



# Final Evaluation

**Bringing the Community on Board (BCoB):  
Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the  
economic resilience of communities**

March-July 2019

**World Vision Lanka**



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Special acknowledgement goes to the target community, which has been very supportive in the evaluation process, showing commitment to participate actively for long hours, despite this being an important period for working on their fields. Stakeholders have been available at short notice, have attended after having worked on their fields. They have shown much and flexibility in regard to last minute requests.

### **i. Affirmation**

This evaluation report consists of the work of World Vision Lanka and Janathakshan with financial support from the EU and World Vision Germany. Input also came from various stakeholders including local leadership and members of the communities.

This end of project evaluation was undertaken to evaluate and report on the achievements of the project and provide learning that can support future programming of Janathakshan and World Vision Lanka, at the same time creating learning opportunities for local actors, including CSOs and CBOs, to strengthen their motivation and ability to sustain project outcomes.

In view of this, the information contained herein remains the property of the participating communities. It therefore must be used only with the consent of the said stakeholders.

### **ii. Glossary/Acronyms and Abbreviations**

BCoB	Bringing the Community on Board
CBO	Community Based Organization
CS	Civil Society
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DA	Dairy Association
DS	District Secretariat
DSD	District Secretariat Division
DIF	Development Implementation Framework
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EU	European Union
FA	Farming Association
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GN	Grama Niladhari
HH	Household
IMS	Information Management System

JT	Janathakshan (Gte) Ltd
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAs	Local Authorities
LF	Logical Framework
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PAD	Provincial Agrarian Department
PDPs	Participatory Development Plans
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
QA	Quality Assurance
R	Result
RDS	Rural Development Society
SO	Specific Objective
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WVL	World Vision Lanka
WVG	World Vision Germany

## 1 Executive Summary

### I. Context

Civil society structures have a long history in Sri Lanka, predating the time of the European colonialization and they continue playing a critical role in the development of the country<sup>1</sup>. [REDACTED] and World Vision Lanka designed “Bringing the Community on Board” BCoB in response to the EU’s Call for Proposals to “*enhance CSO’s contribution to governance and development processes*”<sup>23</sup>. Both partners realised the limited capacities CSOs had to participate in development planning at community level, while local authorities and provincial level decision markers lacked systems and procedures for including the voice of rural populations in decision making. The project aimed at addressing this two-fold disconnect, ensuring that

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<sup>1</sup> Moonesinghe, Vinod, 2018: The history of civil society organisations in Sri Lanka. [https://thuppahi.wordpress.com/2018/03/23/the-history-of-civil-society-organisations-in-srilanka/#\\_edn1](https://thuppahi.wordpress.com/2018/03/23/the-history-of-civil-society-organisations-in-srilanka/#_edn1)

<sup>2</sup> World Vision, March 2015: CSO EU Full Proposal.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, 2012: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations. <https://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>

both, CSOs and local authorities would be capacitated to connect “*local development concerns to the provincial and national dialogue*”, increasing the voice of communities<sup>4</sup>.

BCoB focused on three marginalised Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSDs) in Badulla District of Uva Province in Sri Lanka. Kandaketiya, Ridimaliyadde and Meegahakiula<sup>5</sup> are the second, third and fourth poorest DSDs in Sri Lanka<sup>6</sup> and have a total population of 100,002<sup>7</sup>.

The 36-month project started in 2016. Its 800,000 € budget was financially supported by the EU covering 75% while World Vision Germany (WVG) contributed 25%. World Vision Lanka (WVL) and [REDACTED] collaboratively implemented the project, while it was managed by the lead applicant WVG.

The overall objective of BCoB was to **strengthen CSOs as leading stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development**.

## 2. Evaluation Purpose

The TOR defined learning and accountability as the key purpose for this evaluation. WV aimed at enhancing the quality of its programming while being accountable towards its donors and beneficiaries.

According to the ToR, the three main evaluation objectives cover all five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria by (1) analysing **relevance** and **effectiveness** of the BCoB project; (2) **assessing impact** of project outcomes; (3) understanding the mid-term **sustainability** of positive changes.

## 3. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was an end of project evaluation with a specific focus on assessing the potential sustainability of its outcomes.

Methodologically, the evaluation combined the review of project documents, the analysis of quantitative monitoring data, including results from the end of project report, with highly participatory qualitative learning and reflection methodologies. The participatory, reflective data collection process in Sri Lanka started with a workshop for national staff from both implementing partners and the project staff to understand to what level the project had been able to implement its plans. An entry workshop with 40 representatives of key stakeholders and local actors helped to identify potential challenges and successes of the project to be investigated in more detail. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), including 50 out of the 75 CSOs covered by the project, and 10 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were done in all three project locations. FGDs were facilitated in a reflective, visualised workshop style, covering guided capacity self-assessments of the CBOs, an identification of project achievements and its contributors, challenges, and the future potential for sustainability. Key findings were presented in the validation and reflection workshop to the same group that had participated

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<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> World Vision, March 2015: CSO EU Full Proposal

<sup>6</sup> Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka Reports 2015

<sup>7</sup> Badulla District Secretariat, 2017: The performance report and annual accounts for the year 2017. Downloaded online from: <http://www.parliament.lk/uploads/documents/paperspresented/performance-report-districtsecretariat-badulla-2017.pdf> on 05.06.2019

in the entry meeting. Site visits and daily informal conversations with staff and stakeholders have further contributed to the evaluation.

## 4. Key Findings

### 4.1. Relevance

**Needs based:** ■ and WV have both worked in the intervention area before and have designed the project based on the understanding of local needs. The project mostly focused on farming related activities, since the vast majority of the target population of these three DSDs are farmers. The three DSDs are among the poorest in the country. Across all FGDs, BCoB was identified as the most relevant external actor in the areas of change it was supporting the community to achieve. The project covered several activities, ensuring its relevance by facilitating three assessments: one **focusing on CSOs** and their capacities, the second focusing on future production opportunities by **analysing value chains**, and a third study facilitating a vulnerability assessment producing a **risk map** of the intervention area.

The project management was exceptionally strong in adapting to an unexpectedly changing environment.

The project managed to **reach the most vulnerable**, e.g. by creating a wide variety of economic opportunities and by transforming the CSOs charity-based approach to people living with disabilities to an empowerment approach.

Overall, BCoB was highly valued by its stakeholders. In the mapping of external actors' contributions to the changes (part of all FGDs), the project was named as the most important external actor in the area, thus being highly relevant.

### 4.2. Effectiveness

One challenge in determining the effectiveness of BCoB were ill-defined or unmeasurable higher-level indicators, which do not reflect the actual success of the project. BCoB has been successful despite facing significant unpredictable external challenges, including the nonpresence of Local Authorities throughout most of the project life, resulting in the delay of critical activities.

The project was successful in **developing CSO's capacities** on technical issues as well as on CSOs management and engagement in development planning in the local context: a 53% increase in targeted capacity areas was measured. The project managed to put Development Implementation Frameworks (DIFs) in place as an institutionalised mechanism to enable local grass-root participation in the local government's planning. CSO federations were formed, registered and enabled to engage in policy dialogue with the limitation that this had to be done during the final months due to the earlier absence of LAs. The project has contributed to initiating many new economic activities or expanding existing. These may be at the individual household level, with small businesses, the cultivation of new crops or starting dairy production, or at group level as in the case of the maize and pepper production groups. Economic activities for the most vulnerable households have been initiated or strengthened. Significant levels of relevant knowledge have been transferred to CSOs and local actors and an IMS has been put in place for continued access to relevant information for decision making. In summary, despite facing significant external challenges, the project has been highly effective in achieving its defined changes.



### 4.3. Efficiency

An earlier audit and the evaluation have shown that BCoP has been very efficient in using its funds. Implementation has been extremely close to the project design, despite the challenges faced.

### 4.4. Impact

A major impact of the project has been to enable and strengthen local CSO to take an active role and drive local development. This has been enabled through building a wide set of critical capacities, forming federations that are able to get involved at higher political levels and establishing the DIFs as a sustainable mechanism for participation.

The mandate of Farmers' Associations (FAs) has been transformed towards a proactive role in local development.

BCoB has enabled higher levels of economic activity among CSO members and specifically vulnerable families (e.g. through introducing households to dairy farming and establishing marketing channels, enabling value addition to products as maize and pepper through establishing producer groups, cultivating additional seasons by rehabilitating irrigation schemes).

Access to information has increased through establishing an Information Management System (IMS).

BCoP has contributed to the empowerment of women and people living with disabilities, visible in new roles and with new responsibilities within the local context.

### 4.5. Sustainability

Determining the sustainability of changes at the time of the evaluation is challenging because external factors had resulted in the delay of critical activities, as the establishment of the CSO federations or the MIS.

Overall, prospects are positive for two reasons: the continued presence of both implementing partners in the project area will allow providing continued follow-up support in critical areas as the newly established federations. Even more important, the project has had a very sound design in integrating critical components for sustainability: a broad spectrum of capacities have been developed among CSO members and their thinking has been changed, defining their own role and potential in development more proactively. With the establishment of the DIFs, a mechanism has been put in place with local authorities, that allows CSO participation in development planning. BCoB has mostly strengthened and transformed existing local structures and processes. It has established linkages to existing government services and businesses.

## 5. Conclusions

- 1. Enabling CSOs to become lead actors is a complex, multi-layered endeavour, which the project successfully embarked on.** It included e.g. research for evidence-based changes, establishing a federation of CSOs to create sufficient political power, generating the political space to allow participation in local development planning in addition to practical activities and models to increase incomes.
- 2. Hidden objective leading to contradictory approaches:** according to its LF, the project focused on equipping CSOs to become lead actors in their communities. However, the LF did not include BCoB's second major objective: strengthening livelihoods of the most vulnerable

community members, resulting in contradictory approaches. On the one hand, the project tried to strengthen CSOs to drive development with their own capacities and resources. On the other hand, it introduced a number of livelihood strengthening activities through the same CSOs, which were based on external capacities and resources, therefore not replicable and not empowering the local CSOs.

- 3. Complex changes require time and the ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges: delays: especially** the two-year absence of Local Authorities, key to the success of the project, completely messed-up the timeline. The project team impressively adapted to the unforeseen challenges. However, a mechanism seemed to lack between donor and implementing partners to revisit the timeline in the light of externally induced delays to ensure success and sustainability.
  - 4. High level of achievement despite limitations:** Despite the limitations BCoB was facing, it implemented all defined activities and achieved significant change.
  - 5. Potential sustainability of achievements:** externally induced delays of two critical project components made it challenging to assess the sustainability of the project's achievements. Nevertheless, the project has done many things right to create a high potential for sustainability: it used and transformed existing structures, it systematically built the capacities for CSOs, it facilitated research to have a sound basis for change, and used a multi layered approach ensuring that change was induced at relevant levels.
  - 6. Limited opportunities for involvement in DME – critical for continued development:** The project has operated with a DME approach that mostly put staff in charge. Ideally, CSOs and federations should have played a major role, ensuring that they will have a system and competencies for running their own monitoring as a means for future learning and adaptation. Local actors were not included in developing the exit strategy. While both partnering organisations jointly developed a meaningful strategy, it was not known by local actors and there was no ownership of it.
  - 7. Taking power and political ambitions into consideration:** One observation of the evaluation team was that CSO leadership as well as other actors were clearly aware of the power or political dimension of the project and the shifts it was causing by strengthening CSOs as local actors. Some limited tensions indicated that the project conceptually may have included too little to take account of this context.
  - 8. Presence in the community and building of relationships:** taking significant time in the communities to develop relationships and trust as a basis for joint project activities was critical for the success of the project. Dedication and closeness of BCoB staff to the communities was highly valued.
- 6. Key Recommendations:**
- 1. Learning from a multi-layered approach:** The set-up of the project with its multi-layered approach is a positive example to learn from for future interventions targeting CSOs.
  - 2. Consistent project designs:** Before finalising a Logical Framework, sufficient attention should be given whether major project components have been included in a consistent way.
  - 3. Fall-back options for project delays:** In terms of staff being able to adapt to changes, this is a positive example to learn from. However, mechanisms should be in place between donors and implementers allowing to address externally induced delays to reduce risk and potential harm.
  - 4. Designing a CSO owned DME system:** For ensuring that a CSO or federation will have a system in place to continue learning and be accountable towards its stakeholders, it should be included from the beginning. Equally, an exit strategy should be jointly developed with local actors early on.
  - 5. Assessing potential harm:** In a power sensitive context, a do-no-harm analysis may be helpful at the onset to ensure that involving and relating to different stakeholders will not cause challenges, create opposition or potentially threaten long-term sustainability.

6. **Avoiding unrealistic indicators:** For measuring change, there is often pressure or perceived pressure to set unrealistically high targets to satisfy the donor. However, these will always lead to problematic evaluation results, a strong project may even seem to have failed. It is important to find ways to be realistic.

## 2 Evaluation Introduction/Background

### 2.1 BCoB – introduction and background information

#### Civil Society Organisations' role in Sri Lanka

Civil society structures have a long history in Sri Lanka, predating the time of the European colonialization<sup>8</sup>. According to Moonesinghe (2018), the early Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) were mostly localised, creating mutual benefit by working with principles of self-organising, self-funding and would have included structures as “*Temple Development Societies (Dayaka Sabhas – committees of lay people supporting Buddhist monasteries) and Tank Councils (Wew Sabhas – farmers’ societies for the maintenance of reservoirs and distribution of irrigation water), [...] Death Donation Societies (Maranadara Samiti – funeral aid societies) [...] [and] traditional informal self-help co-operative structures, such as the Goyam kaiya (co-operative work band)*”<sup>9</sup>. Further CSO structures were established through the Christian churches as well as the Buddhist movement<sup>10</sup>. The establishment of a first secular **women’s union** dates to 1904 which then, “*grew alongside the nationalist movement*”<sup>11</sup>. The Grama sanwardhanaya or Rural Development Movement of the newly independent Ceylon was launched in 1948, establishing **Rural Development Societies (RDSs)** throughout the country to channel efforts of rural communities to improve their local conditions and to allow accessing in a coordinated manner governmental services and participating in the government-sponsored rural development programmes<sup>12</sup>. The UNDP highlights the critical role civil society actors have played in Sri Lanka “*in promoting peace and sustainable development through policy advocacy and grass-roots initiatives*” and describes that “*Its role expanded after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.*”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Moonesinghe, Vinod, 2018: The history of civil society organisations in Sri Lanka.

[https://thuppahi.wordpress.com/2018/03/23/the-history-of-civil-society-organisations-in-srilanka/#\\_edn1](https://thuppahi.wordpress.com/2018/03/23/the-history-of-civil-society-organisations-in-srilanka/#_edn1)

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> ibid

<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> Law & Society Trust, 2017: Rural Development Societies and Women’s Rural Development Societies in Participatory Governance,

[https://www.academia.edu/33958671/Rural\\_Development\\_Societies\\_and\\_Women\\_s\\_Rural\\_Development\\_Societies\\_in\\_Participatory\\_Governance](https://www.academia.edu/33958671/Rural_Development_Societies_and_Women_s_Rural_Development_Societies_in_Participatory_Governance)

<sup>13</sup> UNDP, 2007: UNDP AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN SRI LANKA: PARTNERSHIPS IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

[https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/civil\\_society/publications/Civil\\_Society\\_and\\_UNDP\\_in\\_Sri\\_Lanka\\_partnerships\\_in\\_crisis\\_situations.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/civil_society/publications/Civil_Society_and_UNDP_in_Sri_Lanka_partnerships_in_crisis_situations.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> World Vision, March 2015: CSO EU Full Proposal.

