



# Part Five: Good Practices in Local Economic and Inclusive Development



# Good Practices in Local Economic and Inclusive Development

## 1.1. Objective

The objective of the documented good practice is to showcase how applied approaches, methodologies and tools have led to successes in improved access to economic opportunities for beneficiaries, improved service provision, increased networking and to showcase lessons learnt during their application.

## 1.2. Methodology

In order to identify and document good practices from the project, an internal evaluation, lessons learnt workshop with key stakeholders of the project was conducted and it led to the pre-identification of 28 practices. These 28 practices were screened by an external consultant using the criteria mentioned below.

Criteria taken in to consideration in selecting good practices from the project were:

- i. Actions that are aligned to existing systems and add value to the system which increase efficiency and accountability.
- ii. Actions that Demonstrate 'Positive Impact' in the lives of the most vulnerable populations in the targeted areas.
- iii. Actions that show collaborative action and multi-stakeholder engagement, increasing opportunities for partnerships.
- iv. Actions that show potential for replication and scaling up

The consultant did a desk review of project documents, activity reports. He further, collected information from the field through observation, key informant interviews with the key stake holders of the project, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth Interviews with the beneficiaries. Information collected were reviewed and analyzed using the criteria mentioned above and finally 20 practices were documented from the project. These practices demonstrate one or more of the criteria mentioned above.

For information collected directly by the consultant from the field, HI assessment an ethical —protocols were followed. Participation to the interviews and group discussions was voluntary. Participants' consent was obtained before taking any photographs or videos. Reasonable accommodation measures were ensured when interviewing people with disabilities. HI protocols and procedures of 'Do no harm', Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Child Protection policy, and Anti-fraud bribery and corruption policy and Code of conduct were followed.

Presented here are 5 good practices that are intrinsically linked to part 3 of the replication guidebook. These aim to show the main components of the project, which include increasing economic opportunity for CSOs and their members by linking with economic service providers and fostering a conducive environment for economic growth.

## 1. 3 Good Practices in Local Economic and Inclusive Development

### 1. 3.1: Fisheries Fingerling Centre - Linking CSOs with Public Service Providers for economic development

There are 565 households in Kadukkamunai in Paddippali DSD Divisional Secretariat Division) in Batticaloa district. Fresh water fishing is one of the main occupations of the villagers. Agriculture and livestock rearing are their other sources of income. Due to availability of fresh water fishing opportunities in the village owing to the Villukkulam reservoir which is in the village and Kadukkamunai River which crosses the village, The National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA) project established a fingerling centre in 2009 in the Division/Village and facilitated the formation of a fisheries society with 40 members. 10 of its members were trained on fish-breeding. However the society had later on become less active and members were not able to run the fingerling centre effectively.

The project “ Building inclusive civil society and governance for sustainable growth in Sri Lanka” worked on one hand at building capacities of CSOs identified through the Fisheries Unit and on the other hand with the staff of Fisheries unit itself and then linked the two so that the CSOs could receive optimum benefit.

The society now meets once every month and has accumulated a saving of 1,300,000 LKR since the beginning of the project, through increased incomes from joint actions taken up by the society, better management of its funds and increased membership. The department of Animal Production & Health has allocated an amount of LKR 5 00 000 for building a pond for the breeding activities. 4 members of the society are employed in the fingerlings centre – this is a source of income for the members.

“The training on leadership, financial management and CSO governance was particularly useful. Though we were established much earlier, but we had limited management capacity, we feel that through the project we are better able to manage our society and more economic opportunities for us have opened.” V.Nareez, President of Hairiya Nagar Fisheries Co-op Society

#### The Project Intervention:

The project coordinated with the Fisheries Unit in Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Ampara. An assessment was conducted through Aquaculture Development Officers (ADOs) to identify the gaps in service provision. Consultations were done with the ADO, community members and the Director of Fisheries Unit. The following problems were identified:

- a). Lack of awareness on the services and facilities available at the Fisheries Unit and the department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
  - ◆ bsence of a proper methodology to disseminate necessary information to all segments of the community.
  - ◆ Lack of awareness raising materials such as leaflets, posters, etc that could help with information dissemination.
  - ◆ Lack of coordination between the departmental staff (Fisheries Unit of the Provincial Department and Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Central Government) and the community in disseminating and receiving information.
  - ◆ Lack of coordination in conducting meetings among the Government staff from Fisheries departments and in dissemination of information to the community.
  - ◆ Fisheries society members are unaware of the provision of 50% and 100% of subsidy from the Fisheries Department.

