



**PBF PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT**  
**COUNTRY:** Sri Lanka  
**TYPE OF REPORT:** SEMI-ANNUAL, ANNUAL OR FINAL  
Final ( January 2018 to March 2020)  
**DATE OF REPORT:** March 31, 2020

<b>Project Title:</b> EMPOWER: Building peace through the economic empowerment of women in northern Sri Lanka	
<b>Project Number from MPTF-O Gateway:</b> 00108311	
<b>PBF project modality:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IRF <input type="checkbox"/> PRF	<b>If funding is disbursed into a national or regional trust fund:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Country Trust Fund <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Trust Fund <b>Name of Recipient Fund:</b>
<b>List all direct project recipient organizations (starting with Convening Agency), followed type of organization (UN, CSO etc):</b> International Labour Organization, World Food Programme, <b>List additional implementing partners, Governmental and non-Governmental:</b> Puthukkudiyiruppu Women Entrepreneurs' Cooperative Society (hereafter PTK women's cooperative)	
<b>Project commencement date<sup>1</sup>:</b> 09 January 2018 <b>Project duration in months:<sup>2</sup></b> 18 months, the contract period has been extend untill December,2019	
<b>Does the project fall under one of the specific PBF priority windows below:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender promotion initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Youth promotion initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Transition from UN or regional peacekeeping or special political missions <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-border or regional project	
<b>Total PBF approved project budget* (by recipient organization):</b> ILO: \$ 685000 WFP : \$ 515,000 PTK Women's cooperative : \$ 800,000 : \$ Total: 2,000,000 <i>*The overall approved budget and the release of the second and any subsequent tranche are conditional and subject to PBSO's approval and subject to availability of funds in the PBF account</i>	
<b>How many tranches have been received so far:</b> 2	
<b>Report preparation:</b> Project report prepared by: ILO and WFP Project report approved by: Representatives of ILO and WFP Did PBF Secretariat clear the report: Yes Any comments from PBF Secretariat on the report: Yes and incorporated Has the project undertaken any evaluation exercises? Please specify and attach: Yes, a final evaluation	

<sup>1</sup> Note: commencement date will be the date of first funds transfer.

<sup>2</sup> Maximum project duration for IRF projects is 18 months, for PRF projects – 36 months.

#### NOTES FOR COMPLETING THE REPORT:

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

#### PART 1: RESULTS PROGRESS

##### 1.1 Overall project progress to date

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

Outcome 1: The livelihood component has been further strengthened through animal husbandry and industry-based income-generating activities for the members of cooperative with procurement, technology, training and exchange visits, etc along with agro wells establishment. 460 households trained on commercial cultivation. The sustainability of the interventions was secured through a partnership with a company to create 21 employment in the coir rope industry by providing input, technical knowhow and assured market. The project has invested significant money, time and effort to establish commercial-scale backyard poultry farms at ten selected places which will create sustainable income for at least 50 beneficiaries. The completed business strategy for the cooperative will enhance the business skills of the members and the financial sustainability of the cooperative. Capacity building of the coop also further strengthened during the reporting period.

Outcome 2: All activities under this outcome have been completed. Training was provided for agents of change who are supporting victims of gender based violence (6-7 cases since last progress report) by linking them with public institutions and other support mechanisms. 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, peacebuilding and communication.

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

Root causes of the conflict such as inequality, discrimination, lack of opportunities, and low levels of economic growth have not significantly changed since the war ended ten years ago. The EMPOWER project has helped to alleviate some of the root causes through improving economic empowerment and resilience of ex-combatant women and war-affected communities.

With the support of the project, abovementioned communities got involved in SMSEs, selected cash crops and other industry-based productions. Women who led SMEs were able to create jobs, and enhance employment in the community with a range of hiring between 1-5 daily wage workers, and in some instances even higher numbers of 5-10 workers per SME, depending on the seasonality of the crops and the type of SME activity .

Building institutional capacities of the PTK cooperative is immensely contributing to address economic and peace-related issues within their locality by connecting with the

relevant institution in the long run. For example, the coop has been successful in demanding land to be allocated by government authorities, a significant achievement. The effect of the project on the local coop is also evident as the PTK Coop was awarded a prize as the best performing cooperative in the district in 2019. This is the third time it has won this award since it was formed in 2016. The coop as also expanded its member base and now has some 2,200 members.

