

DIMO's approach to supporting rural communities through climate-focused initiatives

Building Climate-Smart Villages for Resilient Communities



As climate risks intensify and communities face growing uncertainty, the need for development models that combine sustainability, resilience, and economic opportunity has never been greater. Across Sri Lanka, vulnerable communities are increasingly affected by changing weather patterns, pressure on agriculture, water insecurity, and declining livelihood stability.

Recognising this urgency, DIMO is patronising the Climate Smart Village concept to develop self-sufficient villages with solutions offered by DIMO. Under this model, communities are supported through livelihood-related initiatives, including vocational development, healthcare, agriculture, education, water and sanitation, energy, and micro financing. This approach combines climate-resilient practices, clean technologies, and community governance to address climate risks while strengthening local economies.

From Climate Vulnerability to Sustainable Rural Transformation

With Climate Smart Villages, DIMO expects to translate environmental sustainability into action by integrating climate-resilient agriculture, renewable energy, responsible water management, and ecosystem conservation at the community level. By reducing emissions while strengthening resilience to climate risks, DIMO expects to contribute towards creating future-ready rural communities that protect natural resources and secure livelihoods for generations to come.

The concept also provides a platform to strengthen long-term community initiatives by aligning climate action, technology, and inclusive development. Through collaboration with communities, partners, and institutions, the model improves overall scalability, long-term effectiveness, and opportunities for shared investment to deliver sustainable impact.

Building Eco-Tourism Through Conservation-Led Livelihoods

DIMO is also currently working with the Wildlife Conservation Society Galle (WCSG) at Lankagama, where the initial engagement focused on educating and training Forest Department guides on the best approaches to guide both

local and foreign visitors to the forest.

Lankagama is a key access point to the Sinharaja Forest Reserve, and it plays an important role in supporting eco-tourism and conservation efforts in the region. A significant number of forest guides operating in this area come from the local communities of Lankagama and Neluwa, making their knowledge and conduct essential to safeguarding the integrity of this sensitive ecosystem.

With this in mind, the primary objective of the initiative was to strengthen the capacity of these community-based guides through structured training on identifying endemic fauna and flora, along with ethical guiding practices, professionalism, and personal grooming. These improvements enhance visitor experience while reinforcing responsible tourism and conservation awareness at the grassroots level.

The training programme was hosted by WCSG and conducted by the Young Zoologists' Association of Sri Lanka, with technical guidance and oversight from the Department of Forest Conservation. Through this collaborative effort, 80 members of the local community were empowered with improved knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to ecosystem protection and sustainable livelihoods.

Strengthening Communities Through Long-Term Development

DIMO continues to strengthen its long-term engagement at Lankagama through a holistic development approach. This includes vocational skills development, education support, and sustainable water management. These initiatives are designed to build local capabilities, improve access to essential resources, and create lasting socio-economic value while reinforcing environmental stewardship within the community.

As a purpose-driven organisation, DIMO focuses on meaningful impact rather than isolated implementation. These efforts are consistently evaluated based on the positive and lasting outcomes delivered to individuals and families, as well as wider community groups such as youth societies, schools, educational institutes, and women's groups.

Identifying the most suitable pilot site and implementation partner has been one of the most challenging aspects of expanding the Climate Smart Village initiative. DIMO has held many meet-

ings and discussions with communities and government administration officers to identify a viable site and a community willing to work towards self-sufficiency.

Pocket-Scale Initiatives for Practical and Immediate Impact

This year, DIMO plans to continue identifying additional project sites while implementing targeted, pocket-scale initiatives. While smaller in scope, these initiatives are designed to deliver meaningful outcomes. Planned focus areas include vocational training, education, and livelihood development, with particular emphasis on irrigation and agriculture.

As climate conditions change rapidly, vulnerable communities face a higher risk from climate-related events. This makes adaptive and locally driven interventions increasingly important for resilience and long-term sustainability.



“WITH CLIMATE SMART VILLAGES, DIMO EXPECTS TO TRANSLATE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INTO ACTION BY INTEGRATING CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE, RENEWABLE ENERGY, RESPONSIBLE WATER MANAGEMENT, AND ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL.”

DIMO's Sustainability Agenda for 2030

DIMO's Sustainability Agenda 2030 focuses on three key pillars: building resilient businesses, creating resilient communities, and conserving the living planet. Under the community pillar, DIMO has committed to impacting one million people by 2030. Achieving this ambition requires initiatives that are sustainable and supported through the organisation's expert capabilities.

The Climate Smart Village concept offers significant opportunities to deliver transformative outcomes at the community scale. While DIMO continues 'Lassana Hetak' as a key community project, the organisation aims to develop Climate Smart Village as its next flagship community initiative, enabling broader and more sustainable impact than individual small-scale projects.

Ownership, Partnerships, and Shared Responsibility

No initiative can achieve lasting sustainability without genuine community ownership. Communities must become custodians of the support and opportunities created through each project. At the same time, transformation cannot be delivered in isolation.

DIMO prioritises partnerships that bring investment, technical expertise, and knowledge across multiple dimensions. State support also remains important in strengthening the value and reach of private-sector contributions to community development and well-being.

Through Climate Smart Villages, DIMO is building a forward-looking pathway that enables innovation while integrating time-tested indigenous knowledge to develop resilient and self-sustaining communities for the future. ●