He also explained the project implementation mechanisms by highlighting the submission of project proposals by each implementing agency. (The presentations are annexed).

Dr. Pilapitiya mentioned that the World Bank designed ESCAMP based on the comments of the conservation community on the previously implemented ADB project. He also pointed out that Project Area Managers should identify their priorities, and any PA is eligible to submit proposals based on demand.

Details of World Bank approved activities pertaining to ESCAMP conducted by the Forest Department was presented by Mr. Thilak Premakantha, Conservator of Forests, Planning & Monitoring, Forest Department; and details of World Bank approved activities concerning ESCAMP conducted by the Department of Wildlife was presented by Mr. Ranjan Marasinghe, Deputy Director - Planning & Information Communication Technology, Department of Wildlife Conservation. After the presentation the moderator requested the attendees to raise questions/concerns based on the components of the project and activities highlighted.

The discussion was based on the components of ESCAMP, and paved the opportunity for other organizations, professional bodies and individuals who participated at the forum to learn about ongoing and future activities of ESCAMP, and share their views to improve the same. Below are the opinions and suggestions provided at the forum by some of the participants which could be helpful in the smooth implementation of the project activities, improve ongoing project activities, and guide project related decisions in the long-run.

Attendees

Name

Organization

Present

- 1) Dr. S. Pilapitiya World Bank Consultant for ESCAMP
- 2) Ms. Darshani De Silva Task Team Leader for ESCAMP, Senior Environmental Specialist, The World Bank
- 3) Ms. Mokshana Wijeyaeratne Environmental Specialist, World Bank
- 4) Mr. Ranjan Marasinghe Deputy Director - Planning & Information Communication Technology, Department of Wildlife Conservation
- 5) Mr. P. M. Anura De Silva Project Director, Project Management Unit, Ecosystem Conservation and Management Project
- 6) Mr. K T Premakantha Conservator of Forests, Planning & Monitoring Forest Department
- 7) Mr. Rukshan Jayewardene President, Wildlife & Nature Protection Society
- 8) Mr. Jayantha Jayewardena Chairman, CRI
- 9) Mr. Sudath Abeysinghe Coordinator, BECT
- 10) Mr. Lalith Seneviratne Chartered Engineer
- 11) Ms. Jinie Dela
- 12) Mr. Ravi Corea President, SLWCS
- 13) Mr. K.T. Premathilake CF (Planning and Monitoring), Forest Department
- 14) Mr. Lal Abeygunasekera Addl. C.G.F., Forest Department
- 15) Mr. Ranjan Attygalle Environment Consultant
- 16) Mr. Hemantha Withanage ED, CEJ
- 17) Mr. Chandima Fernando Ecologist / GIS Specialist, SLWCS
- 18) Ms. Deepani Jayantha Country Representative Consultant, Elemotion Foundation
UWERP
- 19) Mr. Chinthaka Weerasinghe Operations Manager, SLWCS
- 20) Ms. Dilena Pathragoda Managing Director, CEJ
- 21) Ms. Nirmalie pallewatta Senior Lecturer, UoC
- 22) Ms. Manori Gunawardena Director, EFL / BFF
- 23) Mr. Lakdas Fernando WNPS

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| 24) Ms. Zaineb Akbarally | WNPS/EFL |
| 25) Ms. Amrik Jayawardene | CEO, Ridge to Reef Lanka (Pvt) Ltd |
| 26) Mr. M.G.C. Sooriyabandara | DG, DWC |
| 27) Ms. Nadeera Rajapaksha | Environmental Specialist, World Bank |
| 28) Mr. N.S.K. Pathirathna | Tc, DWC |
| 29) Mr. H.G. Gunawardena | Coordinator (Comp 1)/ ESCAMP |
| 30) Mr. M.S. Roshan Fernando | PM, ESCAMP |
| 31) Mr. P.G.D.J. Pebotuwa | Coordinator (Comp 2b)/ ESCAMP |
| 32) Mr. Shiraj | Com. Dev & Livelihood Dev. Specialist/ ESCAMP |
| 33) Mr. Safran Mihnar | Director, Earthlanka |
| 34) Ms. Maheeni Samarakoon | ESSS / ESCAMP |
| 35) Ms. Zeenas Yahiya | CS / ESCAMP |



Questions/Answers/Opinions/Suggestions

Component 1: Pilot Landscape Management Planning

Ms. Manori Gunawardena

What is the level of coordination and collaboration between the Wildlife Department and the Forest Department on this element?