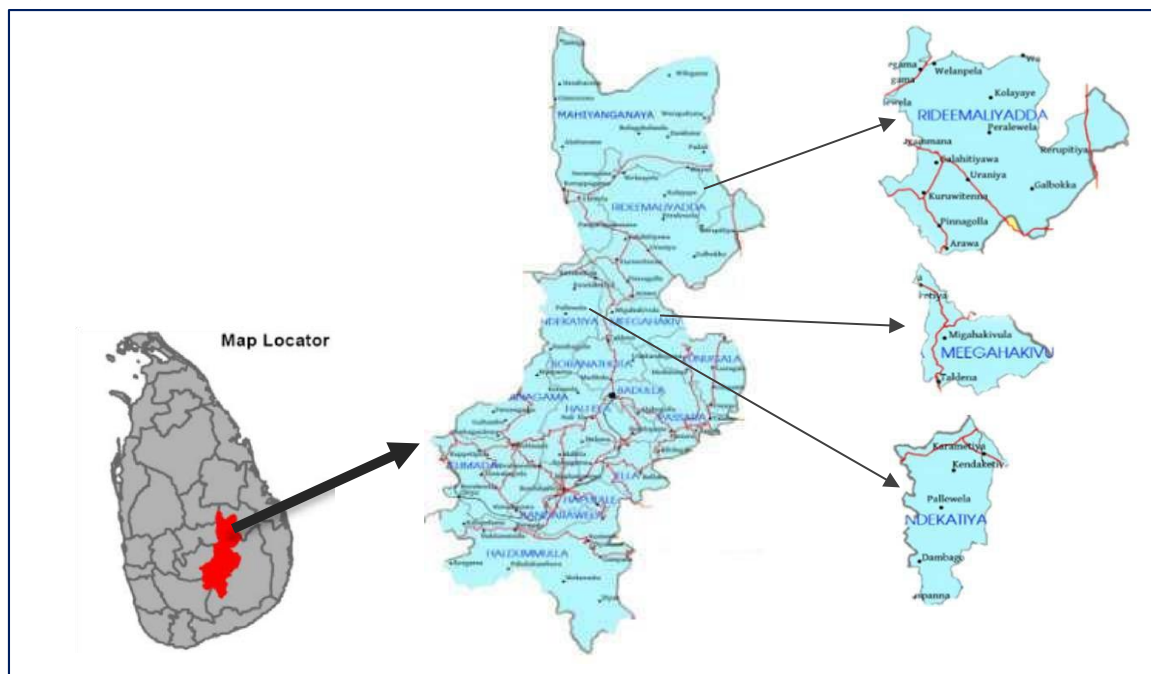
## Rationale for BCoB - a CSO Strengthening Project

BCoB was designed in response to the EU's Call for Proposals to "enhance CSO's contribution to governance and development processes"<sup>1414</sup>. Janathakshan and World Vision Lanka have

observed the critical role CSOs have played in the overall development of the country and specifically its agricultural sector "which accounts for a fifth of GDP and a third of export revenue"<sup>16</sup>. While acknowledging that CSOs "have traditionally played a strong role in socioeconomic development, including in farming and production", they realised that "the majority of CSOs in rural areas lack the resources and capacity to expand and strengthen their roles in communities"<sup>17</sup>. At the same time, "local authorities and provincial level decision makers remained disengaged from community concerns due to unavailability of proper systems and procedures, with decisions very often being taken at national level, without the voice of rural populations being heard". Therefore, the project aimed at addressing this two-fold disconnect, ensuring that both, CSOs and local authorities would be capacitated to connect "local development concerns to the provincial and national dialogue", increasing the voice of communities<sup>18</sup>.

The project focused on three marginalised Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSDs) in the Badulla District of the Uva Province in Sri Lanka: Kandaketiya, Ridimaliyadde and Meegahakiula<sup>19</sup> which are the second, third and fourth poorest DSDs in Sri Lanka<sup>20</sup> Refer to map for the location of the DSDs (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: BCoB Project area**



The total population in the three targeted DSDs was reported at 100,002 in 2017 (for details see table below).

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, 2012: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The roots of democracy and sustainable

development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations.  
<https://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>16</sup> World Vision and Janathakshan, 2018, Terms of Reference for the evaluation of BCoB.

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> ibid

<sup>19</sup> World Vision, March 2015: CSO EU Full Proposal

<sup>20</sup> Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka Reports 2015

**Table 1: Population of the targeted DSDs in 2017<sup>15</sup>**

Area	Male	Female	Total
Rideemaliyadda	26,653	28,022	54,675
Meegahakivula	10,095	10,791	20,886
Kandaketiya	11,850	12,591	24,441
Intervention area	48,598	51,404	100,002

The 36-month project started in 2016. It was financially supported by the EU covering 75% of the budget (600,000 €) while World Vision Germany (WVG) contributed 25% (200,000 €). World Vision Lanka (WVL) implemented the project in collaboration with [REDACTED] while it was managed by the lead applicant WVG.

The overall objective of BCoB was to **strengthen CSOs as leading stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development.**

**Table 2: Summary of the action<sup>16</sup>**

Title of the action:	Bringing the community on board: <i>strengthening the role of CSOs' in increasing the economic resilience of communities</i>
Lot of the EU call which has been applied for:	[REDACTED] Lot 3 - CSOs contribution in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth
Location(s) of the action:	Three DSDs in Badulla District
Project start date	01/3/2016
Project end date	28/2/2019
Total duration of the action:	36 months
Financing	EU 75% (€ 600.000) WVG 25% (€ 200.000)

<sup>15</sup> Badulla District Secretariat, 2017: The performance report and annual accounts for the year 2017. Downloaded online from: <http://www.parliament.lk/uploads/documents/paperspresented/performance-report-districtsecretariat-badulla-2017.pdf> on 05.06.2019

<sup>16</sup> World Vision, March 2015: CSO EU Full Proposal, adapted



Objectives of the action	<i>Overall objective:</i> Strengthen CSOs as leading stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development <i>Specific objective:</i> Equip CSOs to take a lead role in improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, through integrated, participatory and resilient economic growth.
Target group(s)	75 Civil Society Organisations and 20 local authorities in Badulla District
Direct project participants	Approx. 1.200
Final beneficiaries	Approx. 45.000 individuals belonging to rural farmer families in the Badulla District
Estimated results	<b>R1:</b> Strengthened CSO engagement in policy dialogue, development planning and local resource mobilisation. <b>R2:</b> Local authorities, CSOs and smallholder farmers are enabled to make better informed economic decisions <b>R3:</b> Improved capacity of CSOs and smallholder farmers to engage with market stakeholders and local authorities.

## 2.2 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives<sup>17</sup>

World Vision (WV) has defined learning and accountability as its key purpose for evaluations. On the one hand, WV aims to ensure and enhance the quality of its programming and therefore emphasises and practices a strong culture of lessons learnt. On the other hand, World Vision is committed to accountability towards its donors and beneficiaries. As part of this approach World Vision is reviewing BCoB through an external independent evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to examine the impact of the project vis-à-vis their goals and vision and distil lessons from the experience that can be used as inputs for the future projects.

According to the ToR, the three main objectives of the present evaluation are:

**Firstly**, to analyse the **relevance** and **effectiveness** of the BCoB project.

**Secondly**, to assess the **impact** of the project regarding project outcomes 1-3

**Thirdly**, identifying the likelihood that any identified positive changes will be **sustained** in the medium term.

The evaluation was expected to cover all five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. A set of questions and specific themes for each criterion had been included in the ToR (Appendix 1). The findings are structured along these criteria and related questions, however, some questions under the OECD-DAC criteria are presented in a different order to provide a better understanding of the findings.

### (I) Relevance

Needs based	Assess the extent to which the intervention was appropriate to support targeted beneficiaries and project outcomes
	To what extent did the BCoB project work reach most vulnerable children and families?

<sup>17</sup> Summarised from: World Vision and Janathakshan, 2018, Terms of Reference for the evaluation of BCoB

Appropriateness of ToC	Did the BCoB project's underlying Theory of Changes allow to achieve the desired impact?
	To what extent was the project's underlying program logic adequately adjusted according to a changing environment?
Goal Setting	Were the goals and outcomes set realistic?
Strategic Alignment	Is the project aligned with the country strategies and technical standards?
Participation	To which extent did beneficiaries and partners participate actively in the Planning, Monitoring and Reflection processes?
	How has CSO been applied to the economic development of farmer families? Analyse the involvement of CSOs especially for farmer families.
	Were the beneficiaries appropriately selected to receive the interventions proposed? I.e. were the target groups able to influence the economic decision making?
Partnerships	Identify the effectiveness of the partnership with Janathakshan and other partners, focusing on whether the partnership resulted in effective leverage and complementarity between organizations
	Discuss the elements that influenced the effectiveness of the partnership

## (2) Effectiveness

Level of Achievement	To what extent did the programme achieve its outputs, outcomes and goals?
	What were the key challenges that hindered project implementation?
	What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

## (3) Efficiency

Alignment with Planning	Verify the extent to which donor funds used in accordance with agreed activities?
Efficient decision making	Where variances occurred, verify the extent to which changes were made to ensure the most efficient use of resources?
	Analyse the challenges arose that impacted on the efficient implementation of donor funds (like e.g. recruitment, coordination of partnership, resources and capacities, etc.)

## (4) Impact of the BCoB interventions relevant to the formulated Outcomes 1-3

Contribution to change	To identify the positive and negative, intended and unintended, changes produced by the BCoB project interventions in Badulla District and to look if and how these have contributed to any identified changes concerning the defined outcome areas.
	Analyse the contribution of the the BCoB project to any observed impact (intended, unintended, positive, negative) and analyse what other actors and factors contributed to the impact.
Achievement of specific intended outcomes	How (if at all) do these changes contribute to improved economic resilience and in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development following target groups: (i) LAs (ii) CSOs (iii) FAOs (iv) Families and children
	Assess to what extent the following measures were achieved within the analysis: a) Increased CSO engagement in policy dialogue, development planning and local resource mobilisation b) Local authorities, CSOs and smallholder farmers are enabled to make better informed economic decisions c) The capacity of CSOs and smallholder farmers to engage with market stakeholders and local authorities <b>NOTE</b> these questions, representing key outcome indicators, will be answered in the effectiveness section under achievements.

**(5) Sustainability of the BCoB interventions**

Durability	To what extent are the effects and outcomes of the development interventions (summarily) likely to remain in future?
	How likely will critical services and effects be sustained beyond the duration of the project?
	Analyse the integration of the project into existing local institutions (e.g. skill transfer to partners, uptake by CSOs). Discuss the contributions of findings to sustainability of the positive changes
	What are the major factors which influenced the achievement or nonachievement of sustainability of the programme or project?
	To which extent is the project's approach suitable and recommendable for future programming?
Social capital	To what extent did the project strengthen CSOs/LA and small holder farmers in engagement in policy dialogue, development planning and local resource mobilisation and enable to make better informed economic decisions.
	To which extend have CSOs and smallholder farmers engaged with market stakeholders and local authorities.
Transition Strategy	Did the project plan and implement an adequate transition and exit strategy that ensures longer-term positive effects and reduces risks of dependency?

### 3 Methodology

The evaluation was an end of project evaluation with a specific focus on assessing the potential sustainability of its outcomes.

Methodologically, the evaluation combined the review of project documents, the analysis of quantitative monitoring data, including results from the end of project report, with highly participatory qualitative learning and reflection methodologies.

**Figure 2: FGD at DSD level**



The initial steps were a document review and continued with a participatory analysis of the Logical Framework and reconstruction of the program's Theory of Change to identify its potential change and the quality of its design. The methodology combined the use of primary qualitative and limited quantitative secondary data. For primary data collection, qualitative data collection tools were adapted to the specific context.

### ***3.1 Rationale for a qualitative focus***

The analysis of the evaluation question showed, that qualitative tools would be more effective for answering most of these. The project did not have a traditional baseline in place, but several studies had been done<sup>18</sup>, partially taking the role of a baseline. If possible, e.g. in the case of CSO capacities, the assessments would have been replicated to measure the level of change at the end of the project. Unfortunately, as the consultant regularly experiences, neither the sampling had been documented in a way that it could have been replicated, avoiding that differences occur due to alterations in the sampling, nor was the questionnaire available with instructions on how to analyse the data. The study had reported composite results, without explaining in sufficient detail, how these were generated. Efforts to get the required details from the former study team were not successful. Therefore, the decision was taken to design a new tool for assessing the capacities of the CSOs, including a retrospective capturing of the baseline values, i.e. nine capacity areas were defined, based on the support provided by the project. For each capacity area, 5 growth indicators were defined, from a seedling stage to a maturity. Based on the indicators, representatives of the CSOs had to

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<sup>18</sup> Governance capacity assessment, focusing on CSO capacities, Value chain study for Ginger, Maize, Pepper and Turmeric, Vulnerability assessment.

determine where they were currently at and where they had started at the beginning of the project.

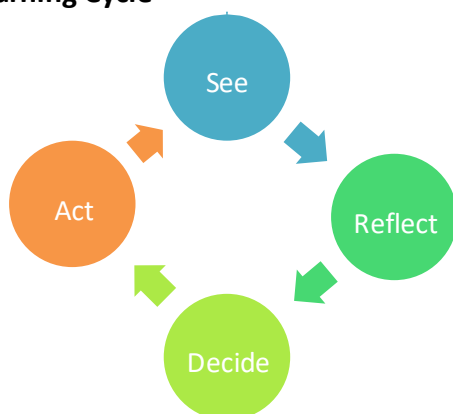
In summary, with the limitations of missing methodological information from the quantitative baseline data, the evaluation focused on an in-depth approach of participatory reflection exercises. The objective with this approach was to maximize the use of limited time and resources for best achieving the defined evaluation objectives while at the same time taking into consideration limitations with the existing quantitative and monitoring data. The tools and process chosen have been used widely (within and outside World Vision) and developed for a context of projects which have no or weak baselines, maximizing the potential to measure change.

### **3.2 Participatory learning and reflection approach**

The key characteristic of the approach for this evaluation was to facilitate it as a participatory learning and reflection process which would equip for and lead to action while generating data that would allow to meet the accountability dimension of the evaluation. With the given limitations, a deliberate effort was made to maximize meaningful participation. The process and tools described below depict this practically.

The underlying theory of a participatory action learning approach is the facilitation of joint learning cycles.

**Figure 3: The Learning Cycle**



The learning cycle defines key steps which develop an in-depth understanding of a situation, promotes the learning from past experiences and leads to action and change based on learning:

1. **Seeing:** A clear understanding of the current situation is required by all stakeholders; it forms the basis for learning and change. This step is about identifying change and impact each project and the overall program has contributed to and how it has done that.
2. **Reflecting:** This step is about systematically reflecting on information collected, e.g. on assessing the level and sustainability of change and potential threats, identifying critical learning, and options for improvement.
3. **Deciding:** This step, in relation to the evaluation report, means identifying and agreeing on the key findings, and learning and developing recommendations for future action. This included reflections with key stakeholders on how they could address challenges identified and ensure sustainability beyond the life of the project, based on their own potentials.



