

Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Creation to Prevent Youth Violence in Hikkaduwa DS Division in Sri Lanka

Evaluation by an independent consultant



Prepared for Arthacharya Foundation

By Dhanawardana Gamage

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall objective of this document is to provide Arthacharya Foundation (AF) with an assessment of the performance, implementation, and achievements of the project implemented by it, namely “Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Creation to Prevent Violence in the Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat Division” in Galle District.

The project’s objective at the goal level has been to ensure that increased opportunities exist for youth to engage in productive employment and to voice and express opinions. In addition, the project aims to help them harness innate potentials so that they can become involved as productive citizens of the country while preventing the formation of destructive youth bulges.

The project has been developed based on the experience of and lessons learned by the AF over a two-decade period working at the grassroots level in work related to poverty alleviation in the project area itself. The project has involved youth mostly as trainees, and most inputs deployed by it concentrate on establishing training-related facilities, mobilizing resources, and applying participatory processes to socially empower the trainees. Additionally, it has attempted to establish a partnership with relevant agencies to obtain opportunities for youth trained by it through advocacy. Activities developed and implemented by the AF to achieve the above goal has been limited only for one year.

The evaluator was an independent consultant tasked with assessing and reporting on the performance of the project. This performance of the project is evaluated in terms of its inputs, outputs, and outcome against the objectives and goals outlined above. It also identifies lessons learned from a broader perspective and makes conclusions and recommendations.

Before the assessment started, the evaluator reviewed the project proposal and desk reviewed the project documents. A field visit was made thereafter to become acquainted with the project works and activities implemented, and to make broad observations. The staff of the AF including the Executive Director, Programme Officer, Project Manager in Hikkaduwa, and her staff were interviewed to collect necessary information. Some of the beneficiary trainees were also interviewed in Hikkaduwa to obtain insights from their perspective of the training including the way they view the training facilities, quality of training they received, efficiency of training delivery system, and the way they wish to use or have started using the knowledge and skills learned.

The project has the objective of assisting youth, especially young school leavers, in the project area avoid the potential for ganging-up or for engaging in various law-breaking and deviant behavior through improving their employability. This objective was to be achieved by providing skills training in selected spheres that have a ready demand for employment and socially and psychologically empowering them to do so. Its long-term objective or goal is laudable as the area the project is situated in is deemed to have a higher rate of youth-related criminal activity or deviant behavior. In addition, the goal has practical and policy relevance for the whole country. Its objective is laudable in another sense too. For instance,

it seems to address problem that is multi-faceted, which needs different approaches and strategies including in policy, education, judiciary system reform, etc. Finally, it is laudable also because it brings to attention a problem that has caused political, social, and economic disorder from time to time in Sri Lanka since the early 1970s.

However, irrespective of the laudable nature of its objective and time taken to maturation of project outputs into short and medium-term effects and long-term impacts related to its goals, the project has been implemented only for one year mainly due to shortage of financing. Nevertheless, during its implementation period, it has performed effectively and efficiently in terms of delivering inputs such as establishing training facilities; recruiting staff for project management, training and identification; recruiting of beneficiary trainees; and imparting knowledge and skills that can be used for salaried/waged employment and to earn income through self-employment. By the time the project ended in September 2017, some who graduated were engaged in income-earning activities related to their training. The project has enlisted support from appropriate stakeholders such as businesses, industries, government and non-government agencies working in the area to contribute to its objectives. The performance of the project at goal level, in terms of its long-term impacts, has to be analyzed at a later date as these will surface only after the maturation of project inputs and outputs.

Section One

1. Introduction

1.1 The project

The project implemented by AF, namely "Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Creation to Prevent Violence in the Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat Division (DSDs) in Galle district" is evaluated in this report. The project's major objective, at the goal level, has been to increase the employability of youth to prevent them from taking up various forms of criminal and deviant behavior associated with youth bulging in the area.

As identified in the project proposal, unemployed youth tend to bulge and engage in thefts, organized robberies, gang rape, and eventually murder with the potential for engaging in violent political insurrections. The proposal also recognizes high incidence of "Beach Boys" in the area. These youths are engaged in various odd jobs in tourism industry, mainly as guides, drug traffickers, and male sex workers vulnerable to HIV. They become criminal elements during the offseason.

The project proposal aptly states the problem of youth bulging and its implications as follows:

"In spite of the military finishing off of the thirty-year-old war, Sri Lanka is still placed at the 30th position as an 'Alert Country' in the Fragile State Index published by the Fund for Peace in Washington DC, USA, where one of the prominent indicators is the pressures from skewed population distributions, such as a "youth or age bulge."¹

Failure of authorities to grasp the relationship between different forms of widespread violence and formation of youth bulges has repeatedly created violent situations in the last four decades, which eventually develop to proportions that are out of control. Formation of youth bulges due to various contributing factors was a prominent social symptom that appeared during the pre-insurrection period in the early seventies. A similar situation emerged prior to the 1989 insurrection while the surfacing of youth bulges again was the most significant symptom that appeared preceding the uprising of the Tamil youth that eventually developed to the level of a violent liberation war."

