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SRI LANKA SUPPORTING REGIONAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAM (SuRG)

ANNUAL REPORT (OCTOBER 2009–SEPTEMBER 2010)



NOVEMBER 2010

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COVER PHOTO:

Cast members perform the street drama on good governance at the center of Sungavila town on 8 September 2010. The street drama performances were facilitated by a SuRG grantee, which is working to improve engagement of community members in the Lankapura local authority in the Polonnaruwa District.

Photo courtesy of SuRG.

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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APS	Annual Program Statement
AU	American University
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CEaT	Community Empowerment and Transformation
CLG	Commissioner for Local Government
CLIN	Contract Line Item Number
COP	Chief of Party
CORE	Connecting Regional Economies Program
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DS	Divisional Secretariat
EP	Eastern Province
FY	Fiscal Year
GA	Government Agent
GN	Grama Niladhari
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HLPR	Housing, Land and Property Restitution
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
LA	Local Authority
LG	Local Governance
LTTE	Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MLGPC	Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSI	Management Systems International
NELSIP	North East Local Services Improvement Project

NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OD	Open Dialogue
OLD	Official Language Department
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PS	Pradeshiya Sabha
PTF	Presidential Task Force
RCO	Regional Contracts Officer
SE	Social Equity
SLPI	Sri Lanka Press Institute
SL. Rs.	Sri Lankan Rupees
SuRG	Supporting Regional Governance Program
ToT	Training-of-Trainers
UC	Urban Council
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VEGA	Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance
WRDS	Women's Rural Development Society

INTRODUCTION

In March 2008, Tetra Tech ARD (formerly ARD, Inc.) was awarded Contract No. 383-C-00-08-000501-00 to implement the United States Agency for International Development (USAID's)/Sri Lanka Supporting Regional Governance Program (SuRG). The initiative was designed to build on USAID/Sri Lanka's democracy and governance efforts to address development needs resulting from the then-ongoing almost 30-year conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam (LTTE). The program supports regional governance in conflict-affected areas by focusing on four program components—social equity, local governance, community empowerment and transformation, and open dialogue—with crosscutting activities that promote governance improvements around the betterment of human security.

In May 2009, the GOSL decisively defeated the LTTE after almost three decades of fighting. The repercussions, not surprisingly, continue to unfold with direct impact on people's daily lives in the north and east, as well as the remainder of the island. Undeniably, the absence of war and terrorism represents critical improvement in human security for the whole of the population. Economic activity has increased, checkpoints are greatly reduced, mobility for citizens in the east has normalized, and people are doing their best to move on with their lives.

Presidential and parliamentary elections absorbed national attention and resources for almost the entire first half of fiscal year (FY) 2010, beginning with nominations in November 2009 for the presidential election and running until polling in April 2010. During this period, local authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs), even if not directly engaged in campaigning, remained cautious about engaging in public activities. Planning and activities were put on hold pending the outcome.

The elections resulted in the government winning 58 percent of the vote in a highly contentious presidential election and 144 seats (just six short of the two-thirds majority needed to control votes) in parliamentary elections. The government moved quickly to capitalize on its wins, as seen in the following:

- The opposition candidate was arrested and court-martialed.
- Ministries were consolidated and appointments made, putting 94 government departments and approximately 70 percent of the budget in the hands of the President or one of his family members.
- All relief, rehabilitation, and development activities in the north were put under the control of the Presidential Task Force (PTF), an extra-constitutional body run by the Minister of Economic Development, the President's brother.
- The 18th Amendment was added to the Constitution. This eliminated term limits for the President and weakened the 17th Amendment, which was intended to reduce politicization of elections and the police through independent oversight commissions.

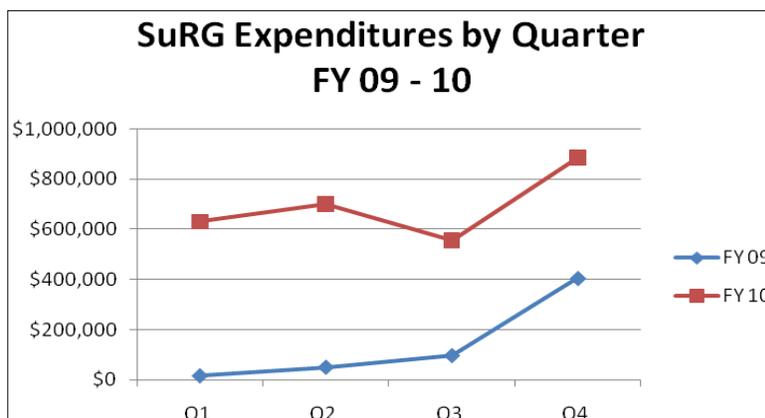
These factors, in conjunction with repeated extensions of Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, increased budget, recruitment, and authority for the Ministry of Defense, underscores minority communities' lingering sense of insecurity.

In the north and east, significant infrastructure and physical development is ongoing. While most people are in favor of development, they are also deeply concerned that projects are planned and implemented with little or no consultation from regional and local authorities or communities. This not only raises questions about people's ability to participate in the development of their own communities, it also further exacerbates long-

standing concerns and complications regarding land. The sense that land is being allocated unfairly—based on ethnicity or politics—is pervasive. To what extent this is actually the case is very difficult to determine, as laws and authority regarding land are extremely complex.

The lack of official attention or approval for social, cultural, or civic development has direct implications on SuRG programming. As noted above, the PTF must approve any development activity in the north and has stated that training, capacity-building, or awareness-raising can be handled by the government and is therefore not needed from outside agencies or NGOs; these activities are rarely approved. In the east, the situation is less severe, but still complicated and not entirely distinct. The Government Agent (GA) in Trincomalee has long been averse to such activities and continues to maintain tight control over activities in the district. This year, a more hardline approach to NGOs and development programs has begun to be felt in Batticaloa as well. In general, civil society groups that are not directly connected to the government (such as Rural Development Societies, Fishermen’s Societies, and the like), are finding it increasingly difficult to carry out their work. For example, the Batticaloa GA has said that all women’s issues should be dealt with through Women’s Rural Development Societies (WRDS), eliminating the need for other women’s NGOs or CBOs.

SuRG was able to maintain a robust program throughout the year. After building a solid foundation and relationships in year one, SuRG significantly increased activities each quarter this year (except for a slight dip due to elections in Q3) as the chart below, “SuRG Expenditures by Quarter FY 09-10” clearly indicates.



Throughout the year, the types of activities carried out were adjusted as needed and new activities were added and curtailed as warranted by political and security constraints and opportunities. Most significantly, SuRG expanded its relationship with and support to the GOSL to accommodate the government’s requirements and USG’s policy in the country. SuRG revamped and expanded its local governance component at the request of GOSL officials to train all Pradeshiya Sabhas (PSs) in the east. (By the end of the fiscal year, SuRG also included all of the province’s Urban and Municipal Councils in the program.) In July, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with the Ministry of Local Government to formalize this relationship. At the ceremony, the Minister deemed it a “...historic event...” and by the end of the fiscal year, had requested USAID expand the program throughout the island. SuRG also worked with the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration to expand the local government language training program to all 37 PSs in the east.

SuRG built close ties to the Land Commissioner General’s Department and related officials by sponsoring a land study tour to East Timor and a comprehensive follow-up assessment and recommendations for USAID support. Participants in the study tour included 12 government officials from the Land Ministry, Ministry of Nation Building, Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Environment.

In response to a request for support from the Minister of Justice to the U.S. Ambassador, SuRG deployed a team of three international lawyers and justice sector experts to conduct a Rule of Law Assessment. The Assessment will form the basis for further USAID support to the Ministry of Justice.

This report details SuRG activities as well as achievements, lessons learned, and general contract implementation covering the period from October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010.

I.0 CONTRACT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

SuRG significantly increased programming during FY10; awarding grants valued at Sri Lankan Rupees (SL Rs.) 94,484,999 to 20 organizations working in the east, the north, Polonnaruwa, Monaragala, and nationwide. In addition, SuRG significantly expanded the work with local authorities (LAs) in the east—moving from a targeted technical assistance program for 11 LAs, providing a series of technical and language training programs, to all 43 LAs in the Eastern Province, along with follow-up technical assistance to SuRG’s Year 1 11 LA partners. These activities, along with additional SuRG directly implemented training, technical assistance, research, and analysis are detailed below, divided by program component.

I.1 SOCIAL EQUITY

While many of the most egregious forms of human rights violations (such as abductions, disappearances, killings, and prolonged detentions) diminished substantially over the course of the year, ensuring full protection for human rights requires vigilance.

Donor funding for human rights work may be diminishing in this arena due to the withdrawal of some donors with a longstanding commitment to human rights. The human rights community faces challenges in securing Presidential Task Force (PTF) approval for human rights work in the north and increasingly fears that donors will yield to government restrictions. SuRG believes that the work its social equity partners do is vital to achieving a post-war settlement in which all communities feel they are on an equal footing before the law, and to preserving democratic norms and processes in a period in which checks and balances have been severely compromised.

SuRG was proud to be able to support the work of several strong social equity partners. Highlights of social equity activities of FY2010 include:

- The first major study of the ineffectiveness of the habeas corpus remedy, examining nearly 900 cases, was completed; advocacy was begun to build consensus on the need for changed judicial behavior and law reform.
- A participatory workshop for 20 northern lawyers on legal issues growing out of undocumented deaths due to the conflict was held. An additional 53 lawyers were trained by a SuRG partner on the applicability of international instruments and covenants in Sri Lankan law.
- A SuRG partner provided legal advice and referrals to 393 people and legal representation to 134 new victims in 191 separate cases in the reporting period. Older cases continued. In the Jaffna High Court, 45 habeas corpus cases were filed and were given leave to proceed. An additional 23 fundamental rights cases were also filed; of the 8 resolved so far, 7 were found in favor of the detainees, who were released.
- A SuRG partner formed 62 community-based development groups with a total of 554 members in the north. The partner also pursued 154 human rights cases in the courts.
- An early warning system (EWS) in Batticaloa distributed 111 messages to 250 networks.
- Human Rights Diploma programs were initiated for 35 participants in Trincomalee by a SuRG partner, and 45 participants in Ampara by another SuRG partner

- From the Ampara District, 2,874 people sought advice at six mobile legal clinics carried out by a SuRG partner and 125 obtained legal aid at three clinics provided by another partner. These clinics provided legal counseling, referrals, and support on issues including land, birth, marriage documentation, and spousal maintenance.

1.1.1 TRAINING

The SuRG SE team also conducted the first in a series of training workshops for lawyers on emerging legal issues in the north and east of Sri Lanka in August 2010 in Anuradhapura. Twenty lawyers from the north attended; the participants were identified with the assistance of the presidents of the district Bar Associations. The workshop was conducted in Tamil to improve comprehension.

“I had many doubts with respect to partition law. I thought it was difficult to file and represent such cases but due to the workshop I have cleared my doubts and feel I can handle such cases.”
 –Participating lawyer, SuRG training for lawyers from the Northern Province

The workshop addressed issues relating to undocumented deaths due to the conflict and dealt with proof of death in order to obtain a death certificate, succession, testamentary action, inheritance of property, and the custody and adoption of minors whose parents died during the conflict. Concerns relating to land and property, such as proof of ownership and/or possession of private and state lands, secondary possession, prescriptive title to land, and partition of land were addressed by a High Court judge, a retired Supreme Court judge and two senior attorneys. One of the presentations that addressed succession in post-conflict settings was published in the Tamil newspaper, *Thinnakaran*. Generally, workshops for members of the legal community follow a lecture format; this workshop was applied with time for discussion and sharing of approaches to different legal issues. In addition, every topic included a practical simulation in which participants argued a case. SuRG SE staff worked with workshop resource persons to ensure this interactive focus.

In the final quarter of the year, the SE team began planning for a second workshop on the same themes for lawyers in the east. The SE team also began discussions about replicating its planned series of workshops for lawyers for judges in the north and east.

1.1.2 GRANTS AND SUBCONTACTS

ARD001

Project	Corpus Remedy and the Right to Liberty under Fundamental Rights Jurisdiction
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 4,182,000
Dates	1 January 2009–31 December 2009

In the first quarter of FY10, a SuRG partner completed drafts of two research reports: “Study of the Legal Protection of Life/Liberty Rights in Sri Lanka” and “Liberty Rights At Stake: the Virtual Eclipse of the Habeas Corpus Remedy in Sri Lanka.” Both studies pointed to flaws in judicial performance regarding the protection of rights. The habeas corpus study is the first major research examining the extent to which the remedy works in practice. With the opening of courts in the north, the research team was able to expand its scope; in the end, the team examined close to 900 reported and unreported judgments and orders of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals relating to habeas corpus, as well as briefs and orders of the Northern Provincial High Court. Both reports were peer reviewed in March 2010. Subsequently the reports were finalized, taking into account the input of the peer review and SuRG advisers. Both reports are based on a significant amount of carefully analyzed data, particularly in the habeas corpus report; the partner delivered more than the grant agreement called for. They also submitted a preliminary advocacy plan, which became the basis for the follow-on project which started on 2 August 2010. The partner plans to focus its advocacy

on the habeas corpus remedy, because problems in obtaining the remedy are not well understood in the legal community.