- b) Lack of awareness on trainings and coaching available for members of the community
- ◆ People are not aware about the trainings that are available in the fisheries units of the Provincial Department, and Central Government Department or how to enroll for those trainings and whom to contact to enroll.
  - ◆ Lack of coordination among the young members of the fisheries Societies, Women and the Government staff to get involved in trainings.
- c) Lack of understanding among members of the fisheries Societies on good governance and sustainable development.
- ◆ Lack of awareness on registering the Society and where to register (whether to register under the central government or to register under provincial government), Lack of awareness of the advantages or disadvantages of either Government institutions
  - ◆ Lack of leadership skills and financial management skills among key members of the society to expand the functions of the society in order to empower and enhance the capacity of members of the society
  - ◆ Lack of coordination and collaboration among the general public and the stakeholders to protect, save and recover natural aquaculture resources.

For each of the problems identified a plan of action was designed and implemented. Given below are the plans of action that target at the capacity building of the Fisheries Unit and the CSO.

To enhance technical capacity on in-land fishing a three days full day training was provided for 21 Aqua Culture Development Officers (ADO) . The Resource persons included a) Provincial Director of the Fisheries Unit, b) Senior Lecturer of Biology - Eastern Province, c) Assistant Divisional Secretary, d) Deputy Commissioner of the Corporate Society, e) Representatives from Department of Coastal Protection.

Technical content covered in the training, was: a) Pisciculture Management, b) Integrated Pisciculture. c) Stocking Fingerlings and disease prevention, d) Fishing post harvesting and marketing, e) Rules and Regulations of Government Departments. f) Legal Provisions for Protection of Coastal Areas and g) Legal statues of Cooperate Society

This training program contributed to increased awareness and knowledge on fingerlings management among key members of the Fisheries society. Upon completion, the key members have conducted a follow-up training for their other members.

Information guidelines and handouts on inland fishing were developed and distributed among the Fisheries society by the Fisheries Unit.

As part of the project, the society also received training on 10 topics identified by the project as key to enhance the capacity of CSOs in economic and inclusive development. The training was followed with a coaching session for key members who guided them on conducting further awareness sessions with other members of the CSO, improving their documentation, record keeping and improving their links with economic services. Members were taken on exposure visits to see the activities of other fisheries cooperative societies in Makiloormunai in Batticaloa and Thirukkivil in Ampara. While the aforementioned activities aimed at promoting increased production and quality of fish, members were also encouraged to attend a buyer's sellers meet held in Colombo to support better marketing of the fish produced.

The project has supported renovation of the fingerling centre of the Kadukkamunai Fisheries Society, including provision of a brick pond and lighting. Pond and lighting facilities contribute to increased production of fingerlings and result in increased profit to the Society and increased income of its members. I means of income.

As a result of the actions mentioned above, the society is now active and members have access to additional means of income.

### **Lessons learnt and challenges**

- ◆ Systematic capacity building of fisheries society on one hand and of the Fisheries Unit staff on the other has resulted in increased availability economic opportunities and better utilization.
- ◆ While working with Fisheries Unit enhances fish production, knowledge and linking with markets is important. The buyers and sellers meeting in Colombo, was seen as an important step that increased access of the fisheries society to markets beyond their immediate locality and in bringing in more profits.
- ◆ Meticulous record keeping by the society and fisheries unit has helped track members of the society, member's needs and progress in terms of accessing benefits. This has resulted in members of the fisheries society benefitting equitably.

