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SARP NEWSLETTER

A newsletter made by the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project



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New Leadership for SARP: Mr. Monty Ranathunge Assumes Duties as Project Director

The Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP) has entered an exciting new phase with the appointment of Mr. Monty Ranathunge as its Project Director.

A respected retired senior officer of the Sri Lanka Planning Service, Mr. Ranathunge brings with him decades of hands-on experience in public administration, development planning, and project implementation. Over the course of his distinguished career, he has held several top positions in government, including serving as Secretary to the Ministry of Transport, where he played a key role in shaping policy and steering national development initiatives.

With his wealth of knowledge and proven leadership, Mr. Ranathunge is expected to give fresh momentum to SARP's mission of strengthening smallholder farmers, uplifting rural livelihoods, and building resilience in Sri Lanka's agriculture sector. His guidance will be pivotal in helping the project achieve its ambitious goals in agribusiness development and inclusive growth.

The SARP team warmly welcomes Mr. Ranathunge to this important role and extends its heartfelt best wishes as he leads the project toward even greater impact across all its operational regions.

IFAD Regional Director Visits SARP Project Management Unit



Ms. Reehana Rifat Raza, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, together with Ms. Sherina Tabassum, Country Director for IFAD, visited the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project's Project Management Unit to engage in discussions with the Project Director and project staff.

Empowering Rural Families Through Poultry: SARP's BYP Project Takes Flight



The Strengthening Agricultural Resilience Project (SARP) is creating real change for rural women and youth by turning backyard poultry farming into a sustainable source of income and empowerment.

Through the Backyard Poultry (BYP) initiative, 1,100 farming families across six districts are being equipped with everything they need to succeed from standardized poultry sheds and healthy chicks to hands-on training and direct market connections. Each household receives a specially designed BYP shed that can house 20–25 layer birds. SARP funds 69% of the total cost (LKR 85,000 per shed), with farmers contributing the rest ensuring ownership and reducing financial risk.

By the numbers:

- 1,100 households supported (550 in 2024, 550 in 2025)
- LKR 93.5 million total SARP investment across six districts
- 15 eggs per day expected per household, with projected annual income of over LKR 547,000 by year three
- 70% of beneficiaries are women, placing female farmers at the heart of rural development

But the impact goes beyond income. With better access to nutrition, improved food security, and guaranteed buyers through regional Poultry Food Processing Centres in Kurunegala, Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Vavuniya, and Mannar, this project is laying the foundation for long-term resilience. For many, the BYP shed isn't just a place to raise chickens it's a symbol of new beginnings, greater independence, and a brighter future.



Nurturing Health and Resilience through Nutrition

SARP is bringing nutrition to the heart of rural development with a series of impactful initiatives. From nutritive-rich home gardens now flourishing in villages, to community trainings and awareness campaigns, the project is helping families embrace healthier and more diverse diets.

So far, 58 home gardens are already established, with more to come by the end of the year. At the same time, training programs for health staff and community leaders are spreading knowledge on balanced diets and better food practices, reaching thousands of households.

Youth and women are also stepping forward, gaining hands-on skills through programs on nutrient-preserving techniques such as processing fruits, vegetables, and fish. These efforts not only enhance food security but also open doors to small-scale income opportunities.

By weaving nutrition into 4P partnerships and resilience activities, SARP is creating lasting change where healthy food, empowered communities, and resilient livelihoods go hand in hand.



Rehabilitating Village Tanks to Strengthen Rural Resilience

One of the key activities under the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP) is the rehabilitation of 260 small-scale tanks, targeted for completion by the end of 2027. This initiative aims to provide reliable water resources for agriculture in Sri Lanka's drought-prone dry zones, helping farming families better withstand the impacts of climate change.

To date, rehabilitation work has been completed on several tanks across project districts, while many others are actively under way. Considerable funding and labor have been invested in these efforts, with the enthusiastic contribution of local villagers playing a vital role in ensuring success.

As of mid-September 2025, 171 tanks have been taken up for rehabilitation, of which 136 have already been awarded and are progressing on the ground. Physical works show encouraging advancement, supported by steady financial disbursements. Looking ahead, 89 additional tanks have been identified for the 2026 phase, with modern surveys currently under way to prepare designs.