ARD040

Project	Analysis of the Judicial Prosecutorial System Regarding the Right to Life/ Liberty in Sri Lanka (ARD001)
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 1,860,000
Dates	2 August 2010–31 January 2011

The partner's second grant focuses on raising awareness in the legal community on issues in existing habeas corpus jurisprudence, improving judicial practice in such cases, and building support for the passage of a habeas corpus law, which (if implemented) would ensure greater effectiveness of the remedy. Given that the remedy of habeas corpus in particular has not received much attention in the past, and given the sensitive nature of the research findings which speak to the integrity of Sri Lanka's justice system, this low-key approach to advocacy is required.

The objective is to help create an environment that is conducive to the report's proposed reforms by encouraging a body of expert opinions within the legal community that will be supportive.

Because the grant needed to be split into two components due to the still-pending modification of the SuRG contract, the partner has expressed concerns about the prospect of interruptions in the work flow and momentum, as well as loss of efficiency.

ARD003

Project	Support for War-Affected Widows and Human Rights Education in the Trincomalee District
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 3,588,000
Dates	10 January 2009–15 February 2010

Since 2006, the partner has been addressing human rights needs among residents of the Trincomalee District in the areas of awareness, protection, and realization of rights through a series of interlinked projects that ensure access to education, legal services, and psychosocial assistance for female-headed households affected by the war. The partner believes that this holistic approach can help contribute to a culture of respect for human rights.

During the first quarter of FY10, the partner completed its first SuRG grant, under which it met regularly with war widows and provided advice and counseling. Livelihood support was extended to 48 widows throughout the duration of the project. All 48 participated in psychosocial counseling, livelihood and life skills education, and human rights awareness training. As part of this grant, the partner also concluded a six-month diploma-equivalent human rights education program in December 2009. Fifty-one participants successfully completed their final examinations and received a certificate of accomplishment at a ceremony held to commemorate International Human Rights Day.

ARD041

Project	Support for War-Affected Widows and Human Rights Education in the Trincomalee District
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 3,959,450
Dates	16 August 2010–15 February 2011

Building on the success of this first grant, a second grant under the same name allowed the partner to continue implementing activities in human rights education and assistance to female heads of households. The grant was signed on 16 August 2010 and includes the following activities under three main project components:

- Legal Assistance:
 - The partner received more than 70 applications for legal assistance. Review and selection of the applications is currently ongoing, with 50 families scheduled to be selected for assistance.
- Human Rights Education:
 - A four-month Certificate Course on Human Rights which will focus on providing training to 35 young people who completed their secondary school (General Certificate of Education–Advanced Level) exams. The course is being held in Muttar for youth of that area.
 - The partner selected 35 applicants for an Advanced Studies in Human Rights course. Participants were drawn from field personnel from nongovernmental organizations, government sector employees at the officer level, and university graduates. The course starts in early FY11.
 - The partner began work on a pamphlet on domestic violence aimed at making women aware of their rights and remedies.
- Non-Legal Support to Victims of Rights Violations:
 - Fifty family members were provided with bus or train fare and care packages of essential items to enable them to visit family members in the Anuradhapura and Vavuniya detention centers.
 - Livelihood support was continued for 18 widows; another 30 were added.
 - Psychosocial counseling and life skills training are being delivered to help those affected function effectively as heads of households.

ARD005

Project	Support for Legal Aid Program
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 5,512,685
Dates	1 May 2009–30 April 2010

Under the first grant, the partner, with the support of lawyers in its network, filed legal cases and made legal submissions in the relevant court of competence. During the first three quarters of FY10, the partner pursued the cases of 134 individuals related primarily to arrest and prolonged detention and disappearances, in addition to its ongoing caseload. It also continued work on nine cases filed during the last quarter of FY09. During the period it pursued 10 cases in the Supreme Court, 3 in the Court of Appeals, 77 in the High Court, and 51 at the magistrate’s level.

Of the 77 High Court cases, 45 were applications for the habeas corpus remedy filed at the Jaffna High Court on behalf of disappeared individuals from the Jaffna District. All 45 cases were granted leave to proceed at the Jaffna and Chavakachchery High Court. A total of 23 (including 4 for women) Fundamental Rights applications were filed and 8 concluded. Of the concluded cases, seven detainees were released and one was indicted. With the partner’s help, three of the four female detainees being defended won their release from the Court.

A total of 393 persons (including 112 women) received information, advice and/or referrals under the legal assistance program. Of these, legal cases on behalf of 102 victims (91 men and 11 women) were filed during the grant.

A three-day training program for lawyers was held in November 2009 in Negombo. A total of 53 lawyers (50 men and 3 women) from various High Court districts and those practicing in the north and east, Colombo, and other important districts attended the residential training. The 53 participants were lawyers with a strong interest in human rights cases. The workshop examined the applicability of international instruments and covenants in Sri Lankan law. Both domestic and international experts acted as trainers.

ARD042

Project	Defending Human Rights in Sri Lanka
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 4,084,341
Dates	10 September 2009–10 February 2010

On September 10, the partner commenced its second SuRG grant. The partner is training key persons in from each district. The trainees will participate in a two-day training program where they will learn about the role of defenders, as well as various local and international mechanisms and tools that will enable them to defend human rights within their communities. The program will have a special focus on minority and land rights issues. The training will be conducted by resource persons of the partner, other organizations such as the Human Rights Commission, and other legal activists.

Under the second component, the partner is also continuing its provision of legal aid. Aid is provided through offices in Colombo, Jaffna, and Vavuniya. The Vavuniya office deals with cases in Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, and Mannar. Legal representation is provided through a panel of 15 lawyers. The panel meets every quarter to discuss the progress of each case and to decide on filing new cases. The partner has continued its visits to prisons and detention centers in Colombo and the provinces to trace and interview detainees. In addition, it continues to meet with the Attorney General's Department and the Commissioner of Prisons to advocate for the release and better treatment of detainees.

During the 20 days from the grant start till end of the FY, the partner took up 50 new cases related to victims assisted under the previous grant. In all 50 cases, the court with jurisdiction changed. One case of a disappearance became a case of prolonged detention and finally arrest; ultimately the partner won his acquittal.

During the FY, the partner provided legal representation to 134 individuals and their families and filed 191 cases, with 5 acquittals, 10 appeals, and 4 convictions (of which 3 were appealed). Other cases continue.

ARD022

Project	Mobilization of Community-Based Development Groups
Grant Amount	SL. Rs. 8,652,960
Dates	1 December 2009–31 October 2010

In November 2009, a grant was awarded to the partner to expand their ongoing program funded by the European Union to organize and strengthen communities through education and community engagement, in addition to providing legal aid. SuRG support went toward the formation of 62 new Community Development Groups in Jaffna, Mannar, and Vavuniya Districts. The project attempted to build a community of grassroots, "barefoot" HRDs who understood rights and means of redress, and had the ability to mobilize communities in defense of constitutional rights and against human rights violations.

The partner focused more on community development and advocacy work related to needed services and assistance. This type of work went a long way in helping the CDG gain the trust and respect of the villages where they were working. The CDG conducted *shramadanas* (communal volunteer works projects), helped villagers who had fled to India obtain missing birth certificates, advocated with local authorities to enhance community services, and facilitated a community loan program from the Thrift Co-operative Societies in Vavuniya. The partner also trained their project staff and motivators on voter rights and election issues so that the staff could conduct a voter education awareness program prior to the January presidential elections. Voter awareness programs conducted in Jaffna, Hatton, and Ampara Districts included the distribution of flyers urging citizens to exercise their right to vote, and performances of street theatre groups in strategic locations. In addition, some of the members of the CDGs worked with GNs to register eligible voters in their villages. The partner also pursued 154 human rights court cases in Trincomalee and Vavuniya Districts under the grant.

Also important to note, the partner commemorated human rights day (December 10) in Jaffna. Approximately 1,500 people, including members of CDGs and the general public, walked from Weerasingham Hall in Jaffna to the town center to create awareness on the importance of respecting human rights.

ARD010

Project	Strengthening Housing, Land and Property Rights in Eastern Sri Lanka
Grant Amount	USD \$ 145,533
Dates	15 October 2009–31 January 2011

Through the “Strengthening Land, Housing and Property Rights in Eastern Sri Lanka” project, the partner is trying to influence national policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) return and restitution; it aims at ensuring that international standards are incorporated into this policy. The partner conducts trainings in the Eastern Province and in the Northern Province (as possible) with local government officials, as well as NGOs, civil society groups, and international organizations working with IDP communities.

The partner produced a policy brief on the level of tenure security required for different shelter options. This was intended as an input into their advocacy efforts to inform donors and permanent shelter providers. The policy brief was shared with members of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ lead Protection Working Group and Land Task Force. A second brief was produced for policy dialogue. The second brief examined key challenges affecting the provision of shelter, namely the lack of government policies regarding housing, land, and restitution; and defined achievable standards for housing and challenges related to security of tenure.

During this reporting period, the partner conducted research on land issues in the Eastern Province. Delays were caused by the inability to collect data in the run-up to and during the presidential and parliamentary elections (i.e., from December until late April) and problems with the research approach and the principal researcher.

During the fiscal year, it became clear that the partner’s original advocacy strategy would not work, given changes in government structure. The partner had been working for a few years with a group operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief, which was charged with developing policy for resettlement; it had developed close relations with members of this group. These relationships gave the partner good access for influencing policy debate. The government transferred authority for IDP return and resettlement to the PTF. Consequently, the partner developed a new strategy which included advocacy with international stakeholders working in Sri Lanka on shelter and land issues, including the World Bank, UN-Habitat, the UN Office for Project Services, and the Indian High Commission, which will be funding the construction of 50,000 houses in the north.

The partner implemented two trainings on the subject of “Housing, Land and Property Restitution” (HLPR) targeting NGO and CBO staff with the intention of increasing the knowledge and skill base relating to the topic. The core objectives of the training programs were to:

- Understand the relevance of the concept of restitution and international standards for achieving durable solutions to displacement;
- Introduce legal concepts pertaining to land and property in the national law;
- Develop the capacity to translate salient legal concepts (including human rights) into implementable working standards;
- Develop an understanding of practical issues that can impede a process of restitution and the process and means by which these issues can be overcome (with a special emphasis on land documentation, as per the pre-workshop needs assessment [see below]); and
- Develop an understanding of gender with an emphasis on gender-based issues in displacement.

The post-training evaluation reflected a positive response to workshop sessions. Participants indicated that as a result of the workshop, they were now in a position to consider issues impacting human and restitution rights when implementing housing projects and other restitution-related work, and are able to conduct awareness programs for communities and IDPs on relevant issues themselves.

After conducting field missions in Jaffna, Mannar, and Vavuniya to assess training needs and develop contacts with GNs, Land Commission officials, NGOs, and United Nations agencies engaged in the provision of shelter, the training program for the east was adapted for the Northern Province. The partner requested approval from the PTF to conduct this training with key government and nongovernment stakeholders in the province. The request is still pending.

ARD020

Project	Raising Awareness of Vulnerable Communities of Ampara District
Grant Amount	SL. Rs. 2,230,825.00
Dates	17 February 2010–16 February 2011

The partner increased the human rights knowledge of 270 individuals, most drawn from the Tamil community, who attended awareness-raising sessions. These 31 sessions had a total of 7,322 participants. The sessions focused on raising awareness on basic human rights, fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Sri Lanka, the right to equality, and women’s and children’s rights. Participants were drawn from Women’s Rural Development Societies, Fisheries Societies, Rural Development Societies, Youth Clubs, and local CBOs.

Six mobile legal aid clinics were held, providing services to 125 persons. The partner’s team of lawyers resolved the problems raised by 48 clients; 73 cases were referred to other agencies. Issues dealt with included documentation and advice on the procedure to obtain birth certificates, issues relating to the payment of spousal and child maintenance, and property disputes. Six cases involved abductions by paramilitaries during the war. These cases were referred to International Committee of the Red Cross in Colombo for follow-up action. Cases of land matters were referred to Divisional Secretariats (DSs).

The partner began its Diploma in Human Rights course, offered to young people between the ages of 18–35 years, over a period of six months. The partner received 102 applications; from these, the 40 most-qualified students were selected via an interview process. An additional five applicants who work for legal aid organizations were also accepted. A total of 19 women and 26 men have enrolled. The following course topics were among those covered by the end of the FY:

- Concepts and the historical development of human rights;
- Governance and participation, constitutional rights (Articles 10–14 of the Constitution);
- The domestic human rights framework and institutions—an introduction to local remedies, the Supreme Court, Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman, etc.; and
- International human rights covenants and frameworks.

