



**All-inclusive Reconciliation and Development (AiRD) in Eastern Sri Lanka  
End of Project Evaluation Report**

Project Period: February 2015 to January 2017

Data collected in February 2017

Final Report

Submitted in May 2017

Project Funded by European Union

*This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the assigned consultant and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.*

*For more information please visit <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid>*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I. Introduction

AiRD in Eastern Sri Lanka project was implemented by World Vision (WV) with the financial assistance received from the EU in Verugal & Seruvila Divisional Secretary (DS) Divisions in Trincomalee District, from February 2015 to January 2017. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the democratic environment of inclusive, rights-based reconciliation and sustainable development. The objective follows the guidance provided by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report as well as the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP), in particular regarding the need for an inclusive reconciliation processes. The project theory furthermore assumes a correlation between decreased vulnerability and discrimination and enhanced Human Rights awareness and access on the one hand and lasting development on the other hand.

The Project seeks to achieve two specific objectives; the first objective includes vulnerable populations and civil society in implementing selective recommendations from LLRC and NHRAP; and the second objective includes promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious cooperation towards long-term reconciliation. The Project also sets out three results, the first result is to strengthen women and children's networks to promote non-discrimination of vulnerable groups and their effective participation in reconciliation; the second result focuses on building capacity and strength to engage in generating rights-based, grass-roots solutions for rural development and the third result focuses on establishing and enhancing collaboration between religious and ethnic groups, local and district authorities to stimulate tolerance and healing. Target groups of the project include vulnerable people affected by conflict: Women: 2,150; girls: 1,400; boys: 1,400; disabled persons: 345; Internally Displaced Person and returnees: 750 households in Seruvila and 1,800 households in Verugal.

The project commissioned an external evaluation team to conduct the end of project evaluation in February 2017 by employing a combination of mixed method approach to collect primary data through household survey questionnaire and secondary data through Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, Field observations, reviewing documents and collecting of Most Significant Change Stories. Focus Group Discussions were conducted with key stakeholders of the project, members of Women's Rural Development Society (WRDS), members of the Children's Clubs and Youth Clubs (83 participants). Key Informant Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders such as Government Officials (25), Religious leaders (4), Key leaders in the communities (10), the project partners and the project team (5). The Household Surveys sample included 384 households in the project location. The HHS comprised of 384 participants, including 242 from the Verugal DS Division and 142 from Seruvila DS Division. The pattern of distribution of the households at Grama Niladhari Divisions and the ethnic proportions was also considered while drawing samples from each Grama Niladhari Division.

WV coordinated the project which was implemented together with two local partners. It was quite challenging to embark on the project at the beginning as the intervention was on the rights based approach which is not much familiar in the project locations. This was due to the fact that there were no other non-state actors interested in implementing rights-based projects in these divisions due to inherent bureaucratic structures in the district and the remote geographical location of the DS divisions. However, WV was able to execute the project in a controlled and gradual manner at the beginning with the support of the long-term WV Area Development Programme (ADP) which existed at the time of implementation of the project. At the time of conclusion of the project almost all the anticipated activities were delivered. The project has contributed to improve the democratic environment of inclusive, rights-based reconciliation and sustainable development in both DS divisions. The interview conducted with multiple stakeholders during the course of this evaluation indicates their support and appreciation for the AiRD project implemented by WV and therefore WV has been recognized as an important stakeholder in these DS divisions.

## 2. Key Findings

### a) **Basic human rights:**

- Lack of access to income generation opportunities for women was 31% (Baseline Value 71%).
- Lack of access to safe housing was 50% (Baseline Value 65%).
- Lack of access to clean water was 45% (Baseline Value 62%).
- Lack of access to physical safety was 45% (Baseline Value 61%).
- Lack of access to education opportunity was 26% (Baseline Value 47%).