4. **Acting:** The acting was not part of the evaluation process but was an intended outcome at the level of World Vision and [REDACTED], in the sense of including and implementing learning where appropriate in future programming.

### 3.3 Evaluation team as learning team

For ensuring that the twofold objective of learning and accountability were achieved, the evaluation team was composed of external and internal members. The evaluation lead and ten local students, ensured impartiality, the independence of findings and allowed stakeholders and beneficiaries to freely voice their perspectives about the project. Learning was ensured by embedding representatives from [REDACTED], WVL (project and national office staff) and WVG in the evaluation team, allowing these to participate, where there was no danger of creating a bias in the results.

The role of the evaluation team went beyond the traditional roles in data collection. Team members participated in a continuous, iterative process of analysis and reflection. All members had in-depth understanding of key findings and recommendations. This aimed at equipping staff to implement these in future.

## 4 Evaluation process and tools

### 4.1 Overview evaluation tools

The following table gives an overview of the tools used in the evaluation process.

**Table 3: Evaluation tools**

Tool	Sampling	Focus	Details
T1 FGD using timeline with staff of WVL and [REDACTED]	Project staff, including former staff, National QA staff WVL and [REDACTED]	Staff perspective on the project and its implementation	Timeline reviewing key events, successes and challenges throughout the life of the projects, hopes and fears regarding its future impact.
T2 Logical Framework analysis	Project staff, including former staff, National QA staff WVL, [REDACTED]	Understanding and assessing the intervention logic, updating what actually was implemented	In a participatory exercise the LF and ToC will be visualised and reviewed, allowing staff to illustrate what actually has been implemented and identifying what changes could potentially be linked to project and which not
T3 CSO guided capacity selfassessment	All CSOs are able to send representatives to central location in division including: FAs, DAs, RDSs, WAs, all CSO	Capacity areas which the project intended to strengthen.	For each capacity area that was covered by the project, WVL and JT staff developed 5 indicators, each for a different level of growth/maturity. CSOs and Federations were asked to identify according to the indicators at what level they currently are

	federations, all producer groups		and where they started from at the beginning of the project.
T4a FGD part I with FAs, DAs, WAs and producer groups – mapping impact on members, households and their businesses	4-5 CSOs <sup>19</sup> of the same type with 2 representatives each in each of the 3 areas Max. 10 participants See Table 4 for details	This FGD is a sub- or preparatory activity of T4b below, focusing on a specific set of fruit (impact)	A mapping exercise was used for this FGD: A body map of a member allowed to specifically identify impact on his thinking, acting and relating, a map of the household showing impact in the household and a map of the farm/business for identifying related changes. Results from this mapping were used as “fruit” for the tree of change (T4b).
T4b FGD part II with CSOs, RDSs and producer groups – focus organisational development	4-5 CSOs of the same type with each 2 representatives in each of the 3 areas While planned for max. 10 participants, up to 20 actually participated. See Table 4 for details.	Results of T3 and T4a feed into this tool (fruit and roots) to avoid replication. It allows connecting roots and fruit and assess the impact of ending external support (fertiliser). The tool allows understanding the impact the CSOs have and assess its likelihood for sustainability based on the groups’ capacities and resources.	The focus of this FGD was to determine the development of the CSOs and the role the project has played in this. The tree of change tool was used, focusing on key activities, impact/fruit of the CSO, its capacities and resources “roots” (where applicable, the CSO capacity assessment fed into this), support received “manure” (including its relevance), threats “birds” and the impact of the end of support on the fruit and roots.
T5 FGDs on vulnerability (one per DSD)	Key stakeholders in each DSD representing project activities related to vulnerability	FGD to assess the project’s impact on vulnerability	This FGD has identified and reviewed related activities and explored the extent the project has equipped local actors to reduce vulnerabilities and has had a direct impact. It has identified local and external actors contributing.
T6 Site visits	Irrigation canals, irrigation dam, farmers’ fields	Verification and better understanding of change	A limited number of site visits were done to validate findings and document these in more detail.
T7 Case stories	Representative HHs identified by participants of FGDs	Individual case stories of individuals or groups based on key changes, successes or challenges identified in Focus Groups	FGDs will be used to identify key challenges, changes successes. Together with participants, individuals of specific groups can be identified that allow through case stories to explore this representative issue in more detail. This could be done through a visit of a HH, business, farm or a conversation with an individual CSO.
T8a/b Opening and closing workshop	Key stakeholders	Providing space for key stakeholders in the kick-off, validation and interpretation of findings	The opening workshop was not limited to introductions and logistics but provided a first opportunity for key actors to share about the project. A timeline was used to

<sup>19</sup> Practically, all CSOs that were able to send representatives participated.

			structure the conversation, with a set of questions. Participants represented the different stakeholder groups, much of the work was done in buzz or homogenic groups to maximise participation. The same participants were part of the validation and reflection workshop.
T9 KIIs and informal interviews	Key informants, such as extension workers, representatives of local authorities	Getting in-depth background details, complementing and triangulating information from FGDs.	A sub-team facilitated KIIs in all three project locations as well as in Badulla
T10 Exit meeting at national office level	Strategic staff from both partnering organisations	Reflection and feedback on key findings	Leadership and strategic national office staff from both partner organisations, including a regional representative from World Vision International discussed and reflected on key findings.

## 4.2 Sampling

### Sampling of CSOs for the FGDs

The key principle for sampling in qualitative research is achieving saturation: collecting data to a point where key patterns have been established, repetition occurs and no new information is added (apart from specific, singular findings), hence achieving a point of “data adequacy”<sup>20</sup>. According to Morse, *“In qualitative research there are no published guidelines or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation [...]. Qualitative data, although initially appearing diverse and disconnected, in the process of saturation form patterns or themes and begin to make sense. However, there are no specific guidelines for the a priori estimation of the amount of data required in each category or theme to create these patterns”*<sup>21</sup>. In an evaluation that has a clearly defined timeline and limited availability of resources, an open-ended data collection process, awaiting saturation, is not feasible. Therefore, a number of considerations have been put in place to ensure saturation:

- All three DSDs were covered to ensure that potential differences related to the geographical context were covered;
- All types of CSOs were included in all three regions (if existent), each FGD included multiple groups of the same type, to ensure that differences were covered;
- The sample size is very high, 50 out of 75 groups (67%) were covered, a size that well allowed to cover differences and allowed to achieve saturation;
- Purposive sampling to ensure that individual groups with specific characteristics, as the producer groups were covered.

<sup>20</sup> Morse, 1995: Editorial: The significance of Saturation, Sage publications, viewed online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/104973239500500201>

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

To **ensure data quality**, triangulation was a key principle used, collecting the same information either with different tools or from different stakeholders. In addition, a wider group of stakeholders was included in the evaluation process through the entry and closing workshops, who in the entry workshop explored and identified key themes and validate these and patterns that had emerged during the validation workshop.

Participation of the three divisions (DSDs):

- Key stakeholders from each division were invited as representatives to the opening and closing workshops;
- The evaluation collected data in each DSD.

At DSD-level, each CSO that had participated in the project, was asked to send two participants for the FGDs, including the leader and one member.

For the producer group FGDs, each group was asked to participate with 10 members, including their leader.

The entire evaluation team spent one day in each DSD to facilitate all FGDs in one central location. Because of the season, CSO members were busy on their fields. Random sampling among members was not possible, those available had to be included.

CSO capacity assessment and FGD: A total of 50 CSOs (169 member) from a total of 75 CSOs were covered in the evaluation, participating in the capacity assessment and the FGD.

**Table 4: Sample of CSOs from a total of 75 CSOs**

Type of group	# covered	Division	Number of CSOs represented	Total Male in FGD	Total Female in FGD	% female representation
CSO Federation	3	MGK	1	5	4	44%
		KK	1	8	2	20%
		RM	1	8	2	20%
Dairy Association	7	MGK	1	4	2	33%
		KK	3	15	4	21%
		RM	3	5	14	74%
Farmers' Association	22	RM	7	8	1	11%
		MGK	4	3	3	50%
		KK	11	11	2	15%
Maize Producer Group	1	MGK	1		10	100%
Pepper Producer Group	1	MGK	1		8	100%
Rural Development Society	6	KK	3	4		0%
		RM	3	7	4	36%
Women's Association	10	RM	2		3	100%
		MGK	2		13	100%
		KK	6		19	100%

Totals	50		50	78	91	54%
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### **Sampling of CSOs for CSO capacity assessment**

All CSOs represented for the FGDs were included in the capacity assessment, because these were the CSOs available and able to participate. The sample of 50 CSOs allowed for a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 8.06%. The confidence interval allows to identify major changes, but was not suitable to identify smaller changes (below 16.12%). Increasing the sample size was not possible with the given limitations of season, resources and distance. The discussion and validation of results were used as means to increase accuracy for the smaller changes.

### **Sampling for KIIs and site visits**

KIIs were done with selected individuals who were expected to have specific insights or indepth information, relevant to the evaluation. Sampling was purposive.

## ***4.3 Data collection principles***

### **Structured data collection forms**

For ensuring the collection and documentation of critical data and enable a timely and efficient data analysis process, structured data collection forms were developed for the main tools.

### **Iterative documentation and reflection process**

For ensuring that all evaluation themes are well covered and that learning develops step by step, every day, after data collection, a systematic documentation and reflection process was facilitated.

### **Participatory Analysis and Synthesis and Reporting**

The first level of analysis and synthesis of the data collected was done together with the full evaluation team. Findings were analyzed, synthesized and discussed in participatory setting building onto the iterative documentation and reflection process. The process was structured along the evaluation themes / questions. First conclusions and recommendations were developed through this process.

### **Second level of analysis and report writing**

A second level of analysis and synthesis was done by the external evaluator, bringing together qualitative data and information from informal conversations with staff and community representatives.

## **5 Limitations**

**Use of baseline data for the CSO capacity assessment:** BCoB commissioned three studies at its onset, which were expected to serve as baselines, especially for measuring the development of the CSOs. Unfortunately, two challenges occurred, which did not allow to use the existing data for the intended purpose: Firstly, the sampling procedure was not sufficiently documented, to allow replicating the process, despite contacting the former consultant. Consistency is required to ensure that differences at the final measurement are not because of a different sampling procedure. Secondly, results were presented as aggregate data. Neither the data set nor the results for individual questions from the CSO assessment were



available. Therefore, it was not possible to generate comparable data and the baseline tool and data had to be dismissed for this final evaluation. Instead a tool was used that allows to measure the current status and reconstructs the baseline values. The quality of reconstructed data depends on the interviewees' memory. The tool has used clearly defined indicators for each growth stage helping CSO members to better reconstruct their baseline status.

**Availability of farmers:** unfortunately, the evaluation period was a critical time for farmers to work on their fields. While the evaluation team tried to suit their schedule as good as possible and farmers made great efforts to participate, it was still very challenging for project staff to mobilise participants for the FGDs. With all the extensive efforts staff made, all FGDs had sufficient representation of CSOs in their respective DSD.

**Confidence level of 8.06% for CSO capacity assessment:** A major challenge with surveys among small groups is that the smaller the group the higher the share of those who need to participate for producing robust data with at least a confidence level of 95% and a reasonable confidence interval. Usually in this type of study, a confidence interval of at least 5% is sought, which allows detecting changes larger than 10% ( $\pm 5\%$ ) with 95% probability. The sample of 50 CSOs allowed for a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 8.06%. The confidence interval allows to identify major changes, but was not suitable to identify smaller changes (below 16.12% /  $\pm 8.06\%$ ). For the given exercise, a sample of 63 CSOs out of the total 75 would have been required for a confidence interval of 5%, which was not realistic with the given time and resources. As a measure to address this shortcoming, key results were discussed and validated in the validation workshop.

# 6 Findings

## 6.1 Relevance

### 6.1.1 Needs based

**To what extent has the intervention been appropriate to support targeted beneficiaries and project outcomes?**

The project targeted 45,000 farmer families (specifically CSO members and their families) in the three covered DSDs. According to Badulla District Secretariat, 57.3% of adults above 15 years in Badulla District were occupied in the agricultural sector. This proportion is significantly higher in the targeted DSDs, since the majority of industrial and service sector jobs are in Badulla. Therefore, the project’s focus on farmer families has allowed to intervene in an area that is most relevant to the population of the three targeted DSDs.

Prior to the BCoB project, both implementing partners had covered for many years significant parts of the area with other programmes, giving both a good understanding of local needs, opportunities and context, and equipping for designing a relevant project.

For better targeting the needs of the local farming community, ensuring its appropriateness and identifying opportunities, the project started with facilitating three assessments: one **focusing on CSOs** and their capacities, the second focusing on future production opportunities: **analysing value chains** of pepper, maize, ginger and turmeric, and a third study facilitating a risk assessment producing a **risk map** (vulnerability assessment) of the intervention area (see Case Story 1 for details).

### Case Story 1: Risk mapping in the project area

**KII with [redacted] Badulla**

[redacted] is the head of the Disaster Management Office in Badulla. According to [redacted], the following risk areas and hazards have been identified in Badulla: approximately 69 % of the total land area are considered high risk areas for landslides, flooding in the course of torrential rains, (man-made) forest fires, lightning and seasonal droughts. Initially, the DMO was approached by BoB staff. A continual cooperation on DRR and DRM matters resulted from that first meeting. A first orientation workshop for government line officers was held at the DS in Badulla. Then, 1-day orientation workshops were held for all divisional secretaries, in cooperation with the BCoB project. In a next step, community meetings were organized, mapping the risks in respective areas. The underlying idea was to streamline risk reduction with the ongoing development efforts. A series of technical training courses (e.g. on water conservation techniques, with practical application in a number of villages) was conducted and follow-up courses/workshops were held one year later.

**Observed changes**

GIS-supported risk mapping was done in BCoB project areas. As a result, knowledge and awareness on risk areas amongst participating CSO members and villagers has increased. Early warning mechanisms, have been established, i.e. local people know where to go and how to behave in case of a disaster. This has resulted in reducing the vulnerability of local people who live in disaster-prone areas, and BCoB has continuously contributed to this effort by sharing this information, organizing and training respective farmer and women’s groups.

CSOs, as illustrated earlier (2.1) have a long history in the area (e.g. FAs, WAs, RDSs), with many families being members of CSOs. Many of these CSOs have not been operating at their full

potential, some with only a very limited area of activity e.g. the main role of the FAs prior to the project has been the distribution of fertilizer provided by the government. Targeting and strengthening existing structures has been an important strategy of the BCoB project to target beneficiaries, in addition to establishing some few new structures as the DAs the Maize and Pepper producer groups and the CSO federations.

Initially, the relevance of the project was questioned by the [REDACTED] since the project was perceived as only providing training (soft component) without any tangible benefits. Therefore, both aspects, intangible and tangible were included in the design to ensure the support of the authorities.

Overall, in all Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs)<sup>22</sup> as well as Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), with only one politically motivated exception, participants emphasized the relevance of the project to the area and wished that it could have continued to further consolidate its highly valued achievements.

