

Vanni Agricultural Livelihoods Upscaling and Enhancement Project



Final Report –Year 2017

Green Movement of Sri Lanka

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Executive summary | 2 |
| 2. Project Activities | 4 |
| 3. Gender | 13 |
| 4. Project's Results Presentation | 15 |
| 5. Project Targets vs Project Achievements | 20 |
| 6. Challenges | 23 |
| 7. Lessons Learned | 24 |
| 8. Financial Matters | 25 |

1. Executive summary

Project process

The project went through a series of ups and downs since its launch on 20th December, 2013 with a total budget of LKR 92,700,841 (Equivalent to \$ 713,083) for period of 3 years. The core target of the project was to increase income by LKR 15,000 per family per month from 90% of the families from total 4,500 beneficiary families. In terms of field activities, the project had two components: agricultural value addition and early childhood care and development (ECCD). While the project's activities were in progress, USAID financial department conducted a financial review in September, 2014 and based on their findings the project was suspended on 4th November 2014. Subsequently it was decided to terminate the project by 28th February 2015. At the time of termination GMSL had already treated 2,250 families in Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, and Mullativu districts: project hand outs were distributed, seeds were given to the beneficiary families and trainings on natural agricultural practices were conducted. Also in the ECCD front, GMSL had established 1 out of 21 child care centers proposed in the project, with the partnership of MAS Holdings in Vanavil, Kilinochchi.

Thereafter on 24th March 2016, GMSL was called for a meeting with USAID officials, in which there were discussions to re-award the project with a reduced-budget and less number of activities. GMSL was asked to remove the ECCD component of the project altogether, and focus on agricultural activities. In response, GMSL submitted its modified project which aims to increase income of 70% of beneficiary families by LKR 7,000/- from 2,500 total beneficiary families. The modified project proposed new activities such as trainings on seed production and providing water pumps to ensure around-the-year agricultural activities of the selected beneficiary families. With the modification of the project, GMSL was allowed to carry out field activities from 1st of June, 2015. Nevertheless, the project re-award was subjected to the condition that GMSL addresses previously raised financial and internal control issues.

Upon project re-award GMSL hired new staff to manage the project as previous project management team already left the organization. GMSL also procured 2 consultants who were richly familiar with USAID systems and procedures to upgrade GMSL financial and internal control systems. With the support of newly recruited consultants, GMSL established financial and internal controls and trained the project staff on new systems and procedures. Though, GMSL was able to carry out its activities as per new systems and procedures from 1st June 2015, its pre-termination project documentations for the period from December, 2013 to February, 2015 remained as per GMSL internal policies and procedures, which understood to be below the USAID's standards.

Thereafter, USAID's OFM conducted its second financial review in February, 2016, which recognized GMSL has established sufficient financial and internal control measures after the project re-award. However, at the same time, they re-raised previous issues happened before the project termination. In response to letter from

Agreement Officer on the findings of the second financial review GMSL pinpointed that financial documentations before the project termination were in accordance with GMSL internal policies, though it was below USAID standards, at the moment GMSL couldn't re-correct those matters given the fact that previous staff who handled the project had already left the organization. Also GMSL highlighted that it was wrong, even trying to re-frame previous financial supportive documents which happened under a different management. Sensing the grave threat posed on the project and its beneficiaries, through re-raising the same issues by OFM, GMSL argued that it was already punished once for these weaknesses by terminating the project. So it was morally wrong to re-raise the same issues and terminate the project again on the same ground, disregarding remarkable progress made in financial affairs at GMSL after project modification. Nevertheless, payments to the GMSL from USAID were stopped in February, 2016 and it severely affected the project since GMSL was not in a position to carry out activities according to its work plan. Further, field situation was exaggerated as the project districts experienced extremely hot weather condition during the period affecting project's cultivation.

After several rounds of emails and letters from USAID and vice versa, finally GMSL was able to resolve financial disputes on amicable terms. There was no cost extension of one month for the project to complete the remaining activities that were put on hold. So GMSL completed those activities within the extended period.

Project Results

Though the results from the sample survey was satisfactory and exceeds the project target of getting LKR 7,000 profit from agriculture, it was extremely difficult to conclude that the anticipated 1,750 families from total 2,500 families have enjoyed same level of success. Further, GMSL does not see the results of the sample survey as a basis for inferences on the income increase of the total project population.

Gender

As gender section of the report shows, the project has contributed to gender equality through improving women's access to resources (agricultural tools, seeds, water pumps, post-harvest equipment, knowledge and skills) in the agricultural context. More than two third of the participants of the project activities and handout recipients were women. On the other hand, women has contributed to successful completion of the project activities by organizing and efficiently communicating messages related to the project at village level.

Sustainability

One of the main activities proposed through the project to ensure sustainability was training on seed production. The selected 30 samples from the 2,500 beneficiaries showed that they have re-produced seeds from the project seeds. But it was difficult to make a statement on the bigger picture based on the limited sample survey.

The failure to negotiate successfully with retail agribusinesses for partnership/ forward sales agreement with beneficiaries was also a major bottleneck in ensuring sustainability of the project.

