



Aranayake people

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**A**s we face yet another disaster, the need to focus on sustainable development becomes more important than ever. It is in this area that Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) comes into play and must be made an integral part of social and economic development. In 2015 the government signed on to adopt the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), some of these are directly linked to DRR. They are: Goal 11: to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, Goal 13: take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and Goal 15: to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

These are important Goals to remember when we assess our activities in post disaster recovery situations. The SLWP's work in Aranayake in the aftermath of the landslide in 2016 will highlight how the principles of DRR are being applied to bring back a community after a natural disaster.

The Sri Lanka Water Partnership has organised and supported the Ma Oya Area Water Partnership from its inception and the local partner of the upper Ma Oya area in Aranayake is the Ma Oya-Kuda Oya Surakeeme-Vyaparaya (MKS-V). It has also carried out a major activity supported by Janashakthi PLC in Aranayake which included water quality surveys, support for nurseries run by community women, reforestation of significant catchments and river banks and areas as well as construction of Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) systems in Rahala West School and Hemmatagama hospital. These RWH systems are continuously monitored and are functioning well and serving the community in the current drought. This activity was organised by SLWP with support of its Partner NetWwater (NWW) which has also supervised and constructed 26 RWH systems for hospitals (supported by Retourschup Foundation, NL) and supervised 17 school RWH systems for SLWP (supported by NDB) in the Central Province.

**ARANAYAKE 2016**

Last year, Aranayake suffered a major disaster with a landslide which occurred on the Samasara Mountain. The reasons for the disaster are partly climate change driven and partly anthropogenic. Many areas in and around Aranayake have been identified as being major and medium risk landslide prone sites. The threat is exacerbated by the high degrees of ongoing illicit logging and poor land use practices. Community members also state that water supply has drastically decreased since the landslide.

The complexity of this disaster has highlighted the need for speedily operationalizing the SDGs in future activities. The Hatton National Bank/SLWP intervention coming at this juncture is therefore timely and together we undertook a programme of looking to operationalize DRR in Aranayake which is recovering from the landslide. The programme was executed in two phases.

- a) The total activity of Phase 1 consisted of:
  - i) an initial reconnaissance survey leading to an inception report,
  - ii) Climate Change adaptation (CCA) activity cum RWH maintenance training,
  - iii) construction of the RWH tanks in selected sites,
  - iv) organization of Disaster Risk Reduction (C/A) sensitization programmes in the selected schools for World Water Day in March 2017 and
  - v) follow-up maintenance reinforcement programmes before the SW and NE monsoon (these two activities will be linked with the youth program being

# OPERATIONALISING SDGS TO MITIGATE FUTURE DISASTER RISKS

## DRR THROUGH CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FOR LANDSLIDE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN ARANAYAKE

Thus it was noted that the provision of six RWH systems to marginalized schools was very useful for promoting health and sanitation and thereby, supports access to education. It was also a preliminary tool to building linkages with marginalized landslide prone communities, especially those identified by National Building Research Organization (NBRO) as medium risk in order to promote conservation. These RWH systems also allowed community members themselves be involved in them and all unskilled labour will be accessed from the community in Phase 2.

Catchment conservation in Aranayake is essential in view of the threat of imminent future landslides in 62 Grama Niladari divisions as noted by the NBRO. Unplanned expansion with poor soil conservation by tea small holders continues to pose threats as well. So does the very high level of continuous illicit logging. High risk area families have been evacuated. But, most of the medium risk communities (who have been notified by registered post of their status by the District Secre-

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ing challenges posed by deep seated community and caste divides. There is also a community divide based on economic factors; there is tendency to blame the tea smallholders for their



**When it comes to alternative incomes for community**

developed with an initial meeting which was held on May 27.

Display boards giving a DRR message have been set up as requested by local partners to build community awareness.

The three main objectives of Phase 2 building on the lessons learnt in Phase 1 are:

- a) Community SDG advocacy focusing on youth
- b) Provision of Rain Water Harvesting systems for schools and
- c) Micro catchment conservation in Medium Risk areas.

This programme will help catalyse community participation and support including mobilization for after-care and expansion. The total activities will consist of a reconnaissance survey for site selection, construction of the RWH tanks in selected sites, a CCA cum RWH maintenance training, micro-catchment conservation with community groups and related community advocacy. Six schools shortlisted by the MKSV and the Aranyake Zonal Education office would be selected for provision of rainwater harvesting systems.

The schools thus shortlisted are; Damapalgoda Secondary School, Kalugala Secondary School, Tammita Secondary School, Thellega Secondary School, Dothuloya Secondary School and Gangthuna Udagama Secondary School.

### RAIN WATER HARVESTING

According to the experience of the field team in Phase 1, there were certain issues and activities identified to be implemented in Phase 2.

tary) however, are currently in a state of denial stating that their lands are safe. They need to be encouraged to improve land conservation urgently at least before the North East monsoon. Schools which have received RWH systems will contribute plants for reforestation programmes. Therefore, it is important to start community advocacy and pilot activities in micro catchments as part of disaster risk reduction. The criteria of selection for such sites should be the level of risk and the level of community support, especially from youth groups. Strong community organizations identified from among existing organization in activity A, will be selected as catalysts to mobilize the community.

### ARANAYAKE IN A STATE OF DEPENDENCY

Aranayake used to be a fairly self sufficient community with high income from spices. In the aftermath of the landslide however, it was noted that the community showed increased dependency on state agencies and external sources, especially due to the deluge of aid (mostly inappropriate and underutilized) which came in to the region. Communities are now reluctant to carry out even minor soil conservation activities which can be done independently without state support. Hence mitigation efforts at present are proceeding very slowly.

Thus it was noted that existing community groups should be mobilized with a special focused effort to enthuse youth groups while understand-

inappropriate cultivation practices. Therefore, initiating community advocacy in the form of group meetings is a critical factor in Phase 2. As the temples in the area are the focus of response in disaster situations, the possibility of inviting monks from the medium risk area for the sensitization programmes is being explored. Schools which have received RWH systems will contribute plants for reforestation programmes thereby, ensuring community buy in.

When it comes to alternative incomes for community members, catchment conservation should ensure the planting of spice trees which will give an income as well provide ground coverage. Work will be carried out with participation of volunteer labour. Support will also be accessed from the Department of Export Agriculture for this purpose.

### PHASE 2

Under Phase 2, the following has been proposed: by end of April, a reconnaissance visit for RWH site selection and identification of community groups and micro catchments was undertaken to finalize sites/identify groups - lead NWW and MKSV, from May to June; RWH construction and CCA /DRR sensitization cum RWH maintenance training would be carried out to provide water security and improved sanitation, build awareness of DRR, importance of water security and CCA lead NWW MKSV, in May and September; there will be community advocacy

pro-grammes for capacity building for community groups and reinforcement for key stakeholders, also from May and June; construction of six RWH tanks in the six selected schools will take place to provide water security to the area and from May to September micro catchment conservation and replanting will occur for reinforcement and enhancing school and community support for DRR and CCA.

The experience above highlights that DRR is not only important in post disaster situations but also before one occurs; to mitigate the impact of disasters. Specialised DRR programmes in all risk prone areas in the country will help in future reduce the tragedy of the natural disasters we now face.

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