### **Recommendations:**

- ◆ Peer group discussions and exposure visits were effective in promoting change in practice among fisheries society rather than through training alone. Therefore, those involved in capacity building must consider this as an important tool for capacity building.
- ◆ Capacity building of members of the Fisheries society and the staff of Fisheries Unit is seen as a prerequisite for fostering stronger and effective linkage for economic development.
- ◆ Availability of information in the form of banners and boards as well as contact details will continue to support the fisheries society to stay linked with the Fisheries unit.

## **1. 3. 2: The Unilever Case story - Linking private enterprises and vulnerable people**

Kumari Rajeswari (name changed) is a 41 years old lady living with her 3 children in a house that belongs to her father. For 6 years Rajeswari's family stayed in a camp in Ramnathpur in South India during the war. After the war, UNHCR facilitated their travel back to Sri Lanka. She returned, but had no house, no land, her allotment for a social protection scheme under the Samurdhi programme had been cancelled and she had to reapply. She is the only earning member in her family. Her husband would work as a daily laborer, but he is currently in a rehabilitation centre because of his drinking problem. Rajeswari says "it is a blessing that he is away as he does not contribute in any way when he is at home; it's harder when he is at home as he demands money for alcohol and gets abusive".

As a member of the Mahaveli WRDS (Women's' Rural Development Society) Rajeswari received training on business management and financial management, through the project. The project linked with the unilever CSR (Community Social Responsibility) programme "project Soubhagya". A company representative visited Mahaveli WRDS and gave a brief orientation on the programme. Rajeswari attended this orientation on Unilever's Soubhagya programme that gave information on the product and the business model.

Project Saubhagya is Unilever Sri Lanka's key initiative under its Unilever Sustainable Living Plan pillar of providing 'opportunities for women'. This unique project empowers women through entrepreneurship, helping rural women become direct-to-home ambassadors of Unilever brands. The project began in 2003 with 5 women entrepreneurs and has progressed to include more than 4000 Saubhagya entrepreneurs today. Each entrepreneur has to initially buy products worth 2500/- once their initial products are sold they can buy more. Company representatives are also available to provide advice on how to invest the profits of the initial sales, so that the profits gradually increase.

The margin of profit on each product is around 10 – 25% depending on the product. The society and women were able to obtain orientation on basics in sales, accounts and some social issues, such as health and hygiene through the programme.

Rajeswari expressed an interest in taking up this as a business. The Unilever company representative reviewed and evaluated her application on the basis of the following criteria: 1. Persons from poor background; 2. Demonstrates potential for economic activity.

Unilever then conducted a brief assessment of: a) her income; b) Family income, c) No. of houses in her locality. Rajeswari was selected as one of the entrepreneurs. As per the business model, Rajeswari bought initial stocks of 2500 LKR which took her 2 weeks to sell. In the initial days she covered 25 houses. She currently covers 75 houses in one month and earns around 13000 LKR per month.

She receives close follow –up from the project team and Unilever area representatives are also available via phone. Rajeswari was the secretary of the WRDS, but decided to step down as she had to allocate more time to her business.

She supplements her business of selling Unilever products by also stocking other brands. However, the products of other companies do not move quite as fast. Although the other companies provide stocks without asking for any initial investment, she prefers selling Unilever products.

Rajeswari faces a lot of challenges in managing this business. She has to move from door to door, cover many houses in her location. She has 3 young children, whom she has to leave behind with her aging parents.

Sometimes she doesn't have enough money to buy fresh stocks as she has to spend on house expense, tuition fees of children, and to repay a loan of 30,000 LKR taken from the WRDS.

At times she faces delays in receiving supplies from Unilever – and this affects her business.

However, this business model works for Rajeswari as it gives her an income on a continuous basis and the products for the business are delivered directly to her home. She doesn't have to go to a wholesaler or pay for transportation cost of the product.

### **Lessons Learnt and Challenges:**

There is a high rate of drop out within the Unilever Soubhagya programme due to the following reasons:

- ◆ Entrepreneurs are unable to invest. Unilever advises its Saubhagya entrepreneurs not to use the profits earned from selling the products and to re-invest the profits in the business for at least 8 consecutive weeks. For women coming from poor backgrounds it is difficult to reinvest all the money earned in the business. For many it is the only source of income.
- ◆ Entrepreneurs get little support from family.
- ◆ Entrepreneurs find door to door sales very challenging.

