

## TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS FOR PLANNING STAFF IN THE BATTICALOA AND TRINCOMALEE DISTRICTS

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### ABSTRACT

Training is an important tool for the Human Resource Development in the any organization; hence most of the Government and non government organizations are investing certain percentage of their expenditure as a human capital. The objective of the paper is the Training needs analysis of the Planning staff at the Eastern Province to improve the quality and strengthen the capacity in order to utilize properly the available Coastal resources in the region.

Information collection regarding the training needs aspects by semi Structured questioners through participatory interview of all Divisional Planning Unit (DPUs) from Trincomalee and Batticaloa, the two districts of Eastern Province. For this information collection through personal visit has made to each of DPUs and met all ADPs, DOs DAs, and PAs at the Divisional, District and Provincial levels.

The semi- Structured questionnaire was covered Institutional overview (all DPUs), Tasks and Duties of the Planning staff at the DPU, types of training were received by them and expected training in general to strengthen their planning Capacity.

They have received numbers of training programmes in general but the implication of the training is questionable.

This paper will suggest proper recommendations to planners and the responsible authorities in order to utilize the resources through capacity development of the planning staff to improve the quality of the Communities in the region.

**Key words:** Planning staff, Training

## INTRODUCTION

Employee training is the process whereby people learn the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors needed in order to perform their job effectively (Tripathi P, 1991). Training is a tool to transfer skills and knowledge into the works. The planners are the key people for the any organization who make decisions about the current and future perspective of the markets, products, service to be rendered to the public.

### Aims of the Study

The aims of the Training needs analysis is to improve the quality and strengthen the capacity of the Planners at the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts in Eastern Province

### Specific objectives

- i) To identify the strengths of Human resources of the Planning Units and training needs of planning staff at the divisional, district and provincial level in the EP
- ii) Review and analyze existing human resource capacity for planning and the training needs of key staff engaged in planning, at the divisional, district and provincial level

## METHODOLOGY

Information collection regarding the training needs aspects by semi Structured questionnaires through participatory interview of all District Planning Units (DPU) in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts. For this, information collection through personal visit has made to each of DPUs and met all Assistant Directors of Planning (ADP), Development Officers (DO), Development Assistants (DA), and Programme Assistants (PA) at the Divisional, and District levels.

The semi- Structured questionnaires was covered Institutional overview (all DPUs), Tasks and Duties of the Planners at the DPU, types of training were received by planners and expected training in general to strengthen their planning Capacity, and potential trainees for the training Programme.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Institutional Overview

A total of 40 cadres were identified by planning staff surveyed in Trincomalee District, comprising eight designations engaged in 'planning'

at either the District or Divisional Level (Table 1). 85% of these cadre positions are filled, leaving only six vacancies (three ADP, a Development Coordinator (DC), a Programme Implementation Officers (PIO) and a Programme Assistants (PA) respectively) 66% of planning staff in the district are financed by the Central Government, while the balance 15 staffs who are all junior 'graduate' positions (i.e. DA or PA) are financed by the Provincial Government. Despite being financed by the Provincial Government, day to day management of DA and PA is undertaken by Central Government staff (e.g. DDP, ADP, DO).

Table 1. A summary of the Planning Staff in Trincomalee District

Designation	DDP	ADP	DO	DC	DA	PIO	PA	HRDA	Totals
Total Cadre	1 3%	6 15%	9 23%	3 8%	14 35%	1 3%	5 13%	1 3%	40
Living Cadre	1 3%	3 8%	9 24%	2 5%	13 34%		5 13%	1 3%	34
Financed by Central Govt.	1 100%	3 100%	9 100%	2 100%	3 23%			1 100%	19
Financed by Provincial Govt.					10 77%		5 100%		15

Source: Survey data, 2007

**Key:** DP - Director Planning; DDP - District Director Planning; ADP - Assistant Director Planning; DO - Development Officer; DA - Development Assistant; PLA - Planning Assistant; PIO - Planning Information Officer; PA - Programme Assistant; DC - Development Coordinator; HRDA - Human Resources Development Assistant; SDO - Social Development Officer; WDO - Women's Development Officer and STO - Science and Technology Officer.