### ***To what extent did the BCoB project work reach most vulnerable children and families?***

The project did not directly target children. However, children benefitted through the improvements for their parents (parents reported that they used additional income for paying education, improved nutrition, and had an increased ability to cover health expenses or the new business enabled them to better look after their child as Case Story 2 below illustrates).

A key vulnerable group the project targeted, were **people living with disabilities**. According to Liyange (2017)<sup>23</sup>, within the local social context in Sri Lanka, disability is viewed by the majority of the population through the lens of karma: *“it is seen as an outcome of one’s own past actions and present doings where the individual is responsible for his/her own happiness and misery”*(ibid, p.253). Liyange explains that this has consequences on how people living with disabilities are dealt with, what roles they are given in their communities: *“ The fixed identity of disabled body has become a source of merit for majority of the able-bodies in the society, encouraging them to care for the disabled by simply providing survival needs such as food, clothing , shelter and so forth while undermining or neglecting most of the civil rights of persons with disabilities as human beings.”*(ibid, p.253) He argues that as a result, it reinforces an identity of “dependents” catered for by charity instead of providing equal access in health, education, employment and other areas. In the project area, limited attention was paid to members living with disabilities. According to BCoB project staff, about 800-900 were getting some limited financial support from the government, but they were mostly isolated and excluded from society.

According to participants in the FGDs, including vulnerable community representatives and key actors dealing with them, the project gave them a sense of belonging (identity) voice and supported them to be integrated e.g. becoming members of CSOs. Working with disability network, they created awareness among government leaders. Three workshops were facilitated for CSOs on including people living with disabilities in development action which resulted in agreements on: changing meeting venues to ground level to increase accessibility,

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<sup>22</sup> In the FGDs, participants were asked about the contributions of external actors and their relevance to their growth as a CBO or towards other achievements.

<sup>23</sup> Liyanage C. (2017) Sociocultural Construction of Disability in Sri Lanka: Charity to Rights-based Approach. In: Halder S., Assaf L. (eds) Inclusion, Disability and Culture. Inclusive Learning and Educational Equity, vol 3. Springer, Cham

rotation in meeting points close to people living disabilities, representation allowed in case they cannot physically participate. People living with disabilities have become active members in their CSOs, their equal participation was observed in the FGDs they participated in. **The project clearly has shown relevance:** with its approach, the project has gone far beyond a charity approach, it has supported people living with disabilities to have access and the same rights to participate as active members of CSOs.

**Case Story 2: Supporting a family to establish a business to better care for their Differentlyabled child**

**Providing support to Differently-abled Child’s family**

A 17-year old disabled child was the focus of the following project intervention. The father, a farmer, had a small vegetable cultivation business which did not generate enough income to meet the income requirements of the family. The family has an older daughter who is married. As the younger girl suffers from mental disability, she needs to be looked after all the time. The mother could not engage in cultivation activities since she must constantly take care of her child. Thus, the family was very poor before the BCoB project focused their attention on them. The girl had only attended school up to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Then, they had stopped sending her, as her memorizing and learning capacities were low and she got bullied by other students. The project reached out to the family because of their low income and disabled child.

With the project’s help, including the funds and guidance to build the shop, the provision of 50.000LKR worth of grocery items, a boiler, a cupboard (Showcase) and a gas cooker, the family started a grocery shop. [redacted] technical advisor of World Vision Lanka, was the main contact point of the project. He helped them by providing information and knowledge on how to manage the funds, building the shop and opening it for business. At the time of the project evaluation, the family was able to provide food items to the evaluation team members

The life of the family changed drastically with the help of the BCoB project. They were able to come out of harsh living conditions. With the implementation of the shop they could stop cultivating and start their own work. Now, both parents can do business activities and take care of their daughter at the same time. The daughter also helps the family in household activities. They have fully stopped cultivation and are focusing on grocery business activities. They also started to produce sweets and snacks to the villagers to maximize their revenue. Further, the family has received a loan of 50.000LKR from [redacted] at an interest rate of 12%. The project team supervised and advised the family until the end of the project. The family had to overcome some external challenges when building the shop. Yet, they feel happy about their own success now and are determined to continue the business activities. They are planning to construct another building with two rooms on the same plot. One room is for rent and the other room is to expand the shop or to put in the grinding machine which was received by [redacted]. They are planning to take a loan of 300.000LKR and need of a refrigerator to do business activities. They feel that their living conditions have much improved and they are very grateful to the project.

Members of a marginalized group of families participated in the entry and closing workshops as well as the FGDs. They described the challenges they were facing over many years: the only water they had available in their area was causing significant kidney problems due to the type of water and excessive use of fertiliser. Over many years they had petitioned for support to solve their issue, but never had been successful. The project enabled them to build a dam that has raised the water table reduced the concentration of calcium carbonate CaCO<sub>3</sub>, which according to the family members had significantly improved their health condition.

### **6.1.2 Appropriateness of ToC**

A key step in the evaluation was the participatory analysis of the project's logic framework. A major discovery was that the framework included the CSO strengthening components of the project, while the livelihood components (e.g. creating small businesses, job training without any relation to the CSOs) were not covered and also did not relate to the overall objective as defined. However, the budget included CSO as well as livelihoods components. According to project staff, both were developed separately and therefore disparities may have occurred.

#### ***Did the BCoB project's underlying Theory of Changes allow to achieve the desired impact?***

Except for the omission described above, the Logical Frame and its underlying Theory of change are consistent and activities, with some very minor exceptions, were carried out according to plan. The key idea of the project's Theory of Change was to strengthen existing CSOs, in the case of FAs envision and equip them to go beyond their past narrow mandate, and create CSO federations that would be able to participate and bring to attention community needs at DSD level, participating in the design in development plans. At the same time, local authorities were expected to be equipped to facilitate higher level of community participation in development planning to ensure that together with the CSOs, planning in future would be much closer to the actual needs of the communities. A major challenge for the project's ToC to achieve the desired change was the fact that local authorities were not in place throughout the first two years of the project's life. Those elected only took office a few months before the end of the project. These authorities needed to be in place to approve the implementation of the Participatory Development Framework which included the formation of the CSO federations as one of the steps in this; the acting administrative staff did not have the mandate to do so. Therefore, extremely little time was left for a core component of the ToC. It was only possible to form the federations in the last six months of the project in a context of political instability.

#### ***To what extent was the project's underlying program logic adequately adjusted according to a changing environment?***

The overall project logic was not adjusted throughout the life of the project, despite the absence of the elected local authorities undermining much of the defined logic. However, project staff explained that a number of adaptations were put in place: Instead of working with the elected authorities, the focus has been on the administration. The elected LA were only included during the final year. However, despite the collaboration with the administration, federations were only formed during final year of project. It was feared that the approval process through the administration would have taken very long because it lacked the authority to take the required decisions. Concentrating the capacity development on the CSOs was a further adaptation.

According to project staff, the project initially faced another challenge in getting started: within communities and specifically in Kandakrtiya, an area where World Vision had not worked before, misunderstandings about the organisation's Christian identity and the nature of its engagement resulted in a reluctance to collaborate with the project. Staff explained further that the hesitancy of people living in the area to engage with foreigners had a history of resisting former colonial powers and retreating for their own safety to the mountainous area they now inhabit. Overall, significant time was required to build trust.



### 6.1.3 Goal Setting

#### ***Were the goals and outcomes set realistic?***

The project's goal (overall objective: "*strengthen CSOs as leading stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development*") is linked to two indicators:

1. Increase in local concerns in development planning
2. 20% increase of income in targeted area

In terms of the first indicator, the project planners could not have foreseen that local authorities would not be in place throughout most of the project's life although this was precondition for establishing the federations which were envisioned to be the key vehicles for increasing local concerns in development planning. **While at the planning stage this seemed realistic, it turned out not to be the case.**

**The second indicator** measuring the achievement of the project's goal **was rather unrealistic** for the following reason: in regard to increased incomes, the project directly impacted around 2000 individuals (mostly CSO members and individual beneficiaries of IGAs as reported by project staff), who represent together with their household members roughly 9000 community members, and therefore about 9% of the three DSDs total population. While significant increases among members were reported in the FGDs, often above 30%, it was not realistic to achieve a 20% increase for the entire population. This would have required the 2000 direct beneficiaries to have an average increase of 222% of household incomes to create the overall average increase of 20% for the project area's total population.

The project's specific objective or outcome was to "*Equip CSOs to take a lead role in improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, through integrated, participatory and resilient economic growth.*" Success was expected to be measured with the following three indicators:

1. 60% increase of targeted CSOs believe they are more effective in participating in local policy dialogue and development planning.
2. 50% increase in informed economic decisions made based on the available holistic information.
3. 50 CSOs participating in policy dialogue

These set targets, in place for achieving the outcome (specific objective), were realistic, especially because the project's strategy was to work with established CSO structures, already registered with the government, by increasing their mandate and capacities.

### 6.1.4 Strategic Alignment

#### ***Is the project aligned with the country strategies and technical standards?***

BCoB has mainly worked with CSO structures which mostly had been established through the government (FAs and RDSs). It has worked with the Ministry of Agriculture to establish sustainable information services for the farming community. The government has established a policy to strengthen civil society. Strengthening the CSOs and specifically their engagement in local development, being able to link to DSD-level leadership, intended to allow communities to influence issues concerning their development while creating channels for supporting and sustaining the outcomes of government development initiatives<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Janathakshan and World Vision, 2019, Bringing the Community on Board (BCoB): Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the economic resilience of communities, Annex IV: Final report.

### **6.1.5 Participation**

#### ***To which extent did beneficiaries and partners participate actively in the Planning, Monitoring and Reflection processes?***

According to project staff, the initial project design was based on secondary data and WVL's and [REDACTED] combined prior experience in the area. Implementation was then done according to plan. Monitoring was done by WVL and [REDACTED]. BCoB did not have or follow a systematic reflection process but reflection took place on specific subjects with involvement of local actors where appropriate. Planning for the exit strategy included WVL and [REDACTED] staff.

#### ***How has CSO been applied to the economic development of farmer families? Analyse the involvement of CSO especially for farmer families.***

**A variety of collaborative efforts were made with CSOs according to project staff**, e.g. for the rehabilitation of an irrigation canal, first discussions with CSOs took place (consultation), then decisions were taken. CSOs had a key role in prioritising needs, defining the type of income generating activities, in verifying requests and specific activities, in the selection of beneficiary, in monitoring, and in obtaining approvals from authorities (e.g. for canals). Another example are the dairy associations. The project enabled the association to take the lead in supporting their members e.g. in dealing with MILCO, distributing cattle, getting back the second calf and giving it to another needy farmer, working with other relevant partners.

#### ***Were the beneficiaries appropriately selected to receive the interventions proposed? I.e. were the target groups able to influence the economic decision making?***

A multi-layered selection process was established, with many validation steps from general assembly to technical specialists (e.g. veterinary surgeon confirming capacities and conditions for keeping dairy cow). Most economic interventions were identified by the CSOs. In general, the selection of beneficiaries was seen as fair and no complaints were raised. Two groups that were critical during FGDs and KIIs included the RDSs and the local administrative representatives (GNs) at village level. In the past, these two groups usually played a major role in channelling support to vulnerable community members. In one DSD, a large group of administrative representatives came to the FGD, by far more than had been requested. The group boycotted efforts of the evaluation team members to facilitate the prepared exercise, constantly emphasising that the project had not brought any benefits at all. After the team lead took over the conversation, the lead of the group kept repeating the criticism and explaining that any support to local beneficiaries should go through them since it was their role and they had the required competence. From the interaction, and despite directing questions at other members, it became clear that others were not allowed to speak, except for two other male members with the same message. They repeatedly expressed that they had never been involved in the selection of beneficiaries, despite project staff having regularly worked through them. GNs regularly signed the project's decisions off with all evidence available at WVL's local office. Administrative staff from the other two DSDs did not voice the same dissatisfaction. The lead facilitator was surprised to observe that the question of power played a more prominent role in this context than in any other evaluation facilitated so far. CSOs, leadership roles in the federations and control over resources distributed in the area were clearly seen as means of power.

### **6.1.6 Partnerships**

**Identify the effectiveness of the partnership with [REDACTED] and other partners, focusing on whether the partnership resulted in effective leverage and complementarity between organizations**

During the timeline exercise with [REDACTED] and WVL staff, both highlighted initial challenges in collaborating, with a number of misunderstandings. However, through dialogue and clarifications, the two parties were able to achieve a very positive and efficient collaboration. From the perspective of the external evaluator, as well according to feedback from staff from both partners, the project team was extremely well integrated. Staff and leadership were of the opinion that the collaboration was so successful that both sides were encouraged to collaborate on future projects. Staff from both partners complemented each other well in the projects, based on different competency skills which all were required for the success of the project (e.g. strengthening CSOs and livelihood activities).

The project team successfully collaborated with other actors, including the veterinary surgeon (as reported by the surgeon and staff) who took a key role in the dairy component. He is seen as critical for the long-term sustainability of impacts. On the information sources for farmers, a close engagement and partnership was established with the Provincial Agrarian Department. [REDACTED] reported very good support from the Assistant Director of District Disaster Management. Entry and closing meetings, as well as KIIs and staff feedback showed that the project had been successful in efficiently collaborating with all relevant local government institutions (provincial council and Pradeshiya Saha). The only exception, where clear challenges were observed were the GNs of Meegahakivula.

#### **Elements that influenced the effectiveness of the partnerships**

According to project staff, key factor for the success of the partnership between WVL and [REDACTED] was the willingness of both sides to work through misunderstandings and challenges, proactively continue striving towards a positive relationship and simply giving their relationship sufficient time to develop.

Religion also played a critical role for the project. A number of local actors were initially not comfortable with a Christian Organisation intervening into their area, with some being openly hostile. Avoiding rush but taking time to gain trust within the community were critical.

The project faced some localised challenges by being caught between the envy of different actors and their unwillingness to share power with CSOs as WVL and [REDACTED] interpreted the hostile reactions of some [REDACTED] and the negative feedback from some [REDACTED]

## **6.2 Effectiveness**

### **6.2.1 Level of Achievement**

**To what extent did the programme achieve its outputs, outcomes and goals?**

In the logical framework, the project uses the terminology results (outputs), specific objective (outcome) and overall objective (goal). For achieving the project's specific objective "*Equip CSOs to take a lead role in improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, through integrated, participatory and resilient economic growth.*" Three types of results were sought for achieving this specific objective:

**R1:** *Strengthened CSO engagement in policy dialogue, development planning and local resource mobilization.*

**R2:** *Local authorities, CSOs and smallholder farmers are enabled to make better informed economic decisions*

**R3:** *Improved capacity of CSOs and smallholder farmers to engage with market stakeholders and local authorities*

For better understanding how the project has enabled the achievement of its specific objective and how this has contributed to the overall objective, it is helpful to first understand the level of achievement at results level. Without these results, achievements at higher levels would not have been possible.

### **Achievement Results**

**Effectiveness R1:** *Strengthened CSO engagement in policy dialogue, development planning and local resource mobilization.*

According to BCoB's final narrative report<sup>25</sup>, the first result aimed at **increasing local accountability** towards economic policy implementation and the availability of infrastructure and services. BCoB has increased CSO member's capacities, facilitated the establishment of a mechanisms for local participatory development planning, which have enabled the creation of plans with grass root participation in all three DSDs.

