



**International Labour Organization**

**Enterprise for Pro-Poor Growth Project**

# **Impact Assessment on the Enterprise Culture Component**

**(Final Report)**

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## Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Objectives of the impact assessment of the enterprise culture component	6
2. Methodology	7
2.1 Conceptual approach	7
2.2 Methods	8
2.3 Limitations	10
3. Impact of <i>Palama</i> theatre performances on attitudes towards enterprise	11
3.1 The idea of starting/running one's own enterprise	11
3.2 View of business people in the community	14
3.3 Role of business people in the community	17
3.4 View of business people in the district	19
3.5 Business as a future livelihood option	20
3.6 Views on gender dimensions of business	24
3.7 Views on ethnic dimensions of business	27
4. Impact of <i>Palama</i> theatre performances on behaviour relating to enterprise	29
5. The Process impact of <i>Palama</i> theatre performances	32
5.1 Overall assessment of <i>Palama</i>	32
5.2 Participation by the audience	34
5.3 Messages from <i>Palama</i>	36
5.4 Responses to <i>Palama</i>	38
6. The impact of <i>Palama</i> relative to other enterprise development programmes	41
7. The impact of the Entrepreneurial Studies course	43
7.1 Institutional Issues	43
7.2 Assessment by teachers	45
7.3 Assessment by students	46
8. Overall changes in the enterprise culture of the districts	51
8.1 Attitudes towards enterprise and business people	51
8.2 Changes in the enterprise culture of the district	54
8.3 Contribution of the Enter-Growth Project towards these changes	55
8.4 Proposed improvements to enhance the enterprise culture in the districts	56
9. Conclusions	57
10. Recommendations	64
Appendix 1: Identification of case studies	67
Appendix 2: Interview schedule for assessment of <i>Palama</i> theatre performances	77
Appendix 3: Interview schedule for assessment of the Entrepreneurial Studies Course	84
Appendix 4: Interview schedule for Focus Groups of Influencers and Entrepreneurs on changes in the enterprise culture of the district	85

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The Enterprise for Pro-poor Growth project supports the Government of Sri Lanka's strategy for poverty reduction and generation of quality employment for women and men through an integrated micro and small enterprise development programme. It targets four districts with a high incidence of poverty, Kurunegala, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Puttalam. The project also addresses enterprise-related issues at the national level that will enhance impact in the provinces and transfers lessons learnt to the national policy level.

The project takes a participatory and inclusive approach to planning and developing its specific interventions, to ensure a high degree of relevance and ownership. In addition to supporting the expansion of access of micro and small enterprises to markets for their products and services, and improving their policy and regulatory environment, the project also promotes the strengthening of enterprise culture. This includes a social marketing campaign that proposes enterprise as a way out of poverty. It also provides support to improving business awareness training in vocational and secondary school curricula.

Micro Small Enterprise (MSE) Forums for public-private dialogue have been formed in each of the Districts to guide the project's work and overall MSE development in the Districts. These Forums are a cornerstone of the project's approach, based on dialogue with and between stakeholders. The LOCA (Participatory Appraisal of Competitive Advantage) methodology and a value chain development methodology have also been introduced to identify and address constraints on business growth for poverty reduction and decent work.

Under the enterprise culture component of the project, an in-depth assessment of values, norms and attitudes in relation to business was carried out in all four districts at inception. The results of this socio-cultural assessment<sup>1</sup> were used in the design of the social marketing campaign based on the "forum theatre" concept and in supporting the revision of secondary school curricula in collaboration with the National Institute of Education in Sri Lanka.

The *Palama* ("Bridge") theatre campaign was designed in the first half of 2006 and piloted by the Polonnaruwa Palama group later that year. Subsequently three other theatre groups were established in the project districts, each recruiting young actors and actresses, primarily from villages within the district. Each theatre group has around 15-20 members with an artistic leader and a business manager<sup>2</sup>. The *Palama* theatre groups perform two types of plays: an inspirational/exemplary "performance theatre" play with a happy ending that conveys a positive message on improving one's life through enterprise; and a "forum theatre" play with a tragic ending where spectators are invited to prevent the sad consequences of the play by stepping into the role of an actor, who is oppressed by the situation confronting him/her. Participants are encouraged to change the attitudes and views expressed by an oppressed character in the play and through the character provide alternative solutions to the issues and problems depicted in the play. The performance and forum theatre plays are performed consecutively, interspersed with inspirational song and dance variations that add entertainment value, as well as convey

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<sup>1</sup> Reinprecht, K. and N.Weeratunge. 2006. Design of a strategy to promote enterprise culture in Sri Lanka: Socio-cultural assessment results: Colombo: ILO. The report can be accessed at [www.entergrowth.com](http://www.entergrowth.com).

<sup>2</sup> The Polonnaruwa group is no longer under contract by the Enter-Growth project, as all its activities have been completed. It is now registered as a business in its own right and performed its first full-length play in Polonnaruwa town in April 2008.

business messages and provide information on sponsorship of the initiative. The scripts performed by the groups are based on local narratives and experiences. Forum theatre advocates propose that the active participation of spectators called upon to imagine themselves in the role of familiar characters, stimulates thinking on alternative options and bring about changes in beliefs and attitudes, by questioning long cherished norms and values<sup>3</sup>.

Approximately 114 performances were held by the *Palama* group of Polonnaruwa district between 2006 and 2007, covering all of the D.S. divisions of that district. The Puttalam group has done about 47 performances, primarily in two D.S. Divisions. Performances are reported to draw audiences ranging from around 150 to 700. Average audience size is around 300-350. A performance is typically attended by people from two or more villages/GN divisions.