Financial disputes

As a local organization that received a grant from USAID for the first time, GMSL found, it was extremely difficult to keep up with USAID financial systems and procedures, though it had implemented projects of sizeable volume with many international donors and the organization was annually audited by auditors that recommended by GMSL's main donors.

Before the project termination none of the project staff had sufficient experience in handling financial matters in accordance with USAID systems and procedures. GMSL during Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) revealed its existing financial systems and procedures to USAID. Unfortunately there was no need for major overhaul in GMSL financial systems and procedures identified at that stage. Then, it was saddened to learn after 11 months of the project, our systems and procedure were not capable enough to provide financial documentation up to USAID standards. Therefore, proper training and capacity building is required particularly for local organizations that received project from USAID for the first time, prior to the commencing of the project.

Further, GMSL maintains that solving financial disputes should be of immediate priority of OFM as otherwise resources of both USAID and local organization is wasted due to inactivity which would lead to drastic reduction in return on project investment at field level.

2. Project Activities

I. Distribution of seeds for beneficiary families

Before termination of the project GMSL provided seeds to 2,250 households across the project districts. There were 943 seed recipient families from Vavuniya, 598 families from Kilinochchi and 709 families from Mullaitivu district. The GMSL seed bundle consisted of varieties such as beans, radish, capsicum, long guard, okra, bitter guard and eggplant. The seed packs were bought from Department of Agriculture which guaranteed a germination rate above 75%.

Unfortunately due to project termination, GMSL was not able to capture the results generated through this activity. However, later it got to know that there were number of successful cases that the farmers had not only received substantial income from the farming but also produced seeds for cultivation in the next season.

GMSL also selected additional 250 beneficiaries, 125 from Kilinochchi, 75 from Mullaitivu and 50 from Vavuniya and provided them seeds, namely chili (MI2), eggplant (tinnaweli), bitter gourd and long beans (havari mae), as the revised project planned to treat 2,500 beneficiaries. Each of 250 beneficiary families received 5g of chili seeds, 5g of eggplant seeds, 5g of bitter gourd seeds, and 50g of long beans seeds.

Upon regaining project, GMSL put extra emphasis on sustainability of the project and therefore decided to provide seeds alongside trainings on seed production to beneficiary farmers. GMSL consulted Seeds & Planting Material Development Center-Kilinochchi, retired officers from Agricultural Department who worked as resource personnel to the project and beneficiary farmers across the project districts to determine best seeds combination for the beneficiary farmers as it is very keen on multi-cropping to reduce the risk of abnormal price fluctuations of the vegetables. Despite inter district and intra-district geographic differences, after having several rounds of discussions among the project team, it was identified that locally appropriate and highly demanded seed varieties across the project districts would be long beans (havari mae), bitter gourd (tinnaweli), chili (MI2) and eggplant (tinnaweli) varieties. However, it was informed that eggplant seeds were not available with both the Agricultural Department and private sector seed vendors. Repeatedly cited reason, for unavailability of eggplant seeds was heavy floods that happened several parts of Sri Lanka in 2015 as it destroyed farm lands and plant nurseries particularly in the Northern Province. Consequently GMSL replaced eggplant seeds with tomato (rajitha) seeds as it was available and most importantly it is cultivable across the project districts.

GMSL started seeds distribution in February upon subsiding heavy rains and floods across the project districts. Altogether, GMSL gave seeds to 2,310 families after project re-award: 914 households in Vavuniya, 693 households in Kilinochchi and 657 households in Mullaitivu. For 2016 cultivation season, GMSL provided 10g of tomato seeds, 15g of chili seeds, 20g of bitter gourd seeds and

50g of havari mae seeds). GMSL also requested each beneficiary family to expand their cultivation beyond originally planned 0.25 acres in order to increase income from project's farming activities.

II. Equip beneficiaries for engagement in non-chemical agriculture for profit

Prior to the project termination, GMSL provided 2,250 beneficiaries families with following handouts. Upon project revision, GMSL selected another 250 beneficiaries and provided them with handouts. Before providing handouts, GMSL created Farmer Cooperation Cells which consisted of 5 members in a single cell. The purpose of having cooperation cells was to sharing labor, knowledge and project equipment among the members as natural farming required extra care and attention.

Liquid Fertilizer Manufacturing Kits: On GMSL specifications, the supplier made a tailor-made solution that capable of extracting both liquid fertilizer and nutrient rich worm-wash (wormy wash) extract in jelly form. Each beneficiary family was given one unit.

Virgin black polythene pieces for compost protection: While the process of making compost was imparted to the beneficiaries, the preserving of it (prevention of drying out, evaporation of nitrogen compounds & protect from rain) requires the compost to be placed in a warm dark storage facility. On account of filed experience and successful experiment of GMSL, it provided a virgin black polythene piece to each beneficiary family, instead impractical storage facility at household level to cover the compost content. Polythene pieces were provided to 2,250 beneficiaries.

Sprayer: One Knapsack 16 lit sprayer provided to each FCC (Farmer Cooperation Cells) consisting 05 farmers; this sprayer was shared among the five members of FCC to apply the organic pesticide to the plants.

