

END TERM EVALUATION EMPOWER, ILO SRI LANKA, UN PEACE BUILDING FUND,  
 FEBRUARY 2020  
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Key Words: Sri Lanka, agro-centric, local economic development, jobs for peace, cooperatives, conflict-affected areas, final evaluation, agro-processing, value chain, livelihood restoration, SMEs, fragility,

This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO’s evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Unit.

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## Acronyms

A2i	Access to Information
AR	Annual Review
CC	Chamber of Commerce
CDDC	Cooperative Development Department Commissioner
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILO HQ	ILO Headquarters
ILO-PMT	ILO Programme Management Team
ILS	International Labour Standards
IRF	Immediate Response Facility
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	Peacebuilding Secretariat Office
PPP	Sri Lanka Peacebuilding Priority Plan
PRODOC	Project document
PTK	Puthukkudiyiruppu Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative Society
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEIP	Skills for Employment Investment Programme
UNPBF	United Nations Peace Building Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ILO program requirements for all projects and programs recommend an End Term Evaluation as part of its project implementation cycle. An End Term Evaluation was undertaken during the period October 2019-January 2020. A mission to Sri Lanka and to the field sites in the Northern Province was undertaken November 2-12th, 2019. The mission was planned during this period given the sensitivity to the Sri Lanka National elections which were held on November 16, 2019.

The End Term Evaluation was conceptualized with oversight, as per ILO requirements by the ILO Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand. The study was made possible with funding from the UN Peace Building Fund, and support from the ILO Colombo and ILO Kilinochchi offices.

The study acknowledges the efforts and support of Ms. Rattanaporn Pongpattana, M&E officer, ILO, Regional Office, Asia Pacific Region throughout the evaluation phase of the EMPOWER project. The time spent by Thomas Kring, Chief Technical Advisor, Peace, Job and Reconciliation portfolio, and the ILO Colombo M&E coordination and finance teams, Dilki Palliyeguruge, and Thayananth Nagaratnam must also be acknowledged. Nihal Devagiri, Vasudev Semarasa, Kaveri Jayanthan, the ILO Field team, took me seamlessly through in depth discussions with the government machinery, PTK members, and project beneficiaries. I must also thank Kiruththika Tharumaraja, the national level interpreter, and Navneethan, the ILO field consultant who helped with the technical aspects of interpretation; and Anura, the WFP Driver who drove me tirelessly between Kilinochchi, Jaffna and Mullaitivu for the entire period of November 5-8 for several hours.

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My task was strengthened by the leadership of the EMPOWER program and its mission which are steered by the ILO Country Director, Simrin Singh, with her inspiring presence and zeal to push forward efforts to build solutions on the small island state with a strong emphasis on women, linked to the ILO mandate of decent work. The draft report of the evaluation benefitted from constructive comments from ILO and WFP teams.

It is important to recognize that Sri Lanka and its Northern Provinces reflect a fragility of its own. The observations and findings must be reflective of a slice in time, namely November 4-8<sup>th</sup> in the field, and remain pertinent to that period, and therefore present a major limitation of the evaluation period and the evaluation per se.

Finally, thanks are due to the numerous numbers of PTK Board and staff members, the women of the Mullaitivu PTK Cooperative who spent long hours helping me understand their program inputs, and recognize the valuable links to resilience, impact and effectiveness in the project, the young trainees, the

change management teams of the PTK, and the PTK rural women's banking manager, and staff. This evaluation tells the story of women's economic empowerment as reflected in the tenets of the words,

"From the Ashes we will Rise"

**Rema N Balasundaram**

**International Consultant M&E**

# EVALUATION SUMMARY

## 1.1 Background and Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure: The EMPOWER project in Sri Lanka was conceptualized by ILO in partnership with the WFP, and funded by the UN Peace Building Fund (PBF) from January 2018 to June 2019 (and extended to December, 2019). The implementing partner was a rural Cooperative, the Puthukkudiyiruppu (PTK) Women Entrepreneurs' Cooperative. ILO was the Lead recipient organization and the World Food Programme was the Additional Recipient Organization.

The primary purpose of the project was to increase access to economic empowerment, social integration, resilience and peacebuilding participation for 350 female former combatants and other disadvantaged and conflict affected women members of the Puthukkudiyiruppu (PTK) Women Entrepreneurs' Cooperative Society (PTK) in one of the most isolated and war affected Northern districts of Sri Lanka, Mullaitivu, through a cooperative enterprise engagement with new markets, networks and opportunities that opened up as a result of an improved post conflict environment.

The ILO recognized that one of the most effective ways it could support vulnerable, conflict affected women is via an agro centric program and rural cooperative like the PTK Women's Cooperative in a protracted crises area of the Northern Province. The project's intervention logic was summarized in the form of a Project Results Framework matrix comprising of six activities, two outputs and two outcomes within an overall project outcome statement. The EMPOWER project adopted a conflict sensitive gender, disability and ethnicity responsive approach with a targeted focus on the vulnerabilities of ex combatant women in Mullaitivu.

The UN PBF at inception provided the approval of the financing for EMPOWER in two tranches, of a fully allocated first tranche of \$1,400,000 and a conditional second tranche of \$600,000. The overall approved budget and release of the second tranche was subject to the PBSO's evaluation and decision process, and subject to availability of funds in the PBF account. Government contributions to the project were not planned. The planned commencement date for the EMPOWER project was January 2018, with a proposed end date of June 2019. Given the project implementation delays and a fund balance, in mid-2019, the PBF provided a no cost extension to the project till December 31, 2019.

Evaluation protocols of the PBF and the ILO demand a final independent Evaluation at project completion. This Evaluation responds to that requirement.

## 1.2 Purpose, Scope and clients of the evaluation:

The purpose of the End Term Evaluation is to provide project management, the ILO, the UN Peace Building Fund and other stakeholders, with an independent assessment of the project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, risks and resilience aspects, and identify key lessons learnt and good practices. The scope of the independent evaluation includes a review of and assessment of all activities carried out under the expected outcomes and objectives of the EMPOWER project from commencement in January, 2018 to completion in December, 2019. The intended users of the evaluation are primarily, the ILO, and WFP project management team, the ILO and WFP Country Office, relevant ILO technical teams at regional offices and headquarters, representatives of other international agencies working on peace building in the Northern Province in Sri Lanka, ILO stakeholders at national, district and local levels, and the PBF Secretariat and the UN Regional Coordinator's Office. The evaluation also



strives to provide a forward looking perspective to inform program planning and decision making for financing of job for peace programs for the ILO and WFP going forward.

### 1.3 Methodology for the Evaluation:

The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach applying qualitative analytical tools, using OECD DAC principles, UNEG Norms and Standards, and ILO Evaluation Guidelines, with a special emphasis and adaptation of the ILO Handbook on How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding results in Jobs and Peace and Resilience Programmes. The evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluator having no conflict of interest in the EMPOWER project. The evaluation involved a six step process including:

- (i). Preparation of an indicative inception report;
- (ii) A mission and fieldwork in Colombo, Srilanka, and the project division, Mullaitivu in the Northern Province; (November 2-11, 2019);
- (iii) Presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations at the Divisional Government Office in Mullaitivu to stakeholders including PTK Women's Cooperative, ILO Killinochchi Field team, and Government Officials;
- (iv) Presentation of preliminary findings to ILO CO, WFP and other UN agencies in Colombo;
- (vi) Drafting of a final report based on feedback and comments on the draft report.

The evaluation questions followed the broad outline formulated in the ILO Terms of Reference annexed to this report, the guidelines of the ILO Handbook for Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes, the most recent OECD DAC criteria for evaluation, and a few specific questions on risks and resilience. It included a review of all activities carried out by EMPOWER from project inception in 2017 until November, 2019. The primary sources of data analysis came from ILO evaluations, of the sector and region, programme documentation, ILO guidelines and Handbooks, routine EMPOWER project documentation, and ILO internal project reviews, Key Informant Interviews, Individual Informant Interviews, and focus group discussions, with participants spread out through the ILO, and WFP Colombo and Kilinochchi field offices, Government officials at provincial and divisional headquarters, and PTK cooperative members, SMEs, farmers, change management agents, youth participants in project activities in the field, and private sector agencies engaged with EMPOWER like Hayley's Agro were held over the four day field mission. Meetings were also held with the UN PBF team, the donor to EMPOWER and WFP and ILO teams in Colombo and the field. A field visit to Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu was conducted for a period of four days, and validation workshops held in the field and at ILO Colombo offices as a debriefing towards the end of the mission, as mentioned above.

### 1.4 Main findings and Conclusions:

#### High relevance with alignment to stakeholder needs and national strategy:

The project built relevance at multiple levels at inception, and ensured its relevance throughout the project cycle till completion. Early measures included the alignment to both supply and demand side relevance built to the PBF donor, ILO, WFP, and the Government of Sri Lanka national strategies and plans. Relevance was built with its design to revive the local economies in the Northern Province, given its high poverty profile and the plans to provide technical assistance to vulnerable sections of the population particularly the ex-combatant women.

The fragility in Sri Lanka due to ethnic strife remains an integral part of the background of the development landscape. At the time of the inception of the project, and as seen at the time of the end term evaluation in the field, the war in Sri Lanka had been over for more than a decade. The Northern Province

seemed well on its way to enhancing and sustaining peace dividends for its communities<sup>1</sup>. The original project design took into account the prevailing local conditions and incorporated a conflict and gender sensitive approach for local empowerment and economic development in the Northern Province. The ILO identified a niche area to support local communities in terms of sustainable livelihoods options through a capacity building approach built through a rural women's cooperative. The EMPOWER project provided clear linkages to the sustenance of peace, with the manner in which, it led a catalytic transformation of women's empowerment through small loans paid to SMEs, and cooperative members, to build and sustain economic empowerment. Both Resilience and Peace were captured in terms of peacebuilding outcomes achieved by economic empowerment in the post conflict zone of Mullaitivu. The EMPOWER project showed that peace can be built empirically through employment, if the right kinds of programming and players are in place.

The PBF funded EMPOWER project helped raise key peacebuilding and peace enhancement priorities and address the root causes of fragility in a post conflict environment. The project addressed the root cause of conflict "lack of opportunity" for ex combatant and marginalized women in a post conflict zone. This was done by integrating cooperatives in a "bottom up" peacebuilding approach with self-help cooperatives and community based organizations to supporting livelihoods, providing social services, and backing women owned small scale businesses. It also helped raise the importance of linking peacebuilding initiatives with a cooperative movement, and prioritize jobs, skills, and employment as the building blocks of resilience. The EMPOWER project targeted women in a low rate labour participation area like the Northern Province, which was a key design element that contributed in large measure to impact. Another key element was the ILO's success and strength of working with cooperatives, with building forward and backward linkages and contributing to economic growth of the region.<sup>2</sup> All stakeholders believe that the EMPOWER project had a positive impact through the activities funded by the PTK Cooperative.

Discussions with the PTK Board and its members, SMEs, beneficiaries, farmers, and Government officials, reflected on the importance and power with which the EMPOWER project helped build potential outcomes for peace enhancement in a short period of time. ILO's expertise in cooperatives in Sri Lanka<sup>3</sup>, its agro centric design, the role of WFP and its ability to assist with the water sourcing for farmers ultimately resulting in crop yields and higher production, availability and technical assistance and linkages with the private sector, in a timely manner helped build economic empowerment despite project implementation delays, and weather related environmental risks of droughts and floods in the agro-zone. The first few months of the project cycle were plagued with project implementation delays due to multiple factors, delay in project funding, procurement delays, and failure of the team to foresee and mitigate environmental, operational, financial and market risks in the region. An inadequate assessment and management of the operational and environmental project risks and their timely mitigation measures was lacking both in design and at inception of the project. These project implementation delays proved costly given the short term duration of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> The Northern Province is termed as a fragile zone, ethnic differences continue to pose problems for communities. The observations of the evaluation are a slice in time.

<sup>2</sup> Discussion with the UN RC Office, Deputy Director.

<sup>3</sup> Specific to the project and not linked to the ILO Cooperatives Unit

**Effectiveness of project implementation and management arrangements:**

The ILO intervention was overambitious and not as effective as envisaged at inception, largely due to multiple factors. These included the absence of a well-designed M&E framework, weak monitoring systems, low institutional and organizational capacity; constraints faced by both the field teams and the PTK Cooperative, and inefficiencies in financial and administrative support at the ILO Country Office. Inadequate monitoring frameworks and indicator design at inception were reflected at multiple levels, these included the paucity of information along the results chain, the team's inability to report on the results achieved, recognize both results and differential results that are pertinent to the distribution of results and outcomes across different groups, and intervention inputs in a meaningful manner. Monitoring reports and progress reports both reflected inputs that seemed to be reflective of measures of compliance rather than reporting on actual outcomes and outputs that had been achieved. Effectiveness of the monitoring system must be assessed at two levels, the first was the manner in which the team built in both an internal review and an audit process, on a demand basis during implementation to help work through project performance issues. The other was the monitoring frameworks which seemed weak. This was reflected in the absence of reporting on several aspects of strengths of the project which had not been carried out, the end term evaluation found that the discussions with the PTK cooperative members and beneficiaries reflected both an achievement of results and outcomes. A deeper review of documentation and data sources indicated that the project had achieved several outputs, and in some cases overachieved outcome indicator targets. A good example is the growth of private sector inputs and its implications for growth of both SMEs, growth of PTK membership and its implications for other factors of growth and outcomes, and the ability for PTK members to build resilience in the community by providing jobs exponentially by each SME and loan. The early context of the project and the inclusion of the PTK members in the design elements of the project was reflected in the evidence of programmatic success recorded at the level of beneficiaries and PTK members, and remains another good practice element in line with the ILO Jobs for Peace and Resilience guidelines for project design, monitoring and evaluation of results. PTK members shared several examples of outcomes of family and personal empowerment, increased household income, enhanced access to livelihood activities, enhanced jobs and skills of the community, and increased resilience, as a result of assistance from the EMPOWER project and loans from the PTK Women's cooperative. Discussions with the PTK members and beneficiaries, reflected a high level of confidence which was an indication of empowerment that had been achieved as a result of the project interventions of small loans, capacity building and knowledge inputs. Additionally, the increase in annual income of the PTK Cooperative reported by the project for outcome 1, is one indication of growth, albeit slowly, during the first few months, and may also be attributed to project implementation delays early on, but picked up once project risks were addressed.

It is also important to note that many of the indicator profiles that had been formulated had multidimensional aspects which could not be reported on and field teams were unable to comprehend actual results on the ground and translate them to monitoring and reporting protocols during project implementation. The concept note at inception, however did make a reference to the difficulty of establishing baselines, and end line targets especially the research components. As is typically done, M&E inputs at inception of projects and programs present challenges in terms of defining outcomes, results and planning of targets. In this case the short term duration of the PBF added another level of complexity. The results framework and indicators defined seemed to have been arbitrarily pulled together with no thought for a better identification of risks and potential outcomes and outputs given the agro centric focus of the cooperative and the protracted crises environment. Consequently, field teams found it difficult to respond to the reporting requirements of the results frameworks and failed to comprehend and

report on the results that had actually been achieved. Despite these shortfalls, effectiveness was relatively higher given the outcomes achieved in the context of private sector led outcomes linked to markets.

### **Sustainability**

Addressing the root causes of conflict, peacebuilding and economic empowerment require long term programming time frames and multiple measures of sustainability built in at all levels. Sustainability of the EMPOWER project was questioned at every aspect, from the rushed concept design, to the choice of the financing instrument that the project undertook, which is a short term instrument with long term financing targeted outcomes and results. The disconnect between the two were glaring to begin with.

Institutional and financial project sustainability was also questioned by the Government officials at provincial and divisional levels. Project completion and project closure being carried out in the same time frame like that of EMPOWER, were not good examples of financial sustainability the Government Agent and Divisional Secretary stated. She questioned the design elements and function of the EMPOWER project and stated that sustainability mechanisms and strategies needed to be established at the design stage. Discussing it at end term was not a good model to follow. Programme reports flagged the absence of a viable sustainability plan for the PTK Cooperative itself and the need to ensure reliability and feasibility in its operational planning tools. Careful design elements that allow measures to attain and build sustainability in a cost effective manner are key to good programming. Sustainability is seldom built overnight or in short measures, especially in the context of building employment outcomes and economic empowerment; the need to better understand interventions that are key to ensure the long term sustainability of programmes and projects once donor support is phased out remain critical.

During the discussions with the EMPOWER team, they stated that an exit strategy/sustainability plan was being formulated by the project, and this would be presented to the project steering committee before completion. However, getting the PTK Women's cooperative leadership itself to agree to the importance of a viable sustainability action plan seemed somewhat elusive to achieve.

Discussions with the ILO team on inclusion of extreme poor and vulnerable communities, reflected the importance of measures to ensure sustained relevance and build sustainability with the project's plans at end term to focus its interventions on broader public goods investments for long term benefits of local communities, going beyond the PTK cooperative and its members.

Despite the above issues, the project was able to achieve some level of program sustainability given the agro centric focus; the links to the private sector player and market demand of its agricultural products. It is this element that will remain sustained even after EMPOWER ends.

### **Efficiency of project management strategies:**

The portfolio of work was hampered by several issues that limited the efficiency of the PBF funded project, in terms of project design, management and oversight. A rushed proposal approval process hindered complementarity and linkage between the project partners and careful designing at inception which are critical elements to programming. The evaluation found that there was need for a more systematic design and implementation approach based on rigorous country analysis, risks and assessment and operationally sound baselines to ensure greater coherence and effectiveness of donor support. Additionally, internal bureaucratic requirements slowed the allocation and release of funds which further delayed project implementation by three months of an 18 month project timeline. The project was also affected by key issues in the relationship, roles and responsibilities between field actors, which was the most significant inefficiency and consequences for project coherence, oversight and accountability. This

was pointed out by the internal review that was carried out in March, 2019. However, correction measures in terms of staff changes, and handover actions taken by the team led to a quick turn around and progress in the project. By end term, several outcomes and results at several levels, and especially in the context of private sector led growth were over achieved.

Enhancing private sector led growth in a post conflict environment with poor socio economic linkages and high poverty baselines: The EMPOWER project shows that agriculture continues to create new economic spaces for women in the war torn and ravaged district of Mullaitivu. The Northern Province and Mullaitivu in particular reported the highest poverty profiles and poor socio economic trends at inception of the project. Careful selection of private sector stakeholders, attention to the conceptualization and formulation of partnerships with Government entities, the PTK, and Hayley's Agro (an international conglomerate) with effective marketing and agribusiness strategies led the way to both effectiveness and efficiency in project implementation solutions. The potential impact of EMPOWER was reflected in the results that were achieved with its links to private sector led growth and sustainable solutions built through the right design and market linkages in the agro centric environment of the Northern Province. Key to these linkages was the role played by both ILO and WFP to different extents throughout project implementation, despite project implementation delays and other project related constraints that cut back implementation time lines by almost nine months of the project schedule between 2018 and 2019, and lowered efficiency gains ILO failed to take actions to minimize the implementation delays, and at completion, the project returned almost 25 percent of its funding to the PBF Support Office due to under runs in expenditure.