Besides deriving its overall rationale from problems associated with youth bulging, the project's rationale, focus, and strategy have been informed by three other factors. First, over two decades of AF's hands-on experience in working with the poor, including the youth in the Southwestern coastal belt of the country. For instance, the project is founded on the AF's continuing observation of youth bulging and associated criminal and deviant behavior in the region where the project is situated. Second, AF's experiences in the Yatiyantota DSD

¹ Failed States Index.

in Kegalle District and the Thanamalwila DSD in Monaragala District in projects with parallel rationale, strategies, and objectives. Third, as an attempt to adapt the lessons learned and best practices developed by the Employment Generation and Marketing Mission (EGMM) of Hyderabad, India, which has effectively generated 120,000 jobs for the rural youth within a short period of two years with funds from the World Bank and Ford Foundation.

1.2 Project objectives

The project's objectives at the goal level have been to firstly ensure that increased opportunities exist for youth to engage themselves in productive employment and to voice and express opinions. Secondly, it allows them to harness innate potentials so that they become involved as productive citizens of the country while thirdly, it helps prevent the formation of destructive youth bulges. It has three general objectives.

General objectives of the proposal are as follows:

1. Train the youth in skills so that they could find gainful employment in their own areas.
2. Increase incomes of low income and poor families of the target youth in order for them to get out of the poverty trap.
3. Empower the youth through the above processes and educate them on their rights through a social mobilisation process, which eventually will enable them to access and reap the benefits of the mainstream of development.
4. Organically develop and refine a replicable and a sustainable low-cost model to generate gainful employment for the youth.

1.3 Project strategies

The project postulates that bulging and criminal tendencies among youth are due to high incidence of unemployment among them, especially the youth from poorer families. Therefore, the project identifies skill training as the major strategy to be used to increase their employability. In this regard, the project has planned to provide the youth with free training opportunities for vocational skills. A particular focus of the project strategy has been serving the youth from the poorer households in the project area who cannot access such training either due to financial constraints or lack of educational qualifications necessary for enrolment in conventional training programs. The major strategies used in this regard by the project included creating skill-developing facilities, recruiting those in need for training, and conducting courses of 4- to 6-month duration within a span of one year.

Section Two

Objectives, Methods, and Focus of the Evaluation

This evaluation on project "Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Creation to Prevent Violence in the Hikkaduwa DS Division of Sri Lanka" implemented by AF is prepared by Dhanawardana Gamage as an independent consultant. Its objective is to provide AF, the United States Embassy Colombo (the funding agency), and other interested stakeholders with an independent assessment of the performance and achievements of the project. The specific objectives of this evaluation are:

- I. To assess the performance of the project against activities carried out, processes applied, outputs created, and effects and impacts.
- II. To identify and assess the lessons learned in terms of what has and what has not worked and the implications for similar future interventions.
- III. To comment on the actions required to further enhance the project design and implementation arrangements, and increase the positive impacts and sustainability of activities and outcomes, if the project is to be carried out in the future.

2.1 Evaluation activities

Preparatory work related to the present evaluation was conducted during the last week of September 2017. The field assessment was conducted during the first week of October 2017 and reviewing and analyzing of information started immediately afterward. A draft report was discussed with the AF project office staff on 17 October while the final report was submitted to the AF on 20th October incorporating comments and suggestions. The final evaluation report, as expected by the AF is a brief, clear, and logical summary of the assessment outcomes.

2.2 Methods applied

The evaluator undertook the following tasks:

- I. Scrutiny of the project plan to understand the problem addressed; its rationale and underlying assumptions, inputs, and outcomes expected; and implementation arrangements and targets.
- II. Desk review of project documents such as progress monitoring information.

- III. Interviews with the Executive Director of the AF, Programme Officer of the AF, field staff at the Hikkaduwa training center, and selected beneficiary trainees from the project area.²
- IV. The AF staff have followed up with some individual trainees to gauge the changes taking place within them after completing the project. Their findings were made available to the evaluator. Some such inquiries by the project staff have been printed as case studies of how trainees used the training for employment. These show, to some extent, effects, and impacts of the project and the direction these occur. These measures, though largely qualitative, are used in the present evaluation of project performance and impact analysis.

