



CIVIL SOCIETY AND UNDP IN SRI LANKA: PARTNERSHIPS IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

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PARTNERSHIP IN CRISIS SITUATIONS**

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FOREWORD

“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it is the only thing that that ever has.” **Margaret Mead**

Sri Lankan civil society has played a pivotal role in promoting peace and sustainable development through policy advocacy and grass-roots initiatives. Its role expanded after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami claimed the lives of more than 30,000 in Sri Lanka alone, and left about 500,000 displaced. Civil society actors readily responded and emerged as significant disaster response partners, particularly in the northern, eastern and southern districts. There the population was most vulnerable because of their geographic location and deteriorating humanitarian situation as a result of about 20 years of armed conflict.

Judging from civil society’s more recent successful response to natural disasters and ongoing conflict, UNDP in Sri Lanka has wisely embraced this force as a genuine partner in

development and today collaborates with more than 1,000 local organizations. This report takes a snapshot of the aforementioned collaborations which promote sustainable peace and improved living conditions for those affected by conflict, poverty, and natural disasters; and seek to highlight innovations that can potentially be replicated elsewhere.

Economic recovery and peace building with institutional strengthening and community empowerment are the two primary cross-cutting issues on which this publication focuses. Through the documentation of collaborative efforts we hope to underscore achievements, offer recommendations to remaining challenges, and facilitate more meaningful partnerships with civil society partners in making Sri Lanka a better place for all.

Neil Buhne
UNDP Resident Representative

ACRONYMS

BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
BPA	Business for Peace Alliance
BRSP	Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CFA	Ceasefire Agreement
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	District Advisory Committee
DRB	District Review Board
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GA	Government Agent
IDP	Internally Displaced People
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IO	Intermediary Organization
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MED	Micro Enterprise Development
MNE	Multinational Enterprises
NAC	National Advisory Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSE	Non-state entities
OCG-RRR	Office of the Commissioner General for Relief Rehabilitation and Reconciliation
SGF	Small Grants Fund
SGP	Small Grants Programme
STRONG PLACES	Sustaining Tsunami Recovery by Organizations Networking at the Grass-roots level through Promoting Local Accountability and Capacity Enhancement Systems
TAFREN	Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation
TP	Transition Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



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OVERVIEW



The civil society tradition in Sri Lanka is vibrant and intricately woven in the fabric of the nation. In light of the country's protracted ethno-political conflict and recovery from the 2004 tsunami, civil society¹ has resettled displaced communities, restored livelihoods, coordinated interventions, collaborated with decision makers, and worked toward peaceful resolutions.

Civil society actors have faced many challenges; most carry out activities in unstable conditions and insecurity. Smaller and newly-formed CSOs are limited by operational factors such as financial and technical capacity – two internal environmental dynamics that impact programme results and sustainability.

UNDP in Sri Lanka has sought ways to develop, promote and nurture its engagement with local civil society organizations in a manner that is mutually beneficial. To date, CSOs serve as implementing partners, service providers, consultants, advisors, and suppliers to many UNDP programmes. This report highlights two important achievements in this regard. The first is the concerted effort by UNDP to strengthen the institutional capacities of its CSO partners; the second is UNDP's endeavor to change its relationships with CSOs from mere contracts to genuine partnerships founded on mutual respect. This journey has presented opportunities for UNDP to share, learn and apply many lessons.



The decision to document this challenging but rewarding journey was recommended by the CSO Division of the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships (BRSP), which undertook a mission to Sri Lanka (2005) and noted the successful outcomes of UNDP-CSO liaisons. These successes were also recognized by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) in its review of the Small Grants Programme (SGP). Both bureaux highlighted the need to raise awareness of the benefits of partnering with civil society in general, and to promote such partnerships as a way to improve coordination in crisis situations. This report attempts to satisfy the aforementioned objectives by highlighting innovative projects, best practices, and lessons learned.

Chapter 1 overviews UNDP's engagement of CSOs and discusses the challenges and opportunities in partnership building. Chapter

2 examines the topic vis-à-vis crisis prevention and peace initiatives. Chapter 3 discusses approaches adopted for institutional capacity development and strengthening of CSOs. Chapter 4 reviews the engagement of CSOs in the delivery of socio economic recovery for conflict and tsunami affected communities.

Empowerment of communities cuts across all UNDP projects and is more closely examined in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 presents a composite list of lessons that UNDP in Sri Lanka has learned in its collaboration with CSOs in crisis situations. This report documents the growing importance of civil society actors in delivering support in complex emergencies. This publication is also relevant to advancing UNDP's global agenda of working closely with local communities and seeks to capture innovations that can be replicated and scaled-up in areas with similar contexts.

¹ One accepted consensus on the concept of civil society is that it is an arena of voluntary collective actions around shared interests, purposes and values distinct from families, state and profit-seeking institutions (Fowler 2002). In this document, the term civil society connotes the full range of formal and informal organizations that are outside the state and the market – including social movements and mass-based membership organizations, NGOs, and community-based organizations, as well as communities and citizens acting individually and collectively.

² The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami affected 13 coastal districts in Sri Lanka. An estimated 35,000 people died in the tsunami and more than a million were displaced as a result of the tidal waves – some of which destroyed infrastructure and homes as far as 1.5 km inland. The government estimate of the total cost of reconstruction stands at \$ 2.2 billion from a three to five year-period.

³ The three-decade ethno-political conflict in Sri Lanka has internally displaced many citizens living in the North-East of the country. More than 68,000 people are estimated dead as a result of the on-going conflict between the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lanka armed forces. The LTTE is fighting for an independent homeland. A ceasefire agreement was signed in 2002. However, hostilities resumed in 2006 and are on-going.

UNDP AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN SRI LANKA



CHAPTER 1

On a global scale UNDP engages civil society organizations depending on the contexts and needs of the country. UNDP in Sri Lanka collaborates by way of informal and formal consultations. An example of an informal consultation is having CSO staff participate in project-management and policy-related decision making through memberships on the national advisory, project steering and project appraisal committees. Formal consultations result in UNDP engaging civil society in one of the following three relationships; the last two are the most common:

- 1) As a manager of a UNDP project: The CSO is an Implementing Partner or an Executing Agency.
- 2) As a contractor: Procurement procedures and contracts apply.