### **Potential impact**

Measuring potential impact of this project was not easy. Short to medium term potential impact may at best be reflected. The EMPOWER project was able to catalyzed the private sector led growth in a low growth post conflict environment like Mullaitivu.

Discussions with the PTK members, at different levels, Board members, beneficiaries, change management agents, and Government officials from both the Agricultural Division, the Provincial Cooperative Division, and the Government Agent, reiterated the importance of the programme inputs from EMPOWER to the community in Mullaitivu and its potential impact.

One of the impact of the EMPOWER project was the economic empowerment of the ex-combatant women which were enhanced through project agro centric intervention measures and inputs, as well as the establishment of the effective linkages with the Private sector conglomerate Hayleys Agro, the SME growth, and the growth of the loan profiles. While such impact data and records are not found in project documents; however; the discussions with the Bank Manager and PTK members during the field visit indicated that more than 90 percent of the loans had been repaid. Other observed impact was that the PTK-member SMEs were able to create jobs, and enhance local employment with an average of 1 to 5 daily wage workers, or in some instances even greater numbers of 5-10 workers, being hired per SME, depending on seasonality of the crops and the SME activity that had been built.

**Recommendations:**

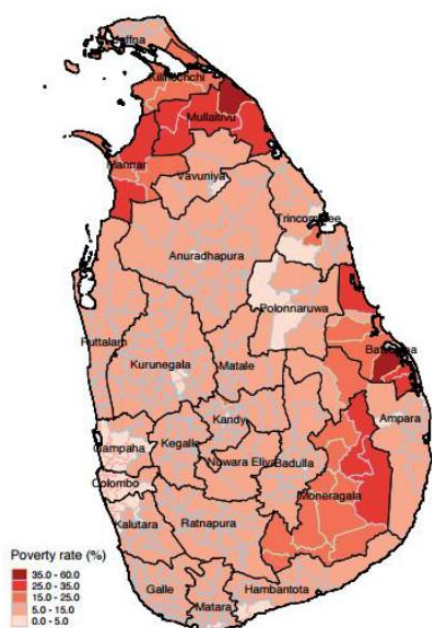
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Documentation of project results with good practices and achievements, with multiple knowledge products from inception of the project.	ILO and WFP, PBF	High
ILO must build its own financing facility	ILO	High
Building Sustainability dimensions at inception and implementation of the Project at all levels	ILO	High
Importance of designing monitoring processes and results frameworks that reflect the relevance of the Theory of Change outcome profiles:	ILO and WFP	High
ILO Headquarters and an enhanced role in formulating guidance tools	ILO	High

## 1 Introduction and Background

Formerly known as “Serendib and the Emerald Isle”, Sri Lanka a middle income country, with a GDP capita of \$4,102 (in 2018) and a total population of 21.7 million, has shown steady growth over the last decade.<sup>4</sup> The progress is reflected in significant reductions of poverty in the midst of equitable growth. The national poverty head count ratio declined from 22.7 percent in 2002 to 6.7 percent in 2012/2013, a major portion of which was driven by growth in labour income.

Despite this, key macroeconomic challenges remain, and these advancements mask trends in several parts of the country where poverty rates are staggeringly high especially the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the country, as reflected in the Figure below. The eight districts that make up the above two provinces have the highest rates of poverty in the country with six of the eight districts exhibiting poverty rates that are well above Sri Lanka’s national average of 6.7 percent.

**Figure 1: Poverty Rates by District (%)**  
2012/2013 HIES



	Poverty Head Count Index (%)	Poor Households (%)
<b>SRI LANKA</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>5.3</b>
<b>NORTHERN PROVINCE</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>8.8</b>
Jaffna	8.3	6.6
Mannar	20.1	15.0
Vavuniya	3.4	2.4
Mullativu	28.8	24.7
Killinochchi	12.7	10.7
<b>EASTERN PROVINCE</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>
Batticaloa	19.4	14.3
Amapara	5.4	4.1
Trincomalee	9.0	6.2

*Source : Economic and Social Statistics of Sri Lanka 2016, Central Bank of Sri Lanka*

*Figure 1 Poverty Rates by District 2012/2012*

More recent data reflect an overall poverty decline in Sri Lanka, but high rates of poverty in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, namely, at 7.7 and 7.3 percent, remain which is still well above the national average of 4.1 percent.<sup>5</sup> Progress lagged in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, as a result of the 30 year long conflict that impacted the socio-economic fabric of society and governance structures. This resulted in significant population displacement and thousands of victims among the civilians. The conflict in the

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Sri Lanka, Socio Economic Assessment of the Conflict Affected Northern and Eastern Provinces, April 2018, World Bank.

North and Eastern provinces is not only a conflict of ethnicity but has several similarities to protracted crises in several other parts of the world.

Private Sector Led Growth in Sri Lanka and the Northern Region in the agriculture sector: Reports indicate that the impact of the civil war on the Northern and Eastern Provincial economies were two fold, it impacted both infrastructure and led to the breakdown of agricultural production, local markets, productive organizations and stifled industry and growth of the private sector<sup>6</sup>. The agriculture sector which included agriculture, livestock and fisheries- constituted the largest employer for most of the Northern and Eastern provinces, especially for the rural population. During the war, agricultural production declined due to several reasons, these included displacement, increasing salinity, the establishment of high security zones, damage to irrigation infrastructure, land mines and lack of access to markets and capital. The destruction of roads, markets and infrastructure disrupted local economies and led to the breakdown of private sector input and output markets and technical support services for farm and non-farm produce and diluted the efforts of cooperatives and other productive organizations. A clear indication of the impact and relationship between agricultural production and the war is reflected below, during ceasefire periods the paddy acreage increased by 7 percent between 2002-2005, demonstrating an inverse relationship between production and the war. (Refer Figure 2 below).

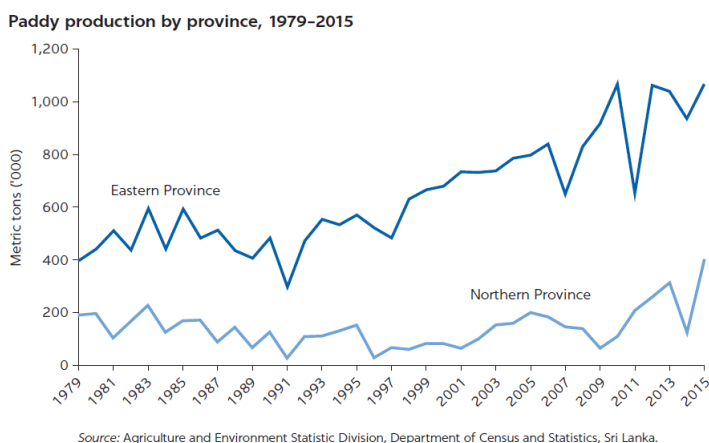


Figure 2 Paddy Production by province, 1979-2015

The war led to specific impacts that affected the economic base of the Northern and Eastern Provinces leading to a virtual collapse of the agriculture sector and constrained growth of the industry and private sector. Under the shadow of the war, and its uncertainties, the private sector left, along with significant capital and employment opportunities. These impacts affected both economic growth and productivity during that period, and the Northern and Eastern provinces have over the last few years tried to emerge from this breakdown.

A closer look at private sector growth and the jobs profile of the Northern and Eastern provinces also shows that much of the growth in services was of lower value addition sub-sectors. The private sector had a diminished role in the region. Labor mobility in the Northern and Eastern provinces remains low. With part of this being attributed to lack of awareness and low information flow across localities, and language barriers with Tamil youth attending Tamil medium schools and facing challenges in being participating in Sri Lanka's labor market, with both national and international companies.

<sup>6</sup> Shadows of Conflict in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka, World Bank Group, 2018.



The ILO also recognized that interventions and institutional capacity building takes time, and must be undertaken with small steps and inputs. The EMPOWER project was designed seeing this as an opportunity and sought to formulate its design elements clearly based on multiple elements. These included agro centric gender responsive concepts, economic empowerment of women to address inequitable gender roles, and targeting of youth with training, communication and programme inputs.

**Sri Lanka and the ILO:** Sri Lanka was admitted to the ILO in 1948, and the ILO Country Office in Colombo covering Sri Lanka and the Maldives was established in 1984. ILO's program interventions focused on the empowerment and support of local communities, employment promotion, and promotion and development of SME and entrepreneurship in order to help create employment opportunities especially for the most vulnerable were key elements that helped build its comparative advantage to the conceptualization of EMPOWER. Support from the ILO, and the design elements of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2013-2017 contributed to the formulation and drafting of the National Framework Proposal and Action Plan for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Sri Lanka and the Northern Province<sup>7</sup>. Design elements and lessons learned from the ILO program intervention LEEDS also contributed in large measure to the work of the ILO team focused on cooperatives in Sri Lanka. ILO's technical support to cooperatives in the Northern part of the country confirmed that cooperatives work successfully, even financing has been withdrawn or phased out, and locally are able to employ significant numbers of women and other vulnerable people affected by the conflict.

The ILO in cooperation with the World Food Programme, worked to build a proposal to procure funding from the UN Peace Building Fund in the poorest profiled district of Mullaitivu in the Northern Province in Sri Lanka. An early Peacebuilding Context Assessment in Sri Lanka carried out in 2016 stated that four of the five districts with the highest levels of poverty in the country are in the Northern and Eastern provinces. Mullaitivu is also marked with wide income disparities which can be mitigated by fast growing programs for skills training for post conflict situations and the provision of equipment and other inputs required to support women's collective's planned strategy for improved participation, production and market engagement. The design element of focusing on the agriculture sector was key. The agriculture sector is the most dominant productive sector in the Northern Province, with paddy harvesting being restored, after the conflict, and 31, 483 hectares under cultivation with an estimated 75,000 hectares restored under irrigation facilities as discussed earlier<sup>8</sup>. Despite basic livelihoods and small scale production of the agriculture sector being restored, the effects of the war and the embargo served to erode the competitiveness of the agriculture sector. Recent reports indicate that Sri Lanka's agriculture sector is undergoing rapid changes, and is reflective of a growing urban population and changing food demands. This further led to an alteration of the domestic value chains.

The World Food Programme's experience in resilience building, including agriculture and water management, as well social sector areas like nutrition and social protection for the most vulnerable, that helps protect against life cycle shocks, promotes gender equality and conflict prevention also helped lay the foundation for the joint programming and partnership of the EMPOWER project.

## 2. Project Background

Sri Lanka is rich in experiences of gender equality, however the obstacles to gainful employment and meaningful engagement for women afflicted by war and those within ethnic minority groups reflected a

<sup>7</sup> Drawn from several ILO Program and Evaluation sources.

<sup>8</sup> Shadows of Conflict in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka, World Bank Group, 2018.

worsening profile. In May 2009, Sri Lanka emerged from a protracted three-decade long civil war with the North and Eastern provinces crippled by its effects.

An early diagnostic assessment carried out in 2016, stated that Sri Lanka's Mullaitivu<sup>9</sup> district was one of the most severely conflict-affected Northern Districts. The most vulnerable women are farmers who are heads of households, ex-combatants and war widows that had not been included in local social and government decision-making processes. This has, over time, reinforced their "status quo" resulting in further marginalization. A study conducted in 2015 demonstrated their high level of vulnerability, with an alarming 28% of pregnant women in the district found to be underweight, 33% found to be anemic and 20% of household with pregnant women found to be food insecure<sup>10</sup>. These women require targeted support in rebuilding their livelihoods and re-establishing their identities as equal members of society, with fair and equitable access to resources and services.

The Northern Province has some unique characteristics in terms of labour force participation rates<sup>11</sup>. It has one of the lowest rates of labour force participation, with the gap being explained by the low participation of women, and youth. The EMPOWER project targeted women in a low rate labour participation area like the Northern Province, which was a key design element that contributed in large measure to impact.

It is against this background that the ILO and the WFP in 2016 sought funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund, to conceptualize and build a program for women and communities in the worst hit conflict zone in the Northern part of Sri Lanka, Mullaitivu district, entitled EMPOWER.

In September, 2017, the Government of Sri Lanka launched its medium-term strategy,<sup>12</sup> Vision 2025, which reinforces the Government's original political statement that outlined an ambitious agenda to transform Sri Lanka into a knowledge-based, internationally competitive, social market economy. The medium term strategy, Vision 2025 foresees a key role for the private sector, and it focuses on trade and competitiveness as drivers of sustained growth and development. It also identifies key constraints which are consistent with its strategy. The ILO project is aligned with both the GOSL Vision and its Peacebuilding Priority Plan which is focused on Reconciliation.

The ILO, the World Food Programme, the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, the UN Resident Coordinator and the Government of Sri Lanka, Secretary General, Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation signed an IRF, in September 2017, for a period of 18 months approving a Peacebuilding Fund, for \$2,000,000 commencing January, 2018 and ending in June, 2019. The project EMPOWER was designed to be aligned with the PBF's focus area Priority Area 3: Revitalize the economy and generate immediate peace dividends with a specific focus on Employment.

**Management and Coordination Arrangements:** Project oversight and coordination were provided by the Peacebuilding Board, consisting of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UN RCO) and the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM). In addition to this a taskforce consisting of representatives of the ILO, WFP, PTK Women's Cooperative, PBF Secretariat and the UN

<sup>9</sup> As of 2016 (provisional data, Department of Census and Statistics), 95,000 people reside in Mullaitivu. As of 2015, agriculture was the major industry by percentage of distribution of employed population (45.5%), 66.0% of the labour force worked in the informal sector (the highest percentage across the island), 3.7% of the population was unemployed (Labour Force Survey Annual Report – 2015, Department of Census and Statistics).

<sup>10</sup> National Nutrition Micronutrient Survey of Pregnant Women in Sri Lanka - 2015, WFP (<https://www.wfp.org/content/national-nutrition-and-micronutrient-survey-pregnant-women-sri-lanka>)

<sup>11</sup> Sri Lanka, Socio Economic Assessment of the Conflict Affected Northern and Eastern Provinces, April 2018, World Bank.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank Country Partnerships Strategy Review, March, 2019

RCO was also set up. The main function of the task force was to plan, implement, monitor, report and coordinate project activities. The task force was established to meet once every quarter throughout the project cycle.

ILO and WFP hired staff at Colombo and the field office in Killinochchi. The field staff from both ILO and WFP worked closely together with the focal point from PTK Women’s Cooperative to implement, monitor and coordinate planned activities.

**Objectives:** The EMPOWER project was designed to increase access to economic empowerment, social integration, resilience and peacebuilding participation for 350 female former combatants and other disadvantaged and conflict affected women members of the Puthukkudiyiruppu (PTK) Women Entrepreneurs’ Cooperative Society (PTK) in one of the most isolated and war affected Northern districts of Sri Lanka through a cooperative enterprise engagement with new markets, networks and opportunities that opened up as a result of an improved post conflict environment.

The ILO recognized that one of the most effective ways it could support vulnerable, conflict affected women is via an agro centric cooperative like the PTK. The Theory of Change was built around the broad measure of the principle driver of conflict, “Lack of opportunities”, the corresponding output of “Enhanced gender-sensitive economic opportunities for population at risk through decent jobs” and the outcome “Greater economic opportunities and empowerment” and the ultimate impact measure “Decent Employment Contributes To Conflict Prevention And Peacebuilding”.

The project was designed with an overall outcome statement and two primary outcomes as reflected in the Table below:

**Table 1: Objectives and Outcome framework of the EMPOWER Project in Sri Lanka**

EMPOWER	Outcomes	Outputs and Activities
<b>Broad Outcome or Goal</b>	<b>Overall project outcome statement:</b> Reducing the risk of economic marginalization in Sri Lanka acting as a driver for further conflict through the cooperative economic empowerment and greater involvement in private sector peacebuilding of female former combatants and other conflict -affected women.	
<b>Outcome 1</b>	Female former combatant 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul> <p><u>Activities:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing analytical, social networking and business strategy skills</li> <li>Improving social and business language skills, and</li> <li>Improving business start-up management/technical skills required for marginalized women to access technical inputs</li> </ol>
<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Outcome 2:</b> Female former combatant and other conflict-affected women leverage their increased social status to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Output 2.1 : The women’s cooperative gains the knowledge, skills, and insights on peacebuilding;</li> </ul>

	<p>be a leading voice in the region’s private sectors’ contribution to peace building.</p>	<p>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><u>Activities:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving peace awareness and skills</li> <li>2. Building peace related networks, and</li> <li>3. Strengthening supporting peace related actions</li> </ol>
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The theory of change adopted stated that:

**IF** war-affected women and female-headed households are engaged in income generating activities in the agricultural sector, participate in management of cooperative, and ; develop business with partners beyond their own communities and ethnic groups;

**THEN** they are more likely to gain greater decision-making roles in their community and be more involved in reconciliation and conflict risk mitigation

**BECAUSE** they will be able to make visible and economically independent contributions and benefits to their society.

The ILO Handbook provides guidance for the formulation and design of Theory of Change (TOC) frameworks in post conflict zones for peace and resilience programmes. These guidelines emphasize the importance of mainstreaming peacebuilding results into employment programmes and building evidence and knowledge on the Theory of Change. An important element of design is for teams to conduct fragility analysis, formulate specific peacebuilding outcomes and indicators, and establish baselines. Evidence of these inputs were not easy to find in the EMPOWER project. The earliest record was the concept note that was signed in 2017, by the Government, ILO, WFP and the PBF Office in Colombo. This concept note provided some evidence of a desk review which covered some aspects of a problem analysis, and stakeholder analysis as recommended by the ILO Handbook. However, as mentioned earlier the project’s Theory of Change was built primarily around one driver of conflict, Lack of Opportunities.

The UN defines<sup>13</sup> peacebuilding as the process to prevent the resurgence of conflict and create the conditions necessary for sustainable peace in war torn societies. The definition of sustaining peace is one where it is the process for managing conflict risk, creating peace in the long term and providing the basic opportunity for economic development. The Theory of Change for EMPOWER reflected a combination of both elements in its formulation overall given the institutional environment surrounding the Northern Province and the protracted crises situation in Sri Lanka. It also took into account the fragility of the region despite the conflict having been abated for ten years. The drivers of conflict in Sri Lanka and the Northern Province in particular were well defined in the TOC, and in terms of project focus namely: these were linked to unemployment and insufficient rights and quality at work, a lack of contact and interactions across different social groups; lack of opportunities, especially for women and youth, including lack of contact and the existence of grievances over inequality and violations of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). All the above areas were taken into account at different levels, in the project in terms of defining the interventions and measures to help build

<sup>13</sup> ILO Handbook How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes, 2019.

employment programs through the domain of agro centric engagement and help contribute to peacebuilding throughout the project implementation period.

