

## **Report on consultancy services provided to Urban Council, Trincomalee for planning and conducting public engagement sessions.**

### **I. Project description: Canada / Sri Lanka Municipal Cooperation Programme (MCP)**

#### **Background**

Following the Tsunami, Sri Lanka has compelled to rehabilitate the lives of affected communities. Even though large amount of resources streamlined by well intentioned international aid agencies towards this end, due to absence of locally established priorities for reconstruction, the local authorities of Tsunami affected communities are unable to effectively and efficiently utilize the available resources and to direct the efforts of various aid providers towards initiatives that support to rehabilitation effort. As a consequence, there were duplicating efforts and inefficiency in utilizing the aid resources.

In the absence of Local Authorities (LA) plans, some aid agencies embarked upon preparing single purpose plans for the communities to guide their respective initiatives. These plans are prepared by consultants assigned by respective agencies and the plans remain outside the normal budgeting and operating processes of the LAs and the other level of government. They do not contribute toward building LA capacity for planning or improving their operations and services. Despite the preparation of numerous plans, LAs have no workable plans which they can use to guide them in sustained in mainstream reconstruction efforts.

In this circumstance, setting Medium - Term Development and Operational Priorities can position LAs for longer term reconstruction that goes beyond basic restoration to pre-tsunami conditions by improving LA operations, revenue mobilizations and services to citizens. It will also establish a common guiding set of priorities for local authorities to build a post tsunami future acceptable to its citizens and supported and sustained by a strengthened administrative system.

#### ***Project Goal:***

The goal of the project is to strengthen the capacity of selected Urban Council of Trincomalee, Municipal Council of Galle, Kalmunai and Batticaloa in developing medium term development priorities and financial frameworks. This goal contributes to the over all MCP project goal of “supporting national post tsunami reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka

and to create and enabling environment for peace building by building local government capacities and through the promotion of good intergovernmental relations”.

*Project Objectives:*

The objective expected to be attained by the project is:

To improve corporate planning capacity in the Urban Council of Trincomalee, Municipal Council of Galle, Kalmunai and Batticaloa by preparing with political, administrative and public inputs, a Medium Term Development Priorities and Fiscal Framework (MTPF), which will become the guiding document for their annual plans, annual budgets, and technical cooperation with foreign organizations.

These objectives contribute to the overall MCP objective of “improving operations management, service delivery and strengthened participatory mechanisms in selected local governments in Sri Lanka”

## **II. About CIRM**

The Centre for Information Resource Management (CIRM) focuses on improving the capabilities of the institutions and organisations in the Northern and Eastern provinces (N&E) in planning, co-ordinating and monitoring development activities. It actively promotes i) participatory development approaches into the existing system of GOs, NGOs and development projects so as to integrate it into their work processes and ii) community mobilisation and awareness among the people of their potential and rights and to utilise their resources so as to enhance rural governance and social integration.

CIRM has engaged in the capacity building of the staff of Govt. institutions, NGOs and special projects in the N&E on:

- Providing understanding on community development.
- Disseminating the approaches, methods and tools for community participation throughout the project cycle management.
- Providing knowledge and skills that are necessary to facilitate as well to ensure community participation

The capacity building is accomplished through different means such as trainings (classroom and field), on-job training, process monitoring and impact assessment.

### **III. Role of CIRM in MCP and scope of work**

CIRM was assigned a consultative role as Public engagement specialist for facilitating public engagement sessions with a view to preparing Medium Term Development and Operational Priorities and Financial framework (MTPF). The MTPF is prepared through an eight step process as referred in Annex 1. Within the context of the eight step process of the MTPF, the Community Engagement Specialist(s) was asked to:

1. Provide technical assistance at specific steps of the MTPF process and also
2. Provide periodic on site coaching and guidance on as needed basis, to LA / CLG personnel in Trincomalee in completing the various tasks in each step to formulate their respective MTPFs.
3. Review the MTPF guide and provide comments in writing to FCM.
4. Participate in MTPF workshops scheduled, and potentially additional workshops if required.

The detailed Terms of Reference given to CIRM is in Annex 01.

### **IV. Procedures adopted to Public Engagement**

Municipal Cooperation Programme (MCP) aims to achieve its objectives through preparing a 5 years plan with the participation of people from within the limits of local authorities which is called as Medium Term Priorities and Financial framework (MTPF). Preparing community driven prioritized project document is a first step in formulating MTPF document. This prioritization was practiced by people during PESs where CIRM specialists facilitated to achieve the objective of PES properly.

