

# Organic growth

Evaluation of the  
Environmental Conservation and  
Awareness Creation Project 2003-2005  
and the Green Movement of Sri Lanka  
for the Norwegian Development Fund



November/December 2006



## Evaluation of Green Movement of Sri Lanka 2006

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Preface</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Executive Summary</b>                                | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Methodology</b>                                      | <b>13</b> |
| <i>The team</i>   | 15        |
| <b>Green Movement of Sri Lanka</b>                      | <b>16</b> |
| <i>The organisation</i>                                 | 17        |
| <i>Who are The Greeners?</i>                            | 18        |
| <i>Gender</i>   | 20        |
| <i>Organisational form</i>                              | 21        |
| <i>Development of long-term and strategic plans</i>     | 22        |
| <i>Strategies</i>                                       | 24        |
| <i>Evaluation</i>                                       | 25        |
| <i>Security</i>   | 26        |
| <i>Post-Tsunami realities</i>                           | 26        |
| <i>Holistic approach</i>                                | 28        |
| <i>Recommendations</i>                                  | 29        |
| <i>Levels of success</i>                                | 31        |
| <b>Campaigns</b>  | <b>33</b> |
| <b>Alternative People's Tribunals (APTs)</b>            | <b>40</b> |
| <b>Media</b>  | <b>45</b> |
| <b>Sustainable nutritional gardens</b>                  | <b>50</b> |
| <b>Other activities</b>                                 | <b>55</b> |
| <b>The web-pages</b>                                    | <b>58</b> |
| <b>Co-operation with the Norwegian Development Fund</b> | <b>61</b> |
| <b>Finance</b>  | <b>62</b> |



## Preface

Thanks to all the people in Sri Lanka who assisted in the fieldwork of this evaluation. The help of people who took their time off to meet with us and help us understand and evaluate the work of GMSL was essential and much appreciated.

Thank you also to the staff at GMSL who spent time and effort to provide us with information and to guide us around with the fieldwork as well as giving me an enjoyable stay in Sri Lanka. It was a sincere team effort from GMSLs side, which gave us the opportunity to spend time travelling with many of the staff members. Special thanks however to Administration Manager Rasika Perera who provided documentation and held the threads before and after the field visit.

Further thanks to Charnika Munasinghe who took the challenge of being co-consultant on short notice and from which I have learned a lot about Sri Lanka.

This report has been through a process of reading and commenting by GMSL and the Development Fund. Any mistakes are however my responsibility.

Cape Town, January 2007

Ellen Cathrine Kjøsterud

## Abbreviations

|      |  |
|------|--|
| ADB  | Asian Development Bank                                 |
| AGM  | Annual General Meeting                                 |
| APT  | Alternative People's Tribunal                          |
| CBO  | Community Based Organisation                           |
| CO   | Chief Organiser (at GMSL)                              |
| DF   | Development Fund Norway (Utviklingsfondet)             |
| DMIP | Disaster Management Information Programme (at GMSL)    |
| EIA  | Environmental Impact Assessment                        |
| FAO  | Food and Agricultural Organisation (of United Nations) |
| GMSL | Green Movement of Sri Lanka                            |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organisation            |
| LFA  | Logical Framework Approach                             |
| LTTE | Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam                       |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals                           |
| NGO  | Non-Governmental Organisation                          |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper                       |
| RADA | Reconstruction and Development Agency                  |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme                   |

## Executive Summary

Green Movement of Sri Lanka (GMSL) was founded in 1998 and had its roots in several Sri Lankan organisations working with environmental issues. The Norwegian Development Fund (DF) has been a partner and donor since the beginning. The organisation was last evaluated for DF in 2003. This present evaluation is covering activities under the Environmental Conservation and Awareness Creation project (also named the core project by GMSL) in the years 2003-2005 and the organisation as it is today.

The evaluation was carried out over four weeks in Sri Lanka in November/December 2006. The team consisted of economist Ellen Cathrine Kiøsterud (team leader) and media consultant Charnika Munasinghe (translator and co-consultant). More than 50 interviews were conducted with individuals and groups, as well as observation of activities and analyses of written documentation. We met people working for GMSL, people benefiting from GMSL activities, people who are target groups for GMSL lobby work and people who for other reasons could contribute to the understanding and evaluation of GMSL.

Visiting GMSL was a very positive experience. The organisation is doing good and relevant work and people we met were very positive towards both the choice of issues and how GMSL conducted their work. The issues that stood most out about the organisation were as following:

The first is the *spirit of the organisation*. GMSL is a successful mix of volunteers, members and staff working together for the common goal. The motivation for and satisfaction from working for GMSL were found in the passion for the issues at hand, the freedom to use ones abilities and be given responsibility for the projects and the opportunities to learn and develop as individuals. All in a framework which many staff/volunteers refer to as a family.

Secondly, their *focus on people on the ground*. GMSL emphasis being an organisation working *with* people, not *for* people. GMSL work with local NGOs/CBO's and often play a facilitator role more than a lead role. The campaigns and activities are based on interviews and research among the affected people, and those people take part in both the research and information process as well as (sometimes in very large numbers) in the campaign itself. The people we met in the field had good understanding of the issues GMSL had worked with/was working with in their area.

Thirdly, their ability to carry out a *large number of activities*. The number of activities in 2003 and 2004 are high given the budget and human resources. In 2005 they were able to change plans quickly and handle an explosive growth in activities and budgets connected to the Tsunami, which they did with quality delivery and relatively few mistakes. The number of core activities went down in 2005, but they did not stop.

And at last, the *minimal bureaucracy*. GMSL has little formal structures around their work. It is still mainly based on discussing issues in meetings and a few formal routines. This has been sufficient before the organisation grew tremendously in 2005 and is part of how they could act so fast and flexible when the Tsunami hit. It is however a challenge today to find good ways to handle the recent growth and the need for more bureaucracy that follows.

## Findings

We had two main questions in our terms of reference. The first was: *How well does the project achieve its stated goals?*

The overall development goal of the core project is the following:

"Natural resource base nurtured and sustained for the enrichment of the future generations"

The objectives are

1. To protect natural resources and promote community owned sustainable development by educating and promoting best practices in Sri Lanka
2. To work as a catalyst in encouraging and motivating civil society and communities to fight for their right to life through policy, lobby, advocacy and legal support in pressurizing stake holders including the government for good governance
3. To reduce vulnerabilities through hazard risk management of natural and human made disasters in Sri Lanka
4. To promote youth, women and disadvantaged groups participation in all levels (policy, implementation and monitoring) in sustainable development and national integration of globally accepted MDGs

The activities of the core project are<sup>1</sup>:

1. Organize people to invoke pressure on ecologically unsustainable development intervention of Government and private Sector Organizations
2. Constant vigilance on policies and aid agencies
3. Alternative people's tribunals (APTs) organized with the participation of experts, Intellectuals, Community Leaders Representing Views And Opinions Of Victimized People Against Large-Scale Development Projects.
4. Legal aid system to educate people on environmental laws and to take legal action if and when necessary
5. Establishment of environmentally friendly consumer societies
6. Technical and Instructional Program
7. Regional & international linkage building & networking activities
8. Media & Information Centre
9. Indigenous knowledge systems related to sustainable farming systems collected and preserved
10. Promoting sustainable agriculture systems

Though we had almost four weeks, there was a time constraint to the evaluation given the large number of activities carried out under the project. To narrow the scope we chose four main activities to focus on. This was done in dialogue with GMSL and DF. The activities chosen were campaigns, APTs, relations to Sri Lankan media and the sustainable nutritional gardens (home gardens). The other activities are listed briefly in the report.

From the activities we saw and the people we met, we can say in general that

- GMSL has a good reputation for implementing relevant projects in dialogue with the people affected.
- GMSL has a good reputation for basing their stands on knowledge and research
- GMSL often succeed with the direct objective of their campaigns, though not always. In most issues where they did not succeed with their main goal, the efforts have had other positive effects. In for instance the issue of preventing the building the superhighways, the case is lost, but many of the people affected have received better compensation due to GMSL.
- GMSL has been good in informing people about the immediate issues they work with. People on the ground had good knowledge and the information corresponded to a large extent with how GMSL presented the issues to us. In some areas the people we met had knowledge of other environmental issues as well, but not always.
- GMSL is not well known. This is not a goal for GMSL either. Most of the activities take place in cooperation with others. On the ground it was mostly the local organisation (member or not member of GMSL) that was known. The partner organisations knew GMSL, as did some of the

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<sup>1</sup> This is the way the activities are listed in the 2004 report. The activities have changed little over the three year period this evaluation covers.



INGO people we met. The people directly in contact with GMSL in the media knew GMSL, but not the other media people.

### *Relevance*

GMSL has a very holistic approach to what creates ecologically sustainable development. GMSL is also people-focussed in their approach. Any activity, if conducted with sustainable development in mind, can be argued to fit in the framework of the project. GMSL take on a high number of different activities under the umbrella of the organisation's goal. They also approach the individual communities holistically and sometimes the tools they use are very indirectly connected to the main goal. This is a reaction to many development interventions that are very focused on single issues and fail to have a sustainable impact because the problem is not seen in context.

The question for GMSL is therefore which activities that have the *largest* impact on creating sustainable development. Most of the activities we looked at were still relevant given the goal of the project. A few activities seem less relevant, even though they fall under the holistic umbrella. These are commented on. We recommend that GMSL should be careful not to spread out to too many activities.

### *Campaigns*

The campaign unit picks up an issue through requests and tips from different sources. They then go and investigate the issue and bring back the information on which GMSL decide to take or not take action. Action can include more research, information to people in the affected area, information and lobbying towards decision makers, media campaigns, demonstrations, legal action and other things depending on the issue.

GMSLs reputation for being knowledgeable about their issues seems to have improved over the three years since the last evaluation. GMSL emphasise to be in dialogue with the INGOs, government offices and businesses behind the projects GMSL often object to. In that sense, GMSL is not very radical and neither do they want to place themselves in the most radical side of environmental politics.

The campaigns we visited had succeeded in informing people about the issues in question and empowering them to take action. In some cases the people also knew what to do if other environmental threats arise.

### Recommendations

- ❑ Keep up the good work!
- ❑ GMSL should give out more information about themselves during the campaigns, so that people know how to get in touch with them.
- ❑ GMSL should go back for evaluations/impact assessments.

### *APTs*

The Alternative People's Tribunal is a tool mainly used in connection to campaigns. The legal unit conducts the tribunal, but the campaign unit often provides the background information. The people affected by an issue bring it to a tribunal with experts and judges listening to their view and writing a recommendation afterwards. Sometimes the respondents come to the tribunal, but not always. The tribunals have the form of a court case, though with no formal power. Sometimes a case is solved based on its outcome. Other times the outcome forms an information base and argument for legal action.

We visited an APT with 90 people from affected areas attending and met people who attended one with 800 people. The APT is a very good tool for collecting information and views in a formal way and creates a good base and legitimacy for presenting a case to the authorities. GMSL wants to outsource the APT to give it more independence.

### Recommendations

- ❑ We support the idea of making the APT independent of GMSL
- ❑ More emphasis on having the respondents present at the tribunal to ensure that both sides views are clear before a judgement is made
- ❑ Better information to the participants about what the APTs are about.

### *Media*

The media unit has many activities connected to documentation, education and media production. We focused how they relate to Sri Lankan media. The media unit inform media about the issues GMSL work with and the events that happens. They send press releases, hold press conferences, provide background information and pictures and sometimes take the journalists to the field.

The media unit has succeeded in getting a good reputation with the media in Sri Lanka. The information they provide is seen as relevant and accurate. GMSL is however often not quoted as the source. They get reasonably good coverage of their issues, but could get more out of their efforts by reaching out to more people with the information they already disseminate. Taking journalists to the field was pointed out as a very good activity, both for coverage on the specific issue and for training of journalists.

TV is a very important medium in Sri Lanka where GMSL to a lesser extent get coverage and could give more attention. GMSL also has the knowledge to produce decent standard TV programmes themselves. They have made some good films, but lack some of the equipment needed for TV quality. If the resources become available, the unit should expand by way of staff strength, office space and staff training.

### Recommendations

- ❑ Update the media list to cater to a larger number of journalists
- ❑ Take more journalists to the field
- ❑ Promote GMSL more as a source of information
- ❑ Evaluate the media work more formally
- ❑ Make an information strategy

### *Sustainable Nutritional Gardens*

The home gardens is an educational project, teaching people to make home gardens using indigenous and environmental friendly methods. The knowledge also saves the participants from using money on seeds and fertilizers. The main goal is food security and better nutrition for the gardeners and their families and it is mainly aimed at women. The home garden project also spread information on environmental issues, like for instance water management, waste management and pollution. The home gardens sometimes operate where GMSL have had other campaigns before, like where they fought the Eppawala phosphate case and the Tantirimale cashew plantation<sup>2</sup>.

The home garden project is very good and popular. The participants had good understanding of what they had been taught and emphasised most of the issues that are important to GMSL. They had more nutritious food, they saved money on fertilizers and seeds, they felt empowered and proud and they had learned about waste management. The teaching is practical and follow-up is given by GMSL and sometimes the organisation through which the project is done. The written material was mainly sufficient. We spoke to one “veteran” gardener who showed us that that the activities were sustained without the need of follow up from GMSL. The other projects were too new to see the long-term impact.

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<sup>2</sup> Examples in the report

A very interesting internal evaluation of the home gardens were under way while we visited.

#### Recommendations

- ❑ Include more practical examples in the written material
- ❑ Train local coordinators in all areas (there are some and they are popular)
- ❑ Make a comparative study of home gardens in Kalamatiya (all the receivers of GMSL houses after the Tsunami got home garden course) and an other area where the gardeners signed up for the course.

### Organisation

The second main question was: *What are the institutional strengths and weaknesses given the organisation's vision?*

GMSL has little formal bureaucracy and rather centralised decision power. Strategies are developed by the (staff) leaders and approved by the Executive Committee. The 144 member organisations, through the annual general meeting, elect the Executive Committee and approve financial reports, but have little formal influence on policy. Influence in GMSL is mainly through informal channels and this apparently suited those we met.

The organisation is very geared towards activities and policy. Less time and interest is put into administrative routines and formal framework. Selection of activities is made in meetings with the heads of departments/units. Much practical decision power is handed over to the heads of departments as long as the activities fall within the plans for which GMSL has received funding. Follow up on previous evaluation and strategies have been minimal, though some of the issues mentioned in the 2003 evaluation have been worked on anyway. Some of the staff has had training in project management related issues and found it positive and helpful. Activities are mainly evaluated in meetings. Other ways of internal evaluation is minimal, though some good efforts are under way.

The staff members are recruited from the volunteers and only in cases where a special skill is required does GMSL recruit from outside. The main criterion for recruitment is a commitment to the GMSL vision. Other skills can be learned over time and all the staff/volunteers we met at the head office went to some kind of training. The volunteers come from very diverse backgrounds. Political and practical emphasis is given to gender equality, which on most levels is quite successful in the Sri Lankan context.

The financial management seems sound after several initiatives have been introduced due to the growth following the Tsunami. GMSL does however have a debt problem because of overspending on one of the Tsunami projects, which is a burden to the organisation.

#### *Strengths*

The good understanding of and loyalty to the organisations vision by all those involved must be seen as a major strength for GMSL. The network of organisations and individuals that work for and with GMSL is also a major strength together with GMSLs good reputation for accurate information and good knowledge of issues. The open and flexible attitude, encouraging initiative and personal growth is in line with the organisations emphasis on grassroots ownership and participation.

The advantages of being a flexible, unbureaucratic network of people and organisations came through very clearly when the Tsunami hit. The mobilisation and activities they undertook has contributed to a good reputation for GMSL.

### *Weaknesses*

The backside of flexibility and freedom is usually lack of structure and routines. GMSL need more coordinating routines to meet the challenges of being a larger organisation and to utilize knowledge and resources across units and activities. The organisation is very dependent on the knowledge of individuals. Lack of formal structure is also a weakness in dealing with internal conflict.

We experienced confusion around which donor who funded what project, being repeatedly directed towards projects which is not part of the DF core project. It is not always important that a field officer know which donor funded their project, but the level of knowledge among heads of department and coordination with the finance manager should be better.

Evaluation of activities to document successes and learn from mistakes is not emphasised.

### **Recommendations**

GMSL should

- be careful not to spread out to too many different activities. There are limits to holistic approaches.
- have a structured overview of which activities that are funded by which donor with activities and financial resources linked.
- use the opportunity of forthcoming planning sessions to look at practical, organisational issues. Not only the political side and what activities to engage in.
- do more project management methodology courses with staff.
- create a system for overlap between staff and information storage to be less dependent on individuals.
- reproduce the CO's style of human resource management (follow up of individuals) at middle management level to meet the challenge of a larger number of staff
- do internal evaluations and project impact studies. Be more self-critical.

### **The Norwegian Development Fund**

GMSL makes a point of calling the Development Fund a partner and not only a donor. DF has been with them since the beginning and the contact extends beyond funding and follow-up. The DF follow-up criteria are not creating more extra work than necessary for GMSL. The financial management requirements are in line with Sri Lankan rules and the rather detailed reporting on activities is carried out in connection to financial reporting.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that DF continue to support the core project of GMSL with emphasis on the campaigns (including legal, media, etc) and organisational issues. DF should look holistically on how to support GMSL in the best way given the arrival of new donors.

## Methodology

Our main areas for assessment according to the terms of reference were:

### A. The project Environmental Conservation and Awareness Creation

Main question: How well does the project **achieve its stated goals**?

The report will

1. State the main goals of the project as written in the project plans and as explained by GMSL.
2. Identify the key activities of the project that was intended to lead to those goals.
3. In depth analysis of 2-3 key activities.
  - What is the methodology used?
  - What are the results of the activities and the degree of success?
  - Recommendations.
4. In the evaluator's opinion how relevant are project activities given the project's goals. How relevant is the project, given the organisation's goals.

### B. Institutional Strength/weaknesses

Main question: What are the institutional strengths and weaknesses given the organisation's vision?

The report will

1. Explain the key processes in GMSL including
  - Development of long-term and strategic plans
  - Selection of campaigns / activities
  - Selection of staff
  - Promotion of female staff v.s male staff.
  - Mapping of major financial investments within GMSL. Find the relative share of DF's support of GMSL total budget.
  - Assess the financial management with a view to transparency, routines, spending and connectivity to projects.
  - Self-evaluation processes
  - Describe organisation decision-making mechanism. Do staff understand the purpose/goals of what they are doing?
  - Assess the nature of the partnership between DF and GMSL, from GMSL perspective.
3. Institutional development since last evaluation and particularly after the tsunami
  - Refer very briefly to the last evaluation by Church & Kiriwadeniya. To what degree the recommendations are followed up?
  - The changes in organization after the tsunami.
  - Attached updated organizational mapping
  - Attached updated activity mapping

The evaluation took place over four weeks in November and December of 2006. It started with a meeting where GMSL presented themselves to the evaluator. An other meeting followed this where the assignment and terms of reference was presented to the heads of departments at GMSL by Kiøsterud with a GMSL translator. This meeting also did a stakeholder mapping on which much of the evaluation was based. (Charnika Munasinghe was hired after Kiøsterud arrived in Sri Lanka and only started working five days into the evaluation.)

The indicators of success in this evaluation are developed by the evaluator and are mostly based on conversations with the GMSL staff. GMSL has good quantitative indicators to check that an activity actually took place that are monitored and reported clearly, but do not to the same extent have indicators to measure the impact of the activities.

The evaluation was done through interviews in groups or individually, observation and through analysis of written documentation. An effort was made to narrow the scope of the evaluation so as to be able to speak to enough people to get different views about the same issues. This was not always successful. The preliminary results were presented to all the staff and volunteers at GMSL in a meeting on the last day.

The team spent much time with GMSL at the office in Nugegoda and visited projects/members in Hambantota district (south, coastal), Ratnapura district (inland, south-west), Anuradapura district (north, bordering onto LTTE area in the north), Kurunegala district (between Colombo and Anuradapura) and Kalutara district (just south of Colombo).

The travels were decided on short notice. The reasons for choosing the areas were

- that there were activities taking place in the areas at the time
- that we wanted to visit (at least) one area where there had been Tsunami activities and one area where the Tsunami did not hit
- that we wanted to see a local office and an area that does not have local GMSL office
- that we wanted to visit areas where there had been campaigns a while ago that were large enough so that we could find random people who remembered them.