Component 1 coordinator Mr. H.G. Gunawardena: Apart from the two departments there are other stakeholders involved such as the Central Environmental Authority, Archeological Department, Irrigation Department, Coastal Conservation Department, Department of Agriculture, Mahaweli Development Authority, District Secretaries, Tourism etc., in this process, the planning activities are carried out by involving many stakeholders at National level and Regional level. There is also an expert committee that involves IUCN, WB, LUPPD, PPD, Biodiversity Secretariat, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, and experts such as Prof. Siril Wijesundera, and Dr. Jinie Dela. Three comprehensive studies are ongoing – one on Biodiversity by Prof. Anoma Perera; one on Land use by Dr. Harshana Kadupitiya, and a Socio-economic study by Mr. Ranjith Herath. Many workshops, meetings, and discussions have been conducted to raise awareness on this new concept.

Mr. Anura De Silva - Project Director – ESCAMP: The national level officers represent the National level planning committee; and the Regional level planning committee comprises of both the Assistant Director, DWC and the DFOs. Additionally, there is a working group at PMU level headed by the Project Director of ESCAMP, Component Coordinator, Nadeera from the World Bank group, and representatives from the Forest Department and DWC, who meet every two weeks to summarize the work going on at field level.

Mr. Ravi Corea

There would be lot of communities involved throughout the landscape. What are the buying incentives for the communities who are going to participate in LMP from the project? Why would they want to participate? What's the benefit they get out of the project? What are the activities proposed?

Mr. Gunawardena: The objectives of LMP are enhancing of ecosystem services that include watershed management, biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, conservation of archeological and cultural sites, and socio-economic development of communities. The socio-economic survey that is going on has identified 124 villages around the PAs out of which 40% directly depend on forests by engaging in activities such as fishing, poaching, sand mining, collecting firewood and non-timber products, cattle grazing, etc. To minimize the threats to the forests, alternative activities such as agriculture, homestead development, cottage industries, and number of vocational training which will provide jobs outside the area will be identified for people who depend on forests. The CBOs identified will be strengthened and empowered, and funds could be provided through this project or through some other project to carry out activities.

Ms. Nadeera Rajapaksha of WB: The baseline studies are still going on. This will help to characterize the landscapes and try to find the key challenges and the drivers of change. The draft of the socio-economic study shows a fairly good attempt of categorizing the GN area, dependence on the forests and so on. Strategies have to be formulated, therefore, not in a stage to talk about the interventions yet because the action plans have not come yet.

Mr. Amrik Jayawardena

Is there any kind of sharing of GIS information now between the two departments? Has FD seen DWCs GIS? Can we have access to it? Are both of the GIS same type and on the same platform?

Mr. Ranjan Marasinghe: GIS information is shared case by case basis by both the departments for management purposes. The DWC has its own GIS information created by using shape files in GIS format, and the same format is being used by the FD also, so they are compatible. If somebody wants to have data, they should send a request to either Department and pay a minimal fee to get it.

Mr. Ravi Corea

What are the two landscape areas? What is the extent of the areas?

Mr. Gunawardene: Hurulu-Kawdulla-Kanthale landscape includes 525,000 hectares, and 270,000 hectares in Sinharaja contiguous forest complex both cover forests and other land uses and wildlife areas

Mr. Lakdas Fernando

Have you'll finalized on the two areas Sinharaja and Kawdulla? Are the boundaries still open for public or community projects?

Dr. Pilapitiya: The two pilot landscape have been finalized. The Landscape component is not open for public or community projects, because it is a pilot project. Community projects can be considered under component 2 based on its eligibility. Component 1 is still in its early stages and the PMU will inform the public as the work progress.