2.3 Focus and limitations in this evaluation

This evaluation focuses on project performance in terms of generating project inputs, deriving the expected outputs and achievements in terms of envisaged outcomes in the planning document. It also assesses the project in terms of its overall effectiveness in relation to assumptions underlining it and comments on such aspects as gender equality, social equity, sustainability of project outcomes, etc. to put the project experience in a broader perspective. Besides the comments that arise out of the analysis of project objectives, performance, and conclusions, recommendations are made to inform any future exercises on similar lines or policy.

However, it should be noted that the assessment in this evaluation is mainly limited to short-term and medium-term effects rather than long-term impacts such as reducing criminal tendencies anticipated under the project. Capturing such long-term impacts in this assessment is difficult mainly for three reasons: First, they will take a long time to surface. Second, there is no baseline information or longitudinal data to compare with. Third, the time available even for making observations in the field was limited.

Consequently, what is appropriate in this evaluation would be to focus the assessment on the following:

- I. Given that the impacts envisaged in terms of higher order objectives or goals of the project will take a long time to surface, what are the readily discernible short-term and medium-term effects that have occurred and what impacts could be expected to occur?
- II. What is the likely magnitude and direction of the possibility of occurrence?
- III. What lessons can be learned from the present intervention for any similar future intervention or policy?

² The evaluator would like to thank the staff of the AF and trainees for giving documented and verbal information. He is especially grateful to Mr. Sathis De Mel, Executive Director of the AF, and Ms. Tikiri Rajapaksha, Programme Officer of the AF for insightful discussions and support in organizing the field visits.

As far as appropriate and available information allows, this evaluation focuses on the following assessment measures.

- I. **Project's relevance** – Consideration of extent to which the objectives of the project are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, community, and needs of the area it is located in and the country as a whole.
- II. **Implementation performance of the project**– Assessment of the project implementation performance in terms of inputs and outputs created against those planned.
- III. **Effectiveness** – Assessment of the extent to which the project contributed to improving employability of project-trained youth or have reduced unemployment among them.
- IV. **Efficiency** – Consideration of whether the project was efficiently managed to obtain value for money (For example, in creating inputs and outputs, use of funds, staff, and other resources).
- V. **Gender equality and social equity** – Assessment of whether the project adequately identified and effectively addressed such issues in its planning and implementation.
- VI. **Assess the quality of stakeholder relationships developed** – Consideration of quality of relations between project efforts related stakeholders at the provincial, village, and community levels and with that of service providers, CBOs, microfinance institutions, etc.as well as the potential for sustaining these partnerships and relationships following the conclusion of the project.
- VII. **Project impacts**– Consideration of the project related positive or negative, primary or secondary, short-term or long-term, direct or indirect, intended or unintended, etc. effects and impacts produced by the project, if any.
- VIII. **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**– Assessment of whether the project's monitoring and evaluation framework, if any, effectively measured the progress towards meeting its objectives.
- IX. **Sustainability**–Consideration of the project efforts and likely continuation of benefits from the project-created outputs following its implementation.
- X. **Documenting the key lessons learned**– Consideration of lessons that can be drawn from the implementation of the project and proposal of recommendations on how these lessons can be integrated into future planning and implementation of similar types of intervention.

Section Three

Performance of the Project

In this section of the report, the performance of the project is assessed according to the criteria laid out in section two above.

3.1 Project inputs

Focusing question: Has the project created pre-planned inputs to reach the desired outputs?

A project's inputs are its pathway linkages to expected outputs and in turn its outcomes. Pathways usually specify and map performance indicators through each step, using a logic model. In the present project, inputs largely involve the establishment of training facilities, delivery of training, and linking of relevant stakeholder groups to support its cause. Therefore, in the following analysis, the project's performance is considered in terms of creating inputs and the ways these have been put to use.

The project has had three major input-focused elements as follows:

- I. Establishing "down-to-earth and low-cost" skills training programs based on the local market demand to generate gainful employment opportunities for targeted youth.
- II. Undertaking advocacy programs and linking appropriate stakeholders to support the project's cause.
- III. Establishing the mechanism and processes to set up employment linkages between the unemployed youth and the private sector companies in the area and outside.

Specific activities implemented in order to achieve the above are as follows. (See appendix1 for detailed information with dates for activities implemented.)

- I. Suitable project sites identified and project office cum training center established in Hikkaduwa.
- II. Recruitment of staff members (Manager, Coordinator, Facilitators, Accounts Clerk, etc.) and training them on project, rationale, objectives and goals, implementation methodology, monitoring progress, participatory evaluation and reporting, etc.
- III. Identification of demand for skilled labor in the identified area and provision of suitable training courses to meet those and length of training period.
- IV. Implementation of awareness-raising activities for targeted beneficiaries of the project and its objectives, in particular about the availability of the training programs.
- V. Training plans and modules prepared that address unemployment among the youth in low-income families of the area.
- VI. Youth groups identified, contacted, and recruited to follow the training.