- 3) As a grant recipient: An agreement is made in vis-à-vis a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).²

CSOs as contractors

Within the contractual framework UNDP and the CSO agree on the scope of services and administrative issues such as deliverables, payment and reporting requirements.³ The capacity of the CSO therefore becomes a key consideration in selection. There is a tendency to select CSOs with proven capacities; thus, smaller and newly-formed organizations are sometimes left out of the process. Unless pre-empted, this unintentionally reinforces the very patterns of privilege and exclusion UNDP aims to eradicate. To guard against this, UNDP has established special institutional strengthening measures. For example, less-established CSOs are

selected and given the opportunity for capacity development during the course of partnership. Such capacity-building opportunities are ideal entry points for UNDP to include organizations that are otherwise overlooked and for UNDP to increase the diversity of civil society actors engaged in partnerships.

CSOs as grant recipients

A number of projects are designed to provide financial assistance to NGOs and other civil society organizations under the Small Grants Facility (SGF). An SGF is either incorporated into technical cooperation programmes or implemented through NGOs or CSOs. Grants of the latter variety are usually given on the basis of requests for proposals.

In this case UNDP establishes the conceptual and logistical terms of reference and invites civil society to submit proposals according to the organizations' interests, needs and capacities. Competitive bidding does not apply, rather proposals are selected according to the predefined criteria of the independent steering committee (or selection committee), and includes factors such as originality, feasibility and sustainability.⁴

Such committees comprise individuals representing a cross-section of civil-society interest and expertise. The members are entrusted with developing criteria for initiatives,

reviewing and selecting proposals for funding, and making recommendations on how projects are carried out. National steering committees are sometimes complemented by local variants (e.g. district steering committees) vested with the authority to perform the same function. Steering committees are advised and encouraged to support CSOs that lie outside of the 'donor net'.

As the Sri Lankan experience demonstrates, the SGF is an effective way to strengthen civil society and enables local organizations to play a stronger role in post-disaster response and recovery. The SGF is also useful for improving coordination, facilitating participatory decision making, and addressing the capacity constraints of lesser-established organizations.

Formal consultations on programming, implementation and policy

UNDP in Sri Lanka formally consults civil society using permanent mechanisms such as advisory committees and steering committees; and ad-hoc mechanisms such as project appraisal committees. The District Review Board (DRB) is one steering committee established under the Transition Programme project, and comprises representatives mostly from UNDP, CBOs CSOs, NGOs, local cooperatives, and is chaired by the Government Agent (GA) of each district. The DRB

discusses and develops projects administered by UNDP in its relevant district. The Board receives technical support from sectoral experts and the input and endorsement of the GA. The DRB is also responsible for monitoring project progress and supporting project evaluations and assessments.

The DRBs have proven highly effective in providing a forum for discussion among district-level government officials and CSOs, while the majority of Conflict Prevention and Recovery (CPR) projects are administered by central- or district-level steering committees comprising government representatives, civil society organizations the private sector. Both bodies have proven effective in bridging civil society and government participation in the humanitarian response and development of the country.

Informal consultations on policy issues

Informal consultations on policy issues take place on a daily basis as UNDP has established a dialogue with CSOs to ensure that programme initiatives respond to the dynamic and diverse needs of the participant community. The chapters that follow explore these modalities in greater depth and demonstrate how each has been used to build and foster meaningful partnerships between civil society and UNDP in Sri Lanka.

² See UNDP and Civil Society Organizations: A Toolkit for Strengthening Partnerships (2006) for a complete description of various instruments used by UNDP to engage with CSOs. http://www.undp.org/partners/cso/publications/CSO_Toolkit_linked.pdf

³ Ibid.

⁴ See UNDP and Civil Society Organizations: A Toolkit for Strengthening Partnerships (2006) for a complete description of various instruments used in UNDP to engage with CSOs. http://www.undp.org/partners/cso/publications/CSO_Toolkit_linked.pdf

ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE BUILDING



CHAPTER 2

Civil society organizations are often the ears and eyes of the community and are the first to respond to tensions between individuals and groups. CSOs also serve as intermediaries between government stakeholders, non-state entities (NSEs), and civilians. During the immediate aftermath of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) of 2002, UNDP in Sri Lanka took advantage of the unique position held by Sri Lankan civil society and tailored some projects to harness peace-building capacities. The abrogation of the Ceasefire Agreement in January 2008 has opened up a new and perhaps more challenging environment for engagement in peacebuilding. However many of the achievements and lessons described below may well endure nonetheless. This chapter underscores such notable collaborations between civil society and UNDP in Sri Lanka.

Strengthening information capacities for the peace process (Peace Secretariats)

The 'Strengthening Information Capacities of the Peace Process' project worked in close partnership with the three established Peace Secretariats to improve the information and communication capacities. It was premised on the belief that it was important for the Secretariats to improve their partnerships with each other and to communicate information and ideas about the peace process with their respective constituencies in order to develop and sustain public support for peace in the country.

The project adopted a two-pronged approach towards meeting its aims. First, it supported the three Secretariats to improve their information and communication capacities. Second, it established

a Small Grants Fund (SGF) modality in order to support civil society initiatives that sought to build public awareness and participation for peace.

Creating dividends of peace

The 2002 CFA underscored the importance of establishing a government body with the responsibility for administering relief and rehabilitation to the country's conflict-affected areas. With this mandate the Office of the Commissioner General for the Coordination of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (OCG-RRR) was established that same year. UNDP accepted the Government of Sri Lanka's call to provide organizational support to the OCG-RRR and has assisted in the development of the National Action Plan for Reconciliation. Though essentially State-led, the planning process actively sought the experience and expertise of civil society actors and developed into a platform for dialogue between representatives of the state (government ministries, civil servants etc) and civil society (academics, CSOs, religious leaders etc). In fact, NGOs spearheaded each of the four working groups constituting the Action Plan, facilitated far-reaching consultations, and eventually developed recommendations which were incorporated into the final document.

Invest-in-Peace: Business for Peace Alliance

Since 2002 UNDP has worked with the government to implement the Invest-in-Peace Project. The Project's premise is that business is good for peace: Generating jobs, goods and services, tax revenues, capital and foreign exchange, technology and markets. Reciprocally, peace is good for business: restoring confidence and security for trade and investment, as well as creating fresh opportunities for private-sector participation in national economic reconstruction and development.

Invest-in-Peace adopts a three-pronged strategy: i) enhancing the enabling environment for investment and trade; ii) building sustainable capacity in business-supporting institutions; and iii) encouraging business to work proactively for peace. Some of the achievements thus far have been the strengthening of the North-East construction industry and skills development, strengthening Regional Chambers of Commerce and SMEs and the creation and strengthening of the Business for Peace Alliance.