“We are very lucky to have the opportunity to follow this course [partner HR Diploma Course] in Ampara. Ours is a backward area and if we wished to follow such a Diploma, we would have had to make the long journey to either Kandy or Colombo. Further, such a course would have been too expensive for many of us. Yet it is important to follow such a course because our knowledge of human rights is very poor; this is the only way we can improve our knowledge. This course is helping us as people who have been discriminated against. There are many more like myself who are eager to follow the course. I want to thank USAID and its partner in Ampara...[for this course].”
–Student

ARD021

Project	Raising Awareness amongst Vulnerable Woman and Adolescents in Ampara District
Grant Amount	SL. Rs. 2,851,910.00
Dates	17 February 2010–16 February 2011

The partner raised awareness of human rights among vulnerable women and adolescents in Ampara. Twenty-four workshops were held for 202 individuals from six villages. Sessions drew 616 participants and included villagers from Women’s Rural Development Societies (WRDs), *Samurdi*¹ (well-being) Societies, NGOs, the partner’s field staff, and youth clubs. Workshop themes included:

- Women’s property rights;
- Peace, co-existence, and human rights values;
- Gender equality and gender-based violence;
- Alcoholism;
- Child rights; and
- Leadership skills and non-violent communication.

During the reporting period, the project has provided psycho-social and legal counseling to 53 women (including 11 widows) in six villages. Of the 53, 36 are victims of domestic violence, 1 has attempted suicide, 3 have been abandoned by their husbands, and some are mentally unstable.

¹ Samurdi (well-being) societies were established in villages in the mid-1990s to implement national poverty alleviation initiatives.

Support groups were also set up among women in the six villages; during the last quarter of the FY, 10 support group meetings were held. Many of the support group members are in dire need of income-generating support, and the partner is now trying to provide help from other ongoing projects.

Three mobile legal services clinics were held during this reporting period with the assistance of lawyers from the Legal Aid Commission's office. A total of 287 people were provided legal advice on issues relating to birth, marriage and death certificates, and land documentation.

ARD017

Project	Peace through Community Self-Protection and Inter Communal Dialogue in the Batticaloa District
Grant Amount	SL. Rs. 2,982,350.00
Dates	17 February 2010–16 February 2011

The grantee's project facilitates Community Meetings (CM) to increase knowledge of women's and children's rights and to plan and conduct *sbramadanas*. A total of 700 participants attended human rights awareness sessions. As part of the community information early warning system network, 111 messages were disseminated via mobile phones to 250 contacts. The contacts in this network include partner network organizations, religious leaders, GNs, DSs, school principals, journalists, police officers in-charge (OICs), security forces, Samurdi officers, and community leaders. The partner also includes information on special events and details of missing persons.

Legal services were provided for 92 cases during the reporting period. Issues included missing civil documents, procedures to obtain birth certificates, matrimonial problems, money disputes, child abuse, missing persons, and documentation related to property ownership. Cases were referred to service providers.

The partner referred 53 legal cases to service providers for follow-up legal action. Of these 53, 7 were filed in the courts, while another 46 cases were in the process of being filed. The remaining 39 cases were referred to legal aid organizations.

The project also provided Sinhala language training to Tamils and Muslims. There are 76 students (56 women and 20 men) including youth; community leaders; members of WRDSs, RDSs, and fisheries societies; NGO workers; and government officials. The six-month course consists of 288 classroom hours.

A leaflet designed to raise awareness of child rights and to prevent child abuse was published by the partner under this project and distributed to 120 government offices and schools. Two street plays were performed on the theme of eradicating domestic violence and women's rights; these plays were performed by 10 trainers who were trained by the partner.

I.1.3 RULE OF LAW ASSESSMENT

SuRG organized a Rule of Law assessment conducted by a team of international consultants. The team conducted a targeted analysis of the status of Rule of Law development in Sri Lanka. In addition to a review of primary and secondary documentation and journal articles, the team relied heavily on in-depth interviews with Sri Lankan and foreign experts for data, insights, and opinions about Sri Lanka's efforts to develop a working Rule of Law. While in Sri Lanka, the team conducted 47 interviews in Colombo, Trincomalee, Jaffna, and Kalutara. They met with officials from the Judiciary, Ministry of Justice, Judicial Services Commission, Law Commission, Attorney General's Department, Government Analyst's Office, Bar, CSOs, and donors.

1.2 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

“We had this opportunity to learn together. We were Tamils, Muslims, Sinhala people as participants. This was the first opportunity for us. We have had conflict among us and we still remember those bitter experiences. However, during the workshop I learned that it is important to heal the wounds and forget those bitter memories gradually. I am now willing to build relations with the members of other communities.”

–Participant in SuRG grantee training 22 September 2010

The Community Empowerment and Transformation (CEaT) component significantly expanded with the award of eight grants to organizations based in the Eastern Province and Polonnaruwa under the first round of the Annual Program Statement (APS) and with the review and pre-selection of a second round of proposals later in the year (see Section 1.5.1). As noted in last year’s report, the capacity of these organizations to design, manage, and implement activities was considerably less than SuRG originally envisioned. Although many of these organizations had received considerable funding in the past during the tsunami relief period, they were primarily implementing projects that focused on livelihoods, shelter, and infrastructure support, rather than on reconciliation or democracy and governance-related activities. As such, SuRG funding raised a new and complicated set of challenges, including the conceptualization of programs, integration of activities, and sustainability. In response, SuRG has put a great deal of effort into providing hands-on technical support and capacity-building to grantees. The capacity-building activities intend to:

- Address basic project design, management, implementation, and reporting issues;
- Support grantees’ understanding of SuRG issues; and
- Provide techniques and skills for community mobilization, advocacy, and networking.

Capacity-building activities started with proposal development workshops before grantees were even selected. This year, a second round of APS applicants from 16 organizations participated in two, five-day residential proposal development workshops. Each workshop provided participants with training on the full project cycle, log frame development, and incorporating core SuRG principles into their programs. Using an applied methodology, the prospective grantee participants could develop a draft proposal for submission to SuRG during the course of the program. SuRG staff worked with the participants before arriving at the workshop to help them expand and clarify their concept notes and arrive at the workshop with well-developed project ideas.

Technical assistance continued with grantees once they were selected to ensure that their program proposals were realistic and manageable. Once grants were awarded, SuRG initiated regular quarterly review meetings with all the grantees. During the reporting period, three sessions were held in which grantees came together to share their progress to date and various successes and challenges. Together with SuRG staff, plans were reviewed for the upcoming quarter, activities were adjusted to reflect lessons learned, and financial and programmatic reporting was reviewed. The meetings were also meant to provide an opportunity for grantees to learn from each other and make contacts within and outside their districts.

Quarterly review meetings also provided a venue for technical training. Based on their needs as assessed by SuRG staff, this year the focus was primarily on program management and implementation. Gender training activities started in the last quarter of this reporting period at the quarterly review meeting and commenced a series of gender programs for grantees.

“Since signing the grant to carry out our project we have encountered many problems, internally and externally. But attending these quarterly review meetings help[s] us because we come to realize that other partners are also facing similar problems. And through discussions and exercises such as the gallery walk we learn from the experiences of the other partners and can use their suggestions to resolve our own problems.”

–Head of SuRG partner organization, Quarterly Progress Review Meeting, Habarana, June 29, 2010

Program implementation by CEaT national and local partners includes a range of activities that aim to build respect among diverse communities and religions, and empower citizens to participate in local decision making and community development. Particular emphasis is placed on giving voice to women and youth, connecting communities to their local authorities, and strengthening local and official community structures, such as WRDS.

Tamil and Sinhala language training is implemented by seven SuRG grantees. It is considered not only a critical tool for daily communication, but an important vehicle to promote co-existence among different communities. Classes are conducted for youth, community leaders, journalists, and religious leaders. In an effort to ensure that the trainings are as effective as possible, SuRG conducted a teacher training session for grantee language teachers. Facilitated by a senior lecturer from the Department of Linguistics at the University of Kelaniya, an official from the Official Language Department, and a former Chief Project Officer at the Institute of Education in Maharagama, the session focused on adult education techniques, teaching materials and curriculum. These language teacher training programs have helped to highlight the importance of language in reconciliation among the various ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka. A follow-up training, preceded by site visits, is planned for early in the next fiscal year.

1.2.1 GRANTS

“Although we have been working with communities for a while, this was the first time we actually worked on advocacy issues. This was a completely new experience to us and one that was promoted by [the partner]...this enabled us to raise problems facing our communities with the relevant authorities and use advocacy as another alternative to seeking resolution to our problems.”

–Chairman Grand Mosque Review Workshop, Kandy, January 2010

ARD004

Project	Building Muslim Consensus
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 12,553,250
Dates	1 March 2009–28 February 2010

The partner’s one-year grant came to a close on 28 February 2010. In spite of numerous challenges, both political and administrative in nature, the partner was able to maintain and build the presence and effectiveness of its regional Assemblies (MPAs) in Puttalam, Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Galle. The MPAs were able to bring together different political actors and create a common platform to discuss issues pertaining to the Muslim communities. They were able to build linkages between political and civil society leaders, enabling grassroots advocacy and resolution through open discussions and mediation of priority local issues. Each MPA took on a range of diverse issues, resolving 23 of 53 issues discussed. Those issues that have not been resolved continue to be addressed by each MPA.

The partner also formed youth, women’s, and inter-religious dialogue forums to expand its reach and link to key Muslim constituencies and other religious groups/forums in the respective regions. The demand for these forums was high and commitment among participants strong. However, these sub-forums are still in a very nascent stage requiring significant work by the partner to build them into functioning and effective forums. Youth and women’s forums were formed in all five regions; inter-religious dialogue forums were formed in all regions except Batticaloa.

During a review of regional programs, the partner identified three significant impacts: 1) the utilization of MPAs by the Muslim community as a means to voice and raise concerns, 2) increased ability of youth and women to address issues relevant to them through the sub-forums, and 3) creation of a common consensus and position on Muslims through the MPAs. Key lessons learned include the needs to do the following:

maintain the identity of the MPA at the regional level in order to liaise and interact with other stakeholders more effectively, build adequate capacity to address issues at the community level by members, identify the most relevant and pertinent issues in order to carry out advocacy efforts, and carry out advocacy planning at all levels in order to ensure effective solutions to priority problems.

Project achievements in building Muslim consensus include:

- MPAs representing eight political parties, all Muslim religious sects, and civil society take up 53 advocacy initiatives and resolve 23 of them.
- Women’s and youth forums formed in all five regions, inter-religious forums formed in four regions.
- A total of 10 regional training programs held for MPA members.
- “Return of Northern Muslims” position paper developed for lobbying of presidential candidates.

At the national level, the partner was plagued with funding and staff issues. Without core funding, the partner was not able to retain a team of qualified professionals, which has undermined its efforts to act as a national center that represents the needs of a diverse Muslim community. When combined with ongoing political changes in the country as well as within the Muslim community, efforts to implement the National Muslim Assembly (NMA) as planned were impeded. The executive committee of the NMA was able to conduct regular meetings and formulate two papers: a strategic paper for Sri Lankan Muslims and a position paper for the resettlement of the Northern Muslims. However, due to political and power struggles within and between the partner and the executive committee as well as within the broader Muslim community, the NMA was never formally launched.

ARD006

Project	Anangu: Women with Mysterious Powers
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 9,540,568
Dates	22 June 2009–21 May 2010

The partner implemented the Anangu project which works with 110 WRDSs representing 11,344 female members from the districts of Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Puttalam, and Jaffna. The project, which ended in May 2010, was designed to empower women to take a more active role in community development and local government through better functioning and more active WRDSs in project districts. Activities aimed at increasing the institutional development of WRDSs and providing members with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to run their respective WRDSs. The ultimate objective was to have the WRDSs take a proactive role in voicing and addressing women’s and local community concerns.

The project worked with 110 project WRDSs at varying levels of institutional development, ranging from those with virtually no organizational structure and limited membership to registered WRDSs widely representative of the local female population. Participating WRDSs conducted and participated in project activities that were relevant to their need. Project activities included a variety of training—accounting, book-keeping, proposal development, meeting management, and banking—focused on ensuring proper administration and sustainability of WRDSs.

During the course of the project, a total of 14 project WRDSs were registered with the relevant government authorities; another 8 have filed the necessary paperwork and are awaiting approval of their registration. The partner also helped 20 project WRDSs to open and manage society bank accounts. Additionally, 11 WRDSs received funding from donor and government agencies based on proposals developed with the partner’s support.

Activities focused on gender were organized to empower female members of the WRDS, as well as to educate the broader community about gender and legitimize women’s participation in community decision

making and development. Gender training held for members of 27 WRDSs introduced the participants to issues such as gender and sex, power relations around gender, and gender-based violence. In addition, participants identified relevant government and nongovernmental organizations in their communities and regions working on priority concerns such as child care, women’s education, and discrimination against women. Readers and film circles were held by 55 WRDSs. Overall, 1,739 women participated in these sessions, which were organized to not only provide participants with new information and understanding on women’s issues, but also to encourage them to engage in their communities. For example, after participating in these discussions, a WRDS in Puttalam, with the support of several neighboring WRDSs, initiated its own awareness-creation campaign on gender-based violence.

