

**DEVELOPING A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO)  
NETWORK  
TO SUPPORT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE  
SRI LANKAN BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN (BAP)**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sri Lanka is at a critical junction for deciding the course and management of its natural resources with the implementation of biodiversity action plan (BAP). Sri Lanka possesses tremendous untapped potential of broad based and well-established community-based organizations (CBOs) and a diversity of environmentally oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as a solid foundation of scientifically-trained academic professionals with advanced degrees. Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment, Transport and Women's Affairs (M/TEWA) has displayed far reaching leadership by acting on their desire to involve grassroots organizations in national policies of natural resource use and management.

Presently lacking, however, are strong institutional linkages and an established network or cooperative arrangements. This is necessary for both horizontal and vertical integration of the diversity of human resources and their organizations dealing with natural resource issues across Sri Lanka today. Moreover, it was recognized that a concerted effort was needed to build stronger relationships among all the players and to assist in the formation of local, regional, national as well as international collaborative arrangements. Although a large pool of talented and active NGOs are working in the country, their skills in developing projects and producing competitive proposals for funding could be substantially improved. Therefore, the major objectives of this short-term consultancy were to identify the interested parties, to encourage their participation, to build links among participants and to begin to develop their skills in the proposal writing process.

This report summarizes the activities conducted during a short-term consultancy from 6 May - 26 May 1995. Included in this document are summaries of the results of two workshops developed specifically for a diversity of environmental NGOs, evaluations of brief site and organization meetings visits, identifications of potential obstacles to progress and recommendations for further action.

Ten recommendations for further action are offered:

- 1.** Produce a manuscript for an international journal that outlines Sri Lanka's BAP program and its innovative approach for including NGOs, which should gain global recognition for these efforts.
- 2.** Enhance future NGO participation by conducting a series of regional visits with presentations to environmental NGOs/CBOs that link the BAP initiatives with their activities.
- 3.** Build a central NGO and BAP library for disseminating biodiversity materials produced by M/TEWA, donors and NGOs/CBOs.
- 4.** Establish or expand national journals or newsletters for publishing biodiversity information.
- 5.** Strengthen institutional capacity to implement the BAP with a national biodiversity database and species collection management project.
- 6.** Conduct intensive field-training courses for NGOs and academics on sampling design, methods and analyses suitable for BAP research projects.
- 7.** Incorporate Geographical Information System (GIS) databases and training into the BAP
- 8.** Develop future workshops on proposal writing skills for NGOs and academics. Specifically, repeating the workshop already held on this subject for a new set of NGO representatives and designing a more advanced workshop for those currently in the process of developing project proposals for external funding.
- 9.** Create a democratic and equitable small grants program to support applied research and action projects of environmental NGOs and academic groups consistent with the BAP.
- 10.** Expand international linkages with sponsors, collaborators and technical reviewers. Specifically, a cooperative arrangement between Sri Lankan Universities and the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activity (MUCIA) holds great promise as a means to enhance Sri Lanka's capacity to address the management of natural resources and implement the BAP.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Mr. H.D.V.S. Vattala was outstanding in his logistical support and made this work possible. He provided advice and insights throughout our meetings with NGOs and shouldered much of the administrative burden. Even this 'serious joker' appreciates his assistance, insights and companionship.

Mr. Avanti Jayatileke and Mr. Edward Scott (NAREPP/IRG) were supportive throughout this endeavor. I greatly appreciate the time and effort both Mr. Jayantha Wikremanayake, Special Projects Manager, The Asia Foundation and Mrs. Manel Jayamanna, UNDP programme officer invested in my education of their programs. Mr. Wikremanayake arranged and accompanied me on site visits of Ritigala and HEC while Mrs. Jayamanna prepared materials and a presentation for the second workshop.

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Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the warm welcome, hospitality and enthusiastic response of so many NGOs and CBOs. I appreciate all who took the time to prepare materials, attend meetings and teach me about their programs. Best wishes in your admirable undertakings!

Although many assisted during this short-term consultancy position, I assume personal responsibility for all opinions and errors contained within this document.

## ACRONYMS

**BAP** - Biodiversity Action Plan

**BCN** - Biodiversity Conservation Network

**BMARI** - Bandaranayake Memorial Aurvedic Research Institute

**BSP** - Biodiversity Support Program

**CBOs** - Community-Based Organizations

**CBRM** - Community Based Resource Management

**CEA** - Central Environmental Authority

**CI** - Conservation International

**CRMP** - Coastal Resources Management Project

**DEA** - District Environmental Agency

**EFL** - Environmental Law Foundation

**ENP** - Environmental NGO Project

**GEF** - Global Environmental Facility

**GIS** - Geographical Information System

**GPS** - Global Positioning Systems

**HEC** - Human-Elephant Conflict Kahalla-Pallekele Project

**IDEA** - Integrated Development Association

**IGOs** - International Non-Governmental Organizations

**M/TEWA** - Ministry of the Environment, Transportation and Women's Affairs

**MfC** - March for Conservation

**MOU** - Memoranda of Understanding

**MUCIA** - Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activity

**NAREPP/IRG** - Natural Resources and Environmental Policy Project

**NF** - Nature Foundation

**NFPO** - National Forum for People's Organizations

**NGOs** - Non-Governmental Organizations

**NSRC** - Neo-Synthesis Research Centre

**OEE** - Organization for Environmental Education

**ORDE** - Organization for Resource Development and Environment

**OSLEN** - Organization to Safeguard Life and Environment

**SLEJF** - Sri Lanka Environmental Journalists Forum

**TAF** - The Asia Foundation

**UNCED** - United Nations Conference of Environment and Development

**UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme

**USAID** - United States Agency for International Development

**WALHI** - Indonesian NGO Forum on the Environment

**WESE** - Wayamba Environmental Science Explorers

**WGSP** - Wayamba Govi Sanwardhana Padanama

**WJMS** - Wana Jana Mithuro Sanvidhanaya

**WRI** - World Resources Institute

## INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has tremendous opportunities for involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academics in the conservation and equitable use of biological resources. Despite its relatively small size (65,610 km<sup>2</sup>), the island of Sri Lanka contains an incredible mosaic of forest and coastal formations along a climatic and altitudinal gradient. With its unique biogeographical history, many species are endemic to the region and overall, the island supports one of the most rich and diverse flora and fauna in Asia (IUCN 1993).

The country is not only rich in biological resources but also human resources and associated institutions. A cadre of highly trained, professional academic leaders and a well-established university system have the potential to train present and future resource managers as well as to conduct biodiversity research essential for informed decision-making. Furthermore, community activism is a central focus of village life and has been for centuries. An outstanding set of NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) are operating throughout the country at the local, regional and national levels. Most importantly, the Government of Sri Lanka has effective and visionary leaders who have demonstrated their willingness to apply creative democratic solutions to biodiversity management. Therefore, the nation of Sri Lanka is poised to implement one of the most ambitious but critical management plan for biological resources.

The Ministry of Environment, Transport and Women's Affairs (M/TEWA) and the Natural Resources and Environmental Policy Project (NAREPP/IRG) designed and sponsored this short-term consultancy to assist in developing an NGO network to support planning and implementation of the Sri Lankan Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The BAP program under M/TEWA is led primarily by Dr. S. Kotagama, Biodiversity Consultant and Mr. G. Gamage, Deputy Director (Land Use). Under their guidance and logistical support, Mr. H.D.V.S. Vattala and I worked as a team to help translate the initial conceptual approach to NGO involvement into action to the extent possible within the prescribed period (6 May - 26 May 1995).