International Alert collaborated with UNDP to establish the Business for Peace Alliance (BPA), a working group of 36 business leaders that

represent 18 local chambers of commerce.[1] The business sector has emerged as a unique partner into the peace-building arena which has not traditionally been a part of civil society; as such, the number of stakeholders in the peace process has increased, as has the potential for diverse and innovative resolutions.

Key Achievements

- Support to civil society institutions through the Small Grants modality paved the way for greater involvement of civil society in the peace process and inter alia improved their outreach to the communities on peace issues.
- The SGF has enabled CSOs to develop innovative projects to communicate and generate public dialogue on peace. These projects in have had the 'multiplier' effect by increasing public participation in peace-building.
- Peace-building work has been diversified through efforts such as the production and dissemination of trilingual publications on conflict resolution.
- The reconciliation exercise created a forum in which multiple stakeholders could discuss once-contentious issues of national importance.



- The National Action Plan for Reconciliation exercise was a rare model of effective cooperation between State and civil society in the peace building arena.
- The activities of the BPA helped improve commercial and inter-personal relations between communities in the north, east and south; for example, exchange visits between the Chambers of Commerce and peace visits by the Regional Chambers paved the way for commercial cooperation and also improved interpersonal relations and cross-cultural understanding.
- Linking regional chambers of commerce gave the organizations a stronger platform for dialogue with policy makers, State industries and multinational enterprises (MNEs).
- Alliances built under the BPA proved useful post-tsunami, as the Chambers were able to meet affected communities and represent their interests to those entrusted with the response and recovery efforts.
- The BPA continues to make representations to various parties on the importance of peace and remains a resilient voice for peace amid increased hostilities.
- The SGF gave UNDP an opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships with CSOs by simultaneously providing institutional and programmatic support.
- Capacity building activities under the SGF enabled participant organizations to function more effectively and with greater consideration for transparency and accountability. For example, CSOs have been able to retain full-time staff instead of relying on part-time and volunteer staff. Many have set up project-monitoring for the first time. Other areas of the project cycle that have improved include proposal and report writing, and financial and accounting reporting.
- Civil society actors have taken ownership of local initiatives and have increased accountability and transparency in actions as a result of institutional strengthening. UNDP-led actions such as frequent field visits to CSOs reinforce relationships and facilitate the alignment of UNDP and CSO interests.
- The SGF has encouraged and supported the district-wide CSO consortia which have enabled unified representations and interventions, and increased CSO leverage with stakeholders. CSO consortia have also helped civil society organizations to better coordinate: For example, sharing information helps reduce duplication and gaps in services and increases inter-district coordination and cooperation. Where CSO consortia have received financial support, the money has been used to support administrative functions such as paying staff, training community leaders, and supplementing travel and communication expenses.



Key Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Escalating conflict and political instability limits the ability of organizations to implement sustainable peace-building efforts. These trends also discourage non-traditional peace constituencies such as the private sector from entering or remaining engaged in peace building.
- Other Constraints include limited resources (human, time, and competing priorities). The SGF-steering committee model, for example, promotes local ownership and transparency and attracts members with the necessary expertise. Yet challenges remain in getting committees to meet, arranging field visits or facilitating CSO training because members participate on

a voluntary basis and are bound by prior professional commitments.

- While providing institutional support is essential for sustaining the work of CSOs, organizational change takes commitment and time. Clearly, CSOs receiving institutional support have improved and gained greater credibility but the full impact of UNDP support is difficult to measure in the short- and medium-term.
- Some CSOs receiving institutional and programmatic support remain motivated during the lifespan of the project but lose interest once material support ends. Such organizations say that the normal 12-month funding cycle is inadequate

to conduct long-term peace-building work. However, UNDP has found that indiscriminately extending funding cycles leads to dependency and a subsequent inability to sustain civil society work independent of external support.

- The implementation of the SGF took longer than anticipated due to various start-up problems and the interruption of routine operations with those of tsunami response and recovery. Despite the slow start, the SGF boasts several unique vertical linkages between CSOs cooperating across cultures and districts. Progress on the development of horizontal linkages between CSOs and national-level stakeholders and processes has been relatively slower.



CASE STUDY 1:

WORKING WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Women are increasingly representing the head of households in the eastern province of Sri Lanka as a result of conflict-related conscription, deaths and disappearances. An emerging trend is that of women taking on the traditional male role of breadwinner and female role of primary caregiver while battling the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict alone.

In an attempt to address this situation five women established the Working Women's Development Forum (WWDF) in 1990. The organization focuses on women- and girl-headed households with limited incomes. Since its inception, the organization has addressed various development needs of the community and raised awareness on human rights. Project initiatives include village savings accounts (run with the support of volunteers) that are used to provide financial support and vocational training to target women.

In spite of such innovative approaches the WWDF has been unable to secure sustainable donor support. This has resulted in the loss of several experienced staff to higher paying NGOs and INGOs. The tsunami has further impacted the human resource capacity of the organization, as the disaster created more women-headed households and increased the demand for WWDF services.

Through the support of the BCPR/BRSP programme WWDF has been able to address these issues by increasing its investment in human resources, providing in-service training, and recruiting and retaining new and experienced field staff and community volunteers. The organization has also scaled up some of its economic recovery and vocational training activities and has a larger field presence now than ever before.



CASE STUDY 2:

PEACE BUILDING THROUGH THE SCOUTS MOVEMENT

Children have strong connections and networks among themselves and can become effective agents of behavior change in the community. Because children are in their formative years they more easily acquire knowledge that can be applied to peace-building efforts. Many of these children are involved with the Sri Lanka Scouts Association (SLSA) and the Colombo District Branch of the SLSA. The SLSA represents one of the most popular young people's movements in the country and holds great potential to mobilize children for peace.

Through the national school system UNDP works with the SLSA to promote cooperation among scouts (including those from the conflict-affected areas of Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Jaffna). Scouting is also promoted through the estate sector, refugee camps and with children living or working on the street. Other UNDP-SLSA efforts include a week-long 'Camporee' to promote inter-ethnic understanding among scouts from all over the nation. Troop leaders are being targeted by UNDP for peer mediation training, negotiations and leadership skills for scout troop leaders; in addition UNDP is working with SLSA will incorporate peace skills as an optional topic in the scouts training curriculum. These are just some of the efforts UNDP is undertaking to promote peace among the scout movement in Sri Lanka.



INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



CHAPTER 3

In emergency and crisis contexts there is a natural tendency to focus on the critical needs of the affected population, while ignoring the capacity and constraints of partner responding organizations. Not all organizations experience the same issues but UNDP has identified three broad categories of capacity shortfalls among CSOs:

1. Managerial, financial and administrative;
2. Technical (ranging from immediate recovery interventions to medium- to long-term peace-building interventions); and
3. Channels to access and engage with government and NSEs.