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

Private sector-led growth was one of the key strategic instrument in the EMPOWER project. The project supported the improvement of livelihoods among the members and then linked the coop with large private companies. The linking of the coop with the private sector value chain creates sustainable access to markets where the coop does not rely on the project and also ensures market information, regarding products, enhancement of technical know-how, quality input and linking with service providers. For example the company Hayley's Agro & Hayleys Coconut Fiber established partnerships to support aloe vera and coir fibre-based production.

The PTK cooperative plays a vital role as one of the main implementing partners of the project. The project demonstrated the key role a coop can play in promoting female empowerment and project implementation for promoting peace and reconciliation. It has also created a more robust and influential group of the most vulnerable women in the area.

The strengthening the coop enabled the creation of a rural bank which together with the link with private sector actors ensures a sustainable foundation for continued improved livelihoods and community engagement. The PTK has also negotiated with a leading mobile network company to receive SIMs free of charge for networking among the members of the PTK. This assisted members to share information on marketing and improved agriculture practices and stay connect on social issues also.

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

off track

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

The resilience created and economic empowerment of agro-based producers through the productivity improvement, creation employment, and access to markets will contribute towards securing durable peace in those communities. The economic and social empowerment helps disadvantaged communities feel include in society and the linkages established with service providers enable to build bridges and trust between different communities.

The PTK coop developed a strategic peace building plan by adapting the "Sri Lanka Peace Building Priority plan in consultation with local government stakeholders at the divisional level. The change agents, trained by the project, were able to play a substantial role in acting as a medium on peace building-related issues and GBV cases. 6-7 cases have been referred to respective authorities and institutions every month.

The established change agent network by the coop was awarded ‘Justice of the Peace’ by the Ministry of Justice and Prison Reform in 2018. Besides, the president of the coop who performed as a change agent was selected as a member of local government as well as a board member of Northern province Cooperative Bank.

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, peacebuilding and communication, which were used as the basis for community dialogue.

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

Ms. Kasinathan Devambagi is a 71 years old woman who lives with her husband close to vishwamadu tank. They did upland cultivation and paddy farming for their consumption. In addition, she had small-scale level compost production and sold it in her neighbourhood. The EMPOWER project supported her to buy two machines, one for compost screening and another for packing. It also supported her with technical know-how on the production. With this support, she expanded her business and started buying raw material such as coconut leaves, paddy husks and other waste from neighbours and nearby farms. She was able to both increase her operation as well as the quality of the product. She is now employing 4 fulltime women permanently from the neighbourhood. She is also hiring an additional 4 women when she needs more labour on a seasonal basis.

“I can easily sell my product. I maintain the quality and I never compromise on that. As a result, I get more and more orders from Jaffna. Apart from that, I am well connected with the technical officers of the Dept. of Agrarian service and Dept. of Agriculture. These relationships also enable me to get more orders.”

Her compost production increased from 200-400 Kg to 1,800- 2,200 Kg per month. She has now also set up a net house and started a perennial seedling nursery from the income she earned through the compost production too.

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

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

Two main events caused issues for the project. The April 2019 bomb attacks lead to severe restrictions on movements with subsequent postponement of activities for weeks. In July/August an independent audit was conducted of PTK following allegation of wrongdoing. The audit raised 3 points of concern including paying higher than market price for input, minor nepotism, and a system of 50% repayment of value of support given to members into the Coop's bank. The audit's finding regarding the main allegation of paying higher than market price for inputs, was inconclusive, as the auditors could not document any wrongdoing. Due to the audit, payments to PTK were halted in late August and resumed again in mid-October following approval by ILO HQ. The suspension of payments had a significant

impact on activities and delivery. ILO Colombo strengthened its financial oversight of the PTK and also increased capacity building to ensure the coop's ability to implement activities fully in line with ILO rules and regulations. The audit issue did not concern any WFP implemented activities.

The project also suffered from a low delivery rate, in part due to some performance issues among the team, and in part due to high staff turnover. The NPC was replaced in May 2019 and a significant improvement in delivery was registered almost immediately. The project has since been making significant progress in catching up, though the other issues made it difficult to fully recover time lost.