Field inspections highlight the tangible improvements already achieved, with tanks such as Dachchidamana Wewa, Pahalagama Wewa, and Kuda Palugollewa Wewa clearly demonstrating the transformation from dilapidated structures into functional irrigation systems. These improvements are restoring water retention, improving irrigation efficiency, and contributing to stronger agricultural productivity and food security.

With the combined efforts of project teams, implementing agencies, and local communities, the tank rehabilitation program is well on course to meet its ambitious target securing water for farming families and building resilience for generations to come.



Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme



An awareness and marketing orientation programme was conducted to enhance the knowledge and skills of rural youth in entrepreneurship. The session focused on practical insights into marketing strategies, business planning, and enterprise development.

The programme also included a field visit where young entrepreneurs showcased their businesses and received valuable guidance to strengthen and expand their ventures.

This initiative represents another significant step toward empowering rural youth and fostering sustainable economic growth and resilience.

Empowering Farmers: How the 4P Initiative is Transforming Rural Agriculture

Farmers Set to Gain from New 4P Initiative

A new initiative under the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP) is creating exciting new opportunities for farmers in the dry zone.

This program connects farmers directly with private companies, helping them break into competitive modern markets. Instead of facing uncertain prices and struggling to sell their produce, farmers will now have the security of guaranteed buyers and more stable incomes.

Alongside this market access, the initiative offers financial support, training, and modern tools.

Matching grants and loans will enable farmers to invest in better irrigation systems, storage facilities, and post-harvest technology. Meanwhile, hands-on training will help them adopt improved farming techniques.

One of the program's standout goals is to boost smallholder incomes by nearly 30%, helping families move beyond just getting by and toward building stable, thriving livelihoods.

The initiative also promotes collaboration by encouraging farmers to form groups. This teamwork strengthens their bargaining power and opens doors to bigger markets. By focusing on climate resilience and connecting supply with real market demand, the program aims to deliver lasting benefits to rural communities.

Officials believe this approach will not only raise household incomes but also improve food security and support a more sustainable future for farming families.



Through the 4P model, SARP aims to build resilience and market participation of rural households affected by climate change, enabling 40,000 smallholder families to increase their income by 30% through inclusive value chains



SARP Promotes Food Security Through Inland Fisheries in the Dry Zone

Ensuring food security and addressing malnutrition in Sri Lanka's dry zone remain central objectives of the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP). Among the project's innovative interventions, inland fisheries have emerged as a vital approach, providing both daily protein needs and new income opportunities for rural families.

With the technical backing of the National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA), SARP has been actively supporting community-managed fishery programs across Kurunegala and other districts. These initiatives have demonstrated strong results from fish fingerling stocking to community-led harvesting and fair profit-sharing models. For instance, in Nikawewa Tank, harvesting generated over Rs. 645,000 in income, while in Thibbatuwawa Tank, earnings reached more than Rs. 1.5 million, benefiting both farmers' organizations and local households through structured profit-sharing models.

Recently, at the Aluthgama Bellankadawala tank, SARP facilitated the harvesting of 106.2 kilograms of fish fingerlings and freshwater prawns, distributed affordably to 55 families through the local fisheries society. By ensuring access to protein-rich food at community level, this program strengthens household nutrition while also reinforcing local economies through aquaculture. These efforts highlight how sustainable inland fisheries can serve as a cornerstone for both improved nutrition and resilient livelihoods, aligning with SARP's broader mission of empowering smallholders and promoting inclusive growth.



Building Partnerships for Inclusive Agribusiness – SARP's 4P Stakeholder Discussion in Vavuniya



The Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP) recently held a stakeholder discussion in Vavuniya on 19 August 2025, led by the Value Chain Development Division, to gather views and proposals on implementing production programs under the Public–Private–Producer Partnership (4P) model.

The event brought together representatives from both the public and private sectors, creating a collaborative platform to explore opportunities, challenges, and strategies for strengthening smallholder participation in value chains. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of joint efforts to make agribusiness more inclusive and resilient.

Encouraged by the success of the Vavuniya session, SARP will be organizing similar stakeholder consultations in other districts to ensure wider participation and local perspectives in shaping the 4P initiatives.

Two-Day Workshop Sets Strategic Direction for the Future



A two-day internal workshop, led by Project Director Mr. N.B.M. Ranatunge, brought together the full team to strengthen performance and shape a clear path forward. The sessions were designed to expedite implementation, identify gaps and challenges, and collectively draft a strategic plan for the coming years. Staff reviewed progress, shared expert insights, and engaged in problem-solving discussions aimed at accelerating impact on the ground.

