

MFF Small Grants Facility (SGF) – Cycle 5 - Jaffna

Lessons Learnt Report

April, 2017



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April, 2017

MFF Small Grants Facility (SGF) – Cycle 5

Lessons Learnt

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Small Grants Facility (Cycle 5) was launched in 2015/2016 in the **Delft Island and in the Coastal areas of Jaffna peninsula** to support projects primarily addressing the priority needs identified in the resilience analysis conducted in the Delft Island¹. The identified projects focussed on three 'key thrust areas', namely agriculture-based interventions, tourism-based interventions, and improvements to support services (water, transport, marketing, technology etc.). One project (MFF-04) had a component in Manalkadu to address livelihoods of poor communities in the village.

The projects and the targets are summarised in Table 1. Annex 1 provides some images of project activities/outputs in the Delft Island.

Table 1 – Summary of the Cycle 5 Projects

Title of the Project	Grantee	Project Targets	Project period
MFF04: Greening of bare land and income generation for the selected community members in Manalkadu and the coastal area of Delft East of Jaffna District	Aaruthal, 51 Wyman Road, Nallur, Jaffna	In Delft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target 30 families cultivate 600 coconut seedlings in their homesteads (with a potential income of LKR 4,000/month after the trees become mature). Target 30 families grow fruit trees in their homesteads with a view to increasing their house-hold income by 60%. In Manalkadu <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing income by onion cultivation – 28 families with an anticipated income of LKR 20,000 in two months (one onion cycle) Increasing income by introducing back-yard poultry – 20 families with an anticipated income of LKR 300/ month after three months from the project start. Increasing income by 60% in 23 families in fish vending and five families in food preparation. 	1 Feb 2016 – 31 January 2017
MFF07: Mapping of ponds / waterholes and restoration of a selected pond in the Delft Island	Department of Fisheries, University of Jaffna, Jaffna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of available ponds/waterholes in Delft island and their characteristics including physico-chemical parameters; Restoration, as a model, of a selected pond using accepted ecological and hydrological principles 	1 January 2016 – 31 December 2016
MFF 22: Installation of an efficient model	Jaffna Science Association, Jaffna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of a model rain water harvesting system; 	1 March 2016 – 28 Feb 2017

¹ Wijewardene, Lakshman, D N S Witharanage & A A M Fahim (2015) Resilience Analysis Protocol to Sustainable Development of Delft Island in Sri Lanka; x+83, IUCN Sri Lanka Country Office, Colombo [ISBN 978-955-0205-44-8]

Title of the Project	Grantee	Project Targets	Project period
of water management and novel home garden system at the Delft Island		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drip irrigation system for sand-bag based vegetable garden and introduction of drought resistant plants; and Establishment of a 'novel' home garden system. 	
MFF25: Building economic resilience of returned coastal communities through sustainable management of ecosystems ²	Sewalanka Foundation, Colombo Road, Boralesgamuwa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of two eco-friendly cabanas Training of partner members in hospitality Increase of household income by 30% in the target groups Increase in tourism to Delft by 30% Literature and tour maps production and distribution 	15 August 2016 - 10 April, 2017

1.2 Theory of Change

The underlying Theory of Change for Cycle 5 was improving the resilience of the communities dependent on coastal resources and the environment, largely focussed on the Delft Island. This Theory of Change is to be demonstrated by using a variety of resilience indicators (e.g. increased household income, improved ecosystem).

1.3 Project area

The Delft Island is in the dry/arid agro-climatic region with rain experienced during the north-east monsoon (from about November to January); the soils are sandy calcareous with low fertility and organic matter. The Cation Exchange Capacity is low. Water table is accessible at reasonable depth in some areas; however salinity levels are significant.

In terms of project management, the local capacity has been found to be quite inadequate; the four projects have been implemented by organisations outside the Delft Island (three in Jaffna and one in Colombo with a sub-office in Jaffna). Personnel for project management have largely come from Jaffna; their time spent in the Island is dependent on ferry times from the Peninsula. Accommodation for visiting personnel is extremely limited, and transportation costs are high. These limitations pose challenges to timely implementation of projects to the standards required.