This report summarizes these team efforts — the primary focus being two workshops developed specifically to reach the widest possible range of environmental NGOs. The first was held in Colombo on 10 May and the second in Wadduwa on 21-22 May. Here, we include not only a synopsis of the two workshops but evaluations of brief site and organization visits, a review of potential obstacles to progress and recommendations for further action. The majority of future activities suggested build either on existing programs and/or

those initiated during this relatively brief effort and will serve as a foundation for continued support of NGO participation in the BAP formulation and implementation.

### **SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES: Workshops I & II and Selected Site Visits**

#### **Workshop I: Introduction of the BAP to the NGO community**

The Ministry of Environment, Transportation and Women's Affairs (M/TEWA) sponsored and designed the first workshop to formally introduce the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) to the Sri Lankan NGO community and featured this consultant's first presentation (Appendix 1). The primary objective was to introduce the concept of biodiversity, outline the fundamental components of the BAP and take a first step in encouraging NGO participation.

The M/TEWA program led by Dr. S. Kotagama, Biodiversity Consultant, was visionary in two major ways. First, in the aftermath of the United Nations Conference of Environment and Development (UNCED-Rio 92), I am aware of no other country that has attempted to involve a diversity of national NGOs in the *process* of planning and implementing a national biodiversity action plan. Second, this was a democratic approach and aimed for diverse participation across the country. To respond to this challenge, M/TEWA sent invitations to all 140 NGOs listed in the governmental (Central Environmental Authority) registry.

Despite the short notice, 47 registered groups attended the first workshop in Colombo on 10 May 1995. During this meeting, I provided a summary of the steps necessary for full involvement in BAP through proposal preparation. An assigned initial task in the process of eliciting NGO interest was distributed; all organizations were asked to complete NGO's mission statement and a questionnaire containing perceived constraints to full participation in the BAP implementation. The meeting was a resounding success because it: (i) stimulated great interest in the BAP across a diversity of groups, (ii) encouraged the NGOs to consolidate their activities along the proposed mission statement guidelines, and (iii) began the first step in compiling information on existing community-based activities related to biodiversity.

The original scope of work for this consultancy involved working directly with approximately ten selected NGOs. Each of these groups would have been required to submit a proposal for review by M/TEWA with NAREPP/IRG. Due, in part, to the timing of the BAP introduction and wide range of perceived skills and needs of various NGOs, the terms of reference were altered to develop this broad based, more fundamental approach. Although this was a challenging work, which required tailoring a new program on extremely short-notice, the adjustment was a sound and wise decision by government officials, Biodiversity Action Plan managers and NAREPP/IRG.

## **Workshop II: Proposal Writing Skills Development for NGOs Contributing to the BAP**

### *Workshop objectives*

The general goal of the second workshop was to provide a forum for NGOs, academics, governmental representatives and technical advisors to exchange information, share experiences and discuss problems and opportunities to increase NGO involvement in designing and implementing the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The four specific objectives were to: (1) review the Biodiversity Action Plan's initiatives to detail how NGOs can create interdisciplinary programs for its design and implementation, (2) enhance communication, dialogue and networks to support the BAP among environmental NGOs and academics, (3) introduce function and techniques of concept papers, proposal development, peer review and grant procedures to encourage the widest possible public participation in the BAP, and (4) receive suggestions and recommendations for expanding this process and creating an equitable participation of NGOs in BAP implementation.

### *Criteria for selection*

On the deadline for NGO submission of their 'mission statements' (18 May 17:00), Mr. G. Gamage, Dr. S. Kotagama, Mr. H. Vattala and I reviewed 36 NGO mission statements received at M/TEWA. An additional 11 submissions arrived too late for consideration. There were two key criteria for selection of NGOs for the second workshop. First, the groups' activities must contain a significant and appropriate biodiversity component. Second, participants were selected who represented a diversity of biogeographical regions along with a range of topics and strengths of activities; we sought to invite as many groups from outside the Colombo region and balance their activities' focus (e.g., tree planting, legal aspects, wildlife). This was accomplished by drafting a preliminary database of the basic components included in the mission statement

along with several reviews of the documents (Appendix 1). On this basis, 24 groups were invited to attend the second workshop.

Dr. Kotagama and Mr. Gamage identified the university lecturers from a diversity of disciplines related to BAP and who represented most of the Sri Lankan universities. Many, unfortunately, could either not attend or be notified on short-notice because university terms were not in session. Similarly, they contacted governmental representatives with institutional affiliations appropriate for this workshop format. In summary, the second workshop included 44 participants and resource persons with 29 NGO and academic representatives.

### ***Workshop Results***

Several important lessons emerged from the conduct and aftermath of the first two workshops. First, do not underestimate the abilities of NGOs. Energy, enthusiasm and educational abilities are exceptionally high. For example, the mission statement task was perceived by some administrators as too difficult an exercise for NGOs. Despite the extremely limited time available (less than one week and over major holidays), all 47 groups present at the first workshop satisfactorily completed this assignment. Most of the NGO materials submitted, however, were not in English. Therefore, Mr. Vattala compiled the information contained in these materials and further analyses of the NGO responses will be included in his report. This database will serve, however, as a foundation for a useful NGO directory to be used by M/TEWA and other groups.

Second, English language skills and educational levels do not appear to be limiting the capacity of even a diverse NGO constituency to participate in such workshops. In the second workshop, greater than 84% of the participants understood 75-100% of the English language lectures that were presented at the university level (even by a rapid New England speaker!). Furthermore, all 25 participants had at least a G.C.E. ('O level) education; greater than 50% hold college degrees. Because fewer than 24% of the participants were from the Colombo region, this was an encouraging finding. In addition, only one university faculty member completed the evaluation form. Therefore, highly trained resource persons did not bias mean educational levels. In conclusion, by insisting on high standards, NGOs are treated with respect and thus, challenged to develop to their full potential.

All objectives were achieved through a combination of plenary and small group sessions. A series of large group presentations introduced theory or concepts and were supplemented with practical tips to assist in their application. Please see Appendix 2 for workshop agenda and materials. The participants were divided

into smaller 'work groups' to discuss and tackle tasks or exercises designed to encourage dialogue and active participation. Again, the aim was to mix the groups according to discipline, interests and abilities with resource persons divided among the small groups.

Despite conceptually difficult tasks and with a diverse group of participants of mixed abilities and disciplines, 100% of the participants deemed this a useful or very useful exercise. Everyone (100%) responded "yes" to the question: "Should we have further programs like this one?" Given this positive evaluation, the program was successful. In addition, evaluations from the Workshop II indicate that the program requires little revision. Instructors, however, perceived time to be a major constraint. If the activity were to be repeated, scheduling an additional overnight and morning would allow for all tasks to be satisfactorily developed by the small groups. This would also allow more contact time for the instructors to invest with individuals and small groups.

Participants varied in their specific response to the presented units. The majority felt the concept paper lectures and exercises were very useful. Those with more advanced training or experience appreciated the presentations on NGO-academic linkages, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and the very detailed and advanced final lecture on proposal development. Therefore, both the scope and depth of the presentations were useful to all in some capacity. Furthermore, the literature prepared in the workshop documents are useful reference materials for all — especially when they begin to prepare their grant proposals.

### **Selected site visits to learn of NGO activities**

The primary objectives were to obtain first-hand experience of the issues facing NGOs and CBOs. These were confined largely to impressions or attending a regional coordinated meeting of CBO leaders. Our visits, often with Colombo-based representatives, were constrained by formality. Although Mr. Vattala and others provided language translations, my active participation was limited, in some cases, by language barriers.

Despite these restrictions, the site visits provided a useful opportunity to evaluate the prospects for developing NGO biodiversity projects outside Colombo. Also, because of the range of interest shown by NGOs attending the first workshop, our goal was to meet with as many groups as possible during the eight days before the second workshop. These visits were instrumental in supporting efforts of these groups and assisted in the design of realistic exercises at the appropriate level for NGO capabilities.

