

Field Visit Report
Mattigaththawa Wewa Rehabilitation (Phase II – CSIAP)
Southern Province

The World Bank financed Climate Smart Irrigated Agriculture Project (CSIAP)
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Land and Irrigation



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FIELD VISIT REPORT

MATTIGATHTHAWEWA REHABILITATION (PHASE II – CSIAP)

Date of Visit: 19/05/2025

Location: Mattigaththawa Tank, Malala Ara Cascade

Project: Climate Smart Irrigated Agriculture Project (CSIAP) – Phase II

Contractor: Isula Construction

Start Date of Work/ contractor mobilized: 1st week of May, 2025

Visited by: Dr. Sithara Attapattu (World Bank), Ms. Sharmila Shanmuganathan (PMU), the Safeguard Team, and the Technical Team of the DPDO/SP&UP.

Mattigaththawa Tank is located within the **Badagiriya Forest** and falls under the **jurisdiction** of the **Forest Department**. It is a **protected area**, and only **downstream rehabilitation works** are proposed under the current **project scope**. The tank is identified as a **Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC)** site and has experienced **frequent rainfall** in recent months.



Field Observations

- The tank is located within a **forest-protected area**, so **no upstream works** or **artificial water drawdown** will be carried out. Instead, **downstream works**—including **canal rehabilitation** and construction of an **agricultural road**—have been proposed and initiated in the first week of May.
- No **tree removals** were observed at the site. Contractors have rented a house **500 meters from the tank site** to accommodate workers.
- **Soil sourcing** for downstream work is a key concern. The contractor has requested to extract soil from the **tank bed**, which lies within the protected area. A **joint site inspection** involving the **Forest Department (FD)**, **Department of Agrarian Development (DAD)**, and **Farmer Organization (FO)** representatives is scheduled for **20th May 2025 at 2:30 pm** to decide on soil sourcing within this protected zone. If soil extraction from the tank bed is disallowed by the FD, the FO has proposed using an **alternative road** for canal rehabilitation. However, this alternative may restrict access for six farmers unless the original **250-meter canal road** is maintained.
- Nearby, **Udamalala Tank**, located 1.5 km away, was identified as a potential alternative source for soil, though concerns were raised that it might not supply sufficient material for the planned rehabilitation. Notably, the FO has yet to consult all farmers about these alternatives and changes.
- During the visit, the **roads were muddy and difficult for material transportation**. Due to heavy rainfall, the team could not disembark from the vehicle, and a meeting with the FO president was held at a nearby farmer's house.
- Farmers confirmed they are currently cultivating **Badagiriya rice**, a **high-value, high-demand crop**. Contrary to initial expectations, farmers did **not agree to forego Yala cultivation** because the contract awarding was delayed. The market price of Badagiriya rice is approximately **Rs. 140.00**, which contributes to their reluctance to abandon the Yala season. Since cultivation proceeded and no artificial drawdown occurred, **no compensation** is planned for farmers.
- **Elephant movements** have been reported on the tank bund even during daytime, and farmers have requested the installation of an **elephant fence** to protect their paddy lands.
- Currently, **DAD officers manage the tank's Operation and Maintenance (O&M)**, despite the tank being under FD administration.

Issues Identified

- **Soil sourcing:** The tank bed lies within a protective area, and **World Bank policy prohibits** the use of material from such areas for external works.
- **Delayed project implementation** has led to a **loss of trust among farmers**, who proceeded with cultivation despite earlier agreements.
- **Elephant intrusion risk** remains high, both cultivation and construction activities.
- **Logistical difficulties** due to **poor road conditions during rain**, affecting transportation of materials and work progress.
- **Unclear administrative ownership** between DAD and FD causing confusion over O&M responsibilities.

Recommendations

1. **Strictly avoid material extraction** from the protective area to comply with World Bank safeguards. If strongly justified only, submit a revised **Environmental and Social Screening Report (ESSR)** with clear justification and obtain necessary feedback/ approvals.
2. **Explore alternative soil sources** outside the protected area. If Udamalala Tank cannot meet the volume requirement, conduct a survey to identify viable non-protected sources.
3. If the **alternative road** is selected, ensure **access for all six farmers** currently excluded by the proposed change and conduct a **full consultation** with affected households.
4. Conduct **regular communication and engagement** with the FO and farmers to rebuild trust, especially regarding future crop planning considerations.
5. The contractor must display the **subproject name board** at the site to ensure public awareness and accountability of the works.

Risk Level Assessment

Taking into account that the **contractor has just mobilized at the site**, farmers mentioned that **work has currently started**. However, there was **heavy rainfall during the field visit we did not see the contractors at the site**. It is important to note that the **tank is located within a forest-protected area**, and the **required approval for rehabilitation** has been obtained from the **relevant departments**. However, materials cannot be sourced from the protected area. Currently, the Yala cultivation for 2025 is ongoing. Potential weather-related delays are considered **high**, with **major challenges in material transportation** due to heavily flooded and muddy access roads, making it **difficult to transport materials**. There may be delays in sourcing suitable soil from outside the project area. Since **downstream works are proposed**, artificial water drawdowns are not needed. The site is categorized as **at-risk**, with a **high likelihood of delays in completing the rehabilitation on or before 30th September 2025** due to the following issues:

- Material transportation difficulties
- Farmers currently involved in cultivation
- Heavy rainfall
- Challenges in sourcing materials for rehabilitation
- This is a high HEC (Human-Elephant Conflict) area, so working hours are limited.