1.4 Summary of Outcomes

The projects were approximately one-year's duration contracted during the first quarter of 2016, although the Project Cycle Management training was held in early September 2015. The MFF Secretariat was unable to contract the Grantees expeditiously due to internal disbursement issues. As a result of this delayed contracting, all agriculture-based projects had been delayed as they missed the north-east monsoon-linked planting season. Thus they were only able to plant seedlings during the north-east of 2016/17 (around November, 2016); i.e. at the end of the project period. This meant that there was no time for data collection to validate the results.

The **agriculture-based** components included planting homesteads with coconut and fruit plants (MFF-04) and introduction of a drip irrigation system (MFF-22). The Resilience Analysis of Delft introduced a model home-garden³ comprised of perennial tree crops (coconut and fruit trees) [which

² As this title does not reflect the scope of work, it was suggested at the PCM training that the title be amended to something like 'Improving economic resilience of Delft Fishers by promoting ecotourism'.

³ *Ibidem* (Wijewardene *et al.*); Fig. 13 (page 36)

will provide economic returns after several years – in coconut this would be about 5-6 years] and field crops and livestock, which will provide income within months, together with composting and integrating poultry and fish production. However, this system is not included in any of the proposed projects; rather MFF-04 chose coconut and perennial fruit trees; MFF-22 used the perennial fruit *Syzygium*. The net result was that the Grantees were unable to have any data on production and income therefrom. The drip irrigation system introduced under MFF-22 was also established in December 2016 and there had been no time for data collection. Furthermore, design of the drip irrigation plots is flawed; they lie adjacent to hose-irrigated plots with no control of free-flow of water into drip irrigated plots. Overall, therefore, the agriculture-based interventions could not demonstrate the underlying Theory of Change.

The Manalkadu component of MFF-04, which is outside of the Delft Island, has provided much-needed, albeit incomplete, baseline and end-line income data to demonstrate the Theory of Change. Although the design of this component could have been better, the Grantee has responded with a collection of the crucial data to demonstrate viability of some of the sub-components of this component.

Availability of water has been addressed by the project, MFF-07. In spite of the difficulties faced by the Grantee, the project had been completed with the agreed outputs. The survey of existing ponds has important results for policy-makers to identify suitable ponds to augment water supply in the Island, which is a crucial need. Already, the relevant government agencies have taken note of the findings, and are expected to undertake rehabilitation of some of the important ponds in the Island.

The refurbished model pond (Thoddachchikulam), handed over to the Department of Agrarian Development, appears to be not the choice of the community. Currently, the pond appears neglected and provides water to grazing cattle. There is no community-based management system or maintenance arrangement. Due to lack of collection of crucial data, the Theory of Change cannot be demonstrated although the progression is evident. Lack of stakeholder engagement is also evident.

Words of Appreciation and Advice.....

The Government is focussed on developing the area after 30 years of conflict, and we need all the support of various agencies in this mammoth task. Delft is one area ear-marked for rehabilitation and development. In 1991, it is estimated that there were about 5,000 families; now it is less due to migration and harsh conditions.

In this scenario, the projects supported by IUCN/MFF are most welcome; those focussing on livelihood development are very important.

We are very keen to coordinate all projects and provide support where needed. In that sense, it is necessary that we are informed of all the projects, beneficiaries etc. so that we will ensure fair-play and transparency.

We have already noted some results of the projects, such as the development of a pond which will provide us some guidance on replicating such examples.

IUCN could look for avenues to provide more support to Delft; we will also support by providing free transport of materials to the Island.

Mr N Vethanayahan, District Secretary, Jaffna

The **tourism-based** intervention is MFF-25; the implementation of this project has been very much delayed, and the cabanas are expected to bring income for participating families of the Fisher Society. The cabanas are still not fully operational and are not fully furnished to accommodate visitors. The

underlying Theory of Change of increased income cannot be demonstrated just now as income is yet to realise.

Hope for a better future.....

Recently, we had the first group of tourists. They were from Kerala and came to spend the day at the cabanas, having heard about the facility from Sewalanka. Upon arrival at the jetty, I received them and brought them here by a small truck.

The older members of the group relaxed in the cabanas whilst the rest enjoyed the beach and the historical points in the Island. Lunch was provided by the *Valampuri Women's Group* and the ladies in the visiting group commended on the quality of lunch.