### **Recommendations**

- ◆ Provision of close mentoring support to entrepreneurs is key to the success of the programme. This mentoring support was provided by CAMID – HI through the project.
- ◆ Mobilize loans obtained from the CSO of which the entrepreneur is a member or obtained from schemes initiated by Departments such as the Divi Neguma Development Department of Sri Lanka, which grants the entrepreneurs a loan needed for their initial investment.
- ◆ Re packaging the business model promoted by Unilever as door to door sales used by the soubhagya programme is looked upon negatively.

### 1. 3. 3: Agri-Groundnuts Initiative – Creating Linkages within Value Chains

Ananda Store is a leading sole proprietorship company in Sri Lanka's groundnut sector and requires a sufficient and regular supply of groundnuts to make snacks and confectionary items.

In Sri Lanka, Groundnut is grown mainly in Northern, Eastern, North Central, North western and Uva Provinces. 23.7% is produced from within the Eastern Province. Within the project area, ThirukKovil Division in Ampara district was identified as the area where majority of the farmers depend on groundnut cultivation. Most farmers are small-holders engaged in cultivation of one or less than one acres of land, use traditional technologies, depend on middlemen to sell the produce, have had no means to store the groundnut and have limited access to markets.

In order to link groundnut farmers to Ananda Store, a producer group with 130 farmers was formed and trained, and purchase agreements developed. The project initiated procurement of post harvesting machines to increase marketability of the producer group, reduce production cost and enable better sales prices.

#### **Project intervention**

The Project conducted a market assessment on agriculture sector to identify potential sectors that generated income sources and employment opportunities in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. Amidst other findings based on the market assessment, the project identified that the Groundnut sector in ThirukKovil Division in Ampara District showed potential for being a source of economic opportunity for its communities including those from vulnerable backgrounds.

Through the project the Thirukkovil Groundnut Producer Association with a membership of 130 (90 women and 40 men) was established in October 2017 with support of a local NGO, Social Welfare Organization Ampara District (SWOAD). The association was trained by the project team, the Agriculture Instructor as well as DS representatives. As the group was newly formed, they were provided trainings on business management, leadership, Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and how to develop a business plan. An exposure visit to producer groups in the Northern Province (Vavuniya, Oddusuddan, and Kilincochi) were organized in October 2017 and provided insight on how to manage a producer group, what is the organizational set up required and business operation. A Community-based facilitator was assigned to the association to help with record keeping and to monitor accountability and transparency of the set up.

Through the project the Groundnut Producer Association received a pod remover, digger and decorticator. These were purchased to improve the quality of nuts and reduce the cost of labor which was usually high for groundnut harvesting and cleaning of nuts. The project also supported renovation of a store to help farmers stock the nuts and sell at best market prices.

Following this, a meeting was arranged between Ananda stores and the association to clarify roles and responsibilities in the intended partnership. Purchase agreements were developed; both parties agreed that goods will be sold on prevailing market prices. also agreed to provide trainings on quality



parameters and apply fair procedures, such as transparency with market information and genuine weighing scales.

The groundnut association made its first sale in June 2018, around 15477 kg of groundnuts to Ananda stores at prices between 190-200 LKR/kg. Currently, the association is on the process of cultivation and is anticipated to sell the Groundnut in December 2018 to Ananda stores.

Furthermore, the District Secretariat is willing to invest in buying more equipment for the farmers' association, while the Agriculture department plans to train them on how to produce groundnut seeds.

Throughout the project, the District Secretariat, the Agriculture Instructor and the local NGO, Social Welfare Organization Ampara District (SWOAD) has been involved to ensure sustainability of this intervention.

### **Lessons Learnt and challenges**

- ◆ The systematic and step-wise approach of the project has resulted in positive impacts. The practice was successful due to the holistic approach that started with the market study, which engaged all stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture, the Divisional Secretariat Office, private buyers, the supply chain and local organizations.
- ◆ Organizing farmers into a collective has proved to be an important step and has contributed to better access to market for farmers and giving them bargaining power.

