

# IMPLEMENTATION OF FARMER FIELD SCHOOL (FFS)

## Inception Report



FAO- GEF Project on Rehabilitation of Degraded Agricultural Lands in  
Kandy, Badulla and Nuwara Eliya Districts in the Central Highlands of  
Sri Lanka

Land Resource Division, Ministry of Environment and Wildlife

Resources

Government of Sri Lanka

Field Coordination – Green Movement of Sri Lanka

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# **Implementation of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Practices Through Farmer Field Schools**

## **Inception Report**

### **1. Introduction**

“Rehabilitation of Degraded Agricultural Lands in Kandy, Badulla and Nuwara Eliya districts in the Central Highlands”, is a project implemented by the FAO, funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) through its land degradation portfolio. The Project (GCP/SRL/063/GFF) aims at reversing and arresting land degradation in agricultural lands in aforesaid districts in the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka, by increasing the provision of ecosystems goods and services and enhancing food security through the promotion of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) practices. The project consists of four components, i.e. strengthening policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks for SLM; Implementation of the identified land restoration technologies in the affected areas of the three districts through a participatory approach; Support the development and implementation of an innovative funding mechanism to promote SLM, Knowledge management, awareness raising and dissemination of best practices.

According to the MTR report, the project has taken a novel approach in rehabilitation. Instead of focusing solely on specific SLM technologies (e.g. terracing for soil erosion control) it has focused on educating and encouraging farmers to adopt SLM technologies (also crop diversification and improved crop-livestock integration) to increase their income from farming and thereby the livelihood. The latter is of special importance as the focus on promotion and education on soil conservation interventions directly is seen negatively by many parties. It is mainly due to its very high labor intensiveness. Thus, the project interventions have been planned holistically through which reducing land degradation is introduced with enhancements in total farm productivity. The project’s support for linking land users to markets/value addition (through PPPs) is really a catalyst to promote the sustainable adoption of SLM best practices and will increase yields. This objective will be realized by offering correct incentives to land users to implement SLMs. This will also ensure the sustainability of project results and impact in the long-run.

The MTR report has also recommended that remaining project interventions should refocus on the well-proven Farmer Field School (FFS) approach. The MTR team recommends that the project shall use FFSs as a vehicle to catalyze wide-scale adoption of SLM best practices, particularly less labor intensive technologies than conventional approaches:

- Restore soil organic matter content and thereby enhance resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events under a changing and variable climate;
- Reduce tillage operations;
- Composting and green manure application;
- Value addition and value chain management including access to market information.

## **2. FFS Capacity-building Action Plan**

In line with the above recommendations, the project planned to compile an FFS Capacity-building Action Plan for **Sustainable Home Gardens, Sustainable Smallholder Tea Production and Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) in vegetable and fruit cultivation in three districts where the project is being implemented**. However, some components of the FFS programme have to be changed and revised on account of the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in March 2020.

Meanwhile, post-COVID-19 priorities of the Government of Sri Lanka have mainly focused on import substitution for crops like potato. In aligning with this, the project agreed to support **seed potato production** through FFS approach. Since the potato cultivation is considered as highly erosive crop, FFS approach is more important and timely-needed in the Badulla and Nuwara Eliya Districts.

### **2.1. Training of Trainers (TOTs) on material development and training**

Extension officers of relevant technical institutions will be used as facilitators for FFS. Each FFS group will be facilitated by one extension officer (technical) and field-level coordinator. These field-level officers and field-level coordinators are usually followers of traditional top

down extension approach. Therefore, comprehensive TOT programmes on FFS will be conducted for facilitators and other relevant categories. The Farmer Field School Guidance of FAO (2016) will be used in those TOTs to ensure the quality of programmes.

There are a large number of internationally available guidebooks for FFS. But there are only very few guidebooks in local languages. Hence, international knowledge and local experience of officers and farmers will be used to compile TOT Manual on FFS.

### **2.1.1. Module 1. Training Module for Facilitator Training for Establishment and Implementation of FFS**

#### **Common objective of the module:**

Development of strong facilitation team which will be capable of establishing and conducting FFS in the most effective way resulting in a significant attitudinal change with positive thinking.

#### **Training methods to be used:**

Participatory training methods and approaches will be used

#### **Structure of the module:**

There are seven lessons in this module and each lesson has a lesson plan, lecture note, training aids, exercise sheets and evaluation questionnaire.