They were also inquisitive on how the cabanas were built and who supported it. They appreciated the support given to the Fisheries Society, and encouraged us to expand business by having a kiosk to sell fruit juices, cold water etc. We are also learning on how to develop this place.

The first group paid us LKR 3,000 for the facility; in addition, our partner truck driver got LKR 3,500 for transport and taking them to other places. The Women's Group received LKR 5,000 for food.

It was a good and encouraging start for our business, and we will put all efforts to improve the facility.

President, Fishermen's Society, Delft

2. Lessons Learnt

Although the projects have not provided much evidence towards the Theory of Change, there are number of lessons to be learnt from experiences thus far. These are presented under several categories.

2.1 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a *sine qua non*, and is emphasised in MFF project implementation strategy. Implementation of Cycle 5 projects has suffered due to poor engagement with stakeholders as evidenced in a number of components. In this regard, it is necessary to take into consideration the special circumstances in the Jaffna district following 30 years of civil unrest and a plethora of funding agencies operating for rehabilitation and development work. Clearly, the government agencies would wish to coordinate all aid and projects to ensure fair distribution of resources to the needy. In the circumstances, following procedure is obligatory:

- Formulate transparent criteria for beneficiary selection;
- Involvement of the Divisional Secretary/*Grama Niladhari* in beneficiary selection so that duplication can be avoided; and
- Sharing of the beneficiary lists with the relevant agencies.

Two senior government officials expressed their displeasure on not sharing the beneficiary lists of a project with them.

Equally, community engagement is essential for successful project implementation. In MFF-25, a partnership has been built with the Delft Fisheries Society as the implementing partner and the beneficiary, through which individual members of the Society will benefit.

In MFF-07, lack of community interest in the management of the pond has resulted in neglect of the pond. The Grantee should have had an on-going relationship with the beneficiary community in the neighbourhood of the pond, and should have facilitated a mechanism, together with the Dept. of Agrarian Development to ensure that the pond is well maintained for community use.

In MFF-22, a school vegetable garden has been established, but it is out of bound for school children. This will not help in children learning from the school garden. Equally, in the same project, the Grantee was requested to work with the Delft Society which originally proposed the farmer field component. However, there has been no engagement with the Society, and this will affect sustainability of the initiative.



Rain water; a precious commodity.....

Water is scarce in the Delft Island; thus the rain-water harvesting system provided by the project will be a very useful item for the school. The school uses this water for a variety of purposes; for drinking, kitchen, garden etc. The vegetable garden supported by the rain water harvesting system has provided some vegetables for the children's mid-day meal. We are paid some money by the World Food Programme for mid-day meal, and since the vegetables are free, we will be able to give food to the older children as well.

We invited some high officials from Jaffna including the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Northern Province to inspect the system. They were very appreciative of the facility, and may even replicate it in other schools.

Principal, Madya Maha Vidyalam, Delft

In MFF-04, the Delft component also required close engagement with the Society, and there was no evidence on such partnership. On the other hand, the Manalkadu component of this project had a close rapport with the farmers' society.

Overall, these findings emphasise the need to have a close dialogue and engagement with the stakeholders (and communities when they are beneficiaries) for successful project implementation.

2.2 Livelihood support

The MFF support to improve household income in the Delft Island is yet to be realised as the initiatives have just begun. On the other hand, in Manalkadu, fish vendors and those who make food items have fared well. The approach of the Grantee in the Manalkadu component has been to select beneficiaries amongst those who were already involved in these trades – it would appear that it was easy for them to improve the conditions and improve incomes; this may have been different if beneficiaries without any previous knowledge was used. The pros and cons of selecting beneficiaries can be discussed either way, but the Manalkadu experience shows that it is much easier to improve the incomes by improving existing ventures. The selection of such beneficiaries can be justified if their incomes were inadequate, or if they were prepared to expand/improve their ventures.

Considering the circumstances, a sound judgement is needed on beneficiary selection. Equally, participation of village-level officials such as the *Grama Niladhari* or the Economic Development Officer would be helpful in determining the needs of the beneficiaries.