### b) **Participation in development activities and leadership:**

- Women having membership with WRDSs was 48% (Baseline Value 54%), *but review of WRDS records indicate there is an increase in the actual membership of women in the WRDS by 30%.*
- Women participation in decision making in the WRDS was 40% (Baseline Value 15%).
- 21% of the community was confident, that their views are heard or represented (Baseline Value 20%).
- 58% reported having membership with other village committees such as youth clubs, children clubs, rural development societies, fisheries associations, farmers associations, mother support groups, etc. Among them 67% of them hold leadership positions.
- 48% reported they get the opportunity to take part in decision making (Baseline Value 15%).
- 47% reported that their views are heard and represented (Baseline Value 20%).

### c) **Reporting on human rights:**

- 65% reported they feel that they report human rights violation to relevant officials or institutions (Baseline Value 40%).
- 76% reported that they seek government officers' help in dealing with rights issues (Baseline Value 40%).
- Trust of the community toward the government to resolve human rights issue was 45% (Baseline Value 45%).

### d) **Frequency of reporting rights and Level of access to state services:**

- 55% acknowledged having access to state service (Baseline Value 55%).
- 35% reported lack of knowledge in dealing with situations related to rights violations (Baseline Value 53%).
- 76% said rights issues are reported to relevant officers (Baseline Value 70%).
- 39% reported satisfaction over the legal services (Baseline Value 15%).
- 85% reported seeking law enforcement institutions only occasionally (Baseline Value 85%).
- 75% of the people reported satisfaction over the services provided by the Referral Desks - based on the records maintained by the Referral Desk (Baseline Value not available as this is a new service initiated by the project).

### e) **Reconciliation and interfaith dialogue:**

- 53% believe interfaith dialogue is a way towards reconciliation (Baseline Value 45%).
- 77% of people believe that there is communication among different ethnic and religious communities in the project locations.
- 77% of the respondents acknowledged that they are satisfied with the role played by the AiRD project in building bridges among the communities.

### f) **Tension and conflict among ethnic communities:**

- 11% reported incidence of conflicts/tensions among different communities in the project location (Baseline Value 80%).
- 55% reported there are trade interactions (Baseline Value 90%).
- 39% reported there are social interactions among different communities (Baseline Value 80%).

### g) **State – Community relations:**

- 47% reported that the state understands peoples' needs (Baseline Value 36%).
  - 55% reported that they can freely speak about their needs (Baseline Value 33%).
  - 44% reported they have difficulty in reporting in their own language. Among them 76% reported satisfaction with the services provided by the officials (Baseline Value 58%).
- h) **Vulnerability factors:**
- 71% reported lack of protection for children in the project areas (Baseline Value 77%).
  - 56% reported lack of protection for vulnerable groups such as female headed households (Baseline Value 48%).

### 3. Conclusion

**Effectiveness:** The planned results have been achieved to a significant level. The action has achieved its overall and specific objectives to a satisfactory degree and is contributing to the achievement of the overall objective and several positive impacts. Course modules and other resource materials developed and distributed as part of the Action (ATPs, WRDS workshops, NVC trainings, handbooks, action plan) were carefully designed to reflect the need as envisioned and facilitated towards the achievement of the proposed objectives.

Findings indicate that the planned results (1 and 2 - Strengthen women and children's networks to promote non-discrimination of vulnerable groups and their effective participation in reconciliation, 3 - Collaboration established and enhanced between religious and ethnic groups, local and district authorities stimulate, tolerance and healing) have been achieved to a certain extent. However, the national level mechanism for reconciliation are yet to be established by the government of Sri Lanka and therefore a formal participation in the national reconciliation process didn't take place.

**Efficiency:** The project inputs ratify to be used in an economical way in carrying out the planned activities for generating the expected results/outputs. Although several activities faced delays while implementation, based on careful assessment of the ground realities alternative plans were put in place to overcome the delays. Due to the nature of the proposed activities (Peace & Reconciliation) delays were encountered to secure permission from the respective local government authorities to implement selected activities. Even though the delays were reported at the beginning, all the deliverables were met at the end.