In terms of the potential and actual strength of planning units in Trincomalee District (Table 2), the data reveals a strong concentration of planner at the District level. 48% of the potential (total cadre) and 56% of the actual (living cadre) are based in the District Secretary's Office in the Kachcheri.

**Table 2. Strength of 'planning units' in coastal DS Divisions and at the District level in Trincomalee District**

Total Cadre	Potential Planning Strength %	Institution	Living Cadre	Actual Planning Strength %
19	48	Kachcheri	19	56
1	03	Kuchchaveli	1	03
3	08	Town & Gravets	2	06
4	10	Thampalagamam	4	12
5	13	Kinniya	4	12
6	15	Muthur	3	09
2	05	Eachchalamapathai	1	03

Source: Survey data, 2007

Out of the six coastal DS Divisional Offices surveyed (i.e. Kuchchaveli, Town and Gravets, Thampalagamam, Kinniya, Muthur, and Eachchalamapathai<sup>1</sup>), Muthur and Kinniya had the highest number of planning cadre, with six and five designated planning staff (15% and 13% of the district's planning potential planning strength respectively). However due to planning staff vacancies in Muthur, Kinniya and Thampalagamam DS Divisional Offices had the highest number of actual planning staff, each representing 12% of the district's actual planning capacity in terms of staff. It is clear from Table 2 that the DS Offices in Kuchchaveli and Echchalamapathai are the weakest in terms of both potential and actual planning strength, each currently operating with only a single planning officer for the respective Division.

A total of 85 cadres were identified by planning staff surveyed in Batticaloa District, comprising thirteen designations engaged in 'planning' at either the District or Divisional Level (Table 3). 81% of these cadre positions were filled, leaving 16 vacancies (ten ADP, three DO, two DC and one DA respectively).

77% of planning staff in Batticaloa District are financed by the Central Government; while the balance 23% staffs who are recent graduates

(i.e. PA) is financed by the Provincial Government. Despite being financed by the Provincial Government, day to day management of PA in Divisional and District office in Batticaloa District is undertaken by Central Government staff (e.g. DP, DDP, ADP, DO).

Table 3. A summary of the planning staff in Batticaloa District

Designation	DP	DDP	ADP	DO	DC	DA	PLA	PA	HRDA	SDO	WDO	STO	Totals
Total Cadre	1 1%	1 1%	15 18%	10 12%	8 9%	21 25%	2 2%	23 27%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	85 81%
Living Cadre	1 1%	1 1%	5 7%	7 10%	6 9%	20 29%	2 3%	23 33%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	69 81%
Financed by Central Govt.	1 100%	1 100%	5 100%	7 100%	6 100%	20 100%	2 100%	0 0%	1 100%	1 100%	1 100%	1 100%	46 33%
Financed by Provincial Govt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23 100%	0	0	0	0	23 33%

In terms of the potential and actual strength of planning units surveyed in Batticaloa District (Table 3), the data revealed a relatively even distribution of planning staff throughout the district. The Kachcheri, not surprisingly had the highest number of planning staff (both in terms of Total and Living cadre), but only accounted for 18% of the potential planning capacity and 16% of the actual planning cadre in Batticaloa District.

Of the eleven coastal DS Divisional Offices surveyed (Table 4) the planning staff in Korali Pattu West, Eravur, Chenkalady each accounted for 10% of the potential and actual planning staff capacity in the District. The Divisional Planning Units in Kaluwanchikudy, Manmunai North, Kathankudy and Manmunai Pattu demonstrated similarly strengths in the number of cadre positions filled. In terms of planning staff available to engage in planning activities at the DS Divisional level, the DS offices in Vaharai, Valachenai and Korali South registered as the weakest in the Batticaloa District.

