

**Restoration of 151 ha. of Degraded Abandoned Paddy Lands in Watareka Surrounding Wetlands, Homagama through cultivating Local Paddy Varieties while Upscaling Other Ongoing Farming SGP Projects**

Grantee of the Project: Human Development Foundation of Sri Lanka

Person in Charge: Mrs. Sunethra Marasinghe

Project Category: Strategic

Landscape: Colombo Wetlands

Location: Watareka, Atigala, Panagoda (west), Panaluwa,

Project Description:

Watareka surrounding wetlands are neglected for almost 2 decades hence biodiversity is rapidly decreasing due to misusing of wetlands. Paddy lands are covered with invasive plants hence the local plant varieties have disappeared. The access water canal ways are filled with soil and access of water to fields is highly obstructed. This project will make the paddy lands cultivatable with organic farming and develop the biodiversity of the site by planting local trees along the field canal bunds. Tree islands are to be established in the middle of the paddy fields as shelter for various bird species. Parachute rice transplanting technique will be adopted to cultivate the paddy fields which is said to be cost effective and has potential to provide high yield per hectare of land. It also minimizes the cost for “beeja vee” as this technique requires only 4 kilos per an acre. Unlike sowing paddy seeds, planting paddy fields cultivated using parachute technique can be flooded immediately which will prevent weed growth. Additionally, an Eco trade center will be established as a platform for all the GEF grantees to sell their eco-friendly products.

Project Objectives:

• All the values related to Watareka wetlands is recognized and integrated.

• Degradation of the wetland is prevented and conserved.

• Restore degraded wetland lands in order to improve ecological functioning.

• Participatory approach is implemented to promote wise use.

A sustainable wetland management strategy is established.

Project Activities:

1. Self-employment promotion for women, youth disabled (60 individuals)

2. 129ha. of degraded paddy lands covered pan, beru and other invasive plants removed and cleared

3. Cultivating abandoned paddy lands with traditional paddy varieties.

4. Providing technical assistance and training to farmers

5. Soil and water quality testing

6. Digging 6.7km long access water canal

7. Koratu land vegetable and local crops cultivation (35 koratu lands)

8. Model wetland- 01 ha

9. Erecting 10 publicity boards

10. Start 60 plant nurseries (mee, kumbuk, aricanut, madam, ratatumba)

11. Establishing 02 fauna protection cages and 92 tree islands

12. Tree planting in sloping lands, wetland, buffer zone, plain lands (10000 trees)

13. Gliricidia SALT hedges in sloping lands for soil conservation (57 lands)

14. Establishing an Eco-tourism resource centre

15. Compost manure preparation 2600kg

16 Maintain marshlands with care, this will store carbon in the air and hence it will help to lower the climate change effects.

17 Reforestation to increase the forest cover. This will absorb carbon from atmosphere.

18 Maintain the lakes and small tanks in the wetland to minimize the rising of air temperature.

19 Maintain field canals in good condition to control the water access and flood.

20 Allieviate the poverty of people increasing the income by paddy and vegetable cultivation and self employment promotion.

21 Protect the wild fauna species to keep the fauna balance.

22 A communicate network is established, among schools, community leaders, politicians, media and private sector.

23 Increase the capacity of NGOs.

24 Maintain a long term monitoring system.

25 Improve the ecological conditions of wetland.

26 Develop the Eco-tourism resource Centre to deliver education and research.

27 A revolving fund organized among beneficiaries.

28 Create an attractive environment in the wetland to reach more tourists locals and foreigners.

29 Build the wetland as a model community habitat in Sri Lanka.