The EMPOWER project adopted a conflict sensitive gender, disability and ethnicity responsive approach with a targeted focus on the vulnerabilities of ex combatants in Mullaitivu. An analytical view of the manner in which this was reflected in the results that the team achieved working systematically through the establishment of linkages with the private sector, and building and mainstreaming peacebuilding results at different levels was evidenced in the project profiles. The peacebuilding outcomes and indicator profiles that were formulated did not take into account some of the key factors of growth and success typically seen in agro centric interventions. This led to the EMPOWER team not recognizing important elements in the manner in which they had been able to build both resilience and social dialogue at different levels in the project with good results. Discussions with the PTK Women's Cooperative also reflected the importance of the manner in which small amounts of funding and the PBF in particular helped contribute to peacebuilding, social cohesion and economic empowerment at different levels.

### **United Nations Peace Building Fund**

The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, (UN PBF) was established in October 2006, following a request from the General Assembly and the Security Council, to fund catalytic post conflict peacebuilding initiatives. The PBF is the prime financing risk tolerant funding mechanism for UN Regional Coordinator led prevention initiatives in a non-mission setting. It is often complemented through short term deployment of technical expertise. The Peace Building Fund, today supports more than 120 projects in 25 countries by delivering fast, flexible and relevant funding. Since its creation in 2015, PBF has allocated \$623 million to 33 countries to help prevent (re) lapse into conflict and sustain peace.

The PBF allocates funds through two financing facilities, the Immediate Response Facility (IRF) and the Peacebuilding Recovery Fund (PRF). Both financing facilities fund initiatives that respond to one or more of the following criteria:

- Respond to imminent threats to the peace process and initiatives that support peace agreements and political dialogue;
- Build or strengthen national capacities to promote co-existence and peaceful resolution of conflict
- Stimulate economic revitalization to general peace dividends and
- Re-establish essential administrative services.

The UNDP Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF) serves as the Administrative Agent (AA) of the PBF and is responsible for a number of oversight functions of the PBF.

A key element of the PBF is to drive UN action that is “risk informed” and “helps to build peaceful and inclusive societies”. It is also designed to contribute to gender equality by increasing the participation of women in political processes, strengthen their voices in post conflict planning processes and address their post conflict needs.

The PBF financing to EMPOWER in Sri Lanka was funded through the IRF modality. The UN PBF at inception provided the approval of the financing for EMPOWER in two tranches, of a fully allocated first tranche of \$1,400,000 and a conditional second tranche of \$600,000. Government contributions to the project were not planned.

The planned commencement date for the EMPOWER project was January 2018, with a proposed end date of June 2019. Given the project implementation delays and a fund balance, in mid-2019, the PBF provided a no cost extension to the project till December 31, 2019.

Evaluation protocols of the PBF and the ILO envisaged a Mid Term review and an End Term Evaluation at project completion. The Mid Term Review did not take place, however ILO did undertake an internal review as mentioned earlier. This Evaluation responds to the requirement for an End Term Evaluation.

### 3. Purpose, scope and clients

#### Purpose of the Evaluation

The End Term Evaluation of the EMPOWER PBF funded project in Sri Lanka, aimed to review and assess progress and achievements of the project against its planned objectives and outputs by using the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) and recommend modifications for improvement. The evaluation is expected to contribute towards organizational learning and promoting accountability to the ILO, national key stakeholders and the donor. The evaluation also aimed at documenting lessons learnt and emerging good practices. A special effort was made during the evaluation process to help identify and build technical inputs that were adopted by the teams on the ground to study the measures taken to prevent the reoccurrence of conflict and sustain peace in the project areas and interventions during the project cycle. While undertaking the assessment, the evaluation identified strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges and risks at multiple levels that inhibited project objectives and delivery of outputs. As mentioned earlier, the end term evaluation is mandatory in accordance with both the PBF and the ILO Policy for projects.

#### Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation covered the project as a whole from its inception in 2017, until the end of December 2019; and the geographical coverage of the project in Sri Lanka. Additional efforts were made to assess the manner in which the project intervention sought to assess and conceptualize risks and resilience in the short project period to allow for lessons learned to be drawn from the project as a whole.

In addition to the evaluation questions that have been formulated by the evaluation team, and presented in the TOR, additional elements were adopted to review resilience and risks at project and program level. Special attention to the peace building elements and potential impact were also ensured throughout the evaluation cycle. The evaluation also provides a forward looking perspective to inform program planning and decision making for financing of agro centric programs for the ILO and WFP going forward. The evaluation was built around the overall framework of three broad questions: What results—outcomes and impact—have been achieved? What worked well and did not work well, and why? What lessons can be identified from implementation?

#### **Gender dimensions, parity, inclusion of conflict affected women and ex combatant women and other non-discrimination issues**

The EMPOWER project was entirely led by women, of the PTK Women's cooperative. This made the task for integrating gender dimensions, inclusion and other non-discrimination issues of conflict affected women and ex combatant women as cross-cutting concerns throughout the methodology, deliverables, and final report of the evaluation relatively easy. In terms of this evaluation, this implied involving all representative stakeholders in the consultation, evaluation analysis and the evaluation team. The evaluator

reviewed data and information that was disaggregated by sex and gender to assess the relevance and effectiveness of gender related strategies and outcomes to improve the lives of the conflict affected community at large. An attempt was made to ensure that this information was accurately included in the final evaluation report. One major factor that reflected results and effectiveness was the private sector led growth of the cooperative and the project as a whole in an area of poor private sector growth, and in this case entirely led by ex-combatant women. This is emphasized throughout the report. The only group that was entirely led by men was the leadership of the farmers' organizations.

## Clients of the Evaluation

The primary end users of the evaluation findings is the ILO and WFP Country Offices in Colombo and the key stakeholders involved in the project. The stakeholders include the national constituents, the partners of the project, the donor the UN Peace Building Fund, the relevant ministries, at central and provincial level, the primary partner PTKO, and the Private Sector market players. . Secondary parties making use of the results of the evaluation will include ILO technical departments, DWT-New Delhi, ROAP and the relevant ILO HQ units and the donor. The results of the end term evaluation is expected to guide project management and teams in planning and implementation of similar projects in other post conflict zones.

## 4. Criteria and Questions

The table below provides key evaluation questions for the evaluation.

Table 2: Key Evaluation Questions for EMPOWER

<i>Relevance and Validity of Design</i>	
1.1	How well do the project design (priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities) address the stakeholder needs that were identified?
1.2	To what extent are the project design (priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities) and its underlying theory of change logical and coherent?
1.3	How responsive was the project design to national sustainable development plans for the SDGs?
1.4	How relevant was the design of the project to the outcomes that were achieved or not achieved?
1.5	To what extent has the project contributed to the implementation of strategies and policy frameworks of the country, ILO and PBF?
1.6	Within the context of the ILO goal of gender equality, inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as well as national level policies in this regard, to what extent did the project design take into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context and specifically ex-combatant women;</li> <li>• Concerns relating to inclusion of ex combatant and marginalized women?</li> </ul>
1.7	To what extent did the problem analysis identify its differential impact on men and women and on other vulnerable groups, (like marginalized women in extreme poverty, poor health,), and what specific activities were programmed towards peace building?
1.8	How appropriate and useful are the indicators described in the project document/ performance framework in assessing the project's progress?
1.9	To what extent did the project design identify and integrate specific targets and indicators to capture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender equality and non-discrimination concerns of ex combatant women?</li> <li>• Concerns regarding women in extreme poverty and marginalized health?</li> </ul>

<p>1.10 To what extent did the project strategies, within their overall scope, remain flexible and responsive to emerging concerns with regards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender equality and non-discrimination of ex combatant women?</li> <li>• Inclusion of ex combatant women?</li> </ul> <p>1.11 To what extent was the coherence of the project design, implementation and reporting tools ensured by the team and partners? Were there any gaps?</p>
<p><i>Effectiveness</i></p> <p>2.1 What progress has the project made towards achieving its planned objectives? What are the reasons/factors behind that progress?</p> <p>2.2 What are the main constraints, problems and areas in need of further attention?</p> <p>2.3 How and how well have stakeholders been involved in the implementation? How well has the project sought to ensure national ownership?</p> <p>2.4 Are stakeholders satisfied with the quality of tools, technical advice, training and other activities, delivered by the project?</p> <p>2.5 Within its overall objectives and strategies, what specific measures were taken by the project to address issues relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender equality and non-discrimination of conflict affected women?</li> <li>• Ensuring the Inclusion of ex combatant women?</li> <li>• How did the project build social dialogue within the framework of implementation?</li> </ul> <p>How effective were these measures in advancing gender equality and inclusion of ex combatant women within the context of project’s objectives?</p> <p>2.6 To what extent were the intervention results monitored and achieved (or not) and what was their contribution (or not) towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender parity and non-discrimination of conflict affected women?</li> <li>• Sustained efforts to include ex combatant women?</li> <li>• Sustained efforts to include extreme poor, and those who could not afford PTK membership fees?</li> </ul> <p>2.7 To what extent did the project results contribute (or not) to the identified SDGs and related targets? Even if the relevant SDGs had not been identified in design, can a plausible contribution to the relevant SDGs and related targets be established?</p> <p>2.8 A To what extent have intervention results been monitored and reported in terms of their contribution to specific SDGs and targets (explicitly or implicitly)? To what extent did the project increase stakeholders’ awareness on SDG targets and indicators relevant to the Decent Work Agenda? (explicitly or implicitly)</p>
<p><i>Efficiency</i></p> <p>3.1 Have the resources (including technical expertise, staff, time, information) been used in an efficient manner?</p> <p>3.2 Has the project received adequate support from the relevant ILO units, the government and national partners?</p> <p>3.3 To what extent did the project leverage partnerships (with constituents, national institutions and other UN/development agencies) that enhance projects relevance and contribution to priority SDG targets and indicators? (explicitly and implicitly)</p> <p>3.4 To what extent did the project leverage partnerships with other ILO projects in the region and with other Programs, to build linkages?</p> <p>3.5 How well have the project management processes worked in delivering project outputs and results?</p> <p>3.6 To what extent did the project budget factor-in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender parity and non-discrimination of conflict affected women?</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of ex combatant women?</li> </ul> <p>And, to what extent did the project leverage resources (financial, partnerships, expertise) to promote these two issues (bullets).</p>
<p><i>Sustainability</i></p> <p>4.1 How effective and realistic is the exit strategy of the project?</p> <p>4.2 To what extent did the intervention advance strategic gender-related needs that can have a long-term positive bearing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender parity of conflict affected women within the world of work?</li> <li>• Inclusion of ex combatant women within the world of work and linked to jobs and markets?</li> </ul> <p>4.3 To which extent the results of the intervention likely to have a long term, sustainable positive contribution to the SDG and relevant targets? (explicitly or implicitly)</p>
<p><i>Potential Impact</i></p> <p>5.1 What were the intervention’s long-term effects in terms of reducing/exacerbating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination of conflict affected women?</li> <li>• Inequalities and exclusion faced by ex combatant women?</li> </ul> <p>5.2 To what extent did the project bring lasting changes in norms and policies that favour/promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender parity and non-discrimination of conflict affected women?</li> <li>• Inclusion of ex combatant women and links to jobs and markets?</li> </ul> <p>5.3 Has the intervention made a difference to specific SDGs to which the project is linked? If so, how has the intervention made a difference? (explicitly or implicitly)</p> <p>5.4 How did the team report on results achieved in terms of program interventions and inputs?</p> <p>5.5 Were the M&amp;E framework and indicator profiles used adequate to allow for results and impact to be measured and reported?</p>
<p><i>Risks</i></p> <p>6.1 How has the intervention formulated design of risks in the projects, and how well?</p> <p>6.2 How have evaluations on similar projects in Sri Lanka defined project and program risks at different levels?</p> <p>6.3 What risks did the project face which were not identified at inception and how did the team mitigate these risks if at all?</p>
<p><i>Resilience</i></p> <p>7.1 How has the intervention formulated design elements for measuring resilience in the project if at all and how well?</p> <p>7.2 Does the team provide measures of resilience and how are these measures reported?</p> <p>7.3 How is resilience contextualized in the context of the PTK and its interventions during the project period?</p>
<p><i>Coherence</i></p> <p>8.1 To what extent did the project ensure internal coherence with the ILO and WFP mission and mandate its strategy and system in Sri Lanka in terms of its interventions carried out and adhered to?</p> <p>8.2 Was external coherence with international norms and standards ensured for a post conflict and protracted crises zone and those adopted for Sri Lanka and the region</p>
<p><i>Special Aspects to be considered:</i></p> <p>9.1 To what extent has the work contributed toward promoting ILO’s mandate on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social dialogue,</li> <li>• international labour standards, as well as</li> <li>• ILO’s goal of gender equality, disability inclusion,</li> <li>• non-discrimination, and</li> </ul>

- social cohesion in the target community?

9.2 What were the facilitating and limiting factors in the project's contribution or absence to these cross cutting issues?

The evaluation questions followed the broad outline formulated in the ILO Terms of Reference, the guidelines of the ILO Handbook for Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes, the most recent OECD DAC criteria for evaluation, and a few specific questions on risks and resilience.

## 5. Methodology

The evaluation was carried out according to ILO standard policies and procedures and complied with both United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards and the OECD/DAC evaluation quality standards. The evaluation also adheres to evaluation norms, standards and follows ethical safeguards as specified in the ILO evaluation procedures.

The methodology adopted ILO's policy guidelines for evaluation (3rd edition, 2017) which provides the basic framework for conducting evaluations. The evaluation utilized a non-experimental ex post evaluation design. It followed a qualitatively dominant performance evaluation approach based on the OECD DAC criteria of evaluation. The methodology also drew the best practice elements reflected in the ILO Handbook How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes, 2019.

The evaluation involved a six step process including:

- (i) Desk review and preparation of an indicative inception report;
- (ii) A mission and fieldwork in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the project division, Mullaitivu in the Northern Province; (November 2-11, 2019);
- (iii) Presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations at the Divisional Government Office in Mullaitivu to stakeholders including PTK Women's Cooperative, ILO Killinochchi Field team, and Government Officials;
- (iv) Presentation of preliminary findings to ILO CO, WFP and other UN agencies in Colombo;
- (v) Document and data analysis with a zero draft report; and
- (vi) Drafting of a final report based on feedback and comments on the draft report.

The primary sources of data analysis came from ILO evaluations, of the sector and region, programme documentation, ILO guidelines and Handbooks, routine EMPOWER project documentation, and ILO internal project reviews, key informant interviews, individual informant interviews, and focus group discussions, with participants spread out through the ILO, and WFP Colombo and Killinochchi field offices, government officials at provincial and divisional headquarters, and PTK cooperative members, SMEs, rural banking leaders, farmers, change management agents, youth participants in project activities in the field, and private sector agencies engaged with EMPOWER like Hayley's Agro were held over the four day field mission. Meetings were also held with the UN PBF team, the donor to EMPOWER and WFP and ILO teams in Colombo and the field. A field visit to Killinochchi and Mullaitivu was conducted for a period of four days, and validation workshops held in the field and at ILO Colombo offices as a debriefing towards the end of the mission. Field data collection plan and list of informants and participant of validation workshop are provided in the Annex.

## Conceptual Framework: Data Collection Worksheet

### *Evaluation Criteria*

This Independent End Term Evaluation of the Sri Lanka EMPOWER project was formulated based on ILO's evaluation policy and procedures. The ILO adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group system's evaluation norms and standards as well as to the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. Given the links to the private sector, job creation and skill building, of the project in a post conflict area, the evaluation additionally, assesses the manner in which the team sought to include the identification and assessment of risks and resilience in the overall project. The ILO uses a conceptual framework that is consistent with Results-Based Management (RBM) principles and address the following five Evaluation Criteria as specified in the ToR (see Annex 1):

1. Relevance and validity of design,
2. Coherence and design of measuring instruments
3. Effectiveness,
4. Efficiency,
5. Potential Impact,
6. Sustainability in terms of organizational, institutional, and financial sustainability issues,
7. Risks
8. Resilience

The evaluation was built around analytical tools for generalizability, with a focus on qualitative methods which enabled the evaluator to better investigate and understand the context within which the PBF funded activities were implemented. This was achieved by the “how”, “why”, and “if not why not” questions and to explore the nuances in the experiences and perceptions of the different stakeholder groups. The evaluator relied on an in depth desk review of primary and secondary documents, key informant and small group interviews and round table discussions. The evaluator also attempted to supplement collected qualitative data with quantitative data derived from primary project documents, secondary studies and in depth discussions with the stakeholders especially with reference to growth factors related to the private sector, SMEs and rural banking. Provided below in Table 2 are the evaluation questions that were adopted.

### **Indicative Data Collection Worksheet**

The ILO template for the Data Collection Worksheet is provided in the Inception report. It describes the way that the chosen data collection methods, data sources, and indicators supported the evaluation questions. The template consists of a series of elements including: Evaluation Questions and Criteria/Indicators, Sources of Data and Method, while one additional element (stakeholder interviews) was also included because it is an important element in this particular evaluation. For each of the eight Evaluation Criteria, a series of evaluation questions have been identified in the ToR, and these were used in addition to the ones provided below; and later adjusted on the basis of the initial document review, in particular also based on the other Program documents on the EMPOWER project in Sri Lanka, assessments, and Progress Reports received prior to the mission. The evaluation used a combination of Key Informant Interviews, Individual Interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

## Limitations of the Evaluation

The evaluation is almost entirely a qualitative analysis supplemented by a few graphs that provide quantitative data provided by the project team in the field. Collating information on project progress, presented its own set of challenges throughout the evaluation cycle, from the formulation and review period of the inception report, the limited time in the field for in depth discussions or data gathering during implementation, and the paucity of documentation of results achieved in the programme reporting. Given the tight schedule of the contracting, and field-mission requirements, the Inception report provided was of an indicative nature. Efforts were made to identify and build on a series of lessons learned based on the project objectives for focusing on women's empowerment in a post conflict zone and with special emphasis on linkages to markets, private sector and jobs. The field work plan was also indicative in nature and is shared as an Annex in the Inception report. The Inception report was finalized in the field during the November 2-12, mission. Given the sensitive nature of the project and its engagement with ex combatants, an attempt was to be made to try and arrange for a focus group discussion that includes all stakeholders, and members who have been part of the project. Plans were that in the event that a focus group discussion with ex combatants is found to be difficult arrangements will be made to speak to them in a non-threatening and inclusive manner to elicit feedback on project outcomes with an emphasis on inclusion. During the field visit, the meetings were primarily with ex combatant women and the focus group discussion did not pose to be a problem at all. Given that the entire program was focused on ex combatant women and the PTK membership was also linked to women, gender mainstreaming and targeting was carried out in its entirety. Not all areas of focus identified by the Evaluation Terms of reference could be accommodated in the evaluation per se, in the mission duration of four days in the field. Plans to study data points and explore some aspects like growth in incomes of PTK beneficiaries, brief study of SMEs, etc was not possible due to the time constraints. The focus of the evaluation was on identifying results and potential impact.