The lesson here is in short-term projects of this nature, the Theory of Change can be demonstrated using communities who are already involved in a trade, but with incomes less than desired.

Development of Delft.....

Delft has many poor people, and we need to improve their livelihoods. They are facing many difficulties due to lack of resources, money etc. Most of the men are dependent on fisheries, and the catch in the recent times has been dwindling. Any extra livelihood income would alleviate their difficulties so that they can have a better life.

The projects supported by IUCN and MFF are most welcome; some projects have yielded results. I have seen the rain-water harvesting system at the Madya Maha Vidyalam – may be this is what we should do as in the past. The pond rehabilitated by one of the projects is also a good example. We are thinking of rehabilitating seven more ponds on the same lines.

As the representative of the Government in Delft, I would like to be informed of all activities so that we will avoid replication but we will also learn from them for replication. However, sadly, some projects are not providing us with this information. This deficiency has to be corrected.

Mr S Jeyakanth, Divisional Secretary, Delft

2.3 Capacity Development

The projects have clearly shown the benefits of capacity development for sustainability of the ventures. In MFF-25, formal training has been provided to community members in the hospitality trade – the recipients are confident and eager to show their competences now in making the eco-tourism component work. On the other hand, in MFF-07, farmers had been trained on maintaining drip irrigation system but are not using their knowledge to maintain the systems in order. The evaluation found that this difference could be due to 'ownership' of the project; in the case of eco-tourism, the beneficiaries see the potential for business, whereas in MFF-07, the beneficiaries were already having an irrigation system with 'unlimited' supply of water for hose-irrigation. In this instance, one begs to ask the question whether the latter beneficiaries really needed the irrigation system.

Empowered....

Arul Jansen is a member of the Delft Fisheries Society. During the time cabanas were being constructed by the Project, Arul was interested as he saw the potential for employment. From the Society he volunteered during the construction phase; later he was selected as a member of the cabana management group. He is thankful that the project organised training at a Jaffna hotel. If not for the project, he could not think of training of this scale. He is confident that he will be able to use his training when he waits on the visitors to the cabanas.

2.4 Commitment of the Grantees

Experiences from the projects and discussions with the beneficiaries and others show that the commitment of the Grantees is an important consideration in the sustainability of the project

interventions. It is sometimes difficult to assess this aspect before awarding the Grant, but involvement in previous projects and references would be useful in fixing a bench-mark.



Looking forward to a better future....

Mary Magdeline is a mother of three; her family was displaced to Vavuniya due to the civil conflict. She returned to Manalkadu after the cessation of hostilities and now lives in a rented house. In 2015, her husband fell ill after an accident, and their livelihood income was disrupted.

Mary Magdeline decided to start food preparation as an additional source of income. She made *vadai* and *vaipan* (banana bread) and sold those in the neighbourhood.

When Aaruthal met the villagers for improving their livelihoods with a project from IUCN/MFF, she decided to join the group. She asked for support to expand her food preparation facility; initially, the husband did not approve her of doing work, but Mary was able to convince her husband on the benefits of working to get an additional income. Thus they together decided to expand the food preparation business.

Mary does the marketing including procuring fish; her husband helps in cooking lunch mainly for the labourers in the area. Earlier they made only *vadai* and *vaipan*; now with about 20 lunch packets a day, they earn about LKR 20,000 per month, which is a substantial increase in her income.

With a sigh of relief she says... *We do not have to depend on our children as we are confident of advancing our lives in the community, thanks to the project supported by Aaruthal.*

In two projects, it is very clear that the Grantee has merely carried out the projects, for the sake of doing a project. In MFF-25, the Grantee has built a partnership with Fisheries Society to maintain the cabanas, and is also likely to continue supporting the partners even after the Project. The Grantee being a national NGO has the necessary wherewithal to undertake such back-stopping. Whilst others may not have the resources, they should at least have the commitment during the project to ensure that mechanisms are in place to continue the good work of the project. Such partnerships arise from good social mobilisation and stakeholder engagement.

2.5 Project Design, Selection and Management

Experiences from Cycle 5 provide a number of lessons on Project design, selection and management, as set out below.

(a) Project Design

Several lessons can be learned from project design experiences.