The key vehicle to achieve this, as the result states, was the engagement of CSOs at various levels. Two indicators (R1.2 and 1.3) show that the project made **efforts to enable CSO members for their engagement**. Firstly, by successfully increasing their knowledge on decision making structures in their context and in the fields of policy and accountability. Secondly the project sought to increase knowledge on the CSOs' rights and entitlements. Evidence for the effectiveness of the first type of training were post training measurements, indicating that 80% (target 60%) had increased relevant knowledge<sup>26</sup>. For both areas of knowledge, the results from the FGDs, specifically the body mapping and Tree of Change exercise gave evidence to the success of significantly increasing knowledge: improved knowledge emerged as the most significant change identified by the CSOs and CSO federations. The majority referred to knowledge being relevant to increasing the CSOs' capacities for taking a role in local accountability.

The project had defined a second precondition for effective grass root participation in local planning: establishing DIFs as a mechanism, accepted by provincial level stakeholders and specifically decision making-officials. Five meetings (indicator R1.4), including components of capacity building, were held. These resulted in developing ToR defining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. This lengthy process with several critical steps laid the foundation for establishing the DIFs in all three DSDs as a mechanism for collective local decision making (indicator R1.1).

In light of an absent local authority, the project has adapted well to the challenge and achieved a significant success.

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<sup>25</sup> Janathakshan and World Vision Lanka, 2019, Bringing the Community on Board (BCoB): Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the economic resilience of communities: Final Narrative Report – Annex VI

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

**Effectiveness R2:** *Local authorities, CSOs and smallholder farmers are enabled to make better informed economic decisions*

BCoB primarily defined the ability of local authorities, CSOs and smallholder farmers to make better informed economic decision as a product of having “improved access to crucial information”<sup>27</sup>. Information is mostly focused on information relevant for farmers. The project established an Information Management System (IMS), putting in place a communication channel as described in Case Story 3. Due to delays, the project had so far only resulted in some limited use of the information provided in decision making (e.g. timing of planting crops due to weather forecasts as explained by FA members).

Establishing the IMS (indicator R2.1) took longer than initially planned. It took more time than expected to identify and adopt the right technology for disseminating the information to farmers. While initially SMSs were believed to be the most promising approach, farmers preferred to receive information through farm leaders and government officers as explained by project staff. Information is now produced in a leaflet and distributed to relevant government authorities. The dissemination of the information was then incorporated into existing community-based quarterly meetings which are held for making seasonal agricultural decisions<sup>28</sup>.

While the project aimed at having three communication channels in place, one had been established by the end of the project (indicator 2.2)<sup>29</sup>. Information access was enabled for 2058 farmers (58 above plan according to indicator R2.3)<sup>30</sup>. Improved decision making was expected to be observed among 40% of the target group, of which 20% have been achieved (indicator R 2.4)<sup>31</sup>. This was explained as a consequence of the IMS only having been established towards the end of the project so that instead of 20 informed decisions based on the available information only two were reported (Indicator R2.5)<sup>32</sup>. The delay may also explain why in none of the FGDs with any of the CSOs the IMS or its information has been mentioned, neither in a positive or negative way. Awareness and an understanding of potential benefits may still be too low at this stage.

Overall, at the current stage it is challenging to assess the effectiveness of BCoB in achieving its second result. The project was flexible to adapt to local preferences of information delivery, however associated delays did not allow to support the adoption process to the level it intended to achieve.

**Case Story 3: Establishment, operation and future of the Information Management System KII with Mrs. A., Director of the Uva Provincial Agriculture Office**

██████████ is heading the Uva Provincial Agriculture Office in Badulla, a government line office with 9 senior officers and 174 field/agrarian officers. ██████████ expresses high appreciation for the

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<sup>27</sup> ibid

<sup>28</sup> ibid

<sup>29</sup> ibid

<sup>30</sup> ibid

<sup>31</sup> ibid

<sup>32</sup> ibid



development work done by BCoB and its support of the Information Management System, and in particular the publication of the information leaflets to the various farmer groups. So far, 2 leaflets have been published and distributed to the farmers, the publication of two more flyers/leaflets is planned. The content of the leaflets covers the following thematic areas and information: General information about agricultural practices, weather-forecasts, market prices, crop varieties, watering and fertilizing, pest control.

The purpose of the leaflet is to allow farmers to make informed decisions about their farming practices and provide them with price forecasts for certain periods. Ultimately, the office is planning to apply modern information technology for information dissemination. In a first step, they intended to use SMS messages for that purpose. However, they found that the farmers were not yet ready to utilise that channel, and thus the leaflets will serve that purpose for the time being.

██████████ is planning to have an assessment done after the publication of five leaflets. The Agrarian Officers will conduct the assessment and get feedback from the farmers.

A strategic plan has been developed to radically transform the existing information system by providing all field officers with tablets and access to the internet. It is foreseen to improve the services and speed up the availability of information for the farmers. E.g. if a crop is befallen by a certain disease, the farmer can send a photo of the affected plants to the central technical research unit, which will investigate the problem and contact the responsible field officer in the area via tablet. S/he in turn can then pass the information on to the concerned farmer and give advice on what to do and the possible treatment.

According to ██████████ and ████████████████████, who also attended the meeting, the formation of farmer federations has made communication for and with the extension services easier. It has also proven to be quite effective in regard to information dissemination.

About one month ago, the maize crops in parts of the BCoB project area had been befallen by a pest called "army worm". To control the pest, the agriculture office gave the order to all farmers not to cultivate maize again before May 2019. Some ignored this and it would have been quite difficult and time consuming for the field officers to contact and monitor individual farmers. By involving the farmer federations in the concerned areas, these actively got involved in monitoring compliance, enabling to control the spread of the pest. Concluding the meeting, ██████████ again stressed the need and importance of the BCoB project for the development of the rural households and communities in Badulla. At the same time, she commented that three years had been too short a time for achieving large scale and long-term impacts.

**Effectiveness R3:** *Improved capacity of CSOs and smallholder farmers to engage with market stakeholders and local authorities*

Result R3, as defined by BCoB, was mainly about increased market access, facilitated through a wide mix of activities aimed at fostering the target groups' economic activity. Capacity building was the largest set of activities, e.g. it included components of training CSO members as trainers to deliver training on alternative income (indicator R 3.1: 45 planned, 46 trained), training on disaster mitigation (indicator R 3.6: 120 planned, 130 participated), enabling a better protection of assets. BCoB facilitated four value chain analysis (indicator R 3.3: 3 planned, 4 completed). Subsequently, training of newly established producer groups across different value chains were conducted, allowing these to develop business plans based on the

value chain analysis. Capacity building also included components as the facilitation of exposure visits (indicator R 3.7: 50 participants planned, 182 participated). In addition, followup and assistance to develop businesses were provided to self-employment beneficiaries and to actors associated with the two new dairy value chains established in two of the three DSDs (e.g. providing technical advice, establishing linkages, providing funding). In the FGDs, the creation or improvement of businesses has featured as one of the most important changes identified by the CSOs.

Major achievements were the establishment of the maize and pepper producer groups, both supported with capacity building and equipment to process their produce, based on plans developed after the value chain analysis. A further example is the promotion of dairy production in the targeted area, resulting in the establishment of 5 new DAs. For ensuring the marketing of milk, four public-private partnerships (PPPs) were formed (indicator R 3.4: 4 planned and achieved). These PPPs link dairy farmers and their dairy associations to [REDACTED]

Overall, training was implemented according to plan, with a few minimal. The project enabled the value chain analysis of four crops, namely ginger, maize, pepper and turmeric, one more than initially planned. There is ample evidence that farmers found these analyses helpful for their investment decisions: maize and pepper producer groups were established, farmers started growing ginger as observed during a farm visit and reported by FAs during FGDs. For one activity area, linking farmers to technical, financial and business service providers (indicator R 3.9: plan 1500, 397 trained)<sup>34</sup> the final report shows underachievement. Four farmer societies with 397 farmers were linked with the Entrepreneur Division of Uva Council which established links with existing business networks. Despite the seemingly weak performance, the activity covered a broad variety of aspects: (1) home gardening and selfemployment support for developing especially the livelihoods of vulnerable CSO members, including PWDs; (2) small community-based enterprise development, providing support to the above mentioned newly established producer groups and dairy associations, especially in establishing critical links. All producer groups in the FGDs have clearly shown the importance and contribution of the project in their establishment. Without the project, these would not exist. (3) Support to the rehabilitation of community livelihoods infrastructure as irrigation canals or ponds. Renovation was supported on 15 minor irrigation infrastructures. CSOs were involved in the full process for capacity building: in identifying needs, planning, working with engineer estimates, reading technical drawings and submitting proposals. In one case, the CSO itself successfully carried out all the work with support of only one engineer who was hired for the project<sup>35</sup>.

In summary, the project, with its limited budget and staff, managed to create plenty of opportunities for CSOs and their members to increase their capacities, including knowledge, linkages as well as production assets, to be in a better position to engage with market holders and relevant local authorities. During the FGDs, CSO members have clearly shown their increased confidence and reported of successes of their economic endeavors.

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<sup>33</sup> ibid

<sup>34</sup> ibid

One observation has been, that some of the trainings (e.g. home gardening, job-related training for unemployed and marginalized people, disaster mitigation, gender), had also included some activities which did not seem to be related to strengthening CSOs or specifically result 3. These seem to be contributing to an outcome that has not been explicitly stated in the project's logical framework: improving the livelihoods of vulnerable community members (e.g. by income generating opportunities, providing training on the operation on heavy machinery or IT to get jobs).

### **Achievement Specific Objective**

**Effectiveness** specific objective: *“Equip CSOs to take a lead role in improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, through integrated, participatory and resilient economic growth.”*

The indicators that were defined to measure the achievement of the specific objective help to understand how those who designed the project perceived it to be successful. CSO members were expected to believe at the end of the project that they are more effective in two key areas: (1) participating in local policy dialogue and (2) development planning (indicator SO 1.1: target 60%, achievement 45%)<sup>36</sup>. Practically, this also meant that at least 2/3 of the targeted CSOs participate in policy dialogue (SO 1.3: plan 50, achievement 5 or 10%)<sup>37</sup> and the same share participates in development planning and local resource mobilization (SO 1.4: plan 50, actual 75 or 150%)<sup>38</sup>. In addition, an increase in informed economic decisions, made based on the available holistic information, was expected (indicator SO 1.2: target 50%, actual missing)<sup>39</sup>.

The participation in policy dialogue and development planning is closely linked to Result 1. While the project has found alternatives to successfully establish the DIFs in the absence of elected local authorities and managed to achieve 150% of its plan by involving all targeted CSOs in the process, this has not been possible for policy dialogue. Dialogue required the presence of the elected local authorities for two reasons: they were the only actors to approve the establishment of the new CSO federations who have a central role in the political dialogue. Further, having local authorities only present during the final months of the project did not allow for sufficient opportunities for policy dialogue. Therefore only 10% were achieved. This also explains why CSO members are not as confident as expected (45 vs 60%) in regard to being more effective in their participation in local policy dialogue and development planning – simply because they only had the opportunity to participate in planning, but 90% not in policy dialogue. In the FGDs, CSO members valued their additional knowledge in understanding the political system and knowing their options on how to get involved. CSO members from all DSDs strongly insisted that establishing CSO federations had an added value to them, although all federations only had been in place for a few months. One of the most important added value they saw was the potential of federations getting involved in policy dialogue. They felt that only the federations had sufficient weight to represent them and would be taken seriously, while individual CSOs would not. Representatives of the CSO federations confirmed this view, seeing the power of their structure based on a significant

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<sup>36</sup> Janathakshan and World Vision Lanka, 2019, Bringing the Community on Board (BCoB): Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the economic resilience of communities: Final Narrative Report – Annex VI

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*

constituency. Despite their late formation, all federations still received significant training, including on basic finance, leadership, rights and responsibilities of CSOs, facing effects of natural disasters and climate change. The guided capacity self-assessment showed a 36% (see Table 5) capacity increase within the short time that had passed since their foundation.

**Table 5: Guided capacity self-assessment of CSOs and CSO federations<sup>46</sup>**

	Average beginning capacities 1-9	in %	Average end capacities 1-9	in %	Average change capacities 1-9	% increase
Average all	1,6	16%	3,6	70%	2,0	53% <sup>47</sup>
Average FA	2,0	26%	3,9	77%	1,9	51%
Average WA	1,4	12%	3,4	62%	1,9	51% <sup>48</sup>
Average DA	1,1	2%	3,7	71%	2,6	69%
Average RDS	1,4	12%	3,6	69%	2,2	57%
Average CSO Fed.	1,2	5%	2,6	41%	1,4	36%

The results of guided self-capacity assessment of CSOs, based on growth indicators on the key areas the project had trained them in, clearly show the success of the program in strengthening CSOs to become strong local actors in improving livelihoods:

- On average across all groups and capacities, CSOs started on average at a level of 16% and achieved 70% at the end, an increase of 53% on average.
- Farmer Associations started at the highest level with 26% and were also in the end the CSOs with the strongest capacities; on average at 77%.
- The greatest improvement across all 9 capacities were measured for the Dairy Associations: an increase of 69% (from 2% to 71%).
- As expected, the Federations showed the least increase, since they were only established during the final months of the project: a total increase of 36% (from 5% to 41%). A number of the Federation’s representatives stated that they had benefitted from trainings as members of their individual CSOs.
- Growth of the livelihood-related capacities, especially 8 and 9, were lower than of capacities related to the CSO. One possible interpretation is that these areas require more time to

<sup>46</sup> For each of the 9 capacity areas assessed, growth levels 1-5 were described (seedling to maturity). Accordingly, scores were from 1-5, with one being the lowest and 5 the highest. The table includes averages across all 9 capacity areas. One capacity area only covered the first three growth stages, since JT and WV expressed that the project started at a very low level and had not been able to include capacity building measures supporting growth beyond level 3.

<sup>47</sup> Please note that this figure is 1% lower than the figures to the left would suggest, because figures have been rounded.

<sup>48</sup> Please note that this figure is 1% higher than the figures to the left would suggest, because figures have been rounded.

develop and are more challenging to show results. Especially the Federations showed the lowest results for these capacities.

The indicator measuring an increase in informed economic decisions made, based on the available holistic information, is linked to Result 2 of the logical framework. In its narrow sense,

based on the findings from R2, limited progress has been made with the establishment of the IMS and information dissemination channels. Since this was only completed towards the end of the project, little impact was measured. However, when taking a broader view, the project had disseminated significant levels of new information. Having new knowledge was defined by the CSO members in the FGDs as the top achievement. Throughout the evaluation, significant evidence was collected that CSOs and individual members, because of the project, had been in a better position to take informed economic decisions. Based on the value chain analysis, some farmers had replaced some of their rice production with ginger<sup>40</sup>, women had formed production groups for maize and pepper and started value addition processes (e.g. popcorn, flour, sale to school canteens, white pepper). The maize producer group has started establishing contacts with local companies to sell their products. Based on information provided to farmers, these have realised the potential income they can get from dairy farming, leading to a significant number of farmers starting milk production. The question is, to what extent the established IMS will be able to at least partially replace the project as a key information source that has influenced many economic decisions and was highly valued by CSO members.

