

EVALUATION REPORT OF THE  
VAVUNIYA, ANURADHAPURA AND PUTTALAM  
REHABILITATION PROJECT  
(VAPReP)  
OF  
FORUT-SRI LANKA

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## Acronyms used

AusAID	- Australian Agency for International Development
CARE	- Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO	- Community-based Organisation
CBR	- Community-based Rehabilitation
CHA	- Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies
COMTEC	- Community and Technical Education Center (Vavuniya)
CSO	- Community Services Organisation (Anuradhapura)
DRC	- Danish Refugee Council
DSD	- Divisional Secretary's Division
ET	- Evaluation Team
FIRM	- Federation of Institutions of Rural Management (Vavuniya)
FOSDO	- Federation of Social Development Organisations (Vavuniya)
GA	- Gender Addendum
GOSL	- Government of Sri Lanka
GS	- Gender Specialist
IDP	- Internally Displaced Person
INGO	- International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOGT-NTO	- International Organisation of Global Temperance – National Temperance Organisation
IYTEC	- Integrated Youth Technical Education Centre (Puttalam)
LFA	- Logical Framework Analysis
LTTE	- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MOU	- Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	- Medicine Sans Frontiers
NDTF	- National Development Trust Fund
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organisation
NOK	- Norwegian Kroner
NORAD	- Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
OSDTRA	- Organisation for Social Development, Training & Rural Action (Puttalam)
PDF	- People's Development Forum (Puttalam)
PIDA	- Participatory Institute for Development Alternatives
PO	- Partner Organisation (of FORUT)
PRA	- Participatory Rural Appraisal
RPDF	- Rajarata Participatory Development Foundation (Anuradhapura)
SANASA	- Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society ( <i>Samupakara Nayadena Samitiya</i> )
SCF	- Save the Children Fund
SEDEC	- Social and Economic Development Centre
SIDA	- Swedish International Development Agency
SLCDF	- Sri Lanka Canada Development Fund
SLEvA	- Sri Lanka Evaluation Association
SLPS	- Sri Lanka Population Services

ToR	- Terms of Reference
UD	- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	- United Nations Children's Fund
VAPReP	- Vavuniya, Anuradhapura and Puttalam Rehabilitation Project of FORUT-Sri Lanka
VDF	- Village Development Fund
WODEPT	- Women's Organisation for Development, Equality, Peace & Temperance (Puttalam)

## **Executive Summary**

The VAPReP of FORUT Sri Lanka as it was summarily referred to in the ToR handed over to this ET was indeed a substantially outgrown umbrella of rehabilitation project activities that were begun in three districts of Vavuniya, Anuradhapura and Puttalam nearly a decade before the start of the evaluation period (1999) as humanitarian interventions with a very limited time horizon. Due to the persistence of the war situation in the Northeast of the country and the consequent inability on the part of most IDPs to return to their original places of residence, the government was compelled to accommodate them in relocated settlements, welfare centres as well as resettle some as and when their villages became 'safer' for re-habitation. Responding positively to the unfolding tragedy on the national canvas, FORUT made a conscious effort to transform the humanitarian initiative into a rehabilitational one and continue to assist the displaced and affected populations to regain a level of 'normalcy' from an initial condition of 'sub-normalcy.'

By 1999, all three project locations had vastly enlarged their reach into many village localities, established small group formations, CBOs and apex bodies which were performing the role of POs of FORUT through whom a large quantum of funding was disbursed as per needs perceived by the membership of these organisations. Six apex bodies, two vocational training institutes and the three FORUT 'hub' operations, some of which were running their own operations in newly accessed localities, all demanded separate 'project status' within the purview of a conscientious evaluation which had only budgeted its time for the three locations mentioned in the ToR. As such, the depth in which the evaluation was originally envisaged by the ET could never be achieved since it decided to 'sample' (albeit much more 'thinly') the field performance of the 8 POs since a major policy decision on fully localising them were in the immediate offing. What had to be left almost untouched (except by virtue of linkage to the POs) was the performance and the continuing role of the FORUT 'hub' within these three localities.

The fact that FORUT has demonstrated an expansionary trend during the five year evaluation period between 1999 and 2003 is evident when the project expenditures are pursued even casually. Since each project had nearly a 10 year presence in the locality before we get into the evaluation period, one must note that VAPReP was already up and running at a very robust level even at the beginning of the evaluation period. In respect of 1999 VAPReP was expending nearly Rs.21 million cumulatively at all three localities which more than doubled by 2003 when the expenditure reached nearly Rs.50 million, all these funds channeled primarily through NORAD. Among the several interventions that were carried out in all three locations were early childhood development, primary education, rural communication (consisting mainly of providing libraries), vocational / skills training, preventive health, housing, water and water resource management, sanitation, community infrastructure, temperance promotion, environmental conservation, youth-related activities, organisational development and banking development. All these activities were carried out within a participatory, empowerment

oriented mold, where the beneficiaries within their incipient organisational formations were challenged to perceive their individual problems in a common context and come together in a common effort to alleviate them. The activities in which the beneficiaries took part whether they resulted in individual (houses or toilets) or public asset formation (renovation of a tank or the repairing of a road) were meant as opportunities to increment social capital formation in terms of organisational growth and capacity enhancement. This was the corner stone of FORUT's development paradigm which subscribed to a time-bound catalytic intervention in a given locality that would precipitate the growth of an organisational base equipped with adequate economic muscle of its own and capable of propelling them into a continuing cycle of life chance improvement into the future when FORUT would have withdrawn from that locality to a more needy one for a similar repetitive intervention. The economic muscle was to be built up in a graduated manner by recycling the grant money pumped in by FORUT in the form of development loans to the membership which charged a modest interest (service charge in Muslim communities) that would serve as an income for organisational maintenance in order to continue servicing the needs of the membership.

Two major observations should be highlighted at the outset. The first is that while the apex bodies/ POs have grown and undertaken a substantial workload of what was earlier carried by FORUT, their economic viability to maintain the current service level is by no means secure. As such, caution needs to be exercised in going ahead with the localisation process since it may undermine the very paradigm on which FORUT's development activities were predicated. The second is the disturbing growth of a substantial proportion of CBO membership who are being marginalised as 'inactive.' Unless a soul-searching is initiated to unearth the reasons for this phenomenon and a course of remedial action instituted to mitigate this trend, a severe moral indictment may be directed against FORUT for having 'recreated' a different group of marginalised after having set out to reduce or eliminate marginality among communities afflicted with deprivation.

According to FORUT's Policy Document of 1998, "the need to work with the women is the need of the day." It further states, "Hence FORUT feels that building up a society is to pay equal attention on the vulnerable sector the women and children." This is a thin statement on gender and it pays scant attention to the complexities of "paying equal attention to the women and children." The field staff is highly influenced by this thin understanding of gender and they happily noted that the gender balance has been achieved through the female participation in their activities. They seemed unable to comprehend that gender relations means social relationships between men and women. Most of the weaknesses with regard to the gender situation have probably stemmed from the light understanding of gender espoused by the 1998 FORUT policy document.

The project proposals noted poverty reduction, relief, better quality of life, peace and civil society mobilization as major objectives of FORUT work. But on the ground level, most of the officers were so intent on the specific project that they are assigned, they seemed unaware of these overall objectives. This is more evident in the staff's focus on making the micro-credit program a success and the way this program has become the yardstick

with which the success of FORUT work is being measured. In fact, how many women took loans and paid back is considered as the best measurement of gender participation. The staff did not seem too concerned about finding out whether the quality of life has been improved for these women. Field research showed that women took loans for their men and that it was the men who told the women whether to stay with the CBO or to leave. It was clear that while women's participation increased and they learned to play roles in the public realm the CBO activities had not engendered changes in attitudes or basic world view. This kind of participation does not lead to sustainable empowerment for women. The field research thus pointed towards the importance of including men and youth in CBO activities to make participation more meaningful. The lop-sided participation had already instilled certain views in that men and boy children think that the CBO activities are only for women and girl children and that they should stay away from such womanly activities. In fact, women usually brought only their girl children to the meetings and activities. This does not bode well for effective and sustainable development or localization.

Furthermore, female-only participation does not give women the skills needed to negotiate better positions in other contexts where men are present. Therefore, rather than changing the power inequity in male-female social relationships it ends up trapping women in same patriarchal relationships as before. Whether women hesitate to assert themselves when men are present depended on differences in traditional gender relations (Muslim society or North Central Province Sinhala community, for example) and class and other structural relations. Attempts to give more opportunities to women by forming women centered societies seemed to be driven by a rather shallow, middle class understanding of gender relations. It seems more effective to encourage participation of all villagers and then to educate them on male-female social relationships and the need to strike a balance.

Hierarchical relations had been developed around the FORUT work in which FORUT officials held the top most tier, the apex body staff the next and the CBO officers the third tier with regard to decisions making, implementation etc. This was much more pronounced in Vavuniya but in all three districts the CBO members expressed bewilderment or plainly protested some of the programs and activities prompting the ET to suspect undemocratic decision making procedures. Women in most villages had no suggestions, plans or hopes for their CBO showing that they are used to following orders that come up from above. For effective localization it is imperative that the CBO members be given more space for equal participation in decision making processes.

Another kind of hierarchy was noticed within the CBOs in which several women consolidated all the powers among them and led the others just the way men and elite who held power in the wider society did. Leadership seemed to rest on traditional criteria such as class position and age. Effective intervention in the form of educational programs is needed to give equal opportunity for all women without bias on caste, class or religion to reach their full potential within these CBOs.



FORUT officials as well as some apex body staff held the idea that the people have got into a culture characterized by “no” and “can’t.” This critical attitude pointed towards a paternalistic top-down development model and evidenced that the above officers did not pay attention to structural conditions, which inspired such thinking patterns among displaced people. For any development project to be successful it should pay serious attention to the wishes and desires of the target population. Rather than holding onto universal and static notions of localization it is better for FORUT to analyze the ground situation in each locality and devise appropriate approaches specific to that locale.

As mentioned in the beginning it is the shallow understanding of gender espoused by the 1998 FORUT policy document that resulted in the regional and apex body staff’s unsatisfactory understanding of gender relations and the failure to achieve lasting empowerment for women through CBO activities. It is heartening to see the new policy document for 2003-2007 espousing a more complex and a better definition of gender and gender relationships. If this understanding is to colour the ground level work by regional and apex body staff just the way the earlier document did then we can expect improvement in the gender balance, equity and the women’s status within villages.

Perceived from a mostly financial angle, FORUT had granted Rs. 33 million for activity based cost within the three projects during 2003. Nearly 55 percent (Rs. 18.1 million) of the grant was allocated to the Vavuniya Project, while the balance was almost equally distributed among the other two projects. Among the districts, the proportionate distribution of allocated funds for activity based cost was nearly similar. The highest percentage was spent on the rehabilitation of schools, preschools, and vocational training with one exception. In Vavuniya, one-third of the budget was spent on the rehabilitation of water supply, sanitation and local infrastructure. In all three projects the lowest proportion was spent on temperance activities. Though the data relating to unit cost were available it is difficult to make any meaningful comparison without detailed information.

Under the localisation process most of the activities have been assigned to apex bodies for implementation. Except RPDF the other apex bodies do not prepare final accounts and do not get them audited. In 2002, FORUT has withdrawn the financial support extended to some apex bodies and has gradually discontinued the support extended to other apex bodies since January, 2004. The available data clearly indicate that their income earning capacity is well below the volume of expenditure. Without FORUT’s financial support the sustainability of apex bodies is uncertain. They have to either improve their own income generation potential or they should obtain grants from other NGOs to continue their socio-economic developmental activities.

It was observed that some village level societies are very strong and have been functioning successfully. The performance of some others are moderate while yet others are weak. Although every project has been allocated a considerable proportion of funds for organisational development, its benefits might not have reached all village level societies and CBOs .

Apex bodies were created and nourished by FORUT. At least part of their credit fund consist of a FORUT grant and the activities implemented by apex bodies are largely an execution of FORUT objectives. Therefore FORUT should introduce a supervisory system until the apex bodies achieve financial viability and sustainability.

## I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Project Background*

In FORUT Sri Lanka's Terms of Reference (ToR) made available to this Evaluation Team (ET), the **Vavuniya, Anuradhapura and Puttalam Rehabilitation Project** (acronymed by FORUT as **VAPReP**) identified for evaluation is explicitly considered as one project. However, as might be construed from the lengthy multi-location based title, the project in reality is located in three separate but contiguous administrative districts of the country lying within what one might consider as the 'buffer zone' of the northern theatre of conflict and war. The disruption that touched the lives of war affected were manifold. The resident civilian population in the Northern Province who got caught between the actual fighting had to flee for their lives in search of safety. These consisted of mostly the Tamil community domiciled in the northern districts of Jaffna, Killinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Northern Vavuniya. Then there were the permanently resident Muslims in the same districts, who were summarily evicted by the LTTE in October, 1990. The third conspicuously affected group were the Sinhala residents of the so-called 'border' villages in northern Anuradhapura who were subjected to intermittent violence by the LTTE and had to seek refuge in welfare centres until their villages became relatively 'safe' for re-habitation. Obviously, there were others who were affected by the war but did not actually fall into any one of the three typified categories above.

Although the designated evaluation period of the VAPReP has been given as 1999-2003 in the ToR, FORUT's involvement in each of these three locations has begun almost a decade prior to the on-set of the evaluation period. It may not be that venturesome to hypothesize that at the time of initial involvement in each of these locations, the evolution of a VAPReP was perhaps farthest from FORUT's mind. FORUT's activities in Vavuniya originated in 1987 (according to successive Annual Reports of FORUT) as primarily a relief response to escalating displacement of civilians, the activities of which were completely disrupted with the out-break of the so-called Eelam War II in 1990 that transformed Vavuniya into a ghost town. Relief measures had to be literally started from scratch in the latter part of 1990. [Some of its pioneering efforts are occasionally documented such as the 'Seed-bank Experiment' which managed to mobilize over 4,000 marginal farmers, ferry seed pulses and cereal from southern Sri Lanka (since no seed material was available for cultivation in Vavuniya) and over 1.2 million Kg of pulses and cereals were produced under disaster conditions, ushering-in that amount of 'normalcy,'

pre-empting the ferrying of that amount of relief rations from Colombo and stimulating the local economy with some degree of gainful employment.]

FORUT's involvement in Puttalam dates to 1990, once again as a piecemeal relief effort when a mass-scale exodus of Muslims from the Northern Province occurred into northern Puttalam. The continued persistence of displacement in the area necessitated a more long-term perspective to the problem and FORUT had to respond positively to the newly elected government's overture to venture into rehabilitation activities by 1995-96. In similar vein, FORUT's activities in Medawachchiya, in the Northern part of Anuradhapura District was begun in 1990 in response to the needs of the displaced Sinhala and Muslim population who had to be sheltered in welfare centres which latterly were transformed into village-based rehabilitation activities when conditions turned more conducive to re-habit the once abandoned 'border' villages.

### ***Objectives***

When perusing the documentation provided to the ET, it becomes apparent that in fact the beginnings of the amalgamation of these three physically separate localities into a holistic conceptualization of a single rehabilitation project, possibly as a funding cum administrative instrumentation began in 1997. The project application submitted to NORAD for funding in 1999 (page 1) places the project duration between 1997-2001 which indicates that this was the period of the project initially envisaged and that, perhaps, it has been extended by a further two years to cover up to the end of 2003. At the time of submitting the application in 1999, the rehabilitation project in these three locations had already jointly absorbed NOK4,240,000 during the previous two years (see Section on Project Information on page 1).

The continuing nature of this project is further highlighted when on the same first page, the 'Project Description' is further clarified parenthetically as 'running projects.' It appears to have already established an implicit 'acceptability' with the donor. It was sufficient to make the following general statement which seems to come closest to a statement of objectives and written in response to a pre-formatted legend which read as '*Brief description of project with most important development objectives, immediate objectives, outputs and activities.*'

*"FORUT's rehabilitation project in Sri Lanka came into being as a reaction to the needs of the displaced population and refugees returning home. The development goal is to assist the war affected population in returning to normal life as soon as possible, whether they live in their old villages (resettlement) or in new places (relocation)."*

The latest available application for funding to NORAD in respect of 2003 states the development object of VAPReP as follows (item 2.8) and does not appear to have changed from that of the 1999 application in terms of substance:

*“The main objective of the project is to assist the returnees, internally displaced persons and affected population in the war stricken communities in the above mentioned districts to return to their original locations or in relocated locations to a better quality of life.”*

Under the overall objectives statement in the 1999 application, it sought to briefly identify locality-specific objectives, once again, an indication that nearer the inception of these projects, each locality did have its own emphases and justification for initiating activities. In Vavuniya it stated that *‘the overall objective is to resettle Internally Displaced Persons coming into the area, providing them with the basic amenities and to lay the foundation for sustainable development among the war-affected people earlier resettled;’* in Anuradhapura, Medawachchiya *‘the overall objective is to re-establish normalcy in the villages and to promote sustained development;’* in Puttalam *‘the overall objective is to resettle/ relocate Muslim and other Internally Displaced Persons and to facilitate the interaction between Internally Displaced Persons and the local population.’*

As can be seen from the different emphases, the nature of intervention needed at the three locations had more than subtle variations. In Vavuniya, where there was a high concentration of IDPs in Welfare Centres and those living with friends and relatives, the intervention needed to focus on delivering basic amenities and more development activities to be directed at those already resettled. In Medawachchiya, the need was to stimulate normalcy creation once the ‘border’ villages abandoned by the villagers became ‘safer’ and the villagers decided to re-habit their villages. In Puttalam where there was a massive exodus of Muslim IDPs from the Northern Province and as the hostilities persisted with hardly any hope for return to their places of origin (i.e., the situation in 1999), the resettlement/ relocation of these IDPs in available (mostly) private land became more or less the only avenue in progress creation in an otherwise hapless situation; however, the presence of a large number of ‘outsiders’ (though of mostly the same majority Muslim community) competing for scarce resource in northern Puttalam created many a tension between the local and IDP populations once the initial outpouring of sympathy on the part of the local population evaporated. Building bridges between the local and IDP populations had to be an issue that had to be actively addressed.

Five years later, at the time of submitting the application for funding for year 2003 (when the MOU between the GOSL and LTTE had been signed and the absence of hostilities had been established for nearly a year) FORUT apparently thought in terms of a unified rehabilitation project and did not think it necessary to highlight locality-specific objectives as it did in 1999.

### ***Rationale***

Superimposed on this objective, we believe, is a multifaceted rationale for amalgamation of the three project locations into one Rehabilitation Project. However, it must be underlined that none of these rationales are advanced in any degree of specificity in any of the project applications and that they need to be ‘extracted’ from the realm of the ‘implicit’ by literally ‘reading between the lines.’ All three project locations had begun as

relief / humanitarian initiatives in response to mass scale human displacement and evolved into rehabilitation programmes due to the persistence of the common stimulus of conflict and war. Though discreet entities, each of the projects is located in the 'buffer zone' of the theatre of war and eminently qualifies to be designated as an all-encompassing rehabilitation project. Perhaps, most importantly, by amalgamating the three project localities, FORUT was to highlight the destructive effects of war which were affecting all major ethnic groups adversely. On the heels of this common human tragedy FORUT was possibly making a public relations statement in profiling itself as an INGO which was most concerned and actively engaged in ameliorating the hardships of all affected communities across the ethnic divide. By stating that "*FORUT support targets displaced people in Vavuniya (mostly Tamils) Anuradhapura (Sinhalese and Muslims) and Puttalam (mostly Muslims)*" the afore-mentioned rationalizations are hinted at although not specifically mentioned.

Another important aspect of an evolved rehabilitation project like VAPReP (which, incidentally, manifests the crucial ingredients of a crisis that has shaken the entire nation to its core) is that it needs to closely follow the unfolding conditions of the conflict, the human tragedies and the periodic shifts in perceptions of all stakeholders (i.e., the displaced, the natives of host communities, the civilian nation at large, the government which would entail the politicians, the bureaucracy as well as the armed forces and the INGOs/NGOs along with their somewhat invisible donor communities). What is being emphasized here is the highly volatile nature of the context within which a rehabilitation project has to survive, often adjust, mature and deliver on set goals. When contrasted with a very much less complicated poverty alleviation project in a non-war zone where at least quasi-democratic norms operate, the travails with which a rehabilitation project such as VAPReP has to contend is somewhat gargantuan.

### ***Components***

The project components that are to be addressed (referred to as project activities) are also given in itemized form on page 1 of the said application of 1999. They are:

1. Rehabilitation of houses
2. Rehabilitation of water supply schemes, sanitation and local infrastructure
3. Education - rehabilitation of schools, preschools, teacher training, libraries
4. Vocational training and education
5. Savings and credit - Agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries
6. Preventive health care and first aid by voluntary health workers
7. Preventive work on alcohol and drugs and environmental protection
8. organizational development, training and banking.

Amalgamation and rationalization of a few of the above items (1 and 2 as well as 3 and 4, for instance), elimination of 'preventive health care' and the introduction of 'advocacy work' and 'communication' are the visible substantive changes that have been made in the listing of activities proposed in the 2003 (latest) application for funding submitted to

NORAD (item 2.8) as appearing below. A noticeable re-ordering of the listing of activities is apparent but whether it reflects a conscious re-prioritizing of rehabilitation emphases within the scope of project implementation is not self-evident although one is inclined to so assume. Perhaps, the re-positioning of ‘organisational development’ at the top of the listing of activities in 2003 project application (from the bottom of the listing in 1999) reflects the growing maturation process of the rehabilitation project with the application writer (FORUT) allocating higher priority to the establishment of a viable organisational nucleus of the beneficiaries with the possible intent of localizing the project activities and the gradual exiting of FORUT from the project locality within the foreseeable future.

- Organisational development
- Micro-credit and income generating activities
- Rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems, shelter and local structure
- Restoring roads and irrigation systems
- Advocacy work
- Renovation of school buildings
- Education; pre-schools, basic education, libraries and vocational training
- Communication
- Temperance and environmental work

## II

### Evaluation Methodology

#### *A Preamble*

This brief ‘preamble’ to the chapter on Evaluation Methodology is deemed somewhat necessary since ‘evaluations’ (like any other document) are also ‘evaluated’ in their turn, either consciously or unintentionally. Since they are more likely to be drawn upon to determine the continued existence of a project, make modifications to on-going operations or reformulate policy alternatives, it is imperative that the limitations of a particular evaluation be highlighted up-front lest there be undue sanctity attributed to it. The implicit legitimacy that may be drawn upon through the sheer use of the word ‘evaluation’ needs to be tempered with what has transpired in terms of ground realities; one needs to allocate measured weightage to the evaluation in terms of the ‘deviations’ it has had to compromise as per the ‘ideal evaluation.’

#### *Essential Parameters of the ToR*

The “Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Evaluation of Rehabilitation Projects of the FORUT in Sri Lanka” dated 28th June, 2003 and first handed over to this Evaluation Team (ET) around mid-late September, 2003 had the following to state in its opening paragraph:

*‘Evaluations are becoming an essential aspect of good governance and contribute to improve the transparency and accountability in development work. Systematic evaluation of projects, programs, institutions and policies become vital to improve performance accountability, lesson learning and policy refinement.’* It goes on further to state that *‘The two projects under consideration are Jaffna Rehabilitation Project (JAREP) and Vavuniya, Anuradhapura and Puttalam Rehabilitation Project (VAPReP),’* the latter being entrusted to this ET. On page 4 of the same document it says that *‘The evaluation team may use participatory rapid assessment methodology to assess the performance of the projects’* and most importantly gives a time limitation to begin the evaluation by the first week of October, 2003 and submit the final version of the evaluation report by end November, 2003 (page 7). [The time-frame was later extended till end January 2004 since contractual agreements could not be signed till mid-October and had to be extended even further - until mid-February, 2004 - since logistic arrangements for field visitation could not be effected till early November, 2003.]