The Polonnaruwa group had developed eight scripts, of which three were of the performance/inspirational category and five were forum/tragic plays. The Puttalam group has developed six scripts – three each of the performance and forum categories respectively. Of the repertoire of the Polonnaruwa group, the most frequently performed scripts were *Mahadenamutta*, an inspirational play based on a comic character from folklore, *Saebaevu sihinya* (“Dream come true”), another exemplary play about a young man who develops his business by starting as a street trader of underwear and *Isuru soya* (“In search of wealth”), a tragic story of a woman who goes to the Middle East for work. The Puttalam group performs four scripts regularly: of the inspirational category they perform *Simon malsalawa* (“Simon Florists”), a humorous story revolving around a carpenter who becomes a coffin maker and *Piyumige meekiri* (“Piyumi’s Curd”) of a young couple developing a curd business; of the forum scripts, they most frequently perform *Katheringe sihinaya* (“Katherine’s dream”), a tragic story about a woman cloth trader and *Ithali mulawa* (“Italy Trap”), about the misfortunes that befall a young man who sells his family’s cows to go to Italy.

The scripts have been developed and written by the groups themselves. As they originate from the two districts, the actors are very familiar with rural life on a day-to-day basis. The scripts are thus acted out skilfully in local idiom, very much locally grounded and culturally appropriate. The dialogues mostly follow the conventions of rural speech and are generally humorous, providing good entertainment to the audience. The business development message is amalgamated into familiar social themes, such as poverty, indebtedness, alcoholism, generational and gender issues. While the scripts of the Polonnaruwa group were all in the Sinhalese language, the Puttalam group developed bi-lingual scripts in Sinhalese and Tamil, as appropriate for that more ethnically diverse district.

The Entrepreneurial Studies course supported by the project and developed together with the National Institute of Education was introduced by the Ministry of Education as a Year 10/11 subject at the GCE “Ordinary” level in 2007 throughout the island. It includes modules on definitions of entrepreneurship, characteristics of entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial environment, business ideas, pricing, shares, and book-keeping. It is being taught in some of the schools in the four project districts<sup>4</sup>. In Polonnaruwa and Puttalam district many schools that begun the subject have discontinued teaching it by 2008. In addition to this course, a module on entrepreneurship has been incorporated into the Business Studies subject at “Advanced” level from 2008.

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<sup>3</sup> Hakemulder, F. 2007. Forum theatre effects on beliefs about business. Colombo: ILO. This study compared attitudes to business in the *Palama* audience before and after the show, as well as with a control group that had not seen the show. The report can be accessed at [www.entergrowth.com](http://www.entergrowth.com).

<sup>4</sup> The zonal education offices of both Polonnaruwa and Chilaw have little information on the number of schools and students who have taken this subject last year and/or who continue to take this subject.

## 1.2 Objectives of the impact assessment of the enterprise culture component

The overall objective of the impact assessment on enterprise culture was to find out qualitatively whether the Enter-Growth project has been able to change norms, values and attitudes towards enterprise in the four districts that it was implemented. For practical reasons, the assessment was confined to two districts, Polonnaruwa and Puttalam. It has to be kept in mind at the outset that changing cultural norms and values, which attitudes and behaviour are based on, is a long-term process and what can be assessed qualitatively, immediately at project completion will be somewhat limited.

The main focus of the assessment was on these specific objectives:

- Assess the impact of the social marketing campaign (*Palama* theatre performances) and the Entrepreneurial Studies course<sup>5</sup> on the norms, values and attitudes of the target population and those who affect their decision-making as they relate to enterprise.
- Identify cases where enterprises have been started (behavioural change) or improved as a result of *Palama*, as qualitative evidence that such impact is being achieved.

Results of the quantitative quasi-experimental impact study<sup>6</sup> on the social marketing campaign (*Palama* theatre performances) in Polonnaruwa district were used in the overall analysis of impact of the culture component. Thus, the main effort of the qualitative assessment was concentrated on the impact of *Palama* at the village level and on the Entrepreneurial Studies course at district level. Moreover, district level meetings with influencers and entrepreneurs were held to get their feedback on changes they perceived in the overall enterprise culture of the district since project inception.

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<sup>5</sup> In the TOR it was envisaged to incorporate the impacts of the Know About Business (KAB) module introduced in the curricula of vocational training institutions, as part of the overall assessment of the enterprise culture component of the project. However, as a final report on the findings of the tracer study of KAB trainees was not available at the time of writing, this could not be done.

<sup>6</sup> Hakemulder, F. 2007. *Ibid.*

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Conceptual approach**

The methodological approach followed was to determine whether changes have occurred in people's norms, values attitudes and behaviour, and whether these can be plausibly linked to the interventions in enterprise culture by the project. The baseline for comparison was the 2006 socio-cultural assessment<sup>7</sup>, which was done at the beginning of the project. However, as that was a rather complex exercise, a streamlined version of the tool kit previously used to assess the enterprise culture (focusing on the norms, values and attitudes of entrepreneurs, influencers and school leavers as potential starters) of the project area were also used to assess impact, encompassing a number of qualitative indicators. Moreover, a number of process indicators were added to assess how participants experienced the *Palama* theatre performance and the entrepreneurial studies course, to supplement the original tool kit.