Rather than detail each project, this is left to those directly involved with the projects. Mr. Steve Nakashima (NAREPP/IRG) has been evaluating the policy implications of many of the Core groups or community based resource management (CBRM) projects under The Asia Foundation (TAF). His reports and findings are insightful, informative and based on careful, thoughtful interviews and evaluations of these programs. Please refer to his professional reviews of specific projects. This was not possible, nor the aim of the site visits reported here. Rather, the goal was to personally interact with as many groups as possible to listen to their views and suggestions. Also we sought to evaluate the appropriate level and approach to take in enhancing proposal writing skills that would assist these groups in increasing their national involvement in the BAP.

In almost all cases, NGOs in Kahalla-Pallekele Project on Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC), Ritigala, Kandy, Rekawa and the Sinharaja region and Colombo would benefit from expanded training in how the BAP would be coordinated with their on-going activities. In each case, local communities and NGOs developed projects with strong natural resource components - that were need or issue driven in a particular region. The most striking feature shared among the NGOs and CBOs visited was that educational, outreach and monitoring activities lacked clearly defined objectives and criteria to evaluate either the progress or success of their efforts. This may be attributed to two primary factors: either these monitoring efforts or criteria were not detailed before projects began and/or background information was unavailable to discern appropriate, specific conditions for evaluation. Their programs grew largely out of awareness or consensus building activities. Most groups and their activities are cohesive and have evolved to the present stage where assessment of their campaigns is urgently needed and now possible with the information available.

This need for critical review is especially applicable to the HEC and Ritigala programs. Both began to gather information on human livelihood activities and/or change views on human-elephant co-existence. Both projects are at the crucial stage where they should define objective criteria for assessing progress, design rigorous evaluation methods either with rapid rural appraisal and unbiased surveys or with detailed measurement of the socioeconomic and biological impact of gathering activities on both the resource and communities involved. Both programs stand to gain much from focused efforts on methods, intended outputs and program evaluation in this early phase. Detailed proposal development by both these groups — even if it solely intended for internal use — should be strongly encouraged. Outside advice by those experienced in such techniques as well as sampling and statistical design should be sought. Even in our brief visit during a regional HEC meeting and later during the final stages of questionnaire development, our challenges to those involved in the project forced them to

quantify their claims and define their criteria for assessment. Valuable contributions were made that facilitated an objective evaluation of the program to date. Further, it created a much more efficient sampling design rather than the proposed onerous task of sampling all villages and the majority of households. With refined objectives, sampling techniques and statistical analyses for the intended use of such information, projects reduce the workload and energy required while enhancing productivity.

Communities' efforts in the Rekawa Coastal Resources Management Project (CRMP) have also reached the stage where individual monitoring efforts would enhance programs and community based resource management. What is first necessary, however, is legal advice and assistance by Environmental Law Foundation (EFL) to lobby for the lagoon residents to acquire strictly controlled access over their own resources. This would ensure that residents are able to allocate and monitor their own fisheries and other resources. The next step would be to work with fisherman's cooperatives in designing a self-monitoring system that recorded the amount and type of the catch (weight, size and types or ideally species), location, duration of fishing, type of boat, dock access and fisherman using the resource. The fisherman's cooperative could then determine the use, stock and renewal rate of the lagoon by themselves. Although an ambitious effort, this would ensure that those tied to the resource manage their own activities. If properly conducted, this would be a profound accomplishment in natural resource management — worldwide. The representatives were intrigued and excited by this prospect and believed it was a viable undertaking. This should be the next stage in this project — greater monitoring control of activities under their jurisdiction.

In addition, sea fishermen in the Rekawa region are seeking to expand their boat capacity from 120 outboard motors to larger seaworthy vessels with powerful engines and thus, greater harvesting capacity and range. Although in the short-term they would increase their captures, this is a short-sighted approach to a limited resource. In all cases of open access or unrestricted off-shore fishing, the resource base has collapsed — some precipitously. Before capacity is expanded, community-based resource control and monitoring must be established to prevent unsustainable harvests. At this introductory stage, the concept seemed confusing to community leaders because the sea is viewed as an unlimited, renewable resource. Those of us, especially from New England fishing communities, have learned painfully that even productive areas such as George's Bank and Newfoundland cod stocks can be rapidly depleted in a few years. Thus, lessons learned in other regions should be heeded even on this local scale.

### ***Determine the resource base and control access through local rights***

With all the community based resource management (CBRM) projects and many other sites either visited or reviewed with project documents, there was a common fundamental flaw in the projected aims of the program. Although controversial, it is reflected in the approach of natural resource management projects *globally*, and thus, not confined to Sri Lankan projects or a result of specific attitudes or approaches here. In all cases, to realistically use and manage resources, the resource itself must first be assessed. For example, many questions must be answered. What is available? What is its renewal or recruitment rate? Where is it distributed? How is it harvested? What is the impact of harvesting on recruitment? Thus, the potential sustainability of the resource must be determined before any programs are developed to increase its use. When enough ecological, social and economic data are either measured or can be estimated, sensitivity analyses should be performed. These analyses should explore: (i) how changes in local, regional or export prices affect the resource, (ii) how the numbers of harvesters' influence the equation, and (iii) determine the vulnerable stages (ecological) or socioeconomic factors that are key to the management of the specific resource in question.

Far too often, before realistic appraisals of resource stocks are projected, projects aim to increase local livelihood opportunities and may even create false expectations of potential benefits. Thus, in all cases of resource management worldwide, we have learned that local residents must first have control and rights over resources. This includes limited access from migrants and having the primary role in decision making regarding resource use. However, wise use and decisions must be based on an adequate working knowledge of the distribution, renewal and productivity of the resource. Thus, at Sinharaja to Rekawa, the involvement of local communities is a noble undertaking but should be conducted simultaneously with resource assessment. Often, many realize this but remark that quantifying the resource base is far too difficult, time consuming or even impossible.

Sensitivity analyses can be based on projected numbers to determine minima or maxima without much actual data. Then it may be determined that local prices are far more important to resource management and human behavior than the reproductive rate of the medicinal plant. Many ecological analyses with even descriptive information can readily determine that harvesting will be unsustainable if employed by more than a few local people. For example, harvesting the entire adult plant for its medicinal root could rapidly deplete the resource within a brief period of extraction even if it's relatively common. The

density and dispersion of adult plants must be assessed with the harvesting rate and intensity. Thus, many of the Sri Lankan natural resource projects must aim to determine the socio-economic and ecological pattern of resource use by local communities.

### **CASE STUDIES: PERCEIVED NEEDS & STRENGTHS FOR SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH PROPOSALS**

#### **Ritigala CBRM Project**

The strict nature reserve of Ritigala has tremendous potential as a long-term biodiversity research area and is capable of attracting much international attention and financial support. This could be done through the establishment of a research area combined with intensive, systematic biological studies of flora and fauna that would build on previous research in the region (see proposal review Appendix VII). With the establishment of a research station, training courses in field methods for both university and NGO groups could be conducted. The area is unique in both the soil and geological formation and as a Gondwanaland relict or refugium and thus harbors tremendous biological endemism. The high diversity and extensive local use and knowledge of medicinal plants from the region warrant special attention for the BAP program and Sri Lanka. With two major seasons and a primary watershed for the region, this strict nature reserve has many off-site benefits as well. Further, it is an important cultural site with national heritage; an ancient Buddhist monastery founded in the ninth century and relatively accessible location near other frequently visited heritage sites.