- VII. Allocating of trainees for skills development based on their aspirations and aptitude, and training them for 4-6 months free of charge in sessions of 20-30 persons.
- VIII. Training modules implemented with trainers who are associated with government and non-government organizations in the area.
- IX. Awareness raising of target stakeholders to link to support project initiatives.
- X. Monitoring of project implementation progress along with that of the work of the staff entrusted with implementation at the divisional and ground level.
- XI. Distribution of IEC materials, posters, handbills, and publishing of course material.

In concluding the implementation, exhibitions were held by trainees and training completion certificates were awarded to those who completed the courses followed by evaluation of each trainee group with stakeholder participation in October 2017.

3.2 Project outputs

Focusing question: What are the major outputs of the project?

Project outputs related to the training are direct and measurable, and are summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1. Number trained at Hikkaduwa Training Center by subject, training duration, and by sex.

Subjects taught	Duration (months)	Total no. enrolled	Percentage of females and males enrolled	
			Females	Males
Mobile phone repairing	6	30	30%	70%
Domestic electrical installation	6	25	30%	70%
Beauty culture and hair dressing	6	30	100%	-
Handicrafts	6	30	100%	-
Sewing	6	30	100%	-
Computer	6	30	60%	40%

Computer training appeared to be a major attraction for both males and female youth. Beauty culture and sewing training have been the major attraction for females including married women. These were from Sinhala or Muslim families in the area showing signs of social equity. Most females preferred training in beauty culture because they could engage in this profession from home and flexible times. Handicraft is a similar vocational skill provided by the project although marketing can become a problem unless the trainees are connected with marketing agencies or markets outside the area. Simple analysis of the labor market in the area was done by the project before the training sessions were conducted

initially. However, there was no clear evidence of taking into product market considerations before some training such as handicraft training were initiated. The stakeholder groups to support trainees have been another major outcome. The cost of training per person was between Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000 including trainer payment, training facility/classroom, material, etc.

3.3 Project outcomes

Outcome performance of the project in the present assessment mainly focuses on its short-term and medium-term effects. It also assesses certain identifiable trends that may mature into anticipated long-term impacts.

Focusing questions:

- I. Has the project achieved its stated objectives of training youth to avail of employment opportunities that fall in line with their training?
- II. Has the project improved the employability of youth through training in the project area?
- III. Has the project contributed to reducing the association of trained youth with criminal elements in the area or engaging in unlawful activities?

In this assessment, the outcome of the project in the short-run is considered as effects compared to that of impacts that take a relatively long time to surface. Most importantly, impacts of the present project are related to its goal-level objectives of reducing the potential for ganging up and engaging in law-breaking activities by youth. There has been insufficient time to uncover such impacts.

3.4 Short-term effects

The major short-term objective of the project was to provide vocational training to unemployed youth or school leavers from poorer families so that they can and will take up employment opportunities available to them in the area. The evaluator found that the selected training programs have been completed by youth numbering 20-30 in groups as presented in table 1. Altogether, 175 persons were enrolled in the courses with only a few dropping out before completion.

Some of the short-term effects of the project were surfacing by the time of the field investigation. For instance, some trainees were using the skills learned for starting self-employment or using such skills to enhance their income. Of those, the AF has documented success stories as case studies. Mostly benefited through self-employment were previously economically less active female trainees (including a few married women) who found some time away from their household routines to engage in a new income-earning activity during their spare times.

Those who followed the course in computer usage, mostly recent school-leaver young males and females, affirmed that they have a complementary skill to access related employment. They are more likely to opt for salaried jobs. Those trained in computer use affirmed that, so far, they have learned more on computer usage during AF's project training sessions than in the school when queried by the evaluator. In other types of training like beauty culture, wiring, etc., most trainees admitted to learning a new skill successfully and efficiently. They

also claimed that the training opened them to new income opportunities by way of self-employment. Some had joined the training to further their knowledge to increase their income. In overall terms, training programs were found to have been useful by the trainees.

3.5 Medium-term effects

A type of medium-term effects of the project would be that a majority of the trainees engaging in employment related to the training they received and increasing their income. The evaluator feels that it is too early for such effects to fully surface. However, the tendency to engage in training-related employment or to use the imparted skills is evidenced from those who were using the skills as discussed under short-term effects.

3.6 Long-term effects or impacts

Viewing in conventional terms, impacts of the present project will include the use of skills learned by trainees for gaining employment with induced impacts on their abstaining from ganging up and engaging in the criminal or deviant behavior. The evaluator is positive that in the short-run, a majority of the trainees will use the skills they learned to help find salaried jobs, working as hired persons for daily wages or becoming self-employed.

