

## **Eco-system analysis of a village within Victoria, Randenigala, Rantambe (VRR) sanctuary – Case study in *Lihiniyagala* village**

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Today environment is subjected to a threatening situation because of over exploitation of environmental resource by human. This study is based on the environmental problems associated with the villagers within the Victoria, Randenigala, Rantambe (VRR) sanctuary. Although government had given legal right to live in that area, being a preservation zone, villagers do not enjoy property rights. Therefore there is a huge conflict between “preservation” and “activities of the community”. This study makes an attempt to examine the problems associated with villagers within the sanctuary and identify causes for such, in order to propose solution to remedy the existing situation. *Lihiniyagala* rural village which is situated in Kandy district, was selected as the study area. This is one of the villages located within the VRR sanctuary. Data collection was done by field visits, focus group discussions, and informal discussions with religious, village leaders, villagers and forest rangers in that area.

There are about 120 families live in this village. Most of them are engaged in agriculture activities that do not generate sufficient income. The problems identified in the area were categorized under 5 major groups as environmental, economic, social and cultural, legal and policies and political. Wood cutting, hunting, sand mining, soil erosion, and water problem were identified as environmental problems. Lack of income generation activities and lack of alternative job opportunities were clustered as economic problems. Social and cultural problems were insufficient infrastructure (power source, roads), elephant man conflict and limited knowledge on eco-system and environmental conservation. Legal and policy problems occur mainly due to improper project planning and implementation. There were some political problems due to rapid implementation of project. Causes for above

situation are lack of government intervention, unclear property rights and deforestation. Possible solution to uplift the villagers' living standards can be stated as follows. Implementation of policy framework, emphasizing sustainable forest management. Creation of more employment opportunities by introducing livestock rearing, especially goats and poultry. Diversify crop cultivation under SALT system. Training people for self employment such as handicrafts and pottery works. Launching proper extension service and fortify interpersonal relationship with authorities and villagers. Eco-tourism is also a solution. Hence, policy measures are warranted to conserve the environment surrounding the village to minimize the conflict of "conservation" and "human activities".