Yet, current threats to resource management in the region are widespread and diverse: uncontrolled extraction of medicinal plants, increased encroachment (*chena*, grazing) on the perimeter of the protected area along with illegal logging within the protected area. Therefore, an outstanding case can be prepared for integrated community based conservation and management in the Ritigala wilderness area.

With local groups, Bandaranayake Memorial Aurvedic Research Institute (BMARI), TAF, Sri Lankan scientists and perhaps international sponsoring scientists, a competitive proposal should be prepared for international donors. Detailed draft proposal reviews were sent separately to these organizations. For national training, the W. Alton-Jones Foundation and The Geraldine Dodge Foundation should be approached for funds to establish a simple, basic but

adequate research station and to sponsor Sri Lankan training fellowships. An additional support could be requested from Conservation, Food and Health Foundation for support of scientific research activities. Perhaps Shaman Pharmaceuticals and Conservation International (CI) would sponsor the research component on Ayurvedic medicines and gathering activities by local communities.

Biodiversity projects throughout Sri Lanka would all greatly benefit from sharing experiences and expertise. The proposed research program at Ritigala would gain much from coordinating activities with other established programs. Similarly, the fundamental principle of the Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) is to develop working models or examples of integrated conservation and development projects. Ideally within each country, these BCN funded sites should stimulate other local, regional and/or national programs. To accomplish these intended benefits, the experience, methods and expertise of those working at the BCN funded project at Sinharaja World Heritage Site must exchange and coordinate their activities with other similar sites such as Ritigala.

### **Kahalla-Pallekele CBRM Project on Human-Elephant Conflict Project (HEC)**

Near the Kahalla Pallekele sanctuary on the south eastern sector, a mosaic patchwork of cultivated areas of secondary forest and agricultural plots exist that were historically contiguous forest. Presently, villages situated throughout these areas (which extend to the Resvehera forest reserve in the east and Karumalagaswewa forest reserve on the west) are dealing with wild and destructive elephant populations. Elephants inflict severe crop damage, destroy human structures that frequently result in human casualties. Four NGOs - Wayamba Govi Sanwardhana Padanama (WGSP), Organization for Resource Development and Environment (ORDE), Wayamba Environmental Science Explorers (WESE) and March for Conservation (MfC) have formed an umbrella organization, Wana Jana Mithuro Sanvidhanaya, (WJMS) aimed to coordinate efforts to resolve some of the human-elephant conflicts in this region. Rather than a passive role, the WJMS has coordinated villagers to take a proactive approach toward the problem by organizing villagers to develop creative solutions toward their living with elephants. Influencing community perceptions toward co-existence with elephants appears to be the primary goal of the first phase of this program.

The wildlife component of this project consists of research on elephant ranging patterns and demography. A better understanding of the forces influencing elephant attacks is essential for devising effective preventative measures. These elephant studies — specifically Dr. Preethiviraj's dissertation research on the

demographics and genetic diversity of Sri Lankan elephants — could readily obtain outside funding from a potential diversity of sponsors. First, Dr. Preethiviraj is a graduate student at the University of Oregon in Eugene. His status makes him eligible for a doctoral dissertation improvement grant sponsored by US National Science Foundation (NSF). His advisor, Dr. Russell Lande, is regarded as one of the foremost population ecologists in the world. With his professor's sponsorship, Dr. Preethiviraj can also apply for funding for his field research from numerous wildlife foundations and NGOs such as Wildlife Conservation International and National Geographic Society. Both of these groups fund a diversity of projects involving elephant ecology, demographics and management in other parts of the world. Also, I met with Dr. Andrew Dobson, Assistant Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ. 08544-1003, USA and mentioned Dr. Preethiviraj's work to him. Dr. Dobson works on population dynamics of disease in large vertebrate populations but has extensive experience modeling the effects of disease and poaching on African elephant populations. He also agreed to review any proposal and comment on its merits in a national and international setting. Dr. Dobson also reviews such proposals for Wildlife Conservation International.

To fund the village based outreach activities, I suggest applying to other small foundations once a core grant has been awarded to Dr. Preethiviraj's elephant research. Conservation and management groups with smaller granting budgets of \$10-30,000 may be willing to supplement support for such outreach activities. Because they can justify the small expense within the larger context of benefit, this may prove highly attractive as they see extended benefits for their relatively small contributions.

### **Kandy-based NGOs and Networks**

The Kandy based groups have developed a suitable working model for a regional 'umbrella' NGO through IDEA: Integrated Development Association. Their activities, coordination and dissemination of materials and information were not only well-developed but could serve as a model of other Sri Lankan provinces or districts. By combining interests and strengths, the Kandy based NGOs have attained the collective potential to receive outside international NGOs who wish to support coordinated activities by national NGO groups. Similarly, in Indonesia, the primary 'umbrella' NGO or WALHI has received generous support by both international donors and foundations such as the World Resources Institute (WRI). If regional networks of Sri Lankan NGOs with defined interests and established accountability were created, there may be greater potential for qualifying for international funding sources. The M/TEWA and NAREPP/IRG should examine the conditions that led to such a favorable

atmosphere for NGO coordination and exchange in Kandy and aim to replicate such conditions elsewhere.

### **March for Conservation- Biodiversity Education Project- MacArthur & World Bank Grant**

By both national and international standards, The March for Conservation recently received a considerably large grant (\$250,000) from the John T. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank targeted for training related to biodiversity. Although I was unable to evaluate the MfC Biodiversity Education Project activities, it became readily apparent from the written materials that funding was awarded based on personal contacts and presentations supported by only a brief concept paper. Funding was apparently 'targeted' for Sri Lankan biodiversity. In its' present state, the proposal would not have been competitive in an international review process. Therefore, other groups should not be misled into thinking that such generous funding is readily available.

This is not meant to disparage those in the March for Conservation or others involved in the process. Quite the contrary, the organization is well-established, led by extremely talented and energetic individuals and has outlined worthy projects such as institutional strengthening and other educational activities greatly needed by Sri Lanka. For all those concerned and involved in the BAP process and future funding opportunities for Sri Lanka, however, it is imperative that a full, detailed proposal be developed by MfC and its collaborators to detail the specific use of the funds. Why, if funding has already been awarded? The development of a detailed strategy is beneficial to all because it clarifies who will be responsible, how it will be conducted and applied and who will benefit for the proposed activities. Further, a written document prevents any potential miscommunication about the desired aims and responsibilities.

### **INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS REVIEWED FOR NGO PARTICIPATION IN BAP**

#### **The NAREPP/Asia Foundation Program**

As one of the oldest — and well- established and financially supported — foundations assisting Sri Lankan NGOs, The Asia Foundation has made major contributions to CBOs and NGO development in the country. In its fourth workplan for the "environmental NGO project" (ENP) under NAREPP, TAF allocated \$1.53 million in resources from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to Sri Lankan environmental NGO development. From a review of their reports, independent and group interviews

with numerous participants and NGOs outside the process, I conclude that they have created and administered an ambitious and important suite of programs. Although there is criticism surrounding their organization within Sri Lanka — and *all* NGO funding programs in general — this appears largely to be a result of their central role, long history with many particular groups and relatively top-down administrative involvement. It is always much easier to criticize those involved than to act and produce change. The challenge is to offer specific, positive steps or recommendations to improve the system.