As noted, the project's objective at the goal level is to reduce ganging up and engaging in criminal activities or deviant behavior by targeted youth, as a result of finding employment through project-related training. AF staff have followed up with some individual trainees to gauge the changes taking place within the trainees and to assess project-induced impacts. These findings were made available to the evaluator and by viewing those it was apparent that the likelihood of achieving the project's pre-planned, long-term objective can become a reality in the future. These aspects are further analyzed in the subdivision "project impacts."

3.7 Issues addressed and relevance of the project

Focusing Question: What is the extent to which the objectives of the project are consistent with the beneficiaries' requirements, project area, and country needs?

The project is aimed at changing conditions affecting the youth from poorer families, in particular unemployed school leavers or those with the likelihood of being unemployed for a long time with the potential for engaging in socially harmful elements in the community. The youth targeted for training have had little direction from their families as to the path they should follow to a fruitful future. Many of them do not have formal qualifications for admission to conventional training courses provided by either the public sector or private-

sector intuitions. However, their major constraint has been the lack of ability to finance any skill training.

The project planners with long experience in the area connote that such socially and economically marginal sectors of the local community are likely to result in youth bulging and subsequently adopting socially, culturally, economically, and politically detrimental attitudes, values, and behavior patterns including gang behavior with criminal tendencies. Sri Lanka has had severe consequences of youth bulging including youth uprising, which is a factor needing attention. In the latter sense, what the project has experimented on is important for practice and policy.

Thus, the issues focused on by the project is important in practical as well as policy terms. This importance is amply validated in the short discussion put forth in the project proposal quoted early. However, it appears that the issues focused on by the present project to be addressed from multiple strategies as is clear from the international experience on the subject. For instance, besides the widely used skill training-based approaches, there have been other approaches like those with a family focus, mentoring, community engagement, deterrence, and discipline as well as gang-specific interventions to name a few. Some such interventions have been used with vulnerable groups and the AF project attempts to help a vulnerable-area community with limited resources.

3.8 Effectiveness

Focusing Questions:

- I. Has the project improved the employability of youth through training in the project area?
- II. Has the project achieved or in the process of achievement of its stated objectives of altering potentiality of youth involvement in unlawful activities?

Effectiveness assessment of training and employment-related aspects of the project have been done in the present exercise against the project's short-term objectives such as creating training facilities, imparting vocational skills to its targeted beneficiaries, training used by the trainees to access employment and income, as well as achievement of its long-term objectives.

Overall, the implementation of the project appears to have mostly achieved its objective of skill training for a significant portion of the targeted population in the area. Through effectively mobilizing unemployed youth – in particular school leavers – and stakeholder agencies' contributions to project-supported activities, a significant amount of preplanned outputs has been effectively created.

Some interviewed by the evaluator were satisfied with the substance of training they received, the way the training sessions were conducted, and the effectiveness of the approach adopted in training. Some trained were already earning an income, mainly from

self-employment associated with the training they received. Furthermore, some beneficiaries were not likely to have any training mainly due to their inability to pay for training. Some of the advantages that the AF project had, according to those interviewed by the evaluator, were flexibility in times for attending classes, informal in-class atmosphere, physical proximity of location the training was conducted, and positive attitudes demonstrated by the trainers towards them.

Some comments on the effectiveness of the project in relation to its goal-level objectives are due in the present assessment. Vocational skill development has been the bottom-line of the present project approach in reaching its goal and the major instrument used for this is providing training that included practical and theoretical training. The evaluator thinks that further strengthening of networking with relevant business, CBOs, relevant government organizations (GOs), and non-government organizations (NGOs) for supporting the project's course could also have been useful for trainees to utilize newly learned skills. Capacity development in the latter areas could also have been beneficial for the trainees in taking up opportunities related to training early and will have a widespread effect.

The project's goal-level objective of reducing gang behavior of youth and their potential for involvement in unlawful behavior is too early to assess and effectiveness of this approach for doing so is yet to be tested. Evaluation of the effectiveness of an intervention of the latter type of objectives would largely involve assessing how the project has contributed to a reduction of ganging up and engagement in criminal activity/deviant behavior. This aspect cannot be assessed at this stage as noted under long-term effects.

However, it is possible even at this stage to establish the direction the trained youth take. Their reported aspirations to access employment have increased and no evidence has surfaced of their involvement in unfavorable gangs. Their engagement with peer groups have increased due to the training.

3.9 Efficiency

Focusing question: Has the project efficiently utilized financial resources available to it?