### **Contribution Overall Objective**

**Effectiveness** in contributing to overall objective: *“Strengthen CSOs as leading stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development”*

The overall objective is very similar to the specific objective and only one specific objective is contributing to its achievement. Therefore, information already provided on the achievement of the specific objective will not be repeated here.

Unfortunately, the two indicators put in place to measure the project’s contribution to the overall objective were not very helpful for different reasons: The first indicator of measuring achieving at least a 50% increase of local concerns regarding economic development<sup>41</sup> being included in participatory development planning (OO 1.1) was neither realistic nor objectively measurable since no baseline was available. Further, it was too early for the measurement, since processes for participatory planning just had been put in place. Having ToRs for the DIFs and functioning federations in place at least increases the probability of having local concerns integrated in future.

The second indicator chosen, a 20% increase of annual household income in the targeted areas, was not set realistically. The 2000 directly involved households would have required an average increase of income of 222%. While an individual household involved in dairy production reported an increase of 300%, this was an exception, with many farmers reporting in the FGDs and informal conversations figures between 40-100%. Because many activities have only been recently introduced, CSO members at the current stage were not able to say realistically how much additional income they would have when their new business activities had consolidated. Also, neither income data from the National Bureau of Statistics for the full project period was available, nor was it feasible with the given resources to facilitate the necessary household survey.

**Overall, the project has been very strategic in strengthening CSOs to become leading stakeholders in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development.**

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<sup>40</sup> Site visit during evaluation

<sup>41</sup> Market prices, harvesting pattern

Unfortunately, BCoB was significantly affected by the delay of having local authorities in place. The project has been creative to find alternatives, however, since local authorities played a critical role in fully achieving the overall objective, this was only possible to a certain extent. CSOs clearly have been capacitated and have a clear understanding of their potential for and their role in their communities. The majority of members has reported in the FGDs increased economic activities and increased incomes.

### **6.2.2 What were the key challenges that hindered project implementation?**

Local communities were initially reserved towards the project, some boycotting it. Project staff reported, because of WVL being a Christian organisation, various actors were initially not willing to work with them. One of the women leaders stated that she had realised the potential of the project to help them and was comfortable working with BCoB, but others in the community were creating fears and putting pressure on members not to collaborate. Her initial strategy was not to meet publicly to avoid creating any attention, until things had settled. Historically, part of the communities covered by the project had rebelled against the occupying colonial forces and then had to retreat far into inaccessible mountain areas. Among these, according to project staff, there are still many who are hesitant to engage with external actors. The project team had to spend significantly more time than expected to build relationships.

The challenge of hiring staff delayed the project as well as local authorities not being in place for the first two years of the project, pushing many critical activities to its final months. The establishment of the CSO federations depended on the presence of local authorities. The delay has left the federations with a much lower level of capacity development than the CSOs, raising questions about their future effectiveness.

### **6.2.3 What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?**

**Working with and boosting existing structures** – BCoB mostly worked through existing structures and processes, e.g. using established CSOs instead of starting new ones. This has avoided lengthy establishment processes as it has been the case with the CSO federations. It has equally prevented establishing structures that are potentially dependent on the project with a high risk of falling into despair when the project ends.

**Transforming existing structures**, increasing their mandate: for example, the FAs traditionally have a very narrow mandate and are mostly in place to allow an efficient delivery of fertiliser or other inputs by the government. The project has significantly transformed the mandate of these groups, allowing them to become active change agents in their communities.

**Federating existing community structures**: this has given existing structure a new potential to intervene into local politics at a higher level than before because of having a much more significant constituency. In addition, it has enabled cross-fertilisation / learning.

**Context – hunger for knowledge** – communities in the project area have a culture of highly valuing new knowledge and ideas, it is positively seen as an opportunity for change.

**Presence in the community**, trust building: especially for World Vision it has been critical to show significant presence in the community and build trust.

**Dedication of the project team, [redacted] and WVL** to achieve the objectives of the project, despite major external challenges. Even during the final months, major efforts were made to make up for the externally induced delays.

**CSO participation in identifying economic interventions** – this has created ownership and helped to promote activities that are relevant to the context.

**Strong collaboration with local government services and the private sector** has allowed a small project team to have support in implementation. Critical relationships have been established for the future, allowing CSOs to seek support when required e.g. Dairy Associations have good relationships to the veterinary service and are able to market their milk via [REDACTED]

**Non-achievement 1 - political conditions:** the fact that local authorities were not in place for a prolonged period was the most critical challenge for not fully achieving the project's objectives.

**Non-achievement 2 - contradictory messages:** To some extent the project itself has been contradictory in the choice of its activities for supporting vulnerable community members, especially [REDACTED] through the CSOs. While it has achieved that CSOs see the potential of having [REDACTED] as productive members and not only recipients, a number of the activities chosen by the project to help these vulnerable community members to establish their own businesses have been very successful as Case Story 4 below illustrates. However, they are not replicable by the CSOs e.g. the distribution of sewing machines as in see Case Story 4, a refrigerator or other capital-intensive production tools for starting a business.

#### **Supporting apparel production**

##### **Case Story 4: Supporting a vulnerable family**

###### ***Interview with*** [REDACTED]

Initially, [REDACTED] got introduced to the BCoB project by an officer from the Ministry of Women Affairs. [REDACTED] was selected to join the project because of the hardship and poverty faced by her family. Until then, her husband, a daily laborer had been the sole bread winner in the family with two school-aged daughters. When he was taken ill and had to undergo surgery, the family was left without any income for some time. Both of their daughters were good students and had passed the Ordinary Level (O/L) Exams with highest grades. Now, their further school education was at risk, because [REDACTED] was unable to pay the school fees any longer. At that very critical time, the project got involved. Subsequently, [REDACTED] took part in various training courses organized by the project, including on leadership and entrepreneurship development, financial management, accounting practice, and disaster management. Further, she attended programs related to 'right to know the information'. Building on existing skills in sewing for her own household requirements, she was encouraged by the project in starting her own village-based business of sewing clothes. In addition, the project equipped her with a Jukie Machine (Industrial Sewing Machine); an Overlock Sewing Machine and 50.000 LKR worth of production material, plus seeds and plants to start a home garden. In the beginning, she didn't have a clear idea about how to move the apparel production forward. It was the project which provided guidance to her in that phase. Meanwhile, she earns enough to pay for the education of her children. She receives more orders from the villagers and from other areas to produce apparel and thinks about further expanding the business and hiring another person. The project team members were continuously providing advice and supervised the financial management. Currently [REDACTED] is conducting her business and production in her own house. The space is not enough for the production and she mentioned that she is planning to build a small building to sell her products and to do production activities. Overall, she was/is very happy about the BCoB project and World Vision. According to her, low income families benefited from this project. She also mentioned that her own success is an example and expression of the project's success.

The Heifer approach is different, where cows are distributed with the condition that they are well kept and the second female offspring will be given to another vulnerable household as identified by the association – giving the group the potential to continually support needy



members of their community. Unfortunately, some of the livelihood activities have created expectations towards external donors instead of giving the groups a tool on how they can help their communities and specifically vulnerable members, becoming self-reliant in facilitating change and in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development.

## **6.3 Efficiency**

### **6.3.1 Alignment with Planning**

#### ***To what extent were funds used in accordance with agreed activities?***

In the analysis of the Logical Framework with project staff and national QA staff of both local partners, one finding has been that all agreed activities, with exceptional minimal deviations, have been carried out as per design. The only challenge as described above, was the delay of critical activities due to external circumstances. Overall, the project showed an exceptional level of consistency between its plan and the actual implementation.

According to a financial audit for the period from 1 March 2016 to 28 February 2018<sup>42</sup>, only 0,0001% (49.24€ out of a total budget of 354,978.72€) were identified in the draft budget as “ineligible” and had to be clarified by the project team. All funds throughout the life of the project were used according to agreed activities (budget lines). The project manager explained that in the case of administrative support, they had not been able to fill a position. The unspent funds were moved to activities. At the level of units, in a number of cases the project was able to have more units with the agreed budget.

### **6.3.2 Efficient decision making**

#### ***Where variances occurred, verify the extent to which changes were made to ensure the most efficient use of resources?***

Where variances occurred, these were shifted between budget lines. According to the project manager, the major shift was from unspent administrative salary to activities.

***Challenges that arose and impacted the efficient implementation of donor funds*** (like e.g. recruitment, coordination of partnership, resources and capacities, etc.)

The project initially faced challenges with recruiting staff, which resulted in a delayed start of the project (six months), one administrative position was not filled throughout the life of the project. Following factors contributed to the challenge:

- Distance of project location, no potential staff available locally;
- For a relatively short temporary assignment, a higher salary may be expected due to the level of risk for leaving a safe position. It is feared that at the end of the project, no immediate new position would be found and that personal savings would be necessary to bridge this phase.
- Limited pool of potential candidates with required technical skills.

A second challenge was related to the time of partners expected to spend in the project. While WVL staff was allocated to spend 100% of their time in the project, ■ staff was only allocated 75%. Since ■ had a significant workload on developing the CSOs but less time in the project,

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<sup>42</sup> European Commission, EuropeAid Development and Cooperation Directorate General ('DEVCO'), December 2019: Bringing the community on board: Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the economic resilience of Communities, Financial Audit of the project; draft report.

WVL had to support much more on the CSO component than initially expected or defined by design.

## **6.4 Impact of BCoB interventions relevant to formulated Outcomes**

### **6.4.1 Contribution to change**

***To identify the positive and negative, intended and unintended, changes produced by the BCoB project interventions in Badulla District and to look if and how these have contributed to any identified changes concerning the defined outcome areas.***

A key finding of the evaluation has been, that according to the Logical Framework and theory of change analysis, **the project had a second outcome area besides equipping CSOs**, which was not included in the Logical Framework, but in the budget: **Creating sustainable livelihoods for the most vulnerable community members**. There is a certain overlap with the impact of the project components strengthening CSOs: many activities in strengthening CSOs e.g. putting a Heifer scheme in place for dairy cows, helped establishing producer groups, or rehabilitating irrigation canals, have all led to increased incomes and therefore improved the livelihoods of its members, including many vulnerable. However, some of the livelihood components did not seem to have contributed at all to strengthening the roles of the CSOs in becoming leading actors in development. Among these were training provided to members of vulnerable households e.g. as operating large machinery for road construction, allowing them to access jobs, or the distribution of sewing machines to start new businesses. Still these activities generated outcomes and impact.

**A significant number of intended changes were identified in the evaluation:**

**Significantly strengthened CSOs in their capacity to participate in and drive local development:** Throughout the report it has been shown that the project has clearly strengthened the 75 participating CSOs and their individual members through systematic capacity building (see Table 5, p.38): by establishing with the DIFs a mechanism for participating in local planning, through linking CSOs to government institutions or the private sector and through establishing CSO federations. The positive impact on CSOs becoming leading actors in local development has only partially been reduced by using non-replicable support models for vulnerable community members, creating expectations on external aid (unintended negative impact), instead of empowering the CSOs to have their own solutions.

**Increased mandate of FAs:** the project has moved the existing structure of FAs in the project area from a very narrow mandate, mainly focusing on the distribution of fertiliser for the government, towards being an actor active in the development of its communities and for the benefit of its members.

**Increased levels of economic activity and income among CSO members:** the project has offered plenty of effective opportunities for CSO members to increase their incomes. For example, dairy associations reported many farmers were now producing milk, who had never done that before and having a marketing channel through [REDACTED], at the same time improving the nutrition of their own household. Production groups for maize and pepper are now adding value to their products (e.g. popcorn, flour, preparation of school meals, white pepper). Farmers are able to irrigate their fields and therefore in a position to cultivate additional seasons, increasing their income. Other farmers have increased crop diversity improving income and nutrition: one example is replacing small areas cultivated with rice now with

ginger, allowing to increase income ten-fold. The project has created opportunities to newly establish or expand businesses. Staff and CSOs noted a positive mindset-shift towards doing business.

One specifically noteworthy innovative or unconventional approach was the case where [redacted] were given the chance of renovating their own canals instead of hiring a contractor. The contract with the [redacted] has created the opportunity for farmers to have additional income, while improving their skills and knowledge. In addition, leaders got the opportunity to manage a project putting them in a much better position to access government funding in future.

**Case Story 5: Capacity building and support to farmers resulting in investments**

**Supporting Farmers’ income diversification**

Interviewed person: Head of Farmers’ Association and coordinator of a village-based mango and lime producing project.

Through the BCoB project, the farmers’ groups of the area were provided with several training programs, including training on how to produce jam using mango and disaster management training. Further, they were given mango and lime plants. Altogether, 60 families participated in this project. The ones who have land and who has the willingness to cultivate were reached through the project. Point of contact was technical advisor [redacted] from World Vision; additional advisory service was provided by a former manager and provincial council. As a result of these activities, farmers received relevant cultivation information from the project. The disaster management programs educated them about how to prevent from droughts. There was no immediate challenge in cultivating. Project team members attended their meetings and were with them until the end of the project. They trust that there will be a good price for the products. To deliver the products it will take almost 3 years, but they strongly believe that they will receive maximum benefits from the cultivation. To sustain the project deliverables, they are planning to cultivate pepper on mango trees and use the same land slot to cultivate pepper and have multipurpose on the project.

Presently, they are searching for a seller (nationally/internationally) since they are confident about the high quality of their products. After the end of the project the farmers’ association is planning to invite all farmers to an entrepreneurship development program organized by provincial council.

**Access to information:** The target group valued the knowledge transfer of the project most. To ensure access to critical information in the future, BCoB has established an IMS and a channel to distribute information, which farmers identified as critical for their farming (weather, prices, suitable crop varieties, innovations). It will be interesting to observe, to what extent this will be used by farmers in the future. Assessing the use has not been possible, due to the delay of the activity’s completion.

**Empowerment of women:** Direct support of and collaboration with WAs, as well as the establishment of maize and pepper producer associations for women, contributed to their economic and social empowerment as reported by women in the FGDs. Surprising and probably unintended results regarding the empowerment of women were found in another area: for the FGDs, all three dairy groups of Rideemaliyadda were represented by a majority of women, 74%, while in the other two DSDs female representation among the DAs was 33% and 21% respectively. During the FGDs, groups with female majority representation explained that in Rideemaliyadda, DA member households had discovered that women were much stronger in managing the dairy cows and therefore after a while were given the lead. Caring for the dairy cows remained a responsibility of men and women, only the overall responsibility

had changed. Another area of empowerment that women raised during the validation and closing workshop was the fact that women now were allowed to use tools as weed cutters that before were reserved to men. Reviewing key training, monitoring and planning events throughout the life of the project gives some surprising results (Table 6, p.45). Women's participation ranged from 0% in the workshop on development strategies and participatory government forum (PGF) roadmap while they represented 88% of all members at the start-up workshop.