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

Sweet dreams are made of sugar and spice

## 1.2 Result progress by project outcome

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

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

**Rate the current status of the outcome progress:** on track

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

With the support of the project, around 458 war-affected and ex-combatant women of the cooperative who live in Mullative district started agro-based commercial production (aloe vera, ginger, coir rope, poultry) and micro enterprises (food processing, bag making, tailoring, rice and spices processing). These producers were provided quality input, trained in production, supported with market access through links established by the project with select large companies. Other services were operationalised through building and strengthening linkages between the cooperative and service providing institutions. The cooperative itself provided loans for these producers. As a result the women were able to increase their income, access to new markets, and negotiate with other traders. One farmer with successful cultivation could harvest over 650 kg of ginger from a single plot of land: bringing in a income of LKR 169,000 (in an area with wages around 20,000 rupees per month)

Women who started SMEs were empowered to create jobs and increase employment in their marginalised community. Those who hired, engaged between 1-5 daily wage

workers, and in a few instances even greater numbers of 5-10 seasonal workers. depending on the seasonality of the crops and the SME activity that had been built.

The higher production of agricultural produce, employment, and measures to building resilience in the agro centric zone with potential for building livelihoods through food security are the direct results of the project's support and interventions. Furthermore, training and skills were provided to female headed households on climate change mitigation, especially prolonged droughts. Some 150 women were trained on new strategies which included improved agricultural practices, better water management and the introduction of alternative crops to improve household resilience to climate related shocks.

Through the support of the project, and with support from the local government in the form of loan capital, the cooperative was able to start a rural savings association which is now providing loans to the 2,200+ members, providing them with access to financial services which they had not previously had access to.

The project provided extensive support to build the institutional capacity of the cooperative in areas covering of management, governance, financial procedures, office management and management staff for improve performance. The capacity building was also necessitated by the large increase in members of the cooperatives. The support was provided through training and coaching. Further, support for the development of a strategic business plan which incorporated financial sustainability was provided and is being finetuned by the cooperative to ensure continuation of select services to the members.

## **Outcome 2:**

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

**Rate the current status of the outcome progress: on track**

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

The EMPOWER project helped promote peacebuilding and peace enhancement priorities and contribute towards addressing the root causes of fragility in the post-conflict environment. It helped raise awareness about the importance of linking peacebuilding and peace enhancement initiatives with a woman-led cooperative movement and prioritize jobs, skills, and employment as the building blocks of resilience. The EMPOWER project organised exchange visits (9) between communities and strengthen the status of women in the local communities. It raised awareness of social issues through street dramas (4 were held) and gave women a voice as well as provide them with improved awareness of the role they could play to promote peace and reconciliation. The latter especially through the training of Agents of Change where some 60 women from the COOP were trained to lead on the peace building work, as well as on empowerment of women. These Agents of Change were trained on gender mainstreaming and awareness-raising. They were specifically trained to allow them to handle cases of gender-based violence (GBV) and support

victims through referrals to institutions which could provide support. They handle six to seven such cases every month.

The Agents of Change were also trained to taken on community leadership roles and respond to wider issues affecting women, ex-combatants and other vulnerable population in the local communities.

The EMPOWER project and its peacebuilding or in this case peace enhancement component were clearly linked to employment outcomes, like by its private sector growth and linkages. (A finding of the final evaluation, January 2020)

The peace plan training engaged with government stakeholders and local youth. It focussed on an adaption of the national-level plan to the local context, and which is now being implemented at the local level. The PTK coop is monitoring the progress. The training also helped strengthen the network with local government authorities.

