



Evaluation Summaries

Sri Lanka: Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning Project (IRAP) – A Component of UNOPS' Community Access Programming

Quick Facts

Country: *Sri Lanka*

Final Evaluation: *August-September 2008*

Mode of Evaluation: *Final Independent*

Technical Area: *Rural infrastructure
planning*

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Project Start: *27 April 2007*

Project End: *30 September 2008*

Project Code: *SRL/07/02M/ONU*

Donor: *EU (967,591 USD)*

Keywords: *Rural development, infrastructure,
road transport*

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Under this project, the ILO provided Technical Assistance for planning as a subcontractor to UNOPS who provided Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils (MLGPC) to rehabilitate 400 km of roads. The infrastructure improvement was to establish sustainable access to basic amenities for the more vulnerable communities in Ampara district

through the planning and construction of durable community access roads.

To initiate implementation of road works by UNOPS and the MLGPC, the ILO designed a Fund Allocation Model based on vulnerability to guide broad fund allocation to the local Pradeshiya Sabha (PS) level and a Road Prioritization Exercise (PRE) to assist local authority and community representatives to screen and prioritize specific road investments.

For the second and third year work plan, the ILO implemented Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) in Ampara District of the Eastern Province to strengthen the capacity of local authorities to plan and prioritize rural transport interventions. IRAP improved the rural transport system and distribution of facilities and services. The objective of the process was to – in a cost effective manner – improve access to goods and services in rural areas.

IRAP introduced a set of planning tools based on access needs of rural people to maximize the use of local resources. Its main features were its simplicity, user friendliness, low cost application and immediate outputs. Local planners could make use of the tools, as part of their routine planning activities, to define priorities for different sectors and communities. The process enables the planner to quickly assess what should be done, where, and identify rural infrastructure priorities.

The IRAP plans mapped communities' priorities to access basic minimum needs, such as water, and basic services such as health, education, markets and the road network. All plans were formally ratified by the local authorities at District meetings. The plans remain under the ownership of the MLGPC and can in the future easily be used to focus donor contributions on the most isolated and poorest communities.

As well as mapping the locations, conditions, and the use of schools, health centres and markets, a principle output of the planning process was the provision of a full Transport Infrastructure Inventory (TII). This provided the Government and local authorities with exact details of the extent and condition of the road network in the District and also forms the basis of an improved maintenance management system, whereby local authorities can clearly identify the budgets required for rural road management. The project introduced this system for the first time in Sri Lanka.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The evaluation assesses the efficiency of the services provided by the Associated Agency (the ILO) to the Executing Agency (the UNOPS) under the Inter-Agency agreement and the following four components as described in the Description of Services of that Agreement.

Component 1: Fund allocation – Implementation funds to be allocated to the respective divisions of Ampara District based on a Fund Allocation Model prepared and submitted to the Executing Agency based on indicators such as poverty, access and population identifying the most poverty affected and most vulnerable Divisions of the District;

Component 2: Preparation of a First Year Investment Plan consisting of development of roads in 10 of the most vulnerable Divisions

adopting a Rapid Prioritization Exercise and a Cost effective Analysis (CEA) model.

Component 3: Preparation of a Second and Third Year Investment Plan applying the IRAP strategy for all 16 PS Divisions resulting in a Divisional Accessibility Action Plans (AAP) supported by Data Books and Divisional Accessibility Profiles (DAP) for each PS.

Component 4: Contributing toward a Transport Infrastructure Management System through preparation of a Transport Infrastructure Inventory (TII) that forms a part of IRAP, which would be a participatory, low cost road inventory tool that provides an overview of the extent and condition of the road network and forms the basis of a District Based Road Inventory

The specific terms of reference of the evaluation study of IRAP included the following 5 activities.

- i. Review the process and methodology adopted by ILO IRAP project in the preparation of the Divisional Accessibility Action Plans;
- ii. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the IRAP Project;
- iii. Review the project documents and outputs;
- iv. Review all Quarterly Reports and Annual Report produced by IRAP; and
- v. Make recommendations based on the findings.

Methodology of evaluation

Basic information for the evaluation was collected from three sources.

- A desk study reviewing reports available at the ILO – IRAP Project Office in Colombo;
- Key Informant Discussions in Ampara District; and
- A sample of 5 Focus Group Discussions of beneficiary participants in selected PS Divisions in Ampara.