Crowbar: Similar to the sprayer one crowbar provided to each FCC (Farmer Cooperation Cells) consisting 05 farmers; this crowbar was shared among the 5 members of FCC for their farming activities.

Agricultural guide book: Hand book on nature friendly farming practices along with preparation of the natural pesticide and fertilizer methodologies printed in both Tamil & Sinhala Languages and provided to the farmers in order to self-learning and referencing.

Pruning knife: 1 knife was distributed for 1 FCC for collective use.

III. Training of Trainers (ToT Program)

The main knowledge transfer mechanisms proposed by the project was training of trainers program (ToT Program). The project proposed to select committed individuals at grass roots level and train them on natural agricultural practices in

order to train project beneficiaries in respective villages. The original project proposed selecting and training 105 personnel as ToTs to treat 4,500 beneficiaries. With the project revision, GMSL reduced its number of total ToT personnel to 58 on the basis that it was going to target 2,500 beneficiaries only.

The project conducted one ToT program for 30 participants before the termination of the project. The training program was held on 26th and 27th September 2014 at District Agriculture Training Center, Muruganoor, Vavuniya. The 2 day residential training program covered the topics such as land preparation for natural agriculture, organic fertilizer manufacture, and organic pest management techniques, efficient water use techniques etc.

The project's second ToT program was held on 25th and 26th July at the FARM, Thavasikulam with the participation of 31 persons. The program was designed to inculcate positive outlook towards natural agriculture among the participants and provide required knowledge, techniques and skills not only to start natural agriculture on their own level but also to teach fellow beneficiary farmers on the same. The areas covered by the program were preparation of lands, seeds and planting materials, nursery maintenance, recycling and diversification of farmland, manufacturing organic fertilizer, organic pest management techniques, and efficient water use techniques. As the subject experts, retired and currently working officers from Agricultural Department contributed for the program.

One of the very notable items of the training was crop clinic which provided hands on experience to the participants on identification and treatment of pest through organic methods. It was a very lively session as the trainers used live species and disease-affected plants to educate participants on pest control and disease prevention. The participants also enthusiastically asked questions related to issues they face during their day-to-day farming activities. Some participants contributed to the session from their experience on pest control. The training program was concluded with a demonstration on production of liquid fertilizer, composting and fish tonic.

ToT program on advanced natural agricultural practices including seed production

The second round training for ToT was introduced into the project during project revision as GMSL noted it was particularly essential to transfer knowledge, techniques and skills on seed production in order to ensure sustainability of the project.

The second round of the ToT training on advanced agricultural practices including seed production, seeds storage and nursery management was conducted on 5th and 6th September at the Integrated Farm and Training Center, Puliyankulam with the participation of 58 persons. The program also allocated two sessions on community mobilization titled strengthening project's small groups at village level with the view of inculcating knowledge and skills on community mobilization among ToTs and volunteers who will lead the project

activities at the village level. The participants expressed positive feedback on the program content but they identified that due to translation from Tamil to Sinhala and vice versa, time for sessions was not sufficient.

Contribution of the ToT programs towards project targets

From the project point of view ToTs and volunteers played a noteworthy effort in conducting training programs and organizing field activities. The main contact points for field officers were ToTs and volunteers. From output level, as training program evaluation sheets showed the trainings achieved its anticipated objective of teaching beneficiary farmers natural agricultural practices. The majority of the participants improved their knowledge on natural farming and learned new techniques that can be used with natural farming. There was also an unanticipated output of the program; building positive relationship between Sinhala speaking and Tamil speaking communities. From longer perspective, majority of the ToTs stayed with the project and contributed for project through conducting trainings and organizing field activities. From longer perspective, the investment made for ToT programs was satisfactorily justified as the ToT personnel alongside the field officers and volunteers organized and conducted trainings for 2,500 beneficiaries.

IV. Farmer Training Programs

Farmer training programs were in place to disseminate knowledge, technologies and skills through ToT personnel, volunteers and field officers. Though the agricultural sector holds a dominant share in the gross domestic product of the Northern Province, farmers were not reasonably familiar with organic agriculture. There were some farmers who engaged in organic agriculture not by choice but having no other option, as chemical fertilizer, weedicides and other pesticides were not sufficiently available during the conflict period. Therefore, GMSL took substantial effort through farmer training programs to familiarize farmers and change their mindset towards environmentally friendly regenerative natural agriculture.

Prior to the termination of the project, GMSL introduced natural agriculture to 2,250 beneficiary farmers and trained them on natural agricultural practices. After the project re-award GMSL completed its first round of trainings on natural agriculture by training 250 beneficiaries and re-training additional 1,043 beneficiary farmers on their request. Through the first round of farmer training programs GMSL introduced organic agriculture and armed the beneficiary families with necessary knowledge, techniques and skills to engage in natural agriculture. Altogether, GMSL trained 2,500 beneficiaries during first round of farmer training programs.