- The proposals were brain-stormed at a Project Cycle Management training in September 2015; since then two projects which directly addressed the needs of the people in Delft and were recommended by the government authorities could not be awarded to the proponents due to due diligence issues (these are highlighted separately). In the circumstances, these two projects have been later linked to two other approved projects which are not directly related. Both these 'attached' components have fared badly. The Theory of Change circumstances have been clouded by this inclusion, and one Grantee explained that the project was thrust upon them. If projects are to be amalgamated, then it is necessary to ensure that the project logic is sound and consistent with the delivery of the desired impacts.

A curious combination which illustrates the lack of logic is the combination of rain-water harvesting and a totally unrelated drip irrigation system in farmers' field, which is not dependent on harvested rain water.

- The design should take into account delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes/impacts. The project needs to be clear on the intended impacts. For example, RAP provides a homestead model of mixed cropping designed to bring short-term and long-term income to the beneficiaries. It is well known that poor farmers lack enthusiasm to cultivate perennial crops due to long gestation period for harvest. This is overcome by farmstead models combining field crops, animal husbandry, and perennial tree crops. Notwithstanding this recommendation, the project has provided coconut seedlings and fruit species, both of which will take several years to bear fruit and provide an income. As a result, the projects are unable to demonstrate the Theory of Change. The lesson here is that crop models should provide income during the project life, which will make the beneficiaries committed and enthusiastic.

(b) Project Selection

Two proposals were made by local organisations in Delft [MFF-18 - Sustainable Home Garden system is developed in Sarapitty Village. Delft East Farmers Society & MFF 19 - Establish a model coconut-based home gardens in Delft J/6 GN division of Delft. Delft East Rural Development Society]. However, both these Societies failed to pass the Due Diligence test of MFF. Whilst Due Diligence is essential for a variety of valid reasons, it is also prudent to improve the capacity of local level organisations to ensure that they pass the test. This is particularly important in capacity-deficient areas such as Delft. Since proposals looked promising, the Government is now supporting the two Societies to implement the projects.

(c) Project Management

Delft is a difficult area; transport from Jaffna is limited and expensive; there is no local capacity to implement projects; there is very little facilities for visiting staff to stay and work in the Island. Internal transport is also expensive, and all materials will have to be transported from the Jaffna Peninsula. These pose a special challenge to project management. As a result, a number of short-comings was evident:

- Delays in implementation due to lack of staff, procurement difficulties;
- Inadequate mentoring and monitoring as the project staff usually come from Jaffna for the day;

In such circumstances, one-year project period appears inadequate to record the results. In this instance, the situation has been exacerbated by delayed award of the grant; as discussed under 'Outcomes' where all agriculture-based projects were delayed as they missed the planting season due to delayed contracting.



Financial independence....

Mary Theresa has grown up married children and she lives alone with her brother, the husband having passed away some years ago. She has been a fish vendor for a long time; she buys fish on credit from the Manalkadu beach in the morning and takes it to the Chavakachcheri market for retailing. She could only take a limited amount of fish as she did not possess the necessary wherewithal.

The Aaruthal project of IUCN/MFF supported her with LKR 10,000 to buy boxes, scales, fish knives etc. to improve her business. Out of the grant, she used LKR 5,000 to build a part of the parapet wall in the house, and used the balance to buy the equipment and fix boxes.

With this support, Mary is able to take a larger quantity of fish to the market. The fish is also in a better state after travel, and her profits have doubled. She no longer buys fish on credit; she is able to buy fish cheaper with ready cash.

With these developments, her life has become better and she is very much contented. Evenings are spent with the children and grandchildren who come over to the house. She is much thankful for the improvements to her financial situation; she has a considerable savings in the bank which she hopes to use for the marriage of her youngest daughter who works and lives in Trincomalee.

20 April, 2017

Annex 1 – Project photographs



School vegetable garden with drippers – Madya Maha Vidyalayam, Delft



Feeder tank for drip irrigation system – Madya Maha Vidyalayam, Delft



Restored pond, (Thodachchikulum), Delft



Water for livestock, Thodachchikulum, Delft



Beach cabanas, Sand Beach Resort



Pristine Beach in front of the Sand Beach Resort