Since the ET consisted of three members holding current teaching and research positions in the University it was made clear at the initial discussions that field visits could only be accommodated during extended weekends (Friday through Sunday). Although the evaluation mission was conceived of as one project (VAPReP) in the ToR the nominal existence of three project locations, viz., Vavuniya, Anuradhapura and Puttalam prompted the ET to allocate a minimum of an extended weekend for each location plus

another to accomplish an initial reconnaissance mission to familiarize the ET with each location. Since the time span available for field visits was minimal, it was also decided that the senior project staff in situ be given the opportunity to select 4-6 villages, choosing between 1-2 villages with 'high', 'moderate' and 'low' 'success' according to the staff's own perception. This method was preferred to a random blind choice imposed by the ET since the evaluation was conceived as more of a participatory educational tool in the furtherance of development work rather than as a witch-hunt for apportioning blame.

### ***Emerging Ground Realities***

Although this was the proposed plan, ground realities dictated otherwise. The conditions for undermining of the above rationale loomed even before the ET hit the field; uneasiness began when perusing the documentation made available to the ET which revealed that there were several 'organizations' within each project location and that they had 'different' origins, objectives and modus operandi which would seriously undermine the hitherto assumed homogeneity of a single project location, viz., all village/ activity locations within, say, Puttalam Rehabilitation Project would consist of basically the same kinds of activity and a cross-section of 4-6 villages from high, moderate and low 'success' would somehow manage to give an adequate understanding of the dynamics of the project location.

However, it was already too late to change the time frame and manpower commitments of the ET within an already finalized contractual obligation. When the ET visited the field it was more than apparent that apex bodies like WODEPT, PDF, OSDTRA with their several village locations and organizations as well as IYTEC, IYDA all merited separate 'project status' within the Puttalam Rehabilitation Project, which, in turn was a part of (i.e., the first 'P' in) VAPReP. While the activities subsumed under WODEPT could be classified as those of a classical relief measure evolving with time into a rehabilitational one, PDF is the current 'successor' to the development undertakings of an initiative which began in the very early 1990s as an adjunct to the government initiated Janasaviya (Poverty Alleviation) Programme and has hardly any linkage to relief/ rehabilitational pursuits except to be accidentally within proximity to the more encompassing relief/ rehabilitation activities in the area. OSDTRA happens to be an outgrowth of a much-later initiative (during 2000) which FORUT launched under the rubric of 'strengthening of civil societies' project and has an entirely different *modus operandi* (even minus the normally observed resource funneling into a new community development project) to a generally delivery-focused relief/ rehabilitation effort; it has, we believe, only one village that has experienced 'displacement' and that has not been due to the ethnic conflict but due to the impingement of 'development' in the form of the '*Gam Udawa*' (Village Reawakening Programme) in the Anamaduwa Electorate. The lumping of all these different initiatives under the general rubric of 'Puttalam Rehabilitation Project' appears to be a later-day administrative (funding/ documentation-related) rationalization (engineered and driven inevitably from the Meta and Macro levels rather than the Micro and Meso levels - p.12-14) which seems to have been further legitimized with the



proposed establishment of Regional Centres under the 'Decentralized Model' contained in a recent publication, 'FORUT in Sri Lanka: Policy and Strategy, 2003-2007' (p.46-49).

As may be seen with hindsight, fashioning and planning evaluations (that are supposed to assess incipient social formations at grassroots level under a regime of temporally limited developmental intervention) according to administrative (cum funding) rationalizations may be quite misleading and counterproductive to attaining the professed goals of evaluation. As a result of this perceptive error, the ET budgeted for a mere 3 locations while in fact, there were more than 10 development initiatives that needed to be given almost equal weightage at these three locations (this is when one views the core FORUT staff at each of the project localities as a hub which facilitates the other localized initiatives). The result of this erroneous perception was that the ET barely managed to get a glimpse of each of the different initiatives within the 3 project locations. Thus, it must be stated at the outset that the writing of this Report commenced with a feeling of frustration due to there being insufficient time budgeted to delve in-depth into the rich diversity of development initiatives undertaken by what has been simply referred to in the ToR as VAPReP.

### ***Absence of a Base-line Survey***

Stripped to its simplest requirements, an evaluation is supposed to be an assessment of what has transpired between the 'before' and 'after' situations on either side of an intervention. At least this is what the standard textbook prescribes. Even if the 'after' situation can be regarded as relatively non-problematic (which, of course, is not the case herein as the foregoing would indicate) the securing of information prior to the intervention poses more of a problem, especially when an adequate baseline survey has not been conducted. This is more so the case when one deals with action-oriented interventions of an ameliorative kind and the situation is even further exacerbated when the beginnings are precipitated through near-disaster conditions (as has been the case in all three project locations) when the mere query of a baseline survey of any useable quality in a later-day evaluation would have elicit howls of protest as being unrealistic and even superfluous. Even the donor community attaches a premium on the speedy and effective deliverance of relief measures to the affected in a humanitarian intervention and there is hardly any counter-pressure towards carrying out baseline surveys before intervention. Bluntly stated, there was no data available in any usably documented or electronic format pertaining to conditions of the beneficiaries within VAPReP that referred to the year 1999.

With respect to the VAPReP, the situation is even more desperate since the prescribed on-set of the study period (viz., 1999) is a 'non-date' in the life and times of project beneficiaries as well as staff members for most practical purposes. The inception of project activities at all three locations had begun very much earlier to 1999 (1988 in Vavuniya, 1990 in Anuradhapura and Puttalam as both the ToR and the available documentation reveals), which, by the way, was the inception point of the current evaluation, although this is so stated specifically in respect of the Jaffna Rehabilitation

Project but not in respect of VAPReP in the ToR. (However, the same time period - 1999 to 2003 - was verbally identified as the evaluation period for VAPReP as well.) Thus, even a crude attempt at posing post-facto questions to ascertain the health conditions of a village setting, for example, proved quite nonsensical to the beneficiaries since the beginning of 1999 was a non-event in their lives and any meaningful recall of a specific descriptive situation that might be contrasted with the present was almost impossible. As a result, the assumed line of probing and discussion during the focused group interviews had to take an uneasy track. 'Since you have been a member of this organisation from the inception/ better part of the past five years, do you think being a member has made your/ your family's life better? If so, why do you say so?' Obviously, such an assumption encompasses at least two methodological shortcomings; first, we are inadvertently 'leading' the respondent into a positive evaluation of the project activities and secondly, the selective process of membership retention would have already prevented those former members who forfeited it due either to their disenchantment with the project intervention or inability to conform to membership-retention criteria from voicing their negative assessments since they are no longer members and thus unable to be present at the focused group discussion.

### ***Inconvenient Timing***

Yet another variable that could have affected the outcome of the evaluation was the timing of field visits themselves. When the ET contacted the project staff for scheduling of field visits, one of the apologetic reservations made was that the timing was not the most fortuitous. The reason was that the *Maha* cultivation season was on and that it will be somewhat difficult to get a representative gathering for the focused group discussion during a peak labour-utilization period. Since most development activities pursue logico-rational management procedures, it is best that even evaluations which need to be considered as integral parts of a holistic development intervention are scheduled and conducted under the same ethos and not be driven by *ad hocism*.

### ***Methodology***

The primary method of accessing field-based information was through focused group interviews which generally lasted between 2-3 hours per village/ organisation. No pre-determined questionnaire or interview schedule was used to conduct the interview but the assembled group invited to introduce the program of activities carried out during the scope of the last five years (or since inception if the locality had a tenure of less than five years). A member or two from either the local FORUT staff or senior members of the local apex organisation would invariably introduce the ET, describe our mandate and exhorted the membership to be frank in making their own evaluations, whether they be good or bad. The intent of the ET was to follow-up the line of description, request clarifications and get a general feel of the level of understanding, commitment, degree of benefit that the project activities had imparted to the community and the level of sustainability of activities within the locality. While the first part of the discussion was between the whole ET (consisting of an economist, a sociologist and a gender specialist

(GA)/ anthropologist) and all villagers assembled, the latter part was transacted between the ET's Gender Specialist and a group of volunteering female members so as to accommodate gender-based sensitivities. During this phase, some discussions ensued between any male villagers and the rest of the ET, if and when there were male participants present at the discussion. In localities where Tamil was the language of communication, the quantum of information exchanged between the ET and the group of villagers was somewhat reduced since the discussion had to be mediated through a translation. Each project locality was entrusted with furnishing a suitable translator, a female to facilitate the conversation with the gender specialist. It was not always possible to secure a translator without allegiance to the local project. At times, however, there were situations where an adequately conversant member would volunteer to translate the representations made by his/her tamil-speaking brethren/ sorority into Sinhala.

Due to extreme limitations on time available for field visits, it was decided to restrict them to focused group discussions with either a village membership, with organisational membership of apex bodies and/ or inclusive of FORUT staff at project localities. In fact, the latter preceded the former in all three locations since the initial discussion served to clarify the mandate of the ET as well as to familiarize the ET with the project activities. What was consciously left out of discussions were the possible interactions with government officials with whom many facilitatory linkages had been forged and many a benefit directed to the beneficiary membership. In fact, OSDTRA in Puttalam were quite crest fallen when it was indicated that there was no time allocated to hold discussions with a cross-section of the extension services personnel who had been accessed and were working very closely with the project; they stated that almost one half of their project activities consisted of the resources emanating from the state sector and diverted to the project villages and its membership.

Secondary data and documented information in the form of project applications, annual reports and occasional evaluations were made available to the ET from FORUT Sri Lanka's headoffice. Similar documentation available at the local project offices as well as some of the apex bodies were made available by project offices.

### ***Field Visitations***

During a total of 15 days spent in the field, the ET visited and had discussions with 4 types of stakeholders associated with VAPReP. The largest group was the membership of CBOs at the village level followed by members/office-bearers of apex organisations, FORUT staff members at the three project localities and personnel engaged in running specialized institutions/ youth associations. The discussions were never held in isolation of any group. Invariably, either FORUT staff members and/ or office-bearers/ members of apex organisations were present at discussions with members of CBOs as well as at discussions with personnel running specialized institutions. Table 1 presents the village locations visited, date of visitation, number of families resident in the village, attendance at discussion by sex and total membership affiliated to CBO.

**Table 1**

*Project location, village name and apex body affiliation, date of visit by ET, total number of families living in village, attendance at focused group discussion by sex and total membership in CBO*

<u>Project, Village &amp; Affiliation</u>	<u>Date visited</u>	<u>Families in village</u>	<u>Attendance</u>			<u>Total membership</u>
			<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>T</u>	
<i><u>Medawachchiya</u></i>						
Dematagala / RPDF	21/11	68	20	2	22	44
Issipathana Youth Asso./RPDF	21/11	---	05	-	05	43
Kulikkada / RPDF	22/11	160	41	-	41	58
Thammennakulama / RPDF	22/11	120	05	-	05	35
Yakawewa / RPDF	22/11	186	06	-	06	86
Jayaratanakotuwa / RPDF	23/11	.....	....	...	....	....
<i><u>Puttalam</u></i>						
Hajarawatte / WODEPT	6/12	---	06	-	06	30
Huseniyapuram / WODEPT	6/12	680	62	-	62	450
Nirmalapura / PDF	7/12	245	12	4	16	45
Kandakuliya / PDF	7/12	128	13	-	13	50
Paramakande / OSDTRA	8/12	119	21	5	26	35
Thattewa / OSDTRA	8/12	254	11	8	19	---
<i><u>Vavuniya</u></i>						
Madeena Nagar/ FIRM	13/12	300	04	2	06	60
Salampan / FOSDO	14/12	40	--	3	03	---
Poompugar / FOSDO	30/01	120	08	13	21	90
Pampaimadu / FOSDO	31/01	84	12	-	12	20
Katkuli / FIRM	31/12	150	12	-	12	70
Ukulamkulam/ FIRM	1/02	1000	05	1	06	208
<i><u>Institutions</u></i>						
P/ IYTEC	6/12					
V/ COMTEC	14/12					
V/ ORHAN	14/12					
<i><u>Apex bodies</u></i>						
M/ RPDF	8/11 & 21/11					
P/ WODEPT	9/11 & 6/12					
P/ PDF	7/12					
P/ OSDTRA	9/11 & 8/12					
V/ FIRM	13/12 & 1/02					
V/ FOSDO	14/12 & 31/01					

Two things revealed even at a cursory glance at Table 1 is that there is an impressive range in the membership of CBOs, from a massive 450 in Huseniyapuram in Puttalam to a minute 20 in Vavuniya's Pampaimadu; the second is the overwhelming dominance of females in practically all societies in terms of participation at the focused group discussion. On inquiry it became apparent that in fact the male membership in most societies was woefully at a very low ebb; however, some of the CBOs were exclusively designed for female membership as those affiliated to WODEPT.

### III

## Project Implementation

### *Antecedents*

As has been stated earlier, each of the three projects of Vavuniya, Medawachchiya (Anuradhapura) and Puttalam which as a whole constitutes VAPReP, has had an initial entry point for FORUT Sri Lanka that lies well outside the temporal span of focus mandated for this present evaluation which is 1999- 2003. Due to this ‘discontinuity’ in the mandated evaluation period and the initiation and evolution of each project locality, there is an element of ‘injustice’ that might inadvertently be meted out in the process of evaluating the performance of the project. Thus, this brief section on the antecedents of the project is specifically meant as a ‘pre-emptive insurance coverage’ against ‘unjust’ damages that may be caused to the project’s performance by an evaluation focus which imposes a truncated time span.

Even a casual perusal of past Annual Reports of FORUT reveals that each of the three locations were first accessed by FORUT as a humanitarian intervention when there was widespread displacement of residents in the Northern Province that occurred with the escalation of violence and civil war. The common stimulus of war, affected the displacement of people in several ways and the ethnic coloration of the displacements did surface as a noticeable common factor which affected the lives of the displaced. This is not to state that a common fate befell all those that belonged to a specific ethnic identity; the permutations and combinations of misery that befell the displaced were indeed manifold. FORUT stepped into the breach, so to speak, to ameliorate the collective misery of basically three categories of ethnically identifiable populations primarily as a humanitarian intervention, which is generally conceived of as a palliative measure for the essentially short-term.

The southern part of Vavuniya consisting of the so-called ‘cleared areas’ (i.e., areas where the Sri Lankan government’s writ was in tact) was one of the more ‘preferred’ displacement location of the civilian Tamil population who lived north of Vavuniya where active fighting was in progress during the better part of a decade and a half prior to 1999. FORUT’s active involvement began here during 1987 and was almost completely disrupted when the so-called Eelam War II broke-out in mid-late 1990 which effectively converted most of southern Vavuniya into a ghost town. In late 1990 FORUT was able to re-group and put together a skeletal staff within make-shift office space and begin urgently needed humanitarian assistance. At that point in time, the continued presence of a rehabilitation project nearly one and a half decades into the future would have been furthest from FORUT’s mind. Anyway, the project in Vavuniya had to undergo severe constraints in terms of available and retainable manpower (more than 150,000-200,000 estimated to have migrating to India and a further 700,000-800,000 migrating to European and Canadian destinations), lack of amenities, infrastructure but was increasingly called upon to sustain the ever burgeoning population of displacees as well

as function as the launching pad for a continuing, massive relief operation to feed and sustain the population ‘trapped’ within the theatre of war north of Vavuniya.

In northern Anuradhapura, the Sinhala villages bordering the Northern districts of Mannar and Vavuniya were being persecuted by Tamil militants with raids into their villages which invariably saw the massacre of several hundreds of them, forcing them to find safety in welfare centres erected in Anuradhapura. Here too, FORUT’s initial intervention was begun in late 1990 and the villagers fleeing their ‘border’ villages (the nomenclature being a creation of the war) needed first to be furnished with humanitarian assistance within welfare centres. With the rationale of war invariably being in a constant state of flux and the shifts in the strategic importance of such raids, the villagers began to gingerly test out the situation when they thought the raids were abating by visiting their abandoned villages, living in their resurrected abodes by day and attempting some paddy cultivation (but studiously avoiding the highland chena cultivation that was pursued in the forest for fear of reprisals by the militants where their activities were mostly concentrated) but spending their nights outside their homes in the shrub for fear of raids. With the receding of the fear of raids and the villagers becoming more confident of reclaiming their villages, a need for rehabilitational support was requested and was deemed necessary.

It was to the northern part of Puttalam District that the large majority of Muslim residents in the Northern Province turned to when they received summary marching orders by the LTTE at gun point and were asked to vacate their abodes and leave the province within 2 days. Although some of these displaced Muslims also went into Anuradhapura District this was more so as a transitional phase. Muslims being the resident majority of Northern Puttalam was generally considered the more hospitable area for a more permanent relocation and this was resorted to when it became more than apparent that hostilities would not abate in the near future. Here too, FORUT’s first entry into the area began in late 1990, strictly as a humanitarian intervention but was later sucked (almost cajoled by the government) into a rehabilitation phase with the change of government in 1995 and with the conceptualization of the Muslim IDPs of Puttalam as a more permanent phenomenon necessitating added resources for providing shelter of a more durable kind.

By sheer force of circumstances, VAPReP is now being requested to be evaluated as a single rehabilitation project but the foregoing would indicate that at the time of entry into each of the three project location each had a very short temporal horizon on an essentially humanitarian intervention. The prolongation of the conflict meant that the disaster conditions became near irreversible for over a decade and a half and with the colouration of the conflict oscillating between being openly confrontational on the one hand to a willingness to find a solution through dialogue on the other, the project locations too have had to follow the changing needs, moods and commitments of all stakeholders (in what is perhaps the most pervasive crisis to hit the nation), viz., the IDPs, local population in areas of IDP relocation, the government and INGO/NGOs. This has meant that the need for flexibility was at a premium for project implementation and indeed for its meaningful survival.

## ***Overall Project Ideology and Strategy***

For a development organisation committed to pursuing the ideal of participatory development of the marginalised with its own performance being defined primarily as a catalytic role, the engagement in humanitarian/ relief assistance predicated mainly on a resource delivery model to the affected invariably poses dilemmas and paradoxes which are often difficult if not impossible to resolve on the ethico-ideological plane. However, FORUT has had to conscientiously grapple with this problem since (its entry into the Sri Lankan scene in the early 1980s), a protracted civil war has been the order of the day in the Northeast of the country bringing mass displacement and destruction in its wake adding a different dimension to the marginalization of third world populations over and above that of sheer poverty. In a publication titled “Policy Document: FORUT Sri Lanka” published in July 1998 (which is perhaps more applicable to the evaluation period of VAPReP), FORUT states its rationale for engaging in relief operations as follows under a sub-heading titled “Humanitarian Assistance -Relief”:

*“FORUT bears the responsibility to be with the target group/ people in times of manmade and natural disasters in order to reduce human suffering to the maximum possible extent. Though relief assistance is not a part of FORUT’s profile, it has become a result of absolute necessity. Still a participatory approach is advocated in relief operations paving the way towards development efforts.” (p.9)*

In other parts of the country less affected by the consequences of war, FORUT is engaged in community development activities that work towards the empowerment of marginalised population through a participatory mode. Its commitment to work with the disaster-stricken can be viewed as possibly denoting it as a minus situation than that of even the marginalised sector of a relatively more peaceful locality since the latter have their own shelter, some land, a means of a livelihood however much it is inadequate and a network of socioeconomic relations that helps to survive the differential impact of deprivation. Most of the above assets of the disaster-stricken are in the form of non-existence. From this perspective, disaster, rehabilitation and development can be seen as being on a single continuum, one’s point of entry at a particular locality determining the types of strategy one needs to adopt towards working one’s way ‘upwards’ to attaining the ultimate goal of sustainable development for the affected community.

Viewed from this perspective, it is inevitable that as a community emerges from the worst pangs of disaster, and the basic necessities have been restored and secured to a non-life-threatening threshold, FORUT as a catalytic development agency will gradually move into a regime where the mere delivery of resources will recede as a method of achieving deliverance for the affected and greater emphasis will be placed on a participatory empowerment process. It is, however, a contentious ethical issue as to whether the intervening agency as the physical resource-mobilizing partner in the dyad has the legitimacy to dictate terms of interaction to the affected. At best a compromise should be arrived at where the affected are consulted and a working arrangement agreed upon before a shift in strategies are effected. Then again it is not quite clear as to when a



particular disaster-stricken community can be regarded as entering the rehabilitation phase of the development continuum. Should the mere resettlement of the displaced in their original villages constitute the onset of a rehabilitation phase? More importantly, when should a rehabilitational strategy of providing a loan for constructing one's toilet, for example, be considered a legitimate shift in *modus operandi* from when it was considered an unquestioned right of an IDP to be provided with adequate basic sanitation, free of charge. The provision of a loan is undoubtedly acceptable as a sustainable development strategy towards building an organisational nucleus backed-up by some economic muscle in the form of a Revolving Loan Fund into which the loan repayments have to be made. Such are a few of the gray areas that clutter and confuse the ethico-strategic delineations one has to contend with when traversing through the developmental continuum and perhaps, we may have a chance to return to them later.

### ***Current Strategic and Organisational Arrangements***

VAPReP is a part of a larger network of projects funded by FORUT Sri Lanka which has grown from very meagre beginnings to fairly dizzy heights (Rs.3 million in 1984, Rs.59.9 million in 1994, Rs.150.3 million in 1999 and nearly Rs.375 million expended in 2003). It has about 10 major projects located from the very north of the country to the deep south, the Eastern Province alone revealing a conspicuous project absence on the national canvas. FORUT Sri Lanka is headquartered in Colombo and serves as the resource/administrative/ monitoring hub of the project network linking the monetary, documentational flow between the twin headoffices of FORUT Norway and IOGT-NTO Sweden, funding sources (which consists mainly of NORAD/ UD, Oslo, SIDA, Stockholm, AusAID, UNHCR, UNICEF via their Colombo-based offices) and the projects. It obtains the bulk of funding through framework agreements of usually 5-year duration and supplements modest funding for shorter durations from other sources including the supply of 'own share' funding (from FORUT Norway and IOGT-NTO) which is mandatory for most community development projects.

Disbursement of funds to the projects happens usually on a monthly basis with each project submitting a detailed financial request sheet as pertaining to the future programme for the next month. After scrutiny by the programme department, funds are disbursed to projects. Monitoring and review activities of each project is done at Project Review Meetings which are usually held at Colombo once a month (during the past year this has been held once in two months) and attended by all Project Coordinators and/or Programme Managers. When sending the monthly financial request sheet, the preceding month's expenditures substantiated by under-receipts have to be forwarded by the projects to headoffice. More recently, officers within the financial division of FORUT have been visiting the projects on a quarterly basis and scrutinizing financial documentation while providing appropriate guidance to enhance the transparency and accountability of financial record keeping.

Within the scope of this donor funding and the organisational arrangements, FORUT's mission has been to nurture and strengthen organisational growth of grassroots level formations during its time-bound catalytic intervention phase.

