

**Project: Empowering people to mitigate forest destruction by developing knowledge on forest benefits and attitudes of indigenous and forest dependent communities**

**Location: Dambana, Mahiyangana**

**Province: Uva province**

**Period: 2015/2016**

**Grantee Organization: Women's Development Foundation (WDF)**

**Role of TERN: Knowledge Management and Capacity Building**

The target community of this project is the indigenous "Vadda" community of Sri Lanka, which is one of the oldest ethnic groups in the world. The main concept of this project is adopting sustainable land use practices at Dambana area occupied by indigenous people, while facilitating indigenous forest dependant community to enhance their livelihood and societal quality to reduce the threats to the surrounding forests.

The project activities includes, introducing REDD+ concepts to the "Vadda" community, awareness raising on impacts of forest destruction , adopting the benefits of sustainable Chena cultivation and establishing a community based forest conservation committee to conserve the forest. Also degraded habitats will be enriched through adopting sustainable land preparation and farming practices while restoring the tree cover in selected areas. The income generation will also be strengthened by facilitating restoration of degraded agricultural lands and introducing economical crops to the home gardens to improve the productivity.

The project sustainability will be ensured through activities like establishment of a plant nursery in Dambana village and a plant sales center at Kotabakiniya heritage centre, Improvement of the quality and value addition to existing indigenous products and introduce market strategies to standardize the market values of the marketable outcomes of the project. The attention of the international community will be drawn towards the project by launching a website to share indigenous culture, traditions, native beliefs and indigenous knowledge internationally.

The expected outcomes of this project are increased and enriched forest cover in the selected areas , ensured income generation strategies with developed livelihoods for the indigenous community specially increased quality of life of the female members of the community , sustainable home garden units with enhanced productivity and a standardized market established for the value added traditional goods produced by the Vadda community.