#### **Following lessons will be included in this module:**

1. Introduction;
2. FFS approach and its basic concepts;
3. Establishment of groups and management;
4. Adult learning principles for FFS approach;
5. Establishment of the FFS in the field;
6. Practices to be followed by the FFS in the field;
7. ICT for agriculture extension.

This book will be developed as a guidebook for FFS which could be used for any other project or program as well.

**2.1.2. Module 2 - Facilitator Field Guidebooks for following categories:**

1. Sustainable Home garden;
2. GAP in vegetable production;
3. GAP in seed potato production;
4. Sustainable smallholder tea cultivation.

***Each Field Guidebook contains two parts:***

1. Technical information of different categories/crops and FFS-oriented exercises for those technologies -
  - This section explains the basic technical information relevant to a particular category or crop. It also contains exercises which can be used to encourage discussions on those technologies among farmers and select the best technologies which are suitable for farmers' socio-economic situation and local environment.
2. Curriculum for the program -
  - This is the FFS implementation plan in a cropping season for the relevant crop or category. Each crop or category has critical events which are of high importance for final productivity and Sustainable Land Management as a whole.

As discussed in a foregoing section, Agriculture Instructor (AI) or Tea Inspector (TI) will work as facilitators and Agricultural Production and Research Assistant (APRA) or Development Officer (DO) will work as a village level group. This mechanism will encourage inter-sectoral collaboration while ensuring effective and efficient field level coordination. Each group is responsible to conduct one or two FFSs with a total of 60 FFSs to be held during the first round of FFS implementation program during the period from July 2020 to January 2021.

After completing first round, another 60 farmer leaders and officers would be selected from the successfully implemented FFSs and they will be trained further as farmer trainers. Before implementing the second round, experiences obtained from the first round will be reviewed and refresher training will be provided and workplans for a 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of FFS implementation will be developed during a 2-3 day workshop at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of FFS implementation. In the light of prevailing COVID-19 pandemic situation, physical meetings will be restricted further. Therefore, ICT tools will be used to conduct FFSs and information among farmers will be shared through WhatsApp and Facebook.

Considering the above requirements, TOT materials will be developed with the participation of relevant experts and TOT programme will be conducted by the same experts. Moreover, field guides for the above four categories will be developed for the efficient implementation of FFSs.

Following four committees have been appointed for the preparation of TOT materials and FFS field guidelines:

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Expert Group</b>
1	Sustainable home garden	Mr. W.G.M.G. Dayawansa - Consultant, FFS; Mrs. D.S. Ratnasinghe - Additional Director, Agri Business Unit; Mr. Kapila Wckramasinha - Assistant Director - Agriculture (NAICC); Mr. T.A. Kamies - Assistant Director of Agriculture
2	Sustainable smallholder tea cultivation	Mr. Upali Jayasundara - Consultant, FFS; Mr. Kahadawa - OIC, TRI Mr. M.R.N. Dammika , Mr. T.A Kamies, Assistant Director of Agriculture, NAICC
3	GAP in vegetable cultivation	Mr. W.G.M.G. Dayawansa, Mrs. D.S. Ratnasinghe - Additional Director, Mr. A.S.M. Roshan - Assistant Director of Agriculture and Mr. Mahesh Aththanayake - Agricultural Instructor in Agri business Unit, Mr.I.M.N. Chandrasiri - Principal Agriculturist, DOA, Dr. A.G. Chandrapla - Deputy Director, NRMCC, Mr. T.A Kamies - Assistant Director of Agriculture
4	GAP in seed potato production.	Mr. Upali Jayasundara - Consultant, FFS, Mr. K.P. Somachandra - Deputy Director, RARDC, Bandarawela, Mr. Kithsiri Wimalachandra- Deputy Director, Mr. T.A. Kamies - Assistant Director of Agriculture

### 3. Details on FFS in Field-level Implementation

FFS programme	District	Number of FFSs targeted			Total
		1 <sup>st</sup> season June 2020 – Jan 2021	2 <sup>nd</sup> season Jan 2021 – April 2021	3 <sup>rd</sup> season Mar 2021- June 2021	
• Home garden	Badulla	04	04		08
	Nuwara Eliya	02	02		04
	Kandy	04	04		08
Sub total		10	10		20
• GAP vegetable	Badulla	02	02		04
	Nuwara Eliya	02	02		04
	Kandy	02	02		04
Sub total		06	06		12
• GAP – Seed potato production	Badulla	3	3	24	30
	Nuwara Eliya	4	4	24	32
Sub total		07	07	48	62
• Sustainable small-holder tea cultivation	Badulla	06			06
	Nuwara Eliya	04			04
	Kandy	10			10
Sub total		20			20



## FFS Implementation Plan



## 4. ICT for FFS Implementation

Even though the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in agricultural extension has been a matter of great interest during recent years, its application is very meagre. Meanwhile, as conducting physical meetings is not recommended due to prevailing COVID-19 situation in Sri Lanka, the use of ICT in agricultural extension has gained great attention. Therefore, with the guidance of Mr. T.A. Kamish, Assistant Director of Agriculture, National Agricultural Information and Communication Center (NAICC) of the DoA, an ICT-based program has been developed.