*“The mission of FORUT SL is to strive to improve the living conditions of the people by acting as a catalyst in building up and strengthening local groups/ organisations in order to improve the socio-economic situation of the marginalised, fight alcohol and drug problems, promote peace and harmony among communities while providing humanitarian assistance in times of need.” (p.6)*

In the same publication (Policy Document: FORUT Sri Lanka, 1998: p.10) it outlines the development strategies adopted by FORUT to achieve its mission. Among many such strategies are:

- *“Establishment of strong links at the grassroots.*
- *Nurture of strong organisational base of the marginalised to operate as autonomous bodies that can self-manage administrative and financial transactions including fund raising activities while functioning as democratic units.*
- .....
- *Emphasise the limits of funding in terms of time and activities and work on the basis of an explicit withdrawal timetable with the beneficiaries.*
- .....
- *Strengthen the collaboration with Government and its regional agencies in the districts.*
- *Network with like-minded organisations.”*

The foregoing strategies have been picked out to emphasise the particular profile of development activities pursued by FORUT. These are, however, mostly applicable to community development strategies when FORUT enters marginalised (rather than disaster-afflicted) communities where the emphasis is on empowerment for poverty alleviation rather than normalcy creation for the disaster-affected through the delivery of essential goods and services. As has been mentioned earlier, when an organisation like FORUT is actively engaged in multiple-stage interventions along a humanitarian-rehabilitational-developmental continuum, it becomes more or less imperative that it handles most if not all forms of intervention within a holistic framework so that all workers in the organisation are sensitized as to the differing rationales for intervention along with their strategies. As such, FORUT appears to have evolved a dichotomy of strategic intervention applicable to all individual locations of intervention, viz., sub-normal and normal. All ground situations habited by marginalised communities and not characterised by crisis or disaster are perceived as ‘normal’ while those afflicted by disaster are ‘sub-normal.’ The latter have to be brought back to an ‘acceptable’ equilibrium of normalcy before strategic changes in the interventions can be effected. However, when disaster conditions tend to persist for years as has been with war-related displacement, liberties seem to have been evolved in redefining ‘persisting sub-normalcy’ as a ‘virtual normalcy’ and to view the conditions as capable of fruitfully accommodating

at least some of the strategic interventions aimed at normal marginalised communities. It is usually during the prolonged phase of rehabilitation that this metamorphoses is envisaged and all three project locations ear-marked for this evaluation are in the midst of it.

As such, each of the three locations are now endowed with small group formations that have coalesced into the formation of village-level CBOs which in turn have generated one or more apex bodies depending on location-specific ground realities. These apex bodies are viewed as the localised successors to the developmental undertakings which were initiated and nurtured through FORUT interventions and are expected to carry into the indefinite future the collective developmental aspirations as well as the instrumentation of the collective achievement of these aspirations. When FORUT withdraws from a project location, the efficacy of the totality of its developmental intervention could be assessed in the vibrant and capable manner in which the localised apex bodies function to realize the aspirations of its membership.

## IV

### Evaluation Findings

#### *Limitations*

Some of the main limitations in the evaluation were identified in Chapter 2 of this Report. Although the ToR at the very outset alluded to potential beneficial effects that might be derived from launching a ‘systematic evaluation of projects, programs, institutions and policies,’ the initiation of such a comprehensive effort was thwarted at the very outset by the extremely short time period allocated for the evaluation by the same ToR which was further compounded by the limitations on time at the disposal of the evaluation team members. The fact that the ToR partially understood the paradoxical nature of a demand for a systematic evaluation within a limited time span is evident by its own suggestion to use ‘participatory rapid assessment methodology’ by the ET which prompted the latter to use the focused group interview as the main method of primary data collection from the field. The fact that the ET was mandated to evaluate the project life of a 5 year period between 1999 to 2003 within this short duration and since each project locality had a life span well in excess of double that number of years, it did not permit the ET to delve in any depth into project processes. In the absence of any usable baseline survey indicating the status of each project locality at the start of the evaluation period, there was strictly no possibility of contrasting the ‘before’ and ‘after’ situations on either side of the evaluation period. Since 1999 was a non-event in the life of project beneficiaries and even that of the project staff, even a cursory post-facto probing was not attempted as it was a date not ‘relatable’ with any degree of precision.

In lieu of the above mentioned limitations, it was at times impossible to follow some of the specific demands made of the ET in the ToR. One such instance was with respect to the appropriateness of the selection of beneficiaries on the part of project staff and local authorities (p.4 of ToR). Since the initiation of activities at each location was based on a humanitarian intervention and had taken place almost 10 years prior to the inception of the evaluation period, the processes adopted in selecting the beneficiaries lay well outside the evaluation period and very much shrouded in forgotten memories. From the initial humanitarian intervention to the currently evolved rehabilitation phase of the project it is most likely that a natural progression of circumstances would have taken place with minimal intervention on the part of staff and/ or local authorities. To ascertain whether or not the current set of beneficiaries are the most deserving to be persisted within a rehabilitation project, the ET would have had to venture into other non-project locations and assess the comparative situation of the IDPs, for which, there was no time allocated within the evaluation. Knowing the moral obligations that tend to grow within each locality of intervention, the sacrifice of one in lieu of more ‘deserving ones’ would tantamount to an escapism that is ill-tolerated by most disaster-affected communities unless a quantum leap has been made in their quality of life. None of the village localities visited by the ET revealed such a degree of prosperity to warrant a reprimand on account of the project persisting with more than adequately rehabilitated beneficiaries.

In contrast to the above, what appeared most meaningful and rational to pursue within this evaluation was the assessment of the degree of sustainability, capacity and strength of organisational growth that has been demonstrated by each of the apex bodies as well as village level organisations since this was one comparative context that was applicable to all project localities, irrespective of differential initiation contexts and project longevity. Perhaps, it is not an over-statement to say that the nurturing of a vibrant organisational base at each locality was the most pervasive development strategy adopted since FORUT's intervention was always perceived as time bound with a definite withdrawal embedded within the rehabilitation phase. All other strategies such as the involvement of participants and stakeholders in the collective decision making processes as well as activities, the integration of the many faceted project components like micro credit, vocational education for youth and children, health, water sanitation and housing are primarily conceived of as a facilitator in the cause of building organisational strength, although, each of these component development activities do perform an individual function in improving the quality of life of beneficiaries.

The devotion of a mere 2-3 hours per field location to obtain an in-depth understanding of the 'true' feelings of a cross-section of a CBO's membership towards a project is an unrealistic aspiration. For one thing, the presence of three strangers amidst their village setting shooting questions at them, possibly in not-too-understandable terminologies is a highly threatening situation to any villager of simplistic up-bringing. When the urging is to talk and one is somewhat nonplused at the potentially threatening situation, the easiest response is to withdraw into a self-possessed silence. In such situations, it is the more articulate membership, possibly the officebearers, that monopolise the information flow. With no insinuations at deliberate falsification of 'facts' by such persons, it still needs to be pointed out that what might be revealed by the status quo of the 'talkative' might border on the positivistic activity of project implementation.

Let us explore a hypothetical scenario. What might transpire during the discussion with the ET is that after lengthy discussion with project personnel the membership made representation on the need for construction of toilets in the village at the end of which 'n' number of toilets were offered to the village during a specific calendar year by the project under a loan programme and that the CBO was able to mobilise its membership and build all 'n' number of toilets. The repayments on the loans into the CBO's Village Development Fund are all taking place according to schedule except that of one member who is still making the repayment installments but on a slightly delayed basis. For the time-pressed ET that would sound as a near-perfect 'success story' with just the right amount of achievement reversal to make it an authentic real life situation. In fact, this is also most likely to be the rendering of the 'true' picture as well. What might not transpire in the discussion is that two of perhaps the most needy members of this facility were considered and 'overlooked' by the decision making machinery of the CBO because they were deemed as incapable of paying back the monthly loan installments. Since there were further possibilities of accessing project funds, the CBO too was being pragmatic in furthering the common good of its membership by keeping the potential source of funding alive for future mobilisation. The two failed toilet aspirants were probably in the

discussion group but did not voice their disappointment possibly due to fear of being censored or ostracized from their membership; they may even have been convinced by their peers' arguments and accepted that they were unworthy recipients even though their children are continuing to be more absent from school due to sickness which may result from a combination of malnutrition and unhygienic living conditions of the family.

It is unrealistic to even imagine to do an in-depth study into such submerged social realities within the confines of a once-only discussion of no more than 3 hours was one of the main reasons that the ET abandoned the idea of pursuing a detailed account of activity based achievement of each field locality visited. Lest it be construed that the ET may have acted on hypothesised scenarios and phobias, suffice it to say at this point that during some of the more 'intimate' discussions the Gender Specialist had with groups of volunteering women, there had been occasions where they had openly falsified and contested what had been stated in the initial discussion at the same venue. This is possibly due to the fact that the women found the smaller discussion group, possibly without some of their (female) officebearers, less threatening and more conducive to have a heart-to-heart chat.

The other reason to eschew a simplistic activity-based social audit was that there was no visible documentary evidence of a plan of action per field location at the inception of a calendar year, for instance, to contrast what was planned and what was achieved. (It must, however, be noted that in each of the project applications submitted to NORAD for funding in respect of each year within the stipulated evaluation period, there is a project activities output matrix in respect of each project locality, especially with respect to the first four years; the last year has a more concise matrix in respect of all three locations amalgamated, perhaps, a tell-tale sign of being more sure of obtaining the last year's funding of a 5-year framework agreement! But the existence of this output matrix did not allow us to identify what was planned in respect of each village location visited by the ET.) Devoid of this possibility, the mere documenting of quantified numbers would not have meant anything more than stating that there were several activities pursued that were beneficial to the community in question, which was more than apparent from what transpired in the field-based discussions. That there was general appreciation of the activities carried out at most field locations was apparent from the discussions, even from among those villages which were picked for discussion because the project staff's assessment of it was being of a less-than-successful one.

### ***Commonalties in Project Strategies***

Given the foregoing limitations, the ET had to evolve an evaluation strategy based on the commonalties of strategies adopted within VAPReP, especially since there was a 'demand' for a comparative evaluation of the three project localities. As such, this section will first attempt to highlight the common strategies adopted by the project as prevalent in 1999 through 2003 as per the documentation made available as well as on the basis of what was witnessed in the field in order to identify common yardsticks that may be used in a comparative assessment. The reader is requested to keep the antecedent conditions of

each project locality in mind so as to remind him/ herself of the transitional nature of activities that are first conceived of as humanitarian interventions but are transformed into rehabilitational ones mid-stream and are actively being perceived of as potential locations that can absorb participatory developmental thinking and strategies of an essentially long-term nature. Such transitional metamorphoses are also taking place within the context of a national crisis that has swung between conventional and guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings and conciliatory dialogue having plagued the nation for over two decades for which solutions are being desperately sought even at this hour within a context of international facilitation and mediation.

Even at the inception of the evaluation period, the project application to NORAD details the names of 5 local partners through whom VAPReP is operating at the grassroots. They are identified as:

- Federation of Institutions of Rural Management (FIRM) in Vavuniya South
- Comtec (Industrial Training Unit) / Computec (Computer Training Unit) in Vavuniya
- Rajarata Participatory Development Foundation (RPDF) in Medawachchiya, Anuradhapura
- Women's Organisation for Development, Equity, Peace and Temperance (WODEPT) in Puttalam and
- Participatory Development Foundation (PDF) in Puttalam.

At the time of submitting the project application to NORAD in respect of 2003, these partner organizations have undergone some changes with some being consolidated and new ones being added on. Comtec and Computec had been amalgamated as the Community and Technical Education Centre (COMTEC) in Vavuniya while a Federation of Social Development Organisations (FOSDO) had newly come into being in northern areas of mostly 'cleared' Vavuniya. Though not found in the 2003 application, there appears a partner called Community Services Organisation (CSO) in Medawachchiya in all three applications in respect of 2000 through 2002 but this ET did not manage to come across it during its field visits in Medawachchiya and as such are unable to comment about the functioning of it. In Puttalam there were two new organisational formations that are not listed in any application. They are an apex body called the Organisation for Social Development, Training and Rural Action (OSDTRA) functioning as an affiliate of the Puttalam Project and based within the precincts of the Anamaduwa Electorate in Puttalam District. Also under the wing of the Puttalam Project is the Integrated Youth Technical Education Centre (IYTEC) located in Nurachcholai, a kind of COMTEC counterpart in Puttalam. Though none of the applications make reference to it, the establishment of an Integrated Youth Development Association (IYDA) is mentioned in the only annual report (1999) of Puttalam Project that has been made available to the ET. No activity pertaining to IYDA was highlighted by beneficiary villagers in the discussions carried out at field locations in Puttalam but this may have been due to a different target group of youths being accessed by IYDA and they not being necessarily among the more mature villager members affiliated to the apex bodies who were mostly present at the focused group discussions.

The different apex bodies composed of community-based organisations (CBOs) mentioned above are the intentionally engineered building blocks which also indicate the penultimate stage in the maturation of the developmental process adopted by FORUT, even within the context of a rehabilitational project such as VAPReP. Not only is it a crucial factor in FORUT's development strategising, it is also an integral part of the expected behavioural pattern of a development agency aspiring to obtain funding support from NORAD. This is made apparent in the pre-formatted subject-headings under which an application for funding to NORAD must respond which reads as: *"Describe what will be done in [year] to ensure transfer of competence, organisational development and local take-over of the project."* In respect of the application for 1999, FORUT responds as follows under the above sub-heading:

*"Transfer of competence at local community (village) level is the fundamental mode of operation of the projects described on the previous pages. The same can be said for organisational development - FORUT field staff strives to develop local grassroots institutions, and this has for many years been an integral part of our approach. Training programmes, capacity building and skills development is a prime responsibility of the Training Department of FORUT. The programmes are based on need analyses and will target both FORUT's own staff and the office-bearers of the Community Based Organisations. As described previously, local take-over of the projects follows from the following pattern for an intervention: FORUT enters a village, facilitates the formation of a village society, facilitates the formation of a village bank and a pre-school, and as soon as the society and its activities are self-reliant and sustainable, FORUT phases out of the village and enters a new village."*

(p.9 of FORUT Application for funding in 1999)

The process of developmental engineering pursued by FORUT has been presented in a somewhat simplified and non-problematic mode in the foregoing paragraph and perhaps it is the crucial interphase between stated strategies and what transpires on the ground that an evaluation needs to look at with a reasonable magnification, given the limiting factors such as time and man (person) -power resources available within an evaluation. The facilitation of the formation of a village society takes a fairly lengthy social mobilisation phase which needs the intervention of a 'change agent' (in the classical sense of this development paradigm as it was first conceived and implemented in Sri Lanka in the late 1970s) who needs to work with small groups of marginalised people within a village neighbourhood setting, discussing and analysing in comprehensible terms, the reasons for causation and persistence of marginalisation and evolving a consensus on what possibly can be pursued as a counter-measure to the persistence and propagation of marginalisation within the local context of that particular village. Initiation of small groups which routinely meet to discuss their current problems, try to engage in thrift and credit operations paving the way for the formation of savings which can be recycled in the form of small loans among the membership at concessionary rates of interest (as against the usurious rates charged by money lenders) and engage in mutually beneficial self-help activities, all of which would nurture the growth of a group (of neighbourly people of a similar socioeconomic ilk) capable of undertaking beneficial collective action instead of



being the incapacitated, apathetic and atomised individuals that existed prior to the intervention. By coalescing such small groups experiencing similar socioeconomic conditions of deprivation, the initiation and strengthening of a CBO representing the membership of all small groups is undertaken in respect of each village. The formation of the apex body consisting of a membership of several villages is then pursued on the premise that there is potential capacity enhancement in the organisational growth in numbers which is bound to improve the bargaining power of the marginalised collective in accessing and diverting scarce resources into their villages, either through the extension services of the government sector or via the NGO sector linked to the global aid environment.

What is not that clear-cut in FORUT's formulation of its development strategy is when and how it is to judge a CBO/ apex body to be 'self-reliant and sustainable.' The 'as soon as' temporal dimension is hardly a definitive one and as any knowledgeable and conscientious social activist working on behalf of the marginalised would readily admit, the more important thing is to have flexible demarcations to indicate phases of graduation and not to impose rigid time-frames on these processes since they invariably vacillate according to 'unpredeterminable' contextual realities. What needs to be probed and clarified is what constitutes the ultimate functionality of the concepts of 'self-reliance and sustainability' in respect of CBOs and apex bodies for the realisation of FORUT's development paradigm. One needs to delve into the very core of why FORUT first needed to intervene and mediate in the affairs of a given village at all. As has been stated earlier, the disaster conditions that afflicted the large majority of villages accessed through VAPReP was the initial reason for entry into the villages. Once they had been salvaged from a conspicuous condition of sub-normalcy and placed at a non-life-threatening threshold of semi-normalcy, FORUT persisted with the same communities with the intent of securing a supra (above)-normal condition of livelihood for the villagers since 'normalcy' still meant the languishing in an unredeemable cycle of relative deprivation.

Thus, for 'self-reliance and sustainability' to have a developmentally meaningful connotation, the CBOs and apex bodies created as the *modus operandi* for delivering the villagers out of the vicious cycle of deprivation needed to be capacitated to perform this task indefinitely into the future in the absence of the supportive mechanism of FORUT, which, according to its own stated mission, needs temporally to withdraw from its avowed catalytic intervention. Accordingly, they need to be organisationally vibrant mechanisms which are constantly in tune with the aspirations of its membership, who need necessarily to be drawn from amongst the marginalised. In case either of these bodies are beginning to perform their roles well and some among its membership are able to climb out of the cycle of deprivation and some others are not, the organisations still need to maintain their focus and equilibrium on the latter especially in situations of conflict of interest which may arise between the two groups of members. The abandonment or negligent treatment of the deprived on the part of these organisations would constitute a dereliction of duty when contrasted with the mission of its very existence.

In all three locations, the nurturing of small group formations, the establishment of CBOs consisting of group membership as well as the integration of CBOs into the formation of apex bodies had all progressed well before the start of the evaluation period. Only FOSDO in Vavuniya and OSDTRA in Puttalam had their formations within the evaluation period. Practically the same procedures had been used in all field locations in setting up small groups and in establishing CBOs. FORUT recruited its own project staff at the inception of each project and gradually increased its staff with the expansion of each project locality. The Community Development workers/ officers were recruited from among potentially promising volunteers who surfaced from the villages accessed or in close proximity to them and came forward to be trained in participatory development activities. They fanned out into the villages attending and animating the small group meetings which during the inception was held almost on a weekly basis. The growth of confidence in the groups saw modest accumulations of weekly individual savings being pooled into a group savings fund which was managed invariably in rotational format by the members themselves where they entertained requests for modest loans from the membership which were disbursed and repayments made on agreed terms and conditions pertaining to installments, repayment periods and interest.

The confidence gained in the operationalization of group formations spilled into the formation of a village-based CBO which was composed of representatives from each of the small groups in the village. With the formation of CBOs, FORUT began its intensive resource diversion programme into identified community development activities when perceived as being needy by the community through methodologies such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) or any other such instrumentation on which prior training was invariably provided to some of the membership. Among the menu of such possible intervention activities were early childhood development, primary education, rural communication (consisting mainly of providing libraries), vocational/ skills training, preventive health, housing, water and water resource management, toilets, community infrastructure, temperance promotion, environmental conservation, youth-related activities, organisational development and banking development.

Whenever an activity pursued was resulting in an asset formation for a member or his family, such an activity was achieved through the granting of a loan to the deserving applicants as determined by the CBO's membership who also provided a guarantee by two members as the only collateral for the disbursement of the loan. Toilets and houses were the most common individual asset forming developmental activities that were pursued and the repayments on such loans were credited to a Village Development Fund (VDF) which formed yet another source of group funding whose continuing pattern of future use could be determined by the membership of the CBO. In case of an activity which resulted in the formation of community asset such as a road, repair or reconstruction of a tank or a public well, the activity was invariably pursued on volunteered community labour input which was remunerated at a slightly below-market wage which was more often than not operated as a 'food for work' programme. This was a preferred method in most village settings since the foregoing of a day's labour (to work

on the community asset) would have compromised the survival capacity of most villagers; the differential wage between the going market rate (which invariably was not assured on a daily basis) and the volunteered below-market rate was the members' voluntary contribution to the community effort. All externally suppliable inputs (such as cement, machinery if needed or skilled labour) into the community asset became FORUT's contribution to the partnership. Further quanta of resources were mobilized by FORUT to provide training in human resource development as and when the CBOs and FORUT discovered the need for such input in sustaining the transparency and accountability requirements that grew with the organisational growth of most CBOs.

The creation of apex organisations per project locality or area was an integral plan of FORUT for handling the continual development of villages in the aftermath of its own withdrawal from the locality. Entering into an organisational formation with different village societies is most likely to have been a thought extremely alien to villagers at the inception of forming themselves into neighbourhood small groups. With the growth of small group activity and the gradual realization of its utility for deliverance from marginality, the faith in organisational formations would have grown, especially with the formation of CBOs at village level. Doubtlessly, the level of conviction in the efficacy of apex bodies being able to deliver them from deprivation would vary quite markedly among the membership. Given the close association between project aid and the persistence in a dependency syndrome, it would be safe to surmise that the collective conviction displayed by the beneficiary membership would be nowhere near the level of conviction carried by FORUT in the capability of apex bodies to continue the development process into the future.

Two types of models seem to have been pursued within VAPReP. One is to compose the executive committee of the apex body exclusively with delegates nominated by the CBOs. This committee was to be supported by paid employees recruited for their competence and had observer status within the deliberations of the committee which included expression of opinions but no decision making or voting rights. Both FIRM and FOSDO in Vavuniya have pursued this model. The second is to compose half the executive committee with nominated CBO delegates and to complement the other half with former FORUT staff members who have opted to be part of the apex body, both having equal rights in the process of decision making and voting. RPDF in Medawachchiya and WODEPT in Puttalam appear to follow this model of apex body constitution.

### ***Ground Realities at Field Level from a Gender Perspective***

#### *FORUT's Policy on Gender*

FORUT Policy Document of 1998 lists gender as one of the focal points along with environment and child orientation and advocacy. It states, "Hence FORUT feels that building up a society is to pay equal attention on the vulnerable sector the women and children." This is a thin statement on gender and it pays scant attention to the

complexities of “paying equal attention to the women and children.” Judging by the field situation, this, however, seemed to mean that FORUT will pay special attention to ensuring that women participate in activities. The field staff is strongly influenced by this understanding and thus considers participation of women as solving gender problems. They seemed unable to comprehend that gender does not only mean women but it involves the social relationship between men and women. Most of the weaknesses that the Gender Specialist (GA) noted with regard to different projects and activities stemmed from the light understanding of gender espoused by the 1998 FORUT policy document.

Fortunately, the policy document for 2003-2007 states that, FORUT must look at differences in access to power between men and women (p.43). There is a definite improvement in that this perceives gender imbalance as the differences in accessing resources between men and women. The sub-sections on policy, strategy and guidelines and action contain some very important notions that promise changes in the way FORUT regional offices handle gender relations with regard to their activities. The most significant among the new policy statements is the expressed need to educate its staff and partners on gender as a relationship between men and women.

### *Vavuniya*

During the first trip to Vavuniya project office the GS spoke to 15 young women, both FORUT project officers and volunteers, at the office. The discussion was designed to get background information on the women’s status and to see how aware the project’s female staff was about gender issues. The young women enthusiastically participated in the discussion providing a lot of insights into the situation. According to these women, there is much discrimination against women and unnecessary barriers that prevent women’s movements. However, they agreed that parents do not discriminate in giving education to children and if the parents can afford, girls are also encouraged to study. Earlier women got married when they turned 18-20 years of age but now because of new higher education opportunities and difficult economic situation the marriage age for women had gone up to about 30 years of age and the number of children per family had come down. The answers to the specific questions on gender awareness showed a thin understanding of what gender relationships involved. Several women used common rhetoric of women’s liberation but failed to apply this to the ground situation. It seems that they are so used to carrying out programs that come up from above and that they have not been given much space to participate in decision-making processes. Since they are the ones who have ground knowledge on projects it will be important to involve, at least some of them, in the planning and decision-making processes regarding their projects.