### **Key Recommendations**

- ◆ Forming and strengthening of farmer's society requires a step-wise process and capacity building remains central to ensuring a better managed society, better incomes for its members and ensures sustainability of the society.
- ◆ Matching of buyer's demands and producers' offer results in identification of potential linkages between producers and buyers and in concrete recommendations for interventions to realize economic opportunities for both.

## **1. 3. 4: Electronic Citizen Report Card – Promoting participatory Governance for Local inclusive Development**

Electronic Citizen Report Card (e-CRC) is one of the ways by which citizens can provide feedback on the services provided by Local Authority and participate in local governance. Electronic Citizen Report Card (e-CRC) was conducted for the general public of the Trincomalee Urban Council in 2017. The result of the study is strategically reflected in the 2018 budget of the Trincomalee Urban Council. The e-CRC assessed eleven basic services provided by the Council.

1. Household sanitation/toilets for individuals
2. Storm Water Drains
3. Solid Waste Management
4. Access Roads & By-lanes
5. Street-lighting
6. Mother & Child Care
7. Cemetery
8. Parks
9. Playgrounds
10. Library
11. Ayurveda Clinics/Hospitals

Based on a random sample of 557 households spread over 18 GN Divisions that were contacted for the e-CRC the following are the key findings:

- ◆ Considering all the services together, citizens residing in Trincomalee UC area have indicated a combined total satisfaction score of 20% out of a maximum 100%.
- ◆ Overall total satisfaction scores are on the higher side for mother and child care (42%), and library (41%). Services requiring urgent attention include street lighting (7%) cemetery (9%), sewerage (8%) and roads (14%), and play grounds (8%), as ratings for these services are relatively on a lower scale.
- ◆ There has been a slight difference between Samurdhi recipients (21%) and Non-Samurdhi respondents (19%). Also, women respondents have expressed a slight low satisfaction (18%) with overall service delivery compared to men (20%).
- ◆ Citizens identified four services as priority services for the 2018 Budget allocations: Street Lighting (69%), Storm Water Drains (68%), Solid Waste Management (54%), and Access Roads and By-lanes (54%).
- ◆ There have been different satisfactory levels among three ethnicity groups Moor (27%), Tamil (22%), and Sinhala (3%) as to receiving LA services.
- ◆ There have been huge differences among citizen satisfactory level given their distance to the local authority: close to the LA centre (21%), little away to the LA centre (19%), and far away from LA centre (5%)

*Recommendations from the result of the eCRC for the period of 2018 to 2022 are summarized below:*

- ◆ Allocating resources to enhance the top services such as storm water drains, solid waste management, street lights and access roads as listed out by the citizens as top priority services for investments in the 2018 Budget. These priorities will reflect in budgetary allocations.
- ◆ Priority areas for improvements include improving access to facilities in/ of distant communities, construction and maintenance of facilities.
- ◆ The wide variation in service delivery parameters among the ethnicities is a matter that deserves a closer look. Reforming service delivery to reduce inequities should be a major reform agenda for the UC.

Based on the above findings the Urban Council Trincomalee has prioritized working on access roads and has allocated resources to complete the task.

### **The Project Intervention:**

At first the project conducted a baseline and Institutional assessment of Local Authorities (LAs). One of the issues identified was the low level of public participation local development processes led by the LA.

The eCRC was identified as one of the mechanism by which the project could promote participation of the community in local and inclusive development. The eCRC is seen as a “user feedback” that is a cost-effective way for a LAs to find out whether its services reach the people, especially the vulnerable and the marginalized. Recipients of public services get an opportunity to tell the service provider about the quality, efficiency, and appropriateness of the services and the problems they face in their interactions with service providers.

The eCRC is not new for Sri Lanka, or the region, the eCRC was introduced by the Asia Foundation in 2012, and used by a project funded by World Bank in 2011 to 2015. The e-CRC reflects the actual experiences of people with a wide range of public services. The survey, on which a report card is based, covers only those individuals who have had experiences in the use of specific services, and interactions with the relevant public agencies. E-CRC uses an Android-based mobile application to analyze the information collected and produce reporting in real time.