**Outcome 3:**

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

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

**Outcome 4:**

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

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

**1.3 Cross-cutting issues**

<p><b><u>National ownership:</u></b> How has the national government demonstrated ownership/ commitment to the project results and activities? Give specific examples. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>The project’s link to the national authorities is through its district level steering committee. The committee acts as the project’s main advisory body with repres from ILO, WFP, PTK and government stakeholders. As part of the exit strategy the District Secretary, will appoint designated officials from District Secretariat to the PTK board of directors.</p> <p>The ‘District Management Unit’ set up under the District Secretary, coordinated the project implementation at the district level and the Divisional secretariat supported ground level implementation.</p> <p>The Cooperative Development Department had a dedicated Cooperative Officer (CO) assigned to the PTK to help support the implementation of the project and also support the cooperative in its daily work. The CO supported the development of a first draft of a sustainability plan for the</p>
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	<p>PTK to ensure the continuation of select support activities after EMPOWER comes to an end.</p> <p>The PTK has engaged with local government on implementation of the project including with the adaption of the PPP to local context. The recognition received by PTK as the best performing Coop in the northern province further demonstrates the close relations between the cooperative and the local authorities.</p> <p>The creation of a rural bank with the PTK cooperative is a direct result of government support to the PTK and its work. The bank constitutes an important element in the long term sustainability of the PTK and the support it provides to its members.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring:</b> Is the project M&amp;E plan on track? What monitoring methods and sources of evidence are being/ have been used? Please attach any monitoring-related reports for the reporting period. (1500 character limit)?</p>	<p>70% of the indicators of the project M&amp;E framework have progressed in a satisfactory manner. The national project coordinator closely monitored project implementation and financial delivery. The project management team (from ILO and WFP), including Chief Technical Advisor, met at least quarterly, and any follow up required to address programmatic and operational challenges of the project were organised.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation:</b> Provide an update on the preparations for the external evaluation for the project, especially if within last 6 months of implementation or final report. Confirm available budget for evaluation. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>The final project evaluation was carried out in a consultative manner aligning with the ILO and PBF evaluation policies. Findings were validated with project stakeholders, including government, private sector, donor, and implementing partners. The final report will be published on the ILO eval site shortly.</p>
<p><b>Catalytic effects (financial):</b> Did the project lead to any specific non-PBF funding commitments? If yes, from whom and how much? If not, have any specific attempts been made to attract additional financial contributions to the project and beyond? (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>Attempts to attract additional funding and support include a deal negotiated by PTK with a local mobile network provider to supply free SIM cards to the members to facilitate communication and sharing of information on crops and prices. The mobile network provider is further looking at providing additional services such as mobile banking for free through its CSR programme (verbal commitment given, but nothing in writing)</p> <p>The increased membership of PTK meant that the coop qualified for support from the government to establish a credit facility ("rural bank"). The local government provided loan capital to start the credit facility.</p>
<p><b>Catalytic effects (non-financial):</b> Did the project create favourable conditions for additional peacebuilding activities by Government/ other donors? If yes, please specify. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Exit strategy/ sustainability:</b> What steps have been taken to prepare for end of project and help ensure sustainability of</p>	<p>An exit strategy/sustainability plan, developed by the coop with support from the assigned cooperative department officer, has been presented to the project steering</p>



<p>the project results beyond PBF support for this project? (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>committee. It will help the PTK coop with local and regional stakeholders to promote joint responsibility for sustaining the services provided by the coop. The involvement of local government representatives in the steering committee strengthens linkages to government and facilitates continued support to the coop.</p> <p>The available business sustainability plan also includes a financial assessment of earning potential and cost estimate for services provided to ensure financial sustainability.</p> <p>The project has provided capacity building training to staff and management of the PTK, including the development of strategic and business plans, and strengthen coop performance to allow for the independent implementation of the sustainability plan. Board members have improved their knowledge on governance, management culture, legal environment, basic accounting, file management, the role of M&amp;E, professional ethics and code of conduct as well as improved skills on office management, manage staff for performance.</p> <p>The partnership with the private sector constitutes an important sustainability element as it means the access to market is not dependent on the project but is a cooperation between the coop and the private company.</p> <p>The District Management Unit and the Divisional Secretariat will continue to support the PTK member</p>
<p><b>Risk taking:</b> Describe how the project has responded to risks that threatened the achievement of results. Identify any new risks that have emerged since the last report. (1500 character limit)</p>	<p>Reacting to a complaint regarding possible misuse of funds by the PTK cooperative, the ILO Colombo CO immediately contacted ILO HQ. An audit mission was sent in July/August which did a forensic analysis of the accounts. The result identified 3 areas of concern. 1. Payment of higher than market price for inputs. 2. Nepotism in the selection of some beneficiaries. 3. Repayment of 50% of grants/material by beneficiaries into the Rural Bank. The audit was inconclusive on the most serious charge - payment of higher than market price for the inputs. The audit was not able to document any wrong doing. On the issue of nepotism, the ILO worked with the PTK to establish clear and transparent rules for the identification of beneficiaries. Regarding the repayment of 50%, the PTK was informed that this was not in accordance with the rules and regulations of the ILO and the WFP and the PTK management indicated that the practice would stop and any payment made be returned.</p>