**Table 6: Women's participation in training and planning events** (list includes 12 types of events presented in the final report<sup>43</sup>)

Type of activity	Male participants	Female participants	Female in %
Project start-up workshop	16	123	88%
Gender, disability & conflict sensitivity workshop	149	187	56%
Awareness raising workshops for CSOs and LAs on the importance of local accountability in policy implementation and development planning	62	67	52%
Training of CSOs on policy analysis and government decision making structures	66	82	54%
Conduct information sessions on community rights and entitlements	63	114	64%
Training on organizational skill development for CSO members administration, finance, advocacy and leadership	184	123	40%
Consultations with communities on participatory planning frameworks	53	3	5%
CSOs develop Local Development Implementation Frameworks (DIF) for local, inclusive planning and resource mobilization for economic infrastructure and services	127	175	58%
Regular consultation sessions among CSOs, LAs and final beneficiaries to monitor the implementation of the DIF plans and sharing of best practices	177	137	44%
3 provincial level dialogues	46	4	8%
Workshop on development strategies and participatory government forum (PGF) roadmap	23	0	0%

Unfortunately, these figures were only received and analysed after the field-work had been completed, not allowing to have local views in exploring the findings. Overall, women seem to be well represented in most local activities. However, the three occasions where participation has been between 0-8%, all seem to be linked to higher-level political processes at district level. For determining whether these findings indicate a success, they have to be seen and

<sup>43</sup> Janathakshan and World Vision Lanka, 2019, Bringing the Community on Board (BCoB): Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the economic resilience of communities: Final Narrative Report – Annex VI

interpreted within the national context: According to “The Global Gender Gap Report 2017”<sup>44</sup>, Sri Lanka ranks below the global average. However, it is interesting to look in more detail at the four sub-scores; in “health and survival”, Sri Lanka ranked in 2017 globally ahead of all other countries, in “educational attainment” it was above average. In “political empowerment” the gap was greater than the global average and weakest empowerment was measured in “economic participation and opportunity”.

In summary, within the given context, the accounts of empowerment in the economic field as well as the high level of women’s participation and local level, including being more involved in local political issues clearly indicate a success. At the same time, the results show that there are still certain barriers for women’s participation. This is also reflected in the pattern of gender (im-)balance in the project’s workshops.

**Inclusion and empowerment of people living with disabilities:** The project has achieved significant impact among the CSOs on how they view and deal with people living with disabilities (PWDs). Initially, there has been opposition to build capacities among PWDs, since these were classified as non-productive members<sup>45</sup>. In the FGDs they reported that through the project they had started integrating PWDs in a different way. CSO members reported that they had learned that these community members could contribute to the group and society as all the others did. One member living with disabilities explained that he now felt accepted and was able to contribute, was able to care for himself and was not dependent on charity. He and others living with disabilities were now promoted as inspirational examples in their communities. Within a context that traditionally has a very disempowering, charity-based approach to disability, this clearly represents a major move towards a rights-based approach, at least among the CSO members. Practically, they decided to hold meetings in places that are accessible to members living with disabilities, choosing appropriate locations and allowing members living with disabilities to send a representative in case they were not able to participate themselves. Members have realised the value of transferring skills to members living with disabilities.

*“Through this project, there was a huge rise up of the community for the village development. This project has played a key role in village development” ( [REDACTED] )*

#### **Unintended positive benefits:**

**Unity within families and communities:** several CSO members in the FGDs described that the project has brought unity within their families, dairy farmers explained that managing dairy cows was only possible when the entire family supported and took on roles and responsibilities. One DA member described that the responsibilities had resulted in her husband stopping heavy drinking and now was playing a positive role in the family. CSO federations had created a platform for different CSOs within the DSDs to unite, learn and work

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<sup>44</sup> World Economic Forum, 2017: The Global Gender Gap Report 2017, pp.302-303, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf), viewed on 02.07.2019

<sup>45</sup> Janathakshan and World Vision Lanka, 2019, Bringing the Community on Board (BCoB): Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the economic resilience of communities: Final Narrative Report – Annex VI

together as they expressed during the FGDs. Before, different types of CSOs had neither exchanged experiences nor collaborated.

**Dairy value chain:** the project in its design had focused on the value chain of three different crops, but ended up doing four crops and the dairy value chain. Before, in most of the project area, there was basically no market for dairy products. However, working with the dairy groups has resulted in enabling these to redefine and promote their value chain and has created sustainable marketing opportunities for dairy farmers and therefore a steady flow of income.

**Nutrition improvements:** CSO members, especially those of DAs and FAs, have reported that a greater crop variety, vegetable gardening and the availability of milk have led to improved nutrition of their households. Further, increased incomes through the project were seen as contributing to improved nutrition.

**Construction and rehabilitation competencies:** in one case, the project contracted the CSO (FA) instead of external contractors to rehabilitate their irrigation scheme. Only an external architect was hired to guide the work. This opportunity has allowed the FA to develop its construction and rehabilitation competencies while at the same time a significant part of the remuneration was invested in a higher building standard (thicker walls of the canal) and in extending the canal beyond what they had been contracted to do. It further strengthened the reputation and position of the FA for accessing government funding in future, a competitive bidding process where much attention is given to the competence and experience of the applicant groups<sup>46</sup>.

#### **Unintended negative impact**

**Perceptions that external support is required for addressing the needs of vulnerable community members, including PWDs:** As already described earlier (see last paragraph of section 6.2.3 starting on p.40) a number of activities for addressing the needs of vulnerable persons were based on costly approaches. In general, it has been a very positive strategy of BCoB to work through CBOs. However, using approaches to help vulnerable community members through CBOs that are beyond their local capacities and resources has contributed unintentionally to a perception that outside support is required to be in a position to assist, instead of being self-reliant in addressing local needs by using local resources and accessing government support.

#### **6.4.2 Contributions to impact**

***Analyse the contribution of the the BCoB project to any observed impact (intended, unintended, positive, negative) and analyse what other actors and factors contributed to the impact.***

Overall, the project has been identified as the most relevant driver for the changes BCoB had contributed to: in all FGDs participants have agreed that contributions were highly relevant to the changes achieved (see Table 7). However, all equally acknowledged that the project was not operating in isolation, but in collaboration with relevant government structures and institutions, or with the private sector as in the case of [REDACTED]. In a number of cases, the critical role and contribution of community members was highlighted.

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<sup>46</sup> As reported during a site visit by staff and a CSO member, further source: Janathakshan and World Vision Lanka, 2019, Bringing the Community on Board (BCoB): Strengthening the role of CSOs in increasing the economic resilience of communities: Final Narrative Report – Annex VI

In addition, several external actors have been identified. CSOs participating in the FGDs from all three DSDs have rated the relevance of all external actors' the contributions (see table below for the results from the RDS FGDs, a type of group with a broad perspective on local development).

**Table 7: External actors contributing to identified changes** (Source FGDs with Rural Development Societies)

DSD	Type of Group	External actor	Type of support	Level of relevance	comments
KDK	█	█		H	
KDK	█	█	Vocational training	H	
KDK	█	█	Drinking water, hygiene, community halls	H	
KDK	█	█	Drinking water, sanitation	L	
KDK	█	█	Poultry, community halls, water	L	
MGK	█	█	Supporting self-employment through equipment, training	H	
RML	█	█	Sanitary facilities for temple	L	
RML	█	█	Funds for SE, ponds, cows, support to build stables, water tanks	H	
RML	█	█	Water, renovation canals, soil conservation	L	Only one village has benefitted
RML	█	█	New crop and plant varieties for dr season	L	Only one village has benefitted

**6.4.3 Achievement of specific intended outcomes**

**How (if at all) do changes attributed to the project, contribute to improved economic resilience and in promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic development following target groups:**

- (i) **LAs** (ii) **CSOs** (iii) **FAs** (iv) **Families and children**

The key section of this report presenting the achievement of intended outcomes is 6.2.1 (Level of Achievement starting on page 32). This section is limited to the aspect of the project's contribution to the economic resilience of the four defined groups.

**Local Authorities** – it is not realistic to assess this at this point of time, because it has only been possible to involve the LAs very late in the life of the project. The LAs in future are expected to continue receiving community development plans which will be developed by CSO federations, allowing LAs to increase participation in their planning.

**CSOs** – the project has increased the resilience of the CSOs, through capacitating their members, economically as well as enabling these to understand the rights, roles and responsibilities of their structure. This is further complemented by the establishment of CSO federations, which allow CSOs to act together, advocate for their issues and protect each other if necessary. Disaster preparedness skills have been increased and access to information (e.g.



weather and prices) allows CSOs to better protect themselves by taking informed decisions and through access to innovation to continue increasing resilience by adopting relevant ideas.

**Farmer Associations:** The same as what has been said for the CSOs applies. However, there are some additional components: Economic resilience has been strengthened in many ways: irrigation reducing the impact of weather fluctuations and allowing for the cultivation of additional seasons, reducing risk with an increased crop variety, additional sources of income (dairy farming) or adding processing steps in the value chain as practiced by the producer groups.

**Families and children:** this is limited to CSO members, since the broader community was not involved in the evaluation. The project has increased income and diversified income, while as described for farmers, reduced risk. This all contributed to the resilience of families and children. In addition, CSO members in the FGDs and KIIs reported that nutrition had improved and increased incomes had allowed them to cover costs for the education of the children.

## ***6.5 Sustainability of the BCoB interventions***

Reporting on sustainability for this specific intervention is challenging: much of the critical work was only possible to do towards the end of the project. This has impacted the extent to which some of the objectives were achieved and has not allowed these changes to fully show their potential. Especially the late establishment of the CSO federations and establishment of the IMS make it challenging to assess the project's potential for sustainability. Therefore, much in this section remains speculative and will also depend on potential follow-up action by other projects of the two partners and government institutions.

### ***6.5.1 Durability***

***To what extent are the effects and outcomes of the development interventions (summarily) likely to remain in future?***

It is challenging to predict to what level outcomes will be sustained in future as already explained above, especially concerning any outcomes linked to the CSO federations and the IMS. Outcomes at individual CSO level or household level can be assessed more realistically regarding their sustainability. Most have a good chance to be sustainable as CSO members, local stakeholders and the evaluation team believe: e.g. increased crop varieties, increased levels of knowledge, increased CSO capacities, the inclusion of PWDs.

CSO members fear that in future, without the project, they will not have the same level of access to quality information anymore, since experiences with government staff has been less positive, doubting the quality of information.

While the inclusion of PWD is likely to be sustainable, continued support to vulnerable households e.g. in creating business opportunities through the CSOs is either not clear e.g. it will depend on the continuation of the Heifer scheme or may be seen as challenging where approaches had been used that cannot be replicated by local actors.

In summary, good foundations in most areas have been laid for sustainability, but delays make it challenging to predict the sustainability of key components at this stage.

***How likely will critical services and effects be sustained beyond the duration of the project?***

The major service established by the project with local government institutions is **the IMS**. Due to the delay, only limited impact can be observed and much still seemed to be changing

with visions of using Artificial Intelligence services, allowing government field workers with farmer groups to access much more information in future. The government is committed to providing services as the vision and plans are in place. But the timeline is uncertain and it is not clear whether disruptions will occur on this path.

**Milk collection service** – as long as sufficient milk is produced in the area, ██████ is likely to sustain the collection service. Current improvements were the installation of a cooler, allowing milking in the evening.

**Artificial Insemination** is a critical service for dairy farmers. According to the government's Veterinary Service, continued support is ensured.

***Analyse the integration of the project into existing local institutions (e.g. skill transfer to partners, uptake by CSOs). Discuss the contributions of findings to sustainability of the positive changes***

A major strength of the project has been the integration of the project into existing structures. According to the interviews and assessment of capacities, a significant growth of capacities has taken place.

Using existing structures, which are already linked to state institutions or services as well as other actors, significantly increase the likelihood for sustainability. However, the different types of CSOs showed substantial differences in their history, standing in the community and motivation among their membership. Therefore, the potential for sustainable change is different among these groups. Women groups in general had highly motivated members, were already part of strong federations operating up to the national level. On the other hand, some of the RDS members were rather demotivated and pessimistic about the future of their groups, seemingly being in decline, with a history (and political role) which presents a challenge to their future (in some locations, community members do not seem favourable of the RDSs).

The project has also invested in a TOT for agricultural instructors and GNs so they could make CSO members aware about livelihood development and producer groups. However, a regular threat raised by the CSOs in the FGDs was the observation that a number of relevant government staff did not have the level of competence they felt was required. Since the TOT/ training has not been institutionalised, it is unlikely that its impact will be long-term, especially with regular staff turn-over of government services.

#### **Sustainability changes for CSOs – including results from FGDs:**

- All CSOs have shown a significant increase in the awareness of their rights, understanding that if they organise themselves they will be better able to claim their rights and are more likely to be listened to.
- Groups have clearly developed an awareness of people living with disabilities, including their potential to participate in their CSOs, and showed motivation to support these. Some of the models chosen by the project to support these are not replicable for CSOs (e.g. the provision of sewing machines) and therefore some groups may lack ideas on how to practically support PLWDs with their own resources.
- All federations expressed that the time they had received support was too short. They all showed significant motivation and determination to sustain their new structure, understanding its future potential. However, capacities were clearly at a relatively low level, based on the assessment and plans for only meeting once every six months as explained by one federation,

put some doubts to the future development of the federations. Further support would clearly have been desirable for these young structures.

- Except for the producer groups, the project has worked with established groups. This has allowed to boost existing capacities and strengthen existing relationships, increasing the likelihood for sustainability.

***What are the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme or project?***

Most of these factors are explored in more details in the section on general success factors for the project:

- Using existing structures, boosting their mandate (FAs)
- Rehabilitating existing infrastructure
- Identifying and addressing priority needs
- A multidimensional approach: building capacities, developing structures, creating frameworks for participation in local planning, establishing linkages to existing institutions and service.
- Knowledge is highly valued in the host culture.
- Immediate benefits from activities motivated participants and allowed them to see the longterm value of the project.

Factors for the non-achievement:

- Delays and the lack of time (emphasised by all stakeholders, in all FGDs, KIIs and the validation meeting).
- Using a model to support vulnerable persons that cannot be replicated with local resources.

***To which extent is the project's approach suitable and recommendable for future programming?***

**Key lessons**

- Partnering approach – WV and ■ complementing each other's competencies.
- Strengthening/ boosting existing structures, expanding their mandate instead of establishing new groups should be a preferred approach where applicable, especially in the context of short-term interventions.
- Building on local capacities and resources for ownership and sustainability: using community labour and skills as in the case of the rehabilitation of one irrigation canal complemented local capacities and resources with the support of an engineer has created competencies, ownership and high-quality results – this has clearly been a better option than outsourcing the entire work to an external contractor.

**Figure 4: Canal infrastructure rehabilitated by Farmers' Association**



- Capacity building approach was well received by CSOs and effective, members highly value learning about their rights. Training was often a preparatory step of action to follow, allowing participants e.g. to be prepared to engage in participatory planning processes while making these more effective.
- The inclusion of people living with disabilities in the CSOs has worked well: there is an awareness to integrate these members and provide them with opportunities. However, it would be important to match this with approaches to support this group e.g. for starting their businesses with local resources to ensure replicability.
- Establishing federations – CSOs have highly valued the potential of being federated, the ability to influence and being taken serious at higher levels, the learning and sharing among different CSOs.
- Replicable change models (e.g. irrigation canal rehabilitation) which can be done with the CSOs resources should be used when additional components for strengthening local livelihoods are integrated so that these can be models for CSOs on how they can address poverty and support vulnerable members of their communities (distribution of sewing machines cannot be replicated, while the Heifer Project has the potential for continuity as well as a locally led renovation of irrigation canals).
- A key area for potential improvement it a more participatory PME approach, involving stakeholders more in design, creating a monitoring system for local CSOs and federations which they can use beyond the life of a project and which allow stakeholders to be key decision makers in the development of exit strategies.