Mr. Hemantha Withanage

When you say Sinharaja, there are lots of forest areas under the LRC, are these included?

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): The whole landscape is included, and LRC is one of the stakeholders in the planning process

Component 2a – Sustainable use of natural resources for livelihood enhancement

Ms. Darshani De Silva of WB highlighted that the idea of this components is to involve the communities in the Protected Areas. The selected villages have to be in line with the PA areas identified under 3a. Currently FD and DWC have submitted proposals and quite a few activities are going on in some of the villages.

Dr. Pilapitiya said, the objective is not to do rural development work but to develop a linkage between the conservation areas, the PAs, and the community, and do something beneficial for conservation and PAs as well and benefiting the community. It is a restricted menu of activities rather than going to a community under a rural development project.

Dr. Jinie

Are there any specific areas or can they be expanded for new areas? Any restrictions like do they have to be large areas?

Ms. Darshani: The two departments have identified the villages around the PAs they have prioritized to carryout PA management activities under component 3a to make sure it has a linkage to the PAs. If they select a new PA then the villages around that area can be considered as eligible for financing under this sub-component. No restrictions about the size of the area, what is considered is sustainability.

Mr. Hemantha

Considering this aspect on some of our previous experience is very important; during one of the ADB funded project our criticism was they were trying to introduce livelihood activities such as poultry farms which we criticized, and I want to make sure that it is not going to happen this time.

Dr. Pilapitiya: This is not going to happen under ESCAMP

Mr. Hemantha

The experience from Nilgala shows that the villagers expect some kind of benefit. To fulfil this, we formed a reward fund to supply the community for participation. Linking such a mechanism to a project will help it to last for many years.

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESAMP): ESCAMP is forming and also strengthening existing CBOs, with the objective of getting their access for Forest management related to conservation and fire protection. ESCAMP expect the FD and DWC to build up a certain rapport with the people so that they will extend their support.

Ms. Darshani: One of the things encouraged by the project is the two departments to facilitate the links to other rural development projects that are coming in the area because sometimes that process helps to get additional resources and additional investments in to those areas, and this has happened in FD with those in particular related to water supply in lot of the drier areas.

Mr. Lal Abeygunasekera of FD: The main idea of this component is to get the community involved in ongoing forest management and wildlife management activities, because the community concept is a part of the development objective in implementing this ecosystem project

Ms. Manori

In implementing the activities, you said about livelihood development, is any strategic environmental assessment done or captured, or any of your safeguard aspects applied? Will strategic aspects of all impact assessment be addressed?

Ms. Darshani: Whether it is community or it is in a PA, all of it is going through a screening process both from an environmental and social point of view. In the screening outcome none of these falls into any of the national regulations so it falls within the Banks requirement, and depending on the requirement of the screening outcome the next step will be done whether it is an environmental management plan or a social management plan.

Ms. Deepani

Is it possible to introduce small scale vocational training centers in high conflict areas, the idea behind is to minimize the community dependency on existing areas?

Ms. Darshani: It is possible, but it is up to the two departments to decide what PAs they are planning to work in. Proposals can be submitted for North and East.

Mr. Chandima Fernando

During the Knuckles workshop it was highlighted that these CBOs needed some kind of legal authority to protect or conserve ecosystem because there are lots of illegal activities being carried out in Knuckles. They say FD and DWC officers are not enough to manage these activities. Are you going to consider these aspects?

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): The Forest Department along with the Ministry is in the process of amending the Forest Ordinance with regulations to facilitate community agreements.

Ms. Manori

When you work with the community what if they are encroaching? Specially regarding forest department is there a redress in terms of encroachers? Can you remove them?

Ms. Darshani: The project cannot do anything. It is up to the departments to look in to boundary demarcation, and decisions have to be made based on the national re-settlement policy.

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): The department is having a well set guideline for conflict resolution in surveying of demarcation exercise, and there is also a process defined by the Department with the approval of the Ministry for all officials to follow.