FOSDO- The ET visited their office twice, once each time we visited Vavuniya. The FOSDO office has nine staff members and they were all young women. The executive committee, however, consisted of 11 men and 2 women. Since the officials claimed that women are the predominant participants in CBO activities this selection of men to leadership positions raised many questions. The board members listed pre-schools (14 pre-schools) and health volunteer work as the major activities they conduct. The treasurer

came late to the meeting and gave us a clearer view of FOSDO activities. According to him, they have identified 6 project areas and appointed 6-coordinators for these areas. The areas are as follows; health, UNDP project, pre-schools, DRC project, peace and alcohol prevention and children and women's activities. When asked, neither the board members nor the FOSDO officials/volunteers were able to explain what comes under women and children's programs (See example 1 in Gender Addendum (GA) for details). An interview with a health volunteer provided some information as to FOSDO's health activities. These include home visits to provide knowledge on child and mother care, family planning advice, good sanitary habits and pregnant and feeding mother education. She also organized shramadanas to clean the wells, common places and the clinic. In fact, the villagers at several meetings noted the health volunteer work as one successful FOSDO activity that helps them much.

While FOSDO definitely is a good beginning for localization it still seems to be governed within a hierarchical framework in which FORUT office people held the top most tier while CBO officials occupied the lowest tier. Specific instances of these complex power relations will be discussed later. There is confusion regarding work areas and activities between the board members and the officers. The latter need to be more professional in their approach to FOSDO's work. FORUT project officers should also allow more space for both FOSDO staff and the board members for self-planning.

FIRM - Just as with FOSDO board members and even the FORUT officials (including PM and PC) showed poor understanding of gender relations and its importance in achieving sustainable development. They boasted about overwhelmingly female participation in FIRM's CBO activities. According to the board members, from the total membership, 1950 are women while only 44 are men. This trend was even more emphasized at the village level where numbers such as 6 male members out of 106 total membership was commonplace. FIRM had allocated money for gender programs but when asked to explain what comes under these programs it was revealed that the workshop held was about HIV-AIDS and health practices. The GS was also able to talk to 19 female health volunteers belonging to ORHAN and they also showed that they are not used to thinking about their projects on their own. This was a difficult discussion due to the authority wielded by the FORUT project officer over the volunteers. She answered most of the questions, and interrupted volunteers' sentences and corrected them frequently.

Bad scheduling marred the first day of this field visit. The first meeting with the villagers had been arranged at 10 am. The team came from Colombo and it would have been prudent to leave at least 7 hours for the trip. We came to Vavuniya FORUT office at 12:30 and went to the village of Poompagar at 1:30 p.m. People had been asked to gather at the pre-school building at 9:30 and they left after waiting till noon. FOSDO officials managed to collect about 6 people and we started the discussion. Meanwhile one by one others came and at the end there were 13 men and 8 women present. The GS's discussions alone with eight women provided some insights into their lives as well as the effects of the work done by FORUT/FOSDO. These women claimed to be very poor in

that they find it difficult to save any money. Their knowledge on the micro credit program was low and they seemed confused about the system. However, they were knowledgeable about the agricultural inputs loans provided by FOSDO, even though none of the eight women had taken such a loan.

FORUT Vavuniya office and FOSDO's generally seem to be working from an elevated position and tell the villagers how much they are getting. It does not seem that the ideology behind localization, independence and self-governance had been conveyed to the members. For sustainable localization it is important to make the members aware, include their feedback and work with their agreement. For this FOSDO officials and FORUT Vavuniya project officers themselves have to be more attuned to the ideology and the process associated with localization (See GA for examples 2& 3).

In Pampaimadu 12 women were present for the discussion. The village society president was the vice president of the FOSDO and all the women present including her were well dressed in sarees and displayed a substantial amount of gold jewelry, a far cry from Poompagar women. While they talked about getting help from several other NGOs they had a good opinion about FORUT work and said that unlike FORUT most other international NGOs are in the villages for a short time. This seemed like a particularly significant local articulation of the desirability of localization. Women also praised the agricultural input loans, low tractor rental, loans for toilets and the work done by health volunteers. They especially mentioned health volunteer work on encouraging immunization, cleaning wells and family planning advice.

Katkuli community development organization is a society operating under FIRM and has 70 members, 50 out of which could be termed active members. Their loan scheme seemed to be in operation and unlike in the other two villages the members seem to put the loan opportunity to good use. Women also appreciated the opportunities provided by FIRM in the form of accounts maintenance, pre-school and health training. They agreed that their lives are better because of their participation and listed meeting people through society activities and new knowledge they obtained as the perks of participation. Pre-school, library and the health volunteer work were appreciated. One woman, however, used two fingers positioned close to each other to indicate that the improvement she sees is minimal. This gesture was more poignant than many words and effectively expressed her frustration with the slow progress that they are seeing for themselves and the village. Many women present there laughingly agreed with this (we see little development) during the ensuing conversation. Being an urban organization it is perhaps no wonder that the members are little frustrated with the slow march forward. Thankfully the women seemed willing to plod ahead and wish for a better future.

As in many other extremely poor villages women here also reported having no restrictions on their movements by their husbands or relatives. Especially, they reported their husbands as encouraging them to go to NGO functions since they understand that it is for the whole family's advancement that the women are engaging in these activities. But they also laughingly accepted that they could come to these meetings only if they

finish all the housework, cooking and cleaning before they come. If a woman forgets to prepare the meal for her husband before coming to the meeting, then of course there is going to be problems, they claimed. Even though women participate it does seem that this participation had not been given due respect within the village and within their families.

While Poompagar has more male members Pampaimadu had only three male members out of twenty total members. At the latter village only women were present for the meeting and they proudly claimed that they do not want men in their society. They claimed that the three males are young boys. Even though they did not use the exact words it was clear that they did not want men who would try to control them (see Example 4 in GA). In both villages women seem to prefer that men do not attend the meetings. This seems to point towards difficulty in asserting themselves while men, the naturally accepted leaders, are present. In fact, this was clearly evident at the FOSDO executive committee meeting in which the treasurer, who was a male, dominated the discussion while the vice president's attempts to butt in (who at the absence of the president was supposed to be leading the discussion) was thwarted several times. While the GS is sympathetic towards women's desire to achieve leadership positions within supportive environments, it was obvious that this does not give them skills to negotiate better positions in other contexts where men are present. The female only participation in this sense does not change the power inequity in male female social relationships and ends up trapping women in similar patriarchal relationships as before.

To improve gender relations it is very important to encourage participation of both men and women and then promote women's leadership within such contexts. FORUT and local organization officials seem to be very content with the situation in which they feel that gender has been taken care of just because women participate in their multitudes. To improve the gender balance and equity it is vital to look into the factors that prevent men from participating in FORUT activities and then try to change those reasons. Most women cited men's economic activities and the lack of time as the reason for their non-participation. When the GS commented that the children who accompany their mothers are almost always girl children, some women commented that boys have started to think that NGO meetings are for women and girls. It seems that the children are already being socialized into thinking about participation in a specific way. This situation does not bode well for the future and we can expect to see the trend of imbalanced women's participation continuing. Perhaps targeting male youth could be a good way to start changes in the present situation. It would be easier to socialize youth into new ways of gendered relationships, in which mutual respect and equal opportunities at participation will be corner stones. This again calls for a comprehensive educational program in which youth are shown the importance of good governance without really forcing these ideas directly on them. The focus on youth should not allow ignoring older men. Perhaps approaching them at their convenience might help them to more fully embrace the CBO activities.

In the same meeting (FOSDO executive committee meeting) several intersecting power strains were observed. At this particular meeting even the FOSDO women officials had to take a back seat and was spoken over by the above mentioned assertive male treasurer. This was one clear case where several hierarchical strains intersected in which the official power of the FOSDO women was momentarily overtaken by the patriarchal power wielded by the male office bearer. In this same meeting another intersection was visible in that several times when a male village member started to talk while a FORUT official or a member of the evaluation team was saying something a female FORUT official stopped them through hand and facial signals. As earlier explained the deeply entrenched hierarchical understanding of the society seem to characterize FORUT's activities and social relationships. While the officers are well-intentioned they seemed to be led by an uncritical attitude towards several deeply internalized cultural understandings. If an effort towards deep democracy and good governance is not going to be initiated from the top it would be difficult to expect changes that would help towards a more meaningful localization (See Example 5, GA).

Katkuli society is urban based and the families depended on non-traditional, mostly service sector jobs, for their survival. This urbanness colored some of their responses to the questions, especially regarding their reproductive choices. Compared to other CBO's Katkuli society members surprised me with their openness in talking about female reproductive health related issues. Both Katkuli and Ukulankulam women commended the government midwife, MOH volunteers and the FIRM health volunteer work in making people aware. The two FOSDO villages, Poompagar and Pampaimadu, the question was met with shy smiles and reluctant answers. According to the women, health volunteers had given them family planning advice (they were not sure to which organization these volunteers belonged and mentioned several possible government institutions and NGOs). For any NGO intent on improving women's conditions it is important to pay attention to the situation regarding family planning. My discussions led me to believe that even if most women are reluctant to talk about the subject, there is interest and need for acquiring such knowledge among them. The FORUT health volunteers seem to do a commendable job in this regard. However, it seems it will be useful to have workshops in which family planning will be addressed in a holistic sense showing the interlinks between family size, family economy and the women's empowerment. It is very important to involve men in such educational programs since without their awareness on the same issues only minimal results can be expected.

Women's oppression and their low self-esteem have a direct link with their husbands' or fathers' alcohol and drug consumption. This not only result in poor economic situations but also in violence against women and children, unwanted pregnancies and further marginalization of women in such households. In all four societies women present claimed that the alcohol is not a big problem in their villages. When asked about domestic violence the GS received varied answers showing ambivalence in the local definition of what constitutes domestic abuse/violence. First most women claimed that domestic abuse is almost non-existent in their villages. And then they started coming up with incidents, which they characterized as normal and as everyday occurrences. These



incidents included a slapping or punching a woman in the heat of the moment when she failed in her wifely duties such as cooking and cleaning. As long as the abuse is not a daily occurrence and not extremely violent, and happened in the context of a culturally understood mistake by the victim, the village women seem to consider the incident as normal. The more they talked it became clear that this kind of abuse is prevalent and that there is no cultural outrage against such acts.

As explained earlier, with regard to Poompagar village women not having any ideas for self-improvement, Pampaimadu women also showed that they have no plan for the future of the society. In both Katkuli and Ukulankulam women were able to express humble future hopes such as expecting FOSDO to grant aid in cattle and poultry raising. This situation, in which women were not able to express any sustainable long term plans for their own or society's improvement seemed a barrier to effective localization. It is important to disseminate FORUT's message of localization to CBOs thus providing fertile grounds for local leaders to thrive. As it stands now, women do not understand that they have such a vital role to play and thus are unable to formulate long term plans. Allowing more space for village societies to decide on their future programs will be a good beginning. This will allow people to come up and develop locally grounded programs, in however a rudimentary way, and with FORUT/FOSDO help and monitoring they will be able to improve their programs.

#### *Anuradhapura*

As the introduction indicates the RPDF is involved in a multitude of tasks in different villages and most of these seem to be geared towards greater participation by women. The pre-schools, vocational training, promotion of temperance and peace and mobilization of civil society seemed the basic categories of work that they are engaged in, in addition to the micro-credit program. Within these categories they try to reach men and women as well as youth. On our first fact-finding trip the GS met several RPDF women officers separately who were quite articulate and clearly explained their roles and duties.

On our three day field visit to Medawachchiya, the GS met 4 more women staff members. The deputy manager of RPDF is a woman and all the women including her agreed that they work as a team and all ideas are taken into consideration when making decisions. Deputy manager has space to make decisions when the manager is not present. Talking about village women these staff members agreed that women in their project areas are hard working and enterprising. They are all engaged in some kind of an income generating activity. Because of this very reason the controls and restrictions on their movements and violence against women are low. Women have responsibilities within their husbands' agricultural work and, therefore, men and women have to work together to survive. The families in the area seemed to be peaceful and women take care of household finances. The villages in the area being old villages (*Purana gam*), where all the inhabitants are relatives, had reinforced this situation.

According to the staff members, due to RPDF prevention programs alcoholism had been reduced in the villages. Women's participation in family decision making processes had been increased due to their participation in village CBOs. Since it is the women who take the loans and manage its repayment men have to pay attention to their opinions, the staff members claimed. Talking about women's self esteem, the staff members conceded that most women think that it is bad *Karma* to be a woman. Giving an example, one staff member illustrated that at the beginning of a gender training program two third of the women wanted to be men in their next birth. But at the end of the program the response to the same question had been different and all the women wanted to be women in their next birth. While this could very well be an isolated incident, it also can definitely be seen as an example of an effective gender training program.

The ET requested the FORUT/ RPDF staff to arrange four villages, which represented successful, mediocre and weak CBOs. They have taken this request seriously and provided us a spectrum of program success levels. In fact, it should be noted that the FORUT Medawachchiya and RPDF planned our field work with precision allowing us to make full use of the short time we spent there. The first village we visited, Dematagala, boasted a very successful CBO and indicated some important conditions that should be present to achieve such success. The loan program is functioning very well and women present at the meeting had some inspiring success stories to share with us (See Example 6, GA).

During the GS's discussions with 10 women alone (and during the general discussion too) women articulated their pride and happiness in the work of the society. According to the women, before the society started the paddy lands were pawned and by December there was no rice left to eat. Now because of the agricultural loans, women claimed, they are cultivating their paddy lands and all 56 families belonging to the society own houses with permanent roofing. Before the RPDF mobilization only about 5 households had toilets but now almost every house boasts of a toilet, and instances of getting diseases like diarrhea and even malaria is drastically reduced, the women said. Significant in the way they talked was their insistence that "we did" rather than FORUT or RPDF did certain things. Their pride in at least rhetorically claiming that their activities changed the village for the better was clear. These women claimed that the alcohol and drug addiction as well as resultant domestic violence has been significantly reduced and the reason was their awareness programs in which they went from house to house educating people of the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, they added that they would not wait till the government do things and organize shramadhana when they feel that the roads are overgrown or that a tank needs to be cleaned. Since women engage in paddy cultivation and then NGO activities such as RPDF society men can't ignore them, the Dematagala women concurred. Because a loan is taken in the woman's name (in most cases) and she is the one who strategize to pay it back she has more power in decision making within the household, they further added. Like in many other villages these women also noted that regardless of society work they always had freedom of movement and even at night they can freely move around without being harassed. In their simple understanding of equal relationship of men and women within the household and in the village they showed that better economic conditions improve gender relations.

This certainly seems like a very satisfactory situation. Compared with some of the other villages in Medawachchiya as well as in Vavuniya and Puttalam, Dematagala seemed an anomaly. Certain configuration of favorable dynamics seemed to have contributed to this situation. One of which certainly seemed getting together a group of very enthusiastic and enterprising women who have already obtained a certain amount of respect within their families due to the essential agricultural activities they were engaged in. The choice of a very capable bank manager whose husband (the *grama niladari* of the area) supports the society in an advisory capacity had also contributed to the success. It has to be noted that the women highly praised the trainings they received and the dedicated service of the RPDF field officer servicing their village. The biggest difference with the other villages was the members' attitude in which they regarded the CBO work as their own responsibility. We can suspect that the field officer must have been very effective in conveying the FORUT philosophy of localization to the villagers.

In Kulikkada the situation was somewhat different. However, it was important to note that this society was established because several women were inspired by the Weeramurippuwa RPDF supported CBO. Even though we did not hear about such situations in other villages we visited, it was heartening to see that the village activism seemed to be inspiring certain chain reactions in some places. The Kulikkada women's society also engages in welfare activities in addition to giving loans. RPDF had introduced an insurance scheme for the villages and had made the membership of this scheme a prerequisite for obtaining loans. Women bitterly critiqued this scheme and its relation to loan taking. They pointed towards gray areas in which they were not sure how long they would have to keep paying before they can get back the full amount. The difficulty in obtaining help for medical emergencies was also cited as a problem area. According to the women, they run the households economically because men spent their meager earnings on alcohol. They had one alcohol prevention program but then had to stop doing them because those might be too contentious and the drinking men might stop their women from attending the meetings. Even though they claimed that they have freedom of movement it seems that this freedom in most cases is contingent upon men's good will. It should be recalled that the RPDF chairman considers gender is taken care of since it is the women who participate in CBO activities.<sup>1</sup> This situation points towards the inclusion of men in the CBO activities to bring lasting improvements in gender relations.

Women also complained that the RPDF has not responded to their request that they be given training in envelope and yogurt making, thus allowing the society to give loans for such self employment activities. After describing the poverty of the village and the difficult lives of women and children they also noted the lack of common facilities such as electricity, good roads and transportation as hindrances to achieving economic viability. While they can cultivate or engage in small industries the above conditions barred them from marketing those for a profit. They noted that any NGO who is meaning to improve the livelihood opportunities for the village should first look into these infra

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<sup>1</sup> He of course found it a bit problematic since it is difficult to conduct shramadhana and other labor-intensive activities just with women's participation.

structural problems. Otherwise what will happen is (and is happening now) the loans will be spent on activities such as building houses or toilets. While that is good those activities will never steer them out of the darkness they are in now, they stated. FORUT, like any other NGO, has its own mission and could not attend to all these needs. However, any sustainable development plan must take the target people's own ideas into account when designing programs affecting them (Grillo and Stirrat 1997). If not development will remain a top to bottom phenomena that is alien to the locals. Considering that FORUT is intent on localization it is important to look into these ideas and to see how the scarce resources should be channeled to make a lasting difference.

(See example 7, GA for detail on our visit to Thammannakulam village)

RPDF identified Yakawewa Didulana women's organization as one of the successful CBOs within their purview. In fact, the president of the society in an elaborate speech introducing the society espoused commendable ideals on localization, self-reliance and independence. According to this speech and the short general discussion the RPDF and the society had done many good things around the village such as road construction, toilets, pre school and health activities. In fact, the president had nothing but good things to say about FORUT and RPDF activities and evidenced a good knowledge of the localization process. She even claimed that the insurance scheme is a good thing and that many members like the idea of having such a scheme.

The GS found it difficult to hear other women's voices during my conversations alone with the women due to the president's insistence on representing the group's view. She answered all my questions and thrice interrupted when two other women tried to speak. Once when the GS wanted to go back to a woman who tried to speak the president interrupted saying that "she also was trying to say what I am saying." Furthermore, her answers seemed a bit rehearsed and rhetorical. Because of her enthusiasm and the role she played in starting the society she had been elected president over and over again since 1996. She is also the current vice-president of RPDF's Executive Committee. She had participated in leadership training programs and dealt with government and NGO officials for a long time. Even though all the members present (6) seemed to happily accept this situation it raises many questions. Her dominance circumscribe other women's aspirations for leadership positions and hinder them acquiring leadership qualities. Also the long-term leadership position seemed to have instilled in the present president an idea that the society belonged to her and that she is the only person qualified to talk to educated people from Colombo. This evidenced the complexities of women's participation and shows that gender relations do not improve just because women participate. Reversed hierarchies (Kabeer 1994) may develop and women who wield power just the same way as men do within patriarchal power relations may circumscribe other women's space for meaningful participation. Since the GS was unable to listen to several members it is difficult to ascertain the success of RPDF work at Yakawewa. However, it seems important to pay attention to the politics within village societies and what such situations as above means for achieving meaningful participation for village women.

[The ET also visited a youth organization and then visited a village that RPDF just started working in Padaviya. In the first instance only five women were present and we did not have much time to talk to them. During the latter instance the relocated villagers of Jayaratnekotuwa were going through extremely difficult times and it felt ridiculous to even mention gender relations. This village comes under a CARE project that RPDF landed and they were working in close relations with the Padaviya Divisional Secretary. It is here that the FORUT staff's common complaint about people getting into a culture of wanting free deals and playing the tune of "can't" was reiterated with force. Both the government and the NGO people blamed the people for wanting things presented to them. However, they forget to measure the specific circumstances that the villagers are in. They are relocated, through no fault of theirs, in a place offering very little hope for them. There are no basic facilities and it is rarely they get two meals a day. Localization is a good ideal, application of which should be context specific. Trying to push ideals of self-reliance and independence where the ground circumstances are not mature/conducive can result in worse circumstances than prior to NGO intervention.]

### *Puttalam*

WODEPT - Women's Organization for Development, Equity, Peace and Temperance has been working since 1997 to bring development to Muslim women. There are 1080 women who are members of CBOs. Since there is only one member from each family we can expect 1080 families in 24 villages in Puttalam to be touched by WODEPT activities. Earlier there were two members who were elected at the village level who came for District level meetings. But rumors and male antagonism had discouraged them and the WODEPT had to change its structure. Now they have found 8 members, who are not afraid of rumors, and formed an executive committee. This shows that the women's participation had not yet been instilled with much change with regard to their activities in the public sphere (see example 8 in GA for evidence).

Identities are important and it is good for sheltered Muslim women to have a supportive environment in their baby steps towards public activity. In traditional societies, more often than not, it is men who hold positions of authority. In initial stages of outside interventions it might be useful to have men as change agents. WODEPT is exclusively for women and even though it was hoped that the development and change will travel through them to their families above incidents show that in an extremely patriarchal society perhaps an inclusive CBO would be better. Of course this poses the problem of men taking leadership positions and women becoming token participants. This is where the WODEPT staff can play a major role in providing awareness programs on democracy, gender balance, equity and empowerment. The need for such steps is necessary in the context that even among all-women situations, which we discuss later, the traditional hierarchy is clearly visible. Older women and women from elite families held all the leadership positions and they controlled the group activities with an iron fist. It was more than obvious through field research that all women are not given free voice even in same sex gatherings and therefore, it is better to let all villagers try and learn democracy, good

governance and equity in a common forum mediated by capable and culturally sensitive staff.<sup>2</sup> Even though on the outset this seems like exchanging pepper with chillies it may not be a bad idea to start with one or two villages in a different format. This may of course require “politics of patience” as Arjun Appadurai (2001) terms it but since there is not much change in traditional authority structures since WODEPT started work in 1997 to this date, a change in the approach might not be such a bad idea.

At Hajarawatthe the GS was able to talk to six women belonging to different generations. The research conditions were not optimal in that the WODEPT-coordinator had to be present at the meeting as the translator. Women were not very enthusiastic about the loan scheme and did not have any success stories to relate. In fact, they complained that the future of the CBO is uncertain since not many people are interested in joining or actively participating. Even though they have not given any loans this year (because of lack of savings) in previous years many women took loans for livestock raising, to start shops, to buy sewing machines or for fishing. Huseniyapuram women were more optimistic and were happy with the welfare activities they engaged in as well as with the functioning of the loan scheme. They related incidents of getting loans for self-employment as well as for weddings, funerals and children’s educational needs. Even though WODEPT and FORUT project officials claimed that women take loans and that they have gained financial decision-making power because of the loans it appeared that most of the women took loans to improve their husband’s employment. No woman we talked to at both these villages (6 at Hajarawatthe and 61 at Huseniyapuram) started an income generating activity of her own. No one was able to take charge of an already existing economic activity. While it is true that they may earn more respect within the family for bringing low interest loans it is difficult to say that women get more power in family decision making this way. This helps men become financially more secure and become even more patriarchal. Research over the years had shown that groups consider tight control of women’s movement and valorization of their honor as one vital indication of becoming middle class (Chatterjee 1993; Carbayo-Abengozar 2001). It is perhaps important to look into the possibility of attracting younger women to the societies’ activities and train and get them started on income generating activities before they get married. This might influence the younger women to have a lesser number of children and more time to continue their economic activities. As it stands both the village societies comprise of married women with children who find it difficult to start new economic activities.

