

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PEACEBUILDING FUND
PBF PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT TEMPLATE



PBF PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

COUNTRY: Sri Lanka

TYPE OF REPORT: SEMI-ANNUAL, ANNUAL OR FINAL Semi-Annual

DATE OF REPORT: June 2018

Project Title: EMPOWER: Building peace through the economic empowerment of women in northern Sri Lanka	
Project Number from MPTF-O Gateway: 00108311	
PBF project modality: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IRF <input type="checkbox"/> PRF	If funding is disbursed into a national or regional trust fund: <input type="checkbox"/> Country Trust Fund <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Trust Fund Name of Recipient Fund:
List all direct project recipient organizations (starting with Convening Agency), followed type of organization (UN, CSO etc): International Labour Organization, World Food Programme, List additional implementing partners, Governmental and non-Governmental: Puthukkudiyiruppu Women Entrepreneurs' Cooperative Society (hereafter PTK women's cooperative)	
Project commencement date¹: 09 January 2018 Project duration in months:² 18 months	
Does the project fall under one of the specific PBF priority windows below: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender promotion initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Youth promotion initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Transition from UN or regional peacekeeping or special political missions <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-border or regional project	
Total PBF approved project budget* (by recipient organization): ILO: \$ 685000 WFP : \$ 515,000 PTK Women's cooperative : \$ 800,000 : \$ Total: 2,000,000 <i>*The overall approved budget and the release of the second and any subsequent tranche are conditional and subject to PBSO's approval and subject to availability of funds in the PBF account</i>	
How many tranches have been received so far: 1	
Report preparation: Project report prepared by: ILO and WFP Project report approved by: Resident Coordinator Did PBF Secretariat clear the report: Yes Any comments from PBF Secretariat on the report: Already incorporated Has the project undertaken any evaluation exercises? Please specify and attach: N/A	

¹ Note: commencement date will be the date of first funds transfer.

² Maximum project duration for IRF projects is 18 months, for PRF projects – 36 months.

NOTES FOR COMPLETING THE REPORT:

- *Avoid acronyms and UN jargon, use general / common language.*
- *Be as concrete as possible. Avoid theoretical, vague or conceptual discourse.*
- *Ensure the analysis and project progress assessment is gender and age sensitive.*

PART 1: RESULTS PROGRESS

1.1 Overall project progress to date

Briefly explain the **status of the project** in terms of its implementation cycle, including whether all preliminary/preparatory activities have been completed (1500 character limit):

All project staff are hired (ILO: 2 field staff and 1 finance/admin officer; WFP: 1 field staff and 1 driver). All project staff have started working except for the finance/admin officer who will commence his/her assignment in June. The UNV funded international UN Volunteer for Monitoring and Evaluation and a national UNV for Communications positions, whose recruitment has been administered by UNV and WFP, will join in the coming month. The field office in Mullaitivu is constructed, installed with all equipment and is functional.

The project approached relevant government ministries and authorities at provincial, district and divisional levels to orient them on the project and to set up a stakeholder committee. As a result of the orientation, the project received endorsement from the national stakeholders and a stakeholder committee was set up. An external communication strategy was developed reflecting the local media landscape and media channels to ensure effective and sensible communication on the project. A registration platform was developed and in operation to systematically register all cooperative members and store demographic and personal data. Baseline data collection for quantitative data has been completed, and currently designing focus group discussions.

The ILO has also mobilised additional resources and is establishing linkages among different projects in order to strengthen the sustainability of impact.