Mr. Hemantha

Some of the projects such as roads or water are proposed by the villagers, then outside interventions are necessary to identify particular projects are good for the forest or wildlife and for the communities. Sometimes some of these projects may not exist in this country and we may have to get the experience and expert knowledge from other countries, for e.g. bee hive fencing. As such get somebody else to do the study to get good ideas from consultants or civil society organizations

Dr. Pilapitiya: This as a good idea. The two departments encourage partnerships with other people, technical experts and civil society organizations

Mr. Anura De Silva: ESCAMP will explore the possibility to get the ideas from experts who are having experiences from other countries, specially who can introduce novel and innovative livelihood options that would benefit communities and the ecosystem.

2b – Human elephant co-existence

Mr. Lakdas

Has the department abandoned the policy of co-existence or the policy is still on?

Mr. Marasinghe: The policy has not been abandoned by the department

Mr. Ravi Corea

Can you explain how co-existence can be achieved, what solution are you'll planning to apply?

Mr. Marasinghe: Many models are available and number of solutions can be applied. Co-existence is one model proposed by Dr. Prithviraj with success stories therefore DWC is trying to replicate this model in same districts.

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): This is one solution that has been tested and proved to be successful up to a certain extent. Therefore, village fencing and agricultural fencing have been introduced in Anuradhapura and Kurunegala because it is very difficult to find an exact solution for HEC due to the forest cover, the number of elephants and the number of communities.

Dr. Pilapitiya: More than the fence it is important to look at the institutional sustainability on a long run. The DWC should get the Divisional Secretaries involved to be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of village fences, and the Agrarian Services Department in agricultural fences.

Mr. Marasinghe: Mahaweli, Polonnaruwa and Maduru oya areas have a circular type PA where all the wildlife protected areas are connected to each other with ecological boundaries. But in developed areas such as Anuradhapura or Kurunegala, the social structure doesn't support this type of community actions, so these type of fences cannot be replicated in these areas, as such the DWC is introducing the co-existence model to these areas.

Ms. Manori

Mr. Marasinghe said that HEC management is situational on the ground depending it is Mahaweli or a different one. Taking that into consideration, now you are planning on collaring elephants. Wouldn't that be the basis forcing to have regional decisions? From what I understood the collaring endeavor is decided based on regional staff input, isn't the regional staff input important?

Mr. Marasinghe: The responsibility has to be given to the regional officers and assistants to manage the internal social conditions of the area. The datasets will be used to quantify conservation methods against the development projects.

Mr. Amrik

Just as long as you are running behind the correct elephant it is not a problem, to create a mechanism of which elephant should be monitored would be a better long term objective.

Mr. Marasinghe: Ground level regional officers are the experts to gather information from the field. Therefore, first it is important to get information from them, and then blending this information with the expert's knowledge will be the next stage.

Mr. Amrik

Talking about Mahaweli is appropriate because Mahaweli represents agriculture and probably the wildlife conservation side of the conflict, both sides have economic value - agriculture as well as the elephants. So I think we should make an informed decision or create a mechanism to make that informed decision in the future whether this should go into agriculture or to elephant conservation, so creating that mechanism on a watershed sustainable basis is your challenge rather than giving it to the people who have other vested interests, so as the department, you should propose something that we all can stand by

Dr. Pilapitiya requested the department to look into this sort of issue seriously.

Ms. Dilena

Is it only the Project Area Managing staff could send in proposals on fencing to the department or can the NGOs and CBOs send in proposals?

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): Other institutions too can send in proposals for fencing in which case the project will check with the communities for their willingness to participate in a community funding system as we are working with the DWC and with the Divisional Secretary.

Mr. Lakdas

I have seen community fences erected both by community and also by DWC handed over to communities, and almost all have been successful and they are happy. I have noticed that the most successful and effective fence as the fence with GI pipe made with concrete base, and the current goes down the pipe as well.

Ms. Marasinghe: The fences erected using GI pipes are not permanent fences but temporary fences for paddy lands.

Ms. Jinie

When you do fencing around ecological boundaries are you'll looking at only the PAs under the Wildlife Department or considering areas under Forest Department also?