Being a project with a grassroots development approach and aiming to be so throughout its span of implementation, the project's strategy has been to provide low-cost, but appropriate training on a no-fee basis to the target groups in terms of the pre-set project objectives. Cost-per-trainee has been around Rs. 30000, which is economical. The evaluator was informed by the AF office that the project expenditure has largely been in-line with the budget allocated and there have been no cost overruns.

3.10 Gender equality and social equity.

Focusing question Has the project taken into account gender equality and social equity issues and addressed those adequately?

With the influence of the existing hands-on experience of the AF as the project planning and implementing agency, it has had a particular focus on gender, especially on the participation of females and improving their employability and income-earning potential.

According to AF records, of the 175 total trainees trained at Hikkaduwa training center in the project implementation period (October 2016 to October 2017), a noteworthy number of trainees have been females. Electric installation training and mobile phone training was predominated by males while those trained on handicrafts, beauty culture, and sewing were all women. The higher rate of women's participation in training activities has resulted in more women than men taking up self-employment related to their training, increased collective action, self-esteem, their contribution to the household economy, and perhaps family savings too. This is mainly because they have been largely less active economically and have been confined to household work.

3.11 The quality of stakeholder relationships developed

Focusing Question:

Has the project enlisted potential stakeholders to support the project course and continued to do so?

The project has taken steps to enlist and mobilize the variety of stakeholders at the provincial, village, and community levels including the service providers, CBOs, microfinance institutions, etc. These have contributed and supported the project and have the potential for sustaining these partnerships and relationships following the conclusion of the project.

3.12 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Focusing questions:

- I. Did the project have an effective monitoring system?
- II. Has the project monitored its inputs, outputs, effects, and impacts effectively?

The project activities and outputs have been monitored closely at site level as well as from Arthacharya head office in Rathmalana. These efforts appear to have largely involved collecting information on how the project activities/efforts fall in line with the project input targets like the number of youth trained by type, linking and mobilization of stakeholders, and to some extent beneficiaries gaining employment and income opportunities.

As already discussed, the project has far-reaching objectives like changing social and economic conditions of targeted youth groups through imparting employable/sellable skills

so that they will be employed or engaged in income-earning activities rather than engaging in immoral, illegal and gang/mob activities. The most challenging task for M&E would have been to observe and measure the project's higher-order impacts such as tendency towards reduction in youth adhering to undesirable social, cultural, political behaviors. However, there was no an inbuilt monitoring and evaluation strategy written into the project proposal to capture such complex effects and impacts as and when they occur.

The evaluator is of the view that the project activities and outputs as well as the effects and impacts (for instance, employment, income gains, social and gender inclusiveness, poverty reduction and distribution of those impacts amongst different sectors of the target groups) should have been monitored and evaluated, if the continuation of the project is expected.

3.13 Project's impacts

Focusing question:

What are the discernible impacts of the project so far?

In what direction and magnitude have these impacts occurred?

When the investigation for the present assessment was undertaken, the project had been implemented for one year. The major effects created or induced by the project were readily apparent and discussed in the section "project outcome". In the latter section, the project's contribution to improvement in skills development of the targeted groups and effects of the training such as finding employment was discussed.

In this section, changes that are likely to have originated from the project-created outputs, other interventions associated with the project implementation, and directions are discussed. As noted in the "project outcome" section, AF staff have followed up with some individual trainees to gauge the changes taking place within them in relation to the training. These show, to some extent, the direction of such changes and the scale they take place and thus, they can be treated as project impacts. These are summarized below:

- I. Besides transferring tangible skills during the training, the trainees have received assistance in acquiring social skills and values leading to an internal process of transformative learning through value change, confidence building, etc. The result has been the formation of a positive peer group, their members acting as role models to one another and some developing leadership skills and working together in groups.
- II. Experience from project implementation has shown that a sense of hopelessness amongst youth from the marginal households is the key driver towards dangerous bulging. This socio-psychological and economic reality has started to change through empowering processes associated with project implementation. Thus, it appears that the project induces transformation of the tendency for associating with negative youth bulges into peer groups that are positive. Peer groups that have comparable

socio-economic backgrounds have been able to transform from a sense of hopelessness to hopefulness and members aspire to better lives. Amidst healthy competition with rising aspirations, such groups have understood that they are interdependent and need to help each other towards success in reaching their social and economic aspirations. New friendships are based on a positive mindset, which leads to constructive interactions. The newly acquired skills and ways of knowing have been the pathway to reaching these aspirations.

- III. Follow-up inquiries have also revealed that none of the trainees have had any record of association with antisocial elements in their communities, of ganging up or law-breaking behavior, or tendency to engage in such activities. Instead, they have tended to associate more closely with colleagues who had followed the training with them.

