

Minutes of Meeting

Integrated Food Security Programme, IFSP
Trincomalee, Sri Lanka

Lessons Learnt Mission

1. A lessons learnt mission was undertaken for the “Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee” (IFSP) from the 6 to 27 February 2003. The lessons learnt mission was conducted by both project partners; the Ministry of Eastern Development and Muslim Religious Affairs (MoED) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). The members of the team selected by the partners were:
 - **Dr. Nikolaus Schall**, Free-lance consultant. Responsible for: capacity building, human resource development, integrated food security approach, health and nutrition, and overall coordination of the team.
 - **Dr. Eberhard Bauer**, Free-lance consultant. Responsible for: situation analysis, community mobilisation (including PNA), implementation arrangements, infrastructure and economic activities and monitoring and evaluation.
 - **Mr. K. Shanmugalingam**, Additional Secretary Ministry of Eastern Development and Muslim Religious Affairs. Responsible for: Monitoring and evaluation, information management including institution for information management.
 - **Mr. B. Sivapiragasam**, Planning Secretariat of North Eastern Provincial Council. Responsible for: Institutional relations, institutional knowledge management.
2. The lessons-learnt mission pursued two **main objectives**; i) Assessment of concepts, products, approaches, procedures that have been successfully tried and tested within the framework of an integrated food security programme operating in a crises environment; to determine the extent to which these lessons learnt can be applied in other projects operating in the North and East of Sri Lanka and the extent to which these can be replicated to other areas within the requested expansion of IFSP outside of Trincomalee district: ii) Define terms of reference for a proposed appraisal mission that would assess the application submitted by the Government of Sri Lanka to expand the project into other areas in the North and East.
3. The lessons learnt mission was undertaken within the framework of a **participatory assessment process** and centred on determining the main lessons learnt rather than undertaking a traditional project progress review. The team undertook a **triangulation process** between three main points of view: the IFSP team, the service providers and

organisation working with the IFSP, the community based organisations and villagers. The task of the team was to triangulate between the opinions in a subjective manner and then to correlate this with existing monitoring data available within the project. The initial results of the team were presented at a joint workshop conducted at the Cultural Club in Dambulla where the knowledge was shared with the project progress review teams from the Jaffna Rehabilitation Project (JRP) and the North East Community Restoration and Development Project (NECORD). The objective of the workshop was, among others, to assess where lessons-learnt can be shared and jointly used between the projects.

4. **Starting point:** An alarmingly high percentage of the population in Trincomalee district were identified during the project feasibility study and the baseline survey health and nutrition as being malnourished and exceptionally impoverished. With a large number of houses, village infrastructures and the production base destroyed, large sections of the population are suffering from alarming chronic and acute malnutrition. The vulnerability of female-headed households is particularly striking. The previously destabilising security situation was a serious constraint for long-term oriented development co-operation. The ground situation has changed with the signing of the MoU in 2002 and new opportunities are now possible that require some modifications in the conceptual approaches. With the relaxation of the security situation the people including CBOs and partner organisations are more ready and able to take over greater responsibilities of their projects.

5. Several **guiding principles** underlie the IFSP concept as far as nutrition and food security is concerned. IFSP pursues an integrated approach that includes addressing the availability, accessibility, use and utilisation of food that in turn positively impacts on the livelihoods of conflict affected communities. The main aim of IFSP is to support and **promote development** and not relief work; an **active participation of the people** in the various communities is essential. The active participation of the community is measured through their **contributions** that can be in cash or kind and the taking over of increasing responsibilities. Furthermore, **strengthening of the self-help capacity** of families and local groups is undertaken, whereby the community participate throughout all stages of the IFSP project identification, selection, and planning and implementation process. The **capacity of service providers** is also improved wherever possible and IFSP works through the various governmental and non-governmental organisations and departments.

6. IFSP follows a **participatory and integrated approach** for village development. Integration in this context means the **involvement and co-operation** of different departments and non-governmental organisations. Participation of beneficiaries in

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identification, planning, implementation and monitoring of projects aims at **creating ownership for the assets created**. This would contribute to increasing the sustainability, particularly of the project impact. IFSP has developed a **community mobilisation concept to empower vulnerable groups** by strengthening their self-help capacities.