Key to the project’s strategy is an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local authorities, and how women as community members and the WRDS as a community institution can influence local authorities and advocate on behalf of the community. During the trainings and awareness-raising sessions in 12 WRDSs, women were encouraged to engage and raise issues with their local authorities. Follow-up actions as a result of the trainings included the following; women in four communities held discussions with their local authorities and resolved concerns regarding garbage collection; two WRDSs requested and received the annual development plan and budget from the local authority; and a Trincomalee-based WRDS was awarded a contract by their local authority worth SL. Rs. 800,000 for the construction of a road in their village.

WRDSs have also utilized formal letters to call relevant government officials’ attention to problems faced at the community level. One WRDS raised the issue of a shortage of teachers at the local school with the Zonal Director of Education and lodged a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. At the time of reporting, all teacher vacancies at the school have been filled.

In addition, WRDSs have themselves assumed the responsibility of creating awareness on issues related to good governance and the responsibilities of the local authorities through the staging of street dramas. Performed for the public, these dramas raised issues related to their respective locale and have encouraged women to raise their concerns with the relevant local authority.

ARD023

Grant Award	SL. Rs. 5,061,000
Dates	5 October 2009–31 August 2010

The “Promoting Social Engagement through Buddhist Practice” project was intended to: 1) strengthen moderate Buddhist clergy as a positive force for inter-community reconciliation and co-existence by increasing awareness and dialogue among monks and nuns on issues of reconciliation and principles of good governance in the context of Buddhist teachings and practice, and 2) build a network of Buddhist monks and nuns who will promote inter-ethnic and inter-religious reconciliation. The project was implemented in the Ampara, Monaragala, and Polonnaruwa Districts.

The partner invested considerable time at the start of the project building trust with clergy in all three participating districts and helping them to understand the objectives and methodology of the program. They took great care in selecting “user-friendly” temples in the area and mitigating potential resistance in local Buddhist communities. This investment, although more time-consuming than the partner anticipated, proved to be critical to the ability of the partner to convene monks and nuns and the ultimate success of the program.

The primary vehicle for program implementation are “dialogue forums” where monks, nuns, and community representatives come together to discuss, analyze, and reflect on pre-selected issues. The initial forums were held with just clergy. Over the life of the project, 300 clergy participated in 18 of these forums. Discussions were led by scholars and covered the following topics:

- Buddhist Perspective of Conflict Transformation and Peace Building;
- Understanding Problems and Crises of Contemporary Society through the Lens of the Modern State;
- Democracy: Theory and Practice;
- Re-reading Thripitaka (Buddhist Cannon);
- Evolution and Nature: Human and Religious;
- Social Leadership and Conflict Transformation;
- Buddhist Psychology and Western Psychology;
- Human Rights: Concepts and Fundamentals; and
- Basic Studies on Society and Culture.



Buddhist nuns participate in a discussion at a dialogue forum in Monaragala on April 24, 2010. The positive response from the nuns on sessions on social engagement and Buddhist practice has been unprecedented and culminated in the participation of 96 nuns; the initial target was 25.

“There were so many misunderstandings between Sinhala and Muslim communities. But when SuRG invited all of us to a dialogue forum, our Buddhist monks asked questions from the Moulavis regarding non-Muslim’s ability to visit the mosque and attending their programs. In the same way, Moulavis also asked us questions regarding cultural practices. This conversation of course led to a clearing up of many of the misconceptions we had of each other.”

–Community Leader, Polonnaruwa at Lessons Learned Workshop, 29 August 2010.

These initial forums were meant to raise issues regarding social engagement, democracy and governance, reconciliation, and the role of Buddhist clergy in society among participating monks and nuns. The partner quickly found participating monks and nuns very receptive to the program content and eager for discussion and reflection on the topics. The project had planned to engage 100 monks and nuns; by the end of the project, 300 had participated in the project.

The second-level dialogue forums included lay people and religious leaders of other faiths and addressed Religious Tolerance and Ethnic Coexistence; National Reconciliation and Peace-building; and Religious Tolerance and Ethnic

Coexistence. The inclusion of Muslim, Christian, and Tamil religious leaders in these six dialogue forums was an unexpected accomplishment of the project, igniting an ongoing discussion among the religious leaders of all four faiths and their followers about each other’s practices and beliefs and how they might together address issues affecting all of their communities.

In addition to dialogue forums, the partner provided Tamil language training for interested monks and nuns in Polonnaruwa and Monaragala. A total of 44 monks and 14 nuns completed the basic course.

The partner’s engagement of Buddhist nuns in the program resulted in serious and ongoing reflection on the issue of gender equity within the Buddhist religious order. Monks and nuns were brought together in workshops. For most, it was the first time they had participated in a mixed program. In the closing months of the program, the partner held two Lessons Learned Workshops, bringing together participants from all three districts, as well as the outside resource people who contributed to the dialogue forums. The workshops provided an opportunity to discuss lessons learned and make recommendations for ongoing and future work. Most notable from participants’ comments and observations was the recognition by the clergy of how the program had pushed them to look at their own faith and practices through a new lens. Participants noted their openness to new perspectives on other faiths and religions and expressed their renewed commitments to working with their own and other communities.

“If I can speak Tamil, I will go to 1,000 Tamil houses to serve.”
–Buddhist Monk, Ampara, Lessons Learned Workshop, 18 August 2010.

Activity (PO)	Campaign for Women’s Representation in Politics
Amount	SL. Rs. 870,368
Dates	19 October 2009–31 July 2010

SuRG issued a purchase order to support the Campaign for Women’s Representation in Politics (CWRP), a campaign to secure a clause in the reform of the Local Government Elections Ordinance of 1989 mandating a 25 percent quota for women in the nominations presented by political parties for local government elections. At the time the Purchase Order was issued, the bill was expected to be taken up by Parliament in December of that year.

Activities completed under this purchase order were designed to build on a volunteer effort initiated in May 2009, which campaigned for increased women’s political representation, focusing on women in local government and provincial councils. The campaign was premised on its ability to rally the support of existing female political leaders, irrespective of party affiliation, and to join leading women’s groups and supporters together in a broad network interested in expanding women’s participation in politics and local government.

Key achievements included:

- A total of 71,764 signatures collected in 11 events. SuRG funds supported six of these signature campaign events in the Central, Eastern, Northern, North Central, Southern, and Western Provinces.
- Female political leaders from local and provincial government came together to discuss the issue of women’s representation as part of CWRP’s awareness-creation program.
- CWRP brought six female Sinhala political leaders to Jaffna for a public meeting, where they presented the case for the need to increase female representation in politics.
- CWRP linked women’s representation with youth representation, in order to promote youth representation in politics.
- In coordination with the Federation of Local Government Authorities, CWRP has been able to prepare a complete list of all female councilors, provincial and local, in the country. CWRP secured representation from the two main political parties—the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the United National Party. Each political party hosted an awareness-creation meeting and signature campaigns at their respective headquarters in Colombo.

Although CWRP was able to increase national and local discussion about women’s political representation, the bill was unfortunately overtaken by elections and larger political events. The current government has

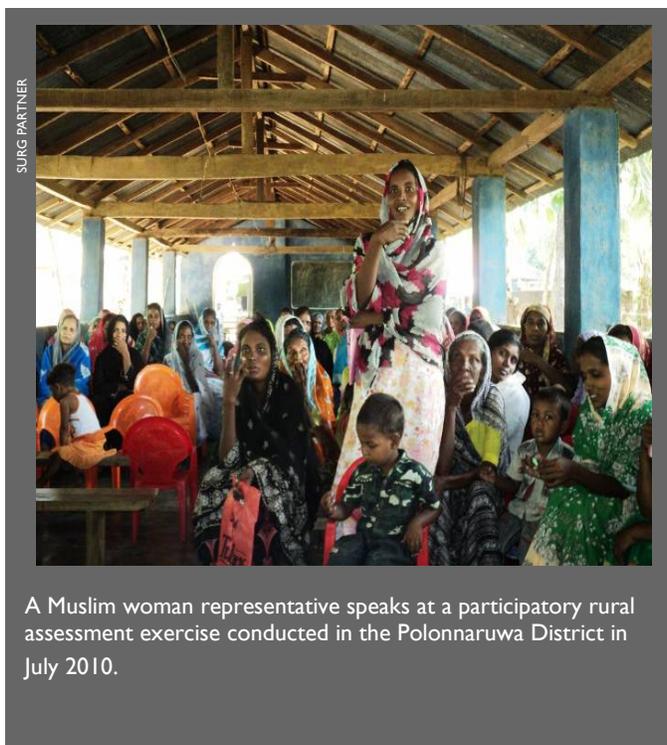
drafted a new bill in the context of broader local government reform. This bill links female and youth representation together and does not stipulate a distinct quota for each.

ARD015

Project	Engaging People’s Forums and Local Authorities to Empower Communities
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 2,833,225
Dates	17 February 2010–16 February 2011

The partner’s “Engaging People’s Forums and Local Authorities to Empower Communities” project was designed to enhance participatory local governance in the Polonnaruwa District by increasing community participation in local governance and decision making. The project is helping elected and government officials of one local authority to engage citizens and creating an ongoing mechanism for interaction between citizen and local authority officials.

The partner initiated the project with 10 awareness raising sessions for 50 village leaders—1 session in each of the 10 villages selected for the project—on the roles and responsibilities of a local authority and the importance of involving community members in the decision-making process of the local authority. After completing these sessions, a “people’s forum” was formed in each village to raise community issues with their local authority and to function as a conduit between the community and local authority.



A Muslim woman representative speaks at a participatory rural assessment exercise conducted in the Polonnaruwa District in July 2010.

Parallel to this process with communities, the partner conducted 11 orientation sessions with political stakeholders and the staff of the local authority to educate them on the need to consult and engage community representatives in the affairs of the local authority.

Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) were undertaken in eight GN divisions. Through these PRAs, community members identified resources, problems, and needs of the community members. A total of 80 project priorities were identified for the respective divisions and a report was submitted to the Steering Committee of the local authority to be considered for inclusion in its Annual Plan.

The partner also organized an exposure visit to Matara and Galle Municipal Councils for 20 members of the LA and government officers and 9 community members to see first-hand how LAs are consulting with their communities and generating local revenue. Upon return, participants from the local authority, based on what they had seen in Galle and Matara, constructed a vehicle park and began collecting taxes as a new form of local revenue for the LA. They also plan to start a garbage recycling project.

“I think most of us had learned a lot of lessons from this exposure visit, particularly for the development of any area it is very important to have public, private and community participation in order for them to get involved in decision making and its implementation process from the beginning. With their contribution we could do many things to develop our area like Matara and Galle MCs did.”

–PS member, Steering Committee Meeting, 25 August 2010

The partner’s project activities have resulted in 40 people from the people’s forums being appointed to the four LA Standing Committees. Representation includes 4 people from each of the 10 people’s forums. Citizen committee members include community leaders, religious leaders, and retired government officers. The partner successfully managed to overcome the resistance of political stakeholders to allow community members to join the various committees. The integration of community members into a local authority Standing Committee was a major success, as it is the first time that this has happened in Polonnaruwa District.

To date, two Standing Committee meetings were held with participation of all representatives, including political stakeholders. Community representatives used the opportunity of these meetings to raise issues identified in the PRAs. As a result of their intervention, the Steering Committee proposed that the Nelumpura library, which serves a primarily Tamil-speaking community, provide Tamil language books and newspapers. It currently only has Sinhala reading material. Community members are also advocating for the discontinuation of an illegal slaughterhouse operating in Sungavila and an illegal timber felling business in the Somawathy sanctuary.

The process has been a challenging one. The partner has had to battle distrust among the local authority staff about the role of NGOs and development agencies. The partner attempts to resolve these problems directly through ongoing discussion and communication among all parties, and through its project activities.

There are also those among the political stakeholders in the local authority who are still not fully convinced of the value of citizen participation in the Standing Committee meetings. It is believed that they are intimidated by the community’s representation. The partner is addressing this by continuously promoting the value of citizen participation through all ongoing project activities.

ARD016

Project	Relationship Building between Diverse Social Groups in Tamil and Muslim Communities
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 2,452,960
Dates	17 February 2010–16 February 2010

The goal of this project is to build strong relationships and trust between Tamil and Muslim communities in eight neighboring villages in Batticaloa District. The partner has established women’s, youth, fishermen’s and farmers’ groups in four Tamil and four Muslim villages. At monthly sectoral meetings among paired Muslim and Tamil villages, villagers come together to discuss common issues and concerns and develop a joint response. To help them address issues, divisional secretaries, government officers from the agrarian and fisheries department, rural development officers, social service officers, youth services officers, and assistant planning officers from Divisional Secretariats are also invited to each sectoral monthly meeting. They provide technical advice and access to services and are working together with the partner to register the respective groups as a WRDS, Farmers Organization, Fishermen’s Society, or Youth Club.