## The key stages in eCRC are:

Conducting a mobile-based survey on households based on sampling about the public services provided by the LA. Using tablets, a scientific sample survey of households was conducted to collect feedback and experiences. A geographic information system (GIS) tracking system in the mobile phones indicates the location from where data is collected, thereby enhancing quality control and the reliability of data collection.

The results of the survey are displayed in a manner that is easy to understand such as graphs, tables and maps. Simple color codes are used to facilitate easy inferences on performance levels and providing information needs of various stakeholders such as policy makers, administrators, political representatives, and citizens

## What is eCRC?



- ❖ Uses Mobile Tablets and of the art technology for survey and reporting
- ❖ Highly accurate
- ❖ Immediate results
- ❖ Ability to see results in the city map
- ❖ Allows resource deficient local governments to repeat the exercise with a one- time investment cost

The e-CRC was designed and implemented as a collaborative initiative with the Department of Local Government, Eastern Province, led by the Commissioner of Local Government (CLG) and supported by the team of Assistant Commissioners of Local Government (ACLGs). The services were covered, timing of the survey and other logistical details were finalized in consultation with the CLG and the ACLGs. The survey was carried out by a team of Community Development officers (CDOs) and Development Officers (DOs) who have already been trained as a pool of resource persons by The Asia Foundation (TAF). A detailed discussion session was facilitated by CGI. All e-CRC surveys are monitored by and trouble-shooted by Good Governance Resource Centre (GGRC), a unit that is established at each ACLG office to coordinate the development initiatives, a pool of trained staff coordinates the whole e-CRC process.

A guide on e-CRC survey was developed to explain the e-CRC survey; it also provided every method on how to conduct the survey.

The e-CRC survey tool included 13 questions covering the Laws' common services. In every question, 04 types of answers were given. According to the respondents' response, the enumerator selected the answers on the mobile app.

## Lessons learnt and the Challenges

- ◆ Final results are reliable and reflect the situation on ground as random sampling was used, monitoring of data collection was possible by tracking GIS coordinates.
- ◆ A great level of disaggregation was possible which helped understand access and satisfaction of services depending on the social status such as ethnicity, gender, etc and geographical distance. However, disability disaggregated information was missed and needs to be ensured in subsequent surveys.
- ◆ The eCRC report emphasizes that there are the different levels of satisfaction based on the social status and geographic distance. This information has provided the evidence to LA to ensure that adequate measures are taken during the Local Authority Participatory Development Plan (LAPDP) and budgeting exercises to address these gaps.
- ◆ Limited time and scattered locations, weather (rains) are some of the challenges faced by enumerators during a survey and need to be anticipated during planning.
- ◆ As the survey uses mobile app, issues related to network coverage and technical problems are often faced that need to be addressed.

## Key Recommendations

- ◆ The eCRC is seen as an opportunity for citizens to express their needs and opinions freely and gives the local authority a quick feedback on what the citizens think. This helps Local Authority in improving their services. This process is particularly useful when there are limited opportunities for citizen engagement and is useful for LAPDP and budgeting.
- ◆ Educating the public on the eleven services and their rights to services are essential to gain valid responses for eCRC.
- ◆ It is important for the Local Authority to carrying out an in-depth analysis on contextual issues before taking actions

### 1. 3. 5: Using Right to Information for Citizen Participation and Local Economic Development

Vijeyakanthan is a 38 years old man and is the president of Samphoor Community Centre in the Muthur Predesiya Saba territory. In 2006, during the 4th Elam war, people from Vijeyakanthan's village were displaced. He moved around from one place to another – Batticaloa, Trincomalee, etc, till March 2017, when he was finally resettled in Samphoor west, his own village.

Vijeyakanthan came in contact with HI-CAMID in 2017, as he is the president of the one of the project CSOs, Samphoor Vinayagar community development centre. Through the project, his CSO received the full capacity building support as well as training on RTI. The training on RTI was facilitated by an LA staff who had received a Training of Trainers on the topic by the project.