Given the recent/current political/peacebuilding/ transition situation/ needs in the country, has the project been/ does it continue to be **relevant** and well placed to address potential conflict factors/ sources of tensions/ risks to country's sustaining peace progress? Please illustrate. If project is still ongoing, are any adjustments required? (1500 character limit)

This project remains highly relevant considering the current political climate and economic circumstances. According to the most recent context analysis conducted by the UNRCO on peacebuilding and reconciliation, political, social, and economic integration of the conflict-affected population in the Northern Province continues to be a major challenge. The integration has been slow due to multiple macro to micro level factors ranging from limited protection and recognition of human rights among conflict affected population in the Northern Province, tensions within the Northern Province across ethnicity/caste/gender/ex-cadres, and limited private sector investment and presence. The report further mentions that access to gainful employment and livelihood activities and indebtedness remain a challenge, especially for female headed households. Women's activism is highlighted as a 'change maker' in propelling the peacebuilding process and emphasizes that more national and international support needs to be channelled on this front. Considering these current needs and gaps, the project is timely and important as it addresses socio-economic integration of the ex-

combatants, female headed households, and widows to empower them to become frontrunners of peacebuilding.

In a few sentences, summarize **what is unique/ innovative/ interesting** about what this project is trying/ has tried to achieve or its approach (rather than listing activity progress) (1500 character limit).

A unique feature of this project is that the members of the PTK Women's Cooperative are involved as project implementers and not solely as project beneficiaries. The project activities are tailored to their needs by involving them in activity planning, design, and implementation. This process inherently results in capacity building of the cooperative and its members and resonates with the identified necessity to empower women's activism in the Northern Province. They have already shown initiatives in setting up new activities, such as promoting their agricultural production and food processing through social media platforms.

Another unique feature of this project is that the project approaches peacebuilding not only through enhancing PTK Women's Cooperative's access to livelihood opportunities, markets, and technologies, but also exposing them to business partners, cooperatives, and communities of different ethnic groups and empower them to become a peacebuilding actor in their own right. This exposure will serve as an initial footing for the members of the cooperative to enhance their communication, negotiation, and consensus building skills as well as their understanding of the overall peacebuilding process.

Considering the project's implementation cycle, please **rate this project's overall progress towards results to date:**
off track

In a few sentences summarize **major project peacebuilding progress/results** (with evidence), which PBSO can use in public communications to highlight the project (1500 character limit):

As it is still at an early stage of the project cycle, it is difficult to report on tangible peacebuilding progress/results. However, initial progress has been made under Outcome 1 on economic empowerment (climate risk analysis, needs assessment on water resources etc.), which shall feed into Outcome 2 that predominantly focuses on women's engagement and peacebuilding. Hence, preparation is underway to realize more robust peacebuilding progress.

The project is planning to conduct a gender sensitivity training for cooperative members, male figures in the community and household tailored to the post-conflict context, including elements on gender-based violence and inclusion of women in the peacebuilding process. Discussions have been included with the Department of Cooperatives to register the PTK Women's Cooperative in the existing national network, "Coop in Coop." Inclusion in this platform shall enhance their socio-economic integration through knowledge exchange and potential business partnerships. The platform will also provide opportunities for the PTK Women's Cooperative to interact with cooperatives (including those that are women-led) from other regions and composed of other ethnic groups, and to showcase their products at the Coop in Coop marketplace to expand their market outreach.

In a few sentences, explain how the project has made **real human impact**, that is, how did it affect the lives of any people in the country – where possible, use direct quotes that PBSO can use in public communications to highlight the project (1500 character limit):

During and shortly after the war, the members of the PTK Women's Cooperative had little contact with populations of other ethnic groups. During one of the project discussions, the members expressed excitement in the possibility of interacting with women from other ethnic and religious groups, exchanging ideas and exploring options for possible collaboration in terms of business expansion, women's empowerment and peacebuilding. Such opportunities will also serve as an outlet to express the hardships they have faced being women, female-headed household, ex-combatant, and persons with disability, and share how they are overcoming the dire situation of the past.

The annexed press release, "Mullaitivu's first all-female cooperative brings women farmers to the fore," provides series of direct quotes of PTK Women's Cooperative on leadership and socio-economic integration.

If the project progress assessment is **on-track**, please explain what the key **challenges** (if any) have been and which measures were taken to address them (1500 character limit).