According to Hajarawatthe women, coming to Puttalam had been good for the female children’s education aspirations. Earlier, when resident in Mannar, girl children had to stop schooling as soon as they reach puberty. Soon thereafter they will be given in marriage. Back then it was difficult to find women who were educated further than grade 6 or grade 9. But now since there is not much work to be done in the house or fields (no land to cultivate) girls go to school until they themselves want to stop. In Mannar most boys do not go to school and start fishing at a very young age. It has not changed much here either. Women with uneducated husbands find it difficult to attend public activities.

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<sup>2</sup> Women of Hajarawatthe CBO strongly expressed the need for inclusion of men. According to them, without men’s support no activity can have a lasting impact.

Such men do not want their women getting together and engaging in social activities. Some men let them participate without much trouble but still women expressed everyday barriers to their public activities. One woman said that if a woman walked twice to the pre-school building with a file in her hand there will be bad rumors against her.

Women in Huseniyapuram seem to belong to a different class background than Hajarawatthe women. The former group claimed that in their village most men and women are educated. They were proud of this fact and listed people who were employed as teachers, nurses and clerks. In fact, the woman who translated for us was a nurse and had her training in Badulla. This allowed her to learn Sinhala and given her a certain power as a mediator between the communities in some instances (when going to the hospital, taking public transportation)<sup>3</sup>. According to these women, some men still do not like their women to participate in CBO activities. But most of them liked their women to attend meetings and obtain loans. At both villages they claimed that the alcoholism and domestic violence is very rare due to the Islamic religious strictures.

Women from both villages noted that the marriage age for women had gone up. According to Huseniyapuram women, the marriage age is now about 25-28 for women. They pointed to all the courses on offer for school leavers and some young women's desire to find jobs. Some older women who had married very young (16 to 18 years of age) related how their daughters got married at 24 and 25 years of age. Hajarawatthe women happily engaged in a discussion about the changes in the family size in their community. According to these women, the reason for lesser number of children is the fact that women get the tubectomy operation done at a relatively young age. When asked for the reasons they cited the relatively easy access to family planning services at the Puttalam hospital. They also pointed towards several changes associated with modernization.

While Sri Lanka Family Planning Bureau seemed to have effectively reached this poor, lower class community, the Huseniyapuram women, at least the ones in leadership positions, expressed quite different ideas. According to them, the operation is not an option for Muslim women. Number of children per family is declining but that is due to the fact that the marriage age for women is going up. Quite in contrast to Hajarawatthe women, who talked about these issues with much enthusiasm and laughter, Huseniyapuram women seemed reluctant to talk about family planning. Neither group claimed that WODEPT had given them information or conducted any awareness programs on family planning and contraceptives. Even though they said that children per family had been reduced from 4.9- 4.7 generally among Muslims and from 5.2 to 4.9 among IDPs the FP and WODEPT officials did not claim that they conducted any programs for this purpose. In fact the staff seemed to be driven by a static traditional understanding of Muslim community and Muslim women and do not seem to be attuned to the changes that could occur from the kind of massive structural changes the Sri Lankan society as a whole is going through and the traumatic experiences of IDPs. It is my opinion that the relocation had affected women from different class backgrounds

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, one fervent wish that was reiterated at both the villages was their need to learn Sinhala.

differently and that the poor, lower class Hajarawatthe women seemed better prepared to internalize new attitudes. In the context of localization, it is important to build local leaders who can be change agents. But the very poverty and marginalization that made them open to new ways seemed to hinder the formation of a strong CBO at Hajarawatthe. This is partially being affected by them practicing dual residency in Mannar and Puttalam since some of their original villages have become available for resettlement. The staff, however, needs to be in constant touch with the mood of their members to intervene at the correct place at the correct time if they are to hope for any lasting empowerment for women.

As per FORUT mission statement the FORUT/Puttalam staff also encouraged women's participation in their activities. FORUT/Puttalam and WODEPT staff insisted that women are becoming assertive and that their communication and articulation skills are improving. An instance where few women manipulated two MPs quest for power to bargain a better deal for the society was related as an example of women's newfound assertiveness. Even at the village women's societies we saw at least some women developing into leaders and others learning how to participate in public activities. Women got together to discuss their common problems and in fact many members cited the happiness that they gained from meeting and sharing as one reason for their participation. However, women-only participation seemed to have its own problems of hierarchy. For example, only 4 out of 62 women at Huseniyapuram spoke when the project staff and the full ET was present. All the women seemed eager to talk to the gender specialist in the special session but several leaders hampered free flow of information by using very authoritarian means. Furthermore, rather than developing new leaders the society's activities seemed to have consolidated traditional class and age based leadership among women.<sup>4</sup> The four women who spoke were older, well dressed and in stark contrast to the haggard majority, appeared to belong to leisure classes. Since these women always had been leaders among the women, what impact, if any, this traditional leadership will have on the the wider Muslim community remains to be seen.

These questions are important to raise in the context that another evaluation (Laura Watkins 2001) on the Puttalam project already noted some of the above observations. According to Watkins "Amongst themselves, the women have proven to be strong, vocal and well organized; yet beyond that on a wider, more public platform, they still prove invisible, and their demands marginal." She further contends that there is a lack of 'gender perspective and awareness' among the women themselves. The WODEPT coordinator was not aware of such an evaluation and while aware of the study the FP/ coordinator appeared not to have read the report. The objective of an evaluation should be to take that into consideration for future changes and therefore, it is essential to disseminate the knowledge gained from an evaluation report to the relevant ground staff. The major recommendation for WODEPT activities is for them to strategize the best way to include men in their activities. It was noteworthy that women in at least one village (Hajarawatthe) suggested that men should be included in the society's activities. If an

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<sup>4</sup> Even at Hajarawatthe where all women participated in somewhat of an equal manner, there was one woman who stood outside and spoke through the iron mesh of the window.



organization is intending to improve gender relations it is necessary to include both men and women and then attempt to improve the social relations between them. In the context of the strict Islamic rules regarding such social relations it is imperative to develop and negotiate a culturally sensitive program that would not alienate the people.

PDF - Nirmalapura in Kalpitiya is a village society of Sinhala membership operating under People's Development Forum. There were four men and twelve women present at the meeting. These people belonged to farming families and recounted stories of difficult lives. It was interesting to note that the spirit they conveyed about developing agriculture at the general meeting was almost completely changed during the discussion with gender specialist alone. They were highly dissatisfied with their hand to mouth existence and stated that the only reason they are still in agriculture is that they just do not have anything else to do. They expressed the need to start some industries in the village providing jobs and also wanted to obtain training and help in starting income generating activities. Women effectively articulated the vicious cycle of events that they are embroiled in. The vegetable farming needed constant and daily attendance by both the husband and wife and that prevented women from traveling to Puttalam or to Colombo for self-employment training. Women complained that their husbands are not far thinking and that they have a feeling that the men would somehow take care of the farming alone if self-employment activities bring money home from the very first day.

In contrast, Kandakuliya CBO members have been able to achieve some economic success through the village society and PDF loans. Loans had been taken to buy fishing equipment, boats and engines and to start pig farming. There was one woman who obtained a Rs.25,000/- profit in 2003 from pig farming (See example 9 in Gender addendum for details). The low economic success of this fishing community seems to rest in their life style in which they focus on day to day living and do not engage in long term planning. This may be another place FORUT/PDF intervention is needed. Workshops, awareness programs on budgeting, long term planning and household management might help the women learn an alternative life style and take it to their families and communities. Even though women at first said they have the freedom to participate in public activities the later conversations confirmed that this freedom is something given by the males. The exclusion of men from society's activities and the non focus on changing women's world view seemed to have trapped women in a double bind in that they now have to engage in this income generating activity (CBO participation) in addition to their other work (See example 10 in GA for details).

Women in both villages agreed that it is the girls who attend school more years than boys (Exmaple 11, GA). There is alcoholism and domestic violence in the village and the members have not yet thought about doing anything about it. Women from both villages agreed that fertility rate per family is declining. Again the women from both villages pointed to similar patterns regarding the marriage age. Unlike in other places these two villages did not boast of an increase in the age of marriage for women. Rather women expressed concern that the girl children in their villages get into very early marriages. To initiate meaningful changes in women's lives in both these villages it seems imperative to

reach young girls and direct them towards education and awareness programs. It is also important to pay attention to the structural conditions that forces boy children out of schools at a young age. Because it definitely is going to be very difficult to initiate changes in women's lives if their men folk are not going to be open to changes in gender relations.

When asked about their hopes and wishes for the future of the society women in both villages expressed the need for training in self-employment. They also noted the need to start big industries or factories in their villages thus providing employment opportunities for village youth. While this is way beyond FORUT's limits, it might be useful to educate the villagers in ways to approach big companies and to communicate and build networks with the power center in Colombo. The importance is enhanced by the fact that such employment opportunities may improve their attraction to education leading to many other changes in the village life styles.

OSDTRA - The focus on civil society mobilization had unwittingly rendered a better picture of gender relations within its village societies. In both village gatherings almost equal numbers of men and women were present. Especially in Paramakanda some tensions arose evidencing differences in attitudes to development between men and women. While most of the women present were silent and even looked pained at the confrontation the spirited defense of their stance by a few women showed that women do not shy away from asserting their own positions and fighting for what they think is right in spite of who is being present at the meeting. Trying to give more opportunities to women by forming women centered societies seemed to be driven by a rather shallow, middle class understanding of gender relations among village women. Unfortunately scheduling problems prevented the gender specialist from having a separate discussion with Paramakanda women.

(See Example 12 in GA for details of our visit to Thattawe village society)

(See example 13, GA for details on IYTEC)

### ***Economics of Project Implementation and Sustainability***

FORUT spent Rs. 33 million for the implementation of project-based activities in the three districts in 2003. As has already been noted, the annual expenditure has increased considerably during the recent years. There are a number of methods to examine the economic implications of a project. But the unavailability of required data precludes that type of sophisticated analysis. An indirect way to ascertain the extent to which FORUT activities benefited the target population is to examine the financial accounts of the three projects.

The Activity-based Costing Budget for 2003 was available for all the three districts. The examination of data has to be made keeping in mind the basic objective of the project. The total budget for 2003 varies from Rs.7.0 million in Puttalam to Rs.18.0 Million in

Vavuniya. The percentage distribution of budgeted cost by activity closely related to the needs of IDPs. A closer perusal of data indicates that there is a reasonable distribution of expenditure among the main activities. The civil war had badly damaged the educational facilities and basic amenities such as water tanks, sanitation and infrastructure facilities especially in Vavuniya and Anuradhapura districts. These two projects were able to identify these requirements correctly and had allocated the funds accordingly. The Vavuniya project has allocated the major proportion of its budget (33.7 percent) to rehabilitation of water supply schemes, sanitation and local infrastructure followed by (29.2 percent) on education and vocational training (rehabilitation of schools, preschools, teacher training and libraries). In Anuradhapura, where only boarder villages were affected by the civil war, little more than one-fifth (21.6 percent) of expenditure was allocated on rehabilitation of water supply schemes, sanitation and local infrastructure. Interestingly, all the three projects spent around 30 percent of allocated grant on the rehabilitation of schools, preschools, libraries teacher training and vocational training. Though Puttalam District was not affected directly by the civil war, the migration of IDPs in increasing numbers to Puttalam District posed the biggest challenge. The Puttalam project has given the highest priority for credit fund activities.

The successful implementation of any project depends largely on the degree of the target population's participation and the management skills of the staff of the project as well as village societies. Therefore, the allocation of around 20 percent for activities relating to organizational development (mobilization, capacity building and management skills development) of the staff of the FORUT Project Offices as well as the staff of the partner organizations is justifiable.

Although one of the major objectives of the project is to increase income generation among the target population, both Vavuniya and Anuradhapura projects had only allocated approximately 6 percent of their budgetary provisions for income generation. The Puttalam project has not shown separately the amount of money spent on income generation activities; presumably it is included along with Credit Fund activities. Under the localization process the responsibility of most of the income generation activities are handed over to the partner organizations.

### *Anuradhapura*

FORUT activities in Anuradhapura District are limited to three DS Divisions, Medawachchiya, Padaviya and Horowpothane. The Project Office is in Medawachchiya. Welfare and rehabilitation activities of Padaviya are mainly supported by CARE through FORUT. The financial support for Medawachchiya is basically a responsibility of FORUT.

The apex body of Medawachchiya, RPDF, was established in 1993. During the period 1993-1998 RPDF worked through FORUT. But now most of the FORUT activities are assigned to RPDF. The annual budget for Medawachchiya amounted to Rs. 6.2 million for the financial year 2002. Of this Rs. 6.1 million was received from FORUT head-

office, Colombo. The balance consisted of the interest received for deposits and loans and miscellaneous income. The revolving fund amounted to Rs.4.04 million. It was observed that there is a fixed deposit with the People's Bank for Rs.1.08 million while the loans extended to target population was Rs. 2.67 million. The major source of income is generated from the funds (savings and unused money of the revolving loan fund) deposited in commercial banks. Depending on the extent of loan disbursements the interest income also varies annually. The more the target population takes loans out of their own savings and revolving loan fund, the lower the interest income generated from the commercial banks. On the other hand, the lower deposits in commercial banks indicate that the project funds generate increasing benefits to the target population. The Income and Expenditure Account shows that the expenditure exceeded the income by about Rs.140,000/- during the financial year 2002 but during the previous year (2001) the earned income exceeded the expenditure. When compared to loans taken during 2001 by the members a decline of Rs. 0.54 million is observed during 2002. However, the available data indicate that there is an increase in loans issued to the target population during the first 10 months of 2003.

Although it is hardly practical, the staff at the Medawachchiya Project Office claimed that there is a 100 percent loan recovery rate. They claim that though there is a delay on repayments they are able to recover completely. However, the recorded data indicate that during the six year period from 1997 to 2002 the repayment rate was only 93 .7 percent, the balance 6.3 percent could be considered as bad debts. When probed the staff put forward mostly acceptable reasons i.e., leaving the place of residence, death and disappearance due to war, continuous crop failure due to droughts and the 'inability' to understand the difference between loan and a grant.

In comparison to all apex bodies within VAPReP, only RPDF in Anuradhapura maintains a reasonably sound accounting system. Four balance sheets (as at 30.06.2002, 31.12.2002, 30.06.2003 and 31.10.2003) audited by a Chartered Accounting Firm were provided to the ET. As shown in the latest balance sheet, the total assets and liabilities as at 31.10.2003 amounted to Rs. 1.36 million consisting Rs. 0.519 million fixed assets and Rs. 0.841 million current assets. The accumulated fund (amount that belongs to the RPDF) amounted to Rs. 0.945 million. The current liability formed Rs. 0.415 million.

The total income of RPDF was Rs.2.884 million during the financial year of 2002. In addition to the FORUT grant of Rs. 1.23 million, they have received Rs. 385,785 from other organizations. The balance income of the RPDF are generated mainly from five sources i.e., credit fund, rented out buildings, sales of goods, sales of agricultural products and contracts. The total expenditure for the financial year 2002 was Rs. 2.864 million. The recorded excess of income over expenditure was Rs. 19,773 only. The annual grant from FORUT consists of 60 percent of salaries of the RPDF staff members. The balance 40 percent of salaries are borne out of their own income. The ET was told that FORUT's administrative support would be discontinued from the beginning of the financial year 2004. If it is so the annual income of the RPDF will decline by about Rs. 1.2 million. The manager of RPDF claimed that the income generated by RPDF covers around 75 to

80 percent of annual expenditure and they will be able to function without the administrative support of FORUT. However, a closer perusal of the financial statements for 2002 of the RPDF does not support this explanation. If FORUT discontinues its contribution towards 60 percent of salaries of eight RPDF staff members the project activities would be certainly affected adversely unless RPDF takes drastic steps to introduce cost cutting methods and increase its productivity.

From the inception the RPDF was able to obtain financial support from the other NGOs and the Government sector. For example SLCDF had extended their financial support to the RPDF through the FORUT for a Water Board Project. Similarly, CARE too has funded RPDF. It is learnt that CARE is to provide a further sum of Rs. 1.9 million to RPDF for welfare activities of the rehabilitated and relocated villagers in the Padaviya D.S. Division.

The Rs. 4.8 million Credit Fund of the RPDF consists of a Rs. 3.9 million grant given by the FORUT (that has accumulated through the years) and the earned interest income of Rs. 0.9 million. The maximum amount of loan granted per member is limited to Rs. 30,000/- with a 18 months repayment period. The upper limit of agricultural loans is Rs. 10,000/-. The group and the village society are responsible to repay the loan. Additionally, 15 percent of the member's savings is retained as a surety. One of the major prerequisites for a loan is that the applicant should be a member of the insurance scheme which has been introduced recently. The current interest rate for loans is 18 percent per annum. During the financial year 2003 (up to 31.10.2003) the RPDF issued Rs. 2.75 million as loans from their credit fund. They claim that 12 percent of loans issued to the target population is not recoverable due to reasons such as deaths, residential changes, drought in 1993 and willful non-payment i.e., misinterpretation of the loan as a grant.

There are two types of loans; loans to societies and loans to individual members. In the case of individual members, loans are given for agriculture, animal husbandry, housing and self employment. The majority of loans are issued to women.

The target population of 26 villages where the RPDF is working had saved Rs. 1.9 million up to the end of 31.12.2002. Women tend to save more than their male counterparts. Currently 9 percent annual interest is paid for savings. The investment decisions are taken by the society. Therefore, savings are invested within their own village. The accounts are audited monthly. The treasurer of the society can keep only Rs. 5,000/- in one's custody to give instant loans to the members. If there is an excess of savings over loans granted, the village societies have to deposit the balance with the RPDF. The manager of the RPDF assured that their members are not allowed to deposit excess savings in commercial banks.

Table 2 summarizes selected financial information pertaining savings, loans and interest rates. In three of the 4 societies in Medawachchiya, all the members as well as office-bearers are women, the one exception being Dematagala. In this society there are a few male members and the president of the society is also a man. The monthly membership

fee varies from Rs. 5/- in Yakawewa to Rs. 50/- in Dematagala. Dematagala seems to be a strong village society. Of the four societies its savings rank as the first and it pays 1.5 percent monthly interest for the savings exceeding the commercial interest rate by almost 10 percentage points. Although in the other three societies the interest rate for savings is higher than that of commercial rate the difference is not that remarkable. The lowest interest rate (9 percent per annum) is in Kulikkada. Dematagala society issued a maximum of Rs. 30,000/- per housing loan for its members.

**Table 2**

*Volume of savings, interest rates paid on savings and loans by village societies visited\* by the Evaluation Team*

Project & Society	Volume of Savings Rs.	Interest per annum for	
		Savings	Loans
<b>Medawachchiya</b>			
Dematagala	376,806	18%	24%
Kulikkada	-	9%	24%
Yakawewa	169,000	12%	24%
Thammennakulama	127,400	12%	30%
<b>Puttalam</b>			
Hajarawatte	-	-	-
Huseniyaapuram	200,000	-	-
Nirmalapura	65,000	10%	36%
Kandakuliya	-	-	48%
<b>Vavuniya</b>			
Poompugar	40,000	10%	16%
Pampaimadu	28,300	10%	16%
Salampan	-	-	-
Katkuli	140,000	10%	15%
Ukulankulam	351,000	10%	15%

\* Information on CBOs in Paramakande and Thattewa linked with OSDTRA though visited by the ET are also not given as these were not created by OSDTRA but merely brought under its umbrella under the 'strengthening of civil societies project.'

These societies had introduced a number of prerequisites for loans. In order to process loan applications the members should have attended monthly meetings regularly, they should have a satisfactory amount of deposits and should have paid membership fees continuously. More importantly, the loan applicants should be members of the insurance scheme that has been introduced recently. Since a considerable proportion of members have not obtained insurance coverage the scheme has invariably limited the number of loan applications. It is important to note that some members severely criticized the introduction of the insurance scheme as a prerequisite for the loans. They argued that the admission fee of Rs. 500/- and the monthly installment of Rs. 50/- are hardly affordable to poor farmers of these villages.

Except in Thamannekulama society there are two types of loans, instant loans and other loans. Instant loans had to be resettled with a monthly interest of 5 percent. The resettlement period varies between one week to 3 months and the maximum loan amount varies from Rs.500/- in Kulikkada to Rs.5,000/- in Dematagala. The instant loans are meant for consumption purposes. In the case of 'Other loans' consisting mainly for housing, agriculture, self employment and animal husbandry, the monthly interest rate varies from 2 percent to 2.5 percent (Table 2). The step-wise graduation within the loan scheme is common to these societies. In general, a member who applies for a loan for the first time is issued only Rs. 2,500/-. With the satisfactory repayment of the first loan s/he could then apply for his/her second loan of Rs. 5,000/-. The step-wise system continues until the maximum loan amount is reached.

In general the members accepted that the RPDF and the village society helped to improve their income generation capacity and social and cultural activities. The loan scheme was particularly beneficial at least to a few members. For example, in Dematagala, with the help of the loan scheme a female labourer who worked in a quarry was able to own a quarry and is now running the business with two small scale metal crushers and 15 to 20 labourers, some of whom are able to earn Rs.500/- to Rs.600/- per day. Currently she meets the demand for metal in the village and has been expanding her business very satisfactorily. She is an active member of the society and appreciates the participatory development methodology adopted by the society. There are three more members who have directly benefited from the credit fund activities of the RPDF.

There are active as well as inactive members in these societies. The proportion of inactive members varies from 20 percent to 60 percent. The presence of inactive members is mainly a result of the attitudes towards loans, i.e., they expect grants instead of loans. The members of the societies visited indicated that they wish that they could avail themselves of more training on self employment and an opportunity to study the development and welfare activities of the other societies.

It seems that there are relatively 'weak' societies. Thammennakulama is the best example. It is an old village ('Purana') bordering the Vavuniya District. This society was formed in 1990 and more than 75 percent members are active in the society. As a result of various internal problems, the society did not function properly until 1998. Though the society was revitalized in 1998 in terms of benefits the village is still marginalized. The main reason is that the members are very lethargic. The staff of the RPDF also accepted the fact that this is the weakest society of all.

### *Vavuniya*

Of the three FORUT Projects, Vavuniya is the largest and oldest. The budgeted expenditure for 2003 was Rs. 18.1 million averaging Rs. 1.5 million per month. This budget is financed by FORUT head-office in Colombo. According to the balance sheet (as at 31.12.2002), the project has been functioning with fixed assets worth approximately Rs. 390,000/- (after depreciation) and Rs. 7.4 million current assets. The

project has a fixed deposit of Rs. 1.0 million with the Commercial Bank and had earned an interest income of Rs. 830,917/-. Information on Savings and Loans is available up to 30.09.2003. The total savings and UNHCR grant amounted to Rs. 3.8 million out of which Rs. 3.5 million has been issued as loans and Rs. 411,680/- was earned as interest income.

The COMTEC institution has been established to promote vocational training by the Vavuniya FORUT project. There are 7 courses and 200 youths attending them. With financial support from NORAD carpentry, masonry, sewing, handicraft, electrical wiring and electric and gas welding courses were conducted free of charge in 2003. The trainees were also paid a daily allowance of Rs. 100/- . However, the evaluation team was informed that NORAD withdrew their financial assistance at the beginning of 2004. Final accounts of the COMTEC shows a profit (excess of income over expenditure) of Rs.10,591/- during the first 9 months of 2003. The production unit that has to be closed in 2004 has, however, recorded a profit of nearly Rs. 250,000/- during the same period; at the time of the ET visit they were fulfilling an order for 1,000 door posts placed by Sewa Lanka and their observation was that the margin of profit on unit of production had dwindled due to intense competition. The most popular section of COMTEC, the Computer Section has also recorded a loss during the first 9 months of 2003 though the courses of the computer section are fee levying.