Such gaps directly impact the quantity and quality of services delivered. To this end UNDP in Sri Lanka has concurrently supported the emergency response and capacity needs

of civil society actors through stand-alone and mainstreaming capacity development activities into projects. This chapter highlights UNDP's success with this strategy through the flagship UNDP CSO project, STRONG PLACES, and identifies mechanisms used to enhance its effectiveness and impact.

STRONG PLACES

The Sustaining Tsunami Recovery by Organizations Networking at the Grass-roots level through Promoting Local Accountability and Capacity Enhancement Systems (**STRONG PLACES**) project is founded on the premise that CBOs must possess strong and effective institutional capacities to function in competitive environments. STRONG PLACES has undertaken an ambitious programme of delivering small grants and training to more than 700 CBOs in

eight tsunami-affected districts to increase such organizations' capacity and competitive edge. This project is implemented through the Centre for Non-Governmental Sector of the Ministry of Finance in eight districts and is funded by the Government of Germany.

The premise for the project stemmed from the results of a post-tsunami needs assessment survey which found that smaller CBOs frequently failed to obtain donor funding due to limited organizational faculty. Many CBOs did not know the process for submitting English-written proposals and compliance to donor reporting process. Consequently, these organizations fell short of donor requirements and were left out of the 'donor net'.

The assessment further discovered that CBOs with relatively poor institutional capacities struggled most in its tsunami response. Human resource capacity became a major issue for some organizations as workloads increased because of the widespread devastation, while local talent was swiped by new I/NGOs which paid higher salaries and offered greater job security. The assessment further confirmed that the power differential between CBOs and stakeholders such as government representatives, donors, INGOs and NGOs led to unequal "partnerships" with the CBOs having little or no bargaining power.

Thus STRONG PLACES was developed to build the capacities of CBOs that responded to the tsunami and were characterized as:

- Disempowered in the tsunami response due to a lack of standard capacities such as grant writing, financial accounting etc.;
- Adversely affected through the loss of key staff/leadership, community assets, lack of infrastructure, restricted cash flows and the like;
- Emerging and targeting neglected and marginalized communities;
- CBOs or other appropriate local organizations that have not yet been formalized;
- CBOs cum defunct organizations because of a loss or dispersal of members, and destruction of infrastructure and records as a result of the tsunami.

The project consists of two components:

1. **Direct capacity development:**

This arm of the project develops the institutional and human resource capacities of selected NGO and CBO consortia and aims to address the urgent capacity needs of CBOs. Organizations are provided with training on common capacity shortfalls such as project cycle management, organizational management, accounting, monitoring and reporting, human resource development and proposal writing.

Organizations are also provided with tailor-made training based on needs identified after the tsunami. For example, many CSOs felt first aid training was important; while others believed learning how to swim was essential. When CSOs make such requests, UNDP responded (as much as possible) under this project.

2. **Small Grant Facility:** The SGF provides grants to CBOs toward direct institutional strengthening and also support activities not generally covered by tsunami funds.

The project is steered by two mechanisms: A National Advisory Committee (NAC) and the District Advisory Committees (DACs). The NAC comprises representatives from Colombo-based CSOs, district-based CSOs, the private sector and government (and the Taskforce for Rebuilding the Nation, TAFREN – which was established and designated as the body responsible for post tsunami reconstruction). On the other hand, DACs comprise representatives from local NGOs, civic and community institutions, and government. The NAC provides oversight and guidance to the project, establishes selection criteria for project proposals and sometimes participates in DAC forums. In practice, DACs select and allocate project funding while the NAC vets the decisions.

The project is also supported by middle-tier representation in the shape of Intermediary Organizations (IOs) responsible for the actual disbursement of grants to CBOs. The IOs were

selected through a transparent district-based bidding process. This mechanism is significant because it creates a stronger layer of civil society organizations functioning within the districts, engenders a loose network of organizations that share lessons learnt/best practices, and establishes a network of CSOs as a district-based source of capacity and knowledge that serve as focal points and can serve as a resource base in future disasters.

Finally, the project is supported by Social Mobilizers in each district that work closely with CBOs and marginalized communities. It is anticipated that this tier of human resources will remain mobilized beyond the project's lifespan and serve as a catalyst for local development.

Key Achievements

- The provision of financial assistance has enabled CBOs to fill capacity gaps in infrastructure and human resources and results in a greater span of outreach.
- CBO training has led to improved organizational practices in business processes such as accounting and financial reporting. Staff has demonstrated increased knowledge in areas such as leadership, communication, interpersonal relationship skills, community mobilization and human rights-based approaches.
- As a result of UNDP interventions a majority of CBOs have improved governance practices. For example, participant CBOs have adopted stronger constitutions, implemented more participatory decision-making processes, and established more transparent record-keeping and reporting practices.
- CBOs also demonstrate increased knowledge on project-based funding and organizational management. As a result they now possess a competitive edge for funding in the future.
- The involvement of civic and community leaders in DAC structures has brought a tier of civil society into the institutionalized recovery processes traditionally dominated by NGO and INGO leaders.
- The NAC and DAC structures have led to a higher degree of civil society involvement,





encouraged solidarity by way of localized decision-making, and given local actors greater ownership of the project. The DAC structure holds potential as a forum for civil society engagement and its members can be a pool of resource persons that last beyond the lifespan of the project.

- UNDP interventions have resulted in the emergence of stronger CBOs in each district with the capacity to bargain with other stakeholders and catalyze future development.
- As a result of UNDP interventions more individuals have been trained and mobilized to respond to future community needs.

intention of the process was that of full participation. For example, in one district the DAC is controlled by local government representatives while in another representatives of smaller CBOs have been intimidated into passive participation by representatives with higher social, academic or economic standing. These unfortunate factors have diluted the participatory nature and intent of DACs.

- Although all NAC and DAC members were initially enthusiastic about the project, only some have maintained their level of involvement over time. Both forums struggle with scheduling difficulties and do not frequently meet quorum, which limits their decision-making ability.
- Given the long-term and intangible nature of institutional strengthening, it has been somewhat difficult to assess the full impact of UNDP work in this regard.

