**PROJECT LESSONS-LEARNED REPORT**

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| **Project Title:** | Ensuring global environmental concerns and best practices mainstreamed in the post-conflict rapid development process of Sri Lanka though improved information management |
| **Country:** | Sri Lanka |
| **Related CPAP Outcome** | National and subnational data collection measurement and analytical systems in place to monitor progress on the SDGs |
| **Project Description and Key Lessons-Learned** | |
| **Brief description of context** | Initially the project was developed with the Ministry of Environment in 2014 and approved by GEF CEO in 2014. However, due to a series of clarifications raised by the intended implementing partner, the project did not commence until late 2015. In Oct. 2015 the Ministry of Disaster Management was mandated with the implementation of the project under the “Sri Lanka Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme’’ 2014-2018, with the consent of the Ministries of Environment, Land, Digital Infrastructure. In line with adaptive management and with stakeholder consensus certain changes were incorporated into the project document to reflect current requirements of the country. |
| **Brief description of project** | The goal of this project was to strengthen data and information management and other support systems that contribute to policy development and improved implementation of the three Rio Conventions.  To this end, the project will focus on improved access to environmental data and information as a basis for strengthened national and sub-national developmental planning, building on the high level of political patronage for a greener and improved environment in Sri Lanka. The project’s objective is to enhance the institutional and technical capacity of relevant stakeholders to support policy analysis, development planning and monitoring related to post-conflict development and implementation of the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements.  The inclusion of non-state stakeholders contributes to the adaptive collaborative management of projectimplementation and promotes long-term sustainability of project outcomes.  The key data generators who report to the 3 Rio Conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) were identified as the stakeholders of the project. There were 60 in total some being Disaster Management Centre, Biodiversity Secretariat, Land-Use and Land-Use Planning Department, etc |
| **Key project successes** | Component 1: Data and information management system –   * MetaData Portal (MDP); *datasmart.lk*   Component 2: Improved capacity to use data for planning, monitoring and decision-making –   * Awareness Campaign for general public, school children, politicians, media personnel, government officials at district and divisional levels and Small & Medium Enterprises * Infrastructure and Capacity Building of Government Stakeholders |
| **Project shortcomings and solutions** | 1. Delay in project implementation due to political and administrative issues. Transferring the project to a different implementing partner resulted in a successful implementation of the project, though additional outputs had to be in-cooperated. 2. Delay in system development (main output of the project), due to unqualified institutional consultant, causing delays in activities which followed the MDP. The project team re-hired a new institutional consultant who successfully delivered the MDP. 3. Limited cooperation of the project stakeholders in sharing metadata and updating the MDP. A series of trainings were conducted to enter metadata into the MDP. 4. Limited cooperation of the Gampaha District Secretariat when piloting activities in Gampaha District. Though certain activities could not be completed without permission from the DS office, the project team was able to conduct activities that did not need District Secretary’s permission (Awareness to Small and Medium Enterprises, Public campaign, etc.) 5. Delay in project activities caused by delayed and limited cooperation of the other Ministries/agencies involved. The project team thoroughly followed-up and coordinated with the relevant officers to avoid further delays. 6. Mislead activities and reports caused by unprofessional consultants. Discussions with the UNDP CO and other UN Expert staff guided the project team to plan and execute activities according to the project AWP and log framework. |
| **Lessons learned** | 1. The project was first assigned to the Ministry of Environment, due to certain shortcomings it was handed over to Ministry of Disaster Management who implemented the project from 2016-2018, a year later from when the project was planned to be implemented. Moreover, being under the Ministry of Disaster Management, the project adapted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in addition to the 3 Rio Conventions for its activities, resulting in successful completion of its activities, including additional disaster management activities, in the short time period. The project overcame this challenge by recruiting National Consultants to perform technical activities/reports with stakeholder consultations. 2. The MDP was completed in October 2018, 2 weeks prior to the project closure, a significant delay caused by the failure of the recruited institute to successfully deliver the system. Though discussions were conducted with the Ministry during the MDP development, they refused to take-over the system due to lack of metadata and other options that were noted to be missing. However, due the project closure, the project team was unable to support the stated needs by the ministry and a consultant was needed to be recruited to conduct further meetings to hand-over the MDP to the Ministry of Disaster Management. 3. The MDP was developed via limited discussions with other stakeholders of the project. Once the MDP was launched, there were many options/ add-ons which were requested by stakeholders in-return for their shared metadata. Further, certain options developed in MDP had to be removed as they did not have an immediate use and are not readily been used by the stakeholders. A series of trainings were conducted to provide knowledge on how to update metadata and use the MDP. 4. Project selected two districts, Gampaha and Badulla, which faced annual disasters, to pilot activities. The Gampaha District activities were partially completed as the District Secretariat (DS) was uncooperative. Activities that does not required direct permission from the DS were implemented successfully. 5. During the awareness for school children segment, Ministry of Education were consulted as they are the mandated agency regarding education for school children. The protocols and processors’ guidelines were given by the Ministry of Education, including the focal points of contact, district education officers, for coordinating with the National Schools in 4 districts. However, the lack of coordination between the zonal/district education officers and the project members caused delay in organizing the quiz competitions. 6. Some of the consultants recruited did not complete their deliverables up to the expected standards, thereby misleading certain project activities causing delays and mishaps. However, the project team was able to complete most of the project’s activities successfully with the guidance of the UNDP CO.. |
| **Follow-up Actions** | 1. Conduct a feasibility study prior to project implementation to determine the capable implementing partners, consultants and staff. 2. Focal points from the Ministry (Implementing Government-body) should be appointed and be present at the discussions with the system development team. He/she should then address any requests and edits on behalf of the Ministry which are to be included into the database. Moreover, signing a MoU with the government implementing partner will avoid delays and conflicts when handing-over of such systems to the government implementing partners. Select and screen applicants thoroughly when recruiting for consultancies, especially with noteworthy activities. Monitoring and Evaluation of such activities should be made compulsory and take corrective/disciplinary action if the institute fails to delivery on time/not up to the expected quality/standard. 3. Conduct open discussions with the project’s stakeholders and key data generators to incorporate their requests and comments into the MDP/systems developed under projects. Conduct trainings with them to enter and edit metadata in their respective departments. Sign MoUs with the stakeholders to ensure continuous data-sharing and sustainability of such systems as the MDP. 4. Consider facts like; disaster occurrences, presence of a government office and officials, relationships between the DS and Ministry, ie to conduct a feasible study before selecting a location/district to pilot project activities. 5. Support and communicate with the national and the district/zonal relevant government officers to arrange logistics and permitting documents for public/children awareness programmes. Visiting the selected area/district with the government officers will also ensure a successful awareness programme, especially in regards to school children. 6. Conduct discussions with the consultants, under the project, to make sure that they have understood the project objectives and are contributing accordingly. Monitor and Evaluate progress of the individual and institutional consultancies and use corrective/disciplinary actions where necessary. Black-listing the relevant consultants will avoid other projects from facing similar situations.   During the project’s terminal evaluation, a number of recommendations were stated. One of the main follow-up actions being the successful launch of the MDP including the contributions of project’s stakeholders. A consultant was recruited, from the CO, to follow-up the recommendations stated in the terminal evaluation. |

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| **Project Information** | |
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| **Partners:** | Ministry of Disaster Management |
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