In assessing the impact, it is necessary to establish to the extent possible, that the changes took place primarily as a result of the enterprise culture component of the project. The baseline was considered as the results of the socio-cultural assessment conducted at the inception of the project. However, as most of the villages had experienced activities by other projects and programmes related to livelihood improvement, micro-finance and business development, during the last three years, the impact of the project's social marketing campaign has to be understood within this rubric of activities. It was originally intended that two of the villages selected would be exposed to *Palama* activities only while two villages would be exposed to other Enter-Growth activities, such as value chain improvement in sectors with competitive advantage - to examine how effective these activities were in bringing about changes in norms, values and attitudes, as well. One of these two was envisaged to be a village where both *Palama* and other Enter-Growth activities took place to explore the possibilities of synergies between the various components of the project. Since value chain improvement took place at the district level based on district level business associations, it was difficult to identify one single village with sufficient entrepreneurs to interview. However, in each district, at least one village was selected where entrepreneurs who had been exposed to other Enter-Growth activities could be included in the impact assessment, some of whom had seen the *Palama* performance and others who had not.

#### **Impact and process indicators**

A common set of qualitative impact and process indicators were used with all respondents at district and village level. The main impact indicators being assessed were:

- (1) A more positive attitude towards entrepreneurs/business people
- (2) A more positive attitude towards women entrepreneurs
- (3) More openness to business as a livelihood option, especially among youth

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<sup>7</sup> Reinprecht and Weeratunge. 2006. *Ibid.*

To obtain data for these indicators, open-ended questions were asked relating to the idea of starting one's own business, views of business people in the village and the district, perceptions of women and different ethnic groups running enterprises, and career choices for self or children (depending on the age of the respondent).

The overall impact indicator and target for the enterprise culture component of the project was: "The number of women and men, including youth and officials, who consider enterprise an attractive way to make a living increases by 20 percent among those who have participated in project initiated activities to promote enterprise culture." While this study was qualitative and thus not able to provide statistically valid data, it attempted to explore the magnitude of change in attitude that might have taken place.

A common set of process indicators were also used, both for assessing the *Palama* theatre performances, as well as the Entrepreneurial Studies Course. These were:

- (1) Level of participation
- (2) Interpretation of message
- (3) Level of response

For data on the process indicators, open-ended questions were asked about the decision to attend the performance/course, whether respondents performed or had ideas to present, overall view of the performance/course, aspects they liked or disliked what they considered the main message and what respondents did, following the performance/course (The detailed interview schedules are attached in Appendix 2, 3 and 4).

## **2.2 Methods**

The primary methods used were open-ended individual interviews and focus group discussions. Participant observation was used to assess the *Pulathisi Navodaya* Business Development Fair at Polonnaruwa district.

### **District level**

Locations for district-level assessments were the district capitals of Polonnaruwa and Puttalam. Altogether four focus group discussions, with a total of 27 participants, were held in the two towns for assessing the overall impact of the enterprise culture component – one each for entrepreneurs and influencers. Entrepreneurs who participated were members of business/trade associations, representing different sectors of industry, including those who had participated in LOCA exercises and value chain development. Influencers were representatives of government and private sector institutions, as well as NGOs, involved in BDS programmes within the district. The majority of participants were male, apart from a single female representative at each of the focus group discussions, excluding the Polonnaruwa meeting of entrepreneurs, who were entirely male.

Four focus group discussions were also held in schools that were teaching or had taught the Entrepreneurial Studies course – two each in the two districts. The two schools selected in Polonnaruwa were both Sinhalese medium - one urban and one rural school. The majority of students who had taken the course, as well as participated in the focus group discussions were girls. In Puttalam, the two schools were Tamil medium, both urban schools – one Tamil and one Muslim. No rural schools were teaching the Entrepreneurial Studies course in Puttalam district. The majority of students who had taken the course and participated in the discussions were girls in the English medium of the Muslim school, as well as the Tamil school. In the Tamil medium of the Muslim school, the course had been taken entirely by boys. In the rural school in



Polonnaruwa the majority of students came from farming families, with a minority in self-employment and private sector employment. In the urbanized school, the parents of students had a range of occupations, including micro-enterprise/self-employment, farming, government and private sector employment. In the Puttalam schools too, the family backgrounds of students were varied; parents' occupations included employment in the private and government sectors, business/self-employment, fishing and overseas migrant employment.

### **Village level**

Altogether 8 villages where *Palama* theatre performances took place were selected in the two districts – four from each district. An effort was made to select the villages with diverse economic activities and ethnic populations<sup>8</sup>.

In Polonnaruwa district the *Palama* programme commenced in late 2006 and had been completed; thus, villages were selected from those which had seen the plays nine months to 1.5 years ago. The villages were Sri Nissankamallapura in Thamankaduwa D.S. Division, Viharagama in Medirigiriya D.S. division, Millana in Dimbulagala D.S. Division and Kumaragama in Hingurakgoda D.S. Division. All are Sinhalese Buddhist rice-farming villages, apart from Sri Nissankamallapura whose inhabitants do not own paddy fields and are thus casual labourers in neighbouring landed villages or engaged in enterprises. In Kumaragama there were considerable households engaged in the cultivation of ornamental plants, in addition to paddy farming. In Kumaragama and the neighbouring Siriketha village, several entrepreneurs who were members of the Ornamental Plant Association that Enter-Growth has supported through the Agrarian Services department, were interviewed.

In Puttalam district *Palama* performances had commenced only in later December 2007 and two D.S. divisions had been covered completely, so villages where performances had been held at least three months ago were selected from these two divisions. They were Kusalai (a Tamil village with shrimp farming and coconut cultivation as the main economic activities) and Veherakele (a Sinhalese Buddhist farming village, growing leafy vegetables and bananas) in the Aracchitkattuwa D.S. Division, as well as Ambakandawila (a Sinhalese Catholic coastal fishing village) and Tissogama (a mixed Tamil and Sinhalese farming village) in Chilaw D.S. Division. In Veherakele several entrepreneurs, who belonged to the Leafy Vegetable Association that Enter-Growth had supported through the Small Enterprises Development Division (SEDD) of the Ministry of Youth Affairs were included.

