



Draft for Discussion

Landcare Sri Lanka

Enhancing Community Resiliency and Strengthening Community-Policy Linkages

A Concept Note

Background & Introduction

Landcare is a widely adopted approach to integrated natural resource management (NRM). As an approach, it centers on community groups working together to rehabilitate highly degraded landscapes using novel, but practical science-based agroforestry and natural resource management techniques. It also focuses on empowering local people to willingly take action to address local problems. Landcare is supported to varying degrees by governments, non-governmental agencies and the private sector. Landcare's track record is impressive. From its roots in Australia in the mid-1980s, some 17 countries and multi-lateral organisations in the Pacific, Africa, North America, Europe and South East Asia are now either independently implementing Landcare programmes, or receiving limited support to initiate them.¹ Recognising the need to raise the visibility of Landcare at the global level - and to spread the adoption of the Landcare approach - Landcare International (LI), an association of individuals and institutions committed to the principles, philosophy and practices of Landcare was launched in October 2004.

Landcare developed quite uniquely in different countries, but the outcomes were more to do with improving human and social capital to implement better farming practices for improved production, income, and natural resource management. The genesis of Landcare in these countries was different and that Landcare has developed through different pathways, but the problems that community landcare groups are trying to address are similar, adhering to the same principles, which is the enrichment of human and social capital to mobilise local action for reversing land degradation issues and improving rural livelihoods, and with emphasis on local demand, volunteerism, genuine participation, partnerships, and use of outside resources. Thus, regardless of differences in circumstances, the driving principles for mobilising local communities to achieve Landcare outcomes are quite general. The essential requirements to facilitate this process are also common, that is, a good balance between community efforts, government partnerships, and support from non-government agencies in the form of technical or institutional innovations, advocacy, and funding. The genesis of these efforts and the pathways these efforts might take will vary from one situation to another, but the philosophy behind these efforts is fundamentally shared. Ultimately, in developing countries with many common problems and an increased emphasis on local governance, the Landcare philosophy might help to mobilise local actions for environmental and economic benefits, with specific variations only in implementation to suit to varying local conditions.

In tropical Asia, Landcare grew out of initiatives by the World Agroforestry Centre in the early 1990s to promote soil conservation technologies in the southern Philippines. Delia Catacutan, World Agroforestry's international Landcare Coordinator, notes that the Centre's provision of technical backstopping to farmers, local officials and agricultural technicians resulted in rapid adoption of soil and water conservation technologies and agroforestry practices. This initial

¹ Countries that adopted Landcare are Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Iceland, Philippines, South Africa, Zimbabwe, USA, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Canada, the UK, South Pacific. Landcare Programmes in these countries vary in terms of size and scope; some are far advance while others are just starting.

success was encouraging, and since then, the Centre initiated efforts to scale up Landcare in other Philippines sites.

Because of the success of countries where Landcare is active, it is now attracting attention and new investments. However, Catacutan (2007) points out that the adoption of Landcare requires better organisation and efforts to meet the following preconditions.

- Widely adoptable agroforestry technologies: Scientists associated with international Landcare initiatives believe that many natural resource management techniques have been developed over the past twenty years and can be literally taken off the shelf to “jump-start” Landcare programmes. These include both science-based conservation techniques, as well as a large portfolio of improved, well-adapted agroforestry germplasm. In those cases where science-based technologies do not exist or are not available, locally adapted practices are available that can serve as a starting point for development.
- Local Interest and Support: Experience in Asia has shown that Landcare is more likely to succeed in areas where farmers are wholly focused on farming and where conservation is actively promoted by local authorities. In the absence of these conditions, Landcare should be implemented to include NRM-based livelihood options and greater involvement of large holders and the business sector.
- Political Stability: Landcare has better prospects for success in politically stable locations. In those instances where local government support is limited, however, or where the political situation is less than stable, a committed and competent non-governmental agency can offset the immediate need for local government support. There are many international NGOs operating in Sri Lanka that might be committed to the Landcare approach.
- Science: A competent research presence is needed to provide technical backstopping and ensure that good science underpins community efforts. The presence of the Centre of Eco-Cultural Studies (CES) and its partners and the World Agroforestry Centre in Sri Lanka provide much of the research capacity needed for landcare to succeed.
- Training and Information: Effective training, communication, and facilitation are essential to landcare. Without farmer-based extension programmes, landcare is likely to be untenable.

In addition, landcare is positioned to play an important role in climate change initiatives. Scientists associated with the present initiative believe that landcare can contribute to both mitigation and adaptation. In the Philippines, farmers attributed improved resiliency to the Landcare programme.

In Sri Lanka, governments, non-governmental organisations and local communities have intersected to achieve economic and environmental benefits through numerous community-based NRM initiatives. Many of these have been successful in meeting this twin goal, however, they remain local with inadequate community-policy linkages. Taken together, these factors argue strongly for establishing a country-wide Landcare Programme that will link disparate programmes under a common umbrella and establish a coordinated “community of practice” and a common platform for all walks of life to fully express their land ethos in a concerted way.

Goals

The main goals of a Landcare Programme in Sri Lanka are:

- 1) to enhance community resilience to natural resource degradation, climate change and economic shocks by improving their capacity to adopt appropriate technologies for sustainable production and income
- 2) to improve community capacity to negotiate and link with policy

United Nations Avenue, Gigiri | PO Box 30677-00100 Nairobi, Kenya | Ph: 254 2 524232 or via USA 1 650 833 6645
Fax: 254 2 524001 or via USA 1 650 833 6646 | Email: dgarrity@cgiar.org | http: www.worldagroforestrycentre.org

- 3) to build a platform for government to provide adequate policy responses
- 4) to build a community of practice for all stakeholders to express their land ethos through a Community Knowledge Service (CKS)

Key Priorities

To achieve the above goals, the following priority areas are identified:

1. Building national and local capacity to effectively implement the Landcare approach. A key research question in this area is “What capacity and learning competences are needed by different stakeholders at different layers in conducting a Landcare Programme?”
2. Identifying niches and complementary efforts with existing NRM initiatives. A key research question is “What policy, institutional and cultural environment provides a niche for Landcare in Sri Lanka? What policy responses are needed? What NRM interventions exist, with which Landcare could build on?”
3. Researching and promoting adoption or adaptation of appropriate indigenous and science-based technologies that both improve yields and conserve natural resources. A key question is “What technologies are appropriate considering differences in socio-economic and biophysical conditions of poor farmers?” What farming systems help build resiliency?
4. Enhancing social capital and institutionalisation at various levels where it is appropriate. A key question is “What institutions exist that provide a nucleus for Landcare in Sri Lanka?”
5. Developing a Community Knowledge Service, as a platform for knowledge-exchange, capacity-building, awareness creation, negotiation, and advocacy.

Key Activities

To deliver the priorities mentioned above, the following key activities are identified:

1. Rapid baseline assessment.
2. Capacity building through training, volunteer programmes, etc, including training and developing a network of Landcare Facilitators.
3. Awareness creation through information and communication materials.
4. Policy research, dialogues, forum, etc.
5. Technology development or testing through on-farm trials in selected pilot sites.
6. Technical assistance to farmers, farmer group formation.
7. Develop a web-based Community Knowledge-Service.
8. Monitoring and impact assessment.

Key Result Areas

Based on the above activities, the following result areas are expected:

United Nations Avenue, Gigiri | PO Box 30677-00100 Nairobi, Kenya | Ph: 254 2 524232 or via USA 1 650 833 6645
Fax: 254 2 524001 or via USA 1 650 833 6646 | Email: dgarrity@cgiar.org | http: www.worldagroforestrycentre.org