If the assessment is **off-track**, please list main reasons/ **challenges** and explain what impact this has had/will have on project duration or strategy and what **measures** have been taken/ will be taken to address the challenges/ rectify project progress (1500 character limit):

The local government elections took place in March 2018. All the government departments and officials were fully engaged in the preparation and implementation of the election during the months of February and March. Hence project experienced delays in initiating most activities that involved the government authorities and their departments. Following the elections, the project team was able to advocate effectively with government officials and obtained relevant approvals for the field implementation (e.g. public launch of the project in mid March 2018, beneficiary selection, and expansion of members).

The current provincial government's tenure ends in September 2018, which will be followed by an election. The project anticipates political volatility in the Northern Province in the months ahead. The project will avoid implementing major, large scale high visibil activities during the election period. Furthermore, the prolonged drought and irregular, abrupt rainfalls have relatively impacted the cultivation of crops (e.g. ginger). As a mitigation measure, the project conducted an assessment of the impact of climate change on crop cultivation and soil testing, which will provide further insights on sustainable crop cultivation. Given these external factors, there is a potential that the current project duration may not be long enough. However, as the project now has it's staffs on board, the project will make every effort to expedite the implementation.

Please attach as a separate document(s) any materials highlighting or providing more evidence for project progress (for example: publications, photos, videos, monitoring reports, evaluation reports etc.). List below what has been attached to the report, including purpose and audience.

Press release that was published by a local newspaper (English). The article was developed by the ILO to put out human stories of the PTK women's cooperative and to share the intention of the EMPOWER project.

http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=182465

External communication on EMPOWER also take place through hrough social media channels of the UN agencies. Both ILO and WFP have followers across the globe and the audience tends to be more development practitioners, donor communities, CSOs, and other UN agencies. The following is an example from ILO twitter website:
<https://twitter.com/ilocolombo?lang=en>

1.2 Result progress by project outcome

The space in the template allows for up to four project outcomes. If your project has more approved outcomes, contact PBSO for template modification.

Outcome 1: Female former combatants and other conflict-affected women increase their economic contribution through effectively accessing new market opportunities, resources and information that have opened as a result of a more peaceful environment.

Rate the current status of the outcome progress: on track

Progress summary: *Describe main progress under this Outcome made during the reporting period (for June reports: January-June; for November reports: January-November; for final reports: full project duration), including major output progress (not all individual activities). If the project is starting to make/ has made a difference at the outcome level, provide specific evidence for the progress (quantitative and qualitative) and explain how it impacts the broader political and peacebuilding context. Where possible, provide specific examples of change the project has supported/ contributed to as well as, where available and relevant, quotes from partners or beneficiaries about the project and their experience. (3000 character limit)?*

As the project is still in its early stages, tangible outcome level progress has yet to be observed. Nevertheless, between January to June 2018, progress has been made in order to better design sustainable livelihood activities for the members of the PTK Women's Cooperative, which shall increase their annual income.

The project has undertaken a climate risk analysis to identify and examine the climate exposure levels, water availability, and soil profiles to develop a recommended list of seasonal crop cultivation that is suitable for the target region. The project has also initiated discussions with potential southern exporters to develop market linkages.

Roughly 250 members of the PTK Women's Cooperative have been identified to be the first batch, to grow three varieties of fruits and vegetables in market demand. They are also provided with technical support on micro irrigation and linked with local agriculture extension services.

The project has identified roughly 100 members of the PTK Women's Cooperative who own micro- and small enterprises. A needs assessment will be carried out and they will further provided with support packages in improving business management.

In respect to water sustainability practices, the project has already conducted an initial assessment of the needs of new infrastructure and resource efficiency system including wells, micro irrigation systems, irrigation tools and net house to the first batch of beneficiaries through the initial assessment.

The PTK Women's Cooperative has received initial approval from the Divisional Secretariat to obtain a 8 acres of land to establish a fruit and vegetable processing plant.

The EMPOWER project has also established a database for membership registration and manual data has been fed into it. The project works on providing capacity building training on basic computer literacy (basic application) and IT systems (Email accounts, e-communication) to the management board members and office bearers of the PTK women entrepreneurs' cooperative society.