### **6.5.2 Social capital**

***To what extent did the project strengthen CSOs/LA and small holder farmers in engagement in policy dialogue, development planning and local resource mobilisation and enable to make better informed economic decisions.***

A major limitation has been that LAs were not in place for most of the life of the project, hence it is challenging to report on the component of policy dialogue. However, the project has prepared the CSOs and federations for engaging in dialogue through training in various

aspects, including understanding of their own role, rights and responsibilities as a CSO, understanding the roles and responsibilities of the local government, local planning procedures etc. According to the feedback from FGDs with federations as well as the CSOs, they felt well prepared for the task and perceived that the training had been helpful. According to staff and the CSO federations, experiences for the last months since the LAs have been in place, have been positive. For one case it was reported that specific attention is paid to the accessibility of meetings for all: CSO members and government officers changed location of meetings where access was difficult for people living with disabilities (reported for 2 DSDs, with one meeting being relocated to take place under a tree). For development planning, as reported throughout this report, a major success has been achieved with the participation of all 75 CSOs. Again, on the accessibility of relevant information for taking better informed decisions, this has been enabled through many activities and workshops throughout the life of the project, however at this stage it is not possible to know whether the IMS has the potential to fill this role.

***To which extent have CSOs and smallholder farmers engaged with market stakeholders and local authorities.***

The two production groups established as well as the Dairy Associations are the main groups that have had significant interaction with market stakeholders to establish new marketing channels for selling their products. Federations have started engaging with local authorities, feel confident about the potential to achieve much more and being taken serious in comparison to individual CSOs

**6.5.3 Transition Strategy**

***Did the project plan and implement an adequate transition and exit strategy that ensures longer-term positive effects and reduces risk of dependency?***

An exit strategy was developed during the last year by the project staff, including [REDACTED] and WV. The plan includes many effective strategies to ensure the sustainability of the project's benefits e.g.:

- A follow-up mechanism was developed as sustainable mechanism to monitor the progress of those who were supported by the project. This is expected to be done by government officers and CSO leaders.
- For strengthening the future role of the federations, it was facilitated that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] now works through the federation of MGK. Further, WV has two ongoing projects in RML and MGK areas. These two will coordinate for continued support where necessary, ensuring additional strengthening, where required for sustainability.

However, stakeholders and CSOs seemed not to be aware of the plan and felt unsure about the future. In exit processes local actors need to take over roles and responsibilities and it is about the future of those who remain behind, therefore it is surprising that for the exit process, little room for participation was created.

## **7 Conclusions:**

### **I. A complex, multi-layered endeavour**

Enabling CSOs to become lead actors for change in their communities requires complex changes. BCoB has taken account of this complexity and developed a multi-layered approach with well sequenced capacity building components. It required in this case building a wide set of capacities for CSO members at specific points of time during the life of the project. This

included research for evidence-based changes (value chain analysis and vulnerability mapping), establishing a federation of CSOs to create sufficient political power, generating the political space to allow participation in local development planning in addition to practical activities and models that enabled the CSOs to generate relevant economic activities to increase incomes.

## **2. Hidden objective leading to contradictory approaches**

While, according to the Logical Framework, the project seemed to be focused on equipping CSOs to become lead actors in their communities, it also included a second objective of strengthening the livelihoods of the most vulnerable community members. This was not included in the Logical Framework. While there may be an overlap with the two objectives, they are not the same and therefore have resulted in contradictory approaches within the project. On the one hand, the project tried to strengthen CSOs to drive development with their own capacities and resources. On the other hand, it introduced a number of livelihood strengthening activities through the same CSOs, which were based on capacities and resources that are not available to local CSOs. Models for supporting vulnerable members of the community were generated that are not replicable and therefore create dependency on external support. Therefore, some findings from the groups were mixed. While they showed significant levels of capacity and confidence they were requesting continual external support for being able to work with vulnerable persons.

## **3. Complex changes require time and the ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges**

Time was the key challenge for the project to achieve its complex changes. Hiring staff took much longer than expected, establishing relationships and building trust required significant time due to religious sensitivities in the region. And finally, the two-year absence of the Local Authorities, key to the success of the project, completely messed-up the timeline. It minimised the available time for critical steps and activities relating to the establishment of CSOs and policy dialogue. The project team impressively adapted to the unforeseen challenges. Where possible alternative approaches were used, as with the development of the DIFs, or where not possible, all efforts to implement within the shortest time were made. They tried to link critical components of the project to other ongoing projects or alternative actors to ensure a certain level of follow-up support.

Taking into consideration the complexity of the required changes, a mechanism seemed to lack between donor and implementing partners to revise the timeline and ensure sufficient time, foremost as a measure for reducing the risk of losing significant investments of all stakeholders involved. At the end of the project, it is not possible to assess the potential impact this lack of flexibility has had on the project outcomes sustainability.

## **4. High level of achievement despite limitations**

Despite the limitations the BCoB was facing, it implemented all defined activities and achieved significant change. The project was highly valued by stakeholders. In the mapping of external actors (part of all FGDs) contributing to the changes, the project was named as the most important external actor in the area, being highly relevant. The project was successful in developing the capacities of CSOs and their members on technical issues as well as on how they can manage their CSOs and engage in development planning in the local context. DIFs were put in place as a mechanism to enable local grass-root participation in planning. CSO federations were formed and registered and enabled to engage in policy dialogue. The project

has contributed to initiating many new economic activities or expanding existing. These may be at the individual household level, with small businesses, the cultivation of new crops or starting dairy production, or at group level as in the case of the maize and pepper production groups. Significant levels of relevant knowledge have been transferred to CSOs and local actors and an IMS has been put in place for continued access to relevant information for decision making.

### **5. Potential sustainability of achievements**

From the perspective of sustainability, two critical components, due to the unavailability of LAs were only possible to complete towards the end of the project: establishing the CSO federations and the IMS. In both cases, it has not been possible to strengthen these to the level that had been intended. Especially for the CSO federations, CSO and federation members showed high levels of ownership, understanding the potentials and wanting these to materialize. Still both were operational and only time will allow a realistic assessment of the sustainability of the components. However, the project has done many things right to create a high potential for sustainability: it used and transformed existing structures, instead of establishing new ones, it systematically built the capacities for CSOs to engage in increasing their engagement in local development, providing relevant skills before embarking e.g. on development planning or establishing new businesses. Further, the project facilitated research to have a sound basis for change, a multi layered approach ensured that change was induced at relevant levels.

The project has managed to challenge local cultural norms about PWDs, unfortunately several tools used to strengthen the livelihoods of PWDs and vulnerable community members did not provide the CSOs with tools based on their local capacities and resources. Therefore, these examples did not empower them in the sense of creating ownership among CSO members to strengthen livelihoods without external support. Components as the Heifer Project or the approach used to renovate irrigation facilities through community members have created more ownership and potential for sustainability. Most of the economic activity triggered by the project was described by CSO members and staff as sustainable and not threatened by the end of the project.

### **6. Limited opportunities for involvement in DME – critical for continued development**

The project has operated with a DME approach that mostly put staff in charge of these processes and created only limited room for local stakeholders. CSO leadership were neither part of planning the project, nor did they have ownership of the monitoring system. Monitoring is basically a means to facilitate learning and progress. Therefore, it is a critical tool for CSOs and CSO federation, not including the process of establishing a monitoring system with these structures is a missed opportunity. According to ■, participatory monitoring was initially intended however, the mechanism was not fully functional due to time constraints.

### **7. NGO owned exit strategy**

While both partnering organisations have developed an exit strategy with sound components to facilitate the exit process, it was not known by local actors and there was no ownership of it. For successful exit strategies, a maximum buy-in of local actors is required, since they need to take over and continue. Usually success is more likely when actors can decide themselves what their contributions will be instead of being given roles and responsibilities.



## 8. Taking power and political ambitions into consideration

One observation of the evaluation team was that CSO leadership as well as other actors were clearly aware of the power or political dimension of aid/development. Some local administrative staff as well as RDS representatives were not happy with the project establishing alternative channels to distribute support to vulnerable community members, diminishing their role and power. At the same time, individual CSO leaders seemed to be politically rather ambitious, seeing the CSO federation as a platform to potentially increase their influence. This is problematic in a context, where CSOs have played political roles and have created tensions. The project conceptually included little to take account of this context.

## 9. Complementarity in the partnership

The partnering experience between [redacted] and WVL has been very positive in this case. Staff grew together as a team and complemented each other with facilitating different components of the project. Staff valued the different sets of skills the other partner brought in and vice versa.

## 10. Presence in the community and building of relationships

Especially for World Vision Lanka, it would not have been possible to embark on this project without taking significant time in the communities to develop relationships and trust as a basis for joint project activities.

Dedication and closeness of BCoB staff to the communities was highly valued among the targeted groups.

## 11. Measuring change

The project has faced two challenges in measuring change: individual indicators were not realistic or measurable, especially those at overall objective level. Further, the baseline measurements were not documented in a way that sampling could be replicated or the calculation of the results. The data set was not available. The consultant experiences this situation in the majority of evaluations carried out.

# 8 Recommendations:

7. **Learning from a multi-layered approach:** The set-up of the project with its multi-layered approach is a positive example to learn from for future interventions targeting CSOs.
8. **Consistent project designs:** Before finalising a Logical Framework, more attention should be given to the consistency of different activities and results included, whether these truly contribute to the set objectives. Instead of having a hidden objective included, it would be more helpful to establish it separately in the LF. This creates the opportunity for ensuring that it will not be contradictory to the other components and will allow to measure its achievement.
9. **Fall-back options for project delays:** In terms of staff being able to adapt to changes, this is a positive example to learn from. However, there are possibilities to reduce risk and potential harm associated with delays: what options are given by the donor and implementing agencies to extend a project that is at a critical stage in terms of achieving its results when it actually comes to its end date? In case no extensions are possible, what options are possible to provide critical support to finalise the project?
10. **Addressing insecurity of short-term jobs:** It is sad to see that a project is delayed and consequently shortened, because staff cannot be hired. A recommendation would be to review on the one hand options that would make such a position more attractive. Alternatively, it may be possible to give staff contracts beyond the life of a project, allowing these to have the

safety that they will move to new projects as soon as their current assignment ends. Having staff in the system that knows the organisation, its processes may be more helpful than constantly adding new staff.

11. **Designing a CSO owned DME system:** For ensuring that a CSO or federation will have a system in place to continue learning and be accountable towards its stakeholders, a CSO based self-monitoring system should be developed at the beginning of the project, allowing the system to become part of the groups' learning culture. Information from this system should feed into the project's monitoring system
12. **Locally owned exit strategies as part of project design:** Ideally, an exit strategy should be developed with stakeholders as integral part of the project design. This allows to adjust a design in light of a deeper understanding on how long-term sustainability can be achieved. Throughout the life of the project, the strategy should be reviewed concerning its relevance and monitored by all stakeholders concerning progress. This will allow stakeholders to be better prepared and exit become a more natural process.
13. **Assessing potential harm:** It is important to assess at the beginning of a project the potential impact on different stakeholders, especially in regard to power and understand what potential challenges this may cause. It may be worthwhile considering to do a do-no-harm analysis to ensure that involving and relating to different stakeholders will not cause challenges, create opposition or potentially threaten long-term sustainability.
14. **Future collaborations based on a successful partnership:** The partnership between ■ and WVVL has been successful and brought positive fruit which both individually could not have been achieved. This positive experience should encourage and guide future collaborations.
15. **Avoiding unrealistic indicators:** For measuring change, there is often pressure or perceived pressure to set unrealistically high targets to satisfy the donor. However, these will always lead to problematic evaluation results, a strong project may even seem to have failed. It is important to find ways to be realistic.
16. **Ensuring the creation of usable baseline data:** The problem of having unusable baseline data needs to be addressed by the QA department. It is too complex for an individual project. Clear guidance needs to be in place, regarding sampling, its documentation and replicability; ToRs and contracts with consultants need to make sure that details on sampling, the data itself, data collection tools and a description of the analysis process is handed over to the organisation. A policy should be in place how and where this information should be stored.

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## 10 Appendices

### 10.1 Evaluation Terms of Reference



World\_Vision\_Lanka\_  
BCoB\_ToR\_for\_final\_Ev

## **10.2 Work Plan**

The work plan gives an overview of the data collection process.



Work Plan.xlsx

## **10.3 Data collection tools**

### **10.3.1 Logical Framework review**

This tool was facilitated with project staff and quality assurance staff from both partners involved in the evaluation. The objective was to create a common understanding on the project, establish what the project actually had implemented and assess the coherence of its design as well as its potential for impact. Before looking at the project's contribution to change, it was important to understand whether per design and actual implementation, change actually could be attributed to the program. The key steps were:

- to visualize the logframe, review at the activity level what had been implemented and add if applicable, include additional activities which had not been captured prior.
- Establish whether the activities implemented were relevant for the defined outputs and had the potential to achieve these.
- Review whether defined outputs were relevant to achieve related outcomes and had the potential to achieve these.
- Review whether defined outcomes were relevant to achieving the project's goal outcomes and had the potential to make a significant contribution to achieve these.

### **10.3.2 Timeline – result**

A timeline was developed at the entry meeting with staff from WVU and [REDACTED]. The result can be found in the attached document.



Entry meeting BCoB  
timeline.xlsx

### **10.3.3 Key Informant Interviews**

A set or pool of general questions was developed for all KIIs. For each interviewee this set was adapted, e.g. non-relevant questions were removed, additional questions for specific details added.

#### **Key Informant Interview Questions BCoB Evaluation**

- I. Tell me/us about your role and involvement in the BCoB project? What types of activities have you been involved in?

2. What do you consider the main achievements of the BCoB project?
3. What do you think have been key factors for that achievement?
4. What particular challenges was the BCoB project faced with during its implementation? (Internal? External?)
5. Who have the Project's efforts been focused on? Who has the project reached through the project?
6. Who has the project collaborated with? How has it worked together with other actors? How has that collaboration worked?
7. How did the BCoB project consider the connection between disaster mitigation and development?
8. Did the BCoB project prepare together with local actors for the end of the project? If yes, how?
9. How likely is it that any positive changes may be sustained?
10. What are the major factors which (will) influence the achievement or nonachievement of the sustainability of the project?
11. Is there any other issue related to the project that we have not raised and you feel is important to share?


#### **10.3.4 Tree of change**

The tree of change tool has been used to facilitate FGDs with CSOs and federations (different adaptations of tool).



1 Tree of change CSOs field guide adap  
1 Tree of change CSOs field guide adap  
Federations data colle

#### **10.3.5 CSO Guided Capacity Self-Assessment**

For assessing capacities, a matrix has been developed with  and WVL covering the 9 capacity areas that were targeted by the project. The attachment is the capacity matrix. Based on the indicators in the matrix, CSOs chose the level they were at the time of the evaluation and from where they had started at the beginning of the project.



Tree - growth stages Sinhala.pdf matrix -  
cleaned.docx