The awareness and information he received from the training and the links he had formed with the LA motivated him to use the knowledge from the training to seek information that concerned his community .

#### ***Using RTI he made a request for the following information:***

There was a land dispute between a private individual and the village people regarding a public well that had been partly fenced off by the private individual. Exercising the Right to Information Act, Mr. Vijeyakanthan requested for information on the ownership of the land; he wanted to clarify whether the land belongs to the LA or the private individual. According to the information he received from the LA he realized that the land where the public well was built by the LA belongs to the private individual. This information, helped prevent a potential conflict among the local people. In fact, upon knowing the correct ownership the community appreciated the generosity of private individual in donating his land to make a well for the public.

#### ***“Through the RTI we can engage more with Local Authority and promote Local Development”***

One of the important milestones that Sri Lanka achieved in the constitution and the legal rights regime is recognizing the right of the citizen in accessing the public information in the Article 14A of the Constitution which was part of the Nineteenth Amendment. This recognizes every citizen's right to access “information as provided for by law and the No 12 of 2016 the RTI was enacted in August 2016 and was operationalised in February 2017. The right of citizens in accessing information about the government's policy and decision-making is an important element of open and transparent participation of people in good democratic governance

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The RTI 16/2016 mandates timely response to citizen requests on Government information. The RTI empowers every citizen to seek information from the Government, inspect Government documents and seek certified photocopies thereof. RTI also empowers citizens to officially inspect Government work or to take the sample of material used in any work. The basic object of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the Government structure, address corruption, and make the democracy work for the people. An informed citizen will be better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of government and make the government more accountable to the people.

However there were multiple challenges in enabling the constitutional provisions of the rights and the subsequent enabling legislation, much remains to be done in order to fully operationalize this legislative framework. The challenges were.

- a. Need of trained human resource
- b. Preparation of information in a way that can be disseminated and understood.c.of the Act.
- d. Existing legislation that contradict with the provisions of the RTI Act
- e. Lack of awareness of the public on the right to information and the processes required to exercise this right.
- f. Electronic and print media not giving priority to publicize the people's right to information
- g. Language barrier - issues related to a lack of language knowledge to prevent people from requesting for information.
- h. Attitudes/beliefs of the people where they believe that requesting information from the government/ LAs may create resentment in the minds of public officials.
- i. The culture of the public service that historically practiced non-disclosure for over 200 years,

LAs are the administrative units functioning in the third tier of the democratic structure in Sri Lanka. Parliament, Provincial Councils and the Local Authorities all comprise of representatives of the public. As per new laws, public representatives to LAs are now elected based on the electorate system within a representative democracy. As per the new Local Authorities law, a member/ representative who will be responsible for their electorate will be elected for each electorate. The community has the right to evaluate the actions of this elected representative, demand for information and request for reports on the activities of the representative elected by them. In fact, the RTI Act offers a new approach to ensure the success of a representative democracy

The Local Authority is not only a mechanism for decentralized decision making on local development it is an institution run by tax payer's money, and hence is accountable to the public. The officials managing local government affairs are thus public servants of the people. In this backdrop, Local Authorities become constitutionally obliged to provide information to their public through the RTI Act, No. 12 of 2016.

## **Project intervention.**

The project aimed at increasing awareness on Right to Information Act (RTI) among the public as well as among duty bearers in the Local Authority to promote a conducive environment for economic development.

The training on RTI was done in three stages. First an awareness session was organized at all project locations for targeted stakeholders; CSO members, Government departments and the LA staff. This was done in consultation with LA staff including ACLG, Secretary, CDO and LGA . These sessions were then followed with a ToT for LA staff at District level. The trained LA staff then trained members of Community Centers and other CSOs on RTI.

These interventions have resulted in an increased usage of the RTI act. There is an information Officer in all the LAs with a complete awareness on the role and skills. Following changes are witnessed

- a. There is a mechanism available to access the information from the local authority
- b. People are educated on the RTI and how to use it
- c. Officials are aware of the duty and the responsibility of a request for information.
- d. Records of the Information request made using RTI are available in the public domain .