**Table 4. Strength of 'planning units' in coastal DS Divisions and at the District level in Trincomalee District**

Total Cadre	Potential Planning Strength %	Institution	Living Cadre	Actual Planning Strength %
15	18	Kachcheri - B	11	16
3	04	Vaharai	2	03
4	05	Valachenai	3	04
8	10	Korali Pattu West	7	10
5	06	Korali Pattu Central	3	04
6	07	Korali South	4	06
8	10	Eravur	7	10
8	10	Chenkalady	7	10
6	07	Kaluwanchikudy	6	09
7	08	Manmunai North	6	09
7	08	Kathankudy	6	09
6	07	Manmunai Pattu	5	07

Hence, the strengths of planning units Batticaloa District is better than Trincomalee

### Planning Tasks and activities

In response to questions relating to the planning tasks and Activities, planning staff from six coastal DS Divisions and the Kachcheri in Trincomalee District listed 52 individual tasks and activities associated with 'planning' at the Divisional and District level. These tasks were coded each of these responses into five categories depending on the nature of the task or activity described (Table 5).



**Table 5. Categories and frequency of tasks and activities identified by planning staff in Trincomalee District.**

Tasks and Activities	KACHT	KUCH	T&G	TAMP	KINN	MUTH	EACH	Totals
1 Administration	2	1						3
2 Coordination	2		2	2	4	2	1	13
3 Data Collection and Analysis	5	1	2	2	2	2	2	16
4 Monitoring and Evaluation			1		1	1		3
5 Project Management	1	1	3	3	4	4	1	17
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>52</b>

**Key:** KACH T - Kachcheri Trincomalee; T&G- Town and Graven;  
KUCH - Kuchchaveli; TAMP - Thampalagamam; KINN - Kinniya; MUTH - Muthur; EACH - Eachchalamapathai

According to staff attached to the planning units at the Divisional and District level in Trincomalee District, the most common tasks and activities undertaken by planning staff are related to Project Management (33%). These included:

1. Preparation of Concept Paper for Projects and other agencies
2. Preparation of Project Proposals
3. Preparation of Village Development Plans
4. Involvement with the work of other line Ministries such as Relief, Rehabilitation and Relocation
5. Implementation of other special projects connected to Mahinda Chinthana
6. Implementation of Disaster Management works
7. Implementation Cultural and Environmental works

Tasks related to data collection and analysis accounted for a further 31% of activities engaged in by planning staff. These include:

1. Data collection and recording of all relevant dates for planning
2. Data collection to prepare Statistical Handbook for the DS
3. Preparation and updating the Resource Profile for the district
4. Preparation and publication of the crop production plan of the District

Coordination activities represented a further 25% of the tasks and activities engaged in by planning staff. These included:

1. Conducting Divisional Coordinate Committee Meeting
2. Coordinating Divisional Agriculture Committee meeting

3. Coordinating others Ministries Development works
4. Coordinating NGOs and other foreign funded Projects
5. Coordinating the Divisional Planning Committee
6. Coordination of all planning activities of the Trincomalee District

It was interesting to note that planning staff in DS Divisions in Trincomalee District at the DS Divisional and District level failed to identify any tasks or activities that could be considered as relating to 'planning', at either the Divisional or District level.

In response to questions relating to the planning tasks and Activities, planning staff from eleven coastal DS Divisions and the Kachcheri in Batticaloa District listed 106 individual tasks and activities associated with 'planning' at the Divisional and District level. These tasks and activities were coded each of these responses into eight categories depending on the nature of the task or activity described (Table 6).