In one case, farmers from all eight villages were concerned about repair of an irrigation channel. Together they contacted the Eastern Provincial Council Minister for Health, and through him were able to get to the Provincial Council Minister for Irrigation and Roads who was able to get repairs on the irrigation channel started and has also promised to construct 10 damaged roads.

The partner has conducted 28 one-day awareness-raising programs around Conflict Management and Mitigation, Non-violent Communication, Co-existence and Peace Building, and Do No Harm to support their efforts to reduce mistrust among the three communities and create space for community members to engage in constructive and positive interaction. They also bring communities together in *shramadanas*. To date, the partner has organized *shramadanas* to clean a local hospital, a mosque, and a Hindu temple.

The partner conducts Sinhala language training to 110 community members.

ARD011

Project	Promoting Peaceful Community Co-existence Through Social Mobilization of Women’s and Youth Groups
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 2,959,600
Dates	24 March 2010–28 February 2011

Working in ethnically diverse communities in Trincomalee, the partner’s “Promoting Peaceful Community Co-existence Through Social Mobilization of Women’s and Youth Groups” began in late February with the formation of women’s and youth groups in 14 villages. The groups come together in *shramadanas*, training, sports events, and divisional meetings to promote peace-building and social development. Each of the women’s groups developed an action plan to respond to the priority needs and issues of their community. Progress on the action plan is discussed in a monthly meeting. Monthly meetings are also used to create awareness on women’s rights and domestic violence. Women visit house-to-house and organize door-to-door discussions. They collect information on women and children affected by different forms of violence. In one example, they connected a woman who was being physically abused by her husband’s relatives to a service provider, so she could file a case. The partner built ties to the service provider through participation at SuRG quarterly review meetings.



A female representative speaks at a peace committee meeting held in the Muthur division of Trincomalee District and facilitated by a SuRG partner, which is supporting the identification of problems faced by the communities and finding solutions for these issues.

In response to concerns about school drop-outs, one women’s group persuaded the mothers of the drop-outs to send the children back to school. They are now in the process of securing hostel facilities for these children to provide the mothers with some relief from the economic responsibility of sending the children to school.

The youth groups from different communities are working together in a variety of ways. For instance, one Muslim and two Tamil youth groups organized a *shramadana* to clean a rural hospital. The youth group in another village organized a sports festival at the village level. The youth groups also are joining together to nominate one candidate to represent them all to an upcoming Youth Parliament organized by the GOSL to be held in Kuchchaveli.

The youth also work together to promote positive social development in their communities. For example, Tamil and Muslim youth from one village took up the issue of illicit liquor production and usage. They joined

with the project women's groups and to raise the issue with the Excise Department and police, and are jointly creating awareness in their communities about the adverse effects of illicit alcohol.

ARD012

Project	Promoting Peaceful Co-Existence through Multi-Ethnic Community Participation
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 2,319,600
Dates	24 March 2010–28 February 2010

The partner project was designed to promote peaceful co-existence through multi-ethnic community **participation in intra- and inter-** youth groups and community peace committees in the Trincomalee District. The partner works with these groups to identify common issues and concerns and coordinate creative and joint solutions.

The 15 project youth groups include 5 Tamil, 5 Muslim, and 5 Sinhala groups, each with members aged 16–28. The groups meet monthly and have identified unemployment, access to information technology, illicit liquor, school drop-outs, and access to library and recreational facilities as priority issues. The partner is working with them and the Youth Services Officer to help them register and address some of these issues. In addition, the partner brings the youth groups from different communities together in training and other activities. A conflict resolution workshop was attended by 37 youth, and 22 youth participated in a leadership workshop. In September, 40 youth from all three communities participated in a *shramadana* to clean a DP site for people displaced from the conflict.

The 15 Peace Committees include village leaders, religious leaders, government officers (Samurdi officer or a teacher), farmer organization leaders, Rural Development Society, and WRDS members. The mono-ethnic groups meet quarterly to identify and address key community concerns. The partner brings them together to address issues that cut across communities. To date, they have been able to resolve a number of community-level conflicts. For example, when a conflict arose between a Tamil farmer and a Sinhala farmer from another village over whether the Tamil farmer would allow the Sinhala farmer to move the Sinhala farmer's ploughing machine through his paddy land, the presidents of both villages' Peace Committees came together and intervened to settle the issue before it could escalate into a community conflict.

In another incident, villagers from a Tamil community were greatly concerned about illicit liquor production in the community. The Tamil Youth Group took up the issue with the Sinhala Youth Group in the adjoining villages, as they were also concerned about their villagers buying illicit liquor. Tamil community members were reluctant to take the issue up with the police, so Sinhala group members agreed to talk to the police and negotiate with them to stop the liquor production. Sinhala youth spoke to Seruwila police. However, since the Tamil village came under one police jurisdiction, both Sinhala and Tamil youth joined forces to request support from them. Their joint efforts led to a police raid on hideouts of illicit liquor production with the support of community members from both Sinhala and Tamil villages.

ARD014

Project	Community Empowerment and Mobilization for Muslim and Sinhalese Communities Co-Existence Project
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 2,383,150
Dates	24 March 2010–28 February 2011

The goal of the project is to promote peaceful co-existence and interaction between Muslim and Sinhalese families in the Polonnaruwa District. Project activities include community mobilization, creation of space for open dialogue and communication between Muslim and Sinhalese, promotion of religious and cultural

understanding and tolerance among the two communities, and facilitation of business and trade among the Muslim and Sinhala communities. These activities are implemented in four Muslim and three Sinhalese villages.

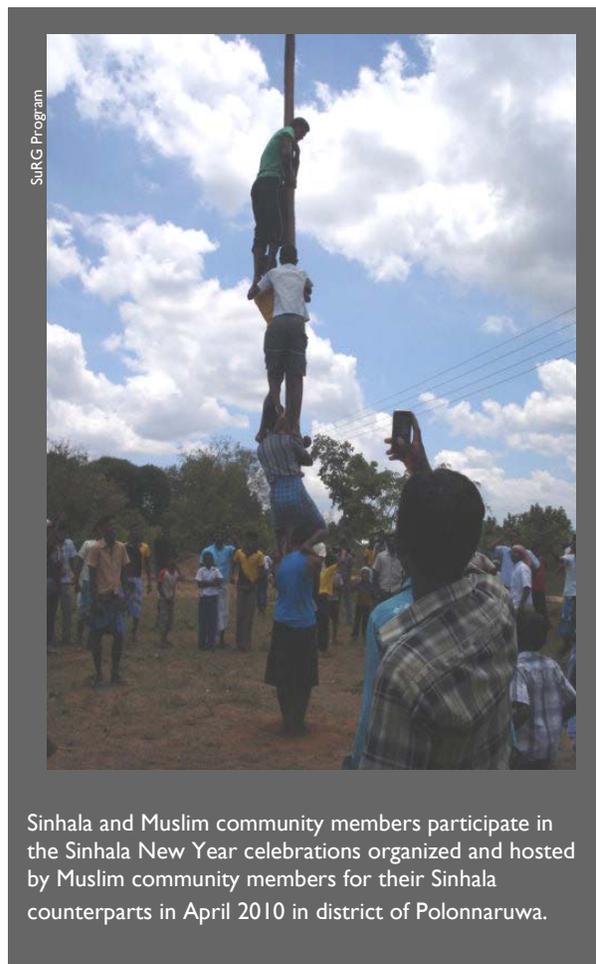
The partner's strategy for community mobilization is to establish small groups in both Sinhala and Muslim communities. There have been 53 groups established in seven villages. They make connections between the communities through various activities including joint training sessions, *shramadanas*, cultural activities, and joint meetings with religious leaders. These activities are then used to raise awareness on the need to promote co-existence among communities. This year, the partner conducted three training programs on group formation, leadership, and communication for members of both communities. They organized a *shramadana* in which 76 Muslims and 64 Sinhalese worked together to clean a Mosque and a Temple. Of particular interest and impact in the community was a meeting with Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders. The religious leaders led a discussion about the importance of sharing the values of both Buddhism and Islam with community members. The group decided to celebrate together the Muslim Eid Festival in a Sinhala village. They also celebrated the Sinhala New Year's festival together.

The partner community groups also function as development committees. The partner has so far conducted PRAs in five of seven of the project villages. Community members themselves collectively engaged in the identification of priority issues with support from the partner staff. Through this process, the partner is securing assistance from government authorities to resolve community issues identified in these PRA exercises. They have engaged the Pradeshiya Sabha which has agreed to rehabilitate a school playground. The local Ministry of Health Officer has committed to repairing the health center which is used by people from 10 villages. In another example, through the PRA, project villages identified 65 children aged 6–16 from four villages who are not getting a proper education. The partner is now in discussions with Apacus, a Japanese organization, for support of those children's education.

SuRG-supported activities have also helped beneficiaries learn about the partner's revolving loan program; 290 community members have subsequently become new members of the scheme.

1.3 LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The SuRG local governance component focuses on building the capacity of elected and government officials from PSs for participatory local governance, emphasizing the role of local authorities, and participatory processes, SuRG's initial strategy was to work closely and comprehensively with a select group of PSs in the Eastern Province. However, the strategy was revised to support all 37 PSs in the Eastern Province, based on a request from Chief Secretary of the Eastern Provincial Council and the Commissioner for Local Government (CLG), and with the support of USAID.



Sinhala and Muslim community members participate in the Sinhala New Year celebrations organized and hosted by Muslim community members for their Sinhala counterparts in April 2010 in district of Polonnaruwa.



Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils Mr. A.L.M Athallah and the Ambassador to the United States, Ms. Patricia Butenis review the signed MOU between SuRG and the Ministry, outlining SuRG's support to all local authorities in the Eastern Province. Also present at the occasion were Deputy Minister, Mr. Indika Bandaranayake, and the Secretary to the Ministry, Dr. Nihal Jayathilake.

In order to accommodate the larger number of PSs, SuRG developed a strategy in conjunction with EML Consultants to deliver a series of training modules to elected officials and government officers from all PSs in the province and provide hands-on and on-site technical follow-up support to SuRG's original 11 LA partners. The program was designed with input from the Ministry of Local Government and the Eastern Province CLG. It was finalized early in the fiscal year. Tetra Tech ARD requested approval from USAID for the program through a subcontract to EML in December 2009. Implementation was delayed until the subcontract was approved in late March 2010.

Once the subcontract was signed, EML set up program implementation units in their offices in Colombo, Ampara, and Batticaloa. In Trincomalee, they operate out of the SuRG office. Staff was recruited and an orientation meeting was held with the CLG of the Eastern Province. The program includes a series of residential training programs, technical assistance, and on-site follow-up to SuRG's Year 1 LA partners to help them apply the knowledge and techniques learned in training to their daily work. During the fiscal year, training was held in Office Management, Accounting, and Finance; Participatory Governance; and Project Proposal Development and Project Cycle Management.

Creating a Community-friendly PS: Porativupattu

The Porativupattu PS serves resettled families from the surrounding 26 villages living in the formerly conflict-affected border villages of Batticaloa District. Representatives and staff members of the PS are attending the SuRG local government training series, and are now applying knowledge and techniques learned in their PS, particularly from the office management training.

According to the Secretary of the LA, "[A]fter the training, we set up a structure within the office. In this new structure, a name card with the responsibilities of the official and the name of the substitute is placed at each desk. This helps a lot because people now know [to] whom they should go to and which responsibilities are held by each of the officials in the local authority. And also [to] whom they should go to if the respective official is absent on a particular day."

Aside from revamping the office setup, the Public Relations Officer is positioned at the front desk to ensure that general queries from community members are investigated. The Public Relations Officer, explained his role. "When people come to the local authority, they come with all kinds of problems. Once I find out what the problem is, I direct them to the respective officials. If they want to lodge a complaint, I encourage them to make the complaint in writing. If not, I help them record the complaint in the ledger we maintain. Once recorded or documented, I make sure that the process is set in motion for the issue to be taken up by the relevant officer."

The changes introduced have helped the staff of the Porativupattu LA address the problems of the villagers more efficiently. As for the PRO, the trainings he received have helped make him better at what he does. "At the training, I learned how we should deal with community members and how we can address their problems. These lessons have helped us be better at our jobs. For instance, when complaints are lodged with the authority, we always make sure to hear both sides of the story and take into consideration the proof at hand and help people come to a settlement agreeable to both parties. I think these changes have helped the people a great lot too."