In each village qualitative open-ended interviews were done with an indicative sample of five categories of respondents, the majority of whom had seen the theatre performances.<sup>9</sup> These were influencers (community leaders, priests, school principals/senior teachers), non-entrepreneurs (farmers, fishers, wage labourers, state sector employees), youth (between 14-20 years of age, both school going and school-leavers), entrepreneurs and starters after *Palama* (SAP). It was envisaged to do interviews with ten respondents per village covering these different categories, representing both genders equally and totalling around 80. Altogether 87 interviews were conducted.

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<sup>8</sup> In the predominantly Sinhalese Polonnaruwa district, the group had primarily performed in Sinhalese villages. In Puttalam district the group has so far only performed in two predominantly Sinhalese DS divisions and is yet to move into divisions with higher proportion of Muslim and Tamil populations. However, the assessment team was able to include one Tamil and one Sinhala Catholic village in the study.

<sup>9</sup> The exceptions were three entrepreneurs in Kumaragama who had not seen the performance but were included in the sample to explore the impact of other Enter-Growth activities and one entrepreneur in Sri Nissankamallapura who was influenced positively by the *Palama* message conveyed through neighbours and subsequent visits by the theatre group, although he had not seen the performance.

**Table 1: Profile of respondents by district, category and gender**

Category	Polonnaruwa District			Puttalam District			Both districts		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Influencer	3	2	5	4	2	6	7	4	11
Non-entrepreneur	3	8	11	8	8	16	11	16	27
Youth	5	3	8	5	5	10	10	8	18
Entrepreneur	7	8	15	5	6	11	12	14	26
SAP	2	2	4	1	0	1	3	2	5
All	20	23	43	23	21	44	43	44	87

Approximately 50% of the respondents were from each of the two districts and of the two genders. There were almost an equal proportion of entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (30%); approximately 21% of the sample was youth, 13% influencers and 6% starters after *Palama*. Males were more predominant among influencers, while females were more predominant among non-entrepreneurs. Among the other categories, the male: female ratio was more balanced.

### 2.3 Limitations

This is a qualitative assessment of the impact of the social marketing campaign (*Palama* theatre performances) and the Entrepreneurial Studies course aimed at changing values and attitudes towards business. As such, it has the limitations of all qualitative studies. As the sample of respondents from each of the two districts is small and not necessarily representative of all those who attended performances as a whole, all findings are only **indicative** (not representative) of the perceptions and views of those had attended the performances. Finding influencers who had seen the performance proved to be difficult in the field. Additionally, in Polonnaruwa district, male respondents who were non-entrepreneurs and who had seen the performance were difficult to find because it was the period of preparing paddy-fields for cultivation.

The assessment aimed at getting depth, in terms of respondents' attitudes towards business and entrepreneurs, as well as the process of the performance, rather than breadth. All figures in the assessment are thus not statistically valid but merely indicate majority and minority views and trends, and are primarily used in lieu of the terms "most", "few" and "some". The differences among districts discussed in this analysis are important only where the findings can be corroborated from other sources, such as the previous Socio-cultural Assessment of 2006. This study could not assess impact on different ethnic groups in any conclusive manner as the performances have so far been held mostly in Sinhala villages.

### 3. Impact of *Palama* performances on attitudes towards enterprise

Results for the indicators used to assess impact of the *Palama* performances on attitudes revealed a largely positive trend. Significant majorities of respondents were positive about the idea of starting/running a business, in their views towards business people and their role within their communities, and about women engaging in business. While the preference for government white-collar jobs as a career option for youth/children remained high, openness to business as a livelihood option has increased significantly both among youth and parents, relative to the findings of the socio-cultural assessment and national youth surveys. Awareness of business people in the district (beyond their own village) was low, and of those who held views, these were largely negative. While ethnic stereotypes about skill in business had changed considerably in Puttalam district for the positive, these had changed somewhat negatively in Polonnaruwa district.

#### 3.1 The idea of starting/running one's own enterprise

The overwhelming majority (79%) of respondents were positive about the idea of starting or running (existing entrepreneurs) one's own business. Slightly more respondents were positive in Polonnaruwa than in Puttalam. There were slightly more respondents from Puttalam who saw both advantages and disadvantages in doing business. In both districts significantly more women (91%) were positive about the idea of running one's own business than men (67%). The overwhelming majority (94%) of youth respondents were positive about this idea. The majority (80%) of starters after *Palama* were positive. More non-entrepreneurs (81%) than entrepreneurs (69%) were positive about starting/running one's own business.

The main reasons offered were that running one's own business gives independence from an employer and provides a constant cash flow in one's hands. It was important not to be a burden to anyone and this was possible if one could earn money through business. Business was also seen to give self-satisfaction.

*It is a good thing to run your own business. It has many benefits. You have money in your hands all the time. You get money to cover household expenditure. You are not under the control of anybody. I do not think that there are disadvantages in doing business. It has only advantages.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*You do not have to work under anybody. You are the boss of your own business. If you do other jobs you have no freedom. Whatever the money you earn is all yours. If you have the talents you can easily improve the business. The other important thing is self satisfaction. There are no disadvantages.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*I like the idea of doing business very much. It is a good thing. You can earn profit and always have some money in your hands. You do not have to owe any money to anybody. Then you are not a burden to anybody. I don't see any disadvantages.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*Doing business is good because you can earn some money. You get benefits. If you buy clothes worth 1000 rupees, you can earn 1500 rupees by selling those. If you make string hoppers and sell at the boutique, you can earn some money. You do not have to owe any money to anybody in order to live. (Female, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*You can come up in life without the help of others when you do business. You can have your own place and you will be the master of your organization. (Male, Tamil Hindu Youth, Puttalam)*

Working from home and flexibility with the time framework were highly valued.