Initial discussion has taken place with the Department of Agriculture on the training component and joint intervention mechanism. Project will start providing trainings once the base line survey analysis is completed.

Outcome 2: Female former combatants and other conflict affected women leverage their increased social status to be a leading voice in the region's private sector's contribution to peacebuilding.

Rate the current status of the outcome progress: off track

Progress summary: *(see guiding questions under Outcome 1)*

As described above, the project experienced some delays in implementing certain activities that involved government authorities, including public project launch and beneficiary selection. However, some progress has been made in the following aspects of the project:

At the project proposal stage, there were roughly 350 members of the PTK Women's Cooperative. As of May 2018, the membership has expanded up to roughly 630 members, which would allow the project to make greater presence, participation, and contribution to peacebuilding and socio-economic integration of the beneficiaries.

The project has initiated preparations for upcoming gender training for the PTK Women's Cooperative to enhance their leadership and negotiation skills in business settings as well as within households. The project will ensure a "gender integrated approach", in which mens participation and engagement is also encouraged. As such, the training will involve men within the community (e.g. male family members, potentially stakeholders etc.) to enhance awareness on how men can play a role in supporting women to be more integrated in the supply and value chains.

The project has started preparations to include the PTK Women's Cooperative in the nation-wide cooperative network, "Coop in Coop". The participation of the cooperative into this network was encouraged by the Commissioner of Department of Cooperative. The network shall serve as a platform to facilitate knowledge exchange on business practices and crop cultivation, while also allowing the cooperative members to interact with those from other regions and ethnic groups, hence contributing to socio-economic integration and peace building.

Outcome 3: Not applicable

Rate the current status of the outcome progress: Please select one

Progress summary: (see guiding questions under Outcome 1)

Outcome 4: Not applicable

Rate the current status of the outcome progress: Please select one

Progress summary: (see guiding questions under Outcome 1)

1.3 Cross-cutting issues

<p><u>National ownership:</u> How has the national government demonstrated ownership/ commitment to the project results and activities? Give specific examples. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>During the Peacebuilding Board Meeting held in May 2018, the project presented the ongoing progress and shared photos, the press release, and project descriptions. The presentation was well-received by the board members (government, line ministries, and donors communities), and confirmed that cultivation of Moringha leaves are highly in demand. The board members also reinstated how important the project is for the national peacebuilding strategy priorities. Other donors participating in the meeting also showed interest to learn more about the project. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Senior Adviser to the Minister of Finance and Media both expressed their continuous support of the project.</p>
<p><u>Monitoring:</u> Is the project M&E plan on track? What monitoring methods and sources of evidence are being/ have been used? Please attach any monitoring-related reports for the reporting period. (1500 character limit)?</p>	<p>EMPOWER project has contracted a local university to collect baseline data. So far, the quantitative data collection process has been completed and the analysis is currently underway. The terms of reference with guidelines and the questionnaire of focus group discussions is currently being developed, which includes a strata of beneficiaries including female farmers, women engaged in agro/ food processing industries, women engaged in other alternate income generating activities, female headed households engaged in agriculture, female farmers with disabilities developed. Lastly, the terms of reference with guidelines and the questionnaire of key informant interviews with national stakeholders as well as the management board of the PTK women's cooperative is under development.</p>
<p><u>Evaluation:</u> Provide an update on the preparations for the external evaluation for the project, especially if within last 6 months of implementation or final report. Confirm available budget for evaluation. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>Baseline data collection (designing of survey, training of data enumerators, data collection and cleaning) has been completed. As data collection was limited to quantitative data, focus group discussions and key informant interviews will follow in next reporting period to capture qualitative deeper information.</p>
<p><u>Catalytic effects (financial):</u> Did the project lead to any specific non-PBF funding commitments? If yes, from whom and how much? If not, have any specific attempts been made to attract</p>	<p>Given the early stage of the project cycle, no financial catalytic effects have been observed.</p>