3.14 Sustainability

There are several different factors contributing to the sustainability of the project-created results. These are as follows:

- I. The project has contributed to a lasting impact on imparting vocational skills among its targeted beneficiary groups and empowered the trainees with social skills and values so that they are likely to join mainstream society and economy rather than join youth bulges that engage in law-breaking activities. However, the sustainability of the training impacts will depend on the continued dynamism of the trainees by engaging in employment or new income-generation activities such as self-employment.
- II. Institutionally, the approach adopted by the AF is based on its experience over the last two decades or so in the area. The project activities have been linked to and have been supported by CBOs and other projects associated with AF.
- III. Youth who received training have developed friendly relationships and appear to work as peer groups helping each other and showing signs of “social capital”. This reduces chances of them joining with youth bulges associated with criminal activity. They have sustained the stimuli created by the project for them to join the mainstream society. Arthacharya is now in the process of institutionalizing these informal processes by forming an alumni group of the trainees, who will then have an identity as a stakeholder in the job market. The alumni group is expected to develop its objectives, functional work, etc. in the near future.
- IV. The AF has established positive links with a broad range of stakeholders working at the divisional and village levels including non-government organizations and CBOs during the implementation of the project. The sustainability of beneficiary impacts will depend on the continued dynamism of the CBOs (only a few that trainees associated with). Durability and strength of established linkages with other stakeholders would also be a factor contributing to sustainability.

- V. Finally, environmental sustainability under the project is not an issue as its activities do not involve or interfere with the environment at all.

Section Four

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

4.1 Lessons learned

This concluding section focuses attention on planning and operational lessons that can be learned from the project and how the lessons learned could be integrated into future interventions on similar lines. It also recommends future actions for the project as well as projects on similar lines.

The project has had an inclusive approach to serving the poorer and marginal sectors of the communities who have little access to conventional training programs. Vocational training programs of the government and non-government organizations are generally dominated by low-income and middle-class groups, but not the poorer groups. The project made it possible for the poor and marginalized groups to benefit through the low-cost model, which did not charge any fee or require higher-level educational qualifications.

The project experience shows that training of youth for vocational skills can be undertaken with participatory/down-to-earth approaches over highly formalized/institutionalized systems with low costs by properly placed non-government organizations, as demonstrated by AF.

The project has implemented a few training programs rapidly and sequentially but efficiently and effectively in one year, making the trainees employment-ready and representing a 'quick fix' model that is replicable.

Some characteristics of the model can be readily identified. A special character of the model is the attempts and processes applied to empower trainees. For instance, the trainees have been endowed with values including the value for self and they understand the ways of living valued by mainstream society so that they become valued citizens and human capital contributing to the economy. The values that have been cultivated amongst the trainees include the ability to see that there are constructive and respectable livelihoods with which they can graduate out of poverty rather than involving in socially and morally unacceptable activities. As a result, the trainee beneficiaries' potential for engagement in violence has been significantly reduced.

Empowerment also has meant trainees learn about relevant sources of information and resources available for future ventures and the stakeholders they can collaborate with. Other aspects of empowerment include the ability to appreciate gender roles resulting in a change of attitudes towards gender relations, new connections, links, positive peer groups, and partnerships with others on similar and different lines.

The project rationale, processes applied, and implementation arrangements made shed light on how skills training can be provided to marginal (even excluded) sectors of the society as a "quick fix" strategy or model. For instance, the project has used minimal resources in

establishing training facilities and have employed local skilled personnel as the trainers, thus efficiently reducing the cost per trainee to Rs. 30,000.

From the beginning, the project has meant to be non-conventional and more down to earth in its trainee empowering strategy. The trainees selected are those who cannot access training not only due to lack of money to pay the fees but also due to lack of formal educational qualifications required by the conventional training intuitions. Its focus has been to cater for local demand for skill labor than for the demand outside the area or in major town centers. Sewing, beauty culture, and telephone repair have been the most appropriate skills to cater to rising local demand. This low-cost model can be further developed, refined, and replicated by Arthacharya and others. It provides a learning curve for NGOs, vocational training institutions of the government, and development practitioners, as well as policy analysis for development.

The project has been implemented in areas affected by social and economic marginality, disquieting semi-urban environments, high population density, dependence on tourism for small-scale business and tourism-related livelihoods, which are highly seasonal, and some communities remaining in poverty over a long. Therefore, the AF approach could be a preferred approach to answer the employment problem of poorer sectors of the community in such areas.

In relation to development assistance, a key lesson that can be learned from the AF project and its approach is that within existing circumstances it may take many years to develop appropriate models addressing youth issues that are socially, financially, and institutionally sustainable. However, that commitment can prove beneficial to communities and the country.