*It is a good idea to do business. If you do a job, you have to go where they want you to. If it's my business I can do what I want. I am not under anybody. I can start small and develop. There is a good demand for our chilli powder. The only problem I face is there are labour shortages here and people often do not have sufficient knowledge – I'm the only one who can operate the grinding mill here. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*It is good to do business - you have freedom and it will help you to improve your life. If there is an emergency situation you can close the shop and go; you can come whenever you like and start. There are no disadvantages. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*There are many sides to it. I had an opportunity to go do a job but decided against it. There is independence in doing business. You don't work under anybody. We can develop something of our own. I like my family. If you do a job, you have more expenses – they are more clothes to buy and iron. I can stay with my family. I'm with my children all the time. There are so many advantages to doing business successfully. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)*

It was also pointed out that profit from business helped in running a household, provided sufficient resources to pay for the education of children and that it was better than any other work in providing adequate income to meet one's expenses.

*Generally you can get some profit from business - you can find money for household expenditure and for your children's education. Money that you earn from other jobs is not enough to cover all these. I don't see any disadvantages. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*It is a very useful thing to do business. You can look after your family. Other people can get help from business people. You can help each other. If you have a business you can build a nice house of your own. If you have other jobs cannot do such things because you do not earn much money. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*According to the current economic situation of the country, it is good to do a business of your own. Money that we earn from other jobs is not enough to live; you can earn more money from a business than from any other job. It has economic advantages and it has no specific disadvantages. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

Some respondents pointed out that business could provide challenges of managing losses, and receiving and giving credit but they were confident of meeting these challenges with their strength, courage and intelligence.

*I think business is the most appropriate thing to do in the present situation. You are not under the control of anybody. You can improve using your own strength. You face challenges. But you have to expect both benefits and problems. If you have a good plan, you can face the problems you might have and do better business. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*It's good for one's future to do business. It's good to have something of one's own. You can face whatever problems you encounter. You will not face any money problems. There are very few disadvantages – for instance, some people might have to take loans and credit might not be easy to get. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*It is good to do business. If you work as a wage labourer you have to work under somebody. And you have to work in the hot sun. If you run a business you are more independent and you always have to use your brain. You should not sell things on credit because the business can collapse. If you have taken any loans you must pay them on time without delays. Otherwise it affects your business. There are no big disadvantages. You can give very little on credit just to catch the customers. I worked as a housemaid in Kuwait for six years and also did a business providing string hoppers and hoppers for Sri Lankan hostels and Indian restaurants. I saved all that money and bought land and built a house for my daughter. Now I'm doing the same business in this village and earn 700 rupees a day. I built a small house for me to live alone and bought furniture from my earnings here, without bothering my children. I always encourage other people to do something of their own. If you have courage and strength you can do anything. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

The disadvantages mentioned were the lack of capital to start and having to face losses if the business does not succeed. Entrepreneurs especially referred to the current economic situation of the country as non-conducive to doing business.

*It is good to do business but first we must see whether one can really start a business - whether one has capital. Can that person continue doing the business successfully? Can they see success in life and live without credit? If you do not do it properly you will lose the business and if you do not have a good market also you will lose the business and earn no profit. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*Business is dependent on the current economic situation of the country. My business is not a good business. People do not have money to buy bricks and build houses. It is difficult to do a business like mine because there is no market. If people have enough money to buy bricks then it is good for me. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*When you do business you have something of your own. You can earn money and give some service to the other people. If you do business with a good mind and with courage, you can do business successfully. The disadvantages are that plants need fertilizer and it is very expensive. There is nobody to buy plants; people who want to buy plants try to give very low prices. We spend a lot of money to look after plants but do not get stable price for the plants. (Female Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*It is very good to do business, but the only thing is that people don't have capital. Having one's own business means, having confidence in oneself. Some people will go to money lenders and pay more interest. At the end of the business, they are stuck. Easy loans are necessary. Coconut buyers and prawn buyers are cheating the producers in the villagers. (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)*

Some farmers and fishers pointed out that their traditional livelihood was these occupations and that they could not imagine themselves to be doing business. Going overseas was also mentioned as a desirable option.

*It is good to do business if possible. I do not like business because I prefer farming to any other business. Nothing is more valuable to us than farming.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*I'm not interested in doing business because I already have a livelihood and don't need to find another one. My brother and I had been fishing with our father even before his death. My older brother is trying to go abroad. I would also like to. Until then I would go fishing. We have our own boat. Mother trades our fish at the Chilaw market from 7.00 to 11.00 am and sometimes later.* (Male, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

An influencer who was both a farmer and officer holder of several community-based organizations that promoted self-employment, saw farming itself as a business. He pointed out that they were satisfied with it due to their lack of dependency.

*As farmers we are doing our own business. We are not dependent. Even if you have a loss it is for yourself.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

Some respondents revealed the influence to the *Palama* performance in their positive perception of the option of doing business:

*As advised in the play, you can get some support from an institution and start a business. It is good to earn some profit. If you do it properly, you can earn good profit. You can get some relief from paying all the credit you owe.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*It is good to do business. As shown in the play, there is no need to go to Middle East or Italy. If you can get some money, you can invest this on some business. There is no need to pay the agencies and get cheated by them. There is no need to get much help from others. You do not have to work under anybody. You are independent.* (Male, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)

The results here are consistent with those of the quasi-experimental impact assessment<sup>10</sup> carried out in Polonnaruwa district in 2007, where a majority of respondents who had seen a *Palama* performance could imagine themselves starting a business.