<p>additional financial contributions to the project and beyond? (1500 character limit)</p>	
<p>Catalytic effects (non-financial): Did the project create favourable conditions for additional peacebuilding activities by Government/ other donors? If yes, please specify. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>Two women from the PTK Women's Cooperative contested in the local government elections of the Puthukkudiyiruppu division (February 2018). Both of them were elected. There were other five women who were also elected to the council. Recently all of them have expressed to join the cooperative. In future, they will most likely become members as well. These five women share similar background in terms of vulnerability as the existing PTK members.</p> <p>This unique opportunity provides a platform to advocate for the vulnerable women in the community and mobilize more resources for women's development in the division. This political participation will also improve the social status of the women in the community and encourage other women to be a part of the political governance process.</p>
<p>Exit strategy/ sustainability: What steps have been taken to prepare for end of project and help ensure sustainability of the project results beyond PBF support for this project? (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>The project works closely with local government authorities at divisional, district, provincial and national levels to ensure the sustainability of peacebuilding activities. This includes Department of Agriculture and Department of Cooperatives, in order to ensure that PTK women's cooperative are exposed to existing national networks. For example, before the end of the project cycle, the project intends to include the PTK women's cooperative into an existing nationwide network established by the Department of Cooperative, "Coop in Coop," to ensure that knowledge exchange and integration will take place beyond the project cycle.</p>
<p>Risk taking: Describe how the project has responded to risks that threatened the achievement of results. Identify any new risks that have emerged since the last report. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>Given the political sensitivity and marginalization of the target beneficiaries, project activities are in many ways effected by the national and local political climate. In order to ensure smooth project implementation, the project has been hosting and approaching local government authorities to have rounds of transparent discussions to gain trust and accountability. The project also keeps the national authorities and entities informed through the Peacebuilding Board Meetings and also at the ILO's regular Decent Work Country Programme taskforce meetings, which includes the Ministry of Labour and Trade Union Relations, Employer's Federation of Ceylon as well as a number of trade unions.</p>
<p>Gender equality: In the reporting period, which activities have taken place with a specific focus on addressing issues of gender equality or women's empowerment? (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>The entire project is designed towards addressing the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. So far the project has been conducting climate assessments, bringing in technical experts, and linking them with local authorities to introduce a livelihood activity that is economically viable and sustainable.</p>

	<p>In consultation with the ILO Gender Specialist of the Decent Work Team, the project is currently developing a ToR for a gender training that will focus on the following aspect: gender stereotyping, taking leadership and decision making for economic activities and within households, and engaging men in women-led livelihood activities.</p>
<p>Other: Are there any other issues concerning project implementation that you want to share, including any capacity needs of the recipient organizations? <i>(1500 character limit)</i></p>	

1.3 INDICATOR BASED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: *Using the **Project Results Framework** as per the approved project document or any amendments- provide an update on the achievement of **key indicators** at both the outcome and output level in the table below (if your project has more indicators than provided in the table, select the most relevant ones with most relevant progress to highlight). Where it has not been possible to collect data on indicators, state this and provide any explanation. Provide gender and age disaggregated data. (300 characters max per entry)*

	Performance Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	Current indicator progress	Reasons for Variance/ Delay (if any)	Adjustment of target (if any)
Outcome 1 See Annex as not all indicators could fit into the template	Indicator 1.1					
	Indicator 1.2					
	Indicator 1.3					
Output 1.1	Indicator 1.1.1					
	Indicator 1.1.2					
Output 1.2 \ 	Indicator 1.2.1					
	Indicator 1.2.2					
Output 1.3	Indicator 1.3.1					
	Indicator 1.3.2					
Outcome 2	Indicator 2.1					

	Performance Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	Current indicator progress	Reasons for Variance/ Delay (if any)	Adjustment of target (if any)
	Indicator 2.2					
	Indicator 2.3					
Output 2.1	Indicator 2.1.1					
	Indicator 2.1.2		50%			
Output 2.2	Indicator 2.2.1					
	Indicator 2.2.2					
Output 2.3	Indicator 2.3.1					
	Indicator 2.3.2					
Outcome 3	Indicator 3.1					
	Indicator 3.2					
	Indicator 3.3					
Output 3.1	Indicator 3.1.1					
	Indicator 3.1.2					