TAF does have two specific short-comings that should be addressed. First, there are few, if any, technical staff or advisors with field based biological and/or social science expertise to help design many of the technical aspects of their programs. Field program officers are energetic, responsible and concerned, but lack specific skills to either train or advise in methodology or monitoring assessment. Although their skills in project administration and coalition building among community organizations are stellar, the program would benefit from some technical advisors. TAF recognized this need for enhancing technical staff and advisors and the original scope of this program involved work closely with the TAF in redressing this discrepancy in scientific and technical skill advising. However, M/TEWA later determined, that in the best interests of the BAP, it would be more effective to be equally available to all NGOs — not restricted only to those funded under TAF. Second, program officers and managers seem far too directly involved in the CBRM project activities (see below under perception of IGOs versus NGOs' roles). Though the starting phase of these projects may have warranted a fairly strong dose of support, continued direct involvement obviously hampers sustainability.

TAF developed a seemingly fair and rigorous selection process for NGO grants with defined criteria for project selection and advertising for applications. Despite their attempts, TAF was perceived by some as too close to USAID and administering favoritism to selected projects<sup>1</sup>. To rectify this *perceived* 'mismanagement' by those *outside* the seed grants and core group, the review process, project proposals and reports should be widely disseminated. Based on a review of their application process and criteria for scoring proposals, the program had noble aims and sought to implement these objectives. TAF could greatly reduce the problems of perception by practicing greater transparency in its programs and processes. A second recommendation would be to require that all grantees submit either concept papers for "seed grants" or detailed proposals for greater financial support that were not only available for outside review but involved NGOs in the selection process. Essentially, they would continually "re-

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<sup>1</sup> I am confused, frankly, by the widely divergent views I heard about the program.

apply” to prevent any real or perceived benefits from previous association. All parties involved — NGOs, TAF, NAREPP/IRG and outside reviewers — would benefit. Especially for monitoring progress and accomplishments, grant proposals with defined criteria for assessing programs at quarterly intervals would be encouraged. Of the programs we visited and discussed, most appeared to be developed post-hoc and primarily by TAF.

### *International (IGOs) versus National (NGOs) Roles*

Because they are so directly involved in many of the TAF projects, it is difficult to discern if TAF program officers and managers have an overseeing position. I am unaware of any other international environmental granting organization in Asia with such a hands-on attitude with its projects. Many Sri Lankan NGOs commented on this and were confused by the TAF role. This is no fault of the conscientious TAF program officers. Rather, they should be commended for investing such efforts. Yet, by becoming so involved in the design and implementation of the projects, they may be displacing the work of their grantees rather than taking the more appropriate role of encouraging, monitoring and evaluating those responsible for the project. In some specific cases, they may be creating unhealthy dependency in the relationships. This is a result of genuine interest and concern in the fate of these projects by the program officers. This, however, leads to vague and undefined roles. Therefore, the specific roles of reviewers, program officers and other administrators may require revisions or at least better definition. This would be beneficial to all those involved.

The perceived confusion of monitoring and involvement by the granting agencies can be readily rectified by insisting on clear proposal development, submission of quarterly reports and evaluations and suggesting outside assistance by more experienced NGOs and academics. Thus, the NGOs and CBOs should better define how they want the TAF to be involved in their projects. A bottom-up and individual-based approach to management should be sought and defined by each group during the planning stages. Overall, less management from above or a ‘hands-off’ approach was reportedly more acceptable to the participants. Many complained that so many ‘official visits’ and unannounced arrivals from Colombo were disrupting their productivity, were insensitive to their schedules and were undermining local authority of respected field-based coordinators. So much effort and time was devoted to reviewing activities that they were stretched to continue their largely volunteer work and livelihood activities. Those interviewed felt that they could not voice these concerns because they feared it might jeopardize further funding from this source.

Therefore, in a broader context of the BAP and the role of USAID/NAREPP, it is important to define clearly the purpose and responsibility of those involved with the coordination of NGOs and CBOs programs. Again, to be fair, this assessment is very limited as a result of time constraints and brief interactions with the range of groups funded under TAF. Also, these roles may be continually changing and these few observations also were obtained while the program is under considerable revision and flux. Currently, TAF is attempting to 'wean' its groups from any dependencies and assisting in their efforts to acquire independent financial and other support.

In conclusion, The Asia Foundation has filled a vital niche within the Sri Lankan NGO community. Grant recipients appear to be a regionally diverse group involved in a wide range of important activities related to natural resource management. It is beyond this scope of work to recommend further action. However, given its central role in environmental NGO development, TAF should encourage outside technical reviews of the program's agendas, administration and significant accomplishments. An internal and external review was available; both positively endorse TAF's Sri Lankan environmental NGO programs. More should be conducted — as they will be strongly in TAF's favor and support— but greater attention should be given to critical analysis to determine how best to continue.

### **UNDP Small Grants-GEF Programme**

The UNDP GEF small grants programme, which is administered by Mrs. Manal Jayamana, Program Officer at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), began in October 1993 with a total budget of about \$200,000. They conducted a very successful outreach campaign through advertising and preparing instructions and proposal format in all three national languages. They received 275 proposals and short-listed 50 for review by two proposal screening committees. First, ten NGO members reviewed the larger set with Mrs. Manal and her assistant. Then 15 were selected and field visits were conducted to improve the projects before funding. A second, higher-level review committee with six members from the M/TEWA and two NGOs along with UNDP officials selected seven NGOs in the first round (1994) and another eight NGOs/CBOs in the second round (1995) for small grants of no greater than \$15,000. This programme served a vital role by supporting a diverse set of local NGO/CBO activities in an equitable, accountable system. The proposal format was so detailed that it was relatively simple for all to prepare and to evaluate (See Appendix 2 in Workshop materials) . All grantees submitted evaluations, quarterly reports and detailed accounting.

## **Sri Lankan Universities & MUCIA Arrangements**

In the interest of furthering long-term academic cooperation in environmental fields between the US and Sri Lanka, several local universities are currently developing a new arrangement or university linkage programme for “Biodiversity and Sustainable Development” between a consortium of 10 or the ‘Big Ten’ mid-western US universities (MUCIA) with the Sri Lankan university system. It is an initiative sponsored by NAREPP/IRG. This arrangement offers great promise for the development of NGO and academic involvement in the BAP. Although in its initial stages of developing memoranda of understanding (MOUs), there are already emerging many opportunities for information exchange, education and research programs and funding support. One program is entitled: “Biodiversity and Environmental Quality Enhancement in a Developing Landscape and Nation”. The primary contact person and US liaison has been Dr. Craig Davis of Ohio State University. Ohio State University is serving as the lead institution and liaison with MUCIA and all other MUCIA member institutions. Dr. Kotagama and other Sri Lankan faculty and university vice chancellors should continue to establish strong bilateral institutional ties with those MUCIA universities with great resources to offer the BAP under the MOU umbrella. Thus, Sri Lankan university faculty should seize this opportunity to forge new partnerships with American universities under MUCIA. They could design a program and arrangements that would propel the BAP implementation process. In particular, the biodiversity resources at the U. of Michigan are an excellent, highly appropriate match for the current BAP program (Appendix V). This arrangement may provide the means for continued training, research and funding on terms compatible with local, regional and national priorities defined in Sri Lanka, NAREPP/IRG and the MTEWA should devote considerable energy — especially at this critical start-up phase — to ensure that broad, democratic and responsible programs are developed that are mutually beneficial to all parties.

## OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

The main obstacle to progress in encouraging greater participation in BAP is breaking down mistrust among NGOs, academics and government officials. On numerous occasions, individuals and their organizations - especially Colombo based groups with advanced English training and outside funding- are perceived as receiving preferential treatment or at least advantages in acquiring funding or contributing to the biodiversity action plan. As an outsider with no previous or current affiliation to any particular group, I heard the complaints of a variety of individuals from all levels, backgrounds and organizations. Some university lecturers and professors from many universities voiced concerns that NGOs were acting in their own business interests — looking for medicinal plants or colorful insects to sell for their own profits. There was a misconception about activities on both sides.