Mr. Marasinghe: The foundation of ESCAMP is linking these two departments and take the whole landscape as one area. Therefore, selecting ecological boundaries do not consider whether they belong to the Forest Department or Wildlife Department.

Mr. Ravi Corea

Does the community have to contribute for fencing? If so what is the ratio?

Mr. Dhammike Pebotuwa: The community has to contribute towards the community maintenance fund for the maintenance of the fences which is decided by the community to have ownership. The amount to be paid is Rs. 3000/- per acre enclosed by the fence and based on the extent of the area.

Mr. Lakdas

While electric fences and holding grounds have a history in this country, I want to expand on that. There was a holding ground in Horowpothana which didn't work, we thought this is the one thing and elephants will no longer come in but it did not work, now we are moving to Lunugamwehera with a new plan. Isn't it better to correct Horowpothana with whatever plan and see whether that is working before investing on a new one, because the project has to be effective.

Mr. Marasinghe: For the first project the Department had two suggestions – Maduru Oya and Lunugamwehera, but there was a pressure to have it in Horowpothana which is not an ideal place because there is less forest cover for the elephants to roam about so they come into human habitats. Instead if we have had that facility in Maduru-Oya or Lunugamwehera this would have been different. For Lunugamwehera we are applying the lessons learnt from Horowpothana and also the elephants will be collared, there will be veterinary facilities and more staff monitoring facilities. Therefore, we can study the behavior of the elephants and decide whether the elephants can be released back to the wild.

Mr. Lakdas

There are design failures in Horowpothana if you put up another one elsewhere without considering the failures in Horowpothana, the elephants will escape.

Dr. Pilapitiya: Horowpothana is a primary forest and is the worst ground to put elephants, specially a high density of elephants because scientific data shows that a primary forest can only have about 0.2 elephants per square kilometer where as if it is grasslands and scrublands 3 elephants per square kilometer. Horowpothana failed from the beginning because a wrong location was selected. The fence erected at Horowpothana is 7 feet tall, and the tall female is about 8 feet tall. Mr. Pathiratne did a detail study of Horowpothana to correct the Lunugamwehera site. So here the DWC is trying to design it properly by making necessary amendments. Mr. Pathirathna can you tell us how many elephants escaped from Horowpothana?

Mr. Pathirathne informed that only two elephants have escaped so far

Mr. Hemantha

Hambantota has lot of pressure to release lands to industrial zones because it is top priority for this government, so am not sure whether they will be putting these close to Lunugamwehera and how that is going to be impacted – this should also need a study. The government might even de-gazette saying there is no land availability in Hambanthota area for this 15,000 acres in the industrial zones, so if you are investing money it should be sustained.

Dr. Pilapitiya: What Mr. Hemantha suggested was a good point to be considered by DWC

Ms. Manori

Given that there has to be some kind of holding facility let's call it whatever. In brief the site is Lunugamwehera as decided, now there has to be a very comprehensive monitoring plan; including the capacity, the carrying capacity and how many elephants can be taken there. SOPs, then the operating protocols for identifying which elephants go in there, if not it is going to be full in a couple of months, if you are going to give public pressure to capture elephants and that's the basis that you will see in a couple of months. There has to be a very transparent process so there is no suspicion in terms of the society concerns. In terms of long term management, the Department has to consider that going down this road that X number of elephants will be in captivity

Dr. Pilapitiya: DG Wildlife proposes that there will be a separate consultation on this particular issue only on the holding ground bringing all the experts because they want to get the feedback before making a moving forward or making a final decision. So as mentioned we will have a paper about what we are planning on doing with the lessons and circulate among the members before coming for the next meeting.

Ms. Darshani: A social assessment was done, the consultant had discussions with the people around Horowpothana to understand what is happening there as well as in Lunugamwehera and the villages around that area. The WB cleared it and now it is in the public domain in the Website. Currently the project is doing an environmental assessment which will also take forward some of the comments that both Hemantha and Manori was making to make sure that those aspects are also integrated into it when that is being finalized.