The second round farmer training programs on advanced natural agricultural practices including seed production

The second round farmer training programs were introduced with the view of ensuring sustainability of the project in the long run as there is strong relationship between continuation of natural agriculture at household level and availability of seeds/ beneficiaries' ability to produce seeds on their own. So the project design was changed and incorporated trainings on seed production. In addition to seed production, knowledge and technologies related to seed storage and nursery management were transmitted through the second round training programs. The GMSL conducted the second round farmer training programs for 2,402 farmers from Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts. In Kilinochchi district 674 farmers were trained and 753 and 975 farmers were trained through the programs respectively in Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts.

Contribution of the farmer training programs towards project targets

Participation for the farmer training programs was encouraging. A great interest was seen among beneficiaries not only to take part in the programs but also contribute from their knowledge. GMSL understood that through its field visits and monitoring visits a substantial percentage of the participants put their learning from the program into practice. For example the beneficiary farmers made liquid fertilizer despite bad odor associated with it. Also almost all beneficiary farmers made composts. Though, the GMSL was not in a position to conduct a survey covering substantial sample from the total beneficiary population due to budget and time limitations, from 30 selected beneficiaries, it was revealed that all of them have produced seeds for next season's cultivation activities which showed that technologies have been tickled down through farmer training programs.

V. Training on postharvest and value addition technologies

The idea behind having postharvest and value addition trainings was to reduce waste and post-harvest losses. During the fruit and vegetable seasons, the prices of fruits and vegetables get very low. Consequently, farmers let the harvest to perish in the fields as sometimes cost of harvesting is higher than the actual income that can be generated by selling produce. Another occasions, a distress sale takes place, in which the farmer gets lowest price which barely sufficient to cover his expenses. To address this, the project introduced postharvest and value addition trainings.

The GMSL conducted training programs on postharvest technologies to beneficiary farmers in collaboration with Institute of Post-Harvest Technology. The objectives of the programs were to introduce necessary post-harvest technologies to minimize post-harvest losses and promote value addition technologies among beneficiary farmers. 10 such programs conducted across the project districts: 4 in Mullaitivu district, 3 in Vavuniya district and 3 in Kilinochchi district. The program covered topics such as maturity indices of fruits and vegetables, post-harvest handling of fruits and vegetables, factors affecting post-harvest losses in fruits and vegetables, suitable packaging for fruits and vegetables, suitable packages to minimize transport losses and value addition

technologies: making jams and cordials. Altogether 250 farmers were trained: 100 in Mullaitivu, 75 in Vavuniya and 75 in Kilinochchi.

VI. Training on floriculture

GMSL conducted a floriculture training program on the 24th November, 2015 at GMSL project office Vavuniya. The participation opportunity was given to the beneficiaries who already engaged in floriculture or the beneficiaries who were enthusiastic to start floriculture as a livelihood. 18 participants took part in the program: 8 from Vavuniya and 5 each from Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts. The program was conducted by Mr. A. Yogarajah, a floricultural expert who works at floriculture Research and Development unit, Department of National Botanic Gardens, Royal Botanic Garden, Peradeniya.

Through the program the participants were introduced new floricultural technologies such as budding, grafting, shared knowledge related to floriculture and provided marketing tips to boost the income. Also the trainer introduced new flower varieties to the participants and different landscape types. Also he highlighted about the use of compost and waste materials. The post program evaluation suggested that the participants learnt at least one new technology in floriculture and they were keen to employ learning of the workshop.

After three months from the program, GMSL field team conducted a post-program review. It was reported that 14 participants out of 18 were in the floriculture business; all the 8 participants from Vavuniya have started floriculture while 5 participants from Kilinochchi and 1 participant from Mullaitivu are on the business. Among 4 participants who haven't started it, 3 of them doing gardening for their self-fulfillment and the other participant has left the village. There was a significant upward move in the average income of the participants; in Vavuniya prior-to program average monthly income of the participants was LKR 1,150 and it has increased to LKR 2,037 after the program. In Mullaitivu district only one participant was active and after the training he was very successful as a floriculturist. His average monthly income has jumped to LKR 6,000 from LKR 2,500 bearing his income from special functions and exhibitions in the district where he earns approximately LKR 25,000 per event. In the Kilinochchi, average monthly income of the participants has boosted to LKR 3,600 after the training from pre-training level of LKR 2,000 per month. I. Vathani of Kilinochchi district has increased her monthly average income from floriculture from LKR 5,000 to LKR 10,000 after the training.

All the participants have added new flower varieties to their business after the training; rose, ixorasa varieties, croton varieties, anthurium varieties and green grass varieties. Some participants have also started selling plants like mango, coconut etc. After the training the participants applied asexual vegetation methods like grafting and budding for propagation. Also as a result of the training they use composts heavily. Further, the trainer taught about recycling and use of waste materials and participants have put those learning into practice.

VII. Distribution of water pumps for beneficiaries

GMSL purchased 80 water pumps to be distributed among beneficiary families; 30 water pumps for Vavuniya and 25 each for Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts. GMSL introduced eligibility criteria and selection criteria for selection of water pump recipients.