Based on this brief experience, most of these seemed unfounded and largely based on personal relationships and history coupled with the lack of dialogue and 'actual' information. The workshops conducted on this consultancy were largely successful and well-received *because* those designing the program were well-aware of this climate. Such an approach appears essential for future programs as well. To build a climate of mutual respect and trust will require careful and continual efforts along these lines.

At present, there also appears to be much inertia and avoidance of any 'umbrella' NGO organizations because of the forementioned problems of dialogue. An umbrella organization or network of NGOs — at least within a region — is necessary to both disseminate information and represent the coalition of opinions in a larger forum. There is, apparently, a disappointing track record with attempts to form a national umbrella environmental NGOs in Sri Lanka. The lessons learned from those experiments should be applied to a re-directed effort toward forming regional 'umbrella' NGOs. Also, TAF is collaborating with another umbrella institution the National Forum for People's Organizations (NFPO) and the successes of such an arrangement should be further explored. Furthermore, the concepts and mutual benefits of such linkages have been stressed in the two workshops conducted on this consultancy.

Participants, at the conclusion of the second workshop, offered these four main recommendations:

- Establish a national level coordination committee.
- Use a District Level Committee or Divisional Secretary level committee to coordinate grassroots NGOs. This could be done through District Environmental Agency (DEA) which was active in the past.
- Coordinate PPI Graduate trainees (now proposed Environmental officers) presently attached to Environment Ministry. Three hundred trainees are working currently with local Authorities - *Pradaysha Sabha*).
- Obtain private sector assistance whenever possible.

Although the seed was planted, the idea must be continually fertilized. NGOs and academics must see the mutual benefits to such collaboration and begin to form their own networks. To overcome these actual and perceived disadvantages, a national steering committee composed of NGOs, government organizations and academics should be created to ensure a more equitable distribution of participation and funding opportunities. Further, opportunities must be well advertised in Sinhala, Tamil and English languages. Criteria for project selection, fair and consistent reviews and available lists of successful proposals must be publically available. This will reassure those not receiving grants that the process was fair and equitable. Accountability is essential to reduce any misunderstandings that may arise. If such measures do not substantially reduce the perceived inconsistencies, outside or 'blind' technical reviewers be enlisted to periodically review programs including the granting programs or agencies themselves.

Workshops such as those held during this consultancy must be continued to enhance skills, create networks and better inform NGOs by reaching as many groups as possible outside Colombo. There should be greater dialogue among sponsors including government agencies and international groups. Many suggested that a closer network among international donors working with environmental NGOs would enhance all programs and coordinate activities among the various groups.

Encouraging unbiased participation is the first step. Continued efforts over the long term will ensure that projects are fully implemented and their progress

adequately monitored. NGO groups seem far too occupied with receiving funds. This is admittedly biased, however, by the scope of work on this consultancy. During our site visits and workshops, it was stressed that no funds were available for us to distribute. Despite the diversity of groups, participation and educational skills, NGOs have not produced *tangible* results or materials in proportion to their potential abilities. The use of these funds must be directly linked to producing results and materials for addressing conflicts of natural resource use and management. Therefore, care must be taken to encourage a shift from this first phase of participation to a second phase of tangible achievements. The focus must be shifted from complaints to action. Grievances and criticism of others only distracts attention from dealing with the urgent issues facing all Sri Lankans—the wise use and management of its spectacular natural resources

In summary, there are a diversity of talented Sri Lankan NGOs that have great potential to contribute to the BAP. Major efforts to enhance their professional skills and encourage their activities have been made in M/TEWA and with small grants programs such as UNDP and the TAF. This consultancy built largely on these tremendous efforts. Even as enthusiasm and participation as well as collaboration among groups and sectors is on the uprise, traditional funding sources for their projects are decreasing. The GEF small grants program, The Asia Foundation, the Biodiversity Support Program (BSP) and Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) and even USAID/NAREPP cannot be relied on as stable continuous source of support. Thus, accomplishments to reduce the competition among groups may be hampered by a sharp decline in the available financial support *worldwide*. We are all forced to re-evaluate roles and programs. Professional skills should be enhanced so NGOs can compete internationally for IGO and foundation support. Greater collaborations between NGOs and academics — both nationally and internationally — must be sought and encouraged in order to produce high quality projects worthy of funding. Cooperation must be stressed as a creative means of overcoming a perceived or real period of financial scarcity.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Noble goals and intentions were introduced during the unveiling of the BAP to the NGO, academic and donor communities. Because of this innovative approach to the Sri Lankan BAP, Dr. S. Kotagama should write a brief editorial type article or note for the journal *Conservation Biology* outlining the activities to gain international recognition and support for further activities. Although conceptually sound, many components of the BAP objectives must be detailed with specific practical steps or tasks to insure progress. Moreover, many activities must be conducted simultaneously to ensure that bottlenecks do not occur and obstruct progress. Recommendations for future activities are included below.

### **Enhance Further NGO Participation & Coordinate Activities**

#### ***Regional site visits to link NGO activities with BAP initiatives***

Concerted efforts to draw further connections between current NGO/CBO programs and BAP initiatives must be made. Defining biodiversity, detailing the BAP initiatives and targeting some of the NGOs diverse interests with specific BAP components is advised. Also, identifying regional or district-based priorities by local groups is strongly recommended for incorporation into the BAP. The CBOs and NGOs requested more reference materials on biodiversity. Additional site visits to learn about on-going NGO/CBO activities should be conducted with the aim to assist these groups identify and monitor their own natural resource management. Rather than an outside consultant, regular visits of regional NGOs should be conducted by M/TEWA sponsored national representatives<sup>2</sup>.

#### ***Central NGO and BAP library***

A central depository or location for all biodiversity materials produced by M/TEWA, donors and all NGOs should be established that is readily accessible and well advertised. This NGO library should contain *The Foundation Directory* and other reference materials obtained or supplied during this consultancy. The database of NGO programs produced by Mr. Vattala should also be available. NGOs such as SLEJF, OEE, OSLEN, EFL, NF and MfC and others who have a prominent role in disseminating environmental concerns to the general public

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<sup>2</sup> Mr. H. M V Vattala has both the experience and the insights to facilitate such exchanges.

should be assembled to have them determine the best procedure in developing this biodiversity resource network. If resources permit, even a portable computer and printer should be maintained for use by all those preparing documents. Also, samples of successful proposals and listings of available funding opportunities with sample grant materials could be filed for use. As documents are created by NGOs they could also be sent to this NGO library. NGOs such as Suryodaya Foundation in Kandy could act as a regional clearing house by compiling and distributing products to regional locations as well.

### *National journals or newsletters as a source for biodiversity information*

The information and experience of the NGOs and CBOs is invaluable for the BAP implementation. Access to information and awareness of their activities was the major concern voiced in the NGO mission statements reviewed. Over 50% claimed that this was the primary constraint to their effectiveness. Limited human resources (36%) is the second most frequently cited reason. To overcome these limitations, information could be compiled, recorded and exchanged in a newsletter and/or national journal created specifically for BAP. This may be covered solely through *SOBA : Environmental Publication* produced by M/TEWA. Existing communication networks could be expanded to include BAP activities. According to The Asia Foundation (Feb 95), environmental newspapers such as Haritha (OSLEN), Biosphere and Surekama (EFL) and Diyadam (SLEJF) had a combined 1994 readership of over 150,000 persons. Some coordination of newsletters should be created to include up-to-date BAP information.

The purpose is two-fold. By creating a forum for dissemination of results as well as source for dialogue, a national BAP newsletter/journal could enhance the communication among groups — especially those from different regions attempting similar activities (e.g., tree planting). Second, the journal serves to focus outputs and reports — not merely for paperwork — but to monitor progress. At later stages, these newsletters could become available on the international computer network (Internet) to exchange this information globally. Thus, M/TEWA possibly with NAREPP/IRG could develop an inexpensive means to communicate activities, results and progress through a newsletter network.