In addition, SuRG is working closely with the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils (MLGPC) in Colombo. This coordination is not only necessary to legitimize the program in the field with local authorities and facilitate smooth implementation, it also provides a mechanism through which SuRG can engage in policy dialogue and help to promote participatory governance principles at the national level. Official coordination with the Ministry started with the signing of a MOU between the Ministry and Tetra Tech ARD to implement the SuRG training and technical assistance program in the Eastern Province. The MOU was signed at a ceremony in July in the presence of the Honorable Patricia Butenis, U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka, and Mr. A.L.M. Athaullah, Minister of Local Government. SuRG technical staff liaise regularly with officials at the Ministry and participate in their progress review meetings with cooperating donors, CLGs from all the provinces, and Ministry Secretaries. In July, SuRG provided support to the Ministry's annual Local Government Symposium which brought in members of local authorities from throughout the island to discuss policy dimensions of local government, local government as a development tool, and current changing needs of local government.

"I strongly believe that this is definitely a historical event, because the assistance of the people of the USA through the USAID for the upliftment [sic] of the local governance system in the Eastern Province is a high priority in our agenda...when I went through the project contents I felt honestly that planned inputs under this project would definitely enrich the local government system..."

—Mr. A.L.M. Athaullah, Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils at SuRG/MLGPC MOU signing ceremony, 7 July 2010

"While appreciating the invaluable services rendered by the USAID through the SuRG Programme [sic] on Local Governance in the Eastern Province, I am pleased to state that both the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils and the Eastern Provincial Council very much admire the improvements in Human Resource Development and Governance initiatives introduced by the SuRG project..."

—Dr. Nihal Jayathilake, Secretary, MLGPC to Mr. Gerald Anderson, Acting Mission Director, USAID/Sri Lanka, 6 October 2010

Highlights of the local governance components include:

- Training of 222 officials from 44 LAs in Office Management, Accounting, and Finance; Participatory Governance; and Project Proposal Development and Project Cycle Management.
- Development and submission of participatory plans to NELSIP by all 37 PSs which participated in the SuRG Participatory Planning workshops plans.
- Development of financial management system for all PSs in the Eastern Province.
- Formation of 10 Participatory Governance Forums.
- Completion of level 1 OLD Sinhala language program by 94 government officials from 11 LAs.
- Completion of level 1 OLD Tamil language program by 21 government officials from 11 LAs.
- Commencement of level 1 OLD Sinhala language program by 283 government officials from 27 PSs.
- Commencement of level 1 OLD Tamil language program by 166 government officials from 27 PSs.

1.3.1 TECHNICAL TRAINING

Training for local authorities this year included residential training programs in:

- **Office Management, Accounting, and Finance** to improve office and financial management systems for LA chairmen, secretaries, and management assistants. During the workshop on accounting and finance management, a database was introduced. This database has since been modified based on input

from the MLGPC and financial specialists. The database will be distributed to all LAs in the Eastern Province next fiscal year.

- **Project Proposal Development and Project Cycle Management** to enhance the understanding of the Secretary, Management Assistant, Community Development Officer, and finance officers regarding the full project cycle and their capacity to develop comprehensive and fundable proposals for projects identified in their medium-term participatory planning.
- **Participatory Governance** to increase the understanding of the LA Secretary, Management Assistant, community development officers, and elected members regarding good governance, including legal and administrative provisions and strategies for citizen engagement and the role of LAs in local economic development. Emphasis was placed on the development of the Citizen Charter and the preparation of LA bylaws.

Each workshop in the training series is developed so that participants not only learn the subject matter, but also will be able to serve as resource persons for other staff in their PSs after training. The methodology is participatory and intended to evoke cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences of participants. Training techniques include case studies, role plays, lessons learned, and best practices in a mix of plenary and break-out sessions. EML staff and consultants, SuRG local government staff, regional and national government officials, and external resource persons conduct the programs.

The training is primarily targeted at government officials, as some elected officials are reluctant to spend the time necessary to participate in the full training program. However, when their participation is deemed relevant, a pre-session of one to two days is held for the participation of chairmen and other elected officials.

For example, in the Office Management, Accounting, and Finance Training, SuRG organizes a two-day pre-session focusing on policy and decision making for chairmen, followed by a full session addressing the implementation of these policies for secretaries and management assistants.

Participants in Local Governance Training by Gender and Ethnic Group							
Training Program	Total LAs	Total Participants	Female	Male	Tamil	Muslim	Sinhala
Office Management, Accounting, and Finance	38	131	26	105	53	33	45
Project Proposal Development and Project Cycle Management	38	69	07	62	30	17	22
Participatory Governance	22	61	04	57	33	16	12

1.3.2 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In order to ensure new knowledge and techniques learned in the technical training program is applied in participants' LAs, SuRG and EML conduct regular site visits and provide technical assistance to SuRG's 11 Year 1 partner LAs in the Eastern Province. Monthly coordination meetings are held with SuRG and EML participation at each of these LAs. These meetings bring together elected officials and staff. At these meetings, priorities for the month are discussed. Through these meetings, SuRG has worked with the LAs to form Participatory Governance Forums, informal forums to encourage engagement between citizens and their LA. To date, meetings have been held in all 11 partner LAs and forums established in 10. It is expected that these forums will provide the vehicle through which citizens can join the LA Standing Committees.

1.3.3 LANGUAGE TRAINING

SuRG Tamil and Sinhala language training for local government officials in the Eastern Province continued throughout the year. The first phase of the program for SuRG's 11 LA partners was completed this year. The program started with enrollment of 207 elected and government officials. In spite of original demand, it soon

became apparent that the elected officials' political and other commitments were interfering with their attendance and as such most dropped out. The course was completed (with over 80 percent attendance) by 115 government officers; 86 students (68 in Sinhala and 18 in Tamil) sat for the official post-completion examination, allowing them to move on to the next level.

SuRG also organized training for officials from the remaining 27 PSs. As with the last program, an Official Language Department (OLD) Training-of-Trainers was held for 21 teachers prior to the start of classes. This group of training includes 283 officers studying Sinhala and 166 officers studying Tamil. The course is expected to be completed by November 2010.



Mrs. M.S. Wickramasinghe, Secretary to the Ministry of National Language and Social Integration, attends the SuRG language training for local officials from the Thambalgamuwa PS in the Trincomalee District in August 2010.

“Thambalagamuwa was my first government appointment. But when I got here, I could not speak a word of Tamil. And everyone here speaks to us in Sinhalese. It was only after the classes began, that we started communicating in Tamil. The classes have been very helpful to us non-Tamil speakers.”

—Staff member, Thambalagamuwa PS

“As a Management Assistant, I faced a lot of problems in understanding the circulars and letters our office received from Colombo and the relevant Ministries. They all happen to be in Sinhalese and I had no knowledge of the language. We also felt completely handicapped when high ranking officials visited our LA...They could not speak or understand Tamil and we didn't understand Sinhalese...I faced the same problem when Sinhalese speaking community members came to our office with their problems. But since taking the Sinhalese classes, my ability to communicate has improved greatly. I'm glad I took the language classes because now I have more confidence.”

—Staff member, Muthur PS

1.4 OPEN DIALOGUE

The SuRG open dialogue component is intended to reinforce and expand space for public discourse on critical governance issues at a time when such a space is highly restricted and shrinking. In this context, SuRG has adjusted its program to target aspiring journalists in the north and east, as working journalists are keeping a low profile by supporting alternative outlets for discussion of governance issues.

SuRG is now exploring a more targeted initiative to support Sarvodaya's (the largest NGO providing resettlement and rehabilitation services to conflict-affected communities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces) efforts at transparency. SuRG, through grants to Sarvodaya and Infoshare and with significant technical assistance from MSI, will design and implement an improved and integrated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for monitoring the progress and effectiveness of Sarvodaya's various projects in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

The system is intended to help Sarvodaya more effectively and efficiently communicate and analyze results, challenges, and impact; and report to donors, government agencies, and other stakeholders. In addition, it is expected that Sarvodaya staff will be able to manage programs more effectively by obtaining better and timelier data about performance. The program is expected to get underway in Q1 FY11.

SuRG Local Government Team Coordinates with Other USAID Initiatives in the Eastern Province

–USAID/Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA)–

The Trincomalee Assistant Commissioner for Local Government (ACLG), in one of his regular meetings with the SuRG local government team, asked SuRG to provide technical assistance to the Trincomalee Urban Council (UC) in solid waste management. Since this is outside of SuRG’s mandate, the team contacted USAID’s VEGA project and hosted a visit for them to meet the ACLG and the UC Chairmen and see the solid waste management site. After the visit, VEGA was able to arrange for a Tamil-speaking volunteer from India to come to Trincomalee and work with the UC on a strategy and action plan for solid waste management.

–USAID/Connecting Regional Economies Program (CORE)–

When USAID’s CORE project began a new initiative on soya bean cultivation and marketing in areas of Trincomalee where they had not previously worked, CORE staff reached out to SuRG to engage local authority partners in the process. SuRG provided contacts and introductions in each partner LA in the district—Thambalagamuwa, Vergul, and Seruvila—as well as with a SRDO, an APS civil society partners. Those contacts helped CORE to identify 60 farmers who they are now working with on the cultivation of 35 acres of soya bean.

SuRG is also assisting CORE’s efforts to enhance the tourism sector in the Eastern Province. CORE attended SuRG’s two Project Cycle Management Training sessions to introduce their program, build ties with LAs, and survey them on needs and prospects for tourism in their LA. Discussions are underway between CORE and SuRG to expand collaboration in this sector.

1.4.1 GRANTS

ARD002

Project	Scholarship Fund for Applicants from the Eastern Province and Polonnaruwa District to the 2009 SLPI Journalism Diploma Course
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 2,538,000
Dates	2 January 2009–31 December 2009

The Journalism Diploma Programme of the Sri Lanka College of Journalism is a nine-month program that combines classroom work with practical experience at newspapers and broadcast outlets. The curriculum is designed in consultation with industry representatives and supervised by the University of Kalmar in Sweden.

In 2009, SuRG awarded scholarships to 17 applicants from Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara, and Monaragala Districts. In the first quarter of this fiscal year, 16 students completed the course. A graduation ceremony was held in February with the participation of the Deputy Chief of Mission to the U.S. Embassy, Ms. Valerie Fowler.

“If not for SuRG, my dream of entering the field of media would never have been realized. I’m very grateful for the organization since problems such as course fees and surviving in the big city were addressed by SuRG which showed a genuine concern towards us...If those who received the scholarship are employed today or will be employed in the future, SuRG can be proud of having supported them to reach that place.”

–SuRG 2009 SLPI Scholarship Recipient, Ampara

ARD031

Project	Scholarship Fund for Applicants from the Eastern Province and Polonnaruwa District to the SLPI 2010 Journalism Diploma Course
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 3,900,000
Dates	6 January 2010–31 December 2010

A second grant to SLPI was awarded to provide scholarships for aspiring journalists from the Northern and Eastern Provinces to attend the 2010 Journalism Diploma Course. An additional 26 students from the Northern and Eastern Provinces were awarded scholarships, as indicated in the chart below.

Of the original 26, 22 students have completed three semesters to date and are currently pursuing internships with national media houses including MBC Television, Asia Broadcasting Company, Thinakkural, and Veerakesari. Of the other 4 students, 2 scholarship recipients left the program to pursue higher studies in Singapore and 2 to pursue employment opportunities.

ARD025

Project	Regional Development and Local Government: The Role of the Provincial Councils
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 8,056, 000
Dates	1 October 2009–30 September 2010

The “Regional Development and Governance: The Role of Provincial Councils” project is based on the need for a better and more informed understanding of the experiences of provincial councils and provinces by both policymakers and the public at large.

The partner held consultations in all nine of Sri Lanka’s provinces on the experiences of provincial councils and implications of the implementation of the 13th Amendment. Consultations were attended by Provincial Council members, leading government officials, civil society leaders, provincial party members from across the political spectrum, and other key provincial stakeholders. In addition, the partner published a booklet in Sinhala, Tamil, and English analyzing the same issues and experiences. This booklet is aimed at policymakers, government officials, and politicians. It formed the basis for a series of newspaper supplements aimed at the general public and published in newspapers of all three languages. All publications were made available in all three languages.

As a result of the consultations, a group of provincial council members came together to set up the Forum of Members of Provincial Councils (FMPC). Councilors from seven of Sri Lanka’s nine provinces participated in an early meeting, in which a pro-tem committee consisting of both government and opposition members was formed.

The provincial consultations took place at the same time the government was preparing new legislation on local government elections and procedures which, once implemented, will have a significant impact on the implementation of the 13th Amendment. Awareness-raising on the actual provisions and authority granted to Provincial Councils throughout the island were extremely timely and helped to focus questions on the merits and challenges of regional governance, rather than as a question of power-sharing.

ARD013

Project	Strengthening Media in Trincomalee District
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 3,120,225
Dates	24 March 2010–28 February 2011

The partner is working in collaboration with the Trincomalee District Media Society (TDMS) to create an effective vehicle and platform through which the voices and concerns of the communities of Trincomalee District are raised and represented.

Working through an extensive network of journalists and media stakeholders of the TDMS, the partner developed a four-pronged approach to address priority issues:

1. Strengthening the institutional capacity of the TDMS;
2. Training selected journalists to carry out their work more professionally and efficiently and to be able to communicate with all stakeholders and community representatives better;
3. Training for women to enter the media sector; and
4. Increasing reporting in Trincomalee District and publicizing local news.