Key Challenges and Lessons Learned

- The deteriorating security situation in the country has slowed (in some districts halted) the progress of many tsunami recovery projects.
- Twelve-month funding cycles, such as those administered under STRONG PLACES, are inadequate to sufficiently transform organizations. Even though CBOs have received training in areas such as proposal writing and the donor financial cycle, these new skill sets and techniques not always sufficiently internalized to secure further donor funding.
- While some CBOs have used UNDP support to sustain organizational initiatives in the medium- to long-term, others have not been as strategic. Disparities exist with regards to direction on issues of sustainability offered by project staff and DACs in each district.
- Some DACs have been dominated by some individuals although the

BCPR/BRSP Small Grants Programme

UNDP in Sri Lanka is one of three country offices that participated in a UNDP Small Grants Programme (SGP) for CSOs in post-conflict countries. The initiative aimed to strengthen the capacities of select UNDP Country Offices and build sustainable partnerships with CBOs in the areas of economic recovery and democratic and civilian institutional reform. The project sought to enhance the capacities of CBOs through training and building strategic alliances with stakeholders.

This programme was based on the premise that developing the capacities of CSOs is necessary to sustain post-conflict recovery. The project was expected to diversify the UNDP partner base and lead to a shared visioning of programming between UNDP and its partners.

CASE STUDY 3:

ILMA SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION

Ilma Social Service Organization (ISSO), formed in 1992 (formally registered in 1997), to serve the village community of Akkaraipattu, in particular refugees displaced by the conflict. Following the tsunami the organization began providing relief to the affected communities.

Supported by STRONG PLACES, the organization has been able to improve its operational processes, for example, introducing improved financial management processes and training its staff as well. The ISSO plans to have its accounts audited for the first time this year (2007) to facilitate greater transparency.

As the organization has improved in this area of organizational management, it has experienced a greater show of confidence among its members. ISSO has now launched a public savings system in which members have collected funds totaling Rs. 32,000 – Rs. 25,000 of which have been disbursed to members as part of a revolving loan scheme. A majority of loan recipients are widows who start up small business from the scheme. Greater financial management has also led to improvements in the saving system. Members now contribute from Rs.50 to Rs.200 per month to the scheme, as opposed to the Rs.10 to Rs.30 they contributed previously.

Membership in the organization has also grown from 130 to 160. “[People] are voluntarily coming to us and asking for membership ... a great achievement for us,” says ISSO president Mr. Kaldeen. “We hope that within the next two years we can change our status to a community bank.”



ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIO ECONOMIC RECOVERY



CHAPTER 4

Economic recovery is a major priority for UNDP in post-crisis development, an area in which UNDP in Sri Lanka has developed many valued CSO partnerships. Such work involves working with impoverished and vulnerable communities affected by emergencies and enabling them to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. One example of this is the Transition Programme (TP)⁶, the main delivery mechanism for UNDP support to Sri Lanka's conflict-affected areas.

Through the network of UNDP field offices, the programme supports a variety of projects at the district and community levels – ranging

from micro-finance to the capacity-building of partner organizations in the agricultural and fisheries sectors. The programme also implemented economic recovery activities in tsunami-affected areas. This chapter details key economic recovery activities and how UNDP has involved civil society actors.

Micro enterprise development

MED contributes to the recovery of the micro enterprise sector by offering direct support to micro-entrepreneurs in addition to developing the capacities of micro-enterprise service providers. MED projects are pivotal to the

economic recovery agenda, given that small enterprises are often the economic safety net of the poor; and that large numbers of women, conflict- and tsunami-affected people are engaged in this sector.

Support to the MED sector is largely provided by offering micro-credit facilities to affected and marginalized communities through the establishment of revolving loan funds in partnership with local cooperatives and CBOs. UNDP supports the formation of such community-based credit societies and offers institutional support to existing ones in order to make them more effective and sustainable. UNDP also partners with government bodies (e.g. the Central Bank, the Ministry of Rural and Small Industries Development), business associations (Ceylon Chamber of Commerce) and private sector institutions in its work in this sector.

Fisheries, agriculture and livestock recovery

Following the tsunami the TP expanded its portfolio to include the restoration of damaged markets, fish auction centres and community halls and the provision of new machinery. The project focuses on improving income generation in the aforementioned sectors through activities such as technology transfer and marketing support. UNDP works closely with Fisheries Cooperative Societies, CBOs, sister UN Agencies, (FAO and UNHCR in particular) and the private sector to build the capacity of such institutions and CSOs in support of these sectors.

Community-based infrastructure and housing

Projects under this sector include construction of new houses, the reconstruction of partially damaged houses and the construction or reconstruction of community infrastructure. UNDP promotes an integrated approach to housing in which participants also have access to basic social services such as water and sanitation, electricity, and access roads.

UNDP partners with CSOs to identify participants and to facilitate their full participation in the reconstruction process. Additionally, UNDP collaborates with UN-HABITAT, the National Housing Development Authority, the Urban Development Authority, North-Eastern and Southern Provincial Councils and Gas; and maintains coordination mechanisms with UNHCR when resettling internally displaced persons (IDPs).

⁶ Established in January, 2004.





Key Achievements

- Inbringing more CSOs into institutionalized development processes UNDP has been able to promote the participation of local actors among stakeholders (donors, government representatives).
- CSOs once working in isolation can now link up with other CSOs. Such collaboration makes it easier for them to carry out joint programmes and make collective representations to other stakeholders. Mechanisms such as coordination meetings helped them to share information and avoid duplication of work.

- The provision of heavy machinery has helped local actors improve the delivery of relief and recovery services to communities.
- Support provided to Fisheries Cooperative Societies and Multi Purpose Cooperative Societies has strengthened local agencies and created local ownership of economic recovery in these districts. Furthermore, the building and/or restoration of community halls and auction centres have given communities much-needed spaces for interaction and mobilization.
- Community ownership in the identification and implementation

of projects has increased, resulting in increased opportunities for sustainability. Furthermore, it has ensured that projects cater to the needs identified by participant communities. The approach also allows for the acquisition of skills development and generates short-term employment for the community members.

- The community-based approach also enhances equity principles as it refrains from singling out participants belonging to particular groups, rather addressing the needs of a community as a whole.

Key Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Many projects face delays and constraints such as insufficient assets and raw material. This particularly holds true for those located in conflict-affected areas due to restrictions and delays in the transportation of goods and services.
- While CSOs have experience and expertise in certain areas (and are selected on these basis), many lack capacity in other crucial areas; for example, while some CBOs working with fishing communities are well-versed in the fishing industry many have difficulties in building or restoring

sector-related infrastructure.