## **Strengthen Institutional & NGO Professional Capacity to Implement BAP**

### ***Biodiversity database & collection management***

As research on the Sri Lankan biodiversity continues, there soon will be an urgent need to store, catalogue and manage species collections. BAP creators must anticipate the added burden on national plant collections. Furthermore, there are no existing national collections of fauna. This is a *national tragedy!* Valuable biological specimens are located in museums throughout the world but unavailable for rapid use by Sri Lankan university students, instructors and researchers. Thus, a national system of species collection and maintenance should be designed, instituted and coupled with a user-driven database created specifically for Sri Lankan needs. Some difficult questions remain to be answered. For example, how will the medicinal plant program under GEF funding be supported institutionally? Where will the collections be stored? Who will loan and send duplicates to the plant systematic experts worldwide? Can the herbarium handle this increased workload? Support to enhance current institutional capacity for managing biodiversity collections — such as trained curatorial staff and facilities— must be obtained through outside sources such as building a biodiversity collection management component into the new Global Environmental Facility project.

An entomologist at the University of Peradeniya, Mrs. Jayanthi Edirisihghe, not only fully agrees with this need, but she has taken the personal initiative to develop a project proposal suitable for submission to the GEF. Other resource persons such as Dr. P Samarakoon (Botanist, U. of Ruhuna) Drs. Mr and Mrs Gunatilleke (mycologist and botanist, U of Peradeniya), Prof. Jayantha Wijeratne (Aquatic and freshwater fish specialist; U of Kelaniya) and Mr. D.H.P. Peramunegama (Director, Botanical Gardens, Haggala) should also be directly involved in developing specific components of the proposal. Mrs. Jayanthi Edirisihghe should be encouraged to participate and have a central role in the development of this project - especially with her entomological skills and experience working with the British Museum of Natural History.

Indonesia is embarking on a similar biodiversity management project — albeit on much greater scale and magnitude — due to the country's size and biogeographical complexity. The research director at Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum Center for Asian Botany, Dr. John Burley, is project team leader for collections management of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funded project in Indonesia. Indonesia is approximately two years ahead of Sri

Lanka in the formal process of managing its species' collections. Dr. Kotagama and his colleagues stand to gain much insight and experience from visiting Indonesian institutions and discussing procedures — common mistakes and creative solutions — with Indonesian officials, collection and database managers and Dr. John Burley. Most importantly, Sri Lanka has yet to develop official memoranda of understanding and legally binding scientific regulations for the use and transfer of specimens (biodiversity) beyond its borders. Such considerations have been debated actively in Indonesia and should be referred to as guidelines for Sri Lankan administrators developing their own protocols.

GEF proposals for enhancing Indonesia's capacity to collect, use and manage biodiversity collections have been included in the materials for review in this consultancy. Also, during Dr. Kotagama's visit to the US, he will have the opportunity to meet with Dr. Burley and discuss the applicability of Indonesian programs to Sri Lanka's current concerns and future uses. Site visits to other Asian countries may also provide the opportunity to learn from others in the region.

### ***Intensive field training courses on sampling design, methods & analyses***

From numerous discussions with university lecturers and NGOs, it became readily apparent that field-based training courses on the latest techniques such as mapping vegetation using global positioning systems (GPS), sampling design for invertebrate and vertebrate populations, experimental design for manipulative trials and rural social surveys were not only needed, but were urgently requested. National and international resource persons could work together as an effective team.<sup>3</sup>

NGO and academic participation in a field methods course has at least three key benefits for the BAP. First, academics and NGOs interact in a common setting and may link compatible interests. Second, NGOs representatives, trained in

<sup>3</sup> Two experts in training Asian scientists and NGOs in methods essential for the Sri Lankan BAP process are Dr. Jill Belsky, tropical rural sociologist, and Dr. Stephen Siebert, tropical natural resource management- with a specialty in the sustainable use and extraction of non-timber forest products. Both are professors at the U. of Montana. For over 15 years, Drs. Belsky and Siebert have investigated livelihoods of rural communities and their use of resources in the Philippines, Indonesia and Belize. They are highly regarded for applying rigorous scientific standards and designing sampling protocols for social surveys, forest assessments in coastal, lowland and rural communities. I have collaborated with both these professionals on inter-disciplinary field courses or consultancies with nationals and internationals in Indonesia and Belize. Thus, I have witnessed their abilities and highly recommend their talents and suitability for a diversity of academic and NGO training in Sri Lanka.

field-based techniques, methods and analyses could develop and conduct successful biodiversity projects. This proposed field course would enhance the environmental NGOs professional capabilities and is especially relevant to those with much experience and advanced level projects (e.g., the Core group NGOs under TAF's 'umbrella'). Third, academics and NGOs can use this training for further educational and outreach activities within their sphere of influence.

These programs could be coordinated with the wildlife training programs currently being taught by Dr. Kotagama and others at the Open University. Further, the university/NGO courses could be a one-month program and/or a week long, intensive course tied to international funding and institutional affiliations (e.g., MUCIA). Finally, and most importantly, a well-designed course program would establish a coordinated sampling effort and design across sites. This allows for direct site comparisons and facilitates a "comprehensive scientific and systematic analyses and reviews of protected areas" (BAP pg 40). Thus, Sri Lanka would be in an enviable position of developing its institutional capacity and coordinating research design and methods across the country.

### *GIS training & extension to include BAP*

In the last six months, the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) under M/TEWA acquired a full suite of Geographical Information System equipment and software from the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Two months ago, six individuals were trained to use the facility. Unfortunately, according to Mr. W.A.D.D. Wijesooriya at CES, GIS databases compiled by the Dept. of Forestry and Landuse have yet to be coordinated with the CEA programme. However, this ARCInfo system, which is PC based, holds great promise as a useful tool in BAP implementation and database management. Through Agenda 21 at UNCED, there was a global request to compile all available information on landuse, forestry and wildlife along with species distributions. Globally, GIS is rapidly becoming the most important new technology in natural resource management for scientists and policy advisors alike. For the M/TEWA, universities and NGOs, developing linkages with the CEA-GIS database will be not only useful, but perhaps vital to the long-term effectiveness and thus, success of the BAP. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to evaluate the uses of GIS in BAP implementation and train as many individuals as possible in the application of this facility.

NARREPP/IRG has conducted surveys of GIS use in the country and has developed GIS capacity. Many of its projects — especially involving coastal zone management — have successfully applied such techniques in their natural resource management programs. Also, the US university system (e.g., through

MUCIA type arrangements) or private sector have great potential to assist GIS training in Sri Lanka.<sup>4</sup> M/TEWA and especially the BAP cell should explore and incorporate GIS training as a priority into its educational strategy

### *Future workshops on proposal writing skills*

A second 'improved' workshop could be repeated for a new group of NGOs and a more advanced workshop for proposal writing could be designed as originally planned.

#### **Workshop II Repeated**

The second workshop should be repeated for the set of respondees who were not selected in the first round. Due to size constraints of the workshop, many high quality 'mission statements' and NGOs could not be accommodated. With a few minor adjustments (notably increasing direct involvement of local resource persons), this workshop could be repeated with little additional effort. This has two major benefits. First, it would encourage those who responded to our request and invested much effort into the submissions but were not selected for the initial workshop. Second, by divesting greater responsibility to resource persons (academics and government representatives) for conducting the workshop, these resource persons would have another formal opportunity to sharpen their training skills in proposal writing and development. Therefore, a repeated workshop would respond to the great interest present in the NGO community, refine the curriculum and expand the training experience of the resource persons.