CIRM was responsible to act as public engagement specialist with the responsibilities of coaching, supervising and facilitating the public engagement sessions in accordance with a set of pre-defined procedures which was formulated by the experts of CIRM considering project guidelines and basic guiding principles articulated in the project document. The public engagement exercise is explained through the procedures in which this exercise needs to be viewed on the basis of input, process, output and outcome.

Following inputs were fed to get expected output from public engagement sessions.

***(a) CIRM gets an overview of the project and the responsibilities of PES***

The CIRM as a public engagement specialist carried out its activities with the initial guidance of FCM professionals who designed the project MCP. Staffs of UC and CIRM participated in an orientation programme with the objective of making clear understanding of underlying project concepts, objectives and goal. Project concept paper and guide for preparing MTPF were also used as base documents.

***(b) CIRM trains selected UC staff on communication and facilitation***

In preparing and implementing MTPF, UC staffs play a pivotal role and act as a direct stakeholder and implementing partner of FCM. In order to build the capacity of the UC staff in preparing MTPF, a capacity building training on communication and facilitation for two days was delivered by CIRM to selected UC staff with the goal of making them capable in taking over the responsibility to conduct future public engagement workshops by themselves. *Session plan and hand-outs of the training is annexed. Refer Annex. 02*

***(c) CIRM supports the preparation for Public Engagement sessions***

Series of planning sessions were held at CIRM on the preparation for public engagement sessions. UC staffs and the council members were also consulted at the required stages. The required data, participants, venues, contents of invitations, collection of project proposals and follow-up – were the major subjects in the planning sessions. The description on the preparatory works is given below:

*i) Collection of data required for PES*

Various types of baseline data required for PES was collected by UC staff with the CIRM's guidance like proposing and making coordination between UC staff and relevant officers who authenticates such type of data. Data on existing CBOs, religious leaders, local politicians and traders were collected for the purpose of inviting the bona fide target group. CIRM recommended GN wise population data instead of overall population data to be collected to identify number of beneficiaries within particular GN divisions. UC area map, which was already drawn by UC did not clearly demarcate the UC boundaries and this was not clearly representing the spatial and attribute data of the area. CIRM produced a comprehensive GIS map for UC with clear boundary lines and spatial data. See annex 03.

*ii) Invitation for proposals*

According to project plan, UC should identify projects and collect it for their own prioritization. Collected proposals should be prioritized and submitted during PES for

public consultation and approval. Even though, the number of proposals collected by UC staff does not represent the whole GNs of UC area. Therefore, the plan was changed with the consensus of UC. In this regard, proposals were invited from community in an open manner through letters, posters and cable TV advertisements. Received proposals were submitted to people during PES for prioritization.

*iii) Invitations to participants*

Government institutions, non-govt. organisations and special projects appraise and implement hundreds of development projects in the UC area in isolated manner. As an opportunity to integrate their resources and efforts, CIRM proposed to invite important service providers to the PESs. Service providers namely CEB, SLT, front line officers and selected NGOs were invited to the PESs. Agenda and list of participants in each workshop are in the annex 04.

*iv) Identification of distinct sections of the community and important development actors*

Groups representing the community were selected in a transparent and inclusive manner in accordance with basic guiding principles of FCM. In this basis, CBO representatives, business community representatives, religious leaders, local political leaders and vulnerable groups were proposed to invite for PES. However, identification of particular vulnerable communities was a complicated task for UC staff and it was not considered.

The contents and lay-outs of the PES invitations and advertisements were prepared by CIRM and UC staff jointly. In order to ensure transparency and inclusiveness, invitations were printed in Sinhala and Tamil languages. Bilingual advertisements were publicized using local cable television, banners, posters and leaflets through which public were invited to take part in the public engagement sessions. See annex 05.

*v) Development of sub criteria for prioritisation*

Community originated proposals and UC proposals were collated for the prioritization exercise during public engagement sessions. Pre defined criteria and sub criteria were to be applied as touch stone for validating proposals. In accordance with project guidelines, these criteria, i.e. eligibility criteria for UC and priority criteria for community were developed and refined by UC staff in consultation with CIRM to determine common standards for validating and prioritizing project proposals. Sub criteria were further developed and score for each sub criteria assigned to make prioritization process more effective. Annex 06 gives the list of criteria and sub criteria for prioritization.

The aforementioned inputs were fed to produce outputs through a methodical process of PES.