The national elections drove the planning for a short duration of the mission in the field which was condensed to four days, the evaluation findings were built on a series of in depth discussions with multiple stakeholders, including the PTK, Government officials, and beneficiaries including SMEs and Rural Cooperative and Rural Bank officials. The field trip from Colombo to Killinochi and onto Mullaitivu was a nine hour car drive. Given the mission duration, this took a fair up a fair amount of time as well.

The looming national elections proved to be detrimental to a large extent, the entire mission was planned to be completed the week prior to the actual election taking place, and despite this, being the prior week, maintaining well established appointments with government officials was quite difficult and time consuming. In most instances, the team spent two days racing from one office to another, trying to procure time, with government officials being called away for meetings at short notice. The mission plan had to be curtailed to the week prior to the elections to allow for the evaluation to be carried out. An underestimation of the evaluation timeline in the field, by the TOR affected data gathering to a large extent.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1 Strengths

#### **Leadership role of ILO, WFP, and Government counterparts:**

ILO's comparative advantage in Sri Lanka lies in its ability to assess labour markets and the workforce, social and economic trends and its effects on labour, and linkages to fiscal and expenditure policy. The ILO team also took into account, the fact that the links to financial markets, risk analysis and risk management, lies with the private sector, and the recognition that solutions in middle income countries like Sri Lanka are linked to a judicious amalgamation of governments, employers, stakeholders, cooperatives, and private sector solutions are key to ILO's work and the potential value added by different partners. Additionally, the focus on climate adaptation measures, efficient irrigation methods and other cropping techniques proved vital to building resilience and promoting agriculture outputs and productivity. Glimpses of these aspects were evidenced in the ILO/WFP EMPOWER project funded by the UN PBF in the fragile post conflict environment of Mullaitivu.

The World Food Programme's comparative advantage lies in its dual mandate to support social and economic development to ensure long term food security while also addressing humanitarian crises. The WFP launched its policy on how to work in peacebuilding settings in 2013. It also signed the "Peace Promise" in 2016, which defined the need for collective action across the humanitarian, development and peace spheres as essential elements to end human suffering by addressing the drivers of conflict and vulnerability and reduce subsequent humanitarian needs. On November 8, 2019, the World Food Programme celebrated 50 years of its presence in Sri Lanka. Early efforts while conceptualizing the WFP role in the EMPOWER project took into account the fact that significant components of WFP's programming in post conflict zones, contribute to improving the prospects for peace through building resilience. In Sri Lanka, WFPs modality of assistance is different to that of ILO's, WFP works primarily through the Government. The World Food Programme together with the ILO and the Government of Sri Lanka provided a series of inputs through commercial agriculture projects including household water harvesting and irrigation. The WFP also provided gender and nutrition awareness training, with knowledge and cultural exchange visits to southern districts which helped women farmers learn and improve their skills in multiple areas. These included knowledge and skills for improved farming practices, indigenous pest control methods, and contributing to their community knowledge base on good agro centric practices.

The WFP uses advanced technology and an online tracking system to map their beneficiary identification and project interventions in the EMPOWER project as reflected in Figure 3. Green areas illustrate project assets creation completed, yellow almost nearing completion, and red more than 50% completed as of November 8, 2019. Also, the system tracks photo evidence of beneficiaries, and the GPS location of the asset with supporting documents for evidence of application selection, agreement and bank documentation. An aerial view of the mapping of WFP technical inputs to the EMPOWER project is provided in the Figure 3 below.

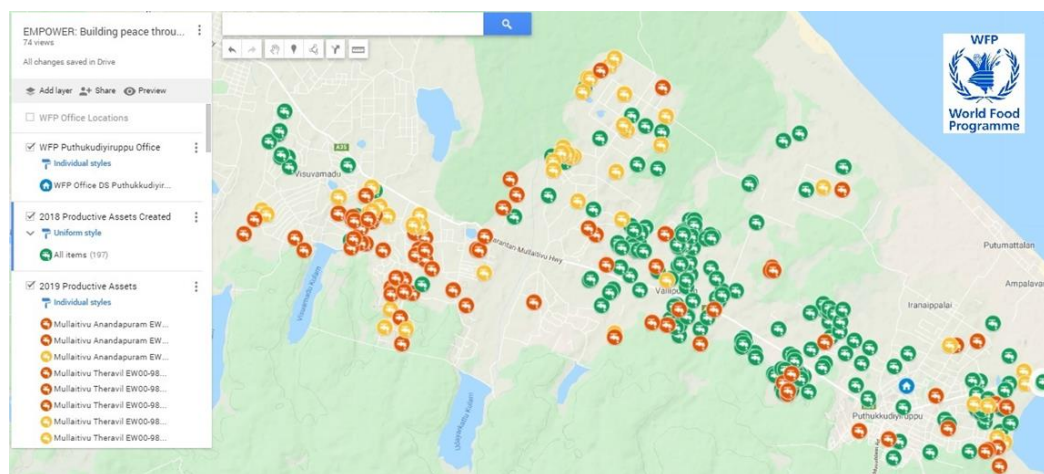


Figure 3 Mapping of WFP technical assistance to EMPOWER, 2019

Source: WFP Colombo, November 2019.

The leadership role of both ILO and WFP Country Directors, and Programme leaders, the efficiency with which joint programming elements were conceptualized and built were forerunners in jump starting the EMPOWER project. The UN PBF RC Office spoke about the importance of leadership in establishing joint programming elements in projects funded by the Peace Building Fund and their ability to build outcomes for peace in post conflict zones.

Another factor that contributed to efficiency and effectiveness was the leadership role played by the Government leaders at provincial and divisional level. Government officials emphasized the need for long term planning of a program like that of EMPOWER in a post conflict zone. Some concern about the leadership and political agenda of the PTK President, and the need for a more subservient attitude towards economic empowerment and uplifting of the vulnerable population of Mullaitivu and the region was key they stated. Sustainability of project financing and funding, identifying measures to build better outcomes for economic empowerment of women, importance of enhancing growth and technical support for agrarian communities, integrating solutions to help build resilience among communities in the Northern province were several areas that were discussed during the evaluation mission.

#### **Catalytic role of the PBF as a financing instrument in a post conflict zone:**

At the time of the roll out of the EMPOWER project in Mullaitivu, the peacebuilding aspects of the region had already been achieved to a large extent, the project contributed in large measure to the enhancement of peace in the region through the technical support and inputs provided by the ILO and WFP teams. It is important to recognize the catalytic role that the loans provided by the EMPOWER project throughout the phase of the project achieved in terms of membership growth, loan growth, SME growth and overall growth of the PTK rural Bank as mentioned below. The loans provided by the PTK Women's Cooperative with funding from EMPOWER were an incentive that contributed to the major achievements mentioned above. This was a result of the catalytic role that the UN PBF played and achieved in terms of a financial instrument introduced at a pertinent time in the region.

**Social dialogue:** The ILO team worked to build elements in its programming, through an innovative knowledge building approach on employment programmes contributing to peacebuilding through the creation of economic opportunities, the promotion of social cohesion through contact between conflicting communities and the reduction of grievances through social dialogue. The PTK Cooperative itself formed

both a platform and a strong web of members which in turn spread its wings to help newer members and help one another, with information, knowledge and links to socio economic opportunities. This was done with a simplicity of style, and in a seamless way, through the sharing of information in a timely manner, and with a systematic stance that is so unique to a rural agrarian based Asian society, where simplicity and timely assistance are the hallmarks of the community. A key element of the social dialogue was the design of targeting downstream level of beneficiaries that included war affected and ex combatant women with bottom up community level capacity building and livelihood activities, establishing links with governance bodies to enhance their political participation with local government authorities. This was emphasized by the PTK members in the discussions throughout the evaluation cycle. The strength of the social dialogue was evident from the discussions that were held with government officials, participants and PTK members, especially given the active dialogue for opportunities to find solutions for agro centric opportunities between all stakeholders that also included peace enhancement as a discussion point.

### **Private Sector led growth of EMPOWER**

ILO's comparative advantage of its work on the promotion and development of SME and entrepreneurship in order to create employment opportunities especially for the most vulnerable led the results of the interventions in EMPOWER. Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi, are divisions that reflect poor private sector led growth, as a result of the conflict. Agriculture and its links to the private sector, continues to create new economic spaces for women in the war torn and ravaged district of Mullaitivu. The ILO and WFP technical support and inputs through EMPOWER were able to increase agricultural productivity, and help improve access to relevant natural resources and measures to enhance livelihoods and economic empowerment in the rural communities of Mullaitivu. Private sector led growth was evident in the project with a closer look at the data in terms of growth of membership of the PTK, growth in the number of SMEs that were provided with loans, and the overall growth of the PTK rural Bank itself during the project period, as shown in the tables below.

The discussions with the PTK Board and members day after day, meeting after meeting led to the recognition that these aspects had enormous implications for the project, and had been captured by the EMPOWER project as part of reporting at a minimal level. Discussions reflected the manner in which the project had helped ex combatant women build economically viable interventions in a sustainable manner in an agro centric zone through a simple measure of inclusion and membership at the PTK.

One of the best practice elements in this aspect of the EMPOWER project are the links that it was able to establish with Hayley's an agro centric international private sector conglomerate in Sri Lanka. It is also important to mention here the links to the lessons learned from ILO's work over several phases with the LEEDS project that pushed forward the success of working with a rural cooperative in an agro centric zone.

ILO identified an opportunity to develop a business partnership with Hayley's Agro Company Private Ltd to cultivate Aloe-Vera with female farmers from the PTK Women's Cooperative Society. Aloe Vera is a major export quality crop in Sri Lanka, and reported export earnings of US\$ 6.23 million with Sri Lanka ranked 11th among Aloe-Vera exporting nations internationally. Around 5,000 metric tons of Aloe-Vera is produced annually in the dry zone and intermediate zones in Sri Lanka. The export of Aloe-Vera registered positive growth trends during the years 2017 and 2018. In 2019, the number of farms contributing to the Hayley's Agro partnership was 100 farmers. A discussion with the Hayley's Agro representative, on the project reflected that the agency, hoped to work towards a target partnership with at least 1000 farmers by 2020, in the Northern Province given its rich agricultural base.

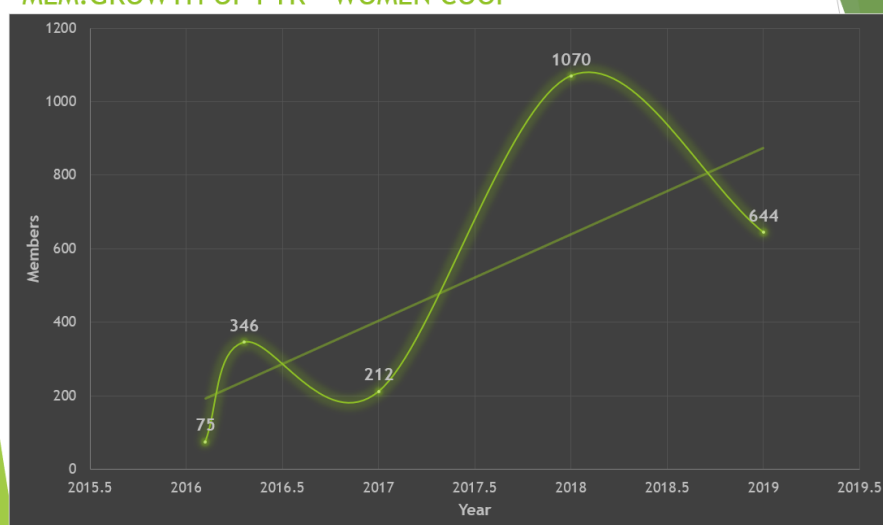
The Hayley's Agro Partnership was built at several levels, the partnership with ILO, the Department of Cooperative Development at provincial level, the Department of Agriculture at divisional level, and the Partnership with the PTK Women's Cooperative. Roles and responsibilities were equally distributed among the various stakeholders, leading to accountability and ownership in planning and implementation. Plans included the provision of capacity building and training of farmers on planting, water, crop management and harvesting of Aloe Vera. Project interventions included the introduction of new technology to ensure efficiency in water management, sharing of best practices based on their work in the Eastern province to improve production and quality, and the facilitation and provision of high quality of seedlings to ensure that the cultivated Aloe Vera are of high quality for export, and use for medical purposes. A complete buy-back agreement with farmers assuring them a consistent price for Aloe Vera cultivation throughout the year was also put in place. The partnership was combined with water management practices, improved farming practices and establishing new value chains to create decent jobs in the rural areas towards enhancing livelihoods and household income. The partnership plans and strategy took into account the Aloe Vera requirement of intense farming practices for efficient crop production.

Discussions with the Hayley's focal point reflected the efficiency gains in working with the ILO EMPOWER project, whereby, the team was able to identify farmers in a short span of time, with the PTK cooperative, and hoped to increase the identification in the region to 1000 farmers. The task of identifying farmers individually was time consuming and the team leader welcomed the option of working with the EMPOWER project in this regard.

#### **Growth in membership:**

An overview of the growth in membership is provided in the graph below, and reflects that the maximum growth was during the implementation of EMPOWER. An internal review of the project conducted by ILO questioned the capacity of the cooperative to handle the growth in membership, but this evaluation, reflects on the growth in the context of economic empowerment that the project built systematically through small loan amounts and the growing incentive of loans to women. At inception, of the project the membership of PTK comprised of 350 members of which 170 members were heads of female headed households who were also ex combatants during the conflict. The growth in membership was attributed to both the systematic coordination of assistance by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Cooperatives Development with the PTK Cooperative as well as the incentives of the EMPOWER project and its interventions, which were to help strengthen women's participation and empowerment and build service delivery capacity. This was done in multiple ways, through gender mainstreaming workshops, entrepreneurship and cooperative management training, and technical inputs at various levels.



**MEM.GROWTH OF PTK - WOMEN COOP**

Source.info. PTK Women coop members' register

Figure 4 Membership Growth of the PTK Women's Cooperative.

### Growth in the number of SMEs funded

Another aspect that was linked to project effectiveness was the growth in the number of SMEs that were funded (Refer Figure below). It was a reflection of ILO's working principle that self-help cooperatives and other community based organizations play a substantial role in acting as a medium to help support livelihoods, provide social services and strengthen small scale businesses. The project clearly reflected that the engagement of cooperatives was both catalytic and strategic in peacebuilding. These SMEs were predominantly established by ex-combatant women. The growth in number of SMEs established and funded during the project implementation period is reflected in the graph below. Discussions on how they built their SMEs was repeated day after day, meeting after meeting, whether with PTK Board members, change management agents, or SMEs. The kinds of SMEs established ranged from inventing organic fertilizer to respond to the private sector growth and requests for organic farmed produce, and establishing small food preparation and food systems services in the province. Additionally, the SMEs also sought to provide jobs to individuals from the community that ranged from hiring daily wage staff or long term staff for a duration from a few days to a few months seasonally, at the rate of 1-5 workers thereby contributing further to building jobs and skills in the community. Discussions reflected the benefits to entire families and family members. In more than 70 percent cases of women provided with loans, the men in the family and youth were also engaged in the SME related activity, whether farming, food preparation, or food systems. The growth in SMEs was a reflection of the interpersonal communication between PTK members, on the loan availability, the incentives it provided and the links to agro-centric measures which were introduced to tangible economic opportunities, and relatively easy to build in the region.

## SME GROWTH-EMPOWER

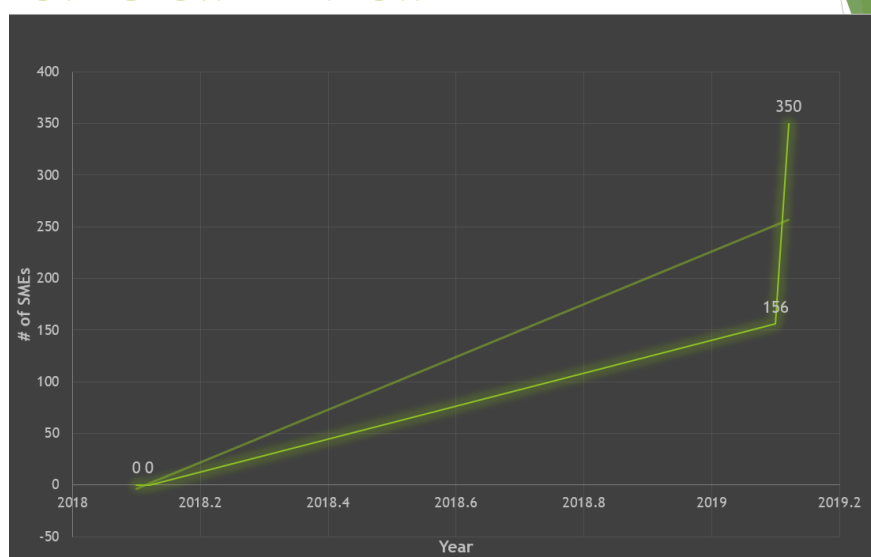


Figure 5 SME Growth

Source: PTK Women's Cooperative, membership ledger

### Growth in the number of loans

One of the incentives for member growth was the provision of loans by the PTK Cooperative. This grew exponentially as shown below during the project period. In discussions with the government officials there was some reflection on the need to ensure correction measures and guidelines on how and to whom the loans should be provided or allocated to, and the fact that the levels of nepotism that were being shown by certain PTK Board members should be minimized to the extent possible. Both provincial and divisional officials spoke of the importance of ensuring high degrees of integrity and servitude in the PTK Board to ensure sustainability of the PTK Cooperative going forward.

However, questions were raised about the fact that loans could only be provided to members of the PTK Women's Cooperative. The PTK has a membership requirement of 100 Sri Lankan Rupees which is a life time membership. The PTK Board is strict in its application of the membership requirement for the provision of loans. This has an exclusionary effect on the extreme poor, the potential for having a range which allows for the vulnerable and extreme poor women in the region to be included was also discussed with the ILO team and PTK members as a future option for consideration.

An overview of the loan size and growth is reflected in the tables and Figure below.