### **3.2 View of business people in the community**

A clear majority (74%) of respondents from all categories held positive views towards business people in their community. Starters after *Palama* (100%), non-entrepreneurs (89%) and influencers (73%) were the most positive, with youth (67%) and entrepreneurs (60%) being somewhat less positive. In Puttalam District, respondents were slightly more positive than in Polonnaruwa. There was no gender difference.

Respondents who were positive generally referred to the ability of business people in their communities to improve their own life situation, their skills, support to the community, as well as an assessment of how fair/reasonable/just they were.

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<sup>10</sup> Hakemulder, F. 2007. *Ibid*

*It is good to develop one's economic situation. They are a big support to other people and for themselves. We don't have to go to a shop faraway, if we have a shop here. People who do business here are from the village - they know the people and are fair by them. (Male, Tamil Hindu Non Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*These people are good – they always have money. They are self sufficient. Earlier most of the villagers used to work as wage labourers. They did not earn much money. People got government support to establish the leafy vegetable business here. We provide water cress for the whole country. This village became an independent society now. This is like the mother village of water cress cultivation and has spread it to surrounding villages as well. They all have fair businesses here. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*People are doing well in business. They have the knowledge of business; if they get more experience they can do it even better. They are doing business honestly and are very reasonable. (Male, Tamil Hindu Youth, Puttalam)*

*They help poor people. They serve the village. They do fair business. If you take a grocery shop; they fix the rates that people can easily afford. No one in this village is exploitative. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*A lot of people here have improved their life because of business. They are reasonable. They are no longer dependent on money lenders. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*They do fair business here. They are very clever. Some businessmen have given others a chance to work under them. They do not cheat anybody but help everybody. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*Their main aim is to improve their life. They help each other. They talk to others nicely. If you take a grocery store for example, they do not charge high prices here. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*Some sell fish and flowers in the village; some have rice mills and grocery stores. We have experienced businessmen in the village and they are fair. We know that because we always communicate with them. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*People here have businesses like rice mills, carpentry shops, flour mills and chilli mills. I always have some connections and transactions - especially with rice mills and flour mills. They are good people. They have built nice houses from the profit of their business. Now they are in good position in society. They charge reasonable prices. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*The villagers who do ornamental plants do their businesses properly. They earn good profit. They have improved their lives because of their businesses; they do fair business using their own strength. They are not exploitative. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

Some respondents pointed out the importance of the profit motive in doing business.

*About 80% of people are fishers here. There are good entrepreneurs – especially in prawn trading. It's good for them. You need money. Some are fair but it's all about profit – there are two sides to it. If we invest Rs 5,000, we expect Rs. 10,000. That's how business is. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur)*

While referring to the positive characteristics of entrepreneurs in the village, this entrepreneur also referred to the responsibilities of entrepreneurs in maintaining quality and integrity.

*They are improving and developing. They are starting small and becoming bigger. They must be systematic. Other people want to give chilli powder at lower prices. The market is competitive. Some people cheat customers by offering lower quality, I don't cheat. Some people try to make a big profit in some businesses. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

Entrepreneurs commented on the skills, intelligence and experience of entrepreneurs.

*They run quite large-scale businesses here. They are very clever in doing business. They have good brains to improve their businesses. They do fair business and do not cheat anybody. (Female, Tamil Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

Entrepreneurs were often more critical of business people in the community than non-entrepreneurs. This has to be understood in the context of competition and local rivalry, as well as losses in risky ventures.

*Nobody has theoretical knowledge. They run these hatcheries using their own experience. Some are not fair doing this business. Some go against the decisions taken by the hatchery association in the village. Especially when they sell prawn fry there is no standard price. Also there is no unity among the hatchery owners in this village. (Male Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I do not like to name them but I know that they want to earn money somehow. Even by selling low quality products. They do not care about the customers. They do not even pay their workers properly. I always talk about this with others - that some do not do fair business. I personally think that is because of the current economic situation in the country. People want instant and easy money. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*They try to improve their business, but they can't come up. Their skills are at a low level. They go to money lenders. They don't have knowledge of markets and prices. Otherwise, they are doing business reasonably. If five people are doing the same business in our village other people can't do it successfully because this village is small. There is limited opportunity. The prawn business is risky – I lost ½ acres of coconut land settling my losses from prawn farming. Others have also had similar experiences. (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)*

However, there were a minority of other respondents who were also critical of business people within their villages.

*I think they are unfair. When the prices are going up in the country, they try to hide stocks. They give incorrect bills. They do not care about these matters. They also cheat us a lot. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)*

*Most people here do business for daily survival, for daily earnings. They are people who do cane – they sell a few baskets in Chilaw and come back. If you have money you can at least take a paddy-field on lease. I can't say that people who do business are just – they buy vegetables from us at Rs. 10 and sell at Rs 30. They get a higher income than us. I grow chillies – they buy it at Rs 250-300 and sell at Rs 500-600. If they are just that's good but they are not. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*



Some entrepreneurs indicated that the producers or farmers were not always fair by entrepreneurs:

*Here there are a lot of liars. When I already paid the money for the vegetables I bought, some growers say I did not pay. They sell us vegetables for higher prices at their plots.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

### 3.3 Role of business people in the community

The majority (82%) of respondents saw a positive role by business people in contributing to the social welfare of the community and to a lesser extent in providing employment opportunities. The positive role of entrepreneurs was identified to a higher degree in Polonnaruwa district (86%) than in Puttalam district (72%). In Polonnaruwa, male respondents were slightly more positive towards the role of business people, while in Puttalam district female respondents were similarly more positive.