The focus topics were chosen by the evaluator, apart from campaigns, which was agreed upon in advance. The topics were chosen based on how they reflect GMSL activities within the core programme and on the team's areas of knowledge. GMSL was asked to point out major activities, but did not want to prioritise between them.

The time set aside for the evaluation made it possible to talk to many people. It was a priority for us to get the views of participants and beneficiaries in the field. The diversity of GMSL activities and the amount of people involved still leave us with a feeling of mostly scratching the surface. We did more than 50 interviews/meetings with:

16 staff members/volunteers + more informal talks with several others  
 4 board members  
 2 former staff members

Representatives of 5 member organisations (board members not counted)  
 Participants, beneficiaries and/or people in opposition to 6 campaigns/APTs  
 Participants in 4 home garden projects  
 7 media representatives  
 3 INGOs (UNDP, World Bank and FAO)  
 2 national NGOs working with environment  
 1 former Minister of Environment  
 1 retired supreme court judge  
 3 government/semi-government officials

We had access to the following GMSL documentation

- National Environmental Policy for People's Action (1998)
- People's report on Sustainable Development Sri Lanka (2002)
- all proposals and reports to DF from 2003 to 2006, and draft proposal for 2007
- financial reports to DF (audited) from 2003 to 2006
- the 2002-2005 strategy

- the 2003 evaluation
- the draft strategy for 2007-2011
- the constitution and organisational profile
- staff contracts

We have also had access to other written information provided by GMSL on request; among other things employee statistics, questionnaires, PowerPoint presentations, magazines and articles, webpages, etc. The GMSL staff was very helpful in providing documentation.

The two presentations and a list of people interviewed have been handed over to DF.

## Limitations

Language differences were the main limitations to the evaluation. Most of the interviews with both GMSL staff and people on the ground were done in Sinhala with Munasinghe translating for Kjøsterud. This makes good conversation difficult, adds time constraint and also creates some misunderstandings. To prevent such misunderstandings from influencing the conclusions of the report, the team has asked control questions and checked information with GMSL. Secondly, GMSL has had the draft report for response and had the opportunity to clear up such and other mistakes.

The Project Manager at GMSL, who is a very central person for the core programme, was abroad during the entire evaluation and not available for interviews.

The possibility to go to the east to see some projects in Tamil areas was discussed and a trip was even planned. The political situation, with such travels becoming possibly dangerous, combined with the fact that few existing activities in that area are funded by the core project, made us decide not to go. As such we have not had a chance to talk to Tamil member organisations about their relationship to GMSL.

There was quite a bit of scepticism towards this evaluation. The information to the GMSL staff could be better before we came, especially since it was the first experience with this kind of evaluation for many of the staff members. The initial presentation was not enough to make people understand what the evaluation was about. What added to the situation was that shortly before we came GMSL had to deal with an internal conflict. DF has been informed of the conflict and taken the appropriate action towards some of the information that came out of it. People at GMSL were however not so comfortable with the evaluation, believing for quite some time that it was linked to the conflict.

## The team

Ellen Cathrine Kjøsterud (team leader) is working as a consultant from Cape Town, South Africa. She is an economist with her master from University of Oslo and has previously worked for different Norwegian NGOs mainly with aids, education, media and democracy. She has experience from evaluations in Africa and Asia, but this is the first time in Sri Lanka.

Charnika Munasinghe- (Co-Consultant) is a journalist by profession with 25 years standing and currently works as a Media Consultant in Sri Lanka. She is a scholar of the International Institute of Journalism, based at the time in West Berlin. Ms. Munasinghe has held many senior positions in the print media in Sri Lanka and has also worked with the electronic media, public relations advertising and marketing. She has general evaluation experience in her field of expertise, gained particularly during her tenure as the Media Advisor to the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Refugees in Sri Lanka.

## Green Movement of Sri Lanka

Green Movement of Sri Lanka, or Green as the people there are calling it for short, was founded in 1998. Its origins are however traced back to the 1980s and reactions to the market oriented economic system causing environmental and social problems.

According to GMSLs own history on their website, two distinct schools of environmentalists emerged:

“The first, elite and middle-class group had a romantic vision for conserving fauna and flora whilst preserving the destructive and anti-environment economic paradigm. The second was made up of academics and activists who wanted the economic paradigm changed to a human and environment friendly one. This group has a political vision as well as a conservation ideology. [...]

GMSL find themselves in the second group. The environmental challenges they took on was the externalities of projects undertaken in the name of development.

“The widespread social, environmental and economic damage of mega scale development projects such as dams, highways, industrial parks, cash crop plantations, mining and logging pave the way for the establishment of environment movements.<sup>3</sup>”

Many organisations and campaigns emerged in the late 80's and 1990s. They were different in where they came from and what approach they had to environmental issues. The people who today are in GMSL have background in several of these organisations and it is a significant reason why GMSL can mobilize such a wide variety of organisations and individuals. In the 1990s they cooperated in a Canadian funded network called the National NGO Action Front (NNAF). A good overview of GMSL background is found in the Church and Kiriwandeniya evaluation from 2003.

“GMSL was born out of a split with the NNAF. Sri Lanka Canadian Development Forum recruited Suranjan Kodithuwakku, currently CO of GMSL, as a consultant to write an environmental policy for NNAF to promote. One outcome of this work was an action plan, and a proposal for a specialised network focused primarily on environmental issues, rather than having environment as a secondary item in the development agenda. The NGOs in the environmental committee, who were already receiving funds through the DF, applied to the DF for funds. This resulted in them breaking from NNAF and starting the GMSL.”

The organisation is based on the action plan, which is called “National Environmental Policy for People's Action” and was compiled and edited by Suranjan Kodithuwakku. The program with Development Fund is drawn from this document and the goals and objectives for the so-called core project (focus for this evaluation) comes from the same. The policy is both visionary and practical. Central to the plan and to the GMSL approach is to build alliances between the urban academics and experts and the rural poor.

Politically GMSL is highly critical to liberal economic political solutions and can probably be placed in the wide anti-globalisation camp. On the other hand they do not reject policies like the Sri Lankan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper completely or on principle, but criticise individual issues within them. This places them to the right of the far left.

“The leftist groups see us as green liberal democrats”

- Suranjan

<sup>3</sup> Taken from GMSL's webpage.



In addition to the action plan, some of GMSL's and their partners' recordings of good practices are to be found in the People's Report on Sustainable Development Sri Lanka that was prepared by GMSL for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa.

There haven't been any large strategic changes since Church and Kiriwandeniya did their evaluation. The organisation has however increased dramatically in staff, budget and activities because of work they did in the aftermath of the Tsunami. The weight and focus mitigation of disasters has increased compared to other activities, but this seems to be a product of the situation rather than a strategic choice. This growth is on its way down again, but looks like it can stabilize on a higher level than before 2005. The Development Fund/Norad/Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs are still the main funders, but many others have come in. In 2005 GMSL received funding from 12 different organisations.

## The organisation

Several large projects were being phased out in September 2006. GMSL is now at a stage where they will evaluate their network look at what has happened to the organisation over the last two years and see where they will go from here. GMSL have at present 144 member organisations (CBOs and NGOs). Several of the organisations on GMSL's member list are docile or non-existent, whereas they have about 80 other community based organisations and NGOs who want to become members. 31 organisations were represented at the 2006 Annual General Meeting.

GMSL works in 24 districts of the 9 provinces in Sri Lanka. They have five staffed field offices which all are in areas that have Tsunami activities. In the future they look into having staffed offices in the north and the east (conflict areas). The conflict makes travelling back and forth to these areas difficult.

Membership is offered to organisations that work towards the goals of GMSL, are registered, audited and work in participatory manner. The organisations get the Arana or Vidahan magazines and to receive capacity building an organisation is supposed to be a member<sup>4</sup>. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the representative meeting for the member organisations in GMSL. The AGM elects the Executive Committee, and three new members must be elected at each meeting. The AGM has to approve the minutes of the previous meeting and financial statements. The annual report is also adopted at the AGM. Approval of any amendments to the constitution and other resolutions are also the responsibility of the AGM.

The organisations or groups of people who are beneficiaries of GMSL are however not necessarily members and quite often not. In addition GMSL offer personal membership and honorary membership. These members do not have voting rights. This means that many of the people actually working for GMSL have no formal influence over the issues GMSL work with.

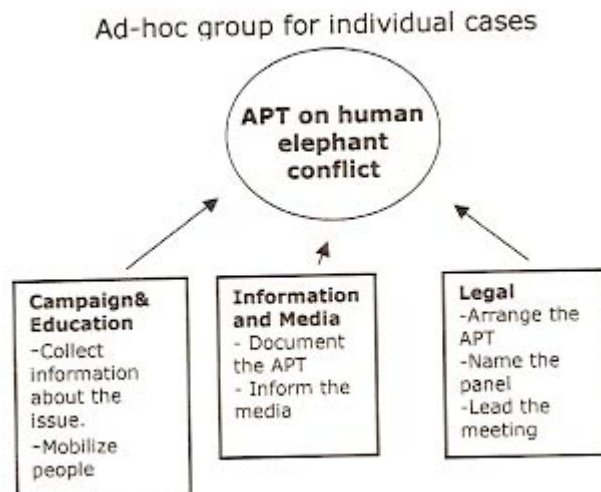
Giving this group voting rights at the AGM would not actually solve this problem, as the AGM have very formal tasks and do not vote over strategies and annual plans. The grassroots people we met in GMSL did not express any wish to have decision power in GMSL. What they did want was more contact and information. The distance between the members and activists and the headquarter should maybe be bridged with activities and seminars rather than formal structures.

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<sup>4</sup> This rule is not strictly enforced. Local organizations doing quality work can receive help even if they are not GMSL members.

To create a good organisational map of GMSL is a challenge. The GMSL organisational map is an attachment at the end of this report. The office is divided into departments (also called units or sections) and so far it is clear. The activities do however not sort strictly under the departments. Some are easy to place. The home gardens are for instance the responsibility of the agricultural department and have little interference from other people. Others are cooperations between different departments and are organised through ad-hoc groups put together for the task. Sometimes people have tasks that lie outside their department because they happen to have a certain skill. Anyone can at times be a translator, driver, educator, organizer and so on.

The figure below is an attempt to illustrate how the ad-hoc groups are put together.



## Who are The Greeners?

The people working for GMSL share a vision. The main qualification for working there is sharing that vision. Any other skill can be gained over time. If you don't share the vision, you don't belong in GMSL. And if you don't share the vision, there is little else to keep you there as well. The working hours are intense and the salaries are not attractive on their own.

"Green works with the poor. The leaders are not posh. People can come here and get experience that is important to get jobs further on. If you come from a poor family, you don't get opportunities like this anywhere else! I learned about writing proposals and using computers at Green. When I went for an other job interview, they asked me if I knew project report writing."

-Former staff member and activist (she got the job)

The staff and volunteers sometimes refer to GMSL as a family, but GMSL is far from being a family business, which sometimes is the situation in NGO's in Sri Lanka and other countries. The people working for GMSL at the main office come from diverse backgrounds – especially the volunteers. Some are straight out of school while others are pensioners, some are from poor backgrounds while others are relatively rich or have pensions, some have degrees while others have little post-high-school education. The main ethnic groups are represented and there are almost equal numbers of men and women.

Suranjan talks of GMSL as a refuge for many of the activists who stay there. Some of them come from traumatic or difficult backgrounds. His leadership philosophy extends from being the leader and employer to looking holistically after the staffs wellbeing. Making space for family, looking after people when they get sick and aiding their career beyond GMSL is part of it. When

discussing the prospect of reducing the size of GMSL because of funding drying up, he is more concerned about some of the young activists than the more experienced ones who more easily can find jobs elsewhere. The volunteers on the other hand refer to him as a father.

Some of the volunteers work with GMSL as part of their studies. They are students writing their master thesis on environmental issues. Masters on air pollution, sand mining and human elephant conflict are three examples.

Those in regular paid staff positions are mostly recruited from the volunteers. Only in the cases where a specific skill is needed and they do not have it in-house do they recruit from outside. The field coordinator and project manager at the Hambantota district office were for instance recruited out of university with relevant academic background in agriculture. The recruitment policy is supported by extensive in-house training of staff and volunteers. Everyone we talked to went to some kind of training, though not all of it was paid by GMSL. The policy is that when a volunteer joins with GMSL, he or she “hangs around” for a while helping out in different departments. After a while the person has a talk with Suranjan to find out where the person enjoys working and what future plans he or she has. The person then becomes assigned to the department most fitting. These talks are supposed to happen once or twice a year for each person.

The human resource management philosophy of GMSL is highly appreciated by those who work there. For most staff and volunteers it has led to high loyalty to the organisation and those who move on to jobs elsewhere usually stay in touch and help GMSL when they can. With larger staff, GMSL face the challenge of keeping this attitude while the CO does not have time to look that well after every volunteer who comes into the organisation. The middle management has experienced this leadership hands on. Many of them have been activists themselves. They should be equipped to more formally take on the responsibility for volunteers and newer staff. Not only will it ease the burden on the CO, but it will also contribute to sustainability when he one day chooses to leave the organisation.

GMSL had a youth brigade project for a while. The project is not part of the DF funding, but it has played an important role in recruitment to the organisation. The members of the youth brigade were recruited directly through announcements, not through the member organisations or other NGO's. The brigades had their own projects to work with. They were a major source of volunteers in the Tsunami-work. The brigade project dissolved in the aftermath of the Tsunami but quite a number of volunteers are still with GMSL. At the moment GMSL is evaluating the project and discussing to restart it again.

We were told from several sources that a critical issue for many NGO's in Sri Lanka is their ability to hand over initiative and responsibilities to the next generation. This does at present not seem to be a problem for GMSL. Though most of the heads of departments had been with GMSL for a long time as activists, they were mostly young and many had only worked for GMSL for two years. This also reflects that the organisation has grown tremendously over the last years. If there is an “old” generation, they would be the people who had worked together with Suranjan in the years before GMSL. There are few “veteran staff members” but we met some “veterans” in positions as advisors, consultants and board members.

The people we had time to interview during the evaluation clearly enjoy working for GMSL and there was a clear sense of loyalty to the organisation and it's mission. Suranjan will jokingly refer to himself as a dictator, and there is some truth to that description as he has huge influence and no formal structure that keeps him from getting the last word. The formal structure is hierarchical. However, the system of discussion and consensus in the organisation seems to work to the satisfaction of the people involved. Suranjan is surrounded by a group of strong personalities who has been involved with him for a long time and who emphasised that the freedom they are given in their work is one weighty reason for being with GMSL.

## Gender

Though there are apparently equal numbers of men and women at GMSL, there is not equal numbers among the heads of sections. Only three of twelve leaders are women – the administration manager, a project facilitator and the head of the Disaster Management Information Project. These three positions are by no means inferior to the others in the team. Three women have headed the DMIP successively, which has the largest single budget at GMSL. One left for another job and volunteers for GMSL in her freetime. The second just returned from an exchange with Fredskorpset.

Both men and women argued that there were not hindrances for women to progress within GMSL. There is high awareness on gender equality. The organisation also does an everyday effort to make men and women equal. The responsibility of serving tea twice daily is shared between the different departments and so it gets served by men and women rather equally (though usually not by the heads of sections). There is a dormitory for men and one for women 50 meters away from the office. Women do usually not travel alone after dark in this area of Sri Lanka. This could lead to women of GMSL missing out on the many informal meetings that take place in the late hours, but by living near the office this is avoided. The men are also good at driving the women who live other places home after late meetings.

There are no rules about gender balance in the Executive committee. At the moment three of nine are women. The goal is 50/50 by 2008. To get close would require one man to be replaced with a woman at the next AGM (and that the other women are re-elected), which is not unrealistic. At grassroots level about 90% of the participants are women according to Suranjan<sup>5</sup>. Reasons to this are among others that the women are closest to the problems when their livelihood is destroyed. The men are afraid of objecting to a development project, as their compensation might be taken away, but the women still come. It is also that when there is compensation paid out for destruction or removals, the money goes to the husband. He can, and sometimes do, take the money and run away with it.

The agricultural projects target women especially. Studies show that there are 53% malnutrition among children and that 46% of pregnant women suffer from anaemia<sup>6</sup>. Nutrition education is therefore a core issue in the different agricultural projects.

We did not look into the youth brigade specifically, but the member we interviewed in Hambantota said they were about 50/50 men and women in his group.

In general GMSL does well on the gender issues. The awareness is there, combined with practical efforts like the transport, living conditions, tea-serving and skills trainings. The low number of women in leading positions must be seen in context with Sri Lankan culture on the issue, though it also means that the effort must be sustained. However, in some sections gender balance should be more actively encouraged. There is only one woman in the Information and Media unit, none in Campaign & Education and none in the Batticaloa office (though the project facilitator with main responsibility for Batticaloa is a woman.)<sup>7</sup> Those units should look into whether there is anything they could do to attract women to their units. Looking at what DMIP does could be a start, as three of five in DMIP are women. GMSL could also actively prioritize using women consultants/advisors when they can to provide role models.

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<sup>5</sup> This was reflected in the agricultural projects we visited, but there were more men participating in the campaign activities we looked into.

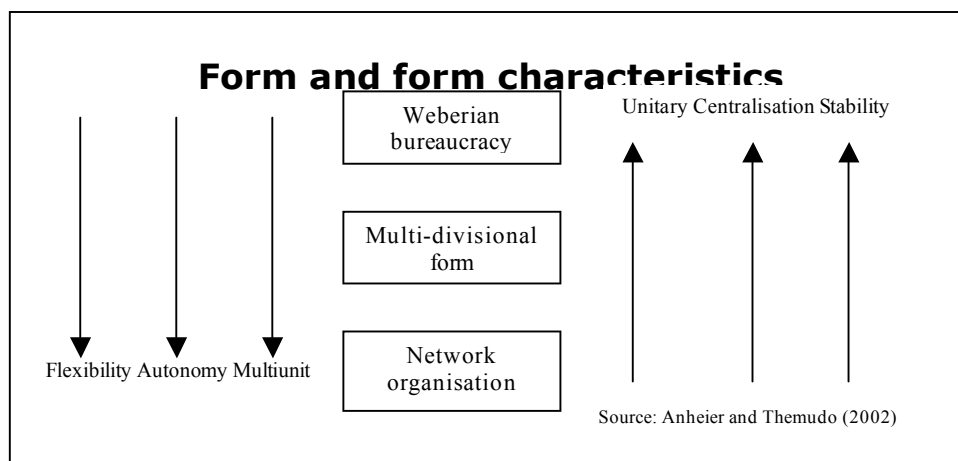
<sup>6</sup> Source: Interview at GMSL

<sup>7</sup> According to the organisation profile

## Organisational form

According to Helmut Anheier and Nuno Themudo (2002), organisational form is more than the formal organisational structure. It includes resource types, governance, accountability, organisational culture, informal structures and external relations.

The structural side of GMSL does not get high priority. The leadership's approach to the organisation focus on empowerment of the human resources and inspiring people by keeping focus on the goals and policies. People refer to GMSL as among other things a family and a refuge. The heads of departments have large freedom to reach those goals in the way they (sometimes with others) find best as long as it is within the types of activities they have received funding for. The volunteers have minimal formal influence and neither do the advisors or consultants that do a great part of GMSL work<sup>8</sup>. Formal power is rather centralised, mainly in the hands of the CO according to himself. Agreements are made in meetings and usually by consensus. In that way, GMSL works more like a company than a membership organisation, which is not uncommon for network organisations.



Flexible, unbureaucratic networks can facilitate fast growth and create a creative space for people to use their abilities and make things happen. This is a strength in GMSL. On the other hand, the same lack of bureaucracy often makes it difficult to coordinate activities. And as organisations grow they also grows out of being able to decide and coordinate everything at meetings where everyone is present. Moving from seven to 159 staff members in two years, like GMSL has done, is definitely such an example. Lack of formal structures also makes it more difficult to handle internal conflicts and weakens accountability when something goes wrong.

GMSL is like most organisations stretched between the flexible on one side and the systematic and predictable on the other. The independence and flexibility is why many of the people at GMSL love to work there. The freedom is one of the main reasons why people who could get much higher salaries and probably more predictable working hours other places, choose to work for GMSL. At the same time several people at GMSL, especially people with administrative responsibilities, expressed a need for more routines for information exchange and project management. The rather newly introduced regular meetings have been a popular initiative. The project cycle workshop done by the Norwegian fredskorps participant at GMSL was also mentioned as an example of good contributions. At the moment flexibility and autonomy might

<sup>8</sup> Some consultants do have quite a say in policy and programs, but not because of formal structure.

have to give way for some more structure. When GMSL is discussing where they are going from 2007 they should make sure to spend some time on how they will coordinate going there as well.