**Table 3: Loan profile of EMPOWER**

YEAR	No of Loans	Millions (Rs)	Loan Size - Range
2017	61	3,050,000	05,000 - 50,000
2018	132	6,650,000	05,000 - 100,000
2019	171	9,500,000	05,000 - 100,000

## PTK COOPs - Rural Bank and its loan

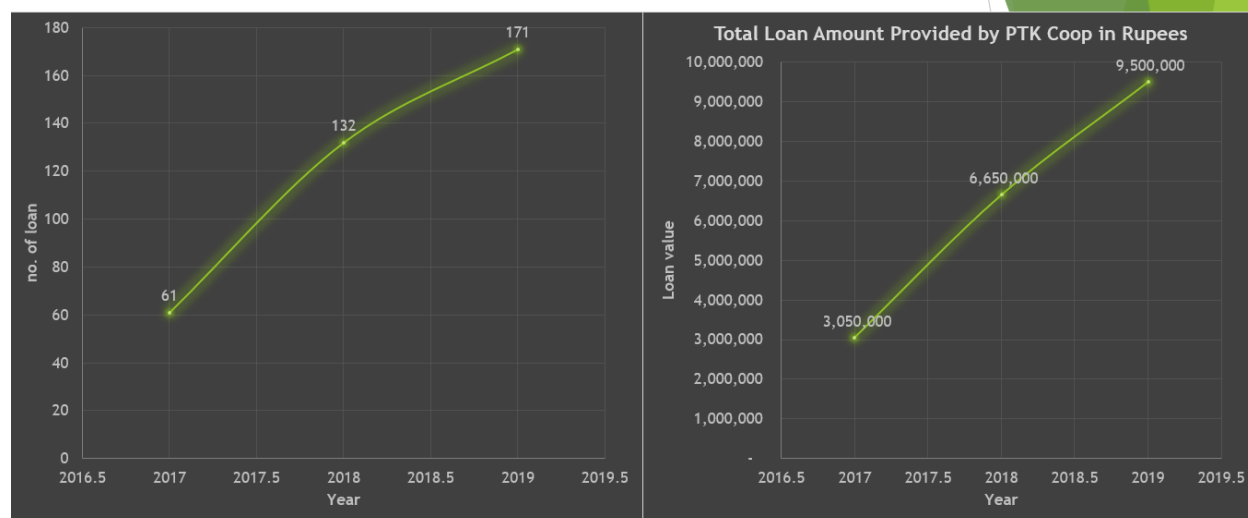


Figure 6 PTK Cooperative Rural Bank and Loan Growth

Source: PTK Women's Cooperative, Rural Bank records

### Building opportunities for income generation in the agriculture sector

Another area of strength in the project was the manner in which the intervention was able to systematically build the confidence and empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable ex-combatant women in a post conflict zone that lacked both livelihood and economic opportunities in addition to the scarcity of agricultural land in the Northern Province. The project was able to systematically build measures to help introduce knowledge, skills and financial inclusion one step at a time, through an agro centric lens. This was done by introducing measures to promote livelihoods, and empowering the affected population at large, while also helping them find their voice in decision making, which led to reducing tensions, building a stronger environment for the enhancement of peace, and contributing to the restoration of trust in the overall governing structures prevalent at that time. Other measures included the knowledge and skills impacted to the beneficiaries and women headed farming households, to address climate change, and specifically prolonged drought, using new strategies. The strategy targeted at 150 farmers, combined assorted improved agricultural practices, from better water management, to introducing alternative crops, to help cushion household income from shocks. Discussions with the PTK members, the change management member team of beneficiaries, and the government officials were reflective of the transformational impact that the project had achieved in a short period of time

## 6.2 Constraints

### Project implementation delays:

Project implementation delays plagued the project from inception. For an 18 month project, despite the project being signed in January 2108, implementation commenced only in May, 2018. Unfortunately, at inception, problems in a procurement request submitted by the PTK and Cooperative Development Officer, without adequate compliance to the rules and regulations established by the Commissioner of

Cooperative Development (CCD), resulted in project operations being put on hold for two months while an enquiry was undertaken by the CCD. These delays resulted in another three months of operations not being carried out. Project implementation delays had already consumed 8 months of project time. Implementation finally restarted in August 2018. These implementation delays affected project performance to a large degree.

Another unfortunate aspect were the problems that the project had to deal with in terms of staffing and inter personal relations between staff and stakeholders, namely the PTK Women's Cooperative which affected both project performance and project implementation timelines. Given the short term framework within which the project had to be implemented, the ILO management swiftly took measures based on an internal project review, to put in place changes and the project was able to then move relatively quickly in terms of performance and results thereafter.

### **Institutional and Organizational capacity in the field:**

Institutional and Organizational capacity of staff<sup>14</sup> in the field and the inability of staff being able to comprehend the importance of the short time frame for project deliverables also led to implementation delays and project lags at multiple levels. Measures to ensure program and project efficiency at field level, were a critical element of PBF funded mechanisms given the short time duration of these projects. Fortunately, ILO management sensed a hold back and the need for an in depth scrutiny of the project implementation delays, and took to making changes that resulted in swift growth of the project inputs as reflected above in terms of growth. However, the project losses were costly as a result of this on all accords.

**The PBF Financing Modality:** The PBF is meant to serve as a flexible to support the UN's broader peacebuilding objectives in countries at risk of relapsing into conflict. However, in Sri Lanka, the PBF modality for the EMPOWER project is a short term financing instrument linked to a long term results framework and impact. One of the greatest challenges of programme management is for teams to build programming elements around financing modalities that have a short term duration and look to define long term impact and long term solutions.

The PBF financing modality although providing an 18 month time frame for implementation, presented its own set of drawbacks with the funding itself coming more than three months after project approval. From a financing and administrative point of view, this was problematic for teams on the ground. The initial framework for design recommends long term financing options and indicator profiles that measure longer term results and impact. Whereas the project implementation time frame is shorter, making it more difficult for teams to even report on results in a meaningful manner given that impact and results related to its measurement are long term in nature requiring a longer term horizon.

The PBF funding modality presented several challenges for the ILO administration as well. Short term programming measures proved to be as time consuming as longer term financing modalities, with its cumbersome administrative procedures. There was also some concern about the actual role of the PBF as an oversight body. EMPOWER had an oversight mechanism in place, but the project implementation delays and funding profiles seemed to indicate whether the role of oversight could have been exercised with greater emphasis on speeding up the need to ensure project outcomes in a short duration project of 18 months.

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<sup>14</sup> ILO Review of EMPOWER, March 2019.

**Inadequate Risk Analysis and Risk Management:**

A review of the project documentation from conceptualization to reporting reflected inadequacy in identifying risks according to the multiple categories and risk management. The advantage of teams conceptualizing risk frameworks in addition to results frameworks lies in the team's ability to understand work towards defining and identifying risks and formulating mitigation measures to encounter the risks where possible.

The Risk framework formulated was rudimentary in nature and was not operationally translated to project implementation needs and forecasting the potential risks especially in the context of environmental risks, given the project risks of both droughts, and floods that took place, which cost a substantial extent of agricultural production and crop losses in the project area. Additionally, the risk ratings were under estimated; with mitigation measures being marginally planned and in several instance absent in its entirety, given the manner in which risks were actually realized.

**Conceptualization of monitoring instruments in EMPOWER:**

Weak M&E design practices and frameworks are a common denominator in the development landscape and the EMPOWER project suffered from this element as well. A challenging aspect in the EMPOWER project was the design and planning process, where results targets are precisely set in the Project plan before commencement of the implementation period, in a post conflict zone, making the establishment of targets somewhat arbitrary and problematic for teams. Although some results can be reasonably modified during the first few months of implementation, thereafter any modification is likely to require a more involved approval process necessary for making any changes, or may not be possible for teams. Rather than setting precisely quantified detailed targets at the project planning stage, guidance targets could have been agreed upon which reflect the same reasoning and knowledge that would be applied in setting precise targets, with more preciseness being reflected in the reporting cycle which reflect learning and progress through the first year of implementation. The guidance targets could be set as base case scenarios. The current results framework has several baseline indicators for impact and other outcome indicators which were not appropriately designed in terms of the outcomes that were conceptualized for the project at inception. The indicator profiles were articulated to measure multiple dimensions of results and outcomes making it difficult for teams to link results achieved with the measures for reporting them. At end term, teams reported the need to handle operational issues, and project implementation delays, with greater priority during the project cycle. Subsequently, this resulted in teams not being able to report in a meaningful manner.

It was difficult to link the outcome indicator profiles in the results framework with the actual results and impacts that had been achieved by the teams at field level. At completion, the evaluation found that several results and potential impact factors that the team had accomplished had not been reported or documented during the implementation phase by either ILO or WFP and remained the untold story in a post conflict zone.

**Joint Programming and its linkage to joint planning, joint implementation and joint assessments during the entire project cycle:**

The importance of joint planning, exercised during design, conceptualization, early implementation and programming are critical when more than one UN agency, works to help build synergies and collaborate. WFP has its own manner of operationalizing project inputs in Sri Lanka and this is carried out only through the Government, ILO on the other hand works directly with agencies, and stakeholders. This presented its own set of challenges for teams. The oversight coordination mechanism may not be the only

conduit for such programs, successful joint programming, needs multiple elements of strategies and collaboration to ensure and build impact and follow through on plans and strategies to fruition. Given the short time frame of the PBF financing modality, measures to ensure greater efficiency in the joint programming approach seemed difficult to ascertain. Joint programming was reflected in the joint planning, and implementation aspects of the project, and to some extent in the joint reporting during project implementation. Joint assessment for a short PBF however seemed elusive.

## 7. Evaluation Criteria

### 7.1 Relevance

- a) Has the project's objectives address the needs and priority of women beneficiaries Female former combatant and other conflict-affected women, the targeted communities, and the PTK cooperative?
- b) To what extent is the project design aligned with and support the broader peacebuilding framework, i.e. the UN peace building fund, the Government of Sri Lanka's national development and employment policies and its Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP), the relevant ILO priorities and policy, as articulated in Sri Lanka's Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) and the ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B) Outcome 5 - Decent work in the rural economy?
- c) What is the perception of local people with regard to the relationship of the activity to peacebuilding?
- d) How well do the project design (priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities address the stakeholder needs that were identified?
- e) To what extent are the project design, (priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities) and its underlying theory of change logical and coherent?
- f) How responsive was the project design of the project to national sustainable development plans for the SDGs?
- g) How relevant was the design of the project of the outcomes that were achieved or not achieved?
- h) To what extent has the project contributed to the implementation of strategies and policy frameworks of the country, ILO, WFP and the PBF?
- i) Within the context of the ILO goal of gender equality, inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as well as national level policies in this regard, to what extent did the project design take into account:
  - Specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context and specifically ex-combatant women?
  - Concerns related to inclusion of ex combatant and marginalized women?
- j) To what extent did the problem analysis identify its differential impact on men and women and other vulnerable groups (like marginalized women in extreme poverty, poor health,) and what specific activities were programmed towards peace building?
- k) How appropriate and useful are the indicators described in the project document/ performance framework in assessing the project's progress?
- l) To what extent did the project design identify and integrate specific targets and indicators to capture:
  - Gender equality and non-discrimination concerns of ex-combatant women?
  - Concerns regarding women in extreme poverty and marginalized health?

- m) To what extent did the project strategies within their overall scope, remain flexible and responsive to emerging concerns with regards to:
- Gender equality and non-discrimination of ex-combatant women?
  - Inclusion of ex-combatant women?
  - Inclusion of women in extreme poverty and suffering from vulnerabilities like marginalized health?

Relevance was built in multiple ways. Supply side relevance was reflected with the EMPOWER project building on the success and lessons learned from previous interventions and models that have proven to be effective like the ILO LEEDS project. The EMPOWER project was aligned to the PBF principles, and to the ILO DWCP, as well as to the WFP mission and mandate. It is also relevant to the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) efforts and processes of UN agencies at country level.

The EMPOWER project is closely aligned to and focuses on the Peace Building Fund's Priority Area 3, "Employment - Supporting efforts to revitalize the economy and generate immediate peace dividends for the population at large". It also seeks to advance the implementation of the Secretary General's Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding, which lies at the core of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The project particularly focuses on Commitment 3 on 'Post Conflict Financing' and Commitment 7 on 'Economic Recovery.' The project's 'employment opportunities approach' aligns closely with the ILO's emphasis on ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the longer-term, as a key tenet of post-war reconstruction. In essence, this approach has a 3-pronged agenda, which includes: 1) enhancing women ex-combatants' access to resources; 2) bolstering women ex-combatants' skills in decision-making and leadership; and 3) increasing women ex-combatants' exposure to economic opportunities and equitable representation at both local and national level.

Demand side relevance was built with close alignment to Government strategies at different levels. The Government of Sri Lanka committed its actions to the implementation of a comprehensive transitional justice approach (Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1 and 34/ on "Promoting reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka") which ensures protection of victims and survivors of human rights abused in Sri Lanka and includes the full participation of the Tamil community in the process. The EMPOWER project interventions and approach are aligned closely to this comprehensive and human rights approach. The project activities at inception envisage the enhancement of economic opportunities and income generation of marginalized populations that is expected to contribute towards their social inclusion and acceptance within the greater community.

Relevance was reflected in the design elements at inception. The project was designed to contribute towards several Sustainable Development Goals that emphasize gender equality, peacebuilding, food security and nutrition, and environmental sustainability in Sri Lanka by realizing economic empowerment, social integration, and resilience towards external risks, among conflict-affected women. The project is guided by the ILO Recommendation 205 on "Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience", which recognized that crises affect women and men differently and the critical importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in promoting peace, preventing crises, enabling recovery and building resilience.

**Relevance of design:** Agro centric design elements for cooperatives led by women: The agriculture sector, was the main sector that contributed to much of employment and labour prior to the war in the Northern and Eastern provinces especially for the rural population. During the war, agricultural production declined due to multiple factors including displacement, increasing soil salinity, establishment of high security zones, damage to irrigation infrastructure, land mines, lack of access to markets and lack

of capital. The EMPOWER project design elements captured these gaps, and sought to build back better an intervention incorporating a post conflict and gender sensitive approach, for local empowerment and economic development. This was designed through agricultural production, with careful attention to irrigation infrastructure and water sources and the potential increase in agricultural production in the absence of war.

The role of both ILO and WFP in this regard and their technical support as reflected earlier must be recognized. The links to greater production of agricultural produce, employment, and measures to building resilience in the agro centric zone with potential for building livelihoods through food security was a reflection of the results achieved by the project but not documented and was a missing element in the discussions with WFP. Areas like the improvement of post-harvest management, measures to learn new technologies in increasing agricultural productivity, reducing post-harvest losses and promoting value aggregation and promote access to markets was also introduced throughout the project cycle.

Discussions with stakeholders reflected the strength and resilience that the project had helped to build in the lives of ex-combatant women, and the beneficiaries. Day after day, the discussions were centered on the attention paid by the project to gender equality, inclusion of ex combatant and marginalized women, and the levels of economic empowerment that the women had gained during the duration of the project, from the agro centric activities that they were engaged in.

Design elements were carefully deployed to ensure that more than 90 percent beneficiaries were ex combatant and marginalized women. Technical assistance and capacity building measures were also clearly aligned with this group. This led to a high level of confidence among the beneficiaries and local stakeholders, and was attributed to the building of adequate empowerment through enhanced income and employment opportunities.

Relevance of design was linked to results achieved in the context of building resilience of the communities in Mullaitivu, and the PTK cooperative members, through economic empowerment as evidenced in the private sector led growth aspects discussed earlier, but not recognized for the multidimensional aspects of results achieved or documented by the team. The results reflected the fact that relevance of design in some areas was built at inception and sustained through completion, and lacking in other areas as mentioned above.

Relevance was built at inception and sustained throughout the project cycle as evidenced through the results of the project, The project report for the last quarter of year at end term reflected the results achieved and of sustained relevance in terms of being well placed to address potential conflict factors/ sources of tensions and risks to the sustenance and progress of peace in a fragile environment like the Northern Province. The EMPWOER project through its livelihoods interventions and financial services helped build a sense of inclusion to an impoverished community and contributing to building a sense of empowerment, trust in the government (at that stage), and ability to access income generation activities through capacity building and training. The effects of the intervention were reflected in the award won by the PTK as the best performing cooperative in the district in 2019. This was the third time the cooperative won the award since its inception in 2016. Relevance was substantial as the project helped the local communities rebuild their livelihood options through production, establishment of SMEs, the procurement of small loans, employment generation and jobs with the support of government agencies, technical support and assistance from the project, and linkages with private sector business with stable marketing arrangements Measures to ensure sustained relevance was reflected in the project's plans at end term to focus its interventions on broader public goods investments for broader benefit of local communities, going beyond the cooperative and its members.



## 7.2 Coherence of design

- a. To what extent did the project ensure internal coherence with the ILO, WFP and PBF mission and mandate its strategy and system in Sri Lanka in terms of its interventions carried out and adhered to?
- b. Was external coherence with international norms and standards ensured for a post conflict and protracted crises zone and those adopted for Sri Lanka and the region?
- c. Was there internal coherence between the peacebuilding and women's economic empowerment objectives?
- d. To what extent did the project ensure internal coherence with the ILO and WFP mission and mandate its strategy and system in Sri Lanka in terms of its interventions carried out and adhered to?
- e. Was external coherence with international norms and standards ensured for a post conflict and protracted crises zone and those adopted for Sri Lanka and the region?

Much of the coherence in the project in terms of design was linked to the results achieved and lessons learned from the early work of the ILO team with LEEDS and knowledge of the role of cooperatives and its advantages in a post conflict zone. It was also linked to the recognition that the agro centric environment in Mullaitivu could be integrated with clear elements built strategically with capacity building and technical support in terms of financing, knowledge and skill enhancement. Policy coherence was systematically built by the team in terms of conceptualization, and reflected clearly in its linkages with the private sector, the Divisional Agriculture Department and the Commissioner of Cooperatives in Jaffina.

Policy coherence was evident not only in the coordination between the ILO, WFP and the PBF, but also the coordination at local and provincial levels in the project implementation once the project got off to a good start and was not hindered by project implementation delays. The close alignment of the design elements of the EMPOWER project with the Government of Sri Lanka PPP, its national strategy, and plans enhanced livelihoods, and peacebuilding, helped the integration of policy dialogue with developmental efforts to help balance economic, social and developmental concerns in a post conflict zone with ease.

Internal coherence was ensured within the mandate and mission of the PBF, ILO and WFP from conception of the project throughout the project cycle. The only setback in terms of internal coherence was the difficulty in the comprehension and agreement of the Provincial and Divisional leadership with the PTK leadership in terms of design and mission going forward. The Provincial and Divisional Leadership wanted a more self-serving PTK leadership who would be more sensitive to the overall PTK cooperative growth rather than it being limited to a political agenda of her own, and the degree of nepotism that was exercised in the provision of loans to next of kin which went against the objectives of the EMPOWER project. Additionally, the ILO team faced difficulties in trying to get PTK leadership and its members to understand and adopt a sustainability plan and strategy to help build institutional and organizational capacity of the PTK Women's Cooperative.