*They help people when they are in need – poor people. They help with village events. They give casual employment to some.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*Business people help when there is any community work at the temple or at the school. They have vehicles - the villagers sometimes use their vehicles if there is an emergency, like to take somebody to the hospital. Some also have provided jobs for the villagers – Sarath's rice mill has 5 workers.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*If there is a function or festival at the temple or at somebody's house they support, give money and organize shramadana. Even if they have small businesses they help as they can. Only one person can provide people with jobs here - not everybody can do that. The owner of the coir/ broom-making business has given jobs to the villagers.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*Business people definitely help the village. We help with all the activities in the village – the societies, the Buddhist Sunday school; we organize many events. Around 50% like to improve the lives of others but the others want to stay in the dark. About 10 people give work to others here.* (Male Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*They employ people. People would like to be employed in a good work place. They help in ceremonies – gifts for the Sinhala New Year and money for holding dansel during Vesak.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*Business people here are helping the village kovil (temple) to put up a compound wall; the concrete work and painting walls amount to around Rs. 10 lakhs. They support religious ceremonies such as Navaratri. They also help the school with all its needs. They provide shramadana such as for road construction. The prawn farmers also offer jobs to the villagers.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)

*Some of them buy cadjan for poor people. If somebody is sick they go to their house and give money to buy medicine. They also help when constructing roads in the village.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*Even if they cannot help they give money. If there is a shramadana they contribute labour. There are no business people here who can provide job opportunities in the village.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur)

*Business people certainly help the village. When we give dansal (alms houses for special festivals) and construct roads, they give money. People who earn little money in this village, go and work under them. Also other people from neighbouring villagers work in their water cress fields. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur)*

*If we have any event in the community, we can raise Rs 34,000-40,000 in 2-3 hours. We organized a dansela for Vesak and cooked 1000 sacks of rice; we also organized sil for Poson. We support both the temple and the school. But it's difficult to collect money for an activity like building a road. Those producing water cress provide employment to others in the village – about 50 people are able to offer others employment. Some of these labourers have now started their own plots and are self-employed. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)*

*Entrepreneurs help the church – to construct the building and for the festivals. There are not a lot of entrepreneurs here since most people do fishing. There are about 4-5 employers – in the coir business and in prawn hatcheries. The coir workshop employs about 25-30 people and the hatcheries have 2-3 employees each. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Influencer, Puttalam)*

*If there is a shramadana, they provide meals, give money. The owner of the welding shop gives training to village youth and after the training he gives them jobs. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

A minority of respondents were negative about the role of business people in their communities. Entrepreneurs were predominant among the critics.

*They [business people] do not help. They do not even give any chance for village people to work at their prawn farms. They take people from outside. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*Business people here contribute less for the improvement of the village than others. Mostly we get assistance from the associations that exist in the village. The Funeral Assistance Society helps funeral houses, alms giving ceremonies and so on. Some people provide jobs in the water cress fields. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Puttalam)*

*They help a bit with the temple or church; they collect money from all of us. They don't do much more. They'll contribute Rs.100 to our Rs. 50. There are people who can do something to improve the village but they don't do anything. There are no jobs for people here. I have to go far away for construction work. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*There is no business person here who can help us in the improvement of the village. Other villagers contribute more than business people to the village. Some provide jobs but they do not pay employees a proper salary. They pay very low salaries. They take school leavers for a very low salary but I pay my workers a good salary - Rs. 600 a day in my carpentry workshop. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*They improve themselves, that's what they do. Some people help others but many don't. We participate in all activities in the village. (Female Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

### 3.4 View of business people in the district

The majority (53%) responded that they had little knowledge of business people in the district, beyond their own villages. This was considerably higher in Puttalam district (71%) than in Polonnaruwa (35%). Of those who held views on business people in the district, in Polonnaruwa around 57% were mixed or negative, while in Puttalam 92% were mixed or negative. There were no significant gender differences in Polonnaruwa, while in Puttalam district relatively more men were negative in their views of business people, who operated beyond their own villages within the district.

District level business people were compared with village business people and were found to be wanting in their sense of fairness and humanity. They were often characterized as exploitative, competitive and interested primarily in high profits.

*They do business on a large scale to make lots of money, high profits. The rice prices here where we grow rice are even higher than in Colombo. Powerful people are using their power. They are not reasonable – not like small business people in the village.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*There is more competition in the district. Some are a bit exploitative. There is some difference between the village and the district.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)

*I know some people who do business in this district and I also know how they do unfair business. People who do animal husbandry, harm animals and sell bad quality products. Some businessmen do not pay a fair price for the materials that they buy from producers, such as coir. They give them very low prices. They do not dump garbage at proper places. I always talk about this and am against this.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*Most people look at their own profit and there is no quality. Until we get the market at least, we shouldn't have low quality – even, after that, of course. In Jayanthipura, there is X Mills – they cheat and sell cheaper – and people buy it, although there is no quality there.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)

*The big businessmen try to trample small scale businessmen. If you take paddy, they buy for Rs. 30 and sell for Rs. 38. That is not fair. They only think of their own improvement.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*In Katupota [neighbouring village] they produce cashew and they are successful like us. There are higher level business people in the district in transport and communication. They have no time for their families, children, society – no time for others. They don't have the humanity (manushyakama) and generosity (udavkarana gathi) that we have among our small producers.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)

*Prawn sub-contractors can be exploitative. There are 3-4 main buyers in the district who export. They purchase from around 25-30 producers here in the village. They spread a rumour in the market that the ship is already come and gone, buy from producers at a low price, keep the prawns in their freezers for some days and make a lot of profit by selling to the export ship.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)

*Some do business in a very cunning way. They sell fish for very high prices and try to keep a very high profit. There are people who cheat their customers a lot. Some sell bad quality fish. Not fresh fish. Some keep fish in the refrigerators for days and sell later.* (Male, Sinhala Catholic Starter after Palama, Puttalam)

*There are some big businessmen who have both technical and theoretical knowledge about these kinds of businesses [prawns]. Some are fair and some are not. That is the nature of business and of human beings. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*People who do business in the district are generally not as close to the Church although they help. In the past, they used to contribute around 10% of their profits, also from fishing, but now they don't do so. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Influencer, Puttalam district)*

Some respondents saw no great difference between business people in the district and the village.