<p><b>Gender equality:</b> In the reporting period, which activities have taken place with a specific focus on addressing issues of gender equality or women's empowerment? <i>(1500 character limit)</i></p>	<p>Since its inception, the project has included war-affected women, ex-combatant women and men leaders of the former organizations. Gender norms, practices, existed inequalities have been taken into consideration in designing and implementing interventions. Women have been capacitated in many different aspects such as the development of leadership, negotiation, advocating and business skills ( 40% of the cooperative members ) to perform their role much better in terms of doing business, running cooperative and advocating for peace within their locality, district and at target at the provincial level. Around 121 women have been assured quality input and market for the products of Aloe vera and coir fibre production under the partnership of Hayley's agriculture and Rileys companies. President of Change agent Network was awarded 'Justice of the Peace' by the Ministry of Justice and Prison Reform in 2018. The president of the Coop who performs as a change agent was selected as a member of local government as well as a board member of Northern province Cooperative Bank.</p> <p>Nearly 460 female farmers received agriculture livelihood assets (agro wells, water pumps, drip and sprinkler irrigation systems, alkathene pipe) and farm training (on commercial cultivation of Banana, Ginger and Ground nuts) and training on operating a seeder and weeder. Around 50 women selected from the farmers received training on gender.</p>
<p><b>Other:</b> Are there any other issues concerning project implementation that you want to share, including any capacity needs of the recipient organizations? <i>(1500 character limit)</i></p>	

### Progress against performance Indicators as at end of the project

	Performance indicator	Baseline	End of project target	Current progress	Reasons for Variance/Delay (if any)	Adjustment of target (if any)
<p><b>Outcome 1: Female former combatants and other conflict affected women increase their economic contribution through effectively accessing new market opportunities, resources and information that have opened as a result of the more peaceful environment</b></p>	<p>Indicator 1.1 Percentage increase in annual income of the cooperative</p>	<p>Annual income of the society in 2017 was USD 1,595 (including bank interest, monthly membership fees, membership admission fees, common hall rent, loan service charges, loan penalties, microcredit interest etc). Average household monthly income is Sri Lanka Rupees (LKR) 31,661 and the median HH income is LKR 30,000</p>	<p>20% increase in annual income</p>	<p>The annual income of the cooperative for 2019 was 15,325 USD. Percentage annual increment is 613% compare to the previous year. (2018 =2,150 USD, 2019=15,325 USD) The coop continues to earn income from renting ground nut seeders, mini truck and microfinance. In addition the coop has registered as income the recovery of 10-15 % of the grant provided by the project to 458 farmers and entrepreneurs.</p>		

	<p>Indicator 1.2 ( PTK established a network with other cooperatives in Mullaitivu district to enhance the economic enterprise) Level of the networks establish by the cooperative, for linking with economic opportunities)</p>	<p>PTK society so far has no network with other cooperatives in the District.</p>	<p>Minimum 5 cooperative networks</p>	<p>The PTK cooperative has established four networks to assure economic opportunities to create sustainable livelihoods for its members. The established linkage with the farmer organization made space for cooperative to gain income through renting weeder and seeder machinery. The established linkage with the private company Hayleys agriculture, Reilys and the Colombo egg market ; provided technical and market access for aloe vera, coir and egg producers. Through WFP, farmer families received agro wells for water harvesting, micro-irrigation (drip and sprinkler) units for water conservation, seeds and plants and</p>	<p>Most of the cooperatives within the northern province carry out the same type of crop production. As a result, there is minimal space for establishing linkages for economic opportunities among these cooperatives.</p>	
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				cultivation training for commercial cultivation. WFP also provided extension services through the government.		
Output 1.1: The women's cooperative gains the knowledge, skills, insights and networks required to better integrate in society to position themselves to access to new markets	Indicator 1.1.1 (The cooperative develops a viable business strategy with a networking plan, and SMART milestones/objectives);  Availability of a viable business strategy for coop	No plan exists at this moment	Yes	The viable business strategy for the cooperative is developed and execute its operation. Learning from another ILO project (LEED+) which is currently being implemented in the northern part of Sri Lanka was immensely used in developing the strategy. Raising poultry, model farm, coir production, aloe		