#### **4.1. Usage of WhatsApp**

This program will be implemented in two tiers:

**(i) *Farmer-level WhatsApp group:***

WhatsApp group will be formed for every FFS group under the close supervision of the facilitator. This will encourage farmers to share their progress and issues and innovative practices. Further, farmers are expected to share their knowledge and experiences to resolve the issues among group members, Voice message as well as chatting facilities will be used. Photos as well as videos will be shared through this group. In addition, fact sheets for different issues in the selected categories will be developed by the project and will be shared among the members at times of relevance.

**(ii) *Expert-level WhatsApp group:***

Four expert groups on relevant categories will be developed and connected through WhatsApp. If any issues are unable to be resolved at facilitator's level or within the farmer group level, those issues will be submitted to an expert group. Then, expert views are expected to be disseminated through ICT to the field level.

#### **4.2. Usage of Face Book (FB)**

This program will be implemented in three tiers:

**(i) Farmer-level**

A Facebook page will be developed for each FFS group. This will encourage to share information within the group. It will also give the opportunity to every group to compare with others and develop innovative technologies or approaches through competition.

**(ii) Category-level**

Each category, a FB group will be formed and encouraged to share their issues and innovative practices relevant to their category.

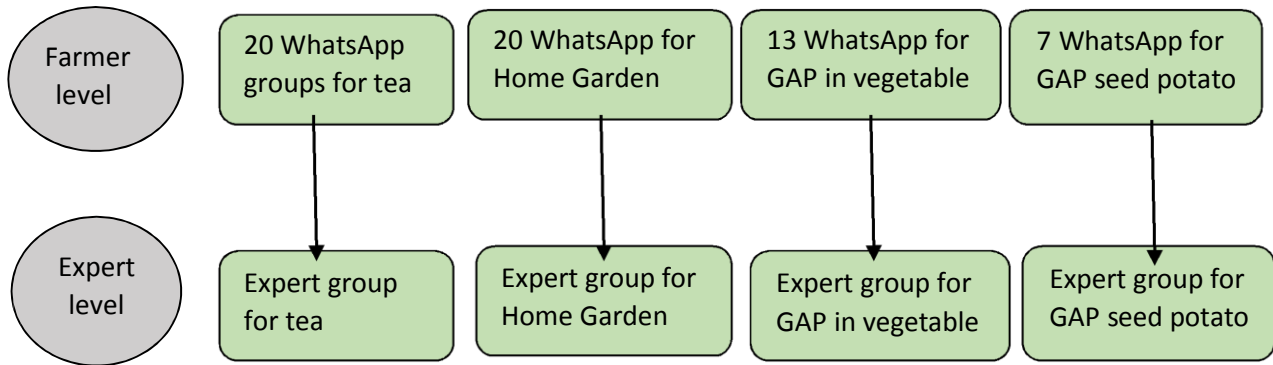
**(iii) FB page for FFS**

All innovative information and practical issues on FFS will be shared through this FB group.