- Some UNDP processes such as Direct Execution (DEX) and Invitation to Bids (ITBs) result in delays and uneven progress in the implementation of sub-projects which result in friction when CSOs function as implementing partners.
- Sometimes selected CSOs do not have enough expertise to carry out certain project activities. In the context of the post-tsunami some individuals set up NGOs to secure funding that poured in. Many of these became defunct after a few months, while others simply did not possess enough capacity to carry out their

mission. In some cases, start-up NGOs attracted the staff of local organizations, further weakening local CSO human resource capacity.

- While the community-based approach has added-value, particularly in the area of sustainability and the subsequent impact of project outputs, it also requires considerable investments of time for the successful development and implementation of projects.

CASE STUDY 4:

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE DISTRICT OF VAVUNIYA WITH MICRO-FINANCE

The economy of the district of Vavuniya is predominantly agriculture-based. Many families depend on rice cultivation, inland fisheries, forestry and farming. Even industrial activities are closely linked to crop agriculture.

Lack of access to credit in both agricultural and agriculture-based industrial activities constrains economic growth in the district. Small farmers and entrepreneurs are particularly disadvantaged as they often cannot secure credit from the formal banking sector because they do not meet financing requirements.

Cognizant of these challenges, UNDP has worked with the Vavuniya District Thrift and Credit Cooperative Societies Union Limited (SANASA) to administer an effective credit operation through its central revolving fund and special loan scheme. The financial programmes were designed to meet the specific needs of the community and have served the district of Vavuniya since 1986. The organization provides credit and savings facilities through 30 active societies in the government-controlled areas of the district.

With support from UNDP and AusAID, SANASA has improved its community outreach. From 2002 to 2006, the number of SANASA established societies grew from 30 to 154 while the number of participant families increased from 414 to 7800. The total disbursement of loans increased from Rs. 5.68 million in 2002 to Rs. 6 million in 2006. More than 50 per cent of these loans were used by farmers to increase agricultural inputs.



CASE STUDY 5:

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH SELF-EMPLOYMENT: KOOMANKULAM WOMEN'S SOCIETY

Kumar Selvanayahi, 38, is a mother of three teenagers: Anandhababu, 17, Raguram, 16, and Srividya, 13. Her family lives in Koomankulam, a village with about 500 families in Vavuniya district. Most families in this village either own small businesses or tailor as a livelihood. Selvanayahi and her family had to leave their homes and move to the Mandhapam refugee camp in India in 1990. They returned to their village in 1993.

After resettling her family started various employment activities but was unable to generate profits because they didn't have enough money or basic business skills. They finally decided to open a bakery but when the bakery began to flourish, Selvanayahi's husband injured his right arm in an accident. To make matters worse, the motorcycle used to deliver bread to clients was stolen. This unfortunate turn of events eventually caused the bakery to shut down.

But all was not lost for Selvanayahi, who is a member of the Koomankulam Women society. Through hard work and perseverance she obtained a loan of Rs. 10,000 to re-establish the bakery. Though the supplies remained a problem, the start up capital from UNDP allowed Selvanayahi to import raw material from Colombo.

Her business has now expanded to a small industry, providing employment from 10 to 12 people and earning her family a monthly income of around Rs. 3000-4500. Selvanayahi has repaid her first loan and has taken a second loan of Rs. 13,000. She plans to use this money to expand her business by purchasing machinery to increase productivity. Selvanayahi's income has substantially increased and she can now send her children to school on a full-time and permanent basis.

ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



CHAPTER 5

Empowering the communities and its partners is a cornerstone of the UNDP development agenda. In fact, one of the reasons for engaging civil society in the first place is to facilitate them in becoming agents of their own development and developing their capacities in this regard. One objective of community empowerment has been to reduce the donor-participant power imbalances, and to build genuine partnerships between UNDP and the community.

This chapter highlights innovative work led by UNDP in the area of community empowerment in Sri Lanka and flags the challenges and opportunities. It also provides recommendation for further improvements.

People's consultations in tsunami recovery

In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami a trend emerged of administering relief and reconstruction through highly bureaucratic and top-down structures, leaving little time and space for consulting affected communities. This led to a disconnect between the real needs of the community and the delivery of services, waste of money and services, corruption, and a lack of human-rights based approaches, meaning that project initiatives didn't incorporate the views of the affected community.

To this end UNDP supported extensive and comprehensive people's consultations on post-tsunami relief, reconstruction and



rehabilitation. The project aimed to listen to the needs, problems and recommendations of the affected communities, and in turn, channel this information to recovery providers and donors. The consultations were carried out by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) of Sri Lanka in partnership with the University of Colombo and national universities in the affected districts. The project was guided by a steering committee which involved the aforementioned partners and TAFREN. This example remains the only comprehensive consultation conducted in Sri Lanka comprising more than 800 focus group discussions (FGDs) in more than 1,100 villages and all 13 affected districts. The consultations also included meetings with host communities, government representatives, INGOs, NGOs and CBOs in the districts.

In its second phase, the People's Consultation project supported the HRC in establishing Help Desks in eight tsunami-affected districts. The Help Desks are run by trained officers recruited through the United Nations Volunteers Programme, who receive allegations of human rights abuse, carry out inquiries and fact-

finding missions, raise awareness on human rights, implement community mobilization programmes, and submit findings and recommendations to recovery stakeholders. Under the same project, UNDP also supports the newly established Ministry of Human Rights with human resource and technical support. Under the same project, UNDP facilitates training workshops on rights-based approaches for various actors at the local level with the aim of improving transparency, accountability and participation in the recovery process.

AIDWATCH

AID WATCH aims to empower civil society to 'ask the right questions' on the recovery and development activities in participant communities by facilitating a dialogue between civil society and relevant stakeholders, and providing technical know-how and mobilization skills. The primary objective of AIDWATCH is to engender an attitudinal change where donors and participants begin to regard aid as a human right as opposed to an act of charity. It also aims to ensure that recovery and development activities take place in an environment of

increased accountability, transparency, participation and empowerment.

At present, AIDWATCH functions within the STRONG PLACES project and has been implemented on a pilot basis in the districts of Galle, Trincomalee, Jaffna, and Batticaloa, mostly in proximity to UNDP housing sites. In a UNDP housing project, for example, participants are brought into a forum where they are encouraged to discuss the project with UNDP field staff, ask questions, share grievances and make recommendations. Where necessary, they are also engaged in dialogue with other actors such as local government representatives and the HRC. They are provided with skills training on the technical aspects of the project and on rights awareness, mobilization and empowerment. As part of this initiative, there is now an AIDWATCH training manual which details steps for establishing community monitoring mechanisms and outlines methodologies for community empowerment.