	Performance Indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator Target	Current indicator progress	Reasons for Variance/ Delay (if any)	Adjustment of target (if any)
Output 3.2	Indicator 3.2.1					
	Indicator 3.2.2					
Output 3.3	Indicator 3.3.1					
	Indicator 3.3.2					
Outcome 4	Indicator 4.1					
	Indicator 4.2					
	Indicator 4.3					
Output 4.1	Indicator 4.1.1					
	Indicator 4.1.2					
Output 4.2	Indicator 4.2.1					
	Indicator 4.2.2					
Output 4.3	Indicator 4.3.1					
	Indicator 4.3.2					

PART 2: INDICATIVE PROJECT FINANCIAL PROGRESS

2.1 Comments on the overall state of financial expenditures

Please rate whether project financial expenditures are on track, delayed, or off track, vis-à-vis project plans and by recipient organization: *off track*

How many project budget tranches have been received to date and what is the overall level of expenditure against the total budget and against the tranche(s) received so far (500 characters limit):

ILO has received its first tranche \$1,039,500, whereas the WFP received its first project budget tranche of \$ 360,500 in January 2018. So far, the ILO expenditure shows against the first tranche and the total budget is \$357,3389.61, whereas for the WFP the expenditure is \$13,882. See attached annex D for further details.

When do you expect to seek the next tranche, if any tranches are outstanding: Given project is still in the early stage of project style, a definite timing cannot be provided at this point.

If expenditure is delayed or off track, please provide a brief explanation (500 characters limit): Expenditure has been delayed due to postponing of project activities due to government elections and irregular rainfalls. However, having completed the preparatory work (recruiting of staffs, establishment of the office, baseline, and assessments etc.) the project will expedite its implementation.

Please state what \$ amount was planned (in the project document) to be allocated to activities focussed on gender equality or women's empowerment and how much has been actually allocated to date: Aside from the headcosts, the remaining project budget (\$1,869,158) has been allocated to activities focussed on gender equality and women's empowerment. The ILO has allocated \$ 1,166,199 and the WFP has allocated \$ 344,083 for Gender equality and women economic empowerment.

Please fill out and attach Annex A on project financial progress **with detail on expenditures/ commitments to date using the original project budget table in Excel**, even though the \$ amounts are indicative only.

Annex – 1.3 Indicator based performance assessment

	Performance indicators	Indicator Baseline	End of project Indicator target	Current indicator progress	Reasons for Variance/Delay (if any)	Adjustment of target (if any)
Outcome 1 Female former combatants and other conflict affected women increase their economic contribution through effectively accessing new market opportunities, resources and information that have opened as a result of the more peaceful environment	Indicator 1.1 Percentage increase in annual income of the cooperative	Average household monthly income is Sri Lanka Rupees (LKR) 31,661 and the Median HH Income is LKR 30,000 Annual income of the society in 2017 was \$ 1595 (including Bank interest, Monthly membership fee, Membership admission fee, common hall rent, Loan service charges, loan penalties, micro credit interest and etc)	5% increase in annual income	Baseline data collected for the indicator.		After careful re-consideration of the inflation and the capacity of the cooperative, the project aims 20% increase in annual income.
	Indicator 1.2 PTK established a network with other cooperatives in Mullaitivu district to enhance the economic enterprise	PTK society so far has no network with other cooperatives in the District.	minimum 5 cooperative networks	The baseline data collected through confirmation with the management board of PTK.		The project is currently working with the Department of Cooperatives to include the PTK in