The first step and an important achievement for this project was the registration of the Trincomalee District Media Society (TDMS) as a legal institution under the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, Eastern Province. TDMS had been functioning since 2003 as the Trincomalee Journalist Association. It was not registered and functioned without proper guidelines and bylaws. Under the partner's guidance, with legal assistance, and input from local journalists and other stakeholders, a constitution was developed and approved by the TDMS Board.

In August, the partner inaugurated its Diploma in Media course for aspiring female journalists. The media sector in the Trincomalee District is currently represented only by males. The partner selected 15 women representing all three ethnic communities throughout the district to participate in its six-month program run by the Institute of Journalism, Trincomalee.

For working journalists, the partner initiated language and computer training. Currently, 10 Sinhala journalists are enrolled in Tamil language classes and 31 Tamil journalists are enrolled in Sinhala language classes. Additionally, 26 journalists are taking a 44-hour computer training program. The program covers the use of software, such as Microsoft Office and Adobe Photoshop, and the effective use of Internet and e-mail.

The partner has also begun to compile a database of journalists in the district, including information on 49 journalists, 35 of whom are members of TDMS. A number of journalists contacted by the partner are not willing to share information for security reasons.

I.5 CROSSCUTTING ACTIVITIES

I.5.1 ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT

In the early part of FY10, SuRG awarded nine grants valued at SL. Rs. 254,079,675 under the Annual Program Statement released in FY09. The grants support activities that address the key SuRG objectives of social equity, community empowerment and transformation, local governance, and open dialogue in communities in 84 villages across 16 DSs in Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Polonnaruwa Districts, as well as 49 journalists working in the Trincomalee District. The grants have been underway and are described in detail in previous sections.

In a second APS release during this fiscal year, SuRG received 63 concept notes. Building on lessons learned from the first round, SuRG built in an early institutional assessment phase to the selection process, as well as up-front technical assistance. Once concept notes were reviewed, SuRG invited representatives from 16 organizations to participate in a proposal development workshop which concluded with the submission of a full proposal to be considered for funding. Two five-day residential workshops—one in Tamil and one in Sinhala—were held in May. The workshops, facilitated by MDF/South Asia with support from SuRG staff,

were designed to provide an overall understanding of program development and proposal writing, as well as specific knowledge of SuRG program objectives and proposal requirements. It was expected that participants would leave with a first draft of their proposal. Again, building on lessons learned from the first round of the APS, SuRG staff worked closely with participants prior to the workshop to highlight key questions raised in their concept notes and to identify areas where preparatory work was necessary.

Upon a review of the proposals, eight grants were pre-selected. Of those grants, four were deemed priority projects and were planned for submission to USAID for approval. These proposals are scheduled to be submitted to USAID for approval once Tetra Tech ARD's contract with USAID is extended.

The remaining four pre-selected grants may be developed, depending on available funding and the capacity of the grantees. SuRG also decided that two organizations which presented project concepts were strong enough to merit further exploration for possible support in the form of technical assistance or a small grant.

1.5.2 LAND

The lack of land tenure security has long been a root cause of conflict in Sri Lanka. As a governance and human rights issue, it is of concern and interest for the GOSL at national, provincial, and local levels, and for citizens of all three ethnic communities as well. Now that the war has ended, unresolved land matters threaten to be an impediment to sustainable reconciliation, reconstruction, and longer-term development. SuRG is addressing land issues on two levels: through training and support for government officials developing and implementing land policy, and through research at both the national and regional levels.

A SuRG workshop included both training and research, and is described in detail in Section 1.1.1. In addition to this support, SuRG organized a study tour to East Timor for national and regional government officials, completed a desk review of existing research and materials on land tenure, and a comprehensive field-based national land tenure assessment at the request of USAID.

Land Study Tour

SuRG organized a study tour to East Timor for 12 central and regional government officials and 1 researcher from 20–27 February. The study tour was intended to highlight issues of tenure security, secondary occupation, and the importance and difficulty of developing land policies in a post-conflict environment. The tour was hosted by Tetra Tech ARD staff from USAID's Strengthening Land and Property Rights in Timor-Leste Project and included discussions with the Timorese National Director; District Land and Property Director of the National Land National Directorate for Land, Property and Cadastral Services (DNTPSC); and a range of international and local agencies, NGOs, and civil society representatives working on land issues. Field visits were made to land data collection and project sites in and around Dili and in the adjoining district of Liquica. Key representatives of the group also met with the USAID/Timor-Leste Mission Representative and his staff from the Program, Economic Growth, and Democracy and Governance Offices. The group learned about the historical and present context of Timor-Leste, land issues, policies and practices, and the Timorese government's response to the IDP crisis from 2006–2009.

"In Sri Lanka we always complicate problems. Our systems are so complex. The Timorese system on the other hand is not as highly institutionalized as our own system is. They use very simple methods to address the problems people encounter. What was most significant was this idea of 'walking together' rather than alone and asking pertinent questions like 'what is your interest in the land?'... This tour was timely because we are ready for change within the system and we now have an idea of what we can propose as changes."

—Sr. Official, Ministry of Nation Building, Land Study Tour Debrief, Colombo, 26 March 2010

The tour provided participants with an opportunity to examine land issues in Sri Lanka from a fresh perspective and explore new and innovative solutions. The tour also consolidated relationships among participants, SuRG, and USAID, providing a local network of officials involved in land issues to draw on for further information and work on land.

National Land Tenure Assessment

SuRG completed a two-phase national land tenure assessment. The first phase consisted of a desk review (with limited field work) of existing reports, assessments, circulars, legislation, and other material. The second phase involved a field assessment conducted by a team from Tetra Tech ARD's home office; an international consultant; and a national consultant with expertise in state reforms and ethnic conflict.

The desk review conducted in January and February explored the relationship between land and conflict and conflict resolution. It involved a review of existing reports, assessments, and other material; provided contextual analysis; and identified critical issues relating to IDPs (from the conflict and the 2004 tsunami) and challenges in resettlement and restitution, secondary occupation and encroachment, informal and formal high-security zones, development projects combined with military buffer zones without legal acquisition of land, lack of trust in government land administration and dispute resolution due to political interference, lack of timely response mechanisms, and ethnic land disputes. The desk study provides a succinct analysis of the literature highlighting these important issues. The desk study was submitted to USAID for approval on 18 February 2010.

The field study was designed to identify government perspectives, operations, capabilities, and needs in land administration; IDP resettlement and restitution of property; tenure arrangement underlying small holder agriculture; and land-related dispute resolution targeting the north and east. Furthermore, the field study was created to determine the landscape of donor and NGO interventions, and identify opportunities for USAID intervention via a new land tenure program. Given the limited time available for the field assessment, the field study was focused on systems to ensure equitable access to resources that are a prerequisite to ensuring sustainable economic growth for all ethnic groups.

The field assessment was built on the desk study highlighting additional information obtained from interviews conducted in Colombo, Jaffna, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa in relation to IDP resettlement and smallholder agriculture. Specific attention was given to the nature of rights and responsibilities associated with the various land tenure regimes, disposal of land and property records including the destruction of land registries, government and donor land property restitution programs since the end of conflict, the state of continued land-related grievances—both perceived and real—of IDPs and others. The study provides an analysis of how these affect IDP resettlement, smallholder agriculture, and conflict mitigation and peace-building efforts in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

The report provides the key findings in terms of the major land-related challenges in IDP resettlement and restitution of property, tenure arrangements underlying smallholder agriculture as a source of possible political and economic instability in Sri Lanka, problems in governance with a particular emphasis on land administration, and formal and informal systems of dispute resolution. The report identifies important government and nongovernmental attempts to address these problems. The assessment further identifies challenges and opportunities for USAID programming and provides programmatic recommendations for short- and long-term USAID intervention.

1.5.3 GENDER

In Q4, SuRG added a gender advisor to the staff to ensure that gender concerns are incorporated into SuRG programming at all levels, including broad strategy, grant selection, and activity implementation. In addition, the Gender Adviser will lead SuRG's ongoing efforts to identify needs of women in the post-war context and initiate SuRG programming responses when appropriate. She will also work with staff to support grantees and other partners on gender generally and on projects and activities specifically targeting women.

A preliminary review of SuRG partners by the Gender Adviser revealed that many believe that gender is about working on women's rights or working only with women. There was only minimal appreciation for gender in the broader context of social roles defined by communities or society and for how this might play out or effect their programming or organizations.

Based on these findings, sessions to introduce the concept of gender were designed and conducted with grantees during the SuRG quarterly review meeting in September 2010. The first session focused on the concept of gender, power, hierarchies and discriminatory practices. Examples from participants' home lives and work in communities pushed the participants to examine their personal attitudes and behavior. This was followed by sessions targeting gender roles and how they impact their organizations and program activities. Partners shared experiences and challenges they face in the field and raised a number of questions about discriminatory attitudes and practices. Two follow-up sessions are planned in the next fiscal year.

A similar session was held for local government officials attending the two SuRG Participatory Governance training sessions. Tailored to the needs and work of LA officials, this session focused on understanding gender roles and social hierarchies in their communities, how to increase women's participation in community meetings and decision making, and what it means to apply a gender analysis when planning programs and projects and serving the community. This was the first time gender had been discussed in the context of a technical training session for many of the participants.

I.6 WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

When the war ended, SuRG began to explore opportunities to program windows of opportunity funds. To date, those opportunities have been extremely limited. National grantees continue their work in the north. SuRG was also able to support three local election monitoring groups to provide voter education and election monitoring in the Northern Province for the January presidential election.

SuRG continued throughout the year to seek options for additional programming. In an effort to address the enormous need for documentation of all kinds—birth certificates, marriage certificates, national identity cards, death certificates, and land documentation—SuRG spoke with organizations ranging from large, established national NGOs, to the small locally based organizations about potential projects. Unfortunately, their ability to perform documentation in a systematic way is still very limited and curtailed by PTF requirements.

I.6.1 GRANTS

ARD009

Project	Monitoring Violence in Local Elections in Jaffna and Vavuniya
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 2,560,750.
Dates	16 July 2009–16 October 2010

The partner's grant to monitor local elections in Jaffna and Vavuniya was extended at the end of the last fiscal year to provide support to train and deploy election monitors in the Southern Provincial Council Elections. With USAID's concurrence, SuRG allowed the partner to use funds remaining from the grant to cover the Southern Provincial Council election, as it was considered to be an important indicator for upcoming national elections. Furthermore, the presence of local monitors was considered critical. The partner trained and deployed 300 monitors in Galle, Matara, and Hambantota.

ARD028

Project	Voter Education and Monitoring the Conduct of Presidential Elections in the Northern Province
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 4,940,575
Dates	30 December 2009–31 March 2010

The partner’s “Voter Education and Monitoring the Conduct of the Presidential Elections in the Northern Province” program included voter education, data collection and dissemination, and election monitoring activities. Voter education programs centered on the right to vote, marking the ballot, and obtaining identification cards. Fact-finding missions were conducted in Jaffna and Vavuniya to assess the political situation during the campaign. The partner issued 21 press releases and conducted six press conferences during the election period to provide updates on violations of election laws. The partner also collected and disseminated data on election violence, misuse of state property, breakdown of the law in the Province, and the behavior of the state-owned media with regard to reporting on the election campaigns of the contestants. On Election Day, 400 election monitors were trained and deployed to polling stations throughout the Northern Province.

ARD029

Project	Monitoring the Conduct of Presidential Elections in the Northern Province
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 5,549,750
Dates	28 December 2009–31 March 2010

The partner’s “Monitoring the Conduct of Presidential Elections in the Northern Province” program included monitoring election-related violence and malpractice during the campaign and on Election Day. The program also monitored the media’s election coverage. A total of 176 monitors and observers were trained on how to monitor the election. They included 9 field monitors, 142 stationary observers and 25 mobile monitors. Of these, 173 were deployed in the districts of Jaffna and Vavuniya at selected polling stations to observe and monitor the voting process. Utilizing standard content analysis techniques, the partner assessed the media coverage—both print and electronic—of the election campaigns. The accuracy and impartiality of the reporting, voter education, equity in political advertising, and access were among those concerns raised in the assessment. In addition, the partner conducted two field visits to assess the political situation at the start of the election campaigns and during the last stages of the campaign, in order to assess the changes in the public’s response and opinion. Throughout the campaign period, pre-election monitoring was carried out by field monitors. Daily communiqués were issued to the media in which major incidents, trends, and issues were highlighted. Pre-election monitoring enabled the partner to identify potentially sensitive regions on Election Day and plan ahead to deploy stationary monitors to those pre-identified polling stations. On Election Day, the partner issued an interim report on the presidential elections at a press conference held in Colombo.

