



### SILC VISIT TO SRI LANKA – November / December 2011

The Annual Landcare Lanka meeting was held in Sri Lanka in November 2011. Advisors Victoria Mack, Sue Marriott, from Australia, and Jerry Moles, from Virginia USA were also joined by Charlotte Hanes, also from USA and Peter Duncan formerly from New Zealand and now resident in Sri Lanka, to learn about project achievements over the past 12 months and future plans.

It was a very positive and productive visit. The results that Kamy Melvani and her project facilitators are achieving are extremely positive for the International Landcare movement. Sri Lankan case studies demonstrate a powerful mechanism for achieving multiple goals for development and environmental stewardship.

A delegation from Bangladesh also joined the field trip for three days. Dr Tanveer Hossain and Dr Zahid Hossain head up the project called *Friends In Village Development Bangladesh* and they are doing some impressive work in rural communities across Bangladesh. They concluded that seeing the projects on the ground crystallised for them how 'Landcare' can work, demonstrating the value of cross visits to turn awareness into action.



Sri Lanka Study Tour participants November 2011

Victoria Mack, Kamy Melvani, Raqibul, Jerry Moles, Zahid Hossain, Tofazzal Hossain, Shaikh Tanveer Hossain, Moin Uddin Khaza, Charlotte Hanes, Peter Duncan, Sue Marriott, Delowar Hossain.

The Bangladesh team has expressed a strong interest in joining the International Landcare movement. See separate article in this newsletter about the Bangladesh program.

Some on-going actions will be undertaken in the next 12 months including trying to arrange for Bangladesh delegates to attend the Australian National Landcare Conference to be held in Sydney in 3-5 September, 2012.

Preliminary discussions have also included the potential to form a South Asia Landcare Network which might include Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. While this idea is only conceptual it has great potential in the medium term.

### LANDCARE IN SRI LANKA

At the local scale Landcare Lanka works on a range of project sites across the island, engaging a talented group of local facilitators to help a growing number of local farmers rethink their farming systems. Organic systems are used, to reduce overhead costs and environmental impact, to diversify farm production based on ecological knowledge and market options to increase farmer livelihoods and resilience. The systems speak for themselves and they produce healthy home and forest gardens using low cost composting systems, intelligent water use and integrated crop rotations. Participating farmers are finding that their outputs increase, their inputs decrease and their risk is spread across a range of potential markets.

Once established these integrated systems, including vegetables, herbs, vines, fruits and timber, are empowering and repeatable, and they enable the farmers and their families to be in control and enjoy financial and significant environmental benefits.

The success of the Landcare Lanka approach is attracting the interest of mainstream donors who can see that this local and environmentally, economically and socially sustainable approach to development can provide concrete benefits and to local communities.

The Sri Lankan case studies provide excellent demonstrations of what can be achieved with dedicated farmers and facilitators and coordinators, small budgets, and high level technical advice to get things started.



Home garden - 12 months old



Integrated Forest garden after 8 years – the site was formerly a bare eroded gully

## TEA EXPORTS

Sri Lankan and Australian Landcare interests have commenced a discussion about the marketing of 'Landcare Lanka tea' to Landcare countries, particularly Australia. The tea is produced on tea estates which have adopted organic approaches to tea production, and have been working with Kamy to include biodiversity planting and forests across the Estate landscapes.

## CHALLENGES

Landcare is not yet recognised as a 'program' in its own right. Achieving each program objectives, such as post-war rehabilitation programs is what donors are looking for, not a brand name.

That said Kamy has done much to tie the work she is doing to the Landcare brand. Her work is slowly gaining hard-won recognition and support, but usually as short term projects with short funding cycles.

It is a constant challenge to gain mainstream support with adequate timeframes i.e. 5+ years, to consolidate research / project results which in turn would position Landcare as a legitimate methodology within the Sri Lankan National development framework.

The challenge for International Landcare is to gain such recognition within the international development framework, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

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Tea Estate composting trials