Policy coherence in the linkages between the objectives of peace building and those for women's economic empowerment were evident throughout the project cycle, given the emphasis on identification and support to the ex-combatants and marginalized women of Mullaitivu. However, there was a breakdown in the way in which PTK leadership handled membership and loan approvals to next of kin, as mentioned in the ILO report.

### 7.3 Effectiveness

- a) To what extent was the intervention's employment and peacebuilding/social cohesion outputs and outcomes achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement of outcomes?
- b) Is the theory of change based on valid assumptions?

To what extent did the synergies, linkages and coherence between the peacebuilding and employment/development objectives contribute to effectiveness? How effective has the extent of integration of ILO and WFP programming, budgeting and resources for effective delivery and achievement of objectives been in the project

The PBF funded EMPOWER project helped raise key peacebuilding and peace enhancement priorities and address the root causes of fragility in a post conflict environment. It helped raise the importance of linking peacebuilding and peace enhancement initiatives with a women led cooperative movement, and prioritize jobs, skills, and employment as the building blocks of resilience. All stakeholders believe that the EMPOWER project had a positive impact through the activities funded by the PTK Cooperative. The EMPOWER project and its peacebuilding or in this case peace enhancement component was clearly linked to employment outcomes, as shown by its private sector growth and linkages.

As stated in the project report to the PBF in November, 2019, the project continued to support agriculture based income generating activities to members of the PTK Women's Cooperative with support in procurement, training and capacity building measures of different kinds.

Effectiveness was also evidenced with the inter agency collaboration between ILO, WFP and the UN PBF in the EMPOWER project and what it was able to achieve. Policies and implementation structures at headquarter and country level operations took into account the cost and complexities that affect collaboration at field office and programme levels in administering optimal collaborative programming to achieve effectiveness in outcomes. This was linked to the leadership roles that were played out as mentioned earlier.

The initial project implementation delays affected the achievement of effectiveness in terms of its achievement of outcomes and outputs. Additionally, an internal audit and its findings in August, 2019 also led to the project implementation being halted for a few months (the audit was not available at the time of the end term evaluation).

The theory of change adopted stated that:

**IF** war-affected women and female-headed households are engaged in income generating activities in the agricultural sector, participate in management of cooperative, and ; develop business with partners beyond their own communities and ethnic groups;

**THEN** they are more likely to gain greater decision-making roles in their community and be more involved in reconciliation and conflict risk mitigation

**BECAUSE** they will be able to make visible and economically independent contributions and benefits to their society.

The ILO Handbook provides guidance for the formulation and design of Theory of Change (TOC) frameworks in post conflict zones for peace and resilience programmes. These guidelines emphasize the importance of mainstreaming peacebuilding results into employment programmes and building evidence and knowledge on the Theory of Change. An important element of design is for teams to conduct fragility analysis, formulate specific peacebuilding outcomes and indicators, and establish baselines. Evidence of

these inputs were not easy to find in the EMPOWER project. The earliest record was the concept note that was signed in 2017, by the Government, ILO, WFP and the PBF Office in Colombo. This concept note provided some evidence of a desk review which covered some aspects of a problem analysis, and stakeholder analysis as recommended by the ILO Handbook. However, as mentioned earlier the Theory of Change was built primarily around one driver of conflict, Lack of Opportunities.

The UN defines<sup>15</sup> peacebuilding as the process to prevent the resurgence of conflict and create the conditions necessary for sustainable peace in war torn societies. The definition of sustaining peace is one where it is the process for managing conflict risk, creating peace in the long term and providing the basic opportunity for economic development. The Theory of Change for EMPOWER reflected a combination of both elements in its formulation overall given the institutional environment surrounding the Northern Province and the protracted crises situation in Sri Lanka. The drivers of conflict in Sri Lanka and the Northern Province in particular were well defined in the TOC, and in terms of project focus namely: these were linked to unemployment and insufficient rights and quality at work, a lack of contact and interactions across different social groups; lack of opportunities, especially for women and youth, including lack of contact and the existence of grievances over inequality and violations of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). All the above areas were taken into account at different levels, in the project in terms of defining the interventions and measures to help build employment programs through the domain of agro centric engagement and help contribute to peacebuilding throughout the project implementation period.

The EMPOWER project adopted a conflict sensitive gender, disability and ethnicity responsive approach with a targeted focus on the vulnerabilities of ex combatants in Mullaitivu. An analytical view of the manner in which this was reflected in the results that the team achieved working systematically through the establishment of linkages with the private sector, and building and mainstreaming peacebuilding results at different levels as evidenced in the project profiles. The peacebuilding outcomes and indicator profiles that were formulated did not take into account some of the key factors of growth and success typically seen in agro centric interventions. The performance indicator profiles had multidimensional aspects for measuring results achieved, but the indicator profiles were linear in approach. This led to the EMPOWER team not recognizing important elements in the manner in which they had been able to build both resilience and social dialogue at different levels in the project with good results. Discussions with the PTK Women's Cooperative also reflected the importance of the manner in which small amounts of funding and the PBF in particular helped to contribute to peacebuilding, social cohesion and economic empowerment at different levels.

**Table 1: Objectives and Outcome framework of the EMPOWER Project in Sri Lanka**

EMPOWER	Outcomes	Outputs and Activities
<b>Broad Outcome or Goal</b>	<b>Overall project outcome statement:</b> Reducing the risk of economic marginalization in Sri Lanka acting as a driver for further conflict through the cooperative economic empowerment and greater involvement in private sector	

<sup>15</sup> ILO Handbook How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes, 2019.

	peacebuilding of female former combatants and other conflict - affected women.	
<b>Outcome 1</b>	Female former combatant 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Developing analytical, social networking and business strategy skills</li> <li>➤ Improving social and business language skills, and</li> <li>➤ Improving business start-up management/technical skills required for marginalized women to access technical inputs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Outcome 2:</b> Female former combatant and other conflict-affected women leverage their increased social status to be a leading voice in the region’s private sectors’ contribution to peace building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output 2.1 : The women’s cooperative gains the knowledge, 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</li> <li>• Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improving peace awareness and skills</li> <li>➤ Building peace related networks, and</li> <li>➤ Strengthening supporting peace related actions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

A close review of the Results Framework reflected the poor design elements in terms of the manner in which the linkages between the downstream indicators were built in the Theory of Change. The ILO Handbook Guidelines for formulating Peacebuilding operations provide a clear series of instructions on the formulation of indicators and measures, these should have been adopted by the team. The haste to provide a results framework without thought to the importance of identifying the right measures seems to have been overlooked. The adopted framework, had outcomes which had multiple elements for measure, and performance indicators that were formulated for measurement, with no clear distinction between outcome indicators and output indicators. A more effective approach would have been to divide the outcome into distinct categories of objectives and corresponding performance indicators whether outcome or output, that would allow teams to measure and report meaningfully. A review of the progress reports presented another side on monitoring. The M&E annex to the project reporting period and project reports that were submitted to the PBF Support Office, reflected an M&E framework with a table clearly listing outcome and output indicator profiles in the framework, but the reporting was minimal. It seems that this was the intent, but it was not followed through. Indicator profiles must be distinctly built as outcome indicators, outputs indicators, and corresponding targets. Provided in the Annex to this report is a single lens profile of aspects that should have been measured based on the current outcomes and outputs measures with a listing of output indicator profiles. Additional areas could also be added, with a clear distinction and listing of components, capacity building, knowledge creation, technical support, and infrastructure support for management and improved practices of agriculture, etc. This categorization would help teams report more succinctly.

The M&E framework and indicator profiles failed to capture the results and effectiveness of project outcomes in terms of private sector led growth profiles and economic empowerment of PTK members during the duration of EMPOWER. At end term, the team had achieved several results and outcomes, but these were not reported due to an incomplete tool for measurement in terms of indicators.

A review of the indicator profiles reflected the need for better design elements of M&E at inception, and more enhanced training and advanced learning to close the knowledge gaps and develop more effective programmes of ILO teams on the ground who are tasked with M&E design. The EMPOWER project M&E framework at conceptualization was formulated by a young UNV staff member/assistant with low skills in evaluation design. Field staff found it difficult to comprehend the indicator profiles to reflect effective programming and results, and ended up reporting out of the need to ensure compliance. The CTO had experience, and knowledge for donor reporting and programme management principles and was able to fulfill reporting requirements with some level of clarity.

EMPOWER progress reports to the PBF Regional Office, reflected some additional results. Early recognition of the importance of the cooperative model and its effectiveness to reach communities was a best practice element for the PBF. It helped enable enhanced agricultural production, greater visibility, voice and negotiating power to ex combatant women headed farming households in a post conflict zone where many faced isolation. It also played a key role in ensuring continuity, building capacity and improved contact between communities. It proved that the cooperative model was effective in supporting women's empowerment as it enabled social aspects of women's challenges and issues to be addressed.

Capacity building measures included ex combatant women, farmers organizations, youth, PTK cooperative members, with technical assistance measures ranging from agricultural management practices, to communication and leadership, governance and business activities of cooperatives, importance of reconciliation processes, importance of working with other ethnic groups, gender and peacebuilding. The peacebuilding aspects of the project involved harnessing the creativity and innovation of youth to generate effective messages that resonate with the community. Fifty youth were trained in leadership, gender and peacebuilding. They used the medium of forum theatres and street drama to engage with more than 400 community members with a range of topics covering inner peace, conflict management, peace building and communication, which were used as the basis for community dialogue.

Another reflection of a best practice element was the economic empowerment of women, with the establishment of nineteen sub cooperatives, which were formed and strengthened during the first year of implementation, with the formation of the *change agent network*. Thirty of the 54 women who were trained were identified as change agent leaders. Their role was to facilitate the process of finding appropriate solutions to issues affecting women and their households, by referring them to relevant stakeholders and government authorities. Discussions at end term with the change agent leaders reflected the importance of the EMPOWER project, and its capacity building measures, wherein they requested help from the Agriculture Divisional Director to provide opportunities for learning about handling risks, knowledge on agriculture value chains, and market linkages for agriculture.

In discussing results, the work of the EMPOWER project and its links to agricultural production in the region must also be recognized. In Mullaitivu district, the project successfully implemented the first ever attempt of ginger cultivation using a sprinkler irrigation system at commercial scale. The harvesting of ginger was ceremonially celebrated in the early phase of the project in Puthukudyiruppu, indicating the possibilities of successful cultivation and economic empowerment. One farmer with a successful cultivation could harvest over 650 kg of ginger from a single plot of land: bringing in a hefty income of LKR 169,000.

“The ginger cultivation has been introduced by the PTK cooperative, with the technical support of the Department of Agriculture. Initially, it was viewed as impossible, but after the successful harvest, most farmers are now motivated to engage more in cultivation of this crop. As this is a first harvest, my family and I are really encouraged” –K. Maiththira, 43 years, Puthukkudiyiruppu East.” Refer, PBF Project Report, , May, 2019.

Torrential rains and floods in December, 2018, led to the destruction of almost 45% of the crops. The Department of Agriculture provided support for disease control measures after the flooding, to minimize the effects of the fungicide.

Evidence of good coordination and cooperation in the EMPOWER project with local government platforms was evident, with the linkages to the Department of Agriculture, Northern Province. This Department, together with the provincial ministry, created marketing opportunities for the sale of ginger produced by the project. They encourages and facilitated women farmers to sell and buy of agriculture product in the social media of “Govipola”. Additionally, the Grain legume and Oil Crops Research and Development Centre recommended the introduction of other varieties of ground nut in the Mullaitivu district, and provided different varieties of seeds to develop a demonstration farm. They pledged to create market opportunities for seed material of these varieties in future.

The report<sup>16</sup> also stated that the number of beneficiaries had exceeded what was initially envisaged, with 426 beneficiaries for agriculture and SME development out of a total membership of 1830. “A particularly important aspect of enhanced production and incomes has been crop diversification. This has been supported by an intensive series of trainings and a number of exposure visits. Diversification is benefiting the wider community. The commercial-level ginger cultivation piloted by EMPOWER has been recognized by the Department of Agriculture (DOA) as a key crop that can be further developed in the local division. The DOA commended discussions with the provincial ministry to obtain assistance for more farmers to engage in commercial-scale ginger cultivation. The construction of 50 wells was completed, with 46 directly included for agriculture beneficiaries who have been supported with agriculture inputs. Skills development to open access to decent work was also significant in the community. 158 beneficiaries were supported for MSE development during the reporting period. 55 (35%) beneficiaries received assistance for tailoring, since the market for stitched clothing is high in the area. 48 (30%) beneficiaries were supported for food processing through the MSME development. Women were able to engage in non-traditional occupations in their MSMEs such as cement post manufacturing, leather products and milling, traditionally male-dominated activities. The upgrading of techniques and agricultural intensification was facilitated through four seeder machines and 6 inter-cultivators which support new farming technologies for higher yield. Upstream and downstream linkages were developed, with the PTK coop initiating a business with other coops by renting out machines, thereby improving their farming practices. This also contributed in large measure to reducing community tensions in receiving assistance, and helped contribute towards peacebuilding activities. The initiative also helped facilitate regular interaction between coops and develop relationships for better project delivery, as well as long term sustainability, the report stated. On the income generation side, the project explores different business models to be implemented, these included a participatory backyard poultry rearing project on a commercial scale, an agriculture input sales center in the PTK division, and a Moringa field for harvesting leaves for the dehydration and export business. These measures were linked to the sustainability measures adopted for the project.

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<sup>16</sup> PBF Progress Report, June, 2019.

The fragility of Sri Lanka must also be recognized in the peace building context, in April 2019, the Easter bombing resulted in a paralysis of several activities and movement of goods. The country as a whole, including the Northern Province witnessed imposing of heightened security measures such as police and military checkpoints on the roads. Given the altered operational context, the implementation of some of the project activities were delayed, including beneficiary selection, the construction of a packaging house for agricultural produce, and the procurement of agricultural equipment.

The earlier discussion on private sector linkages and growth in PTK membership, growth in SMEs and Growth in SME loans, must also be taken into consideration as positive efforts towards effectiveness in the project overall. The indicator profile and reporting of November, 2019 provided a discussion of the growth of PTK membership and the growth in the income of the PTK Women's Cooperative. The provision of loans in small amounts was the single most attributable factor to results achieved. Additional efforts in capacity building measures, and training efforts in terms of outcomes were extrapolated based on the evidence found in the progress reports and is provided in a template in the Annex.

#### 7.4 Efficiency

- a) Did the intervention substitute local initiatives or did it come in addition to local initiatives?
- b) What has been the impact of integrating women's empowerment with peacebuilding goals on the efficiency of the programme?
- c) How efficiently have resources (human resources, time, expertise, funds etc) been allocated and used to provide the necessary support and to achieve the broader project objectives and results?
- d) What aspects of the project could be done differently to cut costs while still delivering achievements and achieve outcomes?

The PBF as a financing instrument is expected to provide a fast response and also demonstrate both flexibility and adaptability on the ground. Efficiency was affected at different stages of project implementation.

The portfolio of work was hampered by several issues that limited the efficiency of the PBF funded project, in terms of project design, management and oversight. The rushed proposal approval process hindered complementarity and linkage between the project partners and careful designing at inception which are critical elements to programming. Additionally, internal bureaucratic requirements, and procurement delays slowed the allocation and release of funds which further delayed project implementation by three months of an 18 month project timeline.

Given the project implementation delays, and the large volume of funding that was available towards the middle of 2019, the PBF team provided both adaptability and flexibility in providing a no cost extension to the project giving them a period of six months, and allowing a project completion of December, 2019. Despite this financial outlays showed that almost 25 percent funds would not be utilized as planned at completion. An additional request for an extension to the PBF in November, 2019 was turned down by the authorities. Most of the budget commitments for WFP were already taken into account, but ILO funding showed a portfolio balance which would then be returned to the donor.

Institutional and organizational constraints largely affected efficiency of the project overall. Like many other PBF operations in post conflict zones, the EMPOWER project was also affected by key issues in the relationship, roles and responsibilities between field actors, which was the most significant inefficiency and consequences for project coherence, oversight and accountability. This was pointed out by the internal review that was carried out in March, 2019. However, correction measures taken by the ILO team

led to a quick turn around and progress in the project. By end term, several outcomes and results especially in the context of private sector led growth had been over achieved.

### 7.5 Potential Impact

- a. How far did the activity contribute to peacebuilding outcomes, and the enhancement and sustenance of peace?
- b. How far did the employment activities potentially impact peace enhancing norms and behaviour (on the sustainable socio-economic integration) of the 1 beneficiaries?
- c. What were the intervention's long term effects in terms of reducing/exacerbating:
- d. Gender inequalities and gender based discrimination of conflict affected women?
- e. Inequalities and exclusion faced by ex-combatant women?
- f. To what extent did the project bring lasting changes in norms and policies that favour/promote:
- g. Gender parity and non-discrimination of conflict affected women?
- h. Inequalities in exclusion of ex combatant women and links to jobs and markets?
- i. Has the intervention made a difference to specific SDGs to which the project is linked? If so, how has the intervention made a difference? (explicitly or implicitly)
- j. How did the team report on results achieved in terms of program interventions and inputs?
- k. Were the M&E framework and indicator profiles used adequate to allow for results and impact to be measured and reported?

Given the fact that the conflict in the Northern Province had a ten year period of peace, the EMPOWER project was timely in helping enhance peace and economic empowerment of ex combatant women and vulnerable communities. Discussions with different groups including PTK Cooperative Board members, change management agents, beneficiaries were focused on the manner in which the project sought to help build resilience and enhance peace through empowerment.

Measuring potential impact in a short term project input, like that of a financing modality like the PBF was not an easy task to either measure, or report against and presents its own set of limitations. Short to medium term potential impact may at best be reflected in the catalytic manner in which the EMPOWER project was able to build different dimensions of private sector led growth in a low growth post conflict environment like Mullaitivu. However, the singular measure of potential impact of the EMPOWER project and the PBF was the economic empowerment of the ex-combatant women built in small measures through agro centric inputs, building effective linkages with the Private sector conglomerate Hayleys Agro, the SME growth, and the growth of the loan profiles as discussed earlier. At end term, data had not yet been procured but discussions with the Bank Manager and PTK members seemed to indicate that more than 90 per cent loans had been repaid in full at end term. Other measures of impact were the manner in which the PTK members who led SMEs were able to build jobs, and enhance employment in the community with a range of hiring between 1-5 daily wage workers, and in some instances even greater numbers of 5-10 workers per SME, depending on seasonality of the crops and the SME activity that had been built. Discussions with the PTK members, at different levels, Board members, beneficiaries, change management agents, and Government officials from both the Agricultural Division, the Provincial Cooperative Division, and the Government Agent, reiterated the importance of the programme inputs from EMPOWER to the community in Mullaitivu and its potential impact during discussions. (Refer to field discussions in the Annex)



## 7.6 Resilience

- a) How has the intervention formulated design elements for measuring resilience in the project if at all and how well?
- b) Does the team provide measures of resilience and how are these measures reported?
- c) How is resilience contextualized in the context of the PTK and its interventions during the project period?

