

## Executive Summary

The Development Fund had selected to support education and skill training for disadvantaged and poor youth between the age 13- 20 years of Sri Lanka, as the recipients of Operation Day's Work fund raised by school children in Norway. The programme highlights youth as important agents of peace and stability to the country that suffered a lot by the prolonged civil war during last two decades. The ultimate objective is to promote ethnic harmony, peace and reconciliation between different ethnic and religious communities.

The programme began its activities in the country in 2004 and will continue until 2008. The Development Fund Norway entered into an agreement between 10 member organizations in Sri Lanka including the Programme Support Office (PSO) and the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). The PSO work as leader and coordinating body of the country activities and it is responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring all ODW local projects of the fellow Partner Organizations.

By end of the year 2005, ODW programme completes two years. Although it has not reached its mid term yet, it was proposed to have an early evaluation in order to clarify its direction and get independent assessment for that purpose. Thus an independent evaluation team had been selected to conduct an assessment of ongoing ODW supported projects by its POs. Main purpose of this evaluation is to learn lessons and get a feedback to redesign the ODW future programme activities. This report presents the findings of the evaluation and recommendations for future direction.

Data and information for preparation of the report collected mainly through field visits to the project areas of all eight POs. During the field visits data collected through focus group discussions, interviews with beneficiaries as well as discussions with PO officials and SWOT analysis of the performance of POs.

The findings of the evaluation reveal that all POs have made considerable efforts to achieve the set targets despite some setbacks due to tsunami during early part of 2005. The POs nearly cover 25 different types of VTs, catch up education for children dropout from schools or missed general school education, peace and ethnic harmony through languages training, theatrical activities, environmental protection and literacy programmes for adults who have severely impoverished due to lack of social exposure and understanding.

One of the ultimate objectives of ODW support is to assist participants to engage in gainful employment after training. According to the field observations and interviews with beneficiaries the rate of job placement varies by vocations, job opportunities for trainees produced by NERTRA, KV, CWDR, and WDC are at satisfactory level. REERDO and TYDUP do not have VT programmes and jobs for their trainees do not arise. FIOH on the other hand making a considerable progress in implementing inter ethnic harmony building programmes through language training, environmental cadet programmes and cultural exchange activities.

Among VT programmes, masonry, driving and sewing proved to be successful in getting jobs. However, KV, NERTRA and some units of CFHD (Samanthurai) done well in job placement of above VTs. However, self employment prospects for past trainees has been constrained due to poverty and lack of post training micro finance support systems available in the project areas. In addition to the direct benefits, the trainees got opportunity to develop team spirit and social skills and have come to know each others culture and values. It was seen VT has brought together ethnically divided villages in the Eastern Province and the upcountry villages.

However, all the VTs have not created economically sound job opportunities. For example organic farming (CFHD) had not given expected results. Some VTs need improvement and clear focus. On the other hand, there are some area specific progress had been noted on particular type of VTs. VT related to construction industry has been improved after tsunami. CWDR introduced non traditional VT for girls - Electronics and House wiring which have good potential. CFHD (Eravur) has done well in conducting VT programmes for girls in Bridal dressing and Sewing.

There are dropouts in some courses. In general there are about 10%-30% drop outs were seen. Drop out reported high due to lack of transport, poverty, tsunami, and security reasons. It is needed to give special focus on poor youth who have been dropped out due to lack of basic needs fulfilled at family level.

Catch up education is one of the effective projects of the ODW in the areas it has been introduced. The difficulties of reaching such groups are one of the main problems. The system adopted by REERDO through mobile education is commendable. Catch up education and tutorials to youth who lost education and living in welfare centers such in Vavunia (WDC) are encouraging. Overall this is one of the key areas for future support as war affected children require proper guidance and basic education. A large number of villages still not covered by ODW programmes but deserve such assistance. Peace and inter racial harmony through environmental projects, language training and social activities such as exchange programmes are key activities of FIOH and positive impacts of such programmes have been observed in areas of skill training, community collective actions through joint environmental activities and cultural events.

In selecting beneficiaries almost all POs have adopted general guidelines of ODW on age limits and ethnic diversity. But reaching disadvantaged and vulnerable is still at primary level and need more concentration in the future. Information on VT was disseminated mainly through personal contacts, organizational links, public address systems and through notices. More often marginal villages, non members of CBOs, children in distant locations are not well informed about the opportunities. There are no malpractices or discriminations reported and observed. A scoring system adopted and transparency maintained by most of the POs. But age limit has more often seems to be an obstacle for many youth as they have excluded in other similar programmes and many who were unable to complete the education on time. On the other hand, minimum educational standard for some courses require English language. This is one reason for drop out of some trainees and as a result opportunities of prospective trainees were deprived.

All POs are well established in their respective regions and developed their capacities by participating in ODW projects and training provided by the PSO. Most have their staff, requirements and basic equipments to carry out the targeted activities. According to the SWOT analysis there are lot of strengths and improved opportunities for POs to carry out ODW activities successfully in the future. Especially they have developed better financial and human resources capabilities and recognition in the field of VT and community development. But many weaknesses such as lack of methodical procedures, inability to capitalize opportunities created by post war and post tsunami situation need to look at carefully by each organization. Overall, three POs (KV, FIOH and REERDO) are having excellent capacities to take over the ODW programme without much difficulty. Other POs have certain limitations and incapacities to develop them as prospective partners. But if they make serious note on their weaknesses and threats they too could mobilize themselves as effective partners in ODW endeavor of assisting youth in Sri Lanka.

Based on the findings, number of general and specific recommendations has been made. VT programmes are an integral part of the ODW of all POs. Sewing, driving, bridal dressing and welding are job oriented VTs and suitable to continue. Masonry is having good prospects but training in some centers is not adequate. House wiring, beauty therapy, computer, electronics, motor mechanics and organic farming (self employment) is specific to areas and need careful consideration. Including new courses such as male dress- making, heavy machinery operation, carpentry, floor tiling and cement block making for some centers as suggested by trainees is feasible.

University courses are leading to better qualification to A.L qualified youth but job opportunities in the area or outside need to be evaluated before intensifying such programmes. Improve availability of sewing machines, micro finance support for purchase of tool kits, and avenues for practical to do agriculture, and materials for bridal and beauty therapy and computers should be looked into. Post training evaluation and tracer studies should be carried out after two years. Careful assessment to be done on job avenues for university courses before introducing such courses.

Selection of beneficiaries need further fine tuning. In general criteria adopted for selection is transparent. However certain amounts of personal contacts play a significant role in selection of candidates. Reaching marginal and backward villages as well as vulnerable war affected youth should be look into for selection of beneficiaries as far as possible. Micro management capacities of certain POs (CFHD) need to be strengthened. It is also recommended to allocate more funds for equipments and facilities to POs that have shown considerable progress during past two years. In order to avoid gaps in the management and for sustainability, a secondary level management/leadership structure should be developed for most POs.