Dr. Pilapitiya: A Department consultation needs to be conducted before the end of October to give some time to come up with the necessary document

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): The monitoring plan is very important and the project demand them from the DWC. Observation towers will be put up in the periphery of Lunugamwehera which will be helpful with the studies and monitoring, and additionally the internal road system will be put in place, and veterinary surgeons and researchers also can go inside the area with the permission of the DWC.

3a – Protected Area Management

Mr. Ravi Corea

Does smart patrolling have a communication system? Does smart patrolling cover protection or just collecting data? Is it a protection tool to communicate from the field to a central location?

Mr. Marasinghe: Smart patrolling is a protection tool; to communicate they have a walkie-talkie system. The importance of this SMART system is to develop a protection Database.

Mr. Ravi Corea

Where do you have walkie-talkie systems?

Mr. Marasinghe: There is a VHS system to cover the entire country and the tower is in Horton plains Thotupola Kanda.

Mr. Ravi Corea

Are you going to install similar for the rest of the parks?

Mr. Marasinghe: Our communication policies do not support to have more VHS equipment in the ground, and the license charges for frequency are also very high. As a policy maker, we tried to change the policies but nothing has changed so far.

Ms. Manori

In recovery and monitoring programmes how are the priority species identified?

Mr. Marasinghe: So far they don't have a thinking on that line because they have other practical problems, but DWC can support the Botanical gardens and Zoological gardens as they are the responsible executive consultants. The DWC has not received such a proposal yet

Dr. Pilapitiya: There is funding for scientific research under 2b on elephant management, and also under this component. WB encourages calling for proposals in joint collaboration with the two departments.

Dr. Jinie

Is this component still open where the departments can decide whether they want proposals?

Ms. Darshani: The space is there to send in proposals, and what we encourage is that the way it is designed the departments have to take the ownership, so we encourage to partner with the departments. Specially on the species; even in new sites species monitoring is very critical.

Mr. Amrik

Can I make a little suggestion that If you use indicator species seriously and create an incentivize system to use indicator species, you are going to monitor, value and conserve – thus you should seriously consider creating a robust mechanism like the cannery in the coalmine

Mr. Lalith Seneviratne

I am happy that technology and science are coming in. I think the number of elephants that are problematic are rather small compared to the 7000 elephants in the country. This has been also shown by studies; the sex ratio is about 1:1.8, so there may be 2500 male elephants at a given time. Studies have shown only about 6% are adults out of which only 20% are crop raiders, so I feel in the whole country there may be about 300 elephants who are crop raiders, and most of the time the villagers know the elephants. While we are talking of the radio collars which are needed for larger area monitoring with the GPS, we are ruling out their IOT network with internet and very soon everything is going to have a high rooting device that will work with the mobile network. If we are talking about 300 elephants my suggestion is do a pilot project in couple of villages with the villages where we identify IOT radio collaring which is extensive. Work with the mobile where the data requirement is very small. There are hundreds of companies in Sri Lanka who are making IOT devices. Let us just do a draft requirement and say that they are welcome to do pilots.

Mr. Marasinghe: The discussion with the lecturers at the University of Peradeniya on IOT devices specified that it is about capturing the energy of given things and now we are moving in that direction

Mr. Amrik

In fact, you can make micro payments by breaking into a geo-fence since drone overflies your land you'll automatically get paid something through digital currencies, in that way you can automate things without getting involved.

Dr. Pilapitiya suggested that interested parties should get together and discuss these issue with the DWC

Mr. Hemantha

This is a very huge component compared to the whole project. Elephant deaths, and hakkapatas; all of them are very serious, everybody is talking about those things and not really the actual issues around the wildlife parks– how are you going to resolve these things under capacity building because if there are 300 problematic elephants, and every year we lose about 40 – 50 elephants and there are 300 coming again and again; at the same time all over the country there may be only about 100 people involved in setting up hakkapatas, so why not we track all these people, I think every villager know who is the killer because we know who the poacher is in our village, it is one or two people so people know these things, why not you have some sort of a capacity building, get the inputs and may be people can call you and do something, because it is a huge component