ARD030

Project	Monitoring the Conduct of Presidential Elections in Northern Province
Grant Award	SL. Rs. 5,374,050
Dates	28 December 2009–31 March 2010

The partner’s “Monitoring the Conduct of Presidential Elections in the Northern Province” program supported a community effort to minimize election violence and election malpractices in the North, and observe the election campaign and polling. The partner documented abuses and made recommendations for improvement of procedures and institutions pertaining to elections. A total of 948 mobile monitors and stationary observers were trained in workshops at the start of the election campaign period. The workshops, held in central locations in the five districts of the Northern Province, focused on issues including monitoring procedures, the code of conduct to be followed, procedures relating to polling, the administration of elections, and possible offenses on Election Day and the reporting of these to the partner. The partner’s monitoring covered the pre-election period (i.e., the period between 17 December 2009 and the day of the election), Election Day, and a post-election period of two weeks after Election Day. The stations observed in

the Northern Province were selected after deliberations by the district coordinating unit following an examination of available information on adverse events during the campaign period. On Election Day, the partner deployed 810 monitors and observers to polling stations in all 32 DS divisions in the North. This included mobile and stationary monitors at IDP camps in Vavuniya.

I.7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN

SuRG M&E staff work continued to improve the M&E procedures and capacity of partners. Activities included proposal development training to build capacity of prospective partners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own activities to ensure success in their respective projects. Since Q3 FY10, SuRG has been conducting a three-day residential quarterly review of work with the participation of all grantees and program staff. M&E is an important component of these proceedings. The M&E team also meets with the partners in the field where their work and data documents are examined and issues and deficiencies are addressed.

The M&E team continued collecting and analyzing data for SuRG performance monitoring. Work with Zoomerang—a web-based survey instrument—commenced during Q4. End-of-training surveys of all SuRG-sponsored trainings are now being translated into English and uploaded into Zoomerang for analysis.

The quality and accuracy of reporting by partners remains low, despite the many partner-support activities carried out by SuRG. A major shortcoming is the inability (or reluctance) of many grantees, especially regional grantees, to provide a narrative report with analytical and qualitative information that will complement the quantitative data they supply. It is believed that the easy availability of funding with negligible reporting requirements in the post-tsunami period convinced groups that they did not need to take reporting requirements seriously. Many partners seem to think that SuRG's insistence on accurate and timely reporting is excessive and a superfluous burden on limited manpower.² Capacity is also very low for handling data and has not proved easy to strengthen. Continued support, training, and supervision by the M&E team, as well as by SuRG program staff, will be needed to try to shift this attitude and improve the capacity of partners to undertake meaningful monitoring and evaluation of their own projects and reporting of results clearly, completely, and without delay.

During the second half of FY10, the M&E team undertook a review of data collected, compiled, and reported in previous annual and quarterly reports. This larger-scale review (more than the customary spot checking) was occasioned by the concern that the very large numbers of beneficiaries reported by one partner might not have been accurate. An audit of the numbers reported revealed significant double-counting. On the basis of this finding, all of this partner's numbers were adjusted to reflect a more realistic position regarding its performance.

As a sequel to this, data that fed into all previous reports prepared by the M&E team were audited for accuracy of numbers. A close study of data that included checking back with the original source materials and discussions with partners and program staff showed that revisions were required because of poor reporting by some grantees. Based on this finding, the first three quarterly report summary sections for FY10 were revised. These revisions are incorporated into annual counts. Revisions with a detailed explanation of why revisions were necessary and how the changes were made are on file at the SuRG Colombo office.

In order to ensure the integrity of data in the future, a new set of procedures is being prepared for both field-level and Colombo offices' data collection and recording. These procedures will entail greater involvement of SuRG program staff with partners and greater specificity towards helping partners with self-monitoring, maintaining performance records, and more complete reporting that would complement the quantitative data with qualitative narratives.

² Partners have told SuRG staff that, in the past, donors provided them with funds for work and did not require any reporting beyond a financial statement and a few photographs at the conclusion of the contracted work.

ATTACHMENT I: SUCCESS STORIES



SUCCESS STORY

WOMEN'S JOURNALISM COURSE PROMOTES INTER-ETHNIC HARMONY



A student studying for the Diploma in Media course conducted in Trincomalee District by the People's Service Council responds to a question at a classroom session.

“For me, this course has been the best gift I have received. I have met so many young people who are from different ethnic backgrounds which were not present in my village. This course, which I could not have afforded, has brought me a lot of exposure into other cultures and people. I never dreamed of experiencing such diversity. I'm very thankful for this opportunity and hope to make the best of it.”

Shanika

When Shanika signed up for a media course targeting young women in the eastern district of Trincomalee, she did so with reservations. She had rarely visited Trincomalee Town, as her own village was located in the interior of eastern Sri Lanka. Living in a segregated Sinhala community, her interactions with other ethnic and religious people were limited. Shanika felt unsettled about interacting with those of a different background.

Shanika's fears were not ill-founded. For decades, Trincomalee was marred by ethnic conflict which prevented different ethnic and religious groups from interacting openly and without fear. Language barriers further exacerbated the situation, deepening the separation between communities. With the volatile political situation in Sri Lanka, media personnel are known to work under immense pressure where incidents of disappearance and intimidation are not uncommon. The strain on media personnel affected the entry of women in to the industry. To date, there are no known female journalists working in Trincomalee District as the level of intimidation remains high.

With the end of the conflict, however, the needs of journalists in the region have been highlighted by the People's Service Council Guarantee Limited (PSC). Funded by USAID's Supporting Regional Governance (SuRG) program, PSC is working with journalists in the East to improve their language and computer skills with the intention of improving the quality and scope of reporting. In an effort to increase women's representation in the media and to encourage reporting on women's issues, USAID is supporting 15 young women, Shanika included, to undertake the Diploma in Media course. The young women selected are from different ethnic, religious, and geographical backgrounds.

The course has provided much needed cultural exposure for the students. A recently concluded Hindu religious ceremony was a first for many of the non-Hindus. “We might have different religious beliefs but that didn't prevent us from taking part in the ceremony. This kind of activity, apart from the course work, helps us understand each other's backgrounds better and will definitely help us in forging stronger relationships,” stated Shanika.

To Rushana, sharing ideas and experiences with the other students has helped to increase understanding and awareness of the problems faced by those living in the interior. “Thankfully, I am more aware of the problems faced by those in the villages, and how these problems impact their lives. For someone like me who has lived all my life in the town environment, this has been quite an eye-opener.” Rushana's exposure to the challenges of the rural communities has strengthened her resolve to become a news reporter with a special interest in exposing the challenges faced by remote and rural communities in Trincomalee District.

Despite the dangers involved in working in the media in Sri Lanka, the students are determined to pursue careers in the field. As student M.S. Shafa states, “When I signed up for the course, I knew of the high risks involved. But becoming a journalist is something I really want to do and so, I'm determined to finish the course. One day, I want to be a news presenter on TV. I'm still a little afraid of the dangers involved but I want to bring issues we face to the fore.”

With her fears put to rest, Shanika is enjoying the course.



SUCCESS STORY

FINDING COMMON GROUND: MUTHUR LOCAL AUTHORITY AND PEOPLE OF SAHAYAPURAM VILLAGE



Mr. G. Shivalingam, community representative of Sahayapuram, explains the improvements experienced in the relationship between the community and the Muthur Pradeshiya Sabha since SuRG began its training sessions targeting the staff and representatives of the local authority.

“The staff knew the role of the local authority involved active participation of the community members. But we didn’t know how to engage them and how to ensure that there was a good relationship built between us and the communities. It was only at the training [that] we came to understand the process of doing assessments and how we can [provide] support to set up committees in the villages. I am very thankful to USAID for all the trainings we are receiving because now, there are stronger linkages between us and the communities. We have come a long way, since now, we include the needs of the people when we ask for funds. It has been a great change from the way things were done before.”

*Mr. M. Najeed,
Development Assistant/Public Relations
Officer*

The citizens of Sahayapuram, a community within the Muthur local authority in the Eastern Province, have been quietly rebuilding their lives since resettling in August 2008. After almost 30 years of conflict came to an end in the east in 2007, Sahayapuram is picking up the pieces and starting to build up what was lost during the war.

The work of the Muthur local authority (LA) and its relationship to the community members are central to this rebuilding process. According to Mr. G. Shivalingam, a community leader and Chairman of the Rural Development Society of Sahayapuram, “their [the LA’s] relationship to us has been like the proverbial tamarind seed that never touches its outer skin. The community and the local authority are mutually inter-dependent but there has not been a close relationship. There has been very little communication between us and very little consideration for our needs.”

Of late, however, the villagers have begun to see a difference in the attitudes and behaviors of the LA staff and representatives. “Today, there are signs of a closer relationship being forged. The staff of the local authority visits Sahayapuram and actually listens to what we, as community representatives, have to say.” The staff is now more involved, attending meetings in the community and encouraging community members to raise their problems at public forums. “This kind of engagement is helpful to us because we are now more aware of the services provided by the local authority and the weak linkage we had before has been strengthened,” Shivalingam explained.

The changes experienced by community members are a direct result of the USAID-funded Supporting Local Governance (SuRG) program, which focuses on improving the skills of LAs in the Eastern Province and strengthening ties between communities and the local government through the establishment of Participatory Governance Forums. Staff and representatives of the Muthur LA have benefited from a range of training including office management, participatory planning and budgeting, good governance, and leadership. The SuRG program also helped facilitate participatory assessments to prioritize the needs of the communities.

The assessments resulted in integrating the prioritized needs of the communities in the local authority development plans for the coming year. As a next step, USAID is providing hands-on technical assistance to the staff to develop several funding proposals for these identified needs. Among these is a proposal for a community water scheme considered a high priority by several communities.

Upon reflection on the changes, Ms. Rafeeka, the Secretary of the Rural Development Society, is hopeful for the future. “There is much work to be done, and as community members, we feel strongly that our active participation will help bring about positive changes. This close relationship with the local authority will help us forge a good rapport with not only the local authority staff but also our elected representatives.”



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUCCESS STORY

TAMIL READERSHIP RETURNS TO COMMUNITY LIBRARY



Muslim youth take a break from lessons to read newspapers made available at the Nelumpura community library by the Lankapura local authority upon a request made by a community member.



“The response of the people has been very positive. We had faced a lot of problems in retaining our Tamil-speaking members because we didn’t have much to offer them. It was not right that the library could not respond to the needs of well over half of its membership. Although we had asked for assistance on many occasions from the local authority, it was only on this occasion that the effort was successful.”

*M.D. Premathilake
Acting Librarian*

Established in 1998, the community library in Nelumpura in the Polonnaruwa District serves over 320 families. Nelumpura is home to a predominantly Muslim community and a small community of 50 Sinhala families: a fact not reflected in the availability of reading material in the library. A majority of the reading material at the library is in Sinhalese, with very few facilities available for the Tamil-speaking Muslim readership.

Nelumpura is a remote, under-developed village bordering the once-contentious Eastern Province. Ethnic tensions fueled throughout Sri Lanka’s almost three-decade-long war have left interaction between different ethnic groups strained. Mistrust between communities is heightened by the lack of understanding of each other’s cultures and languages. In this context, the absence of Tamil reading material in the library was a stark reminder of the attitude of the local administration towards the needs of the Tamil-speaking community in Nelumpura.

USAID, through its Supporting Regional Governance (SuRG) program, is currently supporting the Shrama Shakthi Development Foundation (SSDF) to address such disparities. SSDF works with the Lankapura local authority (LA), helping the staff and representatives connect with 10 villages within the LA constituency. With the support of SSDF, participatory assessments have been conducted by the LA in Lankapura to find out the needs of the people. In addition, SSDF has helped communities appoint community leaders to People’s Forums in an effort to coordinate activities and raise critical issues from the respective communities with the LA. SSDF also helped to facilitate the inclusion of representatives of these People’s Forums into four standing committees within the LA. The committees include finance and policy, housing and community development, technical services, and environmental services.

The lack of reading material at the library, like many other issues, had been raised several times with the relevant officials in the LA, but to no avail. The issue was brought to the attention of the Chairman of the LA by the President of the People’s Forum in Nelumpura, Ms. S.M.H Nisha, at the inaugural meeting between the People’s Forum representatives and elected representatives. The response by the LA to the query was immediate. Funds were allocated by the LA to finance the purchase of six Tamil newspapers; within two weeks, the newspapers were made available at the library.

SSDF’s efforts to link the community and the Lankapura local authority are thus helping to bring about positive change by breaking down ethnic and language barriers. SSDF has helped to create an environment which is conducive to the discussion of challenges and shortcomings within and between communities and elected officials. Such communication is helping communities, such as the Nelumpura Muslim community, to avert the further fractioning of relationships. As Nisha noted, “The LA chairman has already promised an allocation of funds for educational material. At present, I am working towards ensuring these are made available. Thanks to the initiative of linking the community with the local authority, we have been afforded a rare opportunity. Now, we can voice and raise our problems directly with the local authority. I’m very thankful to USAID and SSDF for making this opportunity available to us.”

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