One quite serious limitation by not having more structure is that people mix projects into each other. This is not a major problem within the project/program of one donor, but we were repeatedly directed towards projects that were not part of the DF core project. In most cases we can explain it by the people interviewed not knowing exactly what we were aiming at, but on other occasions we were dealing with head of departments and financial management who gave conflicting views. One of these issues is the APT in Hambantota, where we travelled to meet the participants. We were given the impression that the whole legal programme was supported by DF, which was only corrected after submitting draft report. A smaller case was the issue of travel support to the two young women from Sri Rohan Haritha Parshadaya mentioned further down, where we were told by the finance manager that was financed over the capacity building program, but after delivering the report this was corrected to a special fund for volunteers who helped after the Tsunami. A better overview is especially important since the nature of the activities makes it impossible to plan them in detail at proposal level. If two organisations are funding APTs or DMIP activities, then there is nothing to separate which of them that funds a specific activity. At the end of the year it will of course be divided among them for financial reporting, but there has to be better overview as the year proceeds.

An other challenge is that large dependency on volunteers creates difficulties in maintaining internal discipline. The finance manager exemplified it with how to demand things like financial reports and receipts on time from people who have no formal work-relationship to GMSL. It happens, but it might require both effort and patience from the staff.

## **Development of long-term and strategic plans**

Strategies and plans are not the issue of the AGM. The process of developing plans in GMSL is quite simple. It is left mainly to the staff through heads of departments. The Executive Committee approves the work and all decisions are made with consensus.

The core project that DF funds is based on the policy that was written by Suranjan in 1998 and has not changed since. The annual plans are built on this and has not been changed much during the years.

In 2002 GMSL had a workshop developing a long term strategy for 2002-2005 which was afterwards written down by K.A.J. Kahandawa, who is a consultant to DF. The strategy documents key activities and strategic objectives and these are reflected in the work that GMSL has done since. The strategy itself was apparently not used much. The document is not even completely finished, with critical issues like the action plan, "How will GMSL proceed?" and "Planned deadlines" not being completed.

The following year they were evaluated by Church and Kiriwandeniya for DF. The recommendations from this evaluation have not been the topic of much discussion, though some of them have been handled anyway.

In the annual proposals to DF/Norad GMSL uses a Logical Framework Approach matrix. Neither this planning tool is actually used by GMSL, but only filled in because it is part of the proposal requirements. As such it does its job, as the activities and concrete results are very well documented in the reports. The analytical part of LFA has however not been used.

Bottom line, and this was confirmed by the CO, is that the decision makers at GMSL do not see the need for formal strategic planning tools and formalised documents guiding their activities. The work is planned through discussions with the heads of departments and the input comes from other discussions within the organisation. Little is formal and much is in the hands of the

leadership. It is effective and nobody has uttered reluctance towards this to us. It is apparently more democratic, though informally so, than what is experienced in many other organisations. The CO also said that formal democratic structures does not cater sufficiently for minorities within an organisation, and that he therefore did not want too much power being given to majority voting power. Anheier and Themundo (2002) say about organisations that have little decision making based in democratic membership that:

“The contribution of this type of civil society organisations to democratisation is increased pluralism of society generally. This may involve giving voice to otherwise excluded groups and taking up emerging issues that turn out to be critical – e.g. the environment – but accountability remains weak and legitimacy claims are easily questioned.<sup>9</sup>”

Even though there are few formal documents to which the staff or volunteers can consult to see what GMSL is about or what to work with, they had a strong understanding of the vision of the organisation and why they did the respective activities. The understanding was similar when we discussed it with different people, including field staff, and correspond with the written documentation we have seen in English. Much time is apparently spent on talking policy during meetings at GMSL.

If GMSL should be encouraged to use more planning tools – which they could benefit from as the organisation grows in size and complexity – it should be nurtured to come from within. The assistance from outside in these matters does not seem to have had any deep effect within the organisation. The need from the donor organisations to have strategies and evaluations in writing is still a valid reason for producing these documents but our expectations for follow up on this evaluation are rather modest. On the other side, the people in GMSL who have participated in project management-related courses were very positive about the opportunities that lie within it. We experienced that there was a lack of information storage at GMSL when we wanted to visit a random project from 2004 where the woman in charge had left GMSL. Nobody at GMSL knew where the project was. GMSL apparently do not have routines for making such information available for others in the organisation. Such routines could also be of help when a staff member is sick or get stuck in an area due to natural or political hindrances. The financial manager approved strongly of more plans and structure to ease his work and other members of the management committee expressed satisfaction with the introduction of more coordinating and planning meetings. By seeing the practical use of such tools, the interest in using them at more strategic level might come later.



*Staff meeting at the headquarter*

The figure below shows how day-to-day (or week to week) decisions are made within GMSL. The figure is based on the campaigns and legal issues, which has short time planning frame. The level (which meeting) that an issue is discussed at depends on both time and the size of the issue.

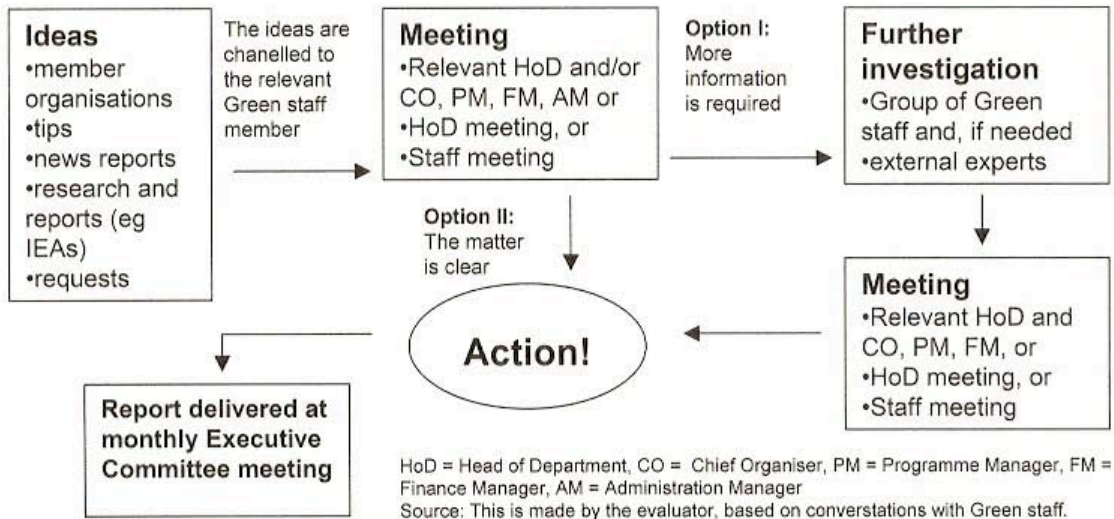
<sup>9</sup> Anheier and Themundo are quoting Edwards and Hulme (1995), Hudson (2000) and Hudson and Biefeld (1997).

## Decision making in GMSL

*Strategic framework:* The constitution, long-term plans and project proposals.

*Criterion:* The issue must be relevant for many people. Green does not take on cases for single individuals.

*Target group:* Can be anyone who suffer from man-made or natural destruction to their environment.



The heads of departments meets weekly. In addition there is a staff meeting every Monday that coordinates activities and exchange information. Both meetings are new inventions in 2006. Before that it seems like meetings for coordination or decision-making were even more informal and ad-hoc.

## Strategies

There are three sets of goals and objectives relevant for the core project. The constitution name the objective and aims of the organisation (Amended at the Annual General Meeting in April 2006):

### Objective of the organization

Sustaining the future of the majority poor and lowincome earning of the country and of the environment.

### Aims of the organization

1. To show the way to fashion the traditional, conservative agricultural life style to suit modern trends.
2. To organize alternative methods necessary for the promotion of the friendly environment in order to strengthen public life.
3. To act in co-ordination with state sector project services at regional, district and national level where policy matters concerning programmes are involved.
4. To act in close co-operation with people's organizations at regional, district and national level as a network with a view to getting maximum public participation.

Secondly, the organisational profile document names the vision and mission:

### Vision

To work towards the harmonious co-existence of the land, its flora, fauna and people and to ensure its preservation through sustainable mechanisms.



**Mission**

To lobby for universal environment awareness and preservation of the same as an integral part of quality human living.

The third is the set that forms the base of the proposals to DF. They have not changed during the period in question for this evaluation and have actually been the same since the beginning of GMSL. The only change for the (draft) 2007 proposal is that objective number three has been removed.

**Overall development goal for DF Core Project 2003, 2004, 2005**

"Natural resource base nurtured and sustained for the enrichment of the future generations"

**Objectives**

1. To protect natural resources and promote community owned sustainable development by educating and promoting best practices in Sri Lanka
2. To work as a catalyst in encouraging and motivating civil society and communities to fight for their right to life through policy, lobby, advocacy and legal support in pressurizing stake holders including the government for good governance
3. To reduce vulnerabilities through hazard risk management of natural and human made disasters in Sri Lanka
4. To promote youth, women and disadvantaged groups participation in all levels (policy, implementation and monitoring) in sustainable development and national integration of globally accepted MDGs

**Evaluation**

Evaluation takes place in the committee meetings or management meetings (aka head of department meetings). These meetings are documented in Sinhala. GMSL has never had a comprehensive formal internal evaluation but some issues are looked into more closely than others. The chairman is for instance evaluating the youth brigade at the moment. The activities are evaluated in meetings and through talking to people. The only systematic, written evaluation we were shown was an evaluation of what the participants in the home garden project implement of what they have learned. There is a tendency in GMSL to collect success-stories and learn from what went right. The projects seem to be constantly improved based on this knowledge.

We have learned many things over the last five years. When we learn, we just act on it and change things. We don't go and write it down. I wish we could write more about lessons learned, but we do not have the capacity.

- Suranjan

There are limitations to this way of evaluating. It does not sufficiently cover information from participants and benefactors. The GMSL staff bring back the general impressions and how the activities went and this can improve the implementation, but few of the people we talked to had been asked questions about how GMSL operates nor had they been interviewed about the long term effect of the actions. Very few were asked about their suggestions for improvement. People both in the field and at GMSL were in general reluctant to talk about things that did not go so well. It is probably much because we were from outside and the people we met were thankful for whatever GMSL has done for them, but it also seemed to be little culture for criticism. The only person we met who very openly talked of mistakes was Suranjan. Some of the staff members who are used to donor contact were also commenting on things that could be improved, but in general people were not open about where there is space for improvement.

DF should consider supporting completely internal evaluations of some activities under guidance of an evaluator. This could be a learning experience for the GMSL staff to encourage more internal evaluations.

## Security

The security situation in Sri Lanka affects GMSL mostly on the practical level. It is difficult and sometimes dangerous to travel to certain areas. GMSL insist on working also in the Tamil areas, which in some cases means in LTTE controlled areas. This has resulted in some press reports in the lane of “GMSL is cooperating with terrorists”, but as their activities are very open and transparent in that area it apparently did not have serious direct consequences. It takes time to build trust on both sides of the conflict lines, but the work GMSL did in the east (Tamil area) after the Tsunami has contributed largely to building that trust. Most of that work is done by Tamil GMSL members, but even some of the Sinhala staff travel to those areas and are welcomed by people from all the sides of the conflict. GMSL also has contacts in the government who indirectly tell them where not to be.

Politics can be dangerous in Sri Lanka but environmental politics is mostly seen as “neutral” to the government/LTTE conflict lines. Sometimes the issues make their own conflict lines though.

“Increasingly we have found our social agenda running very close to the un-kept promises of mainstream politicians/parties and we find ourselves being directly and indirectly attacked by such interests.”

-GMSL staffmember

The demonstrations against the channel between India and Sri Lanka also put GMSL staff under pressure from Indian secret police.

## Post-Tsunami realities

When the Tsunami hit Sri Lanka on the 27th of December 2004 GMSL was wrapping up a year with a budget just under ten million rupees and twelve staff members. They had recently started the Disaster Management Information Project to respond to environmental disasters like floods and drought, but this was barely off the design table. Within hours they managed to be on their way to the disaster areas and in few days they delivered the first needs assessment from the field. They organised volunteers to go to the field and some had the experience of being the first people arriving with clean water to affected areas. In three days they apparently mobilized 3000 volunteers.

In 2005 GMSL increased to 166 staff members and working volunteers<sup>10</sup> in the field. The budget had expanded to 143,4 million rupees. People who’s job is to monitor international financial organisations or educate school children was organising volunteers cleaning up debris after the Tsunami and providing shelter for the homeless. Through their member network, GMSL had the contacts on the ground. Through their international connections they had the link to funding.

| Staff at Green Movement of Sri Lanka |      |      |      |                  |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------------------|
|                                      | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006             |
| Head office, staff                   | 7    | 12   | 23   | 35 <sup>11</sup> |
| HO, volunteers                       |      |      | 21   |                  |
| Field                                |      |      | 122  | 42               |
| % women                              | 43%  | 50%  | 32%  | 49%              |

<sup>10</sup> The concept of volunteers is here a bit blurry. GMSL had two types of volunteers: The ones that worked for free for a short period and the ones that are not staff, but did get paid daily labourer wages for more long term clean-up and reconstruction work.

<sup>11</sup> This number is staff and HO volunteers combined.

The work GMSL did related to the Tsunami is not an issue for this evaluation, but it is clear that it has contributed to a mainly good reputation for the organisation both with the beneficiaries we met and with organisations involved. There has been two issues of corruption locally, but GMSL dealt with that. The Environmental Journalists Forum wants to study the Kalamatia housing site in Hambantota district for a best practice example. The RADA<sup>12</sup> officer in Hambantota was pleased that GMSL not only built houses, but also provided livelihood projects (home gardens) to the beneficiaries. FAO praised that GMSL had been so early with their first needs assessments. In parts of the east GMSL has built trust with the Tamils based on what they have delivered<sup>13</sup>. Staff at GMSL has no doubt learned from the challenges they took on with the Tsunami. Donors want GMSL to implement projects for them.

In the draft plan for 2007-2011 GMSL writes that:

“It is to be noted that although the tragedy caused an unexpected expansion of the movement, it had more than enough capacity to absorb and sustain this growth. In our reconstruction work, since we had never done such things before, we did falter in some areas but these issues were quickly neutralized due to high quality monitoring mechanisms and the lessons learned were used effectively in other areas of similar activity. We are quietly proud that we managed to expand without ever losing sight of our fundamentals even though the outside world only saw expansion on the surface and did not know quiet what was going on.”

It seems from our discussions with people outside the organisation that GMSL has reason to be this “quietly proud”.

The Tsunami-activities did also have the effect that many activities planned for 2005 did not happen, even though the budget was spent. A large part of the budget goes to human resources and the staff did other work for a while. This is only to be expected with the type of catastrophe the Tsunami was and the ability of GMSL to react. The other activities did not collapse either; they are just fewer. (See the graph further down.) There are some activities where the budget and human resources are spent on the planned activity, but where the targets are still quite far off. The legal section is such an example. GMSL should look at this in the planning process they are in, to see if the plans and budgets they make are realistic. 2005 was such an extreme year that it alone does not say enough about GMSL’s ability to plan. On the budget side GMSL admits that they have had less overview and that the newly introduced accounting system is expected to make budgeting easier.

The donor’s appreciation for GMSL is a blessing, but can also cause a problem. GMSL is looking at funding going dramatically down. For most of the projects this is not a problem. The housing projects cost a lot of money, but were planned with a view towards phasing out. The people working on the different projects knew it was short term and move on with new experiences and no expectations for further job with GMSL. However, the amount of staff at the offices has expanded that GMSL would like to keep. At the same time does not only Tsunami funding phase out, but so will probably DF funding do in a couple of years as the Norwegian Foreign Ministry downgrades Sri Lanka from being a high priority country for development aid. In this situation it can be tempting to jump to any funding available to keep going. Many NGOs have gone that route though it might change the face of the organisation. The people at GMSL seem aware of the issue, but should carefully consider how far they want to spread out their activities. They already seem to stretch in many directions. The internal policy of letting people with initiative get the freedom to implement their visions within the GMSL framework seems to result in a wide variety

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<sup>12</sup> Reconstruction and Development Agency

<sup>13</sup> The source of this information was conversations with different people in Colombo. We did not go to the East during the evaluation.

of activities. Not all of them can be said to fall within the DF core project, but neither are they funded by it. GMSL's amended constitution is so wide that almost any developmental activity can be included as long as it is promoting sustainable development.

## Holistic approach

Sri Rohana Haritha Parshadaya is a member organisation of GMSL that was started as a result of the contact with GMSL. GMSL has done awareness on environmental issues with them and they have received courses in organic gardening. GMSL's representative, who recently left the Buddhist order, has also done talks on kindness and caring with them, linking it to the protection of environment. GMSL has further helped them changing an abandoned school building into a community house by supplying the material while the villagers provided labour. The public administrator in the area has an office in the community house. He is the leader in the local community and represents Sri Rohana Haritha Parshadaya at the AGM in GMSL. GMSL has also assisted with some other contributions to the group and through GMSL's capacity building fund for member organisations, they funded two students who were very active in post-tsunami work from the village to go to India to compete in a marathon.

The marathon is maybe an isolated incident of very indirect capacity building and linked to specific funding set aside for youth who had worked on the tsunami. Most capacity building is apparently courses for staff/volunteers and office equipment. The argument for funding the marathon given by the local GMSL staff was that you have to look holistically at a community if you want them to protect the environment. People who are poor and struggle are less likely to consider environmental issues. Encouragement is needed for upliftment.

There is much truth to that logic, but GMSL must draw a line to how far their holistic approach reaches. The area in which Sri Rohana operates is definitely in need of development, and the young people in that area want education and opportunities beyond farming, as farming barely gets the families through the year. Unfortunately this is the case for many, many families in Sri Lanka and GMSL cannot cater for all.

This issue is repeated in the use of the Alternative People's Tribunals. The contractor who built the houses that were falling down in Hambantota district should definitely be held responsible for his poor work, but is this the responsibility of GMSL's legal department? Or is tutoring school children in regular subjects so that they can pass their exams the responsibility of the Disaster Management Information Project?

“When viewing the issue directly we should strictly not be doing this. However, the very definition of the word “holism” implies that a line may be extremely difficult to draw. For example, in the case of school kids in disaster situations, every agency was ready to provide food, clothing, shelter, IDP inputs etc. but none were willing to take into consideration education. At that point, even though it may not be ours to do, the “gap filling” operation seemed logical.”

GMSL staffmember

We will not try to give advice on the detailed level. A holistic approach towards the targeted communities is complicated. At the same time it is seen as the strength of GMSL compared to other organisations that touch upon the communities more superficially, which were pointed out especially in their response to disasters. However, this is an issue where GMSL's lack of guidelines can cause problems. When one organisation gets something, why should not the other? How do they deal with “Why can't we have a ticket to India, when those people got one?” unless they have clear regulations about what benefits the groups can get? Some of the organisations and individuals we met identify GMSL with single people within the organisation; being the one they have contact with. These relationships could easily provide basis for rumours of nepotism and corruption, which GMSL recently have experienced that they are not immune to. To stop such rumours it would help with more regulations written down on paper.

Secondly, reaching out to too many different issues could weaken GMSL as an organisation respected for their knowledge of their topics. With limited funding for staff, there is also a limit to how many issues in which GMSL can have overview of important organisations and people and solid knowledge about rather complicated issues. GMSL is stretching this far through using advisors and consultants from outside, but there is even a limit to how many advisors and consultants they can keep track of. Being focussed is also being able to go deeper into the issues they choose to work with. GMSL emphasis being a multi-skilled group working in a wide range of areas all bound together within a holistic framework. While doing so they should still keep an eye on why they are taken seriously by outside organisations. A major reason is that they have a reputation of providing good and accurate information (as opposed to organisations who fight for a cause but do not know much about it beyond the slogans).

## **Recommendations**

GMSL should

- be careful not to spread out to all kinds of activities. There are limits to holistic approaches.
- have a structured overview of which activities that are funded by which donor with activities and financial resources linked.
- use the opportunity of the forthcoming planning sessions to look at practical, organisational issues. Not only the political side and what activities to engage in.
- do more project management methodology courses with staff.
- create a system for overlap between staff and information storage to be less dependent on individuals.
- reproduce the CO's style of human resource management (follow up of individuals) at middle management level to meet the challenge of a larger number of staff
- do internal evaluations and project impact studies. Be more self-critical.