				vera and agriculture input sales centre are some of the key elements of this strategy, which already started implementation.		
	<p>Indicator 1.1.2 A minimum of 50 cooperative members participate in Sinhala and English classes and attain B1 language level competency by the end of the project. Number of cooperative members attain B1 language level by the project</p>	<p>Above 90% of the participants are not proficient in Sinhala language reading, speaking and writing. (95% - not proficient in reading Sinhala, 92% not proficient in speaking Sinhala and 97% not proficient in writing Sinhala. Moreover, the beneficiaries are not conversant in English language as well. (Not proficient in reading, speaking and writing are 75%, 84% and 78% respectively.</p>	<p>50 cooperative members trained</p>	<p>There is no progress</p>	<p>The project had many numbers of operational issues in the early phase of the project. As a result, the activity was at first postponed, and later cancelled as it was realized that the time is not sufficient for coop members to follow B1 Language course. As a remedy, the project planned to provide English language</p>	

					training through <i>Vidatha</i> centre. However, this did not materialise due to issues at the cooperative level.	
	<p>Indicator 1.1.3 All collective members are competent in at least 1 new skills area relevant to the strategy plan by the end of project; Percentage of coop members gain skills relevant to business strategy plan of the coop.</p>	<p>0% of coop members gain skills relevant to business strategy plan of the coop.</p>	<p>40% of coop members gain skills relevant to business strategy plan of the coop</p>	<p>29% of coop members have gained relevant business skills. aloe vera, ginger growers, coir rope producers, poultry framers and small-scale entrepreneurs have received relevant business skills to continue production, access to market and services.</p>	<p>Business strategy is developed later part of the project duration. Few key elements of business strategy only have been executed during the project period. As a result, the project was not able to meet the expected target.</p>	

<p><b>Outcome 2: Female former combatants and other conflict affected women leverage their increased social status to be a leading voice in the region's informal private sector's contribution to peacebuilding</b></p>	<p>Indicator 2.1 By the end of the project period PTK has established or is actively involved in peacebuilding with a network of other female former combatant and conflict affected women cooperatives in the district/ region Level of involvement of coop in peacebuilding initiatives</p>	<p>90% mentioned that no any tension with other community members outside the project</p> <p>14% of the beneficiaries have already engaged in business with members of different ethnic groups</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>The 35 Change Agents leaders were well recognized in divisional and district level in terms of taking actions for improving durable peace. They handle 7-8 cases in each month referring GBV incidents to relevant authorities as well as other broader issues affecting women including former ex-combatants, female-headed household and people with disability in the division. With the support of the project, Cooperative actively engaged in providing space for marginalized women to participate in agri based producers such as ginger, Aloe Vera, Banana, poultry and other SMSEs assuring the market access. This</p>		
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				<p>engagement facilitates in achieving the economic empowerment which leads towards long term peace Four knowledge exchange visits were conducted by bringing farmers from the Central and Southern provinces of Sri Lanka. During the exchange programmes, the PTK farmers actively involved with the female farmers from Central / Uva and gained not only agriculture knowledge, practices but also understanding and learning from cultural and religious acceptance as a first step in building North-South bridges in peacebuilding.</p>		
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<p><b>Output 2.1: The women's cooperative gains the knowledge an understanding, skills and insights on peacebuilding; together with the access and opportunity to share lessons and experiences with other peacebuilding and women's empowerment networks throughout Sri Lanka in order to enhance their own role in building sustainable peace</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator 2.1.1</b> By the end of the project PTK are recognized local/regional champions/advocates of a relevant peace related issue (such as GBV or female former combatant rights)</p>	<p>33% of the beneficiaries that are facing hardships/challenges in terms of doing business are female</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>The project established the Change Agent Network that consists of 35 active female volunteer leaders. Their role was to facilitate the process of finding appropriate solutions to issues affecting women and their households in their locality.</p> <p>The change agent network presented a tailor-made PPP strategy, based on the national PPP, and action plan for Mullative Divisional level authorities with a view of promoting durable peace in their locality. President of Change agent</p>		
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				<p>Network was awarded 'Justice of the Peace' by the Ministry of Justice and Prison Reform in 2018. The president of the Coop who performed as a change agent was selected as a member of local government as well as a board member of Northern province Cooperative Bank.</p>		
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## PART 2: INDICATIVE PROJECT FINANCIAL PROGRESS