7. **Main lessons learnt:** The lessons learnt team concludes that IFSP has been able to demonstrate that it **is possible to undertake effective rehabilitation and developmental work in a conflict situation**. High degree of **transparency**, visibility and **active interaction** with all parties involved in the conflict are just some of the most important factors that allowed the IFSP programme to operate successfully. Furthermore, the **community focused approach** has shown that longer term development benefits can be achieved within a relatively short period of time of an integrated food security project if sufficient emphasis is given to the whole **concept of community mobilisation**. The very presence of the project in the area proved to be a stabilising and comforting factor for the population; an impact that is neither quantifiable nor directly verifiable. IFSP has been able to develop a **number of important products and procedures** that can easily be shared with other projects, most notably: *the community mobilisation approach (including the participatory needs assessment), the livelihoods approach, vulnerability mapping, school feeding programme, micro-project planning and screening procedures, project book, participatory stakeholder surveys, better targeting procedures towards different groups as well as series of other concept papers and documents*. IFSP has meticulously documented everything that it has developed. The documentation is exemplary and includes a large selection of working and concept papers as well as internet based reference documents (www.ifsp-srilanka.org). The project has also demonstrated that an **integrated approach for addressing the problems of vulnerability is possible and necessary** in order to ensure that numerous of the causes of vulnerability are dealt with simultaneously. This required that **multi-sectoral teams** participate not only in the needs assessment of the communities but also in the joint implementation of community based projects.
8. **Main impact** that the project has had includes: **re-establishment of urgently required community assets and infrastructure** including roads, houses, wells, minor irrigation tanks, markets and drainage systems as well as **income and employment generation** possibilities for the communities. The **interrelation with nutrition and hygiene** has impacted on the overall health of the communities. More significant is that the project has been able to **change attitudes and behaviours** of community members away from the receiver mentality **towards greater self-reliance** through the efforts of the community

mobilisation process. Communities report that they feel that have now been properly involved in the identification, planning and implementation of development activities in their villages and report that they feel the assets created are “theirs” (i.e. greater ownership). The benefits include a greater willingness of the communities to take over the operations and maintenance of the assets.

Less pronounced has been the impact the project was able to have on the institutions and organisations working in the district. **A generally very weak organisational capacity was made worse by the conflict situation** and this was further compounded by the difficulty and unwillingness of the organisations to place their most able persons to lead the organisations that were at the forefront of the reconstruction and development work. This often necessitated that the project supports either its own staff or governmental staff to undertake the development activities jointly with the communities.

- 9. Main recommendations:** The lessons learnt team recommends that the application by the Government of Sri Lanka for the **expansion of the Integrated Food Security Project outside of Trincomalee district should be considered favourably** (as per official Government of Sri Lanka application). The appraisal team recommends that a **detailed assessment of the ground situation should be commissioned as soon as possible**. The team also recommends the numerous **products and approaches** developed by the present IFSP **can be immediately applied with very little modification** in the expansion areas. The team is of the opinion that this will **greatly reduce the development costs** of a future IFSP in the North and East of Sri Lanka. In addition, the team feels that a decision should be taken as soon as possible to expand the project in order to be able to also make use of the know-how presently working in the IFSP (e.g. the highly qualified team of community mobilisers, support staff, etc). Any future project structure must be adjusted to suit the adoption of the best practices and lessons-learnt from IFSP, especially the process orientation and community centred approach. Since the MoU a stronger integration into partner organisations is possible and should be considered in any new project design.

With the conclusion of the current IFSP project the lessons learnt team supports the recommendation made at the Dambulla workshop (‘harmonisation of the FRG supported technical assistance projects in the north and east’) that it would be logical that the **self-help capacity created in the communities by IFSP are further supported** through other economic activities. These may include entrepreneurship development, micro financing services, small business development that could be provided by other GTZ

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supported projects. The team recommends that the information that has been generated by the present project be either handed over either to the new project or to a planned **information management centre** that is currently being developed by the North East Provincial Council. The team recommends that IFSP supports NEPC in consolidating the process and conceptual development of the information centre, especially in defining the exact objectives, functions and processes for information resource management. However, the viability in terms of operation, maintenance and staffing has to be assured by NEPC.

10. The team recommends that the **current IFSP project consolidate its activities** in the focal areas within the framework of completing all activities by the end of 2003. A separate report with a list of main activities that need to be carried out by the present IFSP project in the remaining 10 months of the project is being formulated with the support of one of the lesson learnt team members (Dr. Eberhard Bauer).
11. It is understood that the main lessons-learnt and recommendations merely reflect the common understanding of the signatories representing the North Eastern Provincial Council and the lessons learnt team commissioned by the Ministry of Eastern Development and Muslim Religious Affairs and the GTZ at the end of the mission. It is understood that the proposals contained in these minutes of meetings are subject to the approval of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of Sri Lanka.

Trincomalee, 27 February 2002

Signed

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Chief Secretary, NEPC

on behalf of
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Trincomalee,

Dr. Nikolaus Schall
Team leader "Lessons learnt mission"

on behalf of
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