Eligibility criteria to be a water-pump recipient

Being a VALUE project beneficiary

Should have a well and minimum ½ acres land

Should engage in project's agricultural activities

Water Pump Recipients have been selected based on below criteria

Widow

Person with disabilities

Family income

Number of family members and number of students in the family

Getting consent/ approval from all the respective beneficiaries in the village to the identified water pump recipient

Possibility of sharing a water-pump among beneficiaries in the village

The purchased water pump brand was Edgo. GMSL purchased 24 electric water pumps of 1 HP, 48 electric water pumps of 2 HP, 4 electric water pumps of 3 HP and 4 Kerosene oil pumps. In Vavuniya district, 1HP 10 water pumps and 2 HP 20 pumps were distributed including 1 kerosene oil pump. In Kilinochchi district, 13 water pumps of 1 HP and 8 water pumps of 2 HP including a kerosene oil pump and 4 water pumps of 3 HP distributed while in Mullaitivu, GMSL provided 22 water pumps of 2 HP, 1 water pump of 1 HP and 2 kerosene oil pumps were handed over to the selected beneficiaries. The reason for purchase of kerosene oil pumps was 4 selected beneficiaries didn't have electricity facility. Also GMSL purchased high power 3 HP water pumps as the ground water level in Ambalnagar and Shanthapuram area was very low and therefore high-pressure water pumps were required for beneficiaries in these villages.

In Vavuniya district, GMSL provided water pumps for 29 individual beneficiaries who were selected based on the above mentioned criteria and 1 water pump was in common use. In Kilinochchi district, 22 water pumps were in common use while 3 water pumps were handed over to individual beneficiaries for individual use. In Mullaitivu district, 22 water pumps were in common use while 3 pumps were in individual use. GMSL facilitated common use of water pumps in the villages where selecting onse appropriate water pump recipient can lead to conflicts among the beneficiary villagers.

GMSL underwent lengthy and exhausting process of selecting 80 suitable beneficiaries from 2,500 potential beneficiaries to distribute water pumps. The field officers had number of consultation rounds with grama niladhari, agrarian

service society leaders and agricultural department officers on suitable water pump recipients. Sometimes, based on the criteria proposed by the project, a suitable water pump recipient was identified but it became nearly impossible to get consent for him/ her from all the beneficiaries in respective village. Also in some cases, due to delay in providing water pumps by the project some of the selected beneficiaries have received water pumps from the Provincial Agricultural Department or from another NGO. Then again, GMSL went through the same exhausting process to select a viable replacement for the selected beneficiaries who received a water pump after their selection. Majority of the beneficiaries, despite their income level or they have a water pump or not, want to get a water pump from the project.

The impact of the activity towards project target

GMSL identified potential significance and sensitivity of this activity towards project success at village level and therefore undertook an extremely careful approach in selecting beneficiaries. The decision to provide water pumps for common use helped to overcome potential divisions among beneficiary families at village level. After the water pump delivery, GMSL undertook an inspection visit on random basis; the beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to the project for providing them with water pump to continue their farming activities. There was a general consensus among the Mullaitivu district beneficiaries that water pump was given to the neediest and poorest families. In other two districts GMSL did a fairly good job in selecting water pump recipients, despite aggressive approach of some beneficiaries.

VIII. Establish Village Level Micro-enterprises Associations (VLMAs)

GMSL established 10 VLMAs, 4 VLMAs each in Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts and 2 VLMAs in Vavuniya district. Each VLMA consisted of 8 executive committee members and their task was to manage the operations of the VLMAs including establishing guidelines in a participatory manner for use of project equipment. .

| District | VLMA Central Location | Villages Covered by the VLMA | VLMA Coverage in people | Provided equipment to VLMA |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Mullaitivu | Mankulam | New colony, old colony, neethipuram, thunukkai road, katquary & Mullai road. | 226 | 3 Peanut peeling machines, 30 plastic crates, 4 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| | Olumadu | Olumadu, Thachchadaman, Ampakamama & Pulumachchinathakulam | 174 | 3 Peanut peeling machines, 30 plastic crates, 4 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| | Karippadda | Karippaddamurippu, | 150 | 3 Peanut peeling |

| | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|---|-----|---|
| | murippu | Manavalanpaddamurippu, Puthyanagar, Melivanam and Thampanai | | machines, 30 plastic crates, 4 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| | Oddusuddan | Sivanagar, Katchchilaimadu, Pandarawanni and Palampasi | 236 | 3 Peanut peeling machines, 30 plastic crates, 4 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| Kilinochchi | Ampalnagar | Thiruwayaru, Santhapuram, Raththinapuram, Malayalapuram, Kirusnapuram and Vinayagapuram | 225 | 5 Peanut peeling machines, 50 plastic crates, 4 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| | Mayavanoor | Mayavanoor Ramanadapuram, Vaddakkachchi | 524 | 3 Peanut peeling machines, 30 plastic crates, 4 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| | Kanthikiramam | Kanthikiramam and Konavil East | 95 | 2 Peanut peeling machines, 20 plastic crates, 2 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| | Akkarayan | Akkarayan and Maniyankulam | 50 | 2 Peanut peeling machines, 20 plastic crates, 2 lime harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| Vavuniya | Salalihinigama | Salalihinigama | 150 | 2 Peanut peeling machines, 30 plastic crates, 10 thibbatu harvesting tools, 1 scale |
| | Nandimithragama | Nandimithragama | 150 | 2 Peanut peeling machines, 30 plastic crates, 10 thibbatu harvesting tools, 1 scale |