### 2.1 Comments on the overall state of financial expenditures

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

How many project budget tranches have been received to date and what is the overall level of expenditure against the total budget and against the tranche(s) received so far (500 characters limit): 02

When do you expect to seek the next tranche, if any tranches are outstanding:

If expenditure is delayed or off track, please provide a brief explanation (500 characters limit): **The administrative delays coupled with an internal audit by ILO HQ affected the financial disbursements as per the schedule of activities. similarly, the project expenditure was also delayed in response to shocks generated by the overall operational context for the duration of the project cycle, i.e constitutional crisis, Easter Sunday Attacks, Elections etc**

Please state what \$ amount was planned (in the project document) to be allocated to activities focussed on gender equality or women's empowerment and how much has been actually allocated to date: **95% of the budget, ie 1,9 million**

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

## Sweet dreams are made of sugar and spice: The Rise of Women Entrepreneurs

*A sticky deal is helping women in the heart of the Northern Province to improve their confectionary making and stimulate a culture of entrepreneurship*

### LALITHA IN PROFILE



**From kitchen to CEO:** Lalitha received one million rupees through a coop grant from ILO to improve her homemade sweets. With prudent investment and efficient management, Lalitha stands tall like a million dollars next to a poster she has hung of the world's famous billionaire: which reads, 'The best results are gained from the best experiences. And the best experiences are gained from the worst set-backs' – just like the sweet taste of success and the sting of spice.

The economic integration of previously conflict-affected women from the heart of the battlefield is giving rich dividends. Not only has new and improved trades increased family incomes of this mostly female-headed household community, but enhanced revenue streams have created a wealth of social capital.

Lalitha Suthakaran from Mullaitivu district says, "Ever since I became a member of the Puthukudiyiruppu Women Entrepreneur's Cooperative Society, I have had easier access to obtain funds needed for improving my business. Previously, I made a few different types of candy but only sold it among my immediate neighbours. Though my products had a good demand, it never occurred to me to do this on a grand scale."

"Not having resources to expand my sweet making activities was an inhibitor and never did I think that I would be able to overcome this financial obstacle."

"After joining the society, I grasped the basics of managing finances and being cost-efficient. I pooled money to buy my raw material ingredients in bulk, and in this way was able to save on the unit price. With time, I was able to catch up on savings and buy machinery from a loan disbursed by the society."

"This improved the productivity of the sweet making and I was able to have more sales. Once I established myself a bit more, I was able to construct separate premises for my factory. With a bigger set up, I was able to employ other women from the community and offer jobs to people with disabilities even.

"After one year, I bought a van to help market my products. I now sell even in distant places such as Jaffna district where the market is bigger. My husband helps with this. On the return journey, he buys more bulk material

that I can sell to likeminded businesses at a small profit.

“It is a win-win as I save on fuel for transport while also creating access to the community to have bulk buys and thereby see them on their way to prosperity too.”

The women off the tiny village in Puthukudiyiruppu do not just see Lalitha as a successful entrepreneur and owner of the flourishing Sri Priya Industry. They look up to her as a shining star—an idol and role model of what dedication and hard work can do for their family, their children and the community.



*The ceremonial opening of Sri Priya Industry, owned and operated by Lalitha Suthakaran.*



*The presence of the Government Agent and District Secretary speaks for the economic and social empowerment of this entrepreneur and her community. Key facets of inclusion under peacebuilding work.*

## LALITHA IN ACTION



*From kitchen to CEO: Lalitha (far left) shows her employee how to get the groundnut halwa sweet mix right*



*Sampling her high demand chewing gum for consistency in its solid form*

ILO has helped the EMPOWER Project at Puthuykkudiyiruppu to assist a group of women-headed households become more economically stable. The work done has also resulted in the social empowerment of women, their households and the community.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has worked closely with the women's group to help expand its membership from 15 to 1,500 people, and the process has involved linking them up with different enterprises.