Terms of Reference

for

Consultancy

to conduct

An assessment of the impact of drought on smallholder farmers in Northern Province
Sri Lanka

19 February 2018
1. INTRODUCTION

In 2016 and 2017, parts of Sri Lanka experienced a lack of rainfall, which developed into what was believed to be the worst drought in 40 years. Across the country, 20 out of 25 districts were affected with significant impacts on economic activities, livelihoods and the lives of communities. The Disaster Management Centre estimated that 1.8 million people were affected by the drought. Affected households lost more than one-third of their expected income during the primary cultivation season. More than 300,000 households were considered food insecure with many households having to limit their food intake. The inability of farmers to cultivate lands also caused the declining availability of agricultural work and consequently in many drought-affected communities, indebtedness is rising.

As droughts are a recurrent feature in the North, there is a growing appreciation of the need for comprehensive efforts to develop stronger resilience among households dependent on income from farming activities. The ILO sees a potential for contributing to this process through improved land and water resource management practices. Combined with improved farming practices, including the introduction of alternative crops, and establishing new value chains, it is believed that it is possible to create more climate resilient jobs in the rural areas that protect livelihoods and household income.

ILO Project Context

Since 2011 the ILO has implemented the Local Empowerment through Economic Development and Reconciliation project, LEED+ in Northern Province with the aim to contribute to inclusive and equitable post conflict recovery and development. It represents ILO’s contribution to reducing fragility in the post conflict setting of Sri Lanka by creating decent work opportunities and supporting inclusive growth and reconciliation among vulnerable communities. LEED+ provides a comprehensive package of support to smallholder farmers including agriculture extension services, advice on appropriate crops, securing access to markets and business development support to farmers cooperatives and social enterprises.

As part of the technical support, LEED has introduced more water conserving irrigation methods as a response to the recent drought. This is a good first step in protecting rural households through improved water management practices. However, in view of the severe impact caused by the recent drought, there is a need for additional measures to strengthen climate resilience among smallholder farmers in the North.

2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

Objective

A preliminary assessment of good water resource management practices among smallholder farmers was carried out in November 2017.¹ This study provided several general recommendations on appropriate measures and practices that improve water use in the North. The objective of this assignment is to take this process down the level of individual vulnerable farming households, producing an informed basis for a set of specific recommendations on support measures extended to such farmers.

¹ Improving water security among Smallholder Farmers in Northern Province of Sri Lanka, Arend van Riessen, ILO 2017
The rationale for carrying out this assignment is the overall goal of strengthening natural disaster resilience of rural communities, farms and SMEs through effective land and water resource management measures. Reducing vulnerabilities to future droughts forms an important part of sustainable livelihoods development.

This assignment will explore in detail how the recent drought impacted the most affected smallholder farmer households and on this basis device appropriate measures that protect their livelihoods in the event of future droughts.

This study aims to obtain a better understanding of the smallholder farms that appeared to be hardest hit by the drought. Such information will improve the basis on which to recommend appropriate support measures that strengthen disaster resilience as part of the livelihoods development programme of the ILO and its partners. As such, the output of this exercise is also expected to provide useful guidance to an imminent review and appraisal of existing community based irrigation infrastructure in the region.

**Scope of the Study**

The survey of the impact of the drought on smallholder farmers will predominantly rely on earlier surveys carried out in 2017 during which the impact of the drought were mapped by responsible authorities. This data is expected to provide important information on the geographical distribution and characteristics of the most affected households.

While earlier assessments have focused on the occurred impact of the drought (i.e. the WHAT), the consultant is expected to identify the underlying reasons for the resulting vulnerability due to the lower rainfall during the last two years (i.e. the WHY). This will require field visits to communities and divisions where high concentrations of households were severely affected, to study their access to water resources, current water usage arrangements, available infrastructure for water/irrigation management, farming practices and possible other causes of the severe impact of the drought on their livelihoods.

It is expected that there are different (types of) causes explaining the water shortages and resulting impacts of the drought. The consultant will need to categorize, process and analyse the data and observations from field inspections and interviews with local smallholders and relevant government agencies for the identified causes. Possible other factors that could have contributed/aggravated the impact, should also be investigated (e.g. constraints in getting access to fertilizers, seeds, bank loans, etc.). This analysis should give insight in major trends in terms of causes and impacts vis-à-vis varying water usage practices. This then should provide representative overview and insight in the different causes of the severe impact of the droughts on the most affected smallholders.

