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## **Fish farming in seasonal reservoirs: Beyond technical feasibility**

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### **Abstract**

The Fisheries Community Development and Resource Management Project (FCDRMP) has tested community-based carp polyculture programmes in seasonal minor irrigation reservoirs in the Hambantota and the Monaragala districts of the southern dry zone of Sri Lanka since 1999. Seasonal reservoirs that are technically feasible for fish farming were selected for the implementation of the programme. The potential fish farmers were mobilised mainly through the local farmer organisation. In rare cases, extension staff mobilised people informally. As the main purpose of seasonal reservoirs is the irrigation of paddy lands, the fish farming programme is part of a complex system of resource uses. Ignoring this complexity and excluding the social dynamics within this system result in a high economic and social cost. Out of a sample of 20 reservoirs supported by FCDRMP in 2004, 18 faced serious non-technical problems. By highlighting the social and institutional hindrances the project has experienced, this paper draws attention to the importance of a more holistic approach in planning and implementing fish farming programmes in seasonal reservoirs. An assessment of the local social dynamics and the participation of the community during the planning and implementation stages of fish farming are crucial. In order to recognise, prevent or resolve potential and actual problems and conflicts, a different approach to extension services is necessary.