ABSTRACT

During recent past Sri Lanka had experienced frequent water scarce situations though its severity showed variation in temporal and spatial basis. Water scarcity largely affects agricultural production in the dry zone since period of water shortage usually overlaps with the most critical period of crop growth. The seriousness of drought was felt significantly during 2012 *Yala* season and estimated loss of paddy yield of this season compared to the same season of previous year is 43%. Another 30% of paddy lands were destroyed at the initial stage after sowing. Drought has also affected 43% of the Other Field Crops (OFC) cultivated extent.

To ease the burden of the people affected by drought of 2012 *Yala*, emergency drought mitigation & relief programme was implemented by the Ministry of Economic Development. Considering the importance of de-silting existing tanks in the dry zone as a long term drought mitigation strategy, the accelerated tank de-siltation programme was initiated and was completed within few months. Nearly, Rupees million 3577 was disbursed to conduct this project.

Impact of the tank de-siltation project was assessed by the study in satisfying different water needs of the people and the environment. Tank de-siltation has increased the capacity of all the de-silted tanks though increase of irrigable capacity is somewhat less. Due to accelerated nature of the project de-siltation work has done without proper consultation of the technical experts and farmers, restricting many potential benefits of tank de-silting. However due to increase in total capacity of tanks farmers has gained high level of water security for cultivation, access to water for animals and other domestic needs. Proper planning which utilize technical and traditional expertise as well as tank specific issues will be useful in getting active involvement of beneficiaries for projects of this nature and providing lasting benefits.