***(d) CIRM designs the public engagement workshop***

Public Engagement session is a large group event which involves more than 30 participants. Large group events are powerful as they involve the whole system in the change and learning process. It produces faster and more sustainable changes. It generates high level of commitment from the organization staff. To realize all such advantages, it should be well planned, highly organized and facilitated. Therefore, Series of planning discussions took place in CIRM on:

- How to ensure community representation,
- How to organize effective prioritization process, to promote UC staff participation,
- How to make use of this opportunity to inform UC services to people,
- How to obtain the support and commitment from elected members.
- How to handle large number of people,
- How to make grouping in an effective way to stimulate discussions and information sharing within the groups and across the groups.

The draft design for public engagement session was presented to the council members and staff of UC and their suggestions were incorporated in the final design

The aforementioned inputs were fed to produce outputs through a methodical process of public engagement sessions. The following section will elaborate the different steps as well the process of important steps in detail.

***(e) CIRM conducts Public Engagement Sessions***

Four public engagement sessions were conducted by CIRM on different days, in combination with several participatory processes. The venue was urban council, Trincomalee.

- 1<sup>st</sup> PES for representatives of community based organizations on 23.01.2007.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> PES for representatives of business community on 12.02.2007.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> PES for religious leaders on 14.02.2007.
- 4<sup>th</sup> PES for service providers, Grama Niladhari's and line department officers on 15.02.2007.

UC elected members, selected UC staff and Public Health Inspectors of the UC area attended the public engagement sessions and facilitated whenever necessity arose.

*(i) Registration of participants*

Participants arrived to the PES were given with colour cards according to the geographical area (cluster of GN divisions) represented by them. The colour cards allowed them to be grouped without chaos for prioritization process later. Printed list of project proposals, details of prioritization criteria, sub-criteria with assigned scores were compiled and handed over to every participant in a file.

*(ii) Inauguration of the PES:*

Each public engagement session was inaugurated officially with the presence of the chairman, council members and the head of department of local government to increase responsibility and sense of ownership when the implementing phase of MTPF goes on. After they made introductory addresses, the actual working session started.



*(iii) Criteria explanation*

Then criteria were explained by CIRM facilitator with the visual aids and information manual in which list of criteria and list of project proposals printed and issued to participants. Time was



given to participants to discuss about and include alterations or additions in the proposed criteria. The reason behind this notion is that the people should agree on criteria and make the criteria verified by participants before they practice prioritization.

*(iv) Working groups*

As a next step, participants were grouped according to the adjoining GN divisions on the basis of assumption that the people from adjoining GN divisions could be aware of each other and the background of proximate areas. In spite of the number of groups decided earlier, there were slight changes in grouping to cope up the session situation arose when there was lapse in turn



out of participants. For each group, two facilitators and one note taker were assigned for supervising and facilitating the engagement of community representatives.

*(v) Prioritization of project proposals*

Set of classified (GN division wise) proposals were displayed amid groups and time was given to express the issues behind these proposals. The focal point of this session is prioritizing the community originated proposals. Many complex processes were inserted into this prioritization exercise. Proposals disqualified during eligibility test were separately displayed to



the groups for their information. Valid reasons for disqualification were enunciated by UC staff and it was accepted by the community representatives. The rest of the project proposals were prioritised by participants using the priority criteria as a measuring tool.



In this step, facilitation was in giving relevant information to participants with the support of sector staff from UC. Explanatory interactions were in place when the participants made more clarifications on criteria. There was need to measure certain criteria's value while ranking by scoring. Participants were encouraged through facilitation to come to an agreement as a whole group through discussion with every member's participation. Most of the time, peer explanation for raised questions within groups were induced and it created an environment conducive for stimulating more dialogue and more information sharing among participants.

*(vi) Feed back and comments from the participants and facilitators*

At the end of every session, the participants were requested to give their feed back and comments. After the winding of each PES, all group facilitators and note takers got

together gave feed back regarding methods used. Their suggestions for alternatives and improvements were put into action in the subsequent public engagement sessions.

*(vii) Awareness on UC and its services*

PESs were used to draw the public attention towards UC's spheres of activities. To make awareness among community representatives in respect of UC services, UC income, UC area boundary, objective of PES and MTPF, bilingual visuals were displayed around the meeting room and prepared information materials were also issued during PESs. See annex 07 for information materials and photos of visuals.

## **V. Outputs and outcomes of the PESs**

These interlinked and dimensional inputs produced expected outputs and positive outcomes.

- First and foremost output of PES is GN wise prioritized project proposals available to initiate MTPF to work instantly. Annex 8 shows the scores for each proposal after the prioritisation.
- Another output is 20 UC staffs have been trained on facilitation and communication and 156 participants were in the four PESs conducted for community representatives and service providers.