**Relevance:** Rationale behind a project is yet congruent with the current priorities of the concerned communities in both DS divisions. There is no doubt that the project is highly relevant as evidenced from discussions with multiple and credible sources. For example, multiple sources confirmed the growing trend in the reporting of cases at police station Seruvila, Mediation Board, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (Trincomalee regional office), Legal Aid Commission (Muthur) and the records of the two Referral Desks. Although the government continues to make efforts to implement the recommendation of the LLRC and the NHRAP, it remains to be seen whether the government will be able to fulfil all its commitments. Therefore, the implementation of the AiRD project at grassroots level, incorporating selected recommendation of LLRC and NHRAP has undoubtedly contributed towards strengthening government efforts to build peace and reconciliation in the area.

**Sustainability:** The project outcomes and the impacts have influenced at a functional level, institutional level, policy level and environmental level. The knowledge, experiences and the relationships established among the community through the training programmes and other activities will continue to ensure better relationships among communities. The existence of the long-term Area Development Programme in the project locations is an opportunity for WV and its partners to continue its follow up activities and engagement with the project beneficiaries beyond the project period.

**Impact:** The project has influenced in achieving significant and positive impacts among the communities, particularly among women, children, youth, people with disabilities, Female Headed Household and people at large in the both DS divisions which is evidenced during the document review, Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and the Most Significant Change Stories. Most noteworthy change influenced by the project was the positive attitude created among the project stakeholders which intended to contribute towards further strengthening the bottom top approach existed in the project location.

Inter-ethnic and inter religious dialogue implemented by the project is well received and rooted among all the communities in both DS divisions. The approaches used as a cross cutting theme with multiple outcomes was very effective. Cross communication across the ethnicities and religious groups was promoted and it is evident with participation in social functions such as weddings, temple festivals and religious festivals by other ethnic and religious groups which is now very high. The relationships built among the beneficiaries representing different ethnic and religious groups through various activities will continue to promote attitude changes among them and will ensure coexistence among the communities while preventing tensions.

#### 4. Recommendations

The following recommendations outline how the results and impact achieved by the AiRD project can be sustained by WV and its partners. Although the AiRD project intervention was completed within 24 months, the integration of the AiRD activities into the existing WV Area Development Programme has ensured the continuation of the activities beyond the project period.

- The rights based approaches adopted by the AiRD project should be integrated into existing programmes in order to ensure that the community continue to enjoy their fundamental Human Rights such as education, health and livelihood.
- The people's participation in collective decision making with regard to development needs and issues should be further encouraged to use similar process practiced in the project. This will ensure both community and the service providers share their ownership. Further a careful study of the existing systems will help identifying similar systems and amalgamating them to manage resources efficiently.
- Project partners could continue to facilitate Legal Aid Fairs, at Grama Niladhari level by obtaining support from the respective government officials and ensure that the communities have access to relevant documents which were either lost or damaged during the war. Referral desks should continue to document the needs of the drop-in clients on a regular basis and seek opportunities for partnering with the respective authorities to address the needs.
- Project partners should educate the community to utilise the existing Right to Information Act, which can further strengthen their advocacy initiatives. Therefore, educating and sensitising people with the latest tools such as Rights to Information are very vital.
- Considering the low level of trust among the community towards the government institutions on human rights and accountability, there is a need to further sensitise the respective government institutions to be more accountable towards responding to the community needs, particularly in addressing human rights issue at the local and national level as recommended by the Lessons learnt and Reconciliation Commission and National Human Rights Action Plan.
- Setting up of Inter-Faith Network / Inter-Faith Forum is a strong foundation and further support by WV through ADP is essential for the continuations. However, it should be addressed with adequate care and based on the principles of do no harm as it is a very sensitive topic to be discussed, particularly in areas where the project was implemented. Therefore, WV should seek opportunities to work along with the new systems that might be set up by the government on reconciliation and interfaith dialogue in future in the district.
- Instability and tension among the communities to some extent seems reduced. However, using early warning system on communal violence could be a way to diffuse such tensions in the future. By setting up a Divisional People's Advocacy Forum as described in the recommendation. There is external element that can pose challenges for the existing peaceful co-existence in this area.