Dr. Pilapitiya: This is something for the DWC to think about

Mr. Rukshan Jayawardena

On habitat improvement and management - removal of invasive species is fine, but can someone explain what is introduction of fodder species and etc? Improvement of road networks within PAs – what does this improvement involve? Is it increasing the road network in terms of kms per square area or widening the roads or straightening them? All of these will lead to speeding, am not saying that in National Parks the roads should be in a run-down state to keep the speed down but we have to think carefully about actual improvements because speeding is a huge issue, as you know we have to really think seriously before road improvements take place, can someone explain what are the road improvements at this stage and what are species introduction and fodder species?

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): Road improvements are open for both departments, right now only two proposals have been received, one for Sinharaja and one for Kanneliya. These proposals suggest to improve light traffic within these areas. Right now we have invested in Sinharaja road 1.4kms from the entrance to the Dorana ela because it is in very bad condition with landslides on the road sides, and same in Kanneliya as well, but roads will be improved not for vehicle traffic. For wildlife protected areas it is still open because the objective is to improve protection.

Mr. Marasinghe: Fodder will not be introduced everywhere. This will be introduced in places where the natural process takes over a long time. Fodder will never be introduced in places like the Horton Plains. Fodder species like productivity high grass varieties will be introduced in places like Kurunegala to manage the elephant population.

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD-ESCAMP): ESCAMP mainly concentrates on whether the lands encroached by invasive species can be converted into productive grasslands or fodder lands. Apart from that even for removal of invasive species justification is needed, and proposals have to be submitted with recommendations.

Mr. Ravi Corea

Removal of invasive species– does it apply only to flora plants or is it going to apply to animals expanding their range and moving in from other areas?

Mr. Marasinghe: In this project removal of invasive species apply only to flora

Ms. Dilena

With regard to invasive species – may I know what is the exact mechanism you are going to use to remove the lantana plant species in Udawalawe? Are going to use bulldozers?

Mr. Marasinghe: It is mix of process such as mechanical means as well as manual. Depending on other variables such as the bimodal rainfall it will be decided whether machinery or manual removal is needed

Mr. Lakdas

The removed lantana is just burnt, but in some villages people are using the removed lantanas to make baskets, so think what you can do about it

Dr. Pilapitiya: That is a good thing to look at

Ms. Manori

In general, in terms of invasive removal and also on fodder species, I think as far as I am concerned we are having this as a management strategy so if we are going to do it again can we have a good monitoring and evaluation plan to cover this?

Dr. Pilapitiya: An expert committee is advising the departments on what to do on this

3b - Nature based tourism

Ms. Darshani

We wanted the plans to be done before anything can move forward. Still only four sites have been identified in the initial stage for the planning process so nothing specific has been identified. Currently they are looking at some of the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure which could be used for different purposes, but nothing specifically has moved forward from this component because we were quite explicit about the planning that needs to come through

Dr. Pilapitiya

Can the four management plans that have been prepared now be put on the web?

Ms. Darshani

These plans can be put on the web. In terms of the decision on carrying capacity the issue was raised at the meeting with Mr. Paskeralingam. Policy decision needs to come from the hierarchy order to implement, so we need to have that decision taken before moving forward in some of these activities. The idea is not to increase tourism but to improve the quality of what is already existing and to release the pressure as much as possible.

Mr. Amrik

Has the DWC given a carrying capacity of tourist in the park?

Mr. Marasinghe: Personally I can give a number but if you take the technique used in India to calculate the carrying capacity they have done lot of research work to estimate coefficient and variables, and such research work has not been done in Sri Lanka. This year we will be closing it for two months and planning to have an electronic system for advance booking system to fix a number and control the carrying capacity.