In Vavuniya district, in addition to providing equipment to above VLMAs, GMSL provided Tharanikulam beneficiaries with 1 peanut peeling machine and 3 lime harvesting tools, Namalgama beneficiaries with 1 peanut peeling machine and 3 lime harvesting tools and Alagalla, Echchankulam and Aluthgama beneficiaries with 3 thibbatu harvesting tools each on the request of the respective beneficiaries. Also those villages can't be covered/ managed by the established

VLMA in Vavuniya due to distance between VLMA locations and the respective villages.

In Mullaitivu district 796 beneficiary families attached to 4 VLMA were entitled for use of project's VLMA equipment while in Kilinochchi district 624 beneficiaries linked to 4 VLMA and in Vavuniya district 300 beneficiaries connected to 2 VLMA were eligible for use of VLMA equipment.

Further, GMSL provided food processing equipment such as kitchen utensils, knife sets, blenders, grinders, labeling machines, heat sealing machines, and electronic scale for food processing and value addition activities for 3 VLMA, 1 VLMA from each project district. The selected VLMA were Karipattamurippu of Mullaitivu district, Ampalnagar of Kilinochchi district and Nadimithragama of Vavuniya district.

3. Gender

Gender wise distribution of project's ToT

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Kilinochchi | 5 (26%) | 14 (74%) | 19 |
| Mullaitivu | 5 (29%) | 12 (71%) | 17 |
| Vavuniya | 9 (41%) | 13 (59%) | 22 |
| | 19 (33%) | 39 (67%) | 58 |

- Project's ToT pool was dominant with female representatives and it was identified to be one positive factor that resulted efficient organization of field activities and information distribution at village level.

Gender wise first round farmer training programs

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Kilinochchi | 312 (43%) | 411 (57%) | 723 |
| Mullaitivu | 366 (47%) | 418 (53%) | 784 |
| Vavuniya | 540 (54%) | 453 (46%) | 993 |
| | 1218 (49%) | 1282 (51%) | 2500 |

- In Vavuniya majority of participants male whereas in the other two districts majority were female.
- Overall sex ratio in first round training programs were 95 males per 100 females.

Gender wise seed distribution

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Kilinochchi | 262 (38%) | 431 (62%) | 693 |
| Mullaitivu | 313 (45%) | 390 (55%) | 703 |
| Vavuniya | 487 (53%) | 427 (47%) | 914 |
| | 1062 (45%) | 1248 (55%) | 2310 |

- Except in Vavuniya, in the other two districts majority of seed recipients were female.

Gender wise second round farmer training programs

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Kilinochhchi | 222 (33%) | 452 (67%) | 674 |
| Mullaitivu | 339 (45%) | 414 (55%) | 753 |
| Vavuniya | 531 (54%) | 444 (46%) | 975 |
| | 1062 (44%) | 1248 (56%) | 2402 |

- In Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts majority of the participants were female whereas in Vavuniya, the majority was male.
- Overall, female participation was at 56% and male participation was 44%.

Gender wise key positions (president, secretary and treasurer) in VLMAs

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Kilinochhchi | 1 (8%) | 11 (92%) | 12 |
| Mullaitivu | 4 (33%) | 8 (67%) | 12 |
| Vavuniya | 2 (33%) | 4 (67%) | 6 |
| | 7 (23%) | 23 (77%) | 30 |

Key positions of the VLMAs were dominantly held by women; 23 out of 30 key positions were held by women. Notably 11 key positions out of total 12 positions in 4 VLMAs of Kilinochhchi district were occupied by women. In Mullaitivu district, there were 8 female persons for 4 male persons in higher positions of 4 VLMAs. In Vavuniya, women were elected for 4 key positions out of 6 key positions in 2 VLMAs. Altogether there were 23 female personnel for 7 male personnel at key positions of all the VLMAs.

Gender wise distribution of VLMA executive committee members

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Kilinochhchi | 5 (16%) | 27 (84%) | 32 |
| Mullaitivu | 14 (44%) | 18 (56%) | 32 |
| Vavuniya | 7 (44%) | 9 (56%) | 16 |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| | 26 (32%) | 54 (68%) | 80 |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|

- Similar to the overwhelming female occupants in VLMA key positions, women outperform men in VLMA executive committee representation. Out of total 80 executive committee members in 10 VLMAs, 54 personnel were women and 26 representatives were male.
- In Kilinochchi district, in 2 VLMAs (Akkarayan and Kanthikrimam) all the members including committee members that have been elected were female.
- In Mullaitivu district all the key positions occupied in Oddusuddan and Olumadu VLMA were female.
- There were 7 women committee members for 1 male member in Oddusuddan and Karipaddamurippu VLMAs of Mullaitivu district.