**Table 6. Categories and frequency of tasks and activities identified by planning staff in Batticaloa District.**

Tasks and Activities	KACH T	VAH	VAL	KPW	KPC	KS	ERV	CHK	KWK	MN	KAT	MP	Totals
PM		2	3	2	2	3	7	3	2	2	2	6	34
Coord	2	2	2	3	2	4	1	2	3	3	3	2	29
DC/A	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	23
Planning		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	9
M&E								1	1		1	1	4
Admin	1					1							2
Training						1				1			2
Other				1				1	1				3
Grand Total	5	6	7	10	7	12	11	9	9	10	8	12	106

**Key:** KACH B - Kachcheri Batticaloa; VAH - Vaharai; VAL - Valachenai; KPW - Korali Pattu West; KPC - Korali Pattu Central; KS - Korali South; ERV - Eravur; CHK - Chenkalady; KWK - Kaluwanchikudy; MN - Manmunai North; KAT - Kathankudy; MP - Manmunai Pattu



According to staff attached to the planning units at the Divisional and District level in Batticaloa District, the most common tasks and activities undertaken by planning staff are related to Project Management (32%). These included:

1. Implementation of government development works including DCB
2. Involvement in implementation of foreign funded projects
3. Involving in 180 days programme
4. Preparation of project progress reports
5. Preparation of village development plans
6. Participating in project reviews
7. Proposals writing for foreign funded projects / infrastructure / housing
8. Implementation of special ministry projects (Mahinda Chinthana)
9. Supporting implementation of other special projects of agencies

Coordination tasks and activities represented a further 27% of the tasks and activities engaged in by planning staff in Batticaloa District. These included:

1. Catering to special projects of agencies
2. Coordinating divisional day meetings
3. Coordinating other line ministries
4. Coordinating progress review meetings
5. Coordinating all divisional works
6. Coordinating all NGOs and INGOs
7. Coordinating DCC meetings
8. Coordinating foreign funded projects (NERP, NECCDEP, NECORD)
9. Coordination of other line ministry works
10. Identifying and informing the projects to stakeholders
11. Organizing cultivations meetings
12. Tsunami related works

Tasks related to data collection and analysis accounted for a further 22% of activities engaged in by planning staff. These comprised only four main tasks:

1. Collecting data from GN Officers
2. Preparation of crop production report
3. Preparing resource profile
4. Preparing statistical handbook

Only one planning task was identified by planning staff in DS Divisions in Batticaloa District (8%) as a 'main task and activity' engaged in by planners at the DS Divisional level. This was the 'preparation and implementation of the divisional work plan'.

### Training Received and Requested

**Training Received:** Planning staff from six coastal DS Divisions and the Kachcheri in Trincomalee identified a total of 19 training programmes, which planning staff had participated in the last 18 months (See Table 7). The frequently type of training received was related to computer training (26%), closely followed by office management, project management and specialist sector training (21%).

**Table 7. Types of training received by planning staff in Trincomalee District.**

Institution	KACH T	KUCH	T&G	TAMP	KINN	MUTH	EACH	Totals
<b>Type of Training Received</b>								
1 Computer	1			1		2	1	5
2 Office Management			1		2	1		4
3 Project Management			2	1	1			4
4 Specialist Sector			1	2		1		4
5 Language (English)	1				1			2
Totals	2	0	4	4	4	4	1	19

A little over a quarter of all trainees were PA (26%), while a further 26% of trainees were ADPs. Two training institutions, Management Department of Training and Development (MDTD) and Sri Lanka Institute Development administration (SLIDA), delivered over 85% of the training programmes in which the planning staff participated (eight programmes and seven programmes respectively). Four other service providers (i.e. CATREP, Ministry, Provincial Council and SCSL) each provided a single training programme.

Participants considered the majority of training programmes to have been satisfactory (68%), while two were considered 'excellent' (both conducted by MDTD) and four were 'poor'.

**Training Requested:** Planning staff from six coastal DS Divisions and the Kachcheri in Trincomalee requested a total of 33 training programmes, representing seven categories of training (See Table 8). No strong

preference for particular types of training were expressed by planning staff surveyed, with computer training, project management and planning training (18%) and language and specialist sector training all being relative strongly requested.