						the existing Coop-coop network.
Output 1.1 The women's cooperative gains the knowledge, skills, insights and networks required to better integrate in society to position themselves to access to new markets	Indicator 1.1.1 The cooperative develops a viable business strategy with networking plan and SMART milestones/objectives	No plan exists at this moment	1 viable business strategy			Development of 1 viable business strategy is envisaged.
	Indicator 1.1.2 A minimum of 50 cooperative members participate in Sinhala and English classes and attain B1 language level competency by the end of the project.	Above 90% of the participants are not proficient in Sinhala language reading, speaking and writing. (95% - not proficient in reading Sinhala, 92% not proficient in speaking Sinhala and 97% not proficient in writing Sinhala. Moreover, the beneficiaries are not conversant in English language as well. (not proficient in Reading, Speaking and Writing as	50 members to reach B1 level at the end of the project	Baseline on language level has been collected.		Considering that the level of language for both English and Sinhalese has been lower than initially expected, the EMPOWER project suggests to adjust the end of project indicator target as follows. This change also consider the fact that all beneficiaries are occupied with livelihood activities and other

		75%, 84% and 78% respectively.				household activities. The EMPOWER project will try to ensure their full and active participation. However, considering the circumstances, the target would need adjustments.: "50 members to reach A2 level at the end of the project"
	Indicator 1.1.3 All collective members are competent in at least 1 new skills area relevant to the strategy plan by the end of project	All the participants mentioned that they want to further improve skills under small-enterprises or agricultural activities.		Further data is currently being collected through the FGDs.		The end of project indicator will be set depending on the findings of the FGDs.
Outcome 2 Female former combatants and other conflict	Indicator 2.1 By the end of the project period PTK has established or is	90% mentioned that no any tension with other community		Baseline has been collected and more data/insights		The end of project indicator will be set depending on

<p>affected women leverage their increased social status to be a leading voice in the region's informal private sector's contribution to peacebuilding</p>	<p>actively involved in peacebuilding with a network of other female former combatant and conflict affected women cooperatives in the district/ region</p>	<p>members outside the project</p> <p>14% of the beneficiaries have already engaged in business with members of different ethnic groups</p>		<p>will be collected through FGDs.</p>		<p>the findings of the FGDs.</p>
<p>Output 2.1 The women's cooperative gains the knowledge an understanding, skills and insights on peacebuilding; together with the access and opportunity to share lessons and experiences with other peacebuilding and women's empowerment networks throughout Sri Lanka in order to enhance their own role in building sustainable peace</p>	<p>Indicator 2.1.1 By the end of the project PTK are recognized local/regional champions/advocates of a relevant peace related issue (such as GBV or female former combatant rights)</p>	<p>33% of the beneficiaries are facing hardships/challenges in terms of doing business being a female</p>		<p>Baseline has been collected and more data/insights will be collected through FGDs.</p>		<p>The end of project indicator will be set depending on the findings of the FGDs.</p>

	<p>Indicator 2.1.2 By the end of the project at least 50% of PTK's members can articulate and accurate understanding of, and coherent views on local, regional and national peace related issues and mechanisms</p>	<p>45% of the households mentioned that they are willing to attend skill development programmes with other ethnic groups</p>		<p>Baseline has been collected and more data/insights will be collected through FGDs.</p>		<p>The end of project indicator will be set depending on the findings of the FGDs.</p>
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Mullaitivu's first all-female cooperative brings women farmers to the fore

March 31, 2018, 8:57 pm

PUTHUKKUDIYIRUPPU: It all began with just 15 women. Sivasubramaniam Nandini remembers returning after the war to her village in Puthukkudiyiruppu in Mullaitivu only to find her house had been made unliveable by war and abandonment.

With no one to stand guard, wild elephants had devastated her family's once thriving coconut plantations. "We had come with big expectations, but everything was upside down," says Nandini.

She wasn't the only one in Puthukkudiyiruppu to find herself struggling to make a living. Sivakumar Mala was in the same position. "What was unique about us is that we were all female-headed households," says Mala. Having survived the conflict, the women now struggled to build new lives. While some funds had been made available for reconstruction, it wasn't nearly enough.