Planned activities and results 2003-5

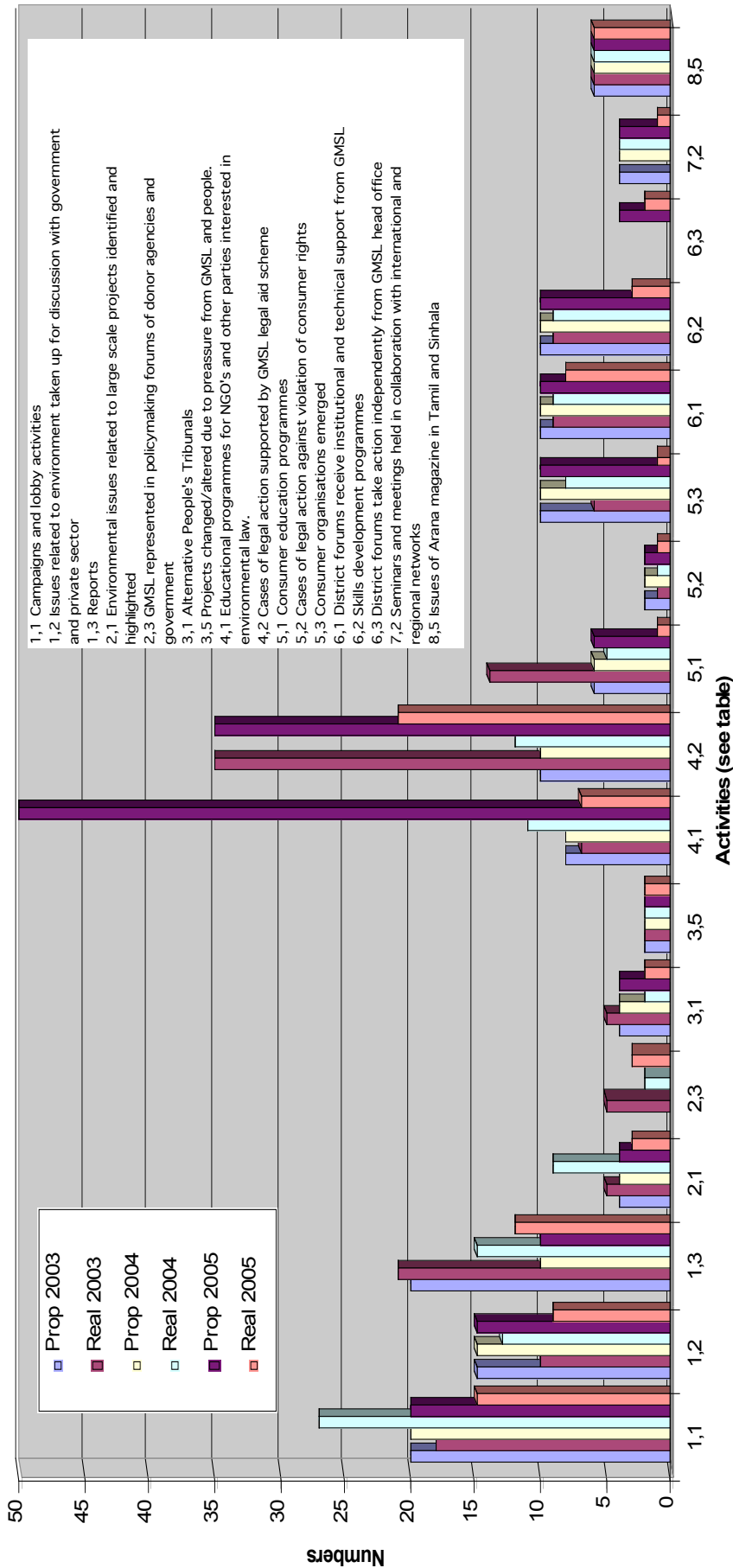
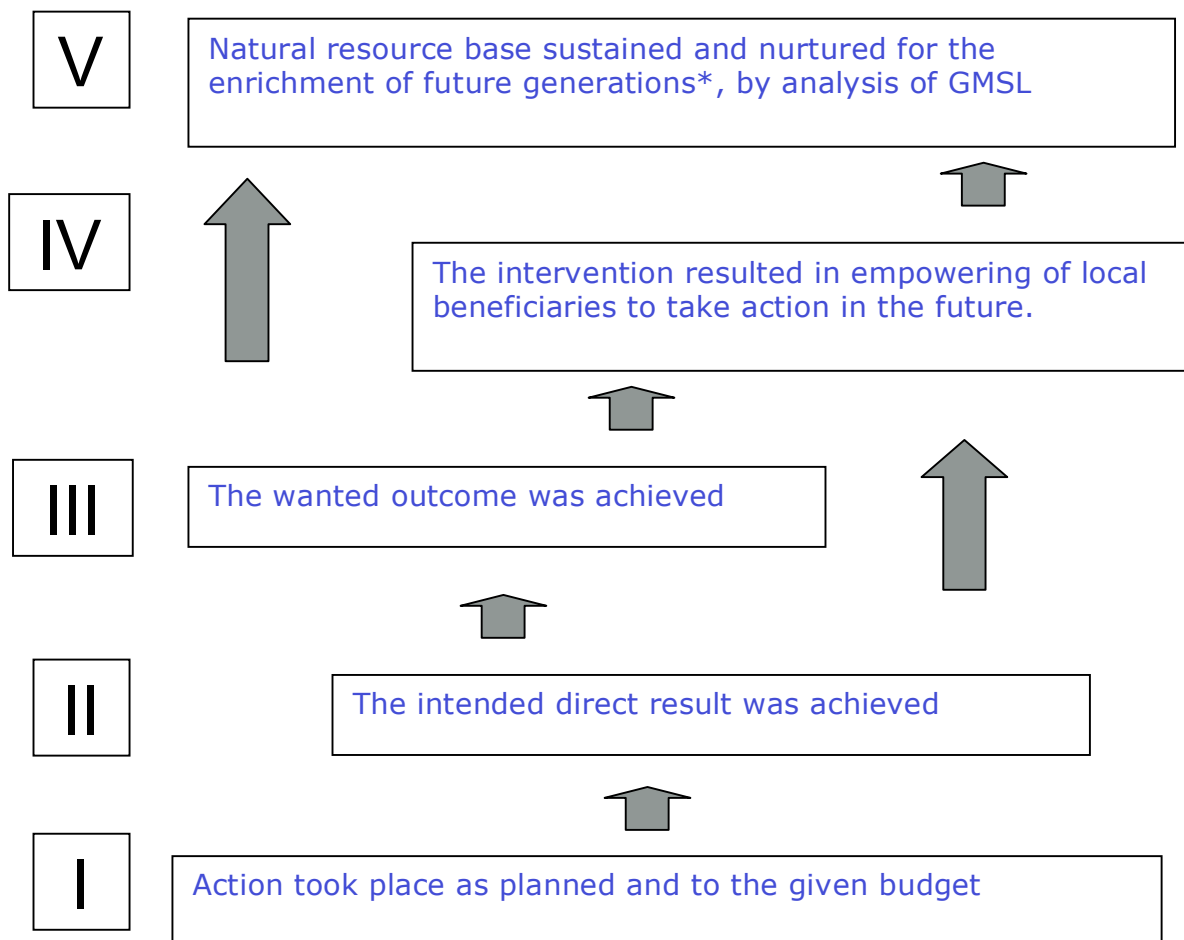


Figure 1 The figure above is a collection of the main activities in GMSL over the period in this evaluation. It is made to illustrate the relationship between proposed activities and those actually carried out. For many of the activities, the proposed number is an indication an has been the same for all the years. The real number comes when GMSL sees what the year brings of issues to handle and how large they are. The result has been sometimes more and sometimes less activities than the proposed ones. In 2005 the general rule is less than proposed of the core activities.

## Levels of success



\*The overall development goal as of the GMSL proposals to DF/Norad.

GMSL report in LFA format, but do not use LFA methodology in their planning. The above figure was developed for the presentation of preliminary findings to GMSL to explain how we have looked at the levels on which a project succeeds. The idea is that success can be measured at different stages in a project and that the levels have to build on each other ending in contributing towards the goal of the organisation. Level I equals what is called “Activities” in LFA. It is the “activities that have to be undertaken by the project in order to produce the outputs”<sup>14</sup> Level II equals “Outputs”, which is the result of those activities that GMSL should be able to guarantee. It would be that people who come to a training are taught what they have been told they will learn or that the participants in an APT really do talk about the intended issue.

Level III and IV equals “Purpose” in LFA. It is the wanted effect of the activities. It can usually be measured, but success is not within control of GMSL. The separation of the two levels is done because many of GMSL’s activities have more than one purpose. It is the direct, measurable one, which is for instance the result of a campaign or what the media really print after attending a press conference. That is level III. Level IV is the broader empowerment of the participants. It does not depend on success on level III. A journalist may for instance attend a press conference, learn about an issue but not get her article printed. That would mean that there is not success on

<sup>14</sup> Norad (1999) The logical framework approach, p17

level III, but if she use the knowledge at a later stage, it would still be success on level IV. On the other hand, an activist may attend a demonstration and contribute to his community winning the case (success on level III), but if he can not explain why it was important to demonstrate, then there is not (in his case) success on level IV.

Level V is the overall goal of GMSL according to their proposals to DF: “Natural resource base sustained and nurtured for the enrichment of future generations”. How GMSL argue that success on level III and IV will contribute to the overall goal is explained in the National Environmental Policy for People’s Action, though it is mainly found as descriptions of environmental problems followed by remedies.

The model is used in the next four chapters when we look into some of GMSL’s activities. The general descriptions above are then replaced with more activity specific measures of success.



## Campaigns

At the beginning of the evaluation we decided to focus on the Eppawala phosphate case and the fight against the water policies, as they are both large cases which are known to people and got reasonable media coverage. Thirdly we picked one issue more randomly from the reports, which is the fight against the cashew nut plantation in Tantirimale. The campaign was local, but the awareness campaign reached about 1000 people who should be possible to find three years later. It was also a case where locals could have conflicting interests. The hydro electric power station campaign is a lost case that we decided to visit as we passed by on our way to Hambantota.

## Goals

| Level of success <sup>15</sup> | Campaigns   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| V                              | Natural resource base sustained and nurtured for the enrichment of future generations.  |
| IV                             | The participants and general public got more awareness on the issue in question and on environmental issues in general. The participants were empowered so as to be able to take action if a similar case comes up. |
| III                            | The issue campaigned about was solved with the wanted result.   |
| II                             | The message was conveyed to the targeted people/business/politicians/organisations. The people affected were informed about the issue and participated in the campaign.   |
| I                              | The campaign activities took place as planned and to the given budget   |

## Methodology

The issues GMSL campaign about come to them in different ways. It could be:

- villagers informing GMSL about an issue
- an article in a newspaper or a TV/radio report
- tips from local or national government (among other things EIAs)
- tips from an other NGO
- tips from a business
- something a member of GMSL picks up during other activities

When an issue is brought to GMSL, the campaign department create a small group who investigate the issue. Sometimes GMSL staff and volunteers do this and other times they seek assistance from external experts. The result is taken to a relevant meeting at GMSL for further discussion. Depending on the size and urgency of the matter this could be head of department with Chief Organiser and maybe project coordinator, section heads meeting, staff meeting or board meeting. This meeting decides whether to move on with the issue. The criteria for taking up an issue are not very specific as long as it falls within the overall goal of GMSL.

An important element for GMSL is the involvement of the affected people. They do not want to be an NGO lobbying politicians and other organisations in Colombo on *behalf* of people – they want to do it *with* the people. Therefore a large amount of work is put into awareness and educational programmes among local villagers in areas affected. An important tool in this process is to translate documents from English to Sinhala or Tamil to make them accessible for the locals. EIA's are in English and the official Sinhala versions often differ from the English version.

<sup>15</sup> See explanation in the previous chapter

Another area that receives high attention is research. The beginning of a campaign is often an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). By law any company wanting to do a development project has to deliver an EIA. Once the EIA is done, the public has 30 days to respond. The EIAs are often superficial or ignore aspects of the project that are relevant. GMSLs challenge is to obtain this information and respond within the 30 days. This makes it important for GMSL that the decision making process on whether to act has to be flexible and fast. Secondly they have to have resources available to do investigations on short notice. A good network of researchers and contacts within relevant ministries and institutions help GMSL in this work, but they often have to depend on second hand research or research done by the institution they are attacking.

From there on the campaign goes ahead with the methods that suit the specific issue. In some cases GMSL collect petitions from villagers in affected areas, other times they produce posters, articles and documentaries through the media section. The media section is usually involved in spreading information through mainstream media. Some issues lead towards huge demonstrations and mobilization of a large network, others can be solved with a letter from the legal section or a phone call to a person in the right position. Some are solved in a short time – others go on for years and even decades.

#### **The cashew nut case**

The proposed cashew nut plantation in Tantirimale was brought to the attention of GMSL by an article in a newspaper in 2003. They got hold of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the project and decided to go and investigate.

The cashew plantation project, which was a cooperation between a Norwegian investor and Sri Lankans, was going to operate in an area of 25 000 acres. There are farmers living and working in the area. They were told they would get work at the plantation and houses in town. Quite some supported the project. We talked to three young students who said the project could have brought better paid work than the nearby factories and administrative positions for some of the more educated people. GMSL and the campaigners did not expect the salaries to be any better at the plantation than in factories. Further, the present situation of growing on their own land was preferred by the villagers to working on a plantation, even though they are poor. The alternative proposed was to give the villagers cashew trees to grow their own cash crop. This has happened since.

The head monk from Eppawala helped with the activities. He is the district coordinator for GMSL in Anuradapura district. GMSL did a large information campaign, going from house to house to talk to people. Members of the youth brigade participated with street theatre. Petitions from the villagers were collected. Many of them are filmed as the villagers could not write. An APT was arranged with about 800 people attending. The head monk said the APT format is a traditional way of discussing issues in his area.

After the media writing, APT and campaigning, the authorities decided to not go ahead with the project.

The local population was sceptical to the evaluation, though slightly jokingly so, as we were introduced by the monk. There had been other foreigners asking similar kinds of questions earlier who had an other attempt to create a plantation in mind. We had to explain the link between GMSL and DF very properly. When we left the house of an elderly woman who would have been moved by the plantation, she commented that “there is apparently different kinds of Norwegians”.

## **Achievements**

In 2003 GMSL, often in cooperation with others, were behind 18 different campaign and lobby activities. More than 50 similar activities were carried out in 2004. In 2005 the number came down to 17.

It seems like GMSL has grown in respect over the years<sup>16</sup>. In the evaluation from 2003 a “knowledge gap” between the CO and the other members was highlighted. We did not encounter such comments. The respect for the CO is still there, but other people have risen to the occasion. Suranjan commented that the knowledge gap may never have been so large, but that the international NGOs perceived the staff having less knowledge while the problem is that they do not speak English. The representatives we spoke to from INGOs were all Sri Lankan, which could be the reason for the difference.

The representative from UNDP highlighted that GMSL is good on policy and legislation. Suranjan is a member of the National Steering Committee of the GEF / SGP program of the UNDP and as such contributes to screening, approving, monitoring and Evaluation..

We need watchdogs, but if you are always against every action then you get in trouble with the authorities. GMSL talks sense. They bring facts to the table. They bring in experts and try to make conversation. [...] The most effective arenas to influence policies are the face-to-face meetings and especially the donor meetings. However, you do not get to that level unless you have the support of the masses.

UNDP coordinator

The World Bank representative we talked to was very positive to NGOs engaging in debate over issues, though he did not find that all were equally constructive. He also admitted that not all of his colleagues are as positive. Constructive critique was welcome as it could provide valuable suggestions for the Bank and make them rethink issues. He said GMSL had grown into being more constructive over the years, though they could still grow a bit more. The FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation) representative did not agree with GMSL on the water-issues, though he could not separate GMSL’s stand from other organisations demonstrating against it. He praised the post-tsunami assessment that GMSL made for being out so early. There were other studies later on, but GMSL’s had been a good start and created a platform for discussion. FAO for instance made one only 18 months later.

On the other side, a couple of representatives from the NGO sector were saying that GMSL had become less visible and did not come out so clear around cases any longer. The proposed airport in Hambantota was used as an example. There was hinting of GMSL becoming too close with the organisations they are supposed to watch.

In the Church and Kiriwandeniya evaluation from 2003 it was mentioned that GMSL has to come up with political and practical alternatives. GMSL has worked on this issue. In Tantirimale they help the locals to improve their own agriculture, as opposed to the plantation that was planned. The same is being done in Eppawala. With the superhighways they have a clear stand on what roads to build and not to build, as well as a “plan b” for the farmers who are affected by the roads that GMSL and their allies have not been able to stop. The water policy issue is very complicated and we did not meet anyone who knew about a comprehensive solution provided by GMSL.. On the one hand they protest against the policy because it gives the government the right to charge for water usage which will be a disaster to the poor farmers, on the other hand they do not oppose to industry or people in urban areas having to pay for clean water. In the meantime use of water is unregulated and the source is getting smaller. In all the issues, GMSL could benefit from writing down, at least in short versions, what their stands are and make them available on the internet.

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<sup>16</sup> In this section we mention INGOs, but it is also relevant for media.

**Lost case: The micro power station in Ratnapura**

The issue of the micro power station was that they chopped down rare trees to make an ally from the station through the forest surrounding it. The work had already begun by the time Green launched the campaign. They spread information about the issue in the local village with help from the local Buddhist monastery. About 45 people from the village went to Colombo to demonstrate outside of the Ministry of Environment. It was too late to stop the progress of the project, but some damage control was still possible. The power station was cutting more trees than they needed to. 35 trees were earmarked to go, but according to an activist we met on our surprise visit they took down 100 odd trees and hid the bark so that the trees could not be identified. As a more long-term goal the campaigners wanted the forest secured as a national heritage site to prevent further damage. We met a labourer who were doing renovations at the local temple who was not worried about the trees. He said the power station made compensations to the people affected. They got cash, jobs, blocks for houses and later electricity. The labourer thinks about 150 people had jobs for two years during the building of the station. He did not oppose the project. He thinks it was OK, because he got some money out of it and now they have better access to electricity. He heard that there was a campaign but never saw it and did not know what it was about.

The activists we met had been to Colombo to demonstrate. He learned much about environmental protection from the campaign but was disappointed about the outcome. Nothing happened and nobody is interested anymore. The people in the village have other things to think about. There are more trees being chopped down, but he does not know what to do with it.

**Is a lost case always lost?**

The micro power station project is an example of how a lost case has some good sides. The activist we met had learned about environmental protection to an extent that he pointed out for us problems in the area. This is a success for the awareness programme, even though the specific campaign was lost. The success would have been even better though if the young man knew where to go with his information about the environmental damage he had identified. This is where GMSL should possibly look into more marketing of themselves during campaigns so that villagers would know how to reach them.

The issue of superhighways is another case where GMSL is slowly loosing. Any traveller in Sri Lanka will agree that the roads need improvement, but GMSLs stand is that what they need are improved roads to where people live, rather than superhighways in central areas. More importantly, as the fight against the roads gets gradually lost, they fight for the affected people's right to compensation. The roads go through multi purpose home gardens and the farmers are often bought off with less than their land's value. GMSL's research and interventions ensure that they get more.

The UNDP coordinator we talked to had in a previous job for the Wildlife Conservation Department encountered GMSL when they and other organisations demonstrated against visitors' centres in seven national parks. The project was called Protected area management and wildlife conservation project and was funded by ADB and World Bank. The department went ahead and built it, but it was made more environmental friendly because of the demonstrations.

**General awareness**

The campaign section at GMSL is not only aiming at one issue, but also to educate people about environmental issues in general. The outcome on this level varies between groups. Some stay in touch with GMSL on a regular basis and they learn through other activities, while others only do one activity and do not know so much about GMSL. The campaign section also has other educational activities that we did not have time to see.

The activists in Eppawala had for instance participated in protests against the superhighways, against water privatisation and in a campaign on an irrigation project in Anuradapura. They had participated in a replanting project with GMSL and learned about paddy cultivation without pesticides. GMSL has done a home garden course at the monastery and helped financing a fence to protect an area with many medicinal plants.