Gender wise water pump recipients/ caretakers

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Kilinochchi | 7 (28%) | 18 (72%) | 25 |
| Mullaitivu | 9 (36%) | 16 (64%) | 25 |
| Vavuniya | 10 (33%) | 20 (67%) | 30 |
| | 26 (32%) | 54 (68%) | 80 |

- Two third of the water pump recipients were female.
- Highest female water pump recipients' percentage was recorded in Kilinochchi district though the other two districts were not far behind.

4. Project's Results Presentation

GMSL conducted a survey covering 30 beneficiaries from project districts; 10 from each district. The results as follows,

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Total population | 2,500 |
| Confidence level | 90% |
| Error level | 15% |
| Response distribution | 50% |
| Sample size | 30 |

Vavuniya district (based on the sample)

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Average project cultivation per household | 0.61875 acres |
| Average expenditure for farming per household (LKR) | 8,850 |
| Average income from long beans (LKR) | 18,800 |
| Average income from tomato (LKR) | 3,240 |
| Average income from bitter gourd (LKR) | 26,350 |
| Average income from chili (LKR) | 19,600 |
| Total average income from farming (LKR) | 67,990 |
| Average Profit for the season (LKR) | 59,140 |

Kilinochchi district (based on the sample)

| | |
|---|------------|
| Average project cultivation per household | 0.45 acres |
| Average expenditure for farming per household (LKR) | 6,350 |
| Average income from long beans (LKR) | 8,250 |
| Average income from tomato (LKR) | 0 |
| Average income from bitter gourd (LKR) | 2,520 |
| Average income from chili (LKR) | 6,900 |
| Total average income from farming (LKR) | 17,670 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Average Profit for the season (LKR) | 11,320 |
|-------------------------------------|--------|

Mullaitivu district (based on the sample)

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Average project cultivation per household | 0.425 acres |
| Average expenditure for farming per household (LKR) | 4,850 |
| Average income from long beans (LKR) | 8,800 |
| Average income from tomato (LKR) | 0 |
| Average income from bitter gourd (LKR) | 2,850 |
| Average income from chili (LKR) | 8,150 |
| Total average income from farming (LKR) | 19,800 |
| Average Profit for the season (LKR) | 14,950 |

Further the sample survey reveals followings,

- All the selected beneficiaries have re-produced seeds of at least two varieties from project seeds for next season's cultivation.
- Monthly savings have been increased by LKR 8,405 in Vavuniya, LKR 8,900 in Kilinochhchi and LKR 9,450 in Mullaitivu.
- In Mullaitivu and Kilinochhchi districts, tomato cultivation was unsuccessful which understood to be due to unusually very hot conditions prevailed during the season.
- 17 out of the sample of 30 haven't engaged in chemical free agriculture before the project

5. Project targets vs. Project Achievements

FINANCIAL STATUS

Target: 70% of 2,500 farmer families including female headed families, war widows and vulnerable families in 52 villages of the Kilinochchi, Mullaithivu and Vavuniya districts increase their monthly profit from agriculture by Rs.7,000/= while raising family savings by Rs.1,000 per month.

Project Achievement:

Through a survey covering 30 beneficiaries it was revealed that on average a family earned LKR 28, 470 during a period of approximately two and half months.

Analysis on the achievement

Though the survey results exceeded the project target of getting LKR 7,000 per month income from project farming, due to following reasons, GMSL doesn't use the survey results to generalize income level of the entire project population.

- Approximately 600 beneficiaries were resettled families which they use their resettled home as a transit location and therefore there were not keen to engage in natural agriculture for profit.
- There were significant delay in providing project water pumps to beneficiary families and therefore approximately 400 beneficiaries didn't cultivate project seeds.
- The marketing facilities which the project planned to expect with the support of private sector agribusinesses were not materialized as expected as agribusinesses were reluctant to come into agreement with the project/beneficiaries on the ground of price volatility.
- Since the project was terminated once and GMSL alongside with USAID conveyed the termination message to the beneficiaries, it became increasingly difficult to re-convince and re-mobilize beneficiaries. Further, as the modified project also went through a turbulent period during its implementation due to financial issues the situation was exaggerated. Consequently, GMSL understood that a substantial number of project beneficiaries remained skeptical towards the project.

FAMILY SAVINGS

Project Achievement:

Family savings have been increased by LKR 8,918 during the project period. The sample respondents maintained that reasons behind increase in savings were a.) getting additional income from the project, b.) expenditure for household's consumption was reduced due to use of home-grown vegetables of the project

KNOWLEDGE

Target: Agriculture: Increased knowledge of the target groups in natural agricultural crop management, theory of agriculture, efficient water use, soil conservation and erosion control, markets, resource management

Project Achievement:

It was richly clear that the beneficiaries have increased their knowledge on natural agricultural technologies through project's TOT programs, farmer training programs and on-site technical support. Project training program evaluation sheets also backed the idea that farmers received knowledge on chemical free agriculture from the project.

SKILLS

Target: Increase in skills of securing a primary livelihood, in the technical and theoretical knowledge of agriculture for specific members of the target group, resource optimization and negotiating skills for engagement with the marketplace.