Through interactive group work, participants analyzed key challenges, brainstormed practical solutions, and developed a prioritized action plan, validated by all. This roadmap will guide stronger coordination, improved efficiency, and more meaningful results for farming communities.

With renewed focus and commitment, the team concluded the workshop energized and aligned toward achieving greater outcomes in agribusiness growth and climate resilience.



Building Staff Capacity in BYP Management | 03–04 Sept 2025, Uppuveli



Forest Restoration in Medawachchiya: Building Climate Resilience

Under the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP), 345 hectares within the Medawachchiya Range have been allocated for forest restoration. Surveying and mapping of the designated lands have already been completed, establishing a clear baseline for implementation.

As part of the groundwork, nurseries have been established, producing more than 22,000 saplings to be used for reforestation. These include a rich mix of species such as Keeriya (*Jatropha multifida*), Mee (*Madhuca longifolia*), Kumbuk (*Terminalia arjuna*), Koon (*Schleichera oleosa*), Madan (*Syzygium cimini*), Thimbiri (*Diospyros malabarica*), Siyambala (*Tamarindus indica*), and Wewarana (*Alseodaphne semicarpifolia*).

This initiative represents a major step toward restoring degraded forest lands, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening long-term climate resilience in the Medawachchiya region. The saplings will be nurtured in nurseries until the November rainy season, when planting will commence.



Promoting Improved Maize Cultivation under SARP



Under the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP), 56 farmers have commenced 53 acres of hybrid maize cultivation since early August. The initiative promotes five key practices: improved drainage, high-density planting, use of hybrid seeds, supplementary irrigation, and fertilizer application following technical guidelines, ensuring higher productivity and resilience.

Each beneficiary receives a grant of LKR 25,000 per acre to support mechanized operations, while regular monitoring by Development Officers and Agrarian Instructors guides field performance.

To strengthen farmer capacity, 34 training sessions and Training of Trainers (TOT) programs were conducted across project districts, focusing on land preparation, crop management, and harvesting. Cluster-based marketing arrangements have also been established to guarantee timely harvest collection and improved market access for participating farmers.

Growing Knowledge, Growing Futures: Farmer Field Schools in Action

Across Sri Lanka's rural heartlands, the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP) is transforming fields into classrooms. Through its Farmer Field School (FFS) program, farmers are learning by doing experimenting directly in their plots with new techniques, crop care, and climate-smart practices.

By August 2025, 68 Farmer Field Schools have trained 1,760 farmers in crops like maize, chili, groundnut, and greengram. The sessions are not only about farming they are about confidence, problem-solving, and resilience. Notably, women (62%) and youth (26%) are taking the lead, ensuring the next generation is at the center of agricultural innovation.

With workshops on modern markets, soil health, and sustainable farming, SARP's FFS initiative is more than training it's a movement to grow stronger communities and secure a resilient future for smallholders.



Implementation Support Mission to Strengthen SARP Progress

As part of ongoing efforts to supervise and strengthen the implementation of the Smallholder Agribusiness and Resilience Project (SARP), an Implementation Support Mission (ISM) is being conducted from 15 to 26 September 2025.

A delegation from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) visited the field from 18 to 20 September, observing project activities and reviewing progress in the districts of Anuradhapura, Vavuniya, and Kurunegala.

During the mission, the team also interacted with beneficiaries and stakeholders, gaining valuable insights into the progress and impact of field-level interventions.



A two-day Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on Project Proposal Development was successfully held from 21st to 22nd July 2025 at the Agrarian Development National Training Center, Pothuhera.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the capacity of Program Officers in developing effective and result-oriented project proposals that contribute to enhancing agribusiness and community resilience.

Participants gained practical exposure to proposal writing, financial analysis, value chain strengthening, and youth engagement in agribusiness.

The second day of the workshop featured hands-on group exercises, case study discussions, and presentations focused on financial viability, integrating youth-led innovations, and community-based project planning.

Participants actively collaborated, presented proposals, and received expert feedback transforming theoretical knowledge into actionable skills. The sessions concluded with appreciation extended to the resource persons and officers for their active participation and commitment, making the event a productive and inspiring learning experience.

Empowering Program Officers through TOT Workshop on Project Proposal Development

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