In Tantirimale the issue was rather different. The people there had barely heard of GMSL. Some of them knew that GMSL helped the local monk in the fight against the Cashew plantation and was ever so thankful for that. They also knew that GMSL does organic farming and were about to do a home garden course in the area, but they did not know what else GMSL does. When asked what they would do if a new threat to their environment arose, they said they would go to the monk.



*The Lunugamvehera water reservoir*

### **A long-term commitment**

Some of the cases Green engage in can last for very long time. The water issue comes back again and again. The superhighways issue has also been going on for years. The issue of the Lunugamveherawater reservoir stretches back to 1978. The reservoir was built with a loan from the Asian Development Bank and was finished in 1985. The area that was to benefit from the water originally had 6000 farmers, but another 9000 were moved to the area later. 100 000 people depending on water from the same reservoir. After two years they found that the reservoir turned out to collect less water than the ADB experts had estimated. There is not enough water for the farmers in the area. Sri Lanka is still paying back on the bond with ADB.

The farmers have since fought for more water to be led into the dam. There have been campaigns, awarenessraising, demonstrations and even an attempt to start digging a line themselves. Many organisations have been involved in their campaigning, and people at Green has been involved since before Green was started. Suranjan highlighted the issue at the ADB annual meeting in 2000, which lifted it to national level. The government promised to cut a line into the reservoir to increase the water levels by 2004. Most of the work on this line has been done, but it is not finalized. The result is that the water is still not there, but is expected to arrive in January 2007.

At the moment new issues are affecting in the same area. The government has decided to build a new international airport in the area, taking 5000 acres of land. The airport is expected to take water and it will harm birds that should be protected in that specific area.

The secretary of the Kirindioya Coordinating Farmers Association was praising the efforts Green has made in assisting their cause. He especially highlighted Greens awareness programme among the farmers.

### The Eppawala phosphate case

The struggle to safeguard the Eppawala phosphate reserves is an example of how Green works in cooperation with other organisations.

The issue in question is consecutive governments' attempt to sell rites to exploit the deposits. Sri Lanka does not have the technology to do high-level exploitation themselves and World Bank and ADB policies, including the PRSP, encourage privatisation of these kind of resources. This level of exploitation would harm the environment in which the phosphate is found and 12000 families could be displaced. Some of those who live there have been moved earlier because of other development projects.

The deposits have been mined in small scale since it was discovered in 1971 and the phosphate is mainly used in perennial crops such as rubber, tea and coconut. In 1992 the government asked for bids to buy it for the first time. The sale was defeated by the protests of the population and the political instability of the time. Another attempt in 1996 was also fought back. The buyer was the American company Freeport-McMoran. When a new attempt to sell was launched in 1998, a group of villagers filed a fundamental rights case in the Supreme Court. The court found that the villagers' rights had been violated and ordered that the phosphate reserve could not be sold unless certain preconditions were fulfilled. The result is an "internationally acclaimed landmark Judgement" which has later been published in full length a book the now retired judge A.R.B Amerasinghe has written on "The protection of culture, cultural heritage and cultural property". Amerashinge told us that the documentation provided to the court by the complainants were of good quality. It was the Environmental Foundation Ltd that was in charge of the legal issues with the campaign, while Green did research, awareness, media contact and organised the campaign on the ground in Eppawala. A group of ten people from Green walked from house to house to talk to people. Many other NGOs and trade unions joined in the demonstrations in Eppawala and Colombo, among the ones most mentioned being Monlar and the Sri Lanka Bank trade union. The Ven. Mahamankadawala Sri Piyathana of the local Buddhist monastery has been spearheading the campaigns and praised Green for teaching them how to campaign:

We had 10 000 protesters near the Bodhi tree in Anuradapura. Green showed us how to do the protests effectively. They got others involved and brought in the media. When the articles appeared in the papers it aroused the interest of scientists who got involved as well.

- Mahamankadawala Sri Piyathana

The monk is now a representative on the board for Lanka Phosphate Ltd, which is the local company doing the low-scale mining in the area. This gives him, and the other activists, early warnings if any threats are coming up.

One should think the case was now won, but there are still attempts to sell the phosphate reserve. In 2003 it was a Chinese prospective buyer and Green came to the support of the locals in the area with campaigning and posters. In 2005 there was another attempt that had to be fought off.

Any attempt to come in has to be more careful now. The phosphate can only be exploited with reports from experts and in line with the requirements laid down in the judgement. The freedom to do as they please has been restricted.

- Mahamankadawala Sri Piyathana

The Minister of Environment during the UNP government defended the sale of the reserve. He told us that if they save the reserve for later, it might lose its value as other inventions replace the use of phosphate.

Source: Interviews and the People's report on Sustainable Development Sri Lanka, 2002

## Internal evaluation

The campaigns are evaluated in meetings at GMSL and this is to some extent quite effective. In the case of campaigns there is often easy to measure if the concrete goal was reached. It is less easy to say if it was because of GMSL (in the case of cooperations) and in the “lost” cases, it is often difficult to say if things would have been different if they were done differently. However, looking more closely to what actually leads to the result is one way to become even better, and to find the answers, GMSL have to talk more systematically with the people on the ground after an intervention. Both in Tantirimale and by the micro power station, people found it strange that we came much later and asked questions.

## Comments and suggestions

Given the goals of the organisation, GMSL can be satisfied with the success of their project. At the concrete level of activities, the campaigns we looked at were both well organised and took advantage of cooperation with local and national NGOs. Not all campaigns lead to the wanted result, but even those who do not had elements of success towards the goals in them.

When it comes to awareness and empowering people, the result was varied, but generally good. People could explain their own issue well (and quite a few of our informants were very randomly run into when we visited the areas). In terms of other environmental issues it went from good to almost blank.

And for the overall goal of sustainable environment, the campaign topics are highly relevant for the environment and the participatory and inclusive methods (when they succeed) seems to create sustainability by empowering people.

Our main recommendation is to keep up the good work – and maybe focus more on campaigns and lobby again as the Tsunami workload goes down. People in and around GMSL supported this as well.

Secondly GMSL should give out more information about GMSL during campaigns. The contact with local communities depend too much on one person. GMSL should make it easier to contact GMSL when a case resurfaces.

Thirdly GMSL should go back for evaluation/impact assessments after some time. One reason is for learning about the actual campaign. Secondly to see if the impact of their success is actually what they assumed it would be.



*This house in Tantirimale was saved from becoming a cashewnutplantation*

## Alternative People’s Tribunals (APTs)

The team attended a national APT on human-elephant conflict that were held in Galgamuwa. The APT was attended by local people from four affected areas and they had each elected a spokesperson. Those were two farmers, one monk and a headmaster. The responding party were represented with two men representing the Wildlife Department and a woman working for an NGO. About 90 people attended in addition to the GMSL staff/volunteers and the panel of judges. Ca 20 of them were women.

The team also discussed expectations with the petitioners in a housing conflict in Hambantota district. They live in houses built after the Tsunami that are quite obviously of dangerously bad standard. A year after moving in, the doors are falling out, there are big cracks in the walls and floors and in one house a whole wall fell down. The APT on the issue took place while we were in Anuradapura. The donor who paid for the houses and the contractor were invited but did not attend. After submitting the report, we were told that this APT was not part of the DF funded project. We have kept it in the report anyway as an illustration of APTs.

Finally we talked to people who had attended the APT about the proposed cashewnut plantation in Tantirimale three years ago. The participants here talked of it as the large meeting (not APT). About 800 people attended, but not the people in the area who supported the proposed cashew plantation, though it was open for them.

The two first APT’s were chosen because they were taking place during our visit. The third was part of the campaign against the cashewnut plantation in Tantirimale that we had decided to look into.

### Goals

| Level of success <sup>17</sup> | Alternative Peoples Tribunals   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| V                              | Natural resource base sustained and nurtured for the enrichment of future generations.  |
| IV                             | The participants got more awareness on the issue in question and, if relevant, learned more about their rights, so as to be able to take action if a similar case comes up. |
| III                            | The case was solved in a satisfactory manner (usually that the side supported by GMSL got their wish through or a rightful compensation)                                    |
| II                             | The affected parties got together and their sides were heard. The judges/panel listened to what was said and delivered a report.  |
| I                              | The APT took place as planned and to the given budget   |

### Methodology

The first experiences with APTs for the people working with it today was in 1993/94, which is some time before GMSL was started. In 1996 it collapsed but were restarted again in 2003 under GMSL. The APT is like a court or a public hearing and the concept is taken from France and the Bertrams foundation.

The campaigns section and the media section cooperate with the legal section on the APTs. The APT itself is organised by the legal section, but the factual input is often from the campaigns unit.

<sup>17</sup> The explanation to this table is found in the previous chapter “Levels of success”



GMSL selects the three judges, who are experts in the relevant areas. They then call on the people to come and tell their problems to the judges. The judges report is sent to the authorities.

At the APT on the human elephant conflict a lawyer from GMSL led the proceedings. First the testimonials from the villagers were heard. Then the representatives from the ministry were allowed to cross-examine the villagers. Later the representatives from the Wildlife Department were examined and a person from GMSL's campaign-unit held a presentation with facts about the human-elephant conflict. The panel (two judges/lawyers and one journalist who has written a book about human-elephant conflict) got two weeks to write their "judgement".

The judgement is sent to the relevant authorities and institutions. A case might get solved at this point, which was what happened with the Cashew plantation case in Tantirimale. Otherwise the statements and the judgement might be used when the case moves on to formal legal action.

GMSL want to "outsource" the APTs from their organisation and make it an independent entity. The purpose is to make it a more independent entity. GMSL is often on the side of one of the parties in the APT, which does not go too well with the neutrality of the tribunal.

## Achievements

| Year | Theme   | Place                       | Participants | Outcome <sup>18</sup>  |
|------|---|-----------------------------|--------------|--|
| 2006 | The indigenous people of Sri Lanka  | North of Colombo            |              | To be held in December   |
| 2006 | Human-elephant conflict   |                             | 90           | Pending  |
| 2006 | Bad houses  | Hambantota                  |              | Pending  |
| 2005 | Environmental problems due to Micro hydro power station   | Kalawana, Rathnapura        |              | Decision were taken to institute legal action against the project.     |
| 2005 | Saddha Thissa Wewa. Encroachment of the land around the Wewa by outsiders disturbing the lives of the 40 traditional families living there. | Monaragala                  |              | President agreed to take necessary action after submitting the report. |
| 2004 | Drinking water project  | Kandupitiya, Puttalam       | 200          | Could be mitigated the bad effects                                     |
| 2004 | Forest fire protection  | Haputhale, Badulla          | 76           | Could be stop to firing that area                                      |
| 2004 | Discussion on the Kadupiti oya Nelum pokune project   | Puttalam                    | 50           |  |
| 2003 | Wild Life Conservation Project (WCP) under Protected Area management (PAM)  | Public Library Colombo      | 175          | An informative document was prepared                                   |
| 2003 | Construction work damaging Kantale dam  | Kantale, Trincomalee        | 75           |  |
| 2003 | Proposed cashew plantation  | Sandamaleliya, Anuradapura  | 800          | The plantation plans were stopped                                      |
| 2003 | Forest reserve in the catchment area in the Labugama reservoir  | Udaweragama temple, Colombo | 200          |  |

<sup>18</sup> All the information in this table is taken directly from the reports to the Development Fund.

### Human – elephant conflict

The conflict between humans and elephants is old, but the conflict and new developments are increasing it. On the one side elephants destroy crops and houses for villagers and kill people. On the other side elephants are killed by people, mainly for protection of crops. The problem is increasing. There are more people in need of land moving into elephant areas and more elephants are being pushed into human areas by different development projects (dams, plantations, industry, etc) in their present areas. In some areas the conflict between the government and LTTE is also pushing the elephants towards new areas. The following are the major projects that disturbed the elephant populations:

- Mahaveli project
- Lunugamwehera irrigation project
- Udawalawa left and right bank irrigation projects
- Higurana Sugar Project
- Sewanagala Sugar Project
- Palawatta sugar project

| Humans killed by elephants in Sri Lanka       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| (Source: Department of Wildlife Conservation) |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 1992  | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
| 22  | 60   | 55   | 57   | 47   | 54   | 53   | 81   | 63   | 44   |

According to the villagers presenting statements at the APT, elephants killed 123 people in 2005. The government give a compensation of ca 100 000 rupees to the family when a child is killed by an elephant, but the villagers complained that this took years to get. Wildlife officials teach people to chase the elephants away.

According to the website [www.elefantasia.org](http://www.elefantasia.org) quoting the Wildlife Department it is estimated that about 2500-3000 elephants are still found in the wild in Sri Lanka, and a further 500 are in captivity. An average of 150 elephants are killed every year. At the end of the 1980s the death toll were at average 50 elephants and 12 humans per year.

Sources: GMSL and <http://www.elefantasia.org/modules/news/article.php?storyid=155>

### Internal evaluation

We did not hear of any formal evaluation or written feedback on the APT's. They seem to be evaluated in meetings at GMSL together with discussion of other issues. The wish to separate the APT as an independent entity seems to be a result of such informal evaluation.

### Comments and suggestions

Our impression of the APTs is in general very positive. The style in which the APT on human elephant conflict was conducted was well organised and the systematic way of letting everyone air their view worked well. The courtroom style made an atmosphere of seriousness around it that probably added to people respecting others when they talked. The people from the Wildlife Department also found the APT a good way of exchanging views. The monk in Tantirimale (cashew nut plantation APT) said that the opposing party probably did not dare to come. This could maybe be avoided with more information on what an APT is. In a conflict situation, the structure of the APT can provide a controllable arena for exchange of views.

In view of the success-table above, we only met people from one APT after the event, being the ones in Tantirimale. In that case it was a success both in contributing to stopping the plantation and as the people we met who attended had good knowledge about the case. The last part is however also due to the information GMSL and others provided outside of the APT.

The fact that the respondents only occasionally turn up at the tribunals did not bother GMSL. The statements will be taken and the report written whether both sides are present or not. Since we only attended one APT, it is difficult to say how the others are, but we saw it as a great advantage that the respondents were present. If we look at another discussion we had with an INGO on other issues, the person said that organisations often come to the meetings with 60% of the information<sup>19</sup> and base their conclusions on that. Real discussion can only happen when the different views on the issues are clear to both sides and both sides know the facts on which the sides base their conclusions. In the APT the villagers and the ministry for example operated with different numbers on how many people who were killed by elephants in 2005. Such a disagreement on the factual base would go unnoticed if the Wildlife Department representatives were not there. We would recommend that GMSL make a stronger effort to ensure that the respondents do actually participate.

And whether the respondents come or not, we believe that the information sent out by GMSL to the respondents (and maybe also the other participants) should be more comprehensive. The respondents in the APT on human elephant conflict had only received a note requesting their attendance. They did not know what an APT was about and did not even get a telephone number to someone they could ask. This did not only make it difficult for them to prepare, or even send the right person, but also make the APT look less professional than it really is.

The idea that the Tribunals should be singled out as an independent entity (as far as is possible) is good. It can hopefully make the different parties see the neutrality in the courtroom as a real one, and also free GMSL to air their view properly.

A second advantage of outsourcing the APT could be that the APT could take on cases for other organisations. The use of APTs as a method in GMSL's work seems to be relevant. When it comes to the issues the relevance is more debateable. The human elephant conflict is a traditional environmental issue and relevant. The cashew nut plantation is also relevant for GMSL's policy of supporting traditional, organic small scale farming rather than plantations. The housing issue in Hambantota is less relevant. It is definitely a valuable cause, but we struggle to see how it falls within GMSL's mandate as an environmental organisation. The APT is a good concept for problem solving of many kinds. It should however not always be GMSL's responsibility and expense to research and prepare for the cases. Making the APT an independent entity could make it accessible for others and leaving GMSL to be the expert researchers within their own field.



*A houseowner show us how the doorframe is falling out on her new house in Hambantota.*

<sup>19</sup> This was used in a context where Green was praised for being better prepared.

**The housing APT in Hambantota district**

Green has a home garden project in an area in Hambantota district where 50 houses were financed by an organisation of movie stars after the Tsunami. The owners could move in in April 2005, but after only a month problems begun to show. There are now huge cracks in the walls, doorframes are falling out and the too thin cement floors are breaking up. One house literally fell down and the family living there had to move. The villagers informed the contractor, who has done nothing to improve the houses. At one point he tried to buy himself out of the problem by providing TV's as compensation, having illiterate villagers signing forms that prevented them from further claims. That attempt ended in the contractor being chased away. Then he came with engineers and said they would come back to fix it, but he did not return.

The villagers did not know who to go to with their problem. Several organisations have looked at the damage, but none could provide any help. Eventually Green decided to take action. Photos and other documentation of the damages were collected and the villagers were informed that they should take legal action. The villagers want money or material as compensation. An APT was planned for December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006 to collect the statements from the villagers. Neither the funding organisation nor the contractor came to the APT, though they were invited. The statement from the panel was not finished by the end of this evaluation.

## Media

The information and media section at GMSL covers many different activities. We focused on their relation to Sri Lanka's media and especially the newspapers.

The role of the media is debated. Some of the non-media people we talked to said that the media has a big role in Sri Lanka. If you get the media to write the right article, people will take to the streets. Others claimed that media does not have much influence, particularly in areas like environment, because people have other important issues to deal with.

The media is not formally hindered by strong censorship, but the ownership of the newspapers have influence in what is published. The political parties have their own papers that will write positively about their side and quite unfavourably about the opposition. Some business tycoons have their own papers. The conflict between the government and LTTE dominates the news. The education levels in Sri Lanka are rather high and the literacy rate is very high. Newspapers reach a wide audience. There are also many papers in circulation in English, Sinhala and Tamil. TV is also a very important medium. On our field trips we encountered TVs in almost all houses and for some illiterate people we interviewed TV is their main source of information. The quality of the TV productions are however not very impressive.

## Goals

| Level of success <sup>20</sup> | Media coverage   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| V                              | Natural resource base sustained and nurtured for the enrichment of future generations.   |
| IV                             | The journalists got more interest and awareness on environmental matters and continued to cover environmental issues. The readers got more awareness on the issue in question and change their lifestyle. The readers who are in positions of power got more awareness on environmental issues and changed their policies accordingly. |
| III                            | Articles/news reports which where correct and highlighted the issues GMSL focus on were printed/aired. The specific issue in question got attention from people and relevant leaders and it helps towards the wanted solution.   |
| II                             | The journalists read the press release/attended the press conference/journalist field trip and understood the issue in question.   |
| I                              | The press release/press conference/journalist field trip etc took place as planned and to the given budget   |

## Methodology

The information and media unit does not have press campaigns of their own but act on requests from the other departments to get media attention to their work.

The Media Unit disseminates GMSL news by way of:

- Press Releases as and when the need arises.
- Press Conferences on a monthly basis
- Through the magazines '*Arana*' in Sinhala and '*Vidhanam*' in Tamil- published six times a year.
- Video clippings supplied for TV news items.
- Through documentaries produced in-house

<sup>20</sup> The explanation to this table is found in the previous chapter "Levels of success"

- Through their website at [www.greensl.net](http://www.greensl.net), which is only in English

GMSL has a contact list of people working in national media who get the press releases and invitations to press conferences.

Sometimes GMSL takes local journalists with them to the field. It can be to attend a demonstration or an APT or to look at some ongoing project like the housing projects. GMSL makes sure the journalists have transport.

## **Achievement**

### *Knowledgeable and adequately qualified personnel*

The staff members in the media unit are knowledgeable about the work. They seem to be adequately qualified while there is still the potential to improve further. The media unit has given adequate back up to the other units and the cooperation between them seems to go well.

GMSL has a large number of press clippings related to their work and can list a number of radio interviews. Their appearances on TV are more limited. They succeed fairly well in having their publicity material published, especially in certain campaigns. Their interaction with the existing print and electronic journalists is limited to a small number compared to the media sector in Sri Lanka.

### *Press conferences*

The monthly press conferences are also reasonably well attended by 19-20 journalists who come on a regular basis. The conferences are held each month and there has not been a problem that GMSL does not have any news to report to the journalists who come. They are anyway discussing to hold press conferences in relation to cases rather than as a regular event.

### *Successful media coverage*

Press coverage is especially important when GMSL wants to raise an issue from local to national level. The Buddhist monk who spearheads the Eppawala phosphate case pointed specifically at GMSL's work with the media as an important contribution from them and the Eppawala case is one that has reached a large number of people through the media coverage.