In consequence of these outputs, following outcomes were attained.

- There was a gap between UC and community and lack of strong bridging measures to reduce the gap. Due to gathering of people from various quarters of community and UC members in the PESs, the gap reduced significantly.
- It has created trust and confidence among the community representatives on the inclusiveness and transparency of UC.
- People were able to aware about UC services and LA laws.
- During the discussion in PES, various issues such as environmental pollution, health hazards, and other community issues addressed. With the consultation of service providers, several means for addressing issues were discussed.

- A space provided for co-operations and linkages with the service providers (i.e. Govt departments, NGOs and special projects).
- As another outcome, members and UC staffs understood and sensitized about public engagement. More over, UC staffs are aware and capable to handle the tools and methods of public engagement.

## **VI. Issues and recommendations for improvements**

In general, public engagement sessions were conducted successfully as planned before. Though there were some significant issues experienced during the preparation and conduction of the PESs. This section describes such issues and proposes recommendations or suggestions for improvement under the sub headings.

### ***(a) Inauguration of PESs***

At the outset, as described above, every sessions were inaugurated with the addresses of council members and dept. heads. At this moment, they consumed more time for their addresses. Due to this, session time was delayed which drained the enthusiasm of the participants. It is recommended that the organizers and addressee should try to reduce the number of speeches and to abide by the time rule scheduled in the agenda.

### ***(b) Criteria for prioritization***

Simple and measurable criteria will only make the prioritisation process fair and meaningful. In this view, sub-criteria were further developed and scores were assigned to each criteria. However, it was not very effective as expected since many projects scored same marks. The reason was mainly due to the lacking of site specific information about each project proposal. This experience reiterates on the importance of collecting vital information (actual needs, previous efforts, intended and unintended impact of proposed project etc.) through small group discussions with the relevant stakeholders(i.e. community living in the particular area and the relevant service providers) on the particular project proposal.

Such discussions prior to public engagement sessions will provide necessary data, will definitely promote high level of community participation and will lead to better decisions.

***(c) Community participation during PESs***

Number of participants from the community was less than expected. The community participation, i.e. increase the number of participants and degree of participation, shall be ensured by conducting the PES in different locations. It is proposed to conduct PES in 4 or 5 locations where each location covers a group of GN division located nearby. In addition to the grouping by adjacent GN divisions, groups with similar interests, livelihood and same language may also be considered for grouping.

***(d) Representation of diverse community groups***

On the grounds of inclusive policy, It was proposed that the local politicians should also be invited to PES. But, taking into consideration of many factors of current situation, council was of opinion that the inclusion of politicians might worsen the conflict among politicians and would create disturbances to the proceedings of FCM. However, it is a fact that the local politicians are also having significant influence on development activities of an area. Therefore, future PESs should consider and define a strategy to involve politicians in a constructive manner.

***(e) Representation and participation of vulnerable groups***

Concerning to identifying vulnerable groups in an urban area, it was difficult to agree on vulnerable group without proper rationalization. As a result, PES could not assure the inclusion of the vulnerable groups. A proper way to identify vulnerable groups is systematic analysis of data specifically related to vulnerability.

The vulnerability-poverty profiles existing with CIRM would be one source for the definition and identification of vulnerable community in the UC area.

***(f) Capacity building towards sustainability***

The purpose of the training session on communication and facilitation is building capacity of UC and other staff to conduct public engagement sessions in future. Only few staff of UC and department of local government participated in the two days training conducted by CIRM that was intended to promote sustainability. UC should capture the opportunities of capacity building of their human resources.

***(g) Availability of public relation materials with UC Trincomalee***

In the process of preparing the visuals about UC services and LA laws, CIRM staff experienced few constraints. It was difficult to access the LA laws that are written in local language. There were different opinions among the UC senior staff about the UC services. Therefore we strongly recommend to the UC to arrive to a consensus on their services, prepare a document on UC services and keep copies ready for dissemination to public. Further UC should ensure the transparency of the LA laws to public in order promote the 'rule of law' and thereby good governance.

The public engagement sessions generated greater expectations among the community. It will bring many positive aspects like co-operation, participation and contribution from the community during planning and implementation of the projects. They would take responsibilities in maintenance too. Nevertheless, UC Trincomalee and FCM need to be vigilant and concerned about the possible negative impacts if expectations are not fulfilled. CIRM emphasizes that UC and department of local government to seek various potential sources to finance and / or to implement the proposed interventions in the near future.