## **Lessons Learned and Challenges**

1. When the RTI awareness programs and trainings were conducted there were no elected council functioning which led to a knowledge gap between the permanent LA structure and the Elected members
2. Training the duty bearers and the service receiver simultaneously contributes RTI being used more effectively and sustainability of the practice is ensured.
3. RTI will work anywhere, it could be PS or UC or MC if the staff and the public are made aware of the act and the role of each stakeholder that they are holding.

## **Recommendations**

The following key factors need to be scaled-up in the practice for replication

- ◆ The approach on training both the duty bearer and the service receiver should be continued with the elected members of LA
- ◆ Building confidence and positive relation with the key stakeholders at the beginning of the project is very important. This is key, as it deals with important and often sensitive issues.
- ◆ During the scaling-up in the replication, the elected LA members also should be engaged within the process specially the chairman/Mayor, Deputy Chairman/Mayor and also people representing all the diversities such as parties, geographical locations, ethnicities and religions.
- ◆ Engaging with the permanent structure such as the LC and Community Centers and creating resources within them.

## **Conclusion**

The project actions were implemented by various development partners, International Organizations, local civil society organizations, and Government institutions. Critical to the intervention is sustainability and replicability of these actions beyond the period of the project.

A common challenge to sustainability and replication is that projects do not engage enough with the Government stakeholders and existing institutional structures. Sometimes, Government policies and procedures do not provide the opportunities to engage with CSOs and NGOs.

New projects are often implemented without taking in to consideration the lessons learnt from the previous projects.

Therefore the project aimed at working with existing structures and systems, building their capacities and fostering stronger linkages between stakeholders to ensure sustainability. The project builds on the lessons learned from previous projects on local economic development and strengthening Local authority for better governance. The project conducted several assessments prior to intervention which enabled the project to understand the actual situation on ground at the given time. Some of the examples of assessments include the CSO screening process, institution assessment of LA, Access to service community assessment and the Market study. Based on these assessments the project actions were modified or redesigned.

The assessment was followed by a systematic capacity building programme that used existing resources available with Government structures and institutions. For example training for CSOs were done by extension officers of the department. And these extension officers were also trained on enhancing their technical capacity through training organized by subject matter experts from their own department. The training was followed with coaching for CSOs and public and private economic service providers so that members belonging to vulnerable sections, such as those living below poverty line, people with disabilities, women headed households would have increased economic opportunities.

This systematic capacity building approach and linkages will support sustainability of project outcomes. Trained members of CSOs and Government Departments will move or be transferred, however the knowledge will remain with the trainees. As for CSOs, capacity building was done for at least 5 persons within their CSO and they are now better linked with Local Authorities, Public and private economic service providers, and hence will be able to continue to access economic opportunities for their members.

In the project, the Local Authority staff was first trained through a ToT, and then the LA staff took the responsibility of conducting a follow-up training for the communities and other stakeholders. The main training was conducted by the CGI and GGRC. CGI used already available mechanisms at ACLG offices; Good Governance Resource Centre (GGRC) to coordinate and implement certain activities such as the e-CRC, LAPD, etc. LAPDP were developed by LA staff through a public consultation based on ward level consultation. This has further strengthened the GGRCs and their recognition in facilitating change increased and their capacity is further strengthened in conducting e-CRC survey and coordinating other certain project activities. The increased capacity and recognition of GGRC in building the LG capacity will help replication to other areas.

Private sector is one of the most important stakeholders in local economic development. Linking with private sector for employment, in value chains has been instrumental in contributing to local economic development. This component has several challenges, and requires an approach that is not the traditional approach used generally by NGOs.

Identification and strengthening the divisional level REF is important in local economic development, making available an environment for economic growth and inclusive development. As this is an existing platform it will be sustained by the government beyond the project.

Furthermore, the documentation and dissemination of the replication guidebook will expand the impact of the project beyond its targeted locations as well and the period. Replication guide book will facilitate the replication of good practices from the project and will guide the new stakeholders who engage with similar intervention at the same location or new locations.

# A Toolkit for Replication



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