### *GMSL not known as a source*

The media give insufficient publicity for the GMSL as an organization. It is common that the media takes the info from GMSL but fails to acknowledge GMSL as the source.

## **Comments by people in the media**

We interviewed seven journalists/editors about GMSL's work with media. Some are on the media list of GMSL. The others were not on the list but are media heads/regular writers on environmental issues for the print media. We asked them questions about the press releases, press conferences, field trips, the news value of GMSL's issues and the quality of the information.

Those on the Media list of the GMSL have indeed received the Press releases of the GMSL. Those not on the list have received only one or two press releases. The Sinhala press releases were well received and all had positive comments about their quality. The most common comment about the quality of the English press releases was that they "need to be improved". Only people who were on the list had attended press conferences.

Those who have received the press releases and those who have read the articles in which GMSL is quoted say that the quality of information is exceptionally good as no one has ever

challenged the facts and information given by GMSL and they have found the information to be always accurate.

#### *More field visits required*

Those on the list have gone on field visits taken by GMSL at least once and they say it is a good idea and relevant to take the journalists on field visits where they can see the work first hand. However they say this does not happen often and that more visits are necessary in order to get an on the spot, wider coverage of the work of GMSL. A problem for the journalists is often lack of knowledge of the field and this kind of education for the journalists could prove very productive.

They feel that there is news value in GMSL issues but as a whole that newspapers here do not seem to have sufficient space for environmental issues with top priority being given to other issues like security news.

#### *Tap more environmental journalists*

A common comment by both the Sinhala and English media are that there should be more journalists who should be tapped for writing on environment issues. They should be contacted, nurtured, educated and made to understand about all the issues GMSL is handling. Not just the one they are highlighting on at that moment of time, but all work GMSL is involved in and keep updating the information to them. To give all the necessary information up to the point of having the information published.

There should be more interaction and coordination with the press and electronic media. GMSL lacks interest to develop new contacts. Mailing of GMSL news not wide enough.

#### *Take on day-to-day issues*

GMSL was encouraged to take up day to-day environmental issues (general issues) and not necessarily only one-off issues for campaigns. Waste management was used as an example.

#### *More awareness on GMSL organisation*

A common comment was that there seem to be a need for a promotional campaign of GMSL organization and its work itself. This in turn will help the public to rally around the organization and its issues far quicker and get more public support for their causes. There is a lack of knowledge on a wider scale on some of the work of GMSL. There is a group who know and there is a section of the public who know but there is a larger majority out there who do not. If they do they would most certainly join in. Therefore there is a need to make an effort towards achieving a wider audience that is much needed by creating more awareness of the GMSL projects. This the Media Unit can do to improve the organisation's strength island-wide.

## **Internal evaluation**

#### *No comprehensive internal evaluations*

We did not hear of any comprehensive evaluations of the media work. Again evaluation is done in meetings at GMSL after the different events. Evaluating the impact of media coverage is a difficult task and too large for GMSL to do individually. More discussion with media people about what they need to produce good articles could however be productive. It would also be valuable to ask decision makers what made them make up their opinions, including the role of media. We met too few decision makers to get data on this. It seems that decisions are made based on personal contact and that the opportunity to get personal contact with decision makers comes from among other things media coverage. This hypothesis could be tested.

## Comments and suggestions

There is no doubt that the media section is doing good work and they put in long working hours. The indicators of their success are the considerable amount of press clippings and the good response we got from the media people. To live up to the ambitions, they would need more staff. However, with the resources they have, there are a few areas they could improve:

### *Expand and update the media list*

The Media Unit must expand and update their media list to cater to a larger number of journalists. It is at present relatively small against the number of media institutions in the country. All media (leaders/ Heads / Editors) should be on the media list. Compared to the efforts put into creating material and arranging press conferences or field trips, spreading the information to more people is a small task that could pay off well. More than one person at each media institution can be on the list, as the main contact sometimes is too busy, while there are others who might have time and interest. Press information should be sent by mail/fax as a physical letter is more difficult to overlook than an e-mail. GMSL should consider sending Arana/Vidhanam to certain relevant journalists for education and keeping them updated.

The person who do the press monitoring for GMSL could be asked to keep an eye out for journalists and other writers who seem interested in the field and get them to write in ways that could make them cover more of GMSL issues. In this way GMSL can avoid restricting to the journalists who have been on the environmental subject for years and get in touch with new and maybe more eager journalists. This information must be included when updating the media list.

GMSL should take more media personnel on arranged trips to the field to witness GMSL projects first hand. This was clearly a popular initiative among the journalists and contributes to long term interest in the issues and more knowledge. The human-elephant conflict is for instance a national issue of high interest. At the APT we attended GMSL had the background research available on the spot. Both sides of the conflict were present and available for interviews. GMSL's staff came across as very serious, knowledgeable and well prepared. For a journalist it would be an excellent opportunity to do a comprehensive article on the issue with minimal effort but only one outside media person was present.

### *Media unit should expand*

If more resources were available, the media unit needs to expand by way of staff strength and office space. The number of media staff may be inadequate if there are simultaneous campaigns running, in order to handle the publicity more effectively. The media unit would be more effective if housed in the same building as the other departments, especially the library, Campaign department and the Legal department. At the moment GMSL is spread out in three buildings and although the distance between these buildings is not much, it affects the efficiency of communication.

The Media Unit members can have more specialized training in their respective specialized fields. More foreign exposure and education on the latest technology and methods in video filming and press release writing required. Periodical visits by media experts are required to give advice and guidance to improve these sectors. There are international NGOs working with building capacity in local media production for organisations like GMSL. This could be explored to obtain more training and maybe funding. The unit would benefit from getting the necessary equipment to make TV quality films. The relevance of providing good TV footage is high given the importance TV has as a medium for the general population. The evaluating team finds the quality of their filming and mixing adequate to move to that level. There is however large space for improvement on sound recording.

### *Need for more awareness on GMSL itself*

GMSL is deliberately not putting much effort into promoting themselves through the media work. For them the issue in question has highest priority and the messenger is less important. It is good



that it is not the opposite, but GMSL could benefit from being a bit more known. If the responses we have received reflect the general views of the media, then GMSL is a quality stamp on a press release or report. GMSL could nurture this reputation and by doing so make the journalists and editors more likely to take up their case next time they see the GMSL logo on a letter. GMSL could also mention to the journalists that they would appreciate to be named as the source when they are quoted. In some of the articles we saw, leaving out GMSL as a source was poor journalism, but maybe poor communication in the part of GMSL, especially if it is a continued occurrence.

*Aiming where it matters to achieve the objective- do a study, evaluate and target*

Finally, using the media is highly relevant for information, mobilisation and attracting attention from business and political leaders. GMSL could however be more clear about which media they choose to work through and why. The media unit see themselves as a service unit for the other units/sections at GMSL. A strategy for which media they use and why they do it is necessary in order to spend their energy on the most effective issues. Media is not only a tool for attention issues of the other sections at GMSL, but a channel for educating people of a wider spectrum. GMSL should look more at whom they should reach through to, which media and what message they need to send to get through to those people.

## Sustainable nutritional gardens

The introduction of sustainable nutritional gardens, normally called home gardens, started in 2004 in Galle, Ratnapura and Kalutara under the project *Promoting sustainable agriculture systems*. We visited home gardens in Ratnapura, but these were from 2006. We tried to find the 2004 gardens in Kalutara, but no-one at GMSL's office knew where they were. The woman in charge of the project has left the organisation. Instead we visited a project from 2005 in the same area. In 2005 the project was expanded to 10 districts. Most projects are implemented on request from the member organisations or government officials. The 2004 project was too spread out to be possible to effectively monitor, so from 2005 they focus on more farmers within limited areas. The project has gone in the direction of only targeting women (which are at the moment 80% of the participants) and plan to focus more on poorer communities. The projects we visited in Kalutara were done through the Samurdi Bank Society, which automatically means that the beneficiaries are poor. GMSL was also about to start a home garden project in Tantirimale, which was by looks of the houses and education levels probably the poorest community we visited.

### Goals

| Level of success <sup>21</sup> | Home garden project  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| V                              | Natural resource base sustained and nurtured for the enrichment of future generations.   |
| IV                             | The participants spread their knowledge about home gardens to other people. They also have increased awareness on other environmental issues and implement environmental friendly lifestyle. |
| III                            | The participants implement what they have learned in their own home gardens. The outcome in terms of yields, nutrition value and income/saved food expenses is as expected.                  |
| II                             | The participants attended and participated actively in the trainings. They show understanding of the issues taught.  |
| I                              | The home garden training took place as planned and to the given budget   |

The goals of the home gardens according to conversations with GMSL are to

- Create ecological, effective gardens based on indigenous agricultural traditions without using pesticides. Re-establish old values in home gardening.
- Have the home gardeners growing more diverse and more nutritious plants for home consumption and create awareness on nutritious food
- Ensure food security using the home gardens as a base and subsidiary creating an extra income and/or save food expenses for the home gardeners
- Create awareness on waste management and generally raise awareness on environmental issues

### Methodology

Most home garden projects are the response to requests, often from member organisations. Once GMSL responds to a request, they go to the area and have an awareness session with the prospective participants. Afterwards those who want to can join the course. The groups are

<sup>21</sup> The explanation to this table is found in the previous chapter "Levels of success"

usually 25-35 people and a test-plot is chosen for the practical teaching. The length of the course is not definite. The Kalutera gardeners got a 7 days course. Training is given about:

- organic fertilizers and pesticides (which are both healthy and can be made at home)
- indigenous growing methods and permaculture, they grow vegetables, spices and medical herbs
- how to grow own seedlings and find seeds themselves (so as to not be dependent on buying seeds)
- compost making
- how to sustain the gardens through hard rains and droughts
- recycling waste to grow plants in (plastic bags, bottles, coconut husks, etc)
- general environmental protection

New issues are included in the curriculum as they arise through the trainings. Tips from participants in one area might be used in other areas.

The teaching is both theoretical and practical. Much of the “classes” take place in the field with the students doing practical exercises. Academics and GMSL staff members make talks. Leaflets and booklets are distributed to everyone. A book published by GMSL is given out to share. There is one book per five people. This book is the same that the teacher uses as his manual. The group get follow up by GMSL staff two to five times after the course is over. Follow up depends on both how easy it is for GMSL staff to get to the area and how much follow up that are needed.

The “classes” are divided into groups of five with one leader who stays in touch with the office via telephone and letters. The women’s organisation in Ratnapura had a coordinator who went around to each home gardener for follow-up and advice. GMSL tries to get a similar contact person in each area. Once a year these are invited to a seminar. The second of these seminars was about to take place in late December.

The newer home gardeners have log-books where they keep track of what they grow and how much the harvest of each vegetable.

When GMSL does their organic paddy farming courses, they make different paddies next to each other with some traditional ones and some alternative ones, so that the villagers can see how different ways of growing affects the paddy. In two of the areas we visited, there were “model home gardens” elected from the participants’ gardens that others could come and look at.

## **Achievement**

The home gardens we visited were quite impressive and the knowledge the participants had on plants and methods indicates that the courses have been good. The participants were very happy with the outcome of the course. They had more variety of vegetables for consumption and a very welcome extra income. We are very aware that the people we met mostly were the most motivated in the groups. Two of them had the sign saying that they were model gardens outside their houses. In Kalamatiya we went for a walk to see the other gardens and the level of implementation varied. We talked to one family who had not implemented the project and they said they would have like to, but did not have the time as a new baby had arrived just recently. We met with another group of women who had had training in organic paddy growing who were very eager to get the home garden course. These women had seen a 20% increase in yields from their paddy after changing to organic methods. The demonstration garden owner in Kalamatiya could also report that women from the nearby village (who did not get the post-tsunami benefits) had come to her house to learn some of the techniques.

The “oldest” home gardener we met had learned his skills in 2005. This project does not get regular follow up from GMSL anymore. The gardener said he would like to get further training, but did not need more follow-up from GMSL on the techniques he had already learned.

The level of knowledge about other environmental issues varied among the home gardeners. Some had attended a meeting on water policy, whereas others mentioned sand mining. Most had learned about waste management and implemented this knowledge in their daily life. None had read the Arana magazine, which is not distributed to the home gardeners.

| Year | Organisation   | Town, district | Participants |
|------|--|----------------|--------------|
| 2005 | Women's group  | Hambantota     | 400          |
| 2005 | Women's group  | Kegalle        | 70           |
| 2005 | Women's group  | Matara         | 400          |
| 2005 | Mihikatha Women's Foundation                                 | Galle          | 60           |
| 2005 | Panduka Organization   | Kurunegala     | 90           |
| 2005 | Ekkabadda Praja Grama<br>Sanwardena Kantha Maha<br>Sangamaya | Rathnapura     | 200          |
| 2004 | Women's group  | Kalutara       | 40           |
| 2004 | Women's group  | Ratnapura      | 75           |
| 2004 | Women's group  | Galle          | 40           |
| 2004 | Panduka Organization   | Kurunegala     | 50           |

### Comments by the participants

The comments from the participants were very positive. They did not have many suggestions to add to the project either. They were satisfied with both the trainings and the follow-up. Interestingly the ones who received the most follow up were the ones who emphasised the most how much it was needed.

“There has been a huge difference. So many things improved. I am shocked of the change.” – Home gardener, Kalutera

The women at Ratnapura suggested that the teaching material included more practical examples of what other people had done. They would like to publish a whole book on such experiences. Including these kinds of issues in the material was also, independently, the suggestion of GMSLs project coordinator in Hambantota.

The motivation for the women to join were mainly increased health for their families and saving money on seeds and pesticides. They also felt more empowered through their ability to contribute more money and food to the family, as well as from doing something that attracted interest from others. Several people mentioned better family life as an outcome.

When poverty enters the house at the front, love goes out the back.

- Farmer leader in Hambantota

The women we met are not the poorest of the poor. In Hambantota they are the beneficiaries of houses and boats from Tsunami-funding, which have increased their material living standard to higher than the neighbouring villagers. (Though living in a nice house does not mean that the family has high income, given the circumstances under which the houses were given.) In Ratnapura the coordinator from the women's organisation said they had some with higher income and some with less than the ones we met. They had recently done an effort to reach out to the poorer by “giving them a push-start”. For those poorer families, tools seemed to be a problem to participate.

## Internal evaluation

The home garden project is under continuous development based on informal feedback from the participants in the field. New techniques and tips have been included in the curriculum because participants asked for specific issues or suggested techniques. The home garden farmer we talked to in Kalutera had for instance invented his own organic pesticide, which had become part of the courses afterwards.

A questionnaire about the Home Gardens has been distributed to one of the first areas where the project has been implemented and the answers are due just before new year. The questions are detailed on what the participants have implemented of what they learned, how the group meetings are going and what they discuss, to what extent the participants are exchanging tools and food and how many of the farmers “old” activities (eg. use of pesticides) she has given up on. The participants are also asked to comment on their health. The plan is to use this questionnaire in other geographical areas when the participants have had time to work on their gardens for a while.

Most of these issues are about the content of the curriculum. There were less discussions of the pedagogical side of the project. In our findings, the participants were satisfied with the teaching and expressed good understanding of what they had been taught. They were all happy with the follow up after the course.

None of the beneficiaries we met had been asked for feedback on the learning material, but one of the local coordinators at GMSL had provided some comments that were to be included in a forthcoming revised book. The questionnaire does not have questions about the written material. The participants were happy about the book and the copies they received, but most of the gardeners we met seemed rather indifferent to the material as they felt they knew the techniques without consulting the book. Some wanted to read more about practical experiences from other gardeners and one person suggested that they should contribute with tips to other farmers.

## Comments and suggestions

The general view is again that GMSL here has a good project. It is implemented in a good manner and is very popular. We found some examples of participants passing on their knowledge to others, which is promising for sustainability. The project is also relevant to the overall goals of GMSL in that it contributes to less pollution, better waste management, saving of water and healthier food for the participants.

The women at the organic rice paddy project wanted a tractor and the Sri Rohan Haritha Parshadaya (who were also an organic farming project) said they needed more tools as well as a motorbike to travel to their paddy fields. After all the donations after the tsunami people has gotten more used to receiving help and materials from outside. We can not say if this is the case with these specific organisations, but GMSL should keep their focus on people helping themselves. In the Ford Foundation-supported project GMSL manages in Batticaloa (which we did not visit) there is an element of micro credit included. The organisation there has linked up with experts on micro credit. GMSL's role in areas where the local partners do not have this link would be to put their beneficiaries in touch with expert organisations.

The projects we visited provide unique opportunities for a comparative study of different settings. The women's organisation took on participants who wanted to join the project. In Kalamatiya the beneficiaries were people who had received houses from GMSL, and all were included in the course, interested or not. The short term and long term sustainability in the two areas could be rewarding to compare.

As more gardens are established, there will be too many for GMSL staff to visit on a regular basis. Training of trainers to have the role that coordinator has in the women's organisation and

GMSL's coordinator has in Hambantota, preferably from within the group/CBO/NGO would be a good contribution to sustainability of the project. GMSL should also look towards training people centrally. One person with assistants does all the trainings today.

## Other activities

The four issues discussed are only part of what GMSL does with support from the DF core project. They were chosen so that we would have time to look more in depth into issues. That made them come on behalf of other activities, which we will more superficially mention here. The activities are listed as they are in the proposals and not sorted by implementing section in GMSL. In addition to the activities mentioned under, GMSL have other activities funded by other projects.

### **Legal aid system to educate people on environmental laws and to take legal action if and when necessary.**

The Legal Aid section provides legal aid, education and research. Most of the focus has been to provide assistance to development victims of large scale development projects proposed by the IFIs and the Government. These services are provided for the most marginalized, socially, politically, economically and culturally victimized communities in Sri Lanka.

The legal section also has an education program. .

This is mainly rights based and address fundamental and environmental rights of the people. GMSL educate CBOs, NGOs and relevant Government officials on the implications of the Environment and Development acts.

Legal research has been conducted for public interest litigation, Alternative People's Tribunals, mediation, redress and relief for victims of the tsunamis, and specific areas where in-depth study is required.

### **Establishment of environmentally friendly consumer societies**

GMSL has school programs for O and A level students on consumer rights and help establishing consumer organisations. The ideological base is to create a fully aware consumer and the focus areas are food, pharmaceuticals and services such as transportation and telecommunications.

In all the projects aimed at grass-roots levels there is an element of awareness on products, services and policy affecting the consumer both directly and indirectly. In addition, as and when required, the legal aid section also contributes. They file cases against violations of consumer rights. In 2006 they had for instance a hearing about alcohol and tobacco advertising being aimed at youth.

### **Technical and institutional programme, aka Institutional strengthening and capacity building of network members**

In this section, GMSL provide institutional and technical support for the member organisations. In 2006 they did capacity building programmes on sustainable development, women and development. They also give support to best practice initiatives and help the building of community organisations (in 2006 in the Tsunami housing villages).

### **Regional and international linkage building and networking activities**

GMSL cooperate with national and international organisations on environmental issues. They are represented on advisory boards and participate in international conferences. The Chief Organizer holds the majority of these positions.

### **Media and information centre**

The people at the media and information centre produce own media for communication with member organisations and for use in the educational programmes, they monitor external media for the organisation and are in charge of media contact connected to campaigns. They are also in charge of the library at GMSL and maintains a press cutting file.

### *Video production*

GMSL is mainly producing video for their own educational programmes and plans are afoot to undertake productions of outside documentaries. They have made one 20 minutes documentary for Oxfam.

The limitation to the video production at the moment is partly the technical quality. GMSL information staff wanted beta camera and beta players to be able to produce the quality normally required for public screening. There have been some examples of TV channels using GMSL footage in their news reports, but these are few.

Some of the programmes showed on TV in Sri Lanka are of surprisingly low quality. The filming and editing in the video about the Hambantota housing project (which is the only one we had time to watch) were of much higher quality than these, which should indicate that there are possibilities for GMSL to produce TV material if the issue is right. The frequency of TVs in relatively poor areas was surprisingly high<sup>22</sup> and TV is the main source of news for some of the illiterate people we met.

### *Arana and Vidhanam magazines*

We initially planned to get feedback on the Arana and Vidhanam magazines that GMSL produce six times a year. Arana is in Sinhala and Vidhanam is in Tamil and the content is generally the same in both. Short after this evaluation the first English language newsletter came out. The goal of the magazines is to raise awareness and educate the target groups on environmental issues. Arana and Vidhanam is distributed to the member organisations and through the schools programme. The member organisations have to pay for the magazine. There are also some libraries and schools subscribing to the magazines and GMSL give away some to relevant people. As we did not meet with participants in the schools programme and met only a few member organisations, we did not meet anyone outside of GMSL who said they had read the magazines. The magazines have never been evaluated formally, but this is wanted by the media and information department in GMSL. They say shortage of funding is the barrier to do so, as they want to hire an external expert to do the evaluation.