**Table 8. Types of training requested by planning staff in Trincomalee District.**

Institution	KACH T	KUCH	T&G	TAMP	KINN	MUTH	EACH	Totals
<b>Type of Training Requested</b>								
1 Computer	1	2		1		1	1	6
2 Project Management	2			1	1	2		6
3 Planning	1			1	3		1	6
4 Language		1		1		2	1	5
5 Specialist Sector			2	1	1		1	5
6 Office Management			2	1	1			4
7 Monitoring and Evaluation	1							1
Totals	5	3	4	6	6	5	4	33

When asked to identify the type of planning staff most in need of the training described above, respondents recommended that future training should target PA (33%), followed by DA (22%) and DO (17%).

**Training Received:** Planning staff from eleven coastal DS Divisions and the Kachcheri in Batticaloa identified a total of 55 training programmes, which planning staff had participated in, in the last 18 months (Table 9). The most frequent type of training received was related to Project Management (38%), followed by Office Management training (20%) and Planning training (18%).

Almost of third of those who had received training was PA (29%), while DC received 22% of training, ADP 19% and DA 17%. Two training institutions, MDTD and SLIDA, delivered over 70% of the training programmes in which the planning staff participated (22 programmes and 16 programmes respectively). Eleven other service providers (e.g. CIRM, ACLG, GTZ, ILO, PPS) delivered one or two training programmes each. Participants considered the majority of training programmes to have been satisfactory (80%), while nine were considered 'excellent' (six of which were conducted by MDTD).



**Table 9. Types of training received by planning staff in Batticaloa District.**

Institution	Totals												
	KACHT	VAH	VAL	KPW	KPC	KS	ERV	CHK	KWK	MN	KAT	MP	
<b>Type of Training Received</b>													
Project Management	1	4	1	1	1	3	1	1	4	2	1	2	21
Office Management	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	11
Planning		2	1			1	1		1	1			10
Computer	1						1			1	1	1	4
Specialist Sector	1										1	1	3
Other						2			1	2	1		6
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>55</b>

**Training Requested:** Planning staff from eleven coastal DS Divisions and the Kachcheri in Batticaloa requested a total of 52 training programmes, representing seven categories of training (Table 10). Planning expressed a strong preference for further training in Project Management (38%) and computer training (19%). Planners also expressed a preference for English language training (17%) and for training in planning (14%).

**Table 10. Types of training requested by planning staff in Batticaloa District.**

Institution	KACH T	VAH	VAL	KPW	KPC	KS	ERV	CHK	KWK	MN	KAT	MP	Totals
Type of Training Requested													
Project Management	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	2	1	3	1	20
Computer		1		1	1	2		1	1	1	1	1	10
Language (English)		1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Planning	1		2	1			1	1			1		7
Data Collection / Analysis	1		1										2
Specialist Sector	1		1										2
Office Management							1						1
other			1										1
Grand Total	4	3	6	5	3	3	6	6	4	3	6	3	52

When asked to identify the category of planning staff most in need of the training described above, respondents recommended that future training should target PA (25%), followed by DC (21%) and DA (17%).

## CONCLUSIONS

The strengths of the planning units are low in general, particularly Eachchalamapathai and Kuchcheveli in Trincomalee Vaharai, Valaichenai and Koralai south in the Batticaloa District are weakest planning units in Eastern Province.

The planners are involved with Project Management, data collection & analysis and coordination of others activities. They are not actually involved in short, medium and long term planning tasks. Most of the planning staff has undergone training but the impact and implementations of training is at poor level at the Divisional and District levels. More than half of the training received by staff from Planning Units was non - planning training. They also have requested training programme directly connected with planning and non - planning tasks.

Top management of the Provincial and central government has to develop general criteria to select trainees for the appropriate training programmes and ensure the relevance of the training. These training should be evaluated properly with a time frame and give feedback to the trainees and the training providing organizations which definitely will assist future development in training programmes formulation.

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