

## EVALUATION OF THE FARMERS' WOODLOT COMPONENT OF THE PARTICIPATORY FORESTRY PROJECT IN SRI LANKA

M W M W T B Dissanayake  
Upper Watershed Management Project

The farmers' woodlot component of the Participatory Forest Project in Sri Lanka has a dual concern: environmental rehabilitation by creating woodlots in marginal state lands with the participation of local people, and socio-economic upliftment of the rural poor. Based on the mixed performance of the project during the last few years, this study tried to examine the level of rural participation in the project, and the effect of major conditions and their determinant factors on successful establishment of the woodlots.

The field study was carried out in the central part of Sri Lanka, during the period from July to September 1997. Two successful and two unsuccessful project sites were selected in the Badulla and Kandy districts based on the seedling survival rate as the main criteria for evaluating success. Data collection was mainly based on series of discussions and semi-structured interviews carried out with project participants, non-participants, key informants, and project officials. In addition supporting secondary data was collected by reviewing the project related reports and documents, and informal interviews with project officials.

The study reveals that the majority of initial decisions related to the project such as, initial decision on a woodlot project, selection of project's location, land distribution, planting design are primarily taken by the project officials. Local people are involved with decisions related to the selection of participants and species. The majority of ongoing decisions such as, weeding and maintenance regime, application of fertilisers, are also imposed by the project. All decisions related to intercropping are taken by the local people.

Among the resources required for implementation, land, technical knowledge, and material inputs such as, tree seedlings, fertilisers, are provided by the project, whereas participants contribute labour, indigenous knowledge, and inputs for intercroppings. A food aid incentive has been used to compensate the labour investment of participants. Local peoples' involvement in administration and coordination of the project at village level is limited.

Three conditions for the success of woodlots are considered in detail. The first concerns the site characteristics, of which, site arability, proximity and accessibility, and tenurial status are the three important determinant factors for success. Among them, site arability appeared to be the most important factor.

Among the different plantation establishment techniques used in the project, selection of the most suitable tree species for the project's location, planting design and spacing based on participant's preference for intercropping, location specific weeding and maintenance regime, adequate measures for protection, are determinant factors for the success.

Four types of incentives used in the project appeared to be crucial for the success. They are, issue of free tree seedlings, food aid coupons, lease agreements, and the provision of technical assistance. The issue of fertilisers was not a condition for success as it was not based on site specific needs.