We find an evaluation of the magazines to be a very good idea. If lack of funding is an issue, GMSL could very well make their own evaluation through questionnaires sent out with the magazine and keep the cost to postage for returns and the effort to analyze the data. (And maybe a day or two of help to develop the questionnaire from an expert.) It could be a good learning experience for the department. We recommend that an evaluation, in addition to mapping the interest of the readers and how much the magazines are actually read, include questions to reveal

- to what extent the content of the magazines have empowered the reader to change his or her behaviour in environmental issues or to participate in campaigns
- to what extent the content has been used as a reference in (school) papers, articles, speeches etc, and
- to what extent the magazines reach the right target groups.

It should also contain open questions to give the respondents a chance to come with suggestions.

### *Library*

The library is located in a building about 50 metres from the main GMSL office. It contains a decent number of books and magazines. The 30 000<sup>23</sup> rupees budget is spent on literature on environment, biodiversity and legal issues. The books are bought on request from the staff members. Donated books and gifts have helped expanding it.

The library is not used as much as GMSL initially hoped for. It used to be located within the main office and was then more used by the staff themselves. It now gets some visits from students

<sup>22</sup> There is a 95% penetration of TV according to GMSL.

<sup>23</sup> A few examples of non-fiction books in Colombo indicate that the average price of a reasonably regular English language book is just under 1000 rupee.



from the nearby university, but is mainly used by staff – though sometimes for checking information requested by external contacts. GMSLs office is not centrally located for politicians or media, so getting there require time and special interest. There is no track record of users of the library. The only record is of people who take out books.

There is a bimonthly lecture series held at the library.

### **Disaster Management and Information Project**

DMIP was started as a response to disaster management by the government, mainly through the army, being a “not so pleasant experience”. According to the DMIP guidelines, the project was started in 2003 in collaboration with the Disaster & Development Centre at Northumbria University in the Great Britain, but according to interviews, not many activities had been undertaken before the Tsunami hit at the end of 2004. It is first mentioned as part of the DF funded core project in the proposal for 2005, but there is nothing about it in the 2005 report. (Tsunami-related projects became a large section outside of the core project in 2005). The first activities reported under the core project are therefore in the mid-year report for 2006. These activities were

- monitoring land slide risk areas
- information gathering on fire risk in slums
- meetings with local people and with authorities
- relief to land slide victims

While we visited GMSL the DMIP unit was preparing for a workshop with children in the East who needed tutoring because they had lost out on classes due to natural disaster.

The work of the unit is to do research and provide education in vulnerable areas before a disaster happens and mitigate the difficulties after a disaster has happened. The awareness raising includes how to prevent or reduce the effect of a disaster, as well as people’s rights in an emergency situation, where aid is to be found and how to get it. The mitigation is short and long term aid to the affected people. The unit does gap-filling between the other NGOs, CBOs and government agencies in the area, trying to direct people to the right organisation if it exists.

The DMIP continues to be a considerable part of the total work of GMSL, but seemingly with other funding. It was not a major part of the project we evaluate here and it was not included in the draft proposal to DF for 2007/2008. The only related activity we saw were the Tsunami-housing project in Kalamatiya. A post Tsunami problem is that people who suddenly have nice houses still don’t have a livelihood or get help to handle their traumatic experiences. GMSLs project had a good reputation with local coordinators because of working with local organisations, including livelihood activities (home gardens) and organising the people who got the houses. A playground was also planned but not built because the project ran out of money.

### **Agriculture**

In addition to home gardens and organic farming, the agricultural department has trainings on sustainable agriculture for youth in schools aged 12-15 years. GMSL is also planning to have a national agrarian policy formulated along with a national people’s agricultural council

### **Indigenous knowledge systems**

GMSL document indigenous knowledge and disseminate this. It is practically put to use in the agricultural projects.

## The web-pages<sup>24</sup>

The web-pages of GMSL have a professional look and are illustrated with beautiful photography. The layout is in principle easy to navigate, but it is not consistent so it is easy to miss out on some important information. You have to find the campaigns section to find what GMSL is actually doing, which is found in a left column. This column changes with the pages. If you are in the Eppawala phosphate case page, the column is called Current activities and provide links to interesting, though old, pages on DMIP, ADB watch, the Green Brigade, etc. If you are in the page for the More and Better Campaign, the same column still has the title Current activities, but contain PRSP, Eppawala, Water policy, etc, though still not with new information. In the historic page the column lists the activities of GMSL quite equal to how they are listed in the proposals to DF, but there are no links to more information.

The web-pages are in English only. The colourful words used to explain what GMSL is makes it exciting and often poetic English, but I sometimes struggle with the meaning of some of words and am sure others do as well.

The pages are inaccessible for the same group of people that GMSL say do not have access to Environmental Impact Assessments because they are in English. Most people in rural areas do not speak or read English. When confronted with this, GMSL replied that they have tried to make web pages in Sinhala/Tamil and the project did not work. The target group does not have access to Internet. 1,4% of the Sri Lankan population has access to Internet according to the web-page Internet World Stats (2006), quoting the International Telecommunication Union. And even if internet is available and some web-pages are in Sinhala/Tamil, the software is in English and require some understanding of that language. Whether to make pages in Sinhala/Tamil depends on whom GMSL want to reach. It might be too early to prioritize more languages at this point, but several efforts are in motion to provide Internet to the rural areas, so GMSL should keep an eye on those developments and especially those aimed at the youth.

There is also some documentation GMSL has produced in Sinhala/Tamil that could be spread further by others who do have Internet access. The articles from Arana/Vidhanam and the press releases could be of interest for the few students who have access, as well as for journalists. And the translations of English documents that GMSL makes for their campaigns should be available for other organisations, researchers, investors and politicians. It could add to the efficiency of the dissemination of information and it could be of help for

others who want to engage on GMSL's side in an issue but do not have the information needed. It would also increase transparency and it would show concretely the efforts GMSL does do reach out to people. Neither of

these efforts would create much extra work, as it is already produced material and could be posted among the English pages.

Looking at the web as an outsider before I went to visit GMSL, the main impression was that it takes some work to find concrete information and it does not give a good overview of the whole organisation. There are large words about preserving the environment for coming generations and the fields in which GMSL work are mentioned, but *what they do* and *how* could be clearer. There are some good exceptions: The snapshots in the campaign section give a good idea of a



*Youth learning to use computers and internet at Galkanda Viharaya (temple); the centre for the Eppawala phosphate campaign.*

<sup>24</sup> This section on the web-pages was done on request from DF after returning from Sri Lanka. It only reflects the views of Kiøsterud.

collection of activities. Though they do not carry dates, they seem a bit outdated, but the concept works. If you download the word/pdf files under the “reading room” you find concrete documents, but they are mainly old. (Water policy campaign is from 2001, Highway project from 2002, Turuwila Tank Project is from 2002, the Setusamudram Canal document, marked “new”, is from August 2005)

It is not so clear where GMSL stands politically. I do not find the pages politically misleading but a bit imprecise. It is similar to the anti-globalisation movement being against globalisation but pro globalisation of the movement. The web-pages express a stand against “development aggression”. At the same time the agricultural projects of GMSL are development projects and GMSL themselves speak much of “sustainable development”. There are certain types of development GMSL is against. The choice of issues GMSL work with will give the reader a good idea of what kind of development they are against, but that require that the reader already know the issues a bit from before.

In their campaigns and projects, GMSL support the small scale (paddy) farmer, using indigenous methods of agriculture and low scale utilization of natural resources. This is reasonably reflected on the web pages.

This paragraph from the research page is also fitting:

In a world where there is a constant battery of so-called "evidence" that is supposed to "prove" that destructive methods of living are in fact to be espoused and propagated, it is imperative that we as a group have alternative mechanisms to counter them. To this end, we have built up a formidable team of loosely affiliated researchers who study environment, organic methods, alternative fuel sources and other techniques that have minimal impact on fragile bio-systems.

The stands on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and its support from the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) could be said to be stauncher on the web pages than when you talk to them or talk to UNDP and the World Bank about GMSL.

What happened was that the government, with a lot of aid from the IFIs formulated a plan that would make a few individuals in Sri Lanka extremely rich in a comparative sense and as payment to the international financial lords who made them that way... let them steal every little bit of what has so far been left of our nation. [...] We will call it the PRSP (AKA Lets Steal Their Nation). They also had something else set up - Lets do this so quietly that they won't even know it before they find out that they are no longer the owners of Sri Lanka. This nation is not going to stand by and let itself be sold into slavery.

This cutting is from the page about who GMSL work for:

This very earth knows of our commitment and we have earned the trust of all its inhabitants. In working for them, we also know that we are helping build a nation that we can be proud to leave behind for those who are yet to come. Yet to make use of what we have prevented from being destroyed. Yet to make use of that which we preserved for them.

GMSL does not explain how they can claim to represent the population of Sri Lanka (which they do in a document on the India/Sri Lanka Setusamudram Canal), not to mention having the trust of all inhabitants of earth. They do not represent the whole population and in discussions they did not claim to do so. GMSL actually have good foundation on the ground in the projects they work with through awareness campaigns, local involvement and member organisations. On the web-pages this is not explained, which would give credibility. The speaking on behalf of the nation, which comes through on the web pages is on the other hand a bit over the top.

I find the wording of some of the GMSL web-pages pompous. From my point of view, maybe backed by Norwegian Jante-law mentality, using such grand about oneself words as in the paragraph above sounds strangely self-glorifying. In Sri Lanka I came across it on other occasions as well and choose to take it in as a cultural difference. How often does the Development Fund get a thank you like this in print? (From the page about donors.)

Those that are able to work with our unbendable identity with truth and reality honor us by giving us a helping hand and we thank each and every single one of them for they are very special people in our lives.

**Suggestions:**

For international networking and to give information to partners and potential partners, an accessible website that give a good reflection of the organisation is important. Maintaining updated web pages however takes time and it must be taken into account that the web pages at GMSL are maintained by one volunteer. Keeping the resources spent in line with GMSLs priorities are important. It seems that GMSL has a healthy view on this, not scaling up the ambitions when the audience is still quite limited.

GMSL should update increase the amount of concrete information on the web pages. The campaign pages with snapshots are good, but only cover a few activities. Such short, accessible descriptions should also be made about what they do under each project and what their stands are on the conflict issues.

GMSL should post more of their existing documentation on the internet – in all three languages.

GMSL should be concrete on who they represent on the internet, naming the member organisations and make a short introduction to how they work with members and non-member partners. (There is an interesting map with partners, but it does not contain the members and minimal explanation.)

## Co-operation with the Norwegian Development Fund

The cooperation with the Development Fund is according to GMSL good. They put emphasis on that DF is a partner and not (only) a donor. The relationship is close both because of the long time they have cooperated and also because GMSL staff has worked with DF in Norway under the Fredskorpset (Peace Corps) project and people from (or connected to) DF have likewise worked at GMSL.

DF staff had no complaints about the administrative requirements from DF. The monitoring requirements apparently suits them and the financial requirements are similar to requirements in Sri Lankan laws and do therefore not create more than reasonable extra work.

DF should continue to fund the core project with GMSL. The focus should be on the lobby and advocacy activities more than on service delivery. GMSL's holistic approach brings many of their activities close to "mainstream" development aid issues, like emergency aid, education, livelihood development and so forth. Some of these activities are financed by the core fund (eg often parts of the human resource input), but most are financed outside of the core funding. In discussions with GMSL it seems like those activities more easily can receive funding from other sources. Therefore, without saying that those activities should not be continued, we recommend that DF in dialogue with GMSL emphasis other issues that are equally important but less easy to find funding for. These seem to be the lobby and advocacy activities, media, legal activities and educational activities.

Seeing the project in the view of DF's own strategic framework was not part of this evaluation. All the core activities are relevant for the project objectives, but within the core activities there might be activities more and less relevant for DF's strategic goals. We have not looked at that issue.

If DF emphasis to be a partner to the whole organisation rather than a donor with a narrow view to single projects, then flexibility is crucial. DF must see their own funding as part of the whole funding base for GMSL.

The core program is good and has potential for growing. We would not recommend that DF reduce the funding unless outside elements force them to. If DF wants to put pressure on reducing GMSL dependency on DF funding they could reduce their funding by percent of the total budget. In other words, if GMSL want to keep up DF funding, they would have to match it with increasingly more funding from other sources.

An other issue that GMSL and DF could work on is that DF apparently covers a larger part of administrative cost than other donors. Again this is an issue where DF must see the effect of their input in a holistic view as some funding unfortunately is only available if others carry administration. But DF could still have dialogue directly with the other main donors on how to share the administrative cost.

### Recommendations to DF

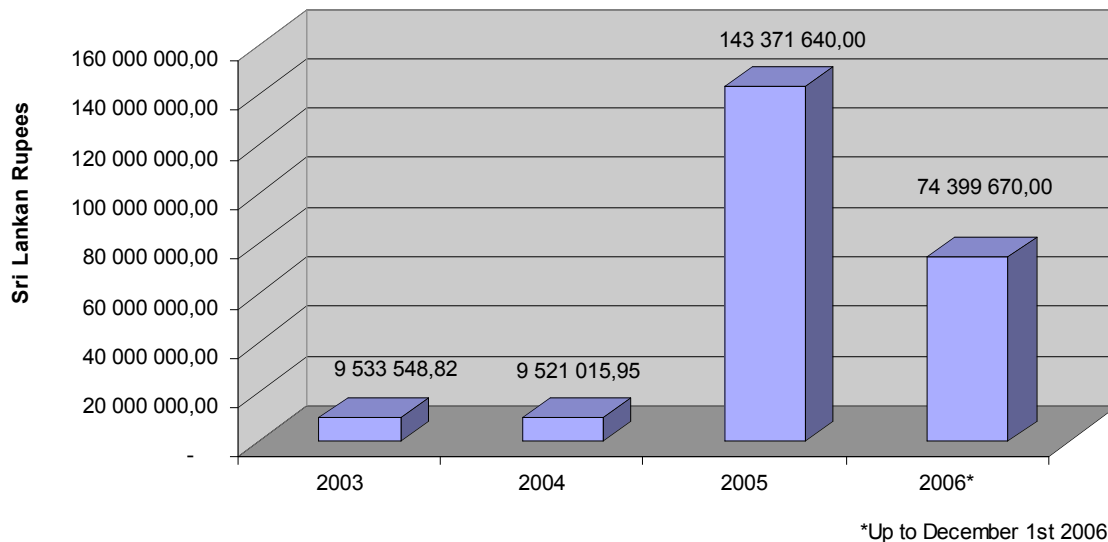
- DF should continue to support GMSL in building organisational capacity.
- DF should encourage internally led evaluations and impact studies by making funding available for them

## Finance

### Overview

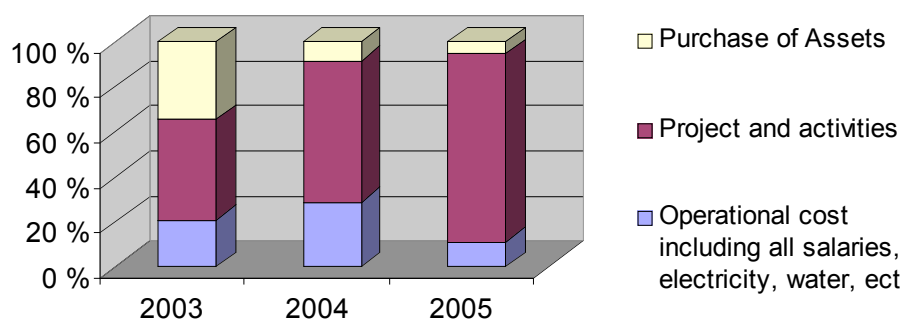
GMSL was started with funding from DF. In 2003 it had reached the level of just above nine and a half million rupees. From 2004 to 2005 the total of funds received increased with more than 1500 percent. In 2006 it was reduced again to about half of the previous year.

Total funds received



The breakdown of total cost has changed quite considerably over the three years. The large investment share in 2003 is due to the purchase of a new vehicle combined with considerable investment in media equipment. The huge share of project cost is at least partly due to that building houses require large material investments, while the regular projects depend relatively more on human resources and salaries are included in the operational cost. It is important to remember that the figure below reflects relative share and that the 2005 budget is much larger than the two previous years.

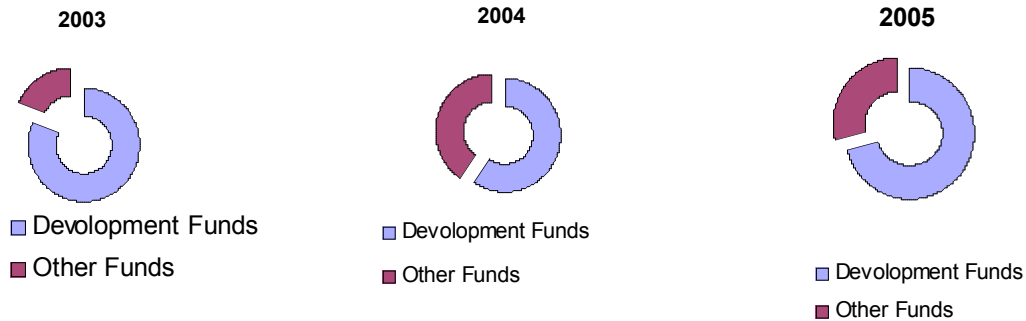
Breakdown of total cost 2003-2005



In the first year of GMSL, DF was the only funder. Other funders have joined later and although DF is still the largest funder, it is not the only leg on which GMSL stands. The large share of DF

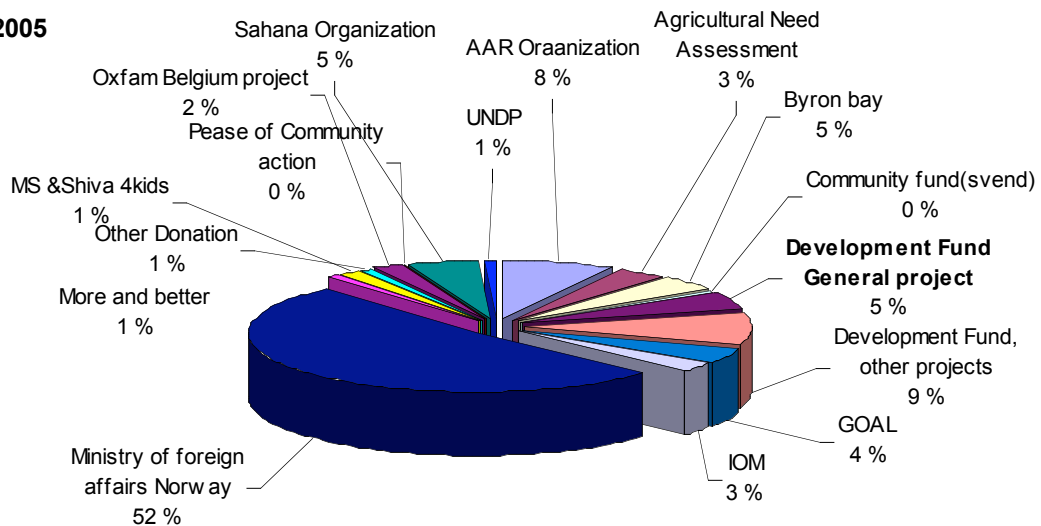
funding in 2005 is because the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs channelled Tsunami aid through DF. The core funding is only 5% of that years funding, as the figure further down reflects.

**Development Fund's share of total funding 2003-2005**



Figures made by GMSL. The DF funding above includes all DF funding. The core project, which is focus for this evaluation, is just a part of the DF funding for 2005.