Mr. Amrik

One suggestion, that before you enter the park you have to sign a document, don't you, as a visitor? so my suggestion is when you sign there put a clause that you sign away your privacy rights basically you can be monitored in the park, that would be a precursor to actually having say a google business group working with you guys to setup a system to monitor what goes on in the park otherwise privacy laws will prevent you monitoring that, so think about it and set yourself up for losing all rights in the park because that is a place for the animals to have their rights

Mr. Hemantha

I have a concern, like the school children, the poor and needy who may need to go out to the park, can't achieve any of these expensive things whether it is electronic or not, how can we make sure that the poor in the country have access to these national parks, that is one of the problems with the surrounding communities because the parks are there but the surrounding communities are poor they don't get any benefits, so that's why they go into the park for firewood and poaching, so here we are trying to get rid of them, so the poor should benefit.

Mr. Marasinghe: Advance booking system is exempted from school children and the poor. The majority who visit the park are well to do people. If we want to reduce the numbers there are two ways to do this, one is to increase the price for tourists and the affluent group and the other to reduce the prices for the student category

Dr. Jinie

This suggestion is for the FD. There are small forests and you can show a different model, a market kind of ecotourism which has never been done can be encouraged if you can bring that in

Ms. Darshani: The FD is keen to look beyond what they have proposed, particularly on the planning side to understand the basics that you require to put these things in place. The CGF and the team is quite open so If you have suggestions please send in because FD has proposed some additional sites they want to consider which are not some of the larger places that they are currently focusing on, so the option is open

Institutional Capacity Building

Mr. Ravi Corea

In this component, is there any room for improving or expanding veterinary facilities? Like having at least one veterinary unit per national park?

Mr. Marasinghe: It depends on the ability to recruit people, now there are about 16 vets. If we have more vets, then we can have one vet for each protected area. The problem we are facing is getting government permission to create more positions

Mr. Hemantha: I haven't seen the Improving of legal enforcement capacity, the legal training in both of the departments. Since legal awareness, training, how to handle cases, and IEA are some of those critical areas that people have forgotten now. Probably the new staff in both Departments don't know these aspects these are critical areas that need to be improved by training

Dr. Pilapitiya: This is eligible for funding under ESCAMP it is up to the departments to ask for it

Mr. Marasinghe: We have a comprehensive plan and developing a program to train 200 wildlife rangers on prosecution where they will follow 10 workshops each conducted on recording standards up to the prosecution.

Mr. Anura De Silva (PD – ESCAMP): Forest Department has implemented a number of training programmes under this component. The subject has to be identified by the departments based on their training needs and could be included into their training plans for funding from ESCAMP.

Dr. Jinie

This is a suggestion for both the DWC and FD – There are lots of new things introduced on training on interpretations that are very valuable for the staff, the departments can get an expert to do it, second thing is animal behavior; I think it is extremely necessary for both departments when it comes to conflict situations. This course that is run by Prof. Gunathilake can be included under this component

Ms. Deepani

With regard to the suggestion made by Jinie, can we introduce veterinary first aid course to the field staff through this project, may be to the Diploma Course?

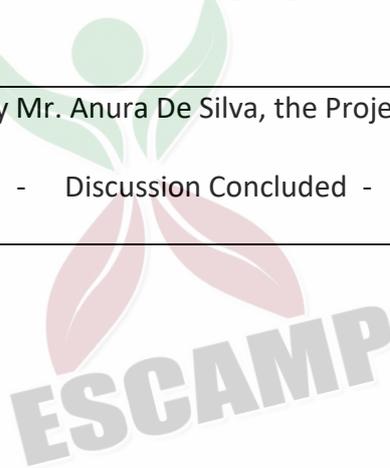
Mr. Anura De Silva (PD – ESCAMP): If the department takes a decision on this then definitely the project can support, it can be included in to the curricular of the Diploma Course

Dr. Pilapitiya: Wildlife conservation which includes the vets has to realize that the mandate is wildlife conservation, and that should be the priority. Every single officer of the department should have the basic training on first aid. It is a policy decision of the departments' management so we have to go ahead with it.

As the DWC agreed there will be a separate consultation to discuss the Lunugamwehera facility within the month of October. Beforehand they will submit a paper on lessons learned from Horowpothana as well as a concept note on what is going to happen so that we are much more focused on the discussion.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Mr. Anura De Silva, the Project Director of ESCAMP.

- Discussion Concluded -



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