The ET visited FOSDO on two occasions and was able to obtain a copy of its Income and Expenditure Statement for 2003. The repeated requests to provide copies of final accounts (Balance Sheets) were not fulfilled. Either they do not prepare final accounts or they are reluctant to reveal information. The accountant and the credit officer of Vavuniya FORUT office supervise FOSDO records and the accountant claimed that FOSDO maintains its financial records.

The accounting rules and guide lines are not followed in preparation of the Income and Expenditure Account (see Annex 1). For example, members' savings as well as loan recoveries are shown as income while savings' withdrawals and amount of disbursed loan are entered as expenditure. When data were adjusted taking into consideration only true income and expenditure, it was observed that FOSDO has recorded a net income (excess of income over expenditure) of Rs. 167,225/- during the year 2003. If FORUT has not supported the payment of salaries of FOSDO staff by providing Rs. 274,500/-, FOSDO would have suffered a net loss of Rs. 107,206/- in 2003. Therefore, as in the case of RPDF, the sustainability of FOSDO in the absence of financial support provided by FORUT is questionable. It should introduce new income generation activities and cost cutting methods to increase productivity.

Irrespective of the impression given by the data in Annex 1, the management committee of FOSDO is still confident of their sustainability. When probed about their future plans the answers revealed that they lack a clear vision about the future. Their aim is to merely expand existing activities (a second fertiliser centre, for instance) instead of introducing new avenues. Further, it has be noted that FOSDO's documentation system is far from



exemplary. The FORUT staff in Vavunia think that FOSDO requires more training to improve their capacity building.

FOSDO has provided some information on current savings and loans. The savings of 14 villages amounted to Rs. 981,860/- and the 399 group members had saved Rs.158,763/- up to the end of 2003. During the same period the total amount of loans issued to members was Rs.746,137/-. Because of the problems of accessibility, the group members in LTTE controlled areas have taken only Rs. 17,210/- worth of loans in total, but they have withdrawn Rs. 53,637/- out of their savings. At present they charge a 16 percent interest rate for loans out of which 12 percent is paid to members for their savings and the balance 4 percent is an income of FOSDO.

In addition to membership savings the operative fund of the FOSDO consists of six sources. They are, Savings of Children's Club, Library Fund, Village Development Fund, FORUT's Revolving Loan Fund and UNHCR Fund. The FORUT has contributed Rs.883,000/- while the grant of the UNHCR amounted to Rs. 1.92 million. Whatever the source, the total amount of money in the fund is used as a revolving loan fund.

The FOSDO provides a number of services to improve the quality of life of their members. They conduct health clinics to educate the people about sanitation and good health practices. In the field of education they support pre-schools and have established libraries in every village with 200 books in each. In addition there is a fee-levying training centre that provides residential accommodation for participants. In each village there are children's clubs and youth clubs. According to them, the sales center that supply agricultural inputs particularly fertilizer and weedicide renders a very good service to the farmers in the area. From the inception of the sales center in 2002 they have earned a total profit of Rs. 125,000/-.

FOSDO generates income from different sources that includes hiring of the tractor (UNDP donation), Plant Nursery, Sales Center, fee-levying training center and interest originated from funds and grants from other NGOs. The staff claimed that they spend Rs. 39,000/- per month for the administration, excluding the salaries of four staff members paid by the FORUT.

All three FOSDO villages were resettled after 1999. During an apparently mis-arranged discussion session (which was held with everybody standing on the road-side where a large number of villagers were putting the finishing touches to a community centre built with NEIAP funding) the ET realized that Salamanpan society was among the weakest of all. The war displaced the villagers for three years. All the houses were destroyed. The chairman of the society could not provide information on savings, loans, interest and the type of services rendered by the society. There is not even a single toilet in this village. The NEIAP has given a grant to the society to be use as a revolving loan fund and women are issued Rs. 5,000/- for income generation activities.

FORUT started to support Poompugar village from their inception in 1990. However, the very same year they were displaced by the war and relocated in Madu area. They returned to the village in 1999. Now there are 120 families. Still 15 families live in India. There are 90 members in the society. The total savings of the society amounted to Rs. 40,000/- and they earn a 10 percent interest income (Table 2). The maximum loan that could be taken is limited to Rs. 4000/-. The interest levied for loan is 16 percent per annum. During the period from 2002 to 2004 the number of loans taken by the members declined gradually, 40, 37 and 7 respectively. The villagers prefer to take loans from the shop keeper because of the formalities in the society.

The Pampaimadu society was registered in 2002. There are 20 members. They have deposited Rs. 28,300/- as saving and earn a 10 percent interest (Table 2). Only one loan has been taken and it has been completely paid back with 16 percent interest rate. The vice President of FOSDO is from this society. The Pampaimadu society is satisfied with the services (health sanitation, family planning, pre school) provided by FOSDO.

FIRM, the other apex body of Vavuniya, was formed with 15 village societies. At present it consists of 17 villages, 111 groups and 1946 members. Of them only 44 are men. The members are required to pay Rs. 5/- monthly membership fee to FIRM. The executive committee consists of 26 elected members from the village societies. According to the chairperson of FIRM out of 15 villages 2 have been performing very well, five societies have been facing difficulties while the balance 8 societies are at the middle level.

FIRM fund consists of savings, interest income, VDF, UNHCR grant and FORUT grant. UNDP also provides loan facilities through SANASA. In addition, some welfare projects of DRC are assigned to FIRM with financial provisions for implementation. There are three sources of income; membership fees, interest and income from the tractor. There are only two staff members. The monthly administrative cost is Rs. 15,000/-.

Since the societies could issue loans out of their savings FIRM does not know the total amount of their savings accurately. The recorded savings amounted to Rs. 2.06 million and total loans issued out of savings were Rs. 681,146/- at the end of 2003.

As in the case of FOSDO, FIRM also did not prepare a balance sheet. However, the office-bearers of FIRM provided a copy of their Income and Expenditure Statement for the year 2003 (Annex 1). It is incomplete and resembles a summary of Cash Book transactions. It is impossible to estimate the financial outcome of its activities with the help of the data provided. Similarly, the Income and Expenditure Statement does not support the data the management had presented at its meeting with the ET. For example, membership fees and interest income were not shown in the Income and Expenditure account.

The Ukulankulam society joined the FIRM in 1998 while the Katkuli society joined in 2001. The Katkuli village consists of 120 families and 70 members in the society. Both these societies levy 15 percent interest for loans and pay 10 percent interest for savings

(Table 2). FIRM monitors savings and loans transaction of these two societies monthly and conducts skill development and vocational training programmes. In order to uplift socio-economic standards of villagers of these societies FIRM has introduced preschools, libraries, health and sanitation programmes and youth clubs. It was reported that the preschools have been functioning very satisfactorily.

As compared to Katkuli, Ukulankulam is a large village with 1000 families and 208 members (Table 2) the village society of which was formed in 1994 with FORUT assistance. The society was very successful at the beginning. But due to mishandling of funds in 1998 the activities came to a standstill. The society was revived in 2002. However, out of a total loan amounting to Rs. 351,000/- the society has been able to collect only Rs. 20,000/-. The committee is confident that they will be able to recover the outstanding loan completely. In order to persuade the loan holders to repay the society has decided to write off accrued interest. The Ukulankulam society was a member of the FIRM when the mishandling of funds was reported. Apparently there was no in-built mechanism to avoid this type of unfortunate incidents.

### *Puttalam*

FORUT Project in Puttalam consists of four partner organisations, WODEPT, PDF, OSDTRA and IYTEC. For the financial year 2003, Puttalam FORUT Project received Rs. 7 million from the head office in Colombo. Its fixed assets consisting of Property, Plant and Equipment (Rs.1.5 million) and Deposits in Commercial Banks (Rs. 1.2 million) amounted to Rs. 2.7 million at the end of year 2002. The savings of village society members was recorded as Rs. 742,264/-. However, the loans issued to the members were more than twice as much as (Rs. 1.7 million) the savings. In addition to the FORUT grant of Rs. 2.0 million, UNHCR and CARE had also contributed Rs. 633,000/- to the Puttalam project.

The basic objective of WODEPT is to cultivate leadership qualities among women, particularly among Muslim women, and to channel women's participation to the developmental process. WODEPT registered with the Ministry of Social Services in 1997 with 14 constituent village societies. At present there are 24 village societies affiliated to WODEPT covering 1080 families. Of them Muslims and Tamils live together in 15 villages. There are old villages as well as newly established resettlements among these 24 villages.

WODEPT does not own an office building. Its administrative office is housed in FORUT office building in Puttalam town. Therefore, its fixed assets amounting to nearly Rs. 50,000/- (as at 30.06.2003) represents only Furniture and Fittings and Sewing Machines. However, the current assets exceeds more than Rs. 4.6 million. The WODEPT fund consists of its own accumulated fund of Rs. 540,132/- and three grants given by FORUT (Rs.2.2 million), UNHCR (Rs.408 thousand) and CARE (Rs. 225 thousand) to be used as a Revolving Loan Fund. The current liabilities that include savings (individual, children and IYTEC) and FORUT fund accounted for nearly Rs. 1.2 million. During the first six months of 2003 WODEPT recorded Rs.201,533/- as income over expenses. As

recorded in final accounts the total net income earned by WODEPT from its inception was Rs. 540,132/-. In addition to a donation of Rs. 90,000/- made by a group of French Women, WODEPT has developed a few other sources of income. These include, interest earned from commercial banks for deposits, service charges for loans, income from sewing classes and loan tax.

In order to implement goals and objectives for the upliftment of the target population's socio-economic status there are seven Project Officers appointed by FORUT. The decision making body of this partner organization includes these seven project officers and the eight members elected by the village societies. The Trial Balance of WODEPT indicates that it pays the salary of one Project Officer. The salaries of the other staff of WODEPT is a responsibility of FORUT. But FORUT will withdraw its contribution towards salaries from January 2004. If WODEPT has to bear the salaries and other allowances out of its earnings the long term sustainability of the programme would be questionable. In order to overcome this problem WODEPT should introduce more income generation activities and cost cutting devices.

The maximum loan issued is Rs. 10,000/- per member. The members are eligible to apply for loans once they attend meetings of their village societies for six months continuously. Since interest levying is prohibited in Islam, there is a 12 percent service charge on loans. The majority of loans are taken for income generation activities such as animal husbandry, agriculture, fishing and self employment. The loan has to be repaid within one year. It is claimed that there is a 100 percent loan recovery rate, 80 percent of loans are repaid within the prescribed period and the balance 20 percent is settled with some delay. Although it is both impractical and unbelievable that there are no bad debts, data are not available to check the accuracy.

According to the management, the programmes implemented by WODEPT resulted in an improvement of the villagers' socio-economic condition, the status of women in particular. The school drop-out rates have declined considerably. Preschools have become extremely popular and almost all children between 3-5 years have started attending preschools run by village societies. The population's health and sanitation practices have been improving gradually. Now there is a tendency among Muslim women to postpone their marriages to obtain a higher education and vocational training. At the inception of the WODEPT programme there has been resistance from the mosque. But the resistance has been disappearing gradually because of the good services rendered to the society and the socio-cultural activities carried out by it.

The ET visited two villages (Hajarawatte and Husaniyapuram) of WODEPT. Hajarawatte society which was formed in 1998 with 50 members was very weak. At present there are only 10 active members. The committee members present at the meetings did not know the volume of savings and loans, but they categorically stated that there are outstanding loans. The main reason for the society's deterioration is that after the peace agreement the majority of the members have returned to Mannar, their original place of residence and are maintaining dual residency intermittently.

A completely different picture was seen in Husaniyapuram village. The members of the Husaniyapuram society are very active and they have done a lot for the socio-economic upliftment of the village. They have introduced a number of programmes such as health, nutrition, preschools, vocational training and extra curricular activities, youth clubs, children's clubs etc. The Micro Financing activities of the societies are also geared towards income generation. To obtain maximum benefits the Husaniyapuram society has closely collaborated with governmental and non-governmental organisations. The members of this society are also very content about the progress that they have made and the relatively improved living standards attained after the relocation. The future plans of the society are very encouraging and realistic. The Husaniyapuram society could be identified as a role model in the economic sense.

The Integrated Youth Technical Education Centre (IYTEC) which functions under the Integrated Youth Development Association (IYDA) was introduced by FORUT with the financial support from CARE. However, IYTEC's balance sheet as on 30.06.2003 does not show any entry relating to the grant made by CARE. The fixed assets of IYTEC amounted to Rs. 512,665/- out of which Rs. 475,570/- was given by FORUT as a grant. No depreciation was charged for fixed assets. At present this organisation is self-financing. For the six month period ending on 30.6.2003 the net income earned by IYTEC was Rs. 105,912/-. There are good future prospects for this programme and if managed efficiently there should not be too many sustainability problems.

IYTEC was established at Nuraichholai in 2000 has been functioning very satisfactorily. During the last year IYTEC has opened a branch at Puttalam town. At present, there are 25 vocational training programmes. The majority of these courses are fee-levying. The youth intake is around 225, out of which 50 percent are women. The students belong to all three major ethnic groups. Since the short period of establishment a total of 750 youths have completed their programmes. The management claimed that some of their trainees are employed in foreign countries. Eight persons who have completed courses such as motor mechanism, welding and electricity have taken loans from the WODEPT credit fund and are self-employed, an obviously encouraging sign of intra-project complementarity in the cause of development. Similar courses are conducted in nearby places by other organizations as well as individuals. The high quality of the courses and relatively low fees charged have created an increasing demand, which is largely unmet. For example, out of 450 applications received, IYTEC was able to accommodate only 227 in 2003. The programme not only encourages the improvement in employability and income generation capacity of youths but also fosters peace and harmony among major ethnic groups.

PDF is a relatively small partner organization with 57 groups and 306 members in 7 zonal villages. The project is manned by two staff members, a Project Officer and a temporary clerk. The relationship between FORUT and PDF is marginal. Though requested, copies of the financial accounts were not provided to the ET. The Project Officer claimed that the accumulated fund of PDF was Rs. 836,000/- out of which Rs. 200,000/- was inactive

due to the non-payment of loan installments. Probably that amount has to be written off as bad debt. According to member societies PDF charges a very high interest (36 percent per annum) for loans issued to societies by PDF until it recovers bad debts completely. This is the highest observed interest rate levied by a partner organization within the system.

PDF has been given a 5 acre land by the government. The management was able to cultivate only 2 acres. It will take at least another 3-4 years to earn an income from this coconut plantation. There are two sources of income; small scale cement brick making machine and credit fund. The income earned from both these sources (approximately Rs. 12,500/- per month) is hardly sufficient to cover monthly expenses.

Out of seven PDF village societies two were visited by the ET. The main economic activity of Nirmalapura is vegetable cultivation. The Nirmalapura society was established in 1994. After the reorganization in 1998 this society has been progressing satisfactorily with a fund of Rs.195,000/-. The fund consists of savings, membership fees and the grant from PDF for the construction of toilets. They used this fund as a revolving loan fund. The annual average rate of interest for savings is 10 percent but for loans 36 percent interest rate is charged (Table 2). All loans are paid within the prescribed period. If demand for loans exceeds the available funds in the society they request additional funds from PDF. A maximum loan of Rs. 15,000/- is issued for agriculture. The members of this society admitted that their knowledge on cultivation and sales techniques as well as income generation capacity has been increased with PDF collaboration. Practically all 33 active members used to earn their living from working as casual labourers after renting their plot of land to middlemen for cultivation. However, at present 25 of them are farmers of their own land. Taking into consideration the needs of the members and the competition they have to face in the future they have prepared a systematic and realistic plan to be implemented with the help of PDF.

Kandekuliya is a fishing village. The society was formed in 1996. The members' savings amounted to Rs. 80,000/-. The loans are mostly for animal husbandry and self employment. The toilet fund (Rs.24,000/-) is used to issue housing loans. This society has the highest recorded interest rate for loans (48 percent per annum) issued to members (Table 3). The reason for this understandably is that the society has taken Rs.200,000/- out of PDF loan fund and pays 36 percent. However, the society pays only 8 percent for savings. The membership claimed that they have realized 75 percent of their objectives. Their main grievance is that there is an unmet demand for loans due to the unavailability of sufficient funds at PDF. However, it is learnt that the increasing demand for loans is for housing and not for direct income generation activities.

The basic objective of OSDTRA is not to gain financially but to strengthen the civil society. The programme plans to work with grass root level organizations in 16 villages in the Anamaduwa D.S. Division in collaboration with the government sector and other NGOs. Initially five villages have been selected and the programme has already been introduced to two villages. The third village is to be added during the year 2004.

The project has been supported by FORUT up to the end of 2002. The final accounts indicate that the Civil Society Programme has received Rs. 905,548/- from FORUT head-office in Colombo during the financial year 2002. The fixed assets of this programme consisting of Buildings, Furniture, Office Equipment and Machinery amounted to Rs. 591,000/- at the end of the year 2002. There was only one item under current assets, Cash in Hand, that showed a balance of Rs. 48.75. The balance is represented by an Assets fund Account. Since no other accounts, especially information on income and expenditure have been given to the ET, it is not possible to comment on financial viability.

The ET visited two villages, Paramakande and Thattewa, of OSDTRA. The Paramakande society was formed in 1988 and joined the Civil Society Programme in 2001. There are 25 active members. The monthly membership fee is Rs.5/-. The society had introduced three programmes (Savings and loans, consumer society and toilet) for the benefit of the members. All these programmes are functioning on a very small scale and is still in its infancy.

The Thattewa rural society was formed in 2001 under the guidance of the Civil Society Programme. There are very active young women and men among the members. The society has introduced a children's club to cultivate and promote saving habits. They have given a prominent place to cultural programmes. The other programmes include savings and loans, marketing (weekly market) and promotion of cashew and coconut planting. The courage and dedication of the youth membership is commendable.

## V

### *Emerging Issues*

The immediate focus of this evaluation is to obtain an independent, rapid observational input on how FORUT has fared in conducting the affairs of rehabilitational activities carried out at three locations, administratively referred to as VAPReP, a single project. That FORUT has been practicing its developmental, rehabilitational, humanitarian and temperance promotional activities for over two decades in Sri Lanka is more than evident even to the most casual observer who chooses to glance at the past Annual Reports of FORUT. Even the most cursory of glances at the expenditure column would indicate that FORUT has gone from strength to strength over the years, at least one clear indication that the supply side of the equation is visibly ebullient in terms of donor confidence. Within VAPReP too, the expenditures have more than doubled over the evaluation period from nearly Rs.21 million in 1999 to nearly Rs.50 in 2003 (see Table I in Annex 2). The simultaneous expansion in the subsidiary/ supplementary donor community (spreading beyond the prime donor of NORAD) is also indicative of a diversifying trend in the donor consortium of FORUT as well as the incrementing nature of confidence in FORUT as an implementing agency. All such evidence would lead this ET to conclude that what FORUT needs now is a greater highlighting of its shortcomings in project implementation, perhaps, even at the expense of down-playing its strengths.

#### *Programme Focused*

1. The year 2004 appears crucial for VAPReP since most of the apex bodies which were evolved as partner organisations (POs) under FORUT's tutelage are identified to be 'localized' or 'self-financed,' both denoting a near-zero level of funding from FORUT. Partner organisations consisted of the important instrument through which FORUT was going to ensure the continuance of participatory empowerment activities of the marginalised after FORUT ended its avowed time-bound catalytic development intervention. The inability of the POs to achieve a desired level of viability denotes a flaw in the theoretical construction of FORUT's development paradigm and that of the practical operationalization of it.
2. The attainment of operational viability was primarily to be achieved through the functioning of the RLF into which FORUT initially pumped in grant money (during the active intervention phase) that was disbursed to the needy (qualified?) membership as loans which were repaid to the RLF with interest, the latter consisting the main source of income of the PO. Several years of this operation has apparently demonstrated that this income is insufficient to sustain the PO since it too needs to keep up services which need manpower and other assets that increase the expenditure. Practically all POs have had to develop alternative sources or plans for added income generation (earning incomes from investing/ cultivating coconut plantations, brick-making, tractor hiring, fertiliser sales centre, plant nursery and sales centre, accessing other project funding, *inter alia*) some of



which have materialized and some needing more time to bear fruit, both literally and metaphorically. Once again, innovative enterprise is visible on the part of POs but FORUT's initial premise of dependence primarily on RLF interest income appears to have been falsified.

3. Why has RLF income not been sufficient to ensure PO viability? All POs reveal that there is a sizable proportion of its membership being rendered as 'inactive.' The proportions which are estimates rather than exact figures indicate the inactive could range from a low of 20 percent to a high of 60 percent. Across the board this could translate to a conservative estimate of approximately one third of the membership being inactive. What is the profile of these inactive membership? Since inactivity is mostly defined as non-attendance at CBO meetings, non-participation in loan transactions and/or non-repayment of installments on loans taken, the ET feels that they might primarily be composed of the most marginalised of the membership. If such is the case, then inactivity would coincide with the marginalised members' inability to sustain themselves within FORUT's development paradigm. Perhaps, one is not fully justified in 'blaming' only FORUT for laying the ground conditions for the ultimate elimination of those they thought needed to be supported and empowered in the first instance. This is because the ground rules for continuing active participation within the membership was laid down by the CBO membership themselves with possibly some guidance from the FORUT's/ PO's animator working with that particular CBO. But what has transpired on the ground after the passage of several years is that among the initially conceived membership, a *de facto* dualism of active and inactive membership has emerged. The latter are yet again relegated into a realm of marginalisation from among a group who were supposed to be marginalised themselves to begin with.

Given this predicament, both FORUT and each of the POs saddled with this problem of inactive membership need to face a fundamental dilemma of significant moral content. Should the PO and the CBOs cater only to those who are enabled to 'play ball' with the rules and guidelines of development structures that have been nurtured by a pro-poor development initiative? What stance should FORUT take if the signals emanating from the POs reflect an affirmative answer to the above question since there was no mention of measures taken to turn the 'inactive' into 'active' during the discussions with the ET. More was stated on turning the POs into viable entities. Shouldn't FORUT intervene and explore the causation of persistence of marginality among the inactive membership and initiate a more responsive supportive environment to lay a safety net to prevent the propagation of marginality? If FORUT does not intervene, wouldn't it possibly tantamount to an abandonment of the poorest of the poor?

4. Reference was made to the twin models followed in governing body formation within POs, one consisting only of CBO delegates and the other combining CBO delegates and former FORUT staff members. It is not possible to pass judgment

on the relative success of each model since many a variable could have interacted to impart a particular effect. The proximity to the conflict zone, level of relative deprivation experienced by IDPs, the growth potential in the immediate local economy and many other such variables would have an impact on PO performance irrespective of the twin variations in the models. Both pros and cons are visible in each model. FIRM and FOSDO following the first model appears to secure the power structure within the CBO membership while the second tries to establish a balance of forces. It is more than possible that the former staff members being full-timers would exert a greater influence on the decision making processes and if it decides to conduct its affairs in a ‘membership unfriendly’ manner, the PO’s rationale for its very existence may be brought into question. But on the other hand, devoid of the support of the membership the PO will soon find itself unable to conduct its affairs in a meaningful manner. The advantage in having a relatively younger, developmentally more trained full-timer personnel within the decision making machinery of a PO is that it may be in a better position to adapt and grab opportunities that are thrown up by changing circumstances. The introduction of enrollment in the insurance scheme to be considered eligible to apply for loans by RPDF (one of the better managed POs) was already beginning to elicit complaints (muted, though) from the membership, was still audible by the ET, thanks to the less threatening discourse environment generated by the Gender Specialist. While the economic rationality behind the introduction of such a scheme was visible, the rank and file of the membership were still not seeing the immediate benefits it would bring to them. Instead they saw it as an additional burden, a kind of measure that would perhaps increment the inactive *vis-à-vis* the active membership.

