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SRI LANKA SUPPORTING REGIONAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAM (SuRG)

QUARTERLY REPORT (OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2008)

DECEMBER 2008

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACLG	Assistant Commissioner for Local Government
APS	Annual Program Statement
ARD	Associates in Rural Development
CBO	Community Based Organization
CEaT	Community Empowerment and Transformation
CHA	Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies
CLG	Commissioner for Local Government
COP	Chief of Party
CORE	Connecting Regional Economies Program
CPN	Community Protection Network
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
DS	Divisional Secretary
GA	Government Agent
GGRC	Good Governance Resource Centre
IT	Information Technology
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
LA	Local Authority
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PS	Pradesha Sabha
PSM	Peace Secretariat for Muslims
SL. R	Sri Lankan Rupee
SI	Social Indicators
SLPI	Sri Lanka Press Institute
STA/M	Senior Technical Advisor and Manager
SuRG	Supporting Regional Governance Program
UC	Union Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I.0 INTRODUCTION

In March 2008, ARD, Inc. was awarded contract no. 383-C-00-08-000501-00 to implement the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Sri Lanka's Supporting Regional Governance Program (SuRG). The three to five year initiative was designed to build on USAID/Sri Lanka's democracy and governance efforts to address development needs resulting from the ongoing conflict. The program supports regional governance in the Eastern province and Polonnaruwa district by focusing on four program components (social equity, local governance, community empowerment and transformation, and open dialogue) with intertwining activities which reinforce governance improvements around the betterment of human and community security.

This report covers the period from October 1 – December 31, 2008 and details progress on contract implementation activities and management and administration. Highlights for the quarter include:

- Award of a grant for Sri Lankan Rupees (SL. Rs) 1,860,600 a research project entitled “Analysis of Judicial/Prosecutorial System Regarding the Right to Life/Liberty in Sri Lanka.”
- Field visits and preliminary capacity assessments of 28 potential partners for Community Empowerment and Transformation activities.
- Orientation meetings and workshops held with Local Authority Chairmen and their secretaries from all 11 SuRG year one local authority partners as well as with the Commissioner for Local Government for the Eastern province and all three district Assistant Commissioners for Local Government.
- Award of a grant for SL Rs. 2,538, 000 to the Sri Lanka Press Institute to provide scholarships for aspiring journalists from the Eastern province and Polonnaruwa district to attend the Sri Lanka College of Journalism Diploma Programme.
- Submission and approval of the SuRG Performance Monitoring Plan.

2.0 CONTRACT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

2.1 SOCIAL EQUITY

Social Equity activities this quarter focused on advancing and building on discussions begun last quarter with pre-selected partners. The first grant for SL Rs. 1,860,600 was awarded to a SuRG partner for the “Analysis of the Judicial/Prosecutorial System Regarding the Right to Life/Liberty in Sri Lanka” research project. The research will explore the judicial response to the right to life and liberty from the Supreme Court during 2000 – 2007 as well as habeas corpus applications at the Court of Appeal, High Court, and Magistrate levels. The findings will be used to engage in a review of the legal/judicial protections available in respect to the right to life and liberty, and demonstrate judicial patterns in response to the disappearance of Tamil citizens from the North and East during conflict periods as well as the disappearances of Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim citizens from the South during the second insurrection of the JVP in the 1980s – 90s.

SuRG has also continued its program development work in Trincomalee over the course of the quarter. A concept paper for a program to support female head of households affected by the conflict with emotional and economic assistance—as well as for the implementation of a human rights education program for non-governmental organization (NGO), community-based organization (CBO), and government development workers in the Trincomalee district—was received and is being refined. The grant should be ready for submission to USAID early in the next quarter.

Discussions are also moving forward to support legal aid in the East and the North.

2.2 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

2.2.1 Building Partnerships

Following up on recommendations from the CEaT assessment completed last quarter, the SuRG Community Empowerment and Transformation (CEaT) team focused on forging relationships and building trust with potential partners based in the Eastern Province. The team visited a variety of groups in each of the three districts in the Eastern Province to learn about ongoing initiatives, challenges, and opportunities unique to each location; and to promote and catalyze innovative ideas for community consultation, reconciliation, and collaboration.

The following is a summary of key findings by district.

- Trincomalee:
 - Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) facilitates a useful Community Protection Network (CPN) in the district. The CPN addresses issues of common concern to members and collects information on a monthly basis but not in a systematic way.

- Peace Committees are active and have a good reputation in the district.
 - Community groups such as the rural development societies, women rural development societies, farmer organizations, and fishermen organizations are quite active at the grass roots level throughout the district. They are an important means through which relationships can be built across ethnic communities.
- Batticaloa:
 - CHA is very active in the district and counts on the participation of many NGOs. They coordinate with commercial banks to provide micro credit services to member NGOs. CHA provides the venue and assists with facilitation as needed, but the network runs independently and is considered by members to be a useful source of information sharing and planning.
 - Livelihood issues were repeatedly mentioned as a priority concern.
 - The Sarvodaya Regional Centre in Batticaloa is developing a Peace Resource Center to house Sarvodaya peace building initiatives. The Center is a useful resource center for training as well.
 - Religious leaders provide a valuable network to facilitate dialogue across communities.
 - Ampara:
 - In many cases, NGO work with communities is started through microfinance programs.
 - In general, Ampara NGOs seemed to be better organized than local groups in the other districts. Program staff seems to have benefited from training on project management and administration.
 - Donors have been active in the district as evidenced by funding history displayed on the walls of many NGOs which include long lists of donors.
 - NGOs tend to lack focus in terms of program design, implementation, and monitoring. There appears to be a strong need for support and technical guidance in developing proposals.