AIDWATCH: GALLE HOUSING PROJECT

Key Achievements

- The consultations provided a forum for the communities to articulate their needs, problems and recommendations (often for the very first time since the disaster).
- Findings from the consultations were shared with decision makers, enabling prompt action on issues raised by participant communities.
- The final report was disaggregated into geographic (i.e. per village) and sectoral units (i.e. as housing, livelihoods, education, health etc.). This allowed actors at various levels to use the findings in more precisely.
- The partnership with the HRC in this venture ensured that the Commission was able to investigate issues of inaction, bribery and corruption, call on local government actors on issues of non-compliance and make recommendations to the state. This partnership extended to the second phase of the project in which Help Desks located in the districts carry out these mandated functions as representatives of the HRC.
- The involvement of the Ministry of Human Rights ensures a direct line of access to agencies of the State through which the findings of the Help Desks are channelled to relevant government bodies.
- The establishment of the AIDWATCH mechanism has increased transparency and accountability centring UNDP housing projects.
- Although created around specific projects, it is anticipated that the empowerment gained as a result of this initiative combined with enhanced mobilization skills, will enable communities to function as watchdogs over all local development activities in the future.
- The linking function of AIDWATCH between participants, local government actors and the HRC contributes to the increasing responsibility and accountability of these actors towards the community and lays the groundwork for continued networking and dialogue.
- The drafting of a manual enables the replication of AIDWATCH in other locations in addition to the extraction of some ideas as part of a larger process of civil society empowerment at the grass roots.

Key Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Although the People's Consultations process would have been more effective and exemplary had it been a joint UN exercise, the efforts to bring other UN agencies into the process encountered various challenges relating to competing mandates and priorities.
- The success of projects such as the People's Consultations rests largely on the ability to get off the ground in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. The project was launched two months after its scheduled date due to operational limitations. As a result, its potential for influencing policy formulation was hampered. The delays led to disappointment among UNDP partners.
- Delays in project implementation also affect initiatives such as AIDWATCH as both CBOs and communities felt let down by UNDP.
- Maximizing the findings of the People's Consultations remains a challenge. Although the report was widely disseminated, the strategy to engage policymakers on various levels on identified

issues, and establishing monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the information was used to its fullest were insufficient. Some of this must be attributed to the reluctance of many stakeholders to listen to the voices of the people and to alter their courses accordingly.

- Conversely, initiatives such as AIDWATCH risk the danger of information overload. For example, full disclosure of budgets without adequate explanation has resulted in participants comparing UNDP budget allocations with that of other development agencies. The field staff has had to face the brunt of disgruntled participations on occasion as a consequence.
- Although AIDWATCH has demonstrated its potential as an independent monitoring tool, it is hard to gauge the sustainability of community forums set up under this mechanism. At present, forums centre on specific UNDP project and heavily rely on STRONG PLACES project staff. It is unclear if these communities will remain as watchdogs of development activities in their districts in the medium-to long-term. The key challenge ahead lies in making these mechanisms sustainable.



The AIDWATCH community for the UNDP housing project in Thalapitiya, Galle, consists of representatives from 21 participant families. Before the project was established, the families to be located in an apartment-style housing scheme, had not met and interacted with each other. The AIDWATCH meetings provided the space for this interaction in addition to face-to-face time with UNDP project staff and government officers.

As a result of this communication many of the information gaps were gradually filled. For example, this particular housing project was delayed because of an incorrect soil test, but the participants assumed that the delays were a consequence of conflicting participant lists. Once this was cleared, UNDP field staff explained the best way to correct the soil test and provide deadlines for completion of the task. These 'promises' were followed up by actions according to the deadlines and the participants were given regular updates of the progress or problems.

While facilitating community participation in monitoring, the AIDWATCH project also attempted to provide participants with a basic yet applicable understanding of their rights, in particular with regard to their relationship with UNDP. This helped dispel the notion that aid was akin to charity and was not to be questioned, and created a confident realization that aid is a path to realize human rights. It also created a greater sense of accountability and transparency on the part of donor organizations and created an informed demand with the community to access information, participate in monitoring the construction of their homes, and the right to answers. The participants evolved from being beneficiaries in the aid cycle to partners and genuine owners.

Some participants felt empowered enough to request an Islamic religious ceremony at the housing site prior to construction – something they had previously been too afraid to ask, believing that it was not their place to request a religious ceremony. They also requested to visit the housing site to inspect their homes and asked project staff to change the window-frame wood because the quality was poor.

It was important to impress upon participants that there are methods and avenues for redress beyond lodging complaints with UNDP housing staff about matters that could not be resolved by them. They understood over time that there were better grievance mechanisms available than writing letters. They realized that avenues such as the HRC and local government officers had not been used to their full potential.

They were thus able to give up the practice of sending anonymous petitions and raise their concerns before all members of the AIDWATCH group. For example, once it was requested that STRONG PLACES staff verify allegations of four participants receiving housing at another site. The Help Desks set up under the People's Consultations project investigated the issue and removed the four people from the list, opening up spaces for other affected families. This is just one example of the ripple effect of community empowerment.

LESSONS LEARNED



CHAPTER 6

As outlined in the preceding chapters, UNDP in Sri Lanka has endeavored to develop and nurture partnerships with civil society, especially CBOs. The progress made in this area has not been without challenges. There are lessons learned, identified pitfalls to avoid, and room for improvement. UNDP itself has many lessons to learn from its own experiences that may be relevant to other UNDP country offices.

This chapter identifies some of these lessons learned. For ease of understanding, the points are divided into the following subcategories: Conceptual aspects of projects, project modalities and project implementation.

Conceptual Aspects

Involving civic leaders: At every stage of UNDP in Sri Lanka engagement with CSOs, efforts were made to tap into community civic leadership. Civic leaders possess insights into their locales and typically command the respect of their communities. However, they usually do not get involved in organized development activities and are thus excluded from wider development forums.

In making a concerted effort to involve civic leaders in project steering committees, UNDP can pave the way for broadening civil society engagement and infusing development

processes with fresh experience and expertise. Given their credibility and acceptance among communities, it would be useful to go beyond simply involving civic leaders in steering committees and engaging them in the implementation and monitoring phases of projects. Care must be taken however to address any intentional and unintentional biases that leaders may bring to the table.

Maximizing the community-based approach: The community-based approach to programming fosters local ownership – beginning with expressed the need of an initiative to the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of activities. The approach also generates short-term employment opportunities for the community, opens up more opportunities for skills development, and addresses the needs of a community as a whole – including traditionally marginalized groups. It is therefore desirable to maximize the utilization of community-based approaches to development as much as possible. It is important to note that this approach requires considerable time; however, the trade-off is that communities remain self-sufficient long beyond the lifespan of the project. These issues have to be factored in at the outset of an intervention, meaning that realistic timeframes and exit strategies must be drawn up, and the strategic imperatives and resources identified for ensuring the sustainability of the intervention are identified and secured beyond the timing set forth in the project cycle.