4.2 Recommendations

The evaluator recommends that AF consider:

- I. AF has managed to obtain support from the American Embassy in Colombo that has constantly committed to supporting the kind of intervention with a vision. As the project's short terms effects like training youth with employable skills with foreseeable positive impacts, the AF may approach other funding organizations to support the experiment/model in the future. However, if the AF is willing to continue, it should be done rather expediently to keep intact the community stimuli created by the project.
- II. Many unemployed or economically less active females in the project area have been trained in beauty culture, sewing, handicrafts, computer usage, etc. If the project is to continue, they may be supported with social, communication, marketing, accounting skills, etc. The trainees could also be assisted by providing materials and machinery such as with sewing machines and credit to start and manage micro

enterprises. This is to help them to diversify or increase their income sources to meet some of their practical and strategic needs.³

- III. The evaluator believes that linking the trainees to AF-associated CBOs in the area and its microfinance (MF) component could have benefitted trainees, especially women, more readily since the access to financial services was identified as a key constraint to the adoption of micro enterprises (MEs), as revealed during the field discussions.
- IV. CBOs that have been functioning under other AF projects have been used to provide publicity to project activities, among others. This avenue of linking potential beneficiaries should be further explored to assess their ability to function as the link so that intended beneficiaries can be selected with some prior knowledge.
- V. The evaluator thinks that further strengthening of networks with relevant business, CBOs, relevant GOs and NGOs to support the project's course activities could also be useful for trainees to utilize newly learned skills. Capacity development in the latter areas could also have been beneficial for the trainees to take up opportunities related to training early and have a widespread effect.
- VI. Further, strengthening of linkages established with stakeholder agencies is needed to have a scaling up effect and sustain training-related outcomes.
- VII. The AF approach/model appears to be a preferred approach not only in terms of training of youth from low income groups, but also from its end goal of linking them to mainstream society and economy. It is also a preferred approach in terms of helping youth from marginal communities in the region by providing livelihood development opportunities and using cost-effective approaches. Therefore, the AF should rectify practical issues that surfaced during the implementation, if any, and in this evaluation before continuing the intervention.
- VIII. Financially, the AF has obtained support from the American Embassy in Colombo, which has frequently committed to supporting this type of intervention with a vision. If the positive impacts anticipated under the project are in line with its expectation, the AF may also approach other funding organizations to support the experiment in the future. However, if the AF is willing to continue, it should be done rather expediently to keep intact the community stimuli created by the project.
- IX. Result-based monitoring and evaluation, especially benefit monitoring (particularly training impacts on the livelihood systems of the trainees), is necessary for this kind of attempt at groundbreaking projects with multifaceted goals into the future. Such a system should include compiling and reporting of disaggregated data for relevant variables like percentage of trainees' participation by gender, activities engaged in after training, and income earned per period. Field staff should be trained to undertake aggregation of data and simple analysis for them to understand their own performance and to set new targets.

³ Practical gender needs are the needs of women or men that relate to responsibilities and tasks as associated with their traditional gender roles or to immediately perceived necessities. Responding to practical needs can improve quality of life, but does not challenge gender divisions or men's and women's position in the society. Strategic gender needs (SGNs) represent what women or men require in order to improve their position or status about each other.

- X. Finally, dropouts from the training (there were a few), should be closely examined to analyze the reasons for doing so and to further refine the project.

3. Annexe1 Project Progress

Result	Oct 2016	N o v	D e c	J a n	F e b	M a r	A p r	M a y	J u n e	J u l y	A u g	S e p	Oct 2017	Completion Date	Actual date
Project office was established														November 2016	October 2016
Staff members gained the fundamentals about project planning and implementation.														November 2016	November 2016
Raised awareness of target stakeholders														October and November 2016	October and November 2016
Raised awareness of target beneficiaries														October 2016 to July 2017	October 2016 to July 2017
Allocated Trainers for each training skill program														October and November 2016	October and November 2016
Allocated trainees for mobile phone repairing														November 2016	November 2016
Allocated trainees for beauty culture and hair dressing training														December 2016	December 2016
Allocated trainees for house wiring														December 2016	January 2017
Allocated trainees for sewing														March 2017	March 2017
Allocated trainees for														April 2017	April 2017

Dr. Dhanawardena Gamage

Dr. Dhanawardena Gamage retired from the government service a few years ago as the Deputy Director of Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute. For more than three decades he was a senior researcher attached to this institute. Also he has worked as a consultant to various multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, ADB and UNICEF etc. in addition to working for bilateral agencies such as AusAID, JBIC and JICA etc. International NGOs such as Transparency International and various others of the international corporate sector have hired him too.

Dr. Gamage studied for his B.A. and B. Phil at the Colombo University specializing in sociology and received his postgraduate diploma from the Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands. While his Master's degree is from University of Queensland in Australia he received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in the US in development sociology.