5. There was a conspicuous lack of ownership of the apex bodies displayed by both the membership of CBOs as well as those delegates of the apex body itself. This was very visible in contrast to some animated discussions which amply displayed the CBO membership’s ownership of that particular CBO or village society. When spontaneous mention of the PO was not forthcoming, even a pointed reference by the ET on the role of the PO within the village development context failed to elicit any substantial response. This was true even of the delegates who formed the governing body of the PO when discussing the issue within the context of the CBO membership. The ownership was voiced mainly by the former staff members turned PO members where the dual composition of the PO was in existence. This lack of ownership of the PO possibly displays a sense of dependency on FORUT for more than financial assistance, perhaps, more disturbingly a lack of ideas and direction among the CBO delegates. The management committee of FIRM was possibly the most unenterprising while FOSDO showed some sense of direction in where they are heading.
6. The link between the Vavuniya Project office and that of FIRM and FOSDO showed visible signs of deterioration because the senior staff members were apparently not quite aware of some of the new propensities in the POs. The

physically separated existence between FORUT project office and the two PO offices would have also added to this estrangement (in comparison to the situations in Medawachchiya and RPDF and Puttalam and WODEPT). It is possible that the recent changes in personnel at Vavuniya may have added to the alienation perceived by the ET. Furthermore, the officer entrusted with keeping the link between FOSDO and the project office had fallen ill seriously for an extended period of time during 2003 and that too had contributed to the absence of dialogue. The accountant attached to Vavuniya FORUT office also displayed a visible unfamiliarity with information on financial matters, especially those activities of the two POs under its wing. The senior staff did recognise this short-coming and undertook to effect immediate remedial steps. Also visible during the discussion was a hierarchical placement of FORUT staff members *vis-à-vis* that of the PO delegates, the latter occupying a more submissive role, possibly a tell-tale sign of former power relations when FORUT was instrumental in initiating the existence of the POs. Within a context of a developmental march towards autonomous existence, the power relations should move, if at all, in the reverse direction, but preferably to an egalitarian partnership. The fact that even until December 2003 FORUT was still providing substantial funding towards defraying administrative expenditure was possibly keeping the imbalanced relationship going.

7. FORUT does not currently supervise the final accounts of POs though they function with the help of the RLF which was created by FORUT as a grant, a demonstrated effect of pursuing a liberal, autonomy-oriented development model. But possibly as a result of this, the ET could obtain only one audited final accounts from among the POs, and that was from RPDF. OSDTRA, operating on a very modest budget and the youngest of POs did not even manage to provide a copy of their final accounts. Thus, what appears to transpire is that the POs do not possess a methodical accounting system. FORUT project officers in charge of accounts maintenance do not supervise the accounts maintained by POs who, in turn, do not supervise the financial transactions of village societies/ CBOs. Although the finance division of FORUT head-office in Colombo had introduced a number of measures to develop a methodical accounting system at project offices, still problems were encountered when comparisons were made across project. An example of this is in respect to 'unit cost.'
8. Within VAPReP there are 6 POs that function as apex bodies, around 90 CBOs, and over 7,000 members in these CBOs (according to figures published in the FORUT Annual Report of 2002, p.2). This has to be considered as a unique strength of FORUT's development activities upon which the future paths and patterns of deliverance of the marginalised needs to be fashioned. But when the ET inquired from one FORUT Project coordinator if he had spoken to his counterpart in another locality on the issues faced by them on localisation, he appeared taken aback and replied in the negative; however, he was perceptive enough to admit that such dialogue should ensue and move even further to a

- dialogue between POs at least. Such discussion and discourse is bound to highlight the commonalties and differences within their respective environments and facilitate a cross-fertilisation of new ideas, enhance solidarity feelings and improve the ownership notion of their common development initiative. Not indulging in this activity in a somewhat vigorous manner appears to the ET as an obvious omission on the part of FORUT, a non-exploitation of a source of strength on which much has been invested.
9. Even the vocational training institutes like COMTEC and IYTEC appear to be guided by a localisation ideology guided by a 'sustainability or perish' motto. This may be more acceptable in relatively 'normal' areas like Puttalam but not necessarily in localities in a state of flux and uncertainty. In Vavuniya and more so in the northern area of the Vanni there is bound to be a massive reconstruction drive that has already commenced to some degree and the national need for trained personnel should possibly be viewed beyond the confines of 'sustainability.'
  10. In a similar manner, the ET feels that FORUT's support for activities of ORHAN too should not be decided on the principle of achieving sustainability for the organisation. The debilitating effects of destruction and war has undoubtedly compounded the burden of the disabled population and they need to be considered as an acutely marginalised group mired in 'sub-normalcy.' FORUT's collaboration with ORHAN needs to be placed upon a welfarist platform and assisted more in accordance with a humanitarian intervention.
  11. The ET felt that the 'true' feelings of the rank and file of CBO membership hardly gets a chance to be represented in an evaluation like the one which was conducted, especially with so much pressure to deliver a report within a very limited time span. With a burgeoning group of inactive membership within the CBOs there is more of a legitimate need to find out if FORUT's paradigm of development is working for such re-marginalised members. This would prompt us to pose the proposition of creating an internal evaluation cell within FORUT, just as much as there is a financial, training and pre-school division in addition to the of the programme division. However, this cell needs to be independent of FORUT's thinking on development but try its utmost to find what the rank and file of members within the CBOs think of engaging in development activities with FORUT and why they are unable to respond positively to its overtures. While this is an extremely difficult proposition to fulfill (not to reflect FORUT's thinking but to reflect the critical (counter) thinking of the marginalised while being paid by FORUT), the internal evaluation cell will lose all its credibility if it towed the mainstream thinking within the organisation.
  12. Directly surfacing from the ToR and FORUT's efforts at up-grading the evaluation exercises by linking this evaluation with professional organisations like SLEvA, it should be stated that there is not much a rapid appraisal can do if it is

not in possession of adequate baseline information to enable it to assess/ comment on the impact of an intervention. Thus, it will be almost imperative for FORUT to conduct a baseline survey at the very first opportunity it gets soon after it enters a new location, whether it be disaster-affected or not. If not, evaluations will continue to be mere post facto scenarios based on impressionistic assumptions. Evaluations too need to be pre-planned and scheduled during convenient time periods where the intrusion of the ET is of minimum inconvenience to beneficiary populations. The developmental efforts need to be conceived as social realities and not as managerial and administrative conveniences (like VAPReP instead of the many POs with their separate initiatives ideally requiring individual attention at the same level of depth). The positioning of an internal evaluation unit within FORUT might assist an external evaluation to get a more realistic idea of ground conditions before it makes its initial assessment between time constraints and undertaking a realistic evaluation.

### *Gender Focused*

1. 1998 FORUT policy document has had a profound influence on regional FORUT officers understanding of gender issues. It contained unclear and imprecise few sentences on gender and espoused a light understanding of gender balance. 2003-2007 policy document has come a long way forward from that and it is imperative to take action to disseminate these new gender policies to the regional offices and apex bodies.
2. While participation of women does evidence a form of empowerment, participation alone does not solve problems. For participation to be meaningful it should lead to attitude changes and positive life style changes (Rahnema 1992; Woost 1997). Staff or the members (both men and women) are not able to think beyond their traditional perceptions and women thus are still trapped in the same patriarchal constraints as well as extremely difficult lives. In a way participation in CBOs had become an added drudgery in their already difficult everyday life.
3. Minimal participation of men in CBO activities seemed to be the reason for relatively few positive changes that we were able to discern with regard to women's lives. What they learn and share in a female centered environment of the CBO is hard to put to practical use without the help of the men. To gain their support it is needed that men become aware of some of the same issues. As it stands now women go through training and learn many things through participation but they do not try to put this new knowledge to use knowing that their efforts are going to be thwarted.
4. Office staff should have more training in gender issues equipping them to impart knowledge at the village level. The staff should also be mindful of local articulations of gender and equality and should pay attention to incorporate those in making decisions.

5. In all three districts the decision making processes were less democratic than desirable. This was more pronounced in Vavuniya but all three programs could be well served if the staff and the members focus on strategizing more or less an ideal speech situation where everybody is given space to express, critique and dissent. For now the CBO members seem to follow whatever idea/order that comes down from FORUT/SL to the regional office and then to the apex body and then to the village level.
6. Office staff should be more attuned to the ideals of deep democracy and good governance. They should be able to think and work beyond the traditional hierarchical structures. While hasty ruptures with the social structures of the wider society is not wise it does help for the FORUT staff to be aware and be critical towards undemocratic values of society. Change happens in small steps and NGOs such as FORUT led CBOs are good grounds to initiate activities corresponding to an alternative way of being.
7. The districts and villages differed significantly from one another but the FORUT approach at all these places was the same. Uni-linear development models sometimes do more harm than good and most of the problems we witnessed in the villages had resulted from this (for example, trying the same model with youth groups as well as CBOs with older women). Any improvements in gender balance and equity also depended on the existing ground conditions and it seems important for the FORUT-SL and other staff to be aware of these political, social and demographic differences. It is vital to allow for flexibility.
8. In some village societies new hierarchies had developed in which certain women had become powerful rendering others to mere spectators. The relation between the two groups of women in a way was not much different from patriarchal power relations. Again more focus on democracy, ideal speech situations, annual elections and rotation of responsibilities has to be stressed.
9. CBOs are teeming with older, married women with children (only at Thattawe (ODSTRA) did we meet members of a youth society). They are already entrenched in set ways of life and might not be conducive to the kind of attitude and life style changes that FORUT is envisaging for women. However, by getting unmarried women to participate in educational and training programs we can hope for future change. Both young women and men will be better as change agents. However, it is clear that the youth is not attracted to FORUT CBO work visited by this ET. This again points towards the non flexible/ uni-linear development model adopted by FORUT. Youth's needs, wishes and desires are different and the micro credit program perhaps does not best address those. The young people we talked to expressed the need for help in initiating large scale economic endeavors such as starting factories etc to attract youth to NGO activities. This may not be a FORUT focus, however, considering the positive changes that a properly mobilized youth population can bring to villages point towards the need

to take such ideas seriously. It is obvious that FORUT's overall objectives in achieving better quality of life, peace, and temperance can be much served by a youthful following. Here it is important to notice the linkages among, alcoholism, domestic abuse, family size and poor economic situations as well as the way all these interconnected phenomena affect women's status.

10. Programmes, if any, on prevention of alcoholism and domestic abuse are ineffective. Locally grounded awareness programmes should be developed and the presentation of it should have more conviction than before. Awareness programs focusing on non-traditional formats like drama, music, creative activities and role play will be effective. It seems needed for the FORUT staff to refocus on the temperance aspects since alcoholism has far reaching effects resulting in domestic abuse, large family size, non-working women and poverty.
11. Each district office should have locally specific priorities in designing their training programmes. While the centrally offered existing ones are useful their effectiveness cannot be assured if other much more needed training is neglected. In Kandakuliya, for example, women seemed more assertive and knowledgeable about the micro credit program than women in other areas. They remained poor not because of any lack of enterprise or talent but because they were entrenched in a culture of day to day living in which they spend lavishly on leisure activities without investing in commodities with long term value. What they need is awareness programmes, which help them to resist cultural stress to spend on certain activities (parties, clothing, big weddings etc).
12. Sometimes it is needed to join hands with other NGOs and relevant authorities in making a change that leads towards achieving FORUT's overall objectives. For example in Kandakuliya a serious problem was the early age that the children leave school. This leads to many problems trapping all people in vicious cycle of poverty and women in difficult lives characterized by hard work, domestic abuse and subjugation. In such a situation it is important to design a concentrated approach in association with religious leaders, school teachers and other educational authorities to reach these youngsters as well as their parents.

## VI

### *Recommendations*

1. In view of the general non-viability of all POs scheduled to be localised in 2004 or thereabouts, the ET would recommend that FORUT postpone this action for at least another 2-3 years. During this interim period closer scrutiny of each PO's activities and plans for the future need to be worked-out on a mutually participatory basis, monitoring mechanisms put in place and acted upon with a view to achieving complete localisation at the end of this period. A standard basic accounting procedure should be put in place during this period so that transparency and accountability is maximised and made relevant to the large majority of the membership within CBOs.
2. FORUT should actively consider each of the alternative plans of POs' to attain viability as a supplement to the main source of income generated from the RLF. Based on the potential viability of each plan, FORUT should suggest that the PO meet certain challenging targets while FORUT too will accept underwriting some part of the financial commitment entailed within these supplementary plans.
3. A kind of a 'grand inquest' into why around a third of the CBO's membership have gone into a state of inactive hibernation needs to be undertaken along with the participation of POs and CBOs. A plan needs to be put in place to bring back the large majority of such inactive membership into relatively heightened state of activity.
4. A further scrutiny through dialogue must be undertaken by FORUT with each of the POs on perceived and incipient tendencies which manifest a sense of alienation between CBO members and the PO. Ways and means of arresting such propensities need to be discussed and active measures put in place to mitigate such circumstances. This activity should ultimately seek to build up the solidarity feeling amongst the membership and to ensure that the CBO and PO have not 'abandoned' the individual members.
5. The visibly hierarchical relation between Vavuniya project office and that of the two POs need to be drastically modified to re-establish an on-going dialogue between to equal partners in development activities. The frequency of interaction between the two parties also need to be increased substantially.
6. A process of capacity building of POs within the realm of financial management should be undertaken systematically during the interim period. The POs should be advised to send a set of final accounts to the head-office in Colombo via the project office. The head-office should undertake a scrutiny of these final accounts and provide follow-up advice on how to improve them in a meaningful manner.



Provision should be made in final accounts for bad debts and depreciation by establishing a reserve fund.

7. When funds are allocated to different activities in different projects, unit cost should be taken into consideration and a process of cost equating should be undertaken within reason; possible cost cutting methods should be suggested by head-office, deliberated with POs and a mutually acceptable method implemented to achieve the desirable goal.
8. FORUT needs to stimulate and facilitate the conditions for a continuing dialogue between POs even among projects (possibly within the entirety of the FORUT system Island-wide) so that a healthy cross-fertilisation of ideas are allowed to germinate, possibly enhancing the solidarity feeling among members from different localities. This activity could be undertaken by FORUT under 'rural communication' with enhanced budgetary provisions aiming at consolidating the development initiatives undertaken up to now. One of the end products of such a continuing discussion should be to evolve more realistic plans for CBO/ PO sustainability.
9. ET would recommend the adherence to a strictly viability model in respect of vocational training institutes situated only in areas that are experiencing 'normal' social conditions. Those in areas closer to 'sub-normalcy' need to be considered within a context of national need. FORUT might consider taking a two-track policy in the latter instance, one to maintain such vocational training endeavours on a semi-supported basis (rather than on a completely viable ideal) while pursuing a line of advocacy to promote the Vocational Training Authority to set up more such centres and assisting them to recruit suitable candidates from village settings in which the POs are active. It is also recommended that the collaboration with ORHAN be further pursued on a welfarist platform, considering it as a needy intervention in the humanitarian fold.
10. The ET would like to recommend FORUT to seriously consider setting up an internal evaluation cell within its organisation that will first take up the quest of the inquiry into the growth of a substantial inactive membership. Through this entry point this cell is expected to get a true feeling of the mood of the people in the villages and based on their understanding of people's needs, suggest a strategic deviation for re-incorporating the marginalised sectors within the membership into the mainstream of development activities.
11. If FORUT is genuinely interested in upgrading the quality of evaluations it undertakes, the evaluators need to be supplied with adequate baseline information pertaining to the period prior to intervention. More realistic time frames need to be allocated as well as appropriate timing of evaluations need to be planned out in a professionally managed manner.

12. FORUT should undertake to effectively disseminate its changed perspective (Policy and Strategy document: 2003-2007) on gender to the project offices and POs.
13. A comprehensive educational program designed for all levels of FORUT staff on gender and gendered relationships should be undertaken and FORUT/ SL office should conduct these programs. The project office staff can then conduct their own programs with the help of FORUT/SL consultants to train youth as change agents who take the message of gender balance and equity to their villages.
- 13a. It is important to pay attention to the format of the workshops. Complex concepts on gender and empowerment should be presented in an easily comprehensible manner possibly through role-play, drama and object feedback techniques. Cultural sensitivity should be shown in imparting knowledge and also the change expectations should be presented as a set of short steps rather than as impossible ruptures with their cultural understanding of life.
- 13b. The need is to refocus on a simple understanding of gender as social relationships between men and women. Recruiting more personnel as gender specialists to the regional programmes as some officers suggested is not needed.
14. More attention needs to be paid and strategies devised to include men and boys in CBO activities. Since the common complaint was that men do not have time to attend meetings due to work it is important to approach them at their own time. Women noted several leisure activities that the men prefer such as hanging out at tea boutiques/market places, temple/mosque activities. These are good places to approach men but this may necessitate more male field workers.
15. Decision making processes need to be made more democratic. Discussing all the matters concerning the CBO at the general meetings and ensuring a situation close to an ideal speech situation where everyone has an equal opportunity to talk, dissent and critique. Making the officers belonging to regional offices and the apex bodies aware that for effective and sustainable localization and resultant development it is imperative to take the target population's own ideas and wishes into account. In the beginning mediation by capable and culturally sensitive staff will be needed.
16. Pay attention to minimize hierarchical structuring of the relations among project offices, apex bodies and village organizations. This can be achieved through educational programmes focusing on the values of deep democracy, good governance and effective communication across class, caste and other divisions.
17. Pay more attention to village politics and social structures to ascertain the form of localization that is most conducive to that particular locale. The districts and villages differed substantially from one another and the success or failure of

- programmes depended on how well the uni-linear localization approach suited the particular ground condition. This was perhaps more pronounced on the particular forms of women's participation as well as the life changes women achieved.
18. Paying more attention to patterns of developing leadership among women. Train all women for leadership and also training them to think beyond their traditional understanding of life. Strategizing a suitable way to see that all women are given a chance at becoming a village level leader thus effectively preventing certain women from consolidating all positions of power and responsibility which leads to lop sided development, frustrations and eventual collapse of societies.
  19. Putting more time and effort to attract youth to CBO activities. Young people are more amenable to change. Educating young men and women on the need for gender equity and fair gendered relationships will have better results in the future than educating older and married women. The need to give training to young women on self employment opportunities is also important given that the usual participants are married women with little children who are already trapped in difficult life styles. Training and starting young women on income generating activities before they get married will get them used to earning money. We can expect they will want to continue once they are married and thus will have less number of children allowing them more time to continue their economic activities leading to better economic conditions for the family.
  - 20 Targeting male youth with a view to change women's status in the future. It is easier to socialize youth into new ways of gendered relationships in which mutual respect and equal allocation of resources and opportunities will be corner stones. These ideas should not be forced directly on them. Imparting knowledge through expressive cultural practices seems a better strategy. A focus on youth should not ignore older men and as shown earlier, measures should be taken to include them in CBO activities.
  21. It is important to include men and male youth in any program on family planning, contraceptive usage or HIV-AIDS prevention. The workshops and programmes on family planning should take the issues in a holistic manner in which the linkages among family size, family economy and women's empowerment is stressed.
  22. More attention should be paid to prevention of alcoholism and domestic abuse. Just as in family planning and health programmes it is important to reach out and include men and male youth in these activities. Educational programs should focus on everyday situations that outrage people rather than insisting on alien sounding theories and definitions. Educational program should encourage women to build supportive networks including men and relevant authorities to tackle problems specific to them. Workshops focusing on non-traditional formats like drama, music, creative activities and role play might be more effective in village

environments where we cannot expect the CBO members to have much formal education.

23. Awareness programmes on budgeting, long term planning and household management and effective domestic communication and negotiation are needed in certain locales. Especially in Kandakuliya fishing village this seemed a dire need. In this village it is also important to make concentrated approach to reach young girls and boys and direct them towards education and awareness programmes. Can start by focusing on the structural conditions that forces children out of schools so early; boys to the fishing vessels and the girls to early marriage. Can design programmes with the help of religious leaders, school teachers and other educational authorities to reach these youngsters as well as their parents.

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## Annex 1

*Income and expenditure accounts of selected partner organization of FORUT Sri Lanka  
within VAPReP*

### **Federation of Social Development Organizations (FOSDO) Tharanikulam**

Income and Expenditure statement  
During the period from 01.01.2003 – 31.12.2003

#### **Income**

Agriculture inputs sales centre	109,807.34	
Tractor activity income	141,642.42	
Interest and other income	94,061.43	
Members savings	156,216.88	
Savings loan recovery	137,357.00	
Agriculture loan recovery	635,708.06	
Savings loan interest	38,638.25	
Salary fund received from FORUT	274,500.00	
Withdraw of revolving fund from FORUT	200,000.00	
		1,787,931.38

#### **Less :- Expenditure**

Tea expenses	5,202.50	
Administration expenses	15,819.50	
Transport expenses	2,685.00	
Stationery	12,061.00	
Bicycle repair	1,626.00	
Purchase of bicycle	5,965.00	
Purchase of table	8,020.00	
Preschool sports meet expenses	15,407.50	
Staff & Volunteers salary	386,000.00	
Savings withdrawal	98,457.58	
Issued savings loans	198,100.00	
Issued Agriculture loan	794,035.00	<u>1,543,379.08</u>
Excess of income over expenditure (including saving & credit)		<u>244,552.30</u>

(contd. next page)

## Annex 1 (contd.)

### Federation of Institution for Rural Management (FIRM)

Income and Expenditure Statement  
During the period from 01.01.2003 – 31.12.2003

#### Income

Tractor activity income	84,545.00	
Members saving	207,630.00	
Saving loan recovery	545,255.00	
Fund received from FORUT	282,250.00	
Fund received from DRC	950,875.00	
Sanasa loan recovery	200,000.00	2,270,555.00

#### Expenditure

Tea expenses	6,015.00	
Administration expenses	161,750.00	
Transport expenses	14,250.00	
Stationery	10,560.00	
Purchase of bicycle	21,000.00	
Staff salary	204,000.00	
Saving & withdrawal	39,456.00	
Issued saving loan	455,000.00	
Issued sanasa loan	200,000.00	
DRC expenses	875,875.00	<u>1,987,906.00</u>
		<u>282,649.00</u>

## Annex 2

### Project Costs and Financing

The project applications and documentation made available to the ET reveals that from 1999 to 2003, the VAP Rehabilitation Project was submitted to NORAD for funding via FORUT Head-office in Gjøvik, Norway. Since yearly applications have been channeled to the same source and annual reports have been submitted likewise, we assume that VAPReP was continuously funded by NORAD since no documentation has been made available to the ET which conclusively demonstrates the funding has been received by FORUT. As has been stated earlier, the initiation of VAPReP has been in 1997 when the project period has been conceived from 1997-2001. As such, the application of 1999 states that at the inception of the effective evaluation period (i.e., beginning of 1999) there was already an accumulated NORAD support of NOK 4,240,000 in respect of 1997 and 1998 which included a 6 percent in lieu of administration expenditure. The projected budget for the entire period (1997-2001) is given as NOK 10,500,000. At the end of the initially conceived period (2001), funding has been requested for a further two years. Thus, in respect of the initial 5 year period of 1997-2001, VAPReP received NOK 14,840,000 (according to application of 2002 - page 1), about NOK 4,340,000 in excess of the initial budget period of 5 years. This is possibly because the approximately NOK 2,000,000 yearly budget was extended by nearly 100% in 2002 and 2003 (i.e., NOK 4,000,000 each year) but FORUT undertook to chip-in with a 10% share which made NORAD's effective support to VAPReP NOK 3,600,000 each during these two years. Thus, a total sum of NOK 22,040,000 appears to have been channeled into VAPReP from 1997 to 2003 by NORAD. (These monies have been made available under Project Number LKA 607 (GLO 732) in 1999, changed to Project Number GLO - 96/015-5 during the next three years (2000 through 2002) and changed again in 2003 to GLO-01/416-1.) Another NOK 800,000 has been allocated by FORUT Norway by way of its own share during 2002-2003. The total expenditure within VAPReP during the last 5 years in Sri Lanka rupees is Rs.180,754,913. The average exchange rate for one NOK varied over the 5 years; in 1999 it was Rs.8.92, dropping modestly to Rs.8.60 in 2000, increasing to Rs.9.84 in 2001, Rs.11.94 in 2002 and Rs.13.40 in 2003.