Setting realistic targets for CBO and community participation: Although it is important to involve the community to the maximum and fully exploit the involvement of CBOs in projects, it is also important to

acknowledge that these actors have other pressing responsibilities. For example, project participants may be unable to attend recurrent meetings if these activities interrupt work of family commitments.

Project Modalities

Simplifying grant-making procedures: The SGF administered through the projects under discussion has one common feature: The adoption of the highly simplified grant-making processes. With this process, CSOs are provided with straightforward procedures at every step of the grant cycle. All material with regard to grant applications and the grant-making process is presented in simplified terms and in local languages. If necessary, UNDP organizes training in proposal writing and financial reporting. When implementing projects, CSOs are given considerable leeway in regards to conceptualizing goals, determining outputs and setting time lines. This includes the freedom to deviate from those originally stated if they are able to make a convincing case for doing so.

When working with smaller, emerging or institutionally weaker CSOs, it is important to keep the grant award process as simple and as flexible as possible. This allows UNDP to support organizations that otherwise have difficulties obtaining assistance from donors. It also encourages a broader range of civil society actors to enter into partnerships with UNDP without being deterred by complex and cumbersome procedures. Finally, giving CSOs some degree of flexibility to adapt projects as they go along gives them a greater sense of ownership which in turn keeps them committed and motivated.

Balancing flexibility with accountability: SGFs have simplified their grant-making process to increase accessibility to CSOs with relatively poor institutional capacities. This however, comes at a cost. There may be a few CSOs that are unable or unwilling to abide by grant regulations even when those regulations are user-friendly. Some organizations may even mistake the flexibility of the grant for leniency and can become more complacent about adhering to its procedures. One of the compromises to note is that the attempt to keep grant making simple and flexible could result in accounting and reporting lapses which in turn could hamper the ability of UNDP to monitor the work of CSOs and project interventions at large.

Given the objectives of working with a larger pool of CSOs and strengthening the capacities of those it works with, it is important that facilities such as the SGF retain their user-friendliness and flexibility. However, care must be taken to balance sensitivity to capacity constraints with demands for accountability. The different SGFs could, for example, consider adopting different reporting and accounting benchmarks within the same project according to the particular capacities of CSOs. This would require well-capacitated CSOs to comply with more stringent regulations, whereas weaker CSOs would be permitted to observe less rigid rules.

Assessing and building the capacities of implementing partners: Using CSOs as implementing partners has yielded rich results. UNDP has been able to tap into their local expertise and experience and ensure the sustainability of its interventions as a result. However for CSOs to be fully effective partners, their capacities must be strengthened even when institutional strengthening is not a direct objective of the

project under consideration. As experience shows, institutionally strengthened CSOs show greater capacity for delivering project outcomes. Furthermore, in strengthening institutional capacities, UNDP contributes to fortifying a tier of civil society with potential for engaging in the development of its communities beyond UNDP's often limited interventions. As experience also shows, institutional strengthening can take multiple forms, from the more exhaustive efforts aimed at changing organizational practices and mindsets through training to the more limited efforts of filling capacity gaps through equipment and infrastructure.

Improving project monitoring and evaluation: UNDP in Sri Lanka has learned many lessons in this area. Among them has been the value of localizing monitoring and evaluation of projects to the greatest extent possible. For example, in STRONG PLACES, a large component of the monitoring is entrusted to local networks such as the DACs, to locally based staff such as the District Support Officers and to the communities themselves through interventions such as AIDWATCH. The localized and bottom-up nature of monitoring and evaluation provides the best snapshot of the project and allows UNDP to identify and tackle issues of mismanagement head on. It also gives CSOs and beneficiaries the assurance that they have not been abandoned or let off the hook by UNDP, a guarantee which, in turn, contributes to increasing their own commitment and watchfulness. Involving beneficiaries gives them greater ownership and ensures that they are able to take up issues along the project's chain of command. Community-based project monitoring and evaluation is a potential model to be used in other projects.

Project Implementation

Projects operating in dynamic environments must maintain flexibility: The ever-changing peace and conflict dynamics require that project teams are open to reorientation and reprioritization of project activities. They must adopt a flexible approach to assessment and monitoring so that progress is captured and rewarded with due sensitivity to the constraints of a dynamic and volatile environment.

Projects that are multifaceted are more sustainable in changing environments: The multifaceted nature of projects is more suited to the present volatile context in Sri Lanka because some components of the project can still be operationalized even when ground conditions are not conducive. For example, the Peace Secretariat project was still able to make headway on building capacities for the individual Secretariats and advance the SGF, even though the opportunities were not ripe for facilitating cross-secretariat interaction and communication although it is one of the project's objectives. The multiple objectives of the project enable the project team to shift emphasis and adapt to conditions on the ground. The fact that the three main objectives were free-standing, but nevertheless interlinked, allowed them to progress without depending on each other, while at the same time facilitating partnerships and relationships where possible.

Projects must be sensitive to their intermediaries and end-users: When projects work in conjunction with principal political stakeholders to the conflict, high

degrees of sensitivity to needs such as security, confidentiality and privacy must be considered. Likewise, working with CSOs requires sensitivity to their capacity constraints for meeting donor regulations and deadlines. It is also necessary for projects to be executed through relatively lean bureaucratic procedures in order to encourage a broader spectrum of intermediaries.

The work of steering committees must be supported by supplementary mechanisms: Some SGFs, as discussed, are overseen by steering committees comprising high-profile representatives from civil society. These individuals are selected for their experience and expertise in development, peace building, disaster recovery and capacity development. The advisory committees are responsible for developing SGF focus areas and proposal; submission guidelines. The committees frequently meet to assess and approve proposals for funding.

The steering committee model benefits the SGF modality on a number of fronts. First, an independent advisory committee makes the SGF transparent and accountable. Second, the individuals in the committee bring a wealth of experience and expertise and are able to make sound assessments of the proposals placed before. Third, they can make recommendations that enhance the impact of the proposed initiatives.

However, experience shows that members of these forums are often unable to meet the project demands. When using the steering committee model, UNDP should make alternative provisions to supplement the work of the committee. In some cases, projects would be well-served with enhanced staffing capacities to carry out field visits and coach CSOs on behalf of the steering committee.