There are many different ways of measuring resilience, built on different theories, different components and different population differentials. Depending on the context in which it is applied, one resilience scale may be more appropriate than others. The discussion of Resilience and its measure in the context of the EMPOWER project in Mullaitivu was built based on the in depth discussions with the PTK members and the manner in which the project contributed to several aspects of building livelihoods. It is important to recognize that the project was implemented during a phase of peace enhancement rather than a peace building phase at that period in time. Given the short mission duration, a broad categorization and discussion is provided below.

Resilience challenges may fall into two or more broad categories<sup>17</sup>:

- Shocks: challenges which tend to be more episodic with a quicker, often more unpredictable onset, such as floods, earthquakes, strikes or disease outbreaks.
- Stresses: challenges which tend to be more chronic with a slower onset and occur on a day to day or cyclical basis, e.g., low agricultural labour growth rates, high unemployment, high costs of doing business, intermittent power supply, inefficient public utilities, chronic food and water shortages.

Resilience refers to the capacity of entities whether individuals, communities, institutions, businesses or systems to survive, adapt, and even grow in the face of these shocks and stresses.

In the context of a peace building project like that of EMPOWER, resilience can be considered from two aspects:

1. **How the EMPOWER project contributes to building resilience in its local context, its “resilience benefit”,** e.g., by providing or upgrading water infrastructure in a paddy field to overcome chronic shortages of water while ensuring broader access, infrastructure projects can help a neighbourhood, city, country or even a broader region survive, adapt and grow in the face of specific shocks or chronic stresses.

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<sup>17</sup> The Project Development Facility to Support Infrastructure to Build Resilience, “Resilience Screen” Guidance and Background Information”, Giridhar N Srinivasan, World Bank, 2015

2. **How a project is itself resilient in nature**, e.g., through specific planning, design, and construction practices, project assets in the form of an infrastructure asset itself can be said to be resilient if it is able to withstand shocks such as droughts, floods, and natural disasters.

In Mullaitivu, resilience was defined by the PTK cooperative members in the context of rebuilding their own livelihoods, in terms of economic resilience, social resilience, and translated to economic empowerment, and the “courage to build better and stronger communities in the agrarian space”. The problems the team faced with physical and environmental risks reflected the absence of the projects ability to build physical and environmental resilience. Leadership in the project, however seemed to have been built through process and capacity building technical inputs provided by the ILO and WFP teams. The Deputy UN Resident Coordinator and the PBF donor spoke at length about the importance of the technical leadership and skills that the two agencies brought to the project through their expertise in the agro centric cooperatives by ILO, the linkages to jobs and labor, and the strength of WFP in the context of water, irrigation and wells in post conflict environments.

The discussions also pointed to the importance of linking resilience with a good identification of risks, which had not been done.

Resilience was defined as economic empowerment at the simplest level, in the EMPOWER project. The PTK women’s cooperative built resilience through its linkages and work carried out through the SMEs, small holder farming entities and micro-credit loans. The project may consider a more in-depth briefing note on how this was realized in terms of effectiveness.

A project may contribute to building economic, social and physical and environmental resilience in combination with multiple design elements. Economic and social resilience were built by meeting basic needs, providing livelihoods, and strengthening individuals and a community to cope with and adapt to a post conflict environment, its stresses and shocks. Additionally, physical and environmental resilience was built by the provision of natural and physical assets, water and other infrastructure inputs for wells etc., by the WFP team, the technical assistance and training provided by ILO, the provision of loans through the cooperative, the timely linkage with the private sector and identification of markets, and the support by the Government entities at all levels. The limited time frame of the evaluation did not allow for an in depth review of how the team had actually carried out or begun the process of resilience strengthening through process and capacity building.

In the case of the EMPOWER project the agro centric domain of the project and the difficulties that the project faced with the “Ginger” and “Drumstick leaves”, or Moringa leaves, production and harvesting losses due to floods also project the failure to identify project and environmental risks; key areas that speak to the importance of linking risks and resilience in a timely manner. Additionally, it is important to recognize that defining project Resilience relies on capturing the interdependence between different system components. Failing to capture these interdependencies can result in outcomes that are detrimental from a resilience perspective, as shown in the example here.

The End Term Evaluation did not have the luxury of time to define the factors pertaining to “resilience benefit” and project resilience in a more in depth manner, however, it was much easier to build the resilience factor in the projects local context.

The ILO and WFP might look to building this as a case study going forward, and drawing lessons from the events.

## 7.7 Risks

- How has the intervention formulated design of risks in the projects, and how well?
- How have evaluations on similar projects in Sri Lanka defined project and program risks at different levels?
- What risks did the project face which were not identified at inception and how did the team mitigate these risks if at all?

The project concept note, to the PBF defined risks in a more collative manner listing out a series of risks at inception. However, a more rigorous risk analysis within the context of the project's local environment, was missing. Typically, within a few months of project implementation it was easy to see how and why defining a risk framework would have been beneficial to the project given its agro centric nature. The risk framework is a relatively new area of focus for projects. Projects led by other development actors especially the International multi-lateral institutions like the World Bank Group and Asian Development have commenced defining risks at multiple levels, across and within sectors. The PBF had formulated rudiments of a risk framework, however, mitigation measures were not adequately defined.

The project faced a series of risks, which can be defined at multiple levels to name a few:

- Project risks
- Environmental risks
- Financial risks
- Exogenous risks
- Sustainability risks
- Institutional and Organizational risks
- Integrity risks, and
- Operational risks

Formulating a risk framework with mitigation measures at inception as part of its project planning exercise would have helped the teams recognize the onset of risks and plan and act accordingly. The project had excellent linkages with the private sector given its agro centric focus, through cooperatives. Forecasting risks, and working towards solutions would have helped the team early on.

## 7.8 Sustainability:

- a) Are there changes in behaviours, sense of ownership and institutions that will sustain the objectives after the activity has finished?
- b) Has a meaningful "hand-over" or exit strategy been developed with local partners/actors to enable them to continue their own employment for peace initiatives?
- c) Has the approach been strategic and exploited on the comparative advantage of the ILO i.e. has it involved tripartite constituents (especially the Employer Federation of Ceylon (EFC) and local trade unions) in Sri Lanka? What is the level of commitment of the tripartite constituencies to, and support for, the project? How has that affected the project to achieve effectiveness and impact?
- d) To what extent has the work contributed toward promoting ILO's mandate on the following:
  - social dialogue,
  - international labour standards, as well as
  - ILO's goal of gender equality, disability inclusion,
  - non-discrimination, and
  - social cohesion in the target community?

What were the facilitating and limiting factors in the project's contribution or absence to these cross cutting issues?

With project financing modalities like the PBF which are a short term modality, and a duration of less than a few years, it was too early in reality to determine sustainability. Project and program sustainability was questionable with the very design of the EMPOWER project in terms of its financing instrument, with the PBF short term instrument with long term financing outcomes and results. The disconnect between the two were glaring to begin with.

Despite this, there were some promising indications of a few initiatives likely to be sustained given the strong linkages to the private sector which were carried out in a coordinated manner for the benefit of local beneficiaries. Institutional and financial project sustainability was questioned by the Government officials at provincial and divisional levels. Officials felt that the EMPOWER project had high relevance given its project design elements but fell short of its targets and outcomes due to poor leadership of the PTK itself. Programme reports flagged the absence of a sustainability plan for the PTK Cooperative itself and the need to ensure reliability and feasibility in its operational planning tools. Careful design elements that allow measures to attain and build sustainability in a cost effective manner are key to good programming. Sustainability is seldom built overnight or in short measures, the need to better understand interventions that are key to ensure the long term sustainability of programmes and projects once donor support is phased out remain critical for all stakeholders concerned at all levels.

However, during discussions with the EMPOWER team in Colombo and in the last progress report, there were indications that an exit strategy and sustainability plan aligned with project outcomes had been developed and was going to be presented to the steering committee before project completion. It was expected that this plan would help support the PTK cooperative to help develop joint responsibility with local and regional stakeholders towards sustainability efforts. The involvement of local government representatives in the steering committee was expected to strengthen linkages to government and facilitate continued support to the PTK Cooperative. However, the ILO team was fairly frustrated in its inability to make the PTK Women's Cooperative comprehend the importance of such a measure at completion.

The best example of financial sustainability was the Partnership built with the Hayley's Agro conglomerate. The Hayley's Agro Partnership was built at several levels, the partnership with ILO, the Department of Cooperative Development at provincial level, the Department of Agriculture at divisional level, and the Partnership with the PTK Women's Cooperative. Roles and responsibilities were equally distributed among the various stakeholders, leading to accountability and ownership in planning and implementation. Plans included the provision of capacity building and training of farmers on planting, water, crop management and harvesting of Aloe Vera. Project interventions included the introduction of new technology to ensure efficiency in water management, sharing of best practices based on their work in the Eastern province to improve production and quality, and the facilitation and provision of high quality of seedlings to ensure that the cultivated Aloe Vera are of high quality for export, and use for medical purposes. A complete buy-back agreement with farmers assuring them a consistent price for Aloe Vera cultivation throughout the year was also put in place. The partnership was combined with water management practices, improved farming practices and establishing new value chains to create jobs in the rural areas towards enhancing livelihoods and household income. The partnership plans and strategy took into account the Aloe Vera requirement of intense farming practices for efficient crop production.

Discussions with the Hayley's focal point reflected the efficiency gains in working with the ILO EMPOWER project, whereby, the team was able to identify farmers in a short span of time, with the PTK

cooperative, and hoped to increase the identification in the region to 1000 farmers. The task of identifying farmers individually was time consuming and the team leader welcomed the option of working with the EMPOWER project in this regard.

Despite the above issues, the project was able to achieve some level of program sustainability given the agro centric focus and the links to the private sector player and market demand of its agricultural products as mentioned above. Sustainability plans between the private sector and PTK members and women farmers were already conceptualized. It is this element that will remain sustained even after EMPOWER ends. The entire project was built around a women owned, women-led intervention in a post-conflict environment drawing from the success of the ILO experience with the LEEDS project.

Programme sustainability seemed elusive, with the PBF financing modality. Despite a fair amount of funding being available at completion, the project was closed on December 31, 2019. Given the importance of the agro-centric design elements in a post conflict environment, and the success of being able to engage cooperatives as a catalytic and strategic instrument in enhancing peacebuilding this evaluation recommends that the ILO Country Office, work towards, building a Multi Donor Trust Fund with programmatic elements to help build and further the essence of the EMPOWER project. In addition, to raise the women's economic level, to empower them with increased jobs and skills, and to strengthen resilience in the Northern Province.

## 7.9. Special aspects to be considered

Special aspects to be considered included the fragility context and the manner in which the team were able to build programme inputs with the right parameters in a short period of time.

Early design elements of the project in targeting ex combatant women, women headed farming households, disabled, war widows, marginalized and vulnerable women, with a self-help cooperative and community based organizations was the winning strategy in supporting and promoting livelihoods, empowering the community at large, enabling them to find their voice in decision making, enhancing social dialogue in an otherwise marginalized environment, strengthening small scale businesses and SMEs as long lasting measures towards, peace building and enhancement of peace.

ILO's focus on the Northern Province, where cooperatives, and associations in the agriculture sector had a rich history of supporting livelihoods, access to markets, delivering input supplies, collective purchasing and marketing, credit facilities and social welfare services before the war, presenting a winning environment for success. Additionally, the institutional and organizational support provided by the Department of Agriculture and Department of Cooperatives went a long way in ensuring programme coherence with the right linkages at local level. Additionally, the focus on climate adaptation measures, efficient irrigation methods and other cropping techniques proved vital to building resilience and promoting agriculture outputs and productivity.

Gender equality and disability inclusion were apparent in the membership of the PTK Women's cooperative and the beneficiaries of the EMPOWER project at the time of discussions of the End Term Evaluation. In 2019<sup>18</sup>, the PTK members who were trained as change agents, supported victims of gender based violence in the community by linking them to public institutions and other support mechanisms. The change agents also helped provide a voice for marginalized groups in the local community. The support included female entrepreneurs being linked with the Chamber of Commerce (CC) in Jaffina. Through this network the women receive opportunities to participate in training on Food Quality,

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<sup>18</sup> PBF Progress Report, June 2019.

Hygiene, Management and Packaging. The Chamber of Commerce also continues to provide business development service and training as mentioned earlier to the PTK Women’s Cooperative. PTK beneficiaries themselves are ex combatants who suffered injuries and deal with disabilities of different kinds. During the discussions, more than 20 percent of the women who attended the discussions for the end term evaluation were disabled in some way or another.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The PBF funded EMPOWER project led by ILO and WFP contributed to the objectives and priorities defined by the project, which was: “Reducing the risk of economic marginalization in Sri Lanka acting as a driver for further conflict through the cooperative economic empowerment and greater involvement in private sector peacebuilding of female former combatants and other conflict -affected women”. The project was built with a cooperative agro centric enterprise engagement model linked to new markets, networks and opportunities that opened as a results of a post improved post conflict environment in 2017. It was aligned with the PBF, ILO and WFP mandate and mission, country sector strategies, the Government of Sri Lanka national strategy, and the Sri Lanka Peacebuilding Priority Plan, It was also aligned with the government’s policy, strategy and plans at the national, provincial, district and division levels in providing support for the affected population affected by almost three decades of conflict in the Northern Province. The project took a nonconventional approach away from the traditional humanitarian approach in a post-conflict context by adopting a value-chain development approach for creating and sustaining livelihoods. It addressed the needs of the poor, ex combatant women, female-headed, and marginal producers with measures to rebuild their lives with a community based cooperative and technical support to build livelihoods, with capacity building interventions and financial inclusion measures. The projects intervention logic was to enhance support for value chain development of micro and small enterprises and business development services, and linkages with private sector led companies. The project was a PBF funded intervention with an implementation timeline of 18 months. At end term the evaluation found that the project had directly contributed in large measure towards the improvement of livelihoods for members through the provision of training, access to irrigation, and inputs for agriculture as part of its efforts to consolidate agriculture based livelihood activities for members of the PTK Women’s Cooperative.

1. **This evaluation recommends that ILO and WFP document the results achieved by EMPOWER:** The team needs to document best practice elements of private sector led growth, and the EMPOWER experience based on an agro centric cooperative movement in a post conflict zone with clear links to employment and economic empowerment outcomes among vulnerable women. ILO studies show that projects of this kind are difficult to find in post conflict zones and would help teams recognize important programming elements for design at inception. WFP’s interventions helped increase production yields and potentially food security elements and livelihoods of communities, and contributed to SDG 2: Ending Zero Hunger; implicit links to these were evident; documenting these elements are key to its role.

2. **ILO must build its own financing facility:** ILO to look into conceptualizing and establishing a long term financing facility for women’s empowerment in poverty stricken zones in Sri Lanka, with an agro centric focus through cooperatives. The EMPOWER project was built to respond to one root cause of conflict, “Lack of opportunity”. The team was able to conceptualize a particularly unique intervention with an agro centric cooperative. The cooperative model in the post conflict zone that was particularly vulnerable, with high poverty rates, low employment, low labour growth rates, was the perfect platform to

build an intervention that would build and enable more effective outreach to communities. It not only enabled enhanced agricultural production, but also provides greater visibility, voice and negotiating power to ex combatant and marginalized women. It was the key element to ensure continuity, capacity building and improved contact between communities. The model was especially effective in supporting women's empowerment because it enabled social aspects of women's challenges and issues to be addressed. However, interventions of this kind in post conflict zones require long term measures especially when they are implemented in fragile states like Sri Lanka. This then leads to the importance and need for ILO TO EXPLORE ALTERNATE FUNDING MODALITIES with multiple donors, to build a multi donor trust fund for empowerment of women's cooperatives and other operational modalities linked to jobs, skills and economic empowerment going forward. Senior Government officials spoke of a long term planning and programming need for the Northern Province and questioned short term financing modalities as being operationally viable.

ILO to rethink financing modalities and options with a more feasible timeline for long term programming of projects that require long term horizons for impact and results. The PBF instrument financing modality with its short term financing and long term results horizon was impractical in post conflict zone as an instrument. Programming for jobs, skills and decent work, and building measures to ensure and enhance economic empowerment must be conceptualized with the right design elements and tools that are balanced in its nuances and operational feasibility at ground level especially in post conflict environments.

### **3. Building Sustainability dimensions at inception and implementation of the Project at all levels:**

Careful design elements that allow measures to attain and build sustainability in a cost effective manner are key to good programming. Sustainability is seldom built overnight or in short measures, the need to better understand interventions that are key to ensure the long term sustainability of programmes and projects once donor support is phased out remain critical for all stakeholders concerned at all levels.

The project must work to design and build sustainability from inception of the program, at different levels. Institutional sustainability measures included multiple efforts by the ILO with the PTK to build a sustainability plan that was in alignment with the PTK mission, and the region given its high levels of poverty and low levels of equality and labour participation rates. However, despite these efforts, the PTK failed to show interest in developing a solid sustainability plan. The Government functionaries, and Divisional Heads were of the opinion, that the political agenda of the PTK leadership led to the failure of the PTK recognizing that this was an important element in project management in the long run. Important to note that the ILO team was able to build sustainability measures at project level, through the private sector led partnership with Hayley's Agro, who had identified farmers from the PTK Women's Cooperative and engaged them with an agreement and further the potential of working with at least 1000 farmers by 2020. Both long and short term measures are required to build sustainability, given the nature of the post conflict zone. Organizational and institutional sustainability were also linked to capacity building measures of the PTK itself, and were difficult to build at various levels. Another example was the inability to build financial management capacity of the administrative staff of the PTK Office, given the high staff turnover. Operational risks in building sustainability had not been defined in the design of the project either.

**4. Importance of designing monitoring processes and results frameworks that reflect the relevance of the Theory of Change outcome profiles:** Despite excellent linkages and lessons learned in terms of design and implementation from the ILO LEEDS project and its various phases in Sri Lanka, the EMPOWER project did not adequately reflect good monitoring protocols or adequacy in terms of design elements of the Results Framework that was formulated downstream of the Theory of Change process to

monitor and report on the EMPOWER project outcomes. Although the Theory of Change was broadly defined and linked to a single indicator in terms of the drivers of conflict namely that of “Lack of opportunities for employment of women”; the indicators downstream both in terms of effectiveness and coherence were not adequately linked to the overall outcome profiles of the project. Baselines were practically absent in the indicator profiles that had been formulated, and the project reflected the absence of clear monitoring and evaluation arrangements and meaningful indicators for reporting. Both monitoring activities of the development activities and process monitoring failed to capture the important elements of project success and potential achievement of results in the project overall. Teams must pay due diligence to the formulation of Results Framework protocols and ensure that they are linked adequately to the Theory of Change principles to allow for adequacy in Measuring, Monitoring and Reporting of Good Results in short term financing modalities that require careful planning measures to elicit good results. Additionally, neither the ILO nor WFP teams had come to terms with the fact that the PBF was a short term financing modality which expected long term results and impact.