#### **Workshop III: A Proposal Writing Workshop**

The original proposal for the consultancy — selecting a subset of more advanced NGOs with concept papers or projects and working with each group individually and within a workshop setting — would be the next stage in the development of national expertise for the BAP implementation. Because a broad general call for action was undertaken, this can now be initiated democratically. Because each project is a case study with specific needs, strengths and limitations, one-to-one training is the desired format to transfer skills at this advanced stage.

The advance proposal writing workshop would select all those participants from NGOs who could submit a fairly detailed proposal in English. Ideally, this would

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<sup>4</sup> For example, The School of Natural Resources and Environment at the U of Michigan has an extensive GIS facility with courses offered on using the system and plans for a full GIS/Remote sensing curriculum in 1996.

be in response to a funding deadline suitable for submission such as the Biodiversity Support Program (BSP). If there was a call for proposals with sufficient time before a submission deadline, this proposed workshop could assist in the design and formulation of competitive proposals for a specific funding source. Because there is a defined product and potentially tangible results, this is greatly preferable to a general workshop.

Although the second workshop in Wadduwa introduced concepts and practices, increasing skills and encouraging high expectations without deliverables (i.e., funding sources) could backfire if funding opportunities remain unavailable. Unfortunately, the two major small grants programs introduced at the second workshop have completed their final funding cycle (GEF administered by UNDP and BSP in Washington DC). The Asia Foundation is also in its final stages of project funding. If a new small grants program was developed or available for Sri Lankan NGOs that distributed at least 10 or more grants in the range of at least \$500-5000, an ideal opportunity would be created. NGOs would then be called upon to develop concept papers into competitive proposals. Again, there would be defined expectations and products for submission rather than simply the transfer of information. This only can be realistically applied when a specific proposal is required and would challenge groups to respond to a defined request. Therefore, the NAREPP/IRG with M/TEWA are in an ideal position to make a significant contribution to NGO and academic participation in the BAP process by developing a small-grants program for biodiversity-related projects.

Although much can be accomplished with targeted energies, it must be recognized that there is no substitute for direct field training in methods, analyses and sampling design. Moreover, many of these skills cannot be transferred in a brief training session, but must be acquired through a continual learning process coupled with a series of workshops. Therefore, it is essential to not only conduct workshops, but to enhance university linkages both nationally (through local NGO-academic partnerships) and internationally (e.g., through MUCIA arrangements). Field-based training programs must be created for NGOs and resource persons to sustain their activities. Also, as previously mentioned, the existence and continuity of small competitive grants are essential for the progress of NGO involvement.

### **Develop a Small Grants Program for Environmental NGOs**

The GEF small grants program administered by UNDP should continue to maintain CBO support. Unfortunately, this program has completed its full funding cycle. Because it fills an essential niche, a strong lobbying effort must be undertaken to ensure continuation of the program. Without additional funding,

there is no local network for most of the recipients to rely upon for future support. It has been suggested to Mrs. Manal Jayamana that she advertise the accomplishments of the program through a summary report of the program's achievements. By preparing and distributing a detailed report which outlines the previous program and details future plans, additional funding cycles may be obtained.

NAREPP/IRG should immediately consider soliciting funds for another small-grants program to either supplement current activities or provide interim support to projects funded under TAF, GEF and other sources. Thus, building capacity through linkages, resources and forums for dissemination of results should all be implemented simultaneously. Although each one has merits independently, each activity in isolation cannot produce the desired results. Therefore, M/TEWA and NAREPP/IRG should seriously consider a broad, long-term strategy to place each of these activities in a general context of the overall BAP implementation program.

What would be the best way to approach a competitive small grants program? The process is essentially identical to developing a proposal outlined in the first workshop. NAREPP/IRG & M/TEWA should work together to develop a 'mission statement' for the program. First, they must reach a consensus and define the fundamental principles of the granting body. Next, an outline of the specific objectives of the program should be detailed with detailed criteria for selection of projects. Then methods, activities and a monitoring system should be developed following the steps detailed in the concept paper exercise. At this stage, the concept paper of this small grants program should be reviewed by a diversity of groups for comments and suggestions especially those with previous first-hand experience in distributing funds to NGOs. Finally, a detailed proposal should be produced that describes the methods, guidelines, granting form, review process and monitoring procedures for the entire length of the granting process. Coordination with other donors and organizations should be initiated at this stage as well.

The critical components to successful implementation of a small-grants program require careful planning, accountability and reaching a wide-audience. This could be the sole focus of a short-term consultancy. Careful preparation of the grant form and instructions would ensure that NGOs could easily follow instructions, think through the project, provide the essential information for evaluation and monitoring and allow for objective assessment of the merits of the proposed activities to the BAP and NAREPP/IRG & M/TEWA's 'mission'.

NAREPP/IRG and M/TEWA may not be in the financial or administrative position to offer such a program. Moreover, many feel that the government should not financially support NGOs because of a potential conflict of interest. Then both organizations should actively seek outside donor sources, coordinate a qualified panel of reviewers from government, NGOs and universities, solicit advice and offer their invaluable experience in designing a democratic and equitable program.

### **Increase international linkages with sponsors, collaborators and technical reviewers**

The great majority (> 95%) of US funding opportunities for biodiversity related activities — with the notable exception of the Biodiversity Support Program — require a US sponsor or co-principal investigator. Sri Lankan universities, NGOs and governmental agencies who wish to seek international funding must invest in building international links. Sri Lankan groups must solicit concerned or involved international researchers for an interactive, mutually beneficial mentoring role. For historical and political reasons, these independent researchers are currently under-represented in Sri Lanka compared with other countries in the region. With the wealth of biological and human resources in Sri Lanka, the paucity of international partnerships is a major short-coming that should be addressed.

Sri Lanka is greatly under-represented in the funding programs of a diversity of international foundations and IGOs — especially in the US. Many of these organizations have expressed the desire to increase their awards to Sri Lanka. Thus, the NAREPP/IRG/ and TAF/USAEP sponsored fellowships to the United States are extremely useful for the selected Sri Lankans to begin dialogue with key players and organizations. Overall, greater awareness of the programs and opportunities both within Sri Lanka and potentially with other nations should be promoted.

At the international level, writing competitive proposals is greatly assisted by native speakers who have familiarity with the process. For example, although Indonesian academics and NGOs are, on average per capita, less skilled in English and have fewer trained academic professionals, they have received tremendous support for their biodiversity programs from international programs such as the BCN where 11 grants were awarded. In overwhelming majority of the grants awarded by the BCN to Indonesian projects, the proposal was written and supported by non-nationals. Conversely, in Sri Lanka eight of nine BCN planning grants were rejected. Program officers had earmarked funds for Sri Lanka and requested competitive proposals. This is not to say that more

proposals should be prepared by non-nationals. Rather, the human resources are presently available in Sri Lanka to develop competitive proposals for biodiversity-related projects.

*Network of technical reviewers of biodiversity proposals*

M/TEWA, NAREPP-IRG and/or TAF should request only technical assistance by compiling a list of technical reviewers worldwide across a diversity of fields (e.g., biodiversity management, botany, wildlife ecology, marine biologists, GIS specialists, rapid rural appraisal, natural resource economics etc.) who would agree to serve as outside 'advisors' or external reviewers. This serves to expand the network, exchange ideas and receive advice during the critical planning stages without creating dependency on those outside the region. Soliciting external proposal reviews of potential programs can be done inexpensively through posting a set of proposals for outside review. Because the capacity within Sri Lanka is enhanced, this is much preferable to the current system operating in Indonesia.

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