**Donors 2005**



## The Development Fund Core Project

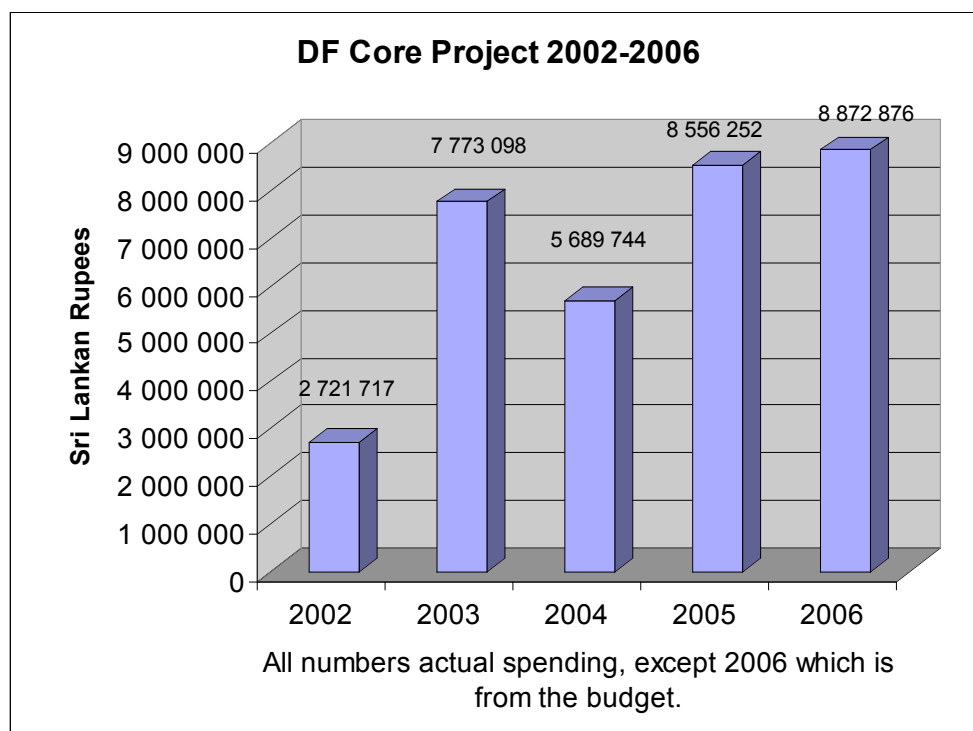
The DF core project is, like it sounds, the core funding for GMSL. It covers the main part of the administrative expenses and the core political activities. There are other central activities funded by other donors. UNDP has for instance funded the youth brigade. But so far the DF core project has been the cornerstone. With good relations to other donors after the Tsunami, this might change. With the prospects of funding from Norad being reduced, the dependency on DF has to change.

**Core Project funded by The Norwegian Development Fund (SL Rupees)**

|                        | 2002             | 2003             | 2004             | 2005             | 2006             |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Funds received</b>  | <b>2 767 621</b> | <b>7 357 845</b> | <b>5 734 465</b> | <b>7 268 699</b> |                  |
| Operational cost*      | 1 680 264        | 2 751 862        | 3 368 488        | 3 313 295        | 4 590 870        |
| Project and activities | 937 994          | 1 816 821        | 1 576 996        | 4 930 676        | 3 750 000        |
| Purchase of assets     | 103 458          | 3 204 414        | 744 260          | 312 280          | 530 000          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>2 721 717</b> | <b>7 773 098</b> | <b>5 689 744</b> | <b>8 556 252</b> | <b>8 872 876</b> |

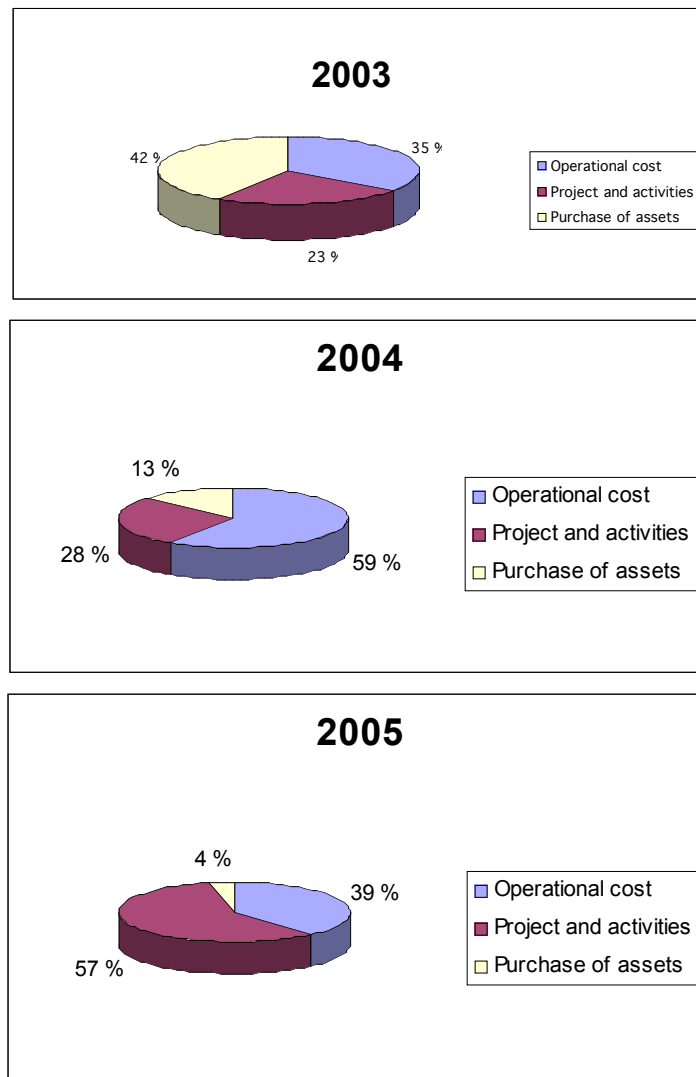
Source: Audit reports 2003-2005. All numbers are actual, except for 2006 which is the budget amounts and taken from the proposal. In the audit report from 2005 the total spending is actually 14 627 858,73 SLR because a housing project was included in the audit but it is not part of the core project. \*Operational cost includes network handling cost.

The following graph reflects the numbers from the table above. It should be noted that according to the audit reports, GMSL have gone considerable over budget in 2003 and 2005. The bill has been covered with other donations according to the financial manager.





The relative spending on operational cost, project cost and investments has changed also within the core project. The investment in 2003 has been mentioned above. The project cost increase in 2005 is real, not only relative. This increase is not reflected in increased activities by a glance at the activities reports. We have however not looked into the reason for this. It could be generally more spending on the same activities or it could be that expensive activities increased and the cheaper ones decreased. We have left the issue because of the special year 2005 was, but GMSL and DF should keep an eye on the spending side in the future to see if it is a trend.



The activities of GMSL can be sorted into two groups: The relatively-easy-to-budget ones and the difficult-to-budget ones. Administration cost is more or less fixed for the budget year. Then there are planned activities that do not depend much on outside factors apart from unexpected price increases. These are for instance publication of the Arana magazine, the agricultural courses and the educational programmes. The activities difficult to plan are the campaigns, the law cases and the disaster management activities. The number of activities planned for these departments are just indicators and so are the budgets. The real number of activities depends on the number of issues that comes up during the year and how large they are. Some activities require just one meeting or one letter to be sent. Others could last for years, involving many meetings,

publications, transport for many people and other costs. The Norad/DF system where unspent funds has to be returned at the end of the year while overspending in one year cannot be covered over next years budget is very inflexible for these kind of activities.

## Monitoring

With rather open budgets and much financial decision making delegated to the heads of departments, the control of funding spent is crucial. In this evaluation we only looked at the control mechanisms at the head office. The financial manager said more training was needed for the field, but they deal less with the DF core project so we did not follow up on this. An extended audit of Tsunami projects has been initiated by DF parallel to this evaluation and the issue it is more relevant for them.

Every time any person at GMSL spends funds, the person has to fill out a form with the receipts. The form includes not only what the money has been spent on, but information on which project it relates to, who participated and other details on the activity. The forms are also used when the narrative reports are written.

In the previous years the accounts reflect on individual projects (eg “APT Proposed Cashew Growing Project” or “Field visit Kalawana & Molkawa”). The details of spending within the projects were not recorded, so to see the breakdown of what the funds were spent on one has to go to the receipts. The system was kept in Excel. It is possible to control this system and the accounting office had no problem finding the receipts when we asked for some random examples, but it require that the auditor not only checks that funds spent are mirrored in receipts being kept, but also that the funds are spent on relevant expenses. Since normal project follow up by donors does not go as far as to look at receipts, this was not a very transparent system. It has however changed.

With the increased amount of budgets, projects and donors following the Tsunami recovery activities GMSL has introduced a more sophisticated accounting system. They are still in the transfer process and 2007 is the first year where the budgets are done in the new system. The main benefits of the system are that it will make it easier to keep track of costs and make budgeting easier, but it will also make the final accounts more transparent.

An important issue of transparency that GMSL has to deal with is to separate which organisations who fund which activities. When setting up the new accounting system it is important that the financial and practical side of activities and projects are linked in proposals and reports. It also seems to be a need for comprehensive annual report where all donors and projects are seen together, as some donors fund very similar activities. Secondly, GMSL should make a financial report on administration where all donors' contributions are seen together.

GMSL has Operational Guidelines for Accounting and Finance which regulate the responsibilities for financial control. GMSL has also adopted some of the forms from the Accounting & Management Systems and Procedures for Tsunami Relief Projects toolkit issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka.

GMSL has no complaints about the requirements of DF concerning financial management. The procedures fall in line with Sri Lankan procedures and do not provide unnecessary extra work. The new accounting system and the improved system of financial planning and monitoring were definitely needed. They are good reactions to the challenges of GMSL's more complicated financial structure. If it is sufficient will only be seen when it has been implemented for a full year. The additional improvement that seems needed at this stage is training of staff at GMSL as well as the field staff. The financial manager had plans to do so, so it seems that the financial control at GMSL is in a healthy process at the moment.

## Financial standing

At the moment GMSL is facing a debt problem. The first housing project they implemented went high over budget due to the rapid increase in building costs that followed the recovery after the Tsunami. We heard of organisations not finishing the amounts of houses they promised after the Tsunami. GMSL decided to keep their promises to the authorities and the local people, but is thereby left with an uncovered bill of 7 846 535 SL Rupee (ca 460 000 NOK). The budgets were increased for the later housing projects. (This roughly equals one year's budget for the core project.)

The problem for a non-profit organisation like GMSL is that there are no sources of profit that can cover the loss like a commercial business could have. All funds are earmarked for specific projects and if they go under budget, then the surplus may not be transferred to cover other expenses. Non-profits have to rely on "own" funding, like membership fees and donations with no strings attached. GMSL does not have membership fees and though they do receive some "open" funding occasionally, it is not in the size of the deficit on the housing project.

It is therefore up to GMSL's funders to help them through this. At the same time GMSL will have to make sure they avoid similar problems in the future. At the moment they go over budget on a much smaller scale with for instance disaster management projects, getting donors to pick up the bill afterwards. This has worked so far, but it is risky behaviour. GMSL wants to have a liquidity fund. Their ability to act on a disaster in a matter of hours is not matched by the speed of potential donors reacting to a proposal. The need for a liquidity fund is relevant, especially at the end of the financial year when regular funds are spent. GMSL must however have very clear plans and regulations for it to avoid the fund being used up.

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

### GMSL – Evaluation Terms of Reference

Evaluation by Ellen Cathrine Kiøsterud

The Development Fund (DF) started a partnership with the Green Movement of Sri Lanka (GMSL), a network of like-minded environmental organisations, since its inception in 2000. The economic support from DF is directed towards organisational building and the activities as defined by GMSL through the project called *Environmental Conservation and Awareness Creation*. GMSL has become one of the closest partner organisations of DF and the cooperation has grown from this project to include policy work, tsunami relief and Fredskorpset exchange program. DF sees GMSL as a potential actor to strengthening environmental movement in Sri Lanka.

This *end of phase evaluation* was scheduled for 2005, but due to the tsunami, it was postponed to 2006. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the results of the project *Environmental Conservation and Awareness Creation 2003-2005*, to what degree the stated goals in the project proposal has been achieved. The report will also assess if the activities of GMSL are relevant to the organisation's vision and provide recommendations for improving the activities for the next phase 2007-8. The final report will be sent to NORAD's public database.

The evaluation will also give insights into the working methods of GMSL and how the institutional framework can be strengthened. But this is secondary to the evaluation of how the goals of the project have been achieved.

Time-table:

| Dates                                     | Total # days | Activity  |
|---|--------------|---|
| 2006                                      |              |   |
| Sept-Oct.                                 | 5            | Travel preparations, reading of documents, finalizing TOR/inception report, <b>clarifying and agree on concepts/Notions</b>   |
| Nov. 13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup>   | 1            | Travel from South Africa to Sri Lanka   |
| Nov. 14 <sup>th</sup>                     | 1            | Meeting GMSL Chief organizer, key staff, introduction   |
| Nov. 15 <sup>th</sup>                     | 1            | Brainstorm + security + with DF program coordinator   |
|   | 2            | Stakeholder analyzes, planning, interview of key staff, go through local documentation  |
|   | 10           | Field visit, meet relevant people within & outside GMSL ( <b>names of these people in revised TOR</b> )   |
|   | 4            | Sum up for the team. Go through information, prepare presentation, discuss findings. Find holes in the documentation to fill before evaluator leaves. Extra interviews. |
|   | 1            | Sum up most important findings, discussion with GMSL  |
|   | 5            | Post-trip work. Write the report.   |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> of Jan 07                 |              | Key stakeholders & informants get draft report for comments   |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> of Jan | 1            | Replies to draft report are incorporated into the report  |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> of Jan                   |              | Deadline for submitting the report  |

## MAIN AREAS FOR ASSESSMENT

### A. The project Environmental Conservation and Awareness Creation

Main question: How well does the project **achieve its stated goals?**

The report will

4. State the main goals of the project as written in the project plans and as explained by GMSL.
5. Identify the key activities of the project that was intended to lead to those goals.
6. In depth analysis of 2-3 key activities.
  - o What is the methodology used?
  - o What are the results of the activities and the degree of success?
  - o Recommendations.
4. In the evaluator's opinion how relevant are project activities given the project's goals. How relevant is the project, given the organisation's goals.

### B. Institutional Strength/weaknesses

Main question: What are the institutional strengths and weaknesses given the organisation's vision?

The report will

1. Explain the key processes in GMSL including
  - o Development of long-term and strategic plans
  - o Selection of campaigns / activities
  - o Selection of staff
  - o Promotion of female staff v.s male staff.
  - o Mapping of major financial investments within GMSL. Find the relative share of DF's support of GMSL total budget.
  - o Assess the financial management with a view to transparency, routines, spending and connectivity to projects.
  - o Self-evaluation processes
  - o Describe organisation decision-making mechanism. Do staff understand the purpose/goals of what they are doing?
  - o Assess the nature of the partnership between DF and GMSL, from GMSL perspective.
4. Institutional development since last evaluation and particularly after the tsunami
  - o Refer very briefly to the last evaluation by Church & Kiriwandeniya. To what degree the recommendations are followed up?
  - o The changes in organization after the tsunami.
  - o Attached updated organizational mapping
  - o Attached updated activity mapping

**EVALUATION PROCESSES/METHODOLOGY**

## Prior to the field visit

- i. TOR drafted and agreed by DF, GMSL and the evaluator.
- ii. DF and GMSL provide documentation to the evaluator (soft or hard-copy), including reports, plans, proposals, information material, research, evaluations, any quantitative data.
- iii. GMSL provides information as requested by the evaluator.
- iv. GMSL and DF identifies a suitable “cultural” and language translator, or a co-evaluator.

## In Sri Lanka

- a) Introductory common meeting with head-office/key decision-makers in GMSL.
- b) Stakeholder analyses ( including possibly conflicting interests/agendas). The stakeholders include  
Internal: Head office, district staff/volunteers.  
External:
  - Organisations and individuals that implement the projects together with GMSL.
  - Organisations and individuals that are Not cooperating partners of GMSL, but are relevant as judged by the evaluator.
  - Media that covered & did not cover the campaign
  - Local population in the relevant areas
  - Other relevant stakeholders
- c) Before the evaluator leaves Sri Lanka: Meeting where preliminary conclusions presented to GMSL staff (& board, if possible)
- d) Feedback from GMSL incorporated into the report

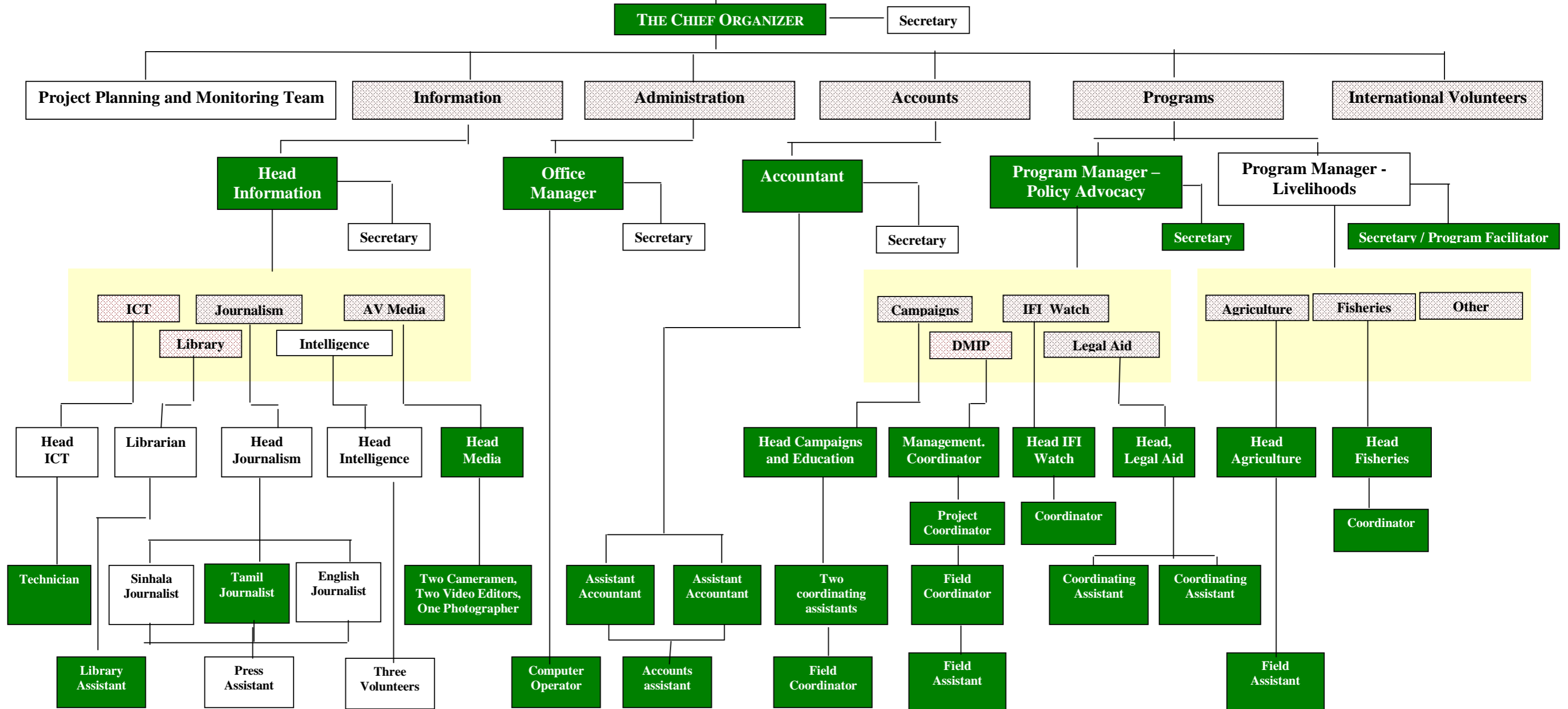
## 7. About the Report

- a. Structured and concise.
- b. Rationale for selection of certain campaigns/geographic areas for in-depth analysis explained.
- c. Concrete indicators of achievement will be identified initially, and then measured and analyzed.
- d. As the report will be assessable to the wider public in the internet, it is important that the report does not compromise the safety of the informants. When necessary, a list of codes instead of actual names might be used (with a code-key for DF use only). The informants have the rights to have access to the final report.

## **Appendix 2: Organisational map of GMSL**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Member organizations of the GMSL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - Comprises of nine members elected once a year at the AGM and the Chief Organizer of the GMSL



GREEN MOVEMENT NETWORK MEMBERS, LOCAL NON NETWORK MEMBERS', INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

ACTIVE SECTIONS OF GMSL
  FILLED POSITIONS OF GMSL
  INACTIVE SECTIONS AND UNFILLED POSITIONS OF GMSL