Project Achievement:

The beneficiary farmers have acquired both technical and theoretical skills in chemical free agriculture through two ToT programs and two rounds of farmer training programs. The TOTs additionally received negotiation skills trainings for community mobilization and market engagement.

Behavior:

Target: A change in mindset from survival and/or subsistence livelihoods to profit oriented engagement in agriculture, change in mindset towards regenerative agricultural modalities that have a lower environmental impact and a higher profit margin.

Project Achievement:

The beneficiaries initially took the project as health-focused one and neglected profit potential of chemical-free agriculture. Having undertaken serious of meetings and monitoring visits, GMSL convinced the beneficiaries that chemical-free agriculture as a viable livelihood and it has higher profit potential than chemical agriculture due to low input cost. This shift in mindset was reflected in increase in land area under project coverage. 26 out of 30 sample respondents had cultivated more than 0.25 acres which expected by the project.

IMPACT: COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Target: Increase in eco-system services for primary livelihood, increase in soil health and erosion control.

Project Achievement:

It can be safely assumed that by preventing chemical use and introducing environmental friendly agricultural techniques, the project has contributed to eco-system wellbeing in the locality.

COMMUNITY BONDING

Target: The creation of a livelihood network specifically for collectivization ensures greater intra-community and inter-community corporation towards mutually supporting one another for the optimization of economic reward of their livelihood efforts.

Project Achievement

Establishment of VLMA for optimization of economic reward and providing agricultural equipment for common use by the project were instrumental in connecting communities together for individual and collective wellbeing.

RESOURCES

Target: Increase in green cover through fruit tree planting for commercial purposes, stability of eco-system services required for optimizing agricultural yields

Project Achievement:

The project did not provide fruit tree plants to the beneficiaries and therefore the target of having stable green cover was not met. However, the green cover was increased seasonally through other cultivation activities of the project.

PARTNERSHIPS/STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Target: Increase in know-how and technology for agriculture based livelihoods

Project Achievement:

The revised project did not see any private sector contribution for the project.

PARTNERSHIPS

Target: Greater collaboration, increases sharing of knowledge, increased connectivity to national learning institutes, increased connectivity to markets

Project Achievement

A mechanism for greater collaboration and sharing knowledge at village level was in place but the revised project did not make any emphasis on the connectivity to learning institutes.

MEDIA

Target: Wider coverage and publicity for specific activities and programs of target communities

Project Achievement

The modified project did not see any activity targeting media.

6. Challenges encountered during the period

1. Not having funds to continue project activities as per work plan

GMSL experienced period of low activity/ inactivity due to not having funds reimbursed/ advances provided to the project. This was one of the major obstacles that happened after project revision. During this period, none of the planned activities were able to carry out as per the work plan and it significantly affected on the project impact.

2. Negotiation with private sector agree businesses

The project' first version proposed establishing market facilities for beneficiary families through partnerships/ forward sale agreements with private sector agribusinesses. However the discussions with them did not materialize into an agreement due to divergences in opinions, particularly on the price.

3. Climate instability

During the project period both drought and flood events recorded from the project districts and therefore the project impact was significantly lessened due to that.

4. Avoiding divisions among beneficiary families when providing water pumps

Since GMSL had limited number of water pumps available for the distribution, it became a daunting task to select ideal water pump recipients while avoiding conflicts/ divisions among the community members. So GMSL undertook two pronged approach: a) participatory decision making: selecting few potential recipients based on the selection criteria and let the community to make the final call b) when selecting one recipient from a village was increasingly troublesome, GMSL decided to keep the water pump in common use. When the pump was in common use every beneficiary from the village was entitled to use the pump for their farming activities.

7. Lesson learned

1. Any capacity building activity provided by the USAID will be of great impact if those have undertaken prior or in parallel to the project, not at the tail end of the project.
2. The financial procedures of USAID are different than the other international donors and therefore, for an organization that takes grant from USAID for the first time, a proper guidance and support is required from OFM during initial months of the project.
3. Voucher review should be a ground to support and improve capacity of local organizations, rather than a basis for project termination.
4. The lesser the amount of time taken to solve financial and programmatic disputes greater the project result would be.
5. It would be of great use if staff at OFM is familiar with each project's nature and context. GMSL experience was if OFM staff was aware of the necessity of having funds on time for agricultural activities of the project, they would have solved financial matters much faster.
6. Improved inter departmental communication at USAID will create facilitative environment for its partners for project implementation.
7. Rather than offering uniform agricultural solution across the project districts, it would be of significant help to the community, had the GMSL treated each village differently based on local priorities. To undertake such localized approach much flexibility is needed from USAID front.
8. To get maximum return for investment in an agricultural project, constantly changing weather and social situation should be taken into consideration, rather than sticking to pre-approved work plan.
9. In organizing field programs, religious events/ festivals at village level should be taken in to consideration to ensure full participation for the programs. This was of particular importance with Tamil speaking community in the Northern Province as they celebrate religious rituals/ festivals for many months.