By the end of the quarter, SuRG had received concept papers from some organizations from the East and from Colombo. They reveal, as did the above-mentioned interviews, a significant need for capacity building with potential partners on project development and management and, in numerous cases, on technical issues as well. In response, the CEaT team is developing a training session on proposal development to help those organizations with good ideas turn their concept notes into sound proposals suitable for submission to SuRG (or other donors) for grant funding. The first workshop will be held at the start of next quarter. Subsequent workshops will be provided to applicants responding to the Annual Program Statement (APS) due out next quarter.

2.2.2 Peace Secretariat for Muslims

SuRG continues to work with the Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM) on a proposal they submitted last quarter. The proposal remains overambitious both programmatically and financially. SuRG has helped the PSM narrow down the scope of their program and focus on strengthening their ongoing regional Muslim Peace Assemblies and launching and developing a National Peace Assembly. The SuRG Program Manager for Monitoring and Evaluation is working with the PSM to develop realistic and measurable indicators for success. The Finance Manager is also working with the PSM to align the budget to the program and to an acceptable level of funding.

2.3 LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Eleven local authorities (LAs) were chosen as year one partners at the end of the last quarter. This quarter the local governance program focused on orientation with partner local authorities and the district and provincial authorities working with them. Individual introductory meetings were held with the 11 LA Chairmen, the

GAs in Batticaloa and Ampara, the Commissioner for Local Government (CLG), the Assistant Commissioners for Local Government from Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Ampara and staff from the Good Governance Resource Centers (GGRC) in Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Ampara. These individual meetings were followed up with group orientation sessions in each district including participation of the Assistant Commissioner for Local Government (ACLG), LA Chairmen, and Secretaries. The following are priority issues raised by officials from each district.

- Batticaloa:
 - Language training for government officials;
 - Training to improve coordination among the Pradesha Sabha (PS), Divisional Secretaries (DS), and other senior government officials;
 - The ACLG would like to participate in the selection of year two LAs for the district;
 - The GGRC pool of trainers is very capable and should be utilized as much as possible to ensure sustainability of the GGRC; and
 - All training should be very practical.
- Ampara:
 - Development of a mechanism to enhance the relationship and coordination among elected PS and Union Council (UC) members and central government local government officials. The GA recommended an advisory board composed of government authorities, local authorities, civil society, and CBO leaders, and LA chairmen be set up. He offered to coordinate with the DS and heads of government departments in the district to facilitate the meetings;
 - The Citizen Charter should be implemented in all LAs in the district not just the three SuRG LAs;
 - The ACLG expressed concern that the GGRC for the district located in Akkaraipattu PS serves only the Tamil community and is not under close supervision of the ACLG, so he requested that another GGRC be set up in a location where the ACLG can supervise it and that serves the Sinhala community; and
 - Language training for the ACLG staff.
- Trincomalee:
 - LA budget and plans are being developed but need further assistance;
 - LA staff needs information technology (IT) training;
 - A computerized database is needed to share and manage information;
 - Financial aid is needed for the implementation of the Citizen Charter; and
 - A mechanism to handle complaints should be set up at each LA.

Following these introductory meetings and orientation sessions, the SuRG local governance team developed a guide for institutional needs assessments to be conducted with focus groups in each local authority. The focus groups will include LA chairmen and members, staff, and members of the local community. The assessments will detail the following:

- Elected council members and LA staff:
 - Previous training;
 - Priorities for future training and technical assistance;
 - Key challenges and remedial actions;
 - Information dissemination and outreach by LA;
 - Handling of public grievances; and
 - Citizen Charter: steps taken to date.

- Community members and CBO representatives:
 - Interaction with LA;
 - Perceptions on LA performance;
 - Challenges working/interacting with LA;
 - Dissemination of information by LA;
 - Responses to public grievances; and
 - Suggestions for improvements.

Focus group discussions in all 11 LAs have been scheduled for early next quarter.

2.4 OPEN DIALOGUE

SuRG signed a SL. Rs 2,538,000 grant with the Sri Lankan Press Institute (SLPI) to provide scholarships from SuRG target districts to their Sri Lanka College of Journalism Diploma Programme 2009. The one year full-time program for aspiring journalists produces industry-ready graduates who can be absorbed into the newsrooms of the country. Students choose a course in print, television, or radio and attend courses conducted in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. The curriculum is designed in close consultation with industry representatives to ensure that students graduate with the skills needed and appropriate for Sri Lanka’s media.

Full scholarships—including tuition, fees, and living expenses—will be offered by SuRG for up to 20 aspiring journalists from the Eastern province and Polonnaruwa district. The Scholarship Program was announced in early November along with SLPI’s announcement for course applications. SuRG visited media representatives and associations along with schools throughout the Eastern province and in Polonnaruwa to encourage applications for the scholarship. All applicants will apply directly to SLPI and must meet all SLPI acceptance and scholarship criteria before being considered for a SuRG scholarship.

SLPI had its largest applicant pool ever, including a large number of applicants from both the Eastern province and Polonnaruwa district. Unfortunately, none of the Polonnaruwa candidates met SLPI’s qualifications for acceptance. In the East, 15 young journalists were accepted. SuRG expanded the geographic target group to include Monaragala and ensure a diverse group of recipients.

Scholarships will be formally awarded when the course begins on January 7, 2009.

2.5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN

MSI’s monitoring and evaluation consultant completed her visit to Colombo this quarter. She traveled to Colombo in the previous quarter to work with the SuRG staff and partners to develop the program’s performance monitoring plan (PMP). A draft was submitted to USAID on October 7. A revised version incorporating recommendations and comments from the SuRG Cognizant Technical Officer (CTO) was submitted at the end of the quarter. In addition, reporting formats for collecting data from grantees were developed for all grants signed or written in this quarter.

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