Implications of Post-2023 Economic Policy Reforms on the Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Sri Lanka's National Mangrove Conservation Policy

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Sri Lanka's National Policy on Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Mangrove Ecosystems (2020) provides a national framework for mangrove conservation, restoration, sustainable use, institutional coordination, scientific monitoring, and stakeholder participation. Existing studies on mangroves in Sri Lanka have largely focused on ecological value, restoration practices, biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, coastal protection, and community livelihoods. However, limited attention has been given to how Sri Lanka's post-2023 economic reform agenda affects the legal, institutional, financial, and monitoring conditions required for implementing the national mangrove policy. This study addresses that gap by examining the implications of recent economic-policy reforms for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of mangrove conservation within Sri Lanka's environmental governance framework. The study adopts a qualitative legal and public-policy analysis based on documentary review, doctrinal legal analysis, and comparative institutional mapping. The analysis also considers the wider legal framework governing mangrove conservation and environmental protection, including the National Environmental Act, coastal conservation laws, forest and wildlife conservation laws, and Sri Lanka's international environmental obligations, particularly the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. These documents were analyzed through thematic coding and mapped against four dimensions of mangrove-policy delivery: implementation capacity, monitoring systems, evaluation mechanisms, and institutional and financial sustainability. The findings indicate that post-2023 reforms do not directly change the objectives of the national mangrove policy, but they substantially reshape the environment in which the policy must be implemented. Fiscal consolidation and debt-management reforms may restrict direct public expenditure on conservation, while public financial management reforms can improve project appraisal, accountability, budget discipline, and performance-based monitoring. The Economic Transformation Act and economic recovery measures may create risks through increased coastal development, tourism, aquaculture, infrastructure expansion, and land-conversion pressures. At the same time, climate-finance strategies and green-growth commitments create opportunities to reposition mangroves as natural infrastructure that supports coastal resilience, blue-carbon finance, biodiversity protection, fisheries productivity, and disaster-risk reduction. The study contributes original knowledge by linking Sri Lanka's post-crisis economic reforms with the legal and institutional requirements of mangrove policy implementation. It proposes that monitoring should move beyond ecological indicators to include budget execution, project delivery benchmarks, enforcement actions, climate-finance mobilization, community livelihood outcomes, and compliance with environmental obligations. The study is limited to documentary and legal-policy analysis; it does not include stakeholder interviews or empirical field-level implementation data. The study concludes that effective implementation of Sri Lanka's mangrove policy requires stronger integration between environmental law, fiscal governance, public investment planning, climate finance, and results-based evaluation.

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