Under the review of reports, a) the Accessibility Action Plans (mainly the plans related to the 5 sample PS Divisions), b) the Fund Allocation Model prepared by ILO for the allocation of funds during the first year of the project and the Inter-Agency Agreement signed between the ILO and UNOPs, c) the Project Proposal of IRAP and d) all quarterly and annual progress reports of the project were reviewed and necessary information was collected for the evaluation.

The Key Informants included a) the senior Government Officers of the district and Divisions, b) Chairpersons and senior officers of sample PSs selected for the study, and c) beneficiary representatives who participated in the IRAP process workshops including women's organizations, representatives of community based organizations and rural development societies etc.

The Focus Group Discussions were held at the sample PSs with participation from government institutions, PSs and community representatives.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The IRAP process has been appreciated by the line agencies and divisional planning authorities as a useful tool for rural level planning. It provided a much needed exposure on local level planning and implementation of development activities. It has filled a vacuum in the rural/regional planning system where field based information is lacking for the preparation of accessibility plans in any of the rural areas in the country. A methodical and sound planning approach such as IRAP was also acceptable to the officials in their effort to formulate and implement development plans to address the pressing community needs.

In a little developed district like Ampara, where field level data and information is lacking for taking decisions on development activities, the IRAP process is highly relevant and useful to collect first hand information on

community needs and appreciated by the community for their involvement and participation in development decision making. The outputs developed under the IRAP process, therefore, are owned by the Government institutions as their proposals for implementation in the next three to four years. This is extremely important and a positive outcome. The process and methodology could be replicated for development planning in other areas of the country. The outputs produced by the IRAP process, especially the GIS maps and TII would be of immense advantage for most other service facility improvement and development organizations such as Water Supply and Drainage, Communication, Electricity and Road Maintenance for development and maintenance of their services.

However, the significance of the preparation of Accessibility Action Plans for a given PS area would have been given more recognition if the sectors to be included in the Plan would have been identified based on the area specific development issues faced by that area and not on the basis of a standard sector approach. During the evaluation, it was found that some sectors included in the Action Plan have no validity for that area due to no serious difficulties faced by the communities. Also, it was found that, at some stage the bottom up approach need to be supplemented with top down experiences especially in the identification of items for future development.

The IRAP methodology introduced several important techniques into the infrastructure planning process in Ampara district. Poverty mapping based on the Fund Allocation Model (FAM), positioning of village assets using Geographical Positioning Systems (GPS), preparation of asset maps using Geographical Information System (GIS) and preparation of Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (VAM) are a few important techniques that had been commonly used in the IRAP process. The evaluation found that Ampara's district administration did not have staff to release to the IRAP working team to apply the use of the

above planning techniques and enable the technology transfer to and capacity building of the district staff. As a result, the district planners will be left only with the outputs but not with the technology of IRAP planning process after the completion of the project.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

Based on the lessons learnt during the implementation of the road development component, the following recommendations have been proposed to strengthen the implementation of Accessibility Action Plans, in the future.

- Establish Plan Implementation Steering Committees with a wide representation of interests and partners;
- Establish Project Monitoring Committees for each Pradeshiya Sabha Action Plan to be chaired by the Divisional Secretary;
- Award construction contracts to trained local community organizations; and
- Promote utilization of local materials, services and labour of respective communities so that their level of income could be increased.

Important lessons learned

The “bottom – up approach’ introduced by the IRAP methodology produced encouraging results on formulating rural sector development plans appreciated by the communities, officials and decision makers. Application of top down inputs integrated into the process could improve the quality and sustainability with long term benefits. The introduction of some livelihood elements as link activities could make the plans more comprehensive and appropriate at macro level.

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of village assets using Global Positioning System (GPS) and Personnel Digital Assistance (PDA), preparation of asset maps using Geographic Information System (GIS) and preparation of Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (VAM) were examples used successfully in the IRAP process.

The project outputs are highly appreciated by the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils (MLGPC) and other public sector institutions. This achievement influenced the MLGPC to take a policy decision that Pradeshiya Sabha shall be the basic unit of planning in the country and the IRAP methodology should be used as the technique of preparing such development plans. The outputs such as Transport Infrastructure Inventory and Asset Maps could play a key role as base documents for the PSs to take over the responsibility of budgeting and implementation of operation and maintenance of community assets in the area.

The availability of development plans for all PS areas of a district would help the District Planning Authorities to formulate Consolidated Rural Sector District Development Plans. Since a PS plan will be small in size and will not be attractive for donor financing, a consolidated district plan would provide a larger and more attractive plan for donor funding on the basis of individual sectors.