Table I provides the financial situation with respect to the money received from NORAD during the years 1997 through 2003 as well as the corresponding figures of expenditure incurred by VAPReP as a whole with the proportionate breakdown of expenditures by each of the three localities.

During 1997 and 1998, just over Rs.35 million were received under VAPReP but the expenditure incurred was a phenomenal Rs.75 million. Obviously an intensified activity of humanitarian assistance was obtained, possibly from the Norwegian UD (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and was channeled to the Vanni during this period. From 1999 to 2003, VAPReP appears to have settled down to a more 'managed' fiscal regime; there has been only very modest variation between the monies received and expenditure incurred on an annual basis. At the end of the 5-year period something slightly in excess of Rs.1 million



was remaining due to the projects and this could easily have been due to variations in the exchange rate.

**Table I**

*Monies received from NORAD for VAPReP, currency equivalent in SLRs., total expended on VAPReP and percent expenditure incurred by Anuradhapura, Vavuniya and Puttalam during 1997-2003*

<u>Year</u>	<u>NOK received</u>	<u>Equivalent in SLRs.</u>	<u>Expended by VAPReP</u>	<u>Percent expenditure incurred by</u>		
				<u>Meda'ya</u>	<u>Vavuniya</u>	<u>Puttalam</u>
1997	2,120,000	17,384,000	28,352,204	32.0	59.1	8.9
1998*	2,120,000	17,914,000	46,605,116*	10.4	81.2*	8.3
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1999	2,210,000	18,910,400	20,988,949	38.9	37.0	24.1
2000	4,240,000	36,464,000	31,365,645	19.5	36.0	44.5
2001	4,240,000	41,721,600	35,418,965	25.1	51.5	23.4
2002	3,888,000	46,422,720	43,401,354	23.1	56.4	20.5
2003	3,600,000	48,240,000	49,580,000	22.9	52.8	24.3
1999 to						
2003	18,088,000	181,768,720	180,754,913	24.6	48.7	26.6

\* Due to a high degree of volatility in Vavuniya and possibly in the Vanni area there had been an intensified activity on the relief front and obviously other funding outside that of VAPReP was utilized and budgeted under Vavuniya.

## Annex 3

### Gender Addendum

**Example 1:** The treasurer said that since the participants (he meant board members) are mostly men they do not know about women's programs. Volunteers, with difficulty and reluctance, listed health activities for women as such programs. But since health is one area there should have been other activities that came under women's and children's programs. It was significant that this very important area is the one that had been neglected and that the office bearers had no clear cut ideas as to what activities could be initiated for the betterment of women and children. At the end of the discussion FORUT/Vavuniya project manager expressed the need for a gender specialist and a micro-credit specialist. Asked to explain why they need such specialists he only explained the need for the latter. It is the GS's contention that rather than filling the office with more staff members what they need is a more focused mobilization of their existing staff.

**Example 2:** There were more confused situations. According to the women, FORUT paid the three preschool teachers and provided money for 37 toilets. However, they were not clear as to whether this money was given as a grant or a loan. After some strong complaints the GS asked a FORUT official who came to the room at this time to explain the situation and was informed that the confusion was generated by the differing views given to the villagers. The FORUT had given the money to FOSDO as a grant but FOSDO had given the money to the villagers as 2/3 loan and 1/3 grant. However, a Colombo FORUT official who had spoken directly to the villagers had told them that the money is given as a grant and the villagers are confused as to why FOSDO is calling this a loan. It is important to be very clear and transparent about loan and grant situations.

**Example 3:** When asked what other income generating activities they can think of, the women were pessimistic and even apathetic in their answers. Since the water scarcity had been affecting their agricultural work for sometime now the GS expected them to have already thought of several economic alternatives. They could only think of retail shops and complained that since there are four or five in Poompagar, men dominated and there were several men who were more assertive. Only one woman managed to barge in when a man gave incorrect information about the day labor wages for women. While it is Rs.250/- for men the woman claimed that it is just Rs.125/- for women. Both these villages came under FOSDO. In Katkuli and Ukulankulam, both villages with FIRM had more women members. Both village societies claimed that women are the active members even though in the latter village it was a man who was the chairperson. However, there was a woman who was assertive and talked most of the time even when the men were present. There are 208 members in Ukulankulam and 150 out of it are female members. They complained of not having proper roads or regular bus services to take their produce to markets. When raising live stock came up as a possible income generating activity women said that is not something that they can do since when the goats and cattle get into other people's yards there will be conflict between neighbors. One woman complained that the village feels like a cage where there is nothing for them

to do. Two female FORUT official who were present at the time complained that these women are lazy. They and other officials reported Poompagar as one of the poorest villages. Women's attitude and the gloominess that they conveyed were in fact disheartening. This raised many questions about FOSDO in particular and FORUT's approach to village development. Is this a result of a culture of NGO economic support where people are given things easily without expecting them to come up with their own ideas? Or is this a specific pathological symptom resulting from traumatic experiences associated with displacement? Whatever the reason, it does not bode well for localization or sustainable development expectations.

**Example 4:** In Poompagar, men dominated and there were several men who were more assertive. Only one woman managed to barge in when a man gave incorrect information about the day labor wages for women. While it is Rs.250/- for men the woman claimed that it is just Rs.125/- for women. Both these villages came under FOSDO. In Katkuli and Ukulankulam, both villages with FIRM had more women members. Both village societies claimed that women are the active members even though in the latter village it was a man who was the chairperson. However, there was a woman who was assertive and talked most of the time even when the men were present. There are 208 members in Ukulankulam and 150 out of it are female members.

**Example 5:** An ideal speech situation, according to Jurgen Habermas, is where

1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
2. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion
3. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion
4. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs
5. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising above rights (Diskursethik, 86)<sup>5</sup>.

At this time it is difficult to comment on the feasibility of finding a context close to an ideal speech situation in Vavuniya, a predominantly Tamil district. Tamil culture is still largely characterized by hierarchical structures and with added problems of war and displacement it might be too much to hope that a democratic arrangement, at least resembling a deep democracy, could be achieved in the near future. However, it is important to note the need for such a change.

**Example 6:** Women were knowledgeable about how the loans, interests and recovery system operates and conveyed the notion that they consider this as serious work in that they have collective responsibility in maintaining the loan fund. They claimed that they bought a pesticide sprayer and started a paddy bank to boost the loan fund. The most important was that some women have achieved remarkable economic success due to their association with the society and mostly through obtaining loans. In one case, a woman took three loans, one after paying the previous and started a quarry, and bought two

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *Habermas and the Public Sphere* by Craig Calhoun 1993.

crushers to break the metal. Now the quarry business is so successful that she has 15 women and 12 men working for her. Even though her son is involved in the business with her the language nuances (the first person use) showed that she consider herself as the owner of the business and that the others had accepted this situation. She also revealed that she was able to buy a tractor and a piece of land from the quarry profit and both properties are registered under her name. Another woman had taken a Rs.50,000/- loan to buy a grinding machine and started a grinding mill. She is still paying back her loan but is very satisfied with the success of her grinding mill. There were many others who had taken loans for agriculture and to build houses.

**Example 7:** Thammannakulama is a border village and had suffered much during the civil war. The women recognized a pattern of development and destruction in their lives. They will slowly improve their lives only to leave everything and run to the jungle when the LTTE attacked and then will come back when tensions are less and slowly improve their lives until another attack ensues. The society is named Dimuthu women's organization and consists of 45 women members. These women also complained about the insurance scheme and cited several gray areas, such as the high premium and less benefits. They said that it would have been better at least if the member is given benefits when hospitalization is needed. The requirement now is loss of limbs or eyes and the women thought these are rare situations and people need insurance mostly in less severe cases. Considering the dissent against the insurance scheme within these two CBOs one could not help but wonder whether any democracy prevailed in deciding on this particular program. As shown earlier, democracy is an important virtue to nurture in the quest for sustainable localization.

Women also praised RPDF work and said that they see development due to its assistance in building toilets, repairing tanks and giving loans for income generating activities. However, the village is still very poor and many families eat two meals a day mainly because at least one family member works as a home guard and draws a government salary. There is some alcoholism and resultant domestic abuse in the village. They have conducted three programs on prevention and hoped to send the message to the men through women and children who participated. But they do not see much change in the alcohol situation. These women also noted that they have no restrictions in moving in the public space as long as they fulfill their required workload on time. It was difficult to discuss gender issues with these women in the context of bleak economic conditions. Hunger, food and displacement constantly crept back into their narratives forcing us to think of better ways to approach gender issues in dire economic conditions.

**Example 8:** In another even more disturbing situation a petition had been sent to a local mosque that the women are getting together to rebel against authority. The mosque formed a committee consisting of three men and they attended the WODEPT village based society meetings to ascertain the nature of its activities. Thankfully the committee gave permission for the society to carry on. But in another incident the mosque prohibited the society from functioning and the staff members related how sad the participants were about the situation.

**Example 9:** They had varied experiences with buying fishing equipment but still felt they achieved much by being able to use their own equipment and boats instead of renting them. One thing that was note worthy about this village was the entrepreneurial skills shown by several women in obtaining loans. The above mentioned woman who was successful in pig farming was able to buy a boat for her husband by participating in three NGO led CBOs and combining three forms of loans taken from these three societies. She in fact was the current bank manager of the society and previously worked in the same capacity at the SEDEC village society. This woman and several others complained that the maximum loan limits in this society is too low and that they cannot do anything worthwhile and show profit through such loans. However, they showed skills in devising their own ways of making use of the available PDF loans. At the later discussion they laughingly informed that there are things that the “sir” (project officer) does not know about loans. One is that persons who qualify to take loans may not be taking the loan for themselves. They take the loan and then distribute it among other needy people who cannot obtain loans due to low savings or bad recovery reports. These sub loan takers repay the loan with interest to the major loan taker and then he or she pays it back to the bank or the PDF. It seems that unwittingly the CBO work has developed a new group of local money lenders. Be they elite and older women or enterprising and talented women, power consolidation hinders other women’s aspirations and opportunities. Incidents such as this evidenced how important it is to pay more attention to the development of leadership among women. If the women are not educated into thinking beyond the traditional frameworks, democracy sometimes comes to mean the perpetuation of existing structures. It is in this context that the GS recommend that FORUT and the regional project offices look beyond just women’s participation and strive for more holistic change in men and women’s worldview.

**Example 10:** They all had to finish their normal household work before coming to the meetings. Usually men let them go to meetings etc. because they like to obtain loans. For some reason if a loan is denied then men say “you stay home,” and there were few women who had to stop participating because of this reason. If there is no chance of getting something out of participation (loans, grants, gifts) then men do not allow women to spend time at such activities. This is further evidence that the participation in most cases had deteriorated into means of consolidating the woman’s help to advance man’s economic authority over the family. Further underlining the differences in the social structure between an agricultural village and a fishing village (Stirrat 1988), the Kandakuliya women did not reveal such stories. These women were more assertive and seemed to have more bargaining strength within the families though they also thought it is natural for men to expect that they finish all the cooking and cleaning before they get out of the house.

**Example 11:** While girls have nothing much to do within the village, boys in Nirmalapura are needed to water the vegetable farms and in Kandakuliya to help in fishing. The situation in the latter village seemed to be more serious in that their fathers

take boys to Mannar on fishing tours soon after their holy communion (*Sathprasada*).<sup>6</sup> To stop this practice the local Catholic priest increased the age for boys to be given holy communion. According to these women, the boys have a chance to attend school up to grade 6 because the age for holy communion now is 11 years. This lack of education among men perhaps was visible in the women's accounts of the prevalence of alcoholism and domestic abuse in their respective villages. In Nirmalapura, women claimed that all the village men drink alcohol and subsequently violence against women is rampant. According to these women, 10-15 percent of the village women live in utter terror of their men physically harassing them. This situation had affected the children and their mothers usually try to give the daughters in marriage earlier than they would have preferred. This, they say, is to prevent the girls from taking the wrong path such as eloping with a bad man. In Kandakuliya, women differentiated between younger and older men and stated that among the younger men alcoholism is less.

**Example 12:** The next village society we visited was a youth organization and was named Rashmi village society of Thattawe. Both young men and women were present and they spoke with clarity about the existing situation and specific problems they are faced with. They are engaged in coconut and cashew cultivation projects and also maintain a village shop (*paribhogika welanda sela*) and hold a monthly fare. Nothing has been profitable as yet and some of the youth seemed to be on the verge of being driven away due to frustration. Notwithstanding the frustration that creeps into members' ideas from time to time, the society still shows promise. This is mostly due to some enthusiastic young men and women who are involved in the activities. These young people are poised to get jobs, university admissions and start businesses and they lamented that due to having nothing to show for their activities that the younger generation is not attracted to the society's work. This does not bode well for the future since at any moment the present members can leave the village. Any locally grounded development project should take the target population's wishes seriously and, therefore, it is important to pay attention to their wish of showing some results or resources to give the society a boost in the village. Rather than holding tight to universal and static notions of localization and self help it might be better for FORUT to take stock of the ground situation in each locality and devise appropriate approaches specific to that locale. Since this society is predominantly youth it will be a shame to let it die a slow death.

**Example 13:** IYTEC - As explicated earlier the Integrated Youth Technical Education Center offers many classes to youth in the area. They offer some gender specific courses such as welding and motor mechanics for men and sewing, fabric painting, and beauty culture for women. In addition they offer computer and English classes separately for men and women. The justification was that some young women from the displaced families are sheltered and that they would not be sent to classes if they are mixed. In a context of Islamic culture and a cultural tendency to think that it is fine for young women to stop schooling right after puberty this seems like a prudent culturally sensitive step to

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<sup>6</sup> In Kandakuliya, women also noted how in the schools in the vicinity Friday and Monday also look like holidays since both children and teachers stay home to enjoy an extended weekend. The nonchalant way women talked about this situation shows that they do not consider education as a means of social mobility.

ensure women's participation in vocational training. Attempts at hasty change produce adverse effects and in that sense the IYTEC's strategy to start with gendered vocational classes again seems a prudent ploy. The GS's discussions with some of the young women at the sewing and fabric painting classes showed that the women are indeed very timid and shy. However, it is important to note that there was no demand for classes such as knitting, pottery painting, doll making and patchwork, all designed for young women in the area. This in a way shows that Muslim women are not interested in learning about a craft that has much potential for income generation but like to learn sewing and sari work to fulfill their everyday needs. It is difficult to comment on what would be an effective intervention to change this situation without a more in-depth study. However, it seems necessary to include more and more young women in village level activities to instill a desire in them to change women's status in their society.

## Annex 4

### **Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Evaluation of Rehabilitation Projects of the FORUT in Sri Lanka**

#### **Background**

Evaluations are becoming an essential aspect of good governance and contribute to improve transparency and accountability in development work. Systematic evaluation of projects, programs, institutions and policies become vital to improve performance accountability, lesson learning and policy refinement.

FORUT believes that a well organised evaluation or even an assessment will provide lessons about its performance and contribute towards the achievement of the goals and purpose of the projects programs. The projects and the programs are therefore measured against its original objectives in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

During 2003 FORUT has identified two projects for evaluation in the North and the North Central provinces funded by UD/NORAD and also local funding received from UNHCR and CARE. The target population for the programs are mainly the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) drawn from the poorer sector of the communities, who are also victims of the war and forceful evacuation.

The two projects under consideration are **Jaffna Rehabilitation Project (JAREP)** and the **Vavuniya, Anuradapura and Putallam Rehabilitation Project (VAPReP)**.

The JAREP has a long history starting from 1983 and the project has had to change its phases and the *modus operandi* due to the situation that prevailed in the district. The evaluation focused this time will however be making a study for the last part of the phase starting from 1999 -2003, the period where FORUT implemented more of a reconstruction program for the IDPs and returnees to the project areas.

VAPReP has a history of 15 years in [Vavuniya] commencing 1988, where, as similar to Jaffna, Vavuniya also had its own changes between relief and rehabilitation due to displacement and military activities in the area. Anuradapura started in 1990 as a relief program under the UD support. This project also suffered during its growth due to border attacks and war related displacements. Puttalam project started in 1996 with the FRG government assistance and became a NORAD funded project since 1998.

The main objectives of the programmes are as follows:

**JaREP:** To resettle the internal displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees to rebuild their living status through a community based rehabilitation approach, with the assistance available from the government and the NGOs.



**VAPREP:** To assist internally displaced persons and affected population in the war stricken communities in the above mentioned districts to return to a better quality of life.

### **The Nature and Scope of the evaluation**

The common purposes for both evaluations are to find out results created by the projects, and to learn more on the positive and negative outcome of the projects. It is also expected to record the lessons learnt out of these programs, to improve policies, planning and monitoring methodologies, and local capacities, in the future programs in the region and its changing environment.

In JAReP the evaluation focus will be made during 1999-2003, and a concrete assessment will be made on the 5 year project.

The VAPReP program will be assessed on the basis of a comparative study on selected components in the three project areas.

The scope of evaluation should broadly cover the following pertinent aspects bearing in mind the mission and vision of FORUT Sri Lanka, the changing events in the region and the scarcity of qualified personnel in the region. Thus the two evaluations will have the major foci on the following specific items.

- a) An assessment of the extent to which the goals and objectives have been achieved or will be achieved by the projects after the implementation period
- b) An assessment of the adequacy of strategies and approaches adopted to meet the project objectives
- c) Review of the adequacy of counterpart support in terms of funds, personnel and political support at local level.
- d) An assessment of the physical and financial performance of various project activities and the capability of the project management and implementation agencies
- e) An assessment of the outputs, effects and impacts of the project to the beneficiaries
- f) An assessment of the institutional strengthening and local capacity development by the project
- g) An assessment of the sustainability of the facilities created under the project.

The evaluation should focus on the implementation performance of the projects and identify the problems, constraints and issues that affected the implementation efficiency and effectiveness. The study should also provide a component-wise assessment of the performance and an overall assessment of the project in terms of actual and potential benefits.

The review should examine on the relevance and validity of the project strategy, the efficiency and effectiveness of its implementation, the impact of the intervention on the community, and the sustainability and foreseeable impacts of the project efforts.

Moreover, the Evaluation study should also focus its attention to assess the extent, to which the initial objectives are still relevant, and whether a possible shift in the objectives was justified and whether any changes in the objectives are warranted.

The two evaluations will have the major foci on the following specific items:-

Jaffna: Evaluation

Vavuniya, Anuradhapuram and Puttalam: Comparable Analysis

1. Selection of beneficiaries and areas for the project operation to cover the post war recovery program in the physical, economical and social sectors; commitment of the staff and local authorities in identifying the right kind of locations and beneficiaries.
2. Project design and selecting components to reach the goals and objective of the project: Evidence of involvement of the participants and stakeholders.
3. Integration between the various project components specifically micro credit, vocational education for youth and children, health, water, sanitation and housing: Improved level of living conditions among the population and their commitment in making collective decisions to increase the project efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Capacity development of the staff and the program support services provided by the central and regional offices: Improved level of participatory managerial level, technical competence, and the capacity and capabilities to maintain the documentation, representation and competence in maintaining the policy.
5. Building community organisations and their strength and their sustainability towards maintenance, management and as civil societies, collective capacity for critical analysis to strengthen their own organisations.

### ***Methodology and approach***

The evaluation team may use participatory rapid assessment methodology to assess the performance of the projects. The team should utilise methods such as review of existing information, key informant interviews, conversational interviews with beneficiaries, focus group discussions, community interviews, direct observations, informal surveys, and other relevant participatory tools and techniques to collect data and information.

If the project has already a Logical Framework Analysis or Project Planning Matrix in place, the team should review it and use "performance indicators" to assess the implementation performance as well as results.

Rehabilitation interventions affect societies in various and complex ways. Hence, any attempt to evaluate their effects may require inter-disciplinary approach with more concern for the local socio-cultural setting. As such, evaluation should examine the participation, ownership and acceptance by the local groups and beneficiaries in the intervention process. Special attention may be required on the gender perspectives, socio-cultural aspects (ethnic, religious etc), environmental and institutional concerns and policy commitment of the political actors. Economic and financial aspects with emphasis on cost effectiveness should also need to be given due consideration. Their financial, economic and institutional arrangements and local capacity building needs to be reviewed *bearing in mind that all these projects are post war recovery projects.*

### **Framework for evaluation**

It is recommended that the evaluation team should utilise all written documents of the program and accounting information, and undertake visits to meet the stakeholders to make necessary observations, interviews, and interactions to obtain information. Ideally the framework should be worked out in the following manner.

- Meet the Resident Representative, the Management Team and if necessary the Programme and Policy Committee.
- Meet the programme / project teams of the respective areas.
- Pre evaluation familiarisation meetings by visiting to different areas
- Setting up evaluation plans and conducting the evaluation.
- Discussion with the stakeholders on the preliminary findings
- Consultation on the First draft
- Final draft.

The final printed report should be made available to the RR of FORUT in 5 copies with an additional electronic copy.

### **Study Team**

As the success of the evaluation ultimately depends on the composition of the evaluation team and the competence and personal abilities of the team members, the study team should preferably comprise of the following personnel.

1. **A Team leader** who should be able to co-ordinate the work of the team members, assess the quality and relevance of the team members and act as a spokesperson of the team. He/she should be concerned with the overall perspective and have background education qualifications in relevant social science.
2. **An experienced Evaluator / Practitioner** with extensive experience in evaluation of social interventions.

3. **A Sociologist** with experience in re-settlement and rehabilitation related development work.

### *Duration and deliverables*

The evaluation study should be conducted within a period of 8 weeks commencing 1<sup>st</sup> October 2003 and be completed by end November 2003. A Steering Group will be established to ensure the duration of the consultation. A formal sitting should be organised by the study team with all key stakeholders to identify areas that need to be investigated into more detail. It is basically an exercise of setting the boundaries of evaluation by clarifying exactly what is to be evaluated. The session will help to avoid later conflicts between stakeholders and evaluators about whether or not the evaluation team has really understood the evaluators' objective. The team should prepare a work-plan after the conduct of an initial dialogue with the relevant stakeholders to agree on the broad evaluation questions. The team should stick to the following time schedule and deliverables.

First Seminar	-	1 <sup>st</sup> week of October 2003
Draft Report	-	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of November 2003
Presentation of Draft Findings (at a stakeholder Workshop)	-	3 <sup>rd</sup> Week of November 2003
Finalisation of Evaluation report	-	End November 2003

The Evaluation report should also contain an *Executive Summary* highlighting key issues, **lessons learned** and follow-up recommendations made.

Budget:

JaReP

VAPReP