"We needed money, but nobody was willing to offer us credit or a loan," Mala explains. For the group of 15 women, their solution was to form their own network. If one of them had a sick family member or a house needing essential repairs, the other women would pool their cash to help out. It was the start of what would become the Puthukkudiyiruppu D.S Division Women Entrepreneurs' Cooperative Society (PTK cooperative).

Today, Nandini is the President of the cooperative, and Mala is its secretary. The International Labour Organisation worked closely with them, first helping to expand the group to 80 people and linking them with another social enterprise. They were then registered as a cooperative in 2016 under ILO's 'Local Empowerment through Economic Development' (LEED) project and also received funding through the Employment Generation and Livelihoods towards Reconciliation in Sri Lanka' (EGLR) project for cooperative management and capacity building.

The only all-female cooperative in the district, the move allowed them to reach more women. Now with close to 500 members and counting, they are getting set for a new, more ambitious phase.

A new US\$ 2 million project called EMPOWER is being funded by The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) through the International Labour Organization (ILO) with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the PTK women's cooperative as implementing partners. It will conclude in June 2019.

"Through our experience with the LEED and the EGLR projects, we know for sure that the cooperative model works," said Simrin Singh, ILO's Country Director for Sri Lanka and the Maldives, noting that the organisation had supported 38 cooperatives in northern Sri Lanka in the last seven years. "As a result of our work, we have seen the incomes of farmers and fisher people in these cooperatives double in the last six years. So we know cooperatives can be transformative here."

Speaking at the launch in Puthukkudiyiruppu, WFP Deputy Country Director, Nguyen Duc Hoang said WFP and ILO would both bring their expertise towards strengthening the EMPOWER project. He added: "the PTK women's cooperative role as an implementing partner is designed to ensure bottom-up, inclusive, and locally-owned economic recovery and social integration. These in turn will contribute to revitalizing business linkages that were disconnected over two decades of conflict."

In particular, by enabling female beneficiaries to take up employment and managerial positions that are often occupied by men, the project also empowers women to break out of conventional gender roles. "Our ability to participate in decision making in the community has gone up, and we are able to take more leadership roles in many platforms," says, 29-year-old Annadasan Pushparaji, the youngest member of the collective.

This has proved critical in Mullaitivu, where women farmers who are conflict affected, heads of households, and war widows remain particularly vulnerable and are typically excluded from local social and government decision-making processes. Studies have also noted health challenges, with significant numbers of women in this area having been diagnosed as underweight, anaemic and at risk of becoming food insecure.

In this context, becoming part of a cooperative can be professionally and socially transformative for women. For instance, Nandini has gone from earning between Rs.15,000 to Rs. 20,000 a month, to earning Rs.50,000 or more from selling her produce. On some months, that figure can be as high as Rs. 80,000.

Critical to her income is selling dehydrated moringa (drumstick) leaves to the private sector through the cooperative. In fact, she makes Rs. 20,000 per month just from selling moringa leaves, harvesting an impressive 500kgs or more of moringa leaves from some 400 trees on her plantation.

ILO gave her seeds and plants that have helped her set up a thriving farm, so she also gets additional income from growing papayas, bananas, pineapples, eggplant, cassava and green chillies - all this in an area where an entire family earns only around Rs.30,000 per month on average.

"The next step is we would like to see is their produce exported overseas," says Cooperative Development Officer, Sivabalasingham Balasundaram, emphasising the need for innovation and value-additions that will boost the income of the producers. As part of his responsibilities he carefully monitors their records and financial transactions, and says that PTK's great strength has been how hard they have persevered in the face of considerable odds.

"When we started, it was not possible for us to get even Rs.1000 as a loan, but now our community approaches us to supply micro-credit," Jayaranjini says. She believes such schemes support the broader goal of reconciliation in the community.

"Normally, conflicts rise on economic grounds and due to unequal access to resources. We are changing that, people are becoming more empowered, and they have many sources of income as we build good business connections with other communities," she says, adding simply, "It motivates everyone to think in a peaceful way."