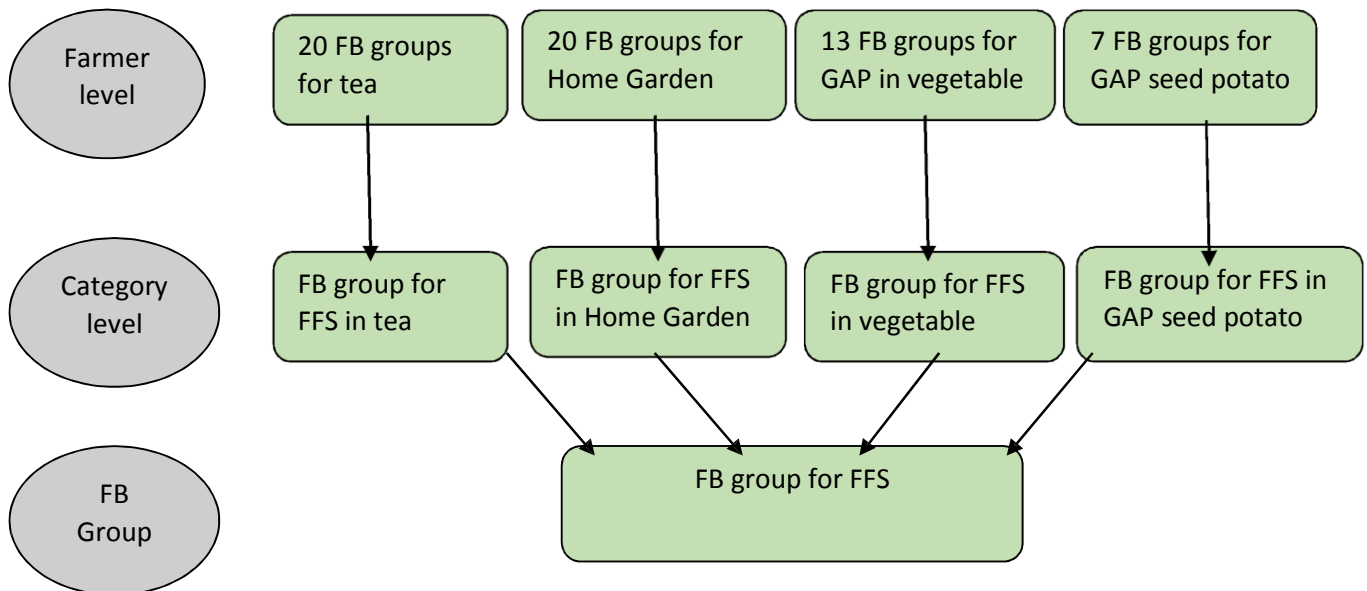
Due to lack of technical know-how and facilities (Smartphone and sufficient signal strength) this will be a challenging task. But, FB approach has already been established in seed potato program.

### ICT usage in FFS

WhatsApp group



### Face Book Groups



## 5. Expected outputs

- Inception Report with the overall FFS implementation plan and detailed curriculum;
- Identification of training needs and relevant SLM practices to be promoted in FFS trainings;
- TOT and FFS training resource materials including curricula which are validated by experts in the relevant technical areas; (TOT Manuel on FFS, Field guides on selected four categories with curriculum);
- A total of 90 facilitators trained through the implementation of 3 Training of Trainers (TOTs);
- A total of 60 FFSs implemented resulting in 1,500 farmers trained and at least 60 FFS farmer facilitators identified and trained for scaling up the FFS programme;
- A total of 3 mid-season FFS TOT follow up workshops conducted to assess implementation status with curriculum gaps, provide refresher training and fine-tuning for the second cycle of FFS;
- TOT and FFS reports with results and experience of pilot FFSs;
- TOT Experience sharing/planning workshops conducted and FFS scale up plans developed for the next step of scaling up of FFS training during 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2021;
- Conducted 40 second- cycle FFSs for good practices relevant for Home gardens, Good Agricultural Practices in Vegetables;
- Three district-level and one national-level famer congresses for FFS graduates, including an award ceremony conducted;
- Experience sharing workshop and a scale up plan for next step of FFS implementation;
- Monthly progress report.

## 6. Implementation Plan

No.	Activities	2020				2021	
		1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q
01	Four (4) expert groups developed for home garden, GAP in vegetable and fruits, Sustainable smallholder tea cultivation and seed potato production						
02	TOT training manual preparation for above 4 sectors						
03	Development of indicators for monitoring and evaluation of FFS						
04	Validation workshop with experts						
05	Awareness workshop for Heads of institutes						
06	Conduct initial TOT training for master trainers						
07	Groundwork and basic field preparation for FFS						
08	Workshop on finalization of curriculum for FFS implementation						
09	Implementation of pilot 40 FFS in the field for vegetable and home garden and seed potato production						
10	Implementation of pilot 20 FFSs in the field on sustainable tea cultivation						
11	Mid-season FFS experience sharing workshop						
12	Workshop on TOT experience sharing of pilot-scale FFS trainings						
13	Implement 40 2 <sup>nd</sup> season FFS in the field						
14	Evaluation of best farmer facilitator groups for award ceremony						
15	Conducting farmer congresses with FFS graduates						
16	Conduct experience sharing workshop on FFS experience and prepare scale up plan for FFS training on next step						