**5. ILO Headquarters and an enhanced role in formulating guidance tools:** The ILO Handbook on designing, and implementing Peacebuilding Projects for results, must be linked to other analytical instruments on operational peace building areas that help identify the building blocks for good project design; and may include a systematic exercise in the form of a conflict and peacebuilding analysis of PBF funded projects in post conflict zones, and regions. ILO must consider building a repository of lessons and good practices of PBF projects, to help develop peacebuilding/social cohesion outcomes, indicators, and baselines from the conceptualization and design stage through the entire project cycle, with careful attention to staffing, and training based on the experience of the ILO Handbook, How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes, 2019.

#### Recommendations:

Recommendation	Responsible Agency	Priority
Documentation of project results with good practices and achievements, with multiple knowledge products from inception of the project.	ILO and WFP, PBF	High
ILO must build its own financing facility:	ILO	High
Building Sustainability dimensions at inception and implementation of the Project at all levels	ILO	High
Importance of designing monitoring processes and results frameworks that reflect the relevance of the Theory of Change outcome profiles:	ILO and WFP	High
ILO Headquarters should have an enhanced role in formulating guidance tools:	ILO HQ unit related to JPR	High

## 9. Annexes

- FIELD PLAN
- LIST OF OFFICIALS AND PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED, NOVEMBER 5-8, 2019
- LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES IN ILO FORMAT
- REFERENCES



## Annex: Field data collection Plan - Final evaluation-EMPOWER project

<b>Date and time</b>	<b>Title and the organization</b>	<b>Name</b>
03/11/2019	Meeting with ILO Programme Leader and Chief Technical Adviser, JPR, EMPOWER, Taj Samudra.	Thomas Kring.
04/11/2019 8.30-10.00 am	Meeting with WFP team Country Director WFP and M&E team	Brenda, Marie, Tushar
04/11/2019 10.15 am - 11.00 am	Meeting with Donor UNPBF and ILO Programme Leader, EMPOWER	Gita Sabharwal and Dushanthi Fernando
04/11/2019 11.00 am - 11.30 am	Discussion with ILO Finance and Budget and ILO Portfolio Officer, and briefing from ILO Technical Lead on EMPOWER.	Thayananth, Dilki, Thomas
04/11/2019 12.00 pm-9.00 pm	travelling by car from Colombo to Kilinochchi-Mullaitavu	Arrival in Mullaitavu
05/11/2019 8.30- 10.00 am	Meeting with National Project Coordinator, Capacity Building Officer , project assistant - Empower Project	Nihala Devagiri (NPC) Kaveri -(Capacity Building Officer) , Project Assistant-Vasu
05/11/2019 11.00 am - 1.00 pm	PTK Coop board and sub coop board members	
05/11/2019 1.45 pm - 3.15pm	Cooperative Development Officer (CDO), Assistant Commissioner of cooperative Development, Mullaitivu	Ms Consi
05/11/2019 3. 30 pm - 5.00 pm	Staff of PTK Meeting with National Project Coordinator, Capacity Building Officer , project assistant - Empower Project	Nihala Devagiri (NPC) Kaveri -(Capacity Building Officer) , Project Assistant-Vasu
6/11/2019, 9.00 am - 10.00 am	District Secretary( government Agent ) , District Secretariat, Mullaitivu/Additional Government Agent, Mullaitivu District. (Former Divisional Secretary, PTK, Mullaitivu)	Mrs. Roopavathy Ketheeswaran, Mr. Pratheepan Maruthalingam
6/11/2019, 10.30-11.30 am	Deputy Provincial Director, Department of Agriculture, Mullaitivu	Mr. Poopalapillai Uganathan
6/11/2019, 12noon - 1.00 pm	Divisional Secretary and Assistant Director Planning- DS Office, Puthukidiyiruppu (PTK) (THIS DID NOT TAKE PLACE DUE TO ELECTION MEETINGS)	Mr. Prathaban Indralingam/Mr. Selvarasa Navaneethan
6/11/2019, 3.00- 4.30 pm	Commissioner of Cooperative Development , Northern Province-Jaffina	Mr. Ponnampalam Vakeeshan
6/11/2019, 6.30 pm-7.30 pm	Marketing and Value chain development Officer,Hayleys (pvt) company	Mr. Saseelan
7/11/2019, 8.30- 10.30	Banana growers and Ginger growers	PTK , Mullaitivu

7/11/2019, 10.30-1.00pm	SMSEs – 2 ( confectionary, detergent producers etc. )	PTK , Mullaitivu
7/11/2019 2.00-3.00pm	Paddy drying bed construction - members from 3 farmer organization - 6 members	PTK , Mullaitivu
7/11/2019, 3.00-4.00 pm	Meeting with NGO	PTK , Mullaitivu
7/11/2019, 4.15-5.15 pm	Youth group – trained on journalism inputs, with a focus on conflict sensitive reporting -10	PTK , Mullaitivu
08/11/2019 8.30 - 9.30	Change agent group- 15 members	PTK , Mullaitivu
08/11/2019 9.30-10.15	Meeting with Rural Cooperative Bank Manager and Clerk	MS Ramanathan Abilasha Manager, Rural Bank, Women Entrepreneur coop Society Ms.Muniyandi Tharsi Clerk
08/11/2019 10.30-11.30	WFP field team	PTK , Mullaitivu
08/11/2019 1.30- 4.30 pm	Validation workshop	PTK , Mullaitivu
09/11/2019 7.00 am-2.00 pm	Return to Colombo from Kilinochchi by car	Kilinochchi to Colombo PG Travels
10/11/2019	Preparation of Debriefing Inputs	Colombo
11/11/2019 10.00 am	Meeting with EMPOWER Programme Leader	ILO Colombo
11/11/2019 10.30 am	Meeting with the ILO Country Director- Brief overview of findings, ILO role in EMPOWER	ILO Colombo
11/11/2019 11.30 am	Discussion with ILO Finance and Budget on the ILO EMPOWER financing options and overview.	ILO Colombo
11/11/2019 12.30 pm	Discussion with the ILO Portfolio technical officer- discussion of preliminary findings and inputs.	ILO Colombo
11/11/2019 3.00- 4.30 pm	Debriefing and discussion of preliminary findings with ILO, UNICEF, WFP and Donor teams	ILO Colombo
12/11/2019	END OF MISSION AND RETURN HOME	

## Participant List for the EMPOWER End Term Evaluation - 05.11.2019- 08.11.2019

No	Entities	Names	Designation
01	Rural Bank PTK Women Entrepreneur Cooperatives	MS Ramanathan Abilasha Ms.Muniyandi Tharsi	Manager, Rural Bank,Women Entrepreneur coop Society  Clerk
02	Women Entrepreneur Coop board members Sub members	Ms.Mary Consi Ms.Suntharalingam Ms.Kalaiselvi Ms.Kasinatahr Thevambikai Ms.Amuthasurabi Ms.Selvam Manjulaeivi Ms.Silvstar Vijaya Ms.Sivasubramaniyam Nandhini Ms.Krishnaumar Jeyaranjini. Gananseelan Rohitra Rohini	Cooperative Development Officer  President Vice president  Sub coop president Member  Secretary ,Sub coop  Member  Member  Member ,Former president  Member
03	Journalism training	Mr.Ms.A.Julia Thusanthi Mr.Mr .A.. Dilshan Mr.S.Saththiyapiriyam Mr.A.Climson	Youth group from PTK
04	Change agent group	Ms.Kasinathar Thevambikai Ms.Silverstar Vijaya Ms.Deron yalini Ms.Thankavadiivel Manjula Ms.Pathmanathan Kunachiththira Arulanantham Selvarani Kumaravadiivel Thayalini	Vice president Member Treasurer Member Sub coop president Member Sub coop president
05	Beneficiaries / Ground nut, Banana, Ginger Growers and SME beneficiaries	Ms.Suntharalingam Kalaiselvi Ms.Silverstar Vijaya Ms.Deron yalini Ms.Thankavadiivel Manjula Ms.Pathmanathan Kunachiththira Arulanantham Selvarani Kumaravadiivel Thayalini Ms.Anthonipillai Julia Thusanthi Vilvarasa Komala Sivakumar Mala Aruleswaran Santhiravathana	President and Well beneficiary Member Treasurer Member Sub coop president Member Sub coop president SME ,PTK Coop SME beneficiary ,Social Mobilizer SME ,Social mobilizer SME beneficiary

	Shankar Santhini	SME
	Thurairajasingam Sivakumari	SME
	Kannan Maiththira	Ginger
	T.Manjuladevi	Ginger

## Farmers Association Venue –Agrarian service Centre

No	Name	Area	Designation
1	P.Thillainathan	Mullivaaikaal West	Secretary
2	A.Firancis	Viswamadu	Secretary
3	P.Thirunamarasa	Udaiyarkaddu South	President
4	N.Thadshanamoorthi	Ampalavan Pokkanai	President
5	U.Kirubakaran	Suntharirapuram	President
6	S.Suthakaran	Devipuram	Vice President
7	Arul Paramanathan	Devipuram A	President
8	Abraham Lingan	Iruddumadu	President
09	N.Janarthan	ASC Puthukkudiyiruppu	Government officer
10	S.Pirabakaran	ASC, Government Officer Udaiyarkaddu	Government officer

**Validation workshop for Empower Final Evaluation**

Venue-District Secretariat, Mullaitivu

Date- 08.110.2019

Time-2.30-4.00 pm

	Name	Agency	Designation
1	Mr.N.Navaneethan	INNO Consultancy for ILO	Consultant
2	Mr.Devahiri Nihal	ILO	National Project Coordinator
3	Mr. S.Vasudev	ILO	Field coordinator
4	Ms.J.Kaveri	ILO	Capacity Development Officer
5	Ms.T.Kiruththiga	Interpreter ,ILO	Interpreter
6	Mr.Anura Lianake	WFP	Driver
7	Ms.S. Kalaiselvi.	PTK Women Cooperative	President
8	Ms. Abilasha	PTK Women Cooperative	Manager ,Rural Bank
9	Ms.M.M.Tharsiny	PTK Women Cooperative	Clerk
10	Ms.A.J.Thusanthy	PTK Women Cooperative	Field officer
11	Ms.A.Pushparaji	PTK Women Cooperative	Field Officer
12	Ms.N.M.Rushiya	PTK Women Cooperative	Driver
13	Ms. Siva Kumar Mala	PTK Women Cooperative	Mobilizer
14	Ms.S.Tharmini	PTK Women Cooperative	Member
15	Ms.T.Sivakumary	PTK Women Cooperative	Member
16	Ms. A.Selvarani.	PTK Women Cooperative	Member
17	Ms.P.Gunasiva	PTK Women Cooperative	Member
18	Ms.Jeya Mary Consi	PTK Women Cooperative	Cooperative Development Officer

19	Ms.Mr.N.Nishanthan	Divisional Secretariat Office ,PTK	Development Officer
20	Mr. S.Navaneethan	Divisional Secretariat Office,PTK	Assistant Director Planning
21	Ms.Silvestar Vijaya	PTK Women Cooperative	Member
22	Ms. K.Jeyaranjini	PTK Women Cooperative	Former & founder President ,PTK Coop
23	Ms. Komala	PTK Women Cooperative	Mobilizer
24	Ms. K.Thevambikai	PTK Women Cooperative	Vice president
25	Ms. T.Manjuladevi	PTK Women Cooperative	Secretary
26	Ms. D.Yalini	PTK Women Cooperative	Member
27	Rema N Balasundaram	ILO	International Consultant

### Validation workshop for Empower End Term Evaluation

Participants at Debriefing Session: November 11, 2019, ILO Colombo: 3.30-4.45 pm

No	Name	Agency	Designation
1	Brenda Barton	WFP	Country Director
2	Andre Berardo	WFP	Deputy Director
3	Tushara Keerthiratne	WFP	Programme Policy Officer
4	Dushanti Fernando	RCO	Programme Coordination Specialist
5	Dianne Silva	RCO	
6	Tharinda Desilva	RCO	
7	Luxmy Sureshkumar	UNICEF	
8	Thomas Kreig	ILO	Chief Technical Adviser, JPR
9	Dilki Palliyeguruge	ILO	M&E Officer, JPR
10	Thayananth Nagaratnam	ILO	Admin and Finance Assistant ,JPR
11	Kaveri Jayanthan (by skype)	ILO	Capacity building officer- EMPOWER project
12	Skatnha Kumar Balasingham	ILO	Senior Programme officer
13	Asanthi Wass		Finance Assistant
14	Chamila Weerathunga		National Project Coordinator
15	Surani Perera-		Communication and public information officer
16	Rema N Balasundaram	ILO	International Consultant and Evaluator
17	Islam Mohammed Kairol (by Skype)	ILO	Value Chain Specialist,

## Lessons Learned and Good Practices

### Lesson learned # 1

## ILO Lesson Learned Template

**Project Title:** EMPOWER: Building peace through the economic empowerment of women in Sri Lanka

**Project TC/SYMBOL:** LKA/17/03/UND

**Name of Evaluator:** Rema N Balasundaram

**Date:** December 5, 2019

The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
<b>Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)</b>	<b>The PBF financing modality:</b> The PBF modality was that of a short term financing instrument with long term planned outcomes, which was a disconnect.
<b>Context and any related preconditions</b>	Given the ILO mission and mandate and the recognition that DWCPs and its tenets require long term planning, the decision to go with a short term instrument in a post conflict zone that required long term programming and planning instruments, with carefully designed results and risks frameworks that are operationally feasible are key. The 18 month caveat with multiple project implementation delays were costly in the short run, for all the key players concerned especially the ILO as a lead agency. Country missions must adopt strict planning and design tools and carefully consider the costs and benefits of different financing modalities and instruments in terms of their timeline and collaborative arrangements on a case by case basis to allow for efficiency in operations at all levels The PRF is generally better suited to more stable post conflict contexts given the situation with Sri Lanka, having been able to build peace reconciliation efforts in the Northern Province, it was surprising to note as to why the ILO had not negotiated a longer term financing modality.(The requirements of a PRF are a government peacebuilding strategy, conflict analysis and UNCT prioritization). Although the IRF provided an extension of six months, this was not adequate to complete all the project commitments and this led to a fair percentage of funds having to be returned to the PBF Secretariat Office.
<b>Targeted users / Beneficiaries</b>	ILO Country Office, and UN RC Office, ILO teams overseeing financing and resource mobilization options at ILO regional office and Headquarters.

<p><b>Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors</b></p>	<p>Low capacity for the ILO country office, longer time needed for conceptualization and project preparation, delay in the recruitment of skilled personnel to oversee programme management functions, and a longer time duration for provincial and local agencies to fully come on board, given its low institutional and organizational capacity. A few weeks before completion, the ILO Country Office requested second extension given its uncommitted fund balance and pipeline projects that had already been identified. However, the PBF Secretariat refused the second extension.</p>
<p><b>Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors</b></p>	<p>It is likely that the UNCT had several agencies requesting funding. The funding pot was small and could not accommodate a medium term request from the ILO. All these forms the reason for the ILO to document its best practice and lessons learned with good evaluative evidence of its programmes going forward. PBF Secretariat allowed a six month extension of the project given its uncommitted balances and the project implementation delays.</p>
<p><b>ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)</b></p>	<p>ILO staff capacity, difficulty of agreement with the UN RC Office on prioritization of the ILO EMPOWER project based on results achieved with its agro centric cooperatives and value chain programmes. Inadequate staff skills at ILO for conceptualization and formulation of the project profile given its multidimensional aspects. Agreement from provincial and local authorities for the prioritization of the ILO project.</p>

Good practice # 1

**ILO Emerging Good Practice Template**

**Project Title: Building peace through the economic empowerment of women in Sri Lanka**

**Project TC/SYMBOL: LKA/17/03/UND**

**Name of Evaluator: Rema N Balasundaram**

**Date: December 5, 2019**

The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GP Element	Text
<p><b>Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)</b></p>	<p><b>Good practice measures to address the root cause of the conflict:</b> The used value chain approach with a coordinated measure with local actors made immense value to address the root causes of the conflict, especially focused on ex-combatant women and women with disabilities.</p>

<p><b>Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability</b></p>	<p>The Theory of Change adopted by the project was built around the driver of conflict related to “Lack of opportunities”. The ILO Field team and its CTA led the project technical support functions in a systematic and sequenced manner, carefully building knowledge, and skills, linking value chain approaches with a coordinated measure with local actors, including the Department of Agriculture, the Provincial Department of Cooperatives, and the private sector linkages with small loans and the rural Bank. The result was a catalytic transformation of the project.</p> <p>The programme measures adopted by the project were systematically built one activity profile at a time, with careful attention to both sequencing and implementation of intervention measures. Coordinated local government and provincial support also led to successful results.</p>
<p><b>Establish a clear cause-effect relationship</b></p>	<p>The EMPOWER project recognized that persons with different abilities can come out of a dependency stigma when they are appropriately supported by gender-sensitive economic development opportunities. The project provided employment and income generating opportunities for the victims of conflict who ended up being differently abled. Timely project response boosted their morale and self-confidence in undertaking income-generating activities through MSMEs, financial inclusion and direct employment.</p> <p>The project responded to the demand of the cooperative members, and the needs of ex combatant and marginalized women based on previous best practice elements of the ILO LEEDS project.</p>
<p><b>Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries</b></p>	<p>Measuring impact in a short term project of one year of implementation may not be an appropriate measure. However, potential impact could be plausibly reported with the economic empowerment measures that was reported on discussion after discussion with the targeted beneficiaries themselves. The other aspect of potential impact was the private sector led growth monitored by the project field team. The project created a business environment for sustained private sector linkages to agro centric women led inputs in Mullaitivu and the Northern Province.</p>
<p><b>Potential for replication and by whom</b></p>	<p>Governments, ILO and WFP teams in post conflict zones, women’s empowerment projects that work to build skills, knowledge and jobs with a carefully adapted approach in other parts of the world. Lessons for the PBF facility and the MPT Office.</p>
<p><b>Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO’s Strategic Programme Framework)</b></p>	<p>The project was strongly aligned to the PBF, ILO and WFP mission and mandate, to ILO’s Strategic Programme Framework, to the Government of Sri Lanka National Strategy, the PPP, and to the Government of Sri Lanka’s national priority to support and strengthen economic development and empowerment in the Northern Province.</p>
<p><b>Other documents or relevant comments</b></p>	<p>Qualitative evidence suggests that the project has contributed to sustainable employment and income generating opportunities with sustainable linkages with the private sector; it has also helped build women’s empowerment and contributed to jobs and skills of ex combatant and marginalized women in an agro centric environment with a women’s cooperative in an isolated post conflict zone in the Northern Province.</p>



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