

The Board Members,

Green Climate Fund

We, the undersigned civil society organizations in Sri Lanka, wish to bring to your notice the serious misunderstanding of facts and ground reality in the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) I review of climate adaptation proposal from Sri Lanka.

We wish to reiterate that the proposal: *Strengthening the resilience of smallholder farmers in the Dry Zone to climate variability and extreme events through an integrated approach to water management* was developed with wide consultation of CSOs and local NGOs and communities at risk and under pressure due to climate change. The proposal was entirely country driven and reflects strong ownership of CSOs representing these vulnerable communities in both conflict-affected and non-conflict-affected districts in the three provinces.

We were extremely pleased when the project obtained necessary clearances from the GCF Secretariat and was listed for Board approval in June. We, however, strongly disagree with ITAP's assessment which we believe stems from misunderstanding of Sri Lanka's current context as a post-conflict country and civil society's engagement on the ground.

We would like to highlight our response and considerations for the Board in light of ITAP's concerns and assessment:

1. **We strongly object to ITAP's suggestion that ex-ante agreements need to have been in place during project preparation and that the lack of these agreements indicates lack of participation and buy-in from civil society and the beneficiaries.** In our assessment of the proposal, and through discussions with some of our partners engaged in project design, we are extremely confident that this proposal has been developed in full consultation with local communities and draws from the experience of communities and **CBOs that are prominent in the Dry Zone in delivering drinking water solutions.** Furthermore, extensive engagement of the civil society, and CBOs in particular, is very much a part of the ground work during implementation of community water supply- a practice which dates back at least 15 years in Sri Lanka. Communities are currently paying as much as USD 27 per M3 (or Rs. 4 per litre) for drinking water from private vendors in districts with water quality issues and high prevalence of kidney disease. There is no issue of willingness to pay since these communities are already paying higher for their water-or do not have an alternate option. Community owned schemes allows the CBO to determine the rates which are affordable to each community and how households pay for the service. It is the most democratic and sustainable approach to water services delivery in rural settings. The project approach goes beyond the existing best practices of community water supply to protect sources and effective water sharing mechanisms with agriculture users (Farmer Organisations).

We would like the Board to strongly note that civil society organizations cannot legally enter into agreements with the government prior to funds being secured. It would be irresponsible to raise expectations of the communities we serve with the uncertainty of funds given GCF's project development and approval process.

2. **We strongly disagree with iTAP's assertion that conflict is the primary driver for the issues of water security in Sri Lanka's Dry Zone and there is no clear additionality for this project to warrant climate finance.** Many of the farmers and communities in the project targeted Dry Zone did suffer from conflict which ended in 2009. Since then, Civil Society in the country has been part of the government and international community's efforts to reconstruct and rehabilitate the affected infrastructure and communities including in health, agriculture, water and sanitation, etc. However, climate change risks and impacts are significant and discernible in the communities and by the farmers our CSO partners work with. Floods and droughts have had severe impacts on as have disrupted monsoon patterns including damage to irrigation systems, rural infrastructure, impact on quality of water, and crop production. These impacts are observed and experienced urban areas and districts that were never impacted by the conflict such as Gampaha and Kegalle. The proposal simply points out that the war-affected districts, and Dry Zone in general is additionally vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to socio-economic marginalization, remoteness and dependence on agriculture as the main livelihood. The conflict and poverty exacerbated the vulnerability of these communities and without the GCF funding, they would be left with no recourse to cope with additional climate risks and impacts.

We recommend to the Board to consider the urgency and needs of the vulnerable communities in the Dry Zone in Sri Lanka; and, assured of community and civil society engagement and country's ownership of this project (as also noted in the 'High' rating of Country Ownership by iTAP itself), move to approve the project.

Sincerely,

1. **Centre for Environmental Justice**
2. **Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement**
3. **Janathakshan**
4. **Sri Lanka Youth Climate Action Network (SLYCAN)**
5. **Centre for Rural Development**
6. **Sri Lanka Nature Group**
7. **Climate Action Network South Asia**
8. **Practical Action – Sri Lanka Programme**
9. **EMACE Sri Lanka**
10. **FEED Sri Lanka**
11. **Participatory Action and Learning Methodologies Foundation (PALM Foundation)**
12. **Development with Disabled Network - Sri Lanka**
13. **Center For Applied Biodiversity Research And Education (CABRE)**
14. **Arena for Development Facilitators (ADFa)**
15. **Participatory Governance Forum (PGF) – Sri Lanka**
16. **Nirmanee Development Foundation**
17. **Environmental Foundation Ltd**
18. **National Federation of Conservation for the Traditional Seeds & Agri-Resources (NFCTSAR)**

- 19. Institute for Participatory Interaction for Development (IPID)**
- 20. Future in Our Hands**