On this basis, it is expected that the consultant will be able to provide concrete recommendations on how drought resilience can be strengthened for various types of smallholder farmers, depending on access to and use of various types of water sources, type and quality of water infrastructure, topography, crops being farmed, agricultural extension services, etc.

**3. KEY TASKS AND OUTPUTS**

**Key Tasks**
Within the context of the above, it is envisaged that the assignment will include the following activities (with the focus on the most affected households):

(i) Based on information from information from the Department of Disaster Management and other authorities, obtain an overview the worst affected farming households in terms of geographical location, climate/rainfall characteristics, access to water, soil characteristics, prevalent cropping patterns and land size.

(ii) Through desk reviews and field visits, review the extent to which the worst affected farmers were impaired in carrying out farming activities as a result of the drought, i.e. partial or total loss of essential harvests (the main crops will be agreed upon with the ILO field office in Kilinochchi).

(iii) Identify the most affected type of farming activities and also the type of farming activities and crops that showed more or less resilience during the recent drought (this activity is obviously relevant to the identification of the “essential harvests” referred to above).

(iv) Review the extent to which alternative drought resilient crops were adopted as a result of the water shortages and the extent to which such changes were effective in terms of addressing the water shortage and from an economic and livelihoods point of view.

(v) Carry out field visits to smallholder farming households that were severely affected by the drought to explore how to alleviate water shortages and safeguarding farming income during future droughts.

(vi) Explore the potential to connect affected smallholder households to various existing sources of water, i.e. tanks, irrigation schemes, wells, etc. and assess the limitations of these schemes.

(vii) Categorise vulnerable smallholder farmers and planters according to farming activities, level and type of vulnerability and possible remedial action in order to strengthen their resilience to future droughts.

(viii) On the basis of the observed drought impact and vulnerabilities, devise concrete support measures for different types of farmers that may strengthen their resilience to future disasters.

(ix) Through consultations with local technical departments, development partners and on-going rural development and disaster response programmes, review the measures already introduced to reduce household vulnerability to future droughts.

(x) Recommend appropriate mitigating measures, that the ILO support programme can carry out/support or promote with partner agencies, which have both immediate and long-term benefits in terms of strengthening livelihoods among the identified smallholder farmers that were severely impacted by the recent drought.

Support measures can include improvements to water infrastructure, new farming methods, alternative marketable crops, financial support services, insurances, improved technical services, specific agriculture extension services and skills development. Equally, the consultant is expected to explore appropriate measures that can assist households in rapid
recovery without resulting in higher indebtedness. The essence here is to identify measures that, if implemented, will have an immediate effect on the most affected households.

**Outputs**

A final report that (i) identifies the most vulnerable smallholder farmer households, the extent to which their farming activities were affected by the drought, main reasons for their high level of vulnerability and the remedial action taken to deal with the impacts of the drought; and (ii) recommends measures that may significantly reduce their vulnerability to future droughts.

### 4. DURATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The assignment, including field visits, consultations with development partners and the submission of a draft report, is expected to require a duration of 30 days.

### 5. ADMINISTRATION, REPORTING AND COORDINATION

The assignment will be carried out under the overall supervision of the ILO Country Office in Colombo, under the technical guidance of the LEED Project Manager and in close consultation with relevant government departments.

The ILO will provide logistical support in the field and also facilitate the consultations with the local authorities in the project area. At an early stage, the consultant will therefore need to prepare a programme for the consultations with local authorities and the field visits. This schedule and will need to be reviewed by the LEED National Project Manager so ensure that all relevant information will be obtained and that a field visits cover a representative number of smallholder farms and thus covers the predominant variations in water use and farming practices.

A draft report will be submitted to the ILO for comments and observations, before preparing the final report.

### 6. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- Advanced university degree in agriculture, water engineering or land and water resource management.
- At least 7 years of experience in the field of water resource management for smallholder farmers in low rainfall regions,
- Excellent command of English is required (oral and written). Knowledge of the main local languages in Sri Lanka is an advantage.