*Business people from outside are actually better but they have been trapped by our local traders. They are all the same. Business means they get a profit of at least 50%. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

A more positive view of entrepreneurs at district-level was expressed by some respondents. While some considered these entrepreneurs to be better than village business people, others perceived similar positive characteristics.

*X Hardware is doing well. Big entrepreneurs in this district live well. They are more reasonable than village business people. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*There are businessmen who are very popular all over country - for example, Y Tyre House. There are some areas of businesses that still need to be improved, such as vehicle sales centers. There is no place here for people to buy vehicles. They have to go to Kandy or to Colombo for that and spend a lot on transport. Some business people in the district are very skilled and provide jobs for others. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I think they also do fair business. I always think that everybody who is doing business has similar characteristics to mine. They are also fair like m). Competition is there among the business people in the village. I know less about business people in the whole district. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*There are not only traditional business people in the district but new ones whose mental and educational side is very good. They are just people. The owner of Z Motors in town is a boy from this village – he is the President of the Lions Club now. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*The business people in this district develop themselves and give jobs to others. At least 4-5 others get jobs because of them – that's important. It is fair for both sides – for themselves and others. (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

### **3.5 Business as a future livelihood option**

A government white-collar job continued to be the preferred option for a considerable minority (33.3%) of parents/influencers. The expectations of a government job were significantly higher in Polonnaruwa district and among women respondents there. Non-entrepreneurs had a higher preference for a government job than entrepreneurs in general, but there was no significant difference between the two categories in Polonnaruwa district. In Puttalam district, only one entrepreneur desired government employment for his children. Security and status were the main reasons offered for this preference.

*I want my children to do government jobs – this is a permanent job and you get a pension. If you do agriculture you will have to face a lot of problems. You will have to go through a hard life. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*We haven't really thought about it. I suppose, we would want them to have a good job after their education. We don't want them to suffer. A government job is the best. A private company also means suffering. I worked in a garment factory – it was always about meeting targets and getting scolded. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*I want my children to be teachers. I do not like them to do the same business - selling rice packets to the hospital canteen. My business is not steady, as it is run under the tender system. If we do not get the tender we earn nothing. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*Depending on the children's education level, it would be good if they can do a government job. It is permanent and accepted by society. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I want high status government jobs for them. I want them to be in good positions where they can earn a good salary and get the pension. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

The preference for a government job was lower among youth at around 22%. More male youth indicated a preference for this sector of employment.

*I would like to have a job with an institution, such as the government. You can serve the country. My parents have not said anything. I do not have an idea to start a business. I have no money for that. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*I would like to get a government job after my O/L and A/L. My mother wants me to do well in my studies and get a government job. I would consider starting a chicken or prawn farm. I can get a good income from that. (Male, Tamil Hindu Youth, Puttalam)*

*I would like to join the army. My parents want me to do a good government job. I have no idea to do business. I want to join the army because my brother joined as well. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

However, a significant proportion (25%) of respondents said they would let their children decide any job/work which was appropriate for their skills or whatever they liked. There was no significant district or gender difference in parents who considered any appropriate option for their children. A trouble-free life for their children was an aspiration of many of these parents.

*I want them to get a good education; other than that I have no dreams, no ideas. I would let them do whatever they want. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I would like them to do a job that helps them to have a good life, not a sorrowful life. Any work is fine except wage labour. (Female, Tamil Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*Whatever they want to do, that is all their decision. Whatever they like I'll support. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I always wanted to do business since childhood. I do not have good educational qualifications but I want my children to get the maximum education they can. Then I would like them to choose their own path, depending on their abilities. Whatever they like to do, I would help them. I can't predict what will happen in 10 years time. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*Our daughter says she wants to do teaching. My father was an artist. She has also inherited this talent. I am teaching her mechanics. There are not many women who do mechanics so if she has this knowledge, she would be at an advantage. She is good in her school work – comes first in class. She is too small for us to decide anything. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*There is not enough infrastructure for self-employment here, although we could grow mushrooms or ornamental plants. We are dependent on our second son who is in the army. It is not our place to tell our children what to do. The younger ones will also choose according to their wishes. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

The proportion of youth who expressed the wish to do any job option was less than their parents.

*I would continue on to do “A” level, or a job if I don’t pass “O” level. I’d do whatever I can find. If I pass I would join the police or go to university. My parents want me to go to a big place. A bank would be good. Since everyone goes to the police, they don’t like that. I would consider business – maybe run a grocery store to earn an income. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I would do any job such as masonry or fishing. I live with my aunt and she would let me do any job. I have not considered doing a business because it is difficult to do alone. I have no knowledge. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)*

Only one youth expressed the desire to work in the private sector.

*I would like to do a job such as at a garment factory. My parents have not said anything. I do not have money start a business. I sometimes do cadjan weaving with my mother. If somebody helps I can start a grocery shop. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

A minority of parents in Puttalam district had expectations that their children would go overseas for work, as earnings would be higher than any employment in Sri Lanka.

*My husband says that our sons should be trained in driving because you can go to any country and earn a living. Our children say they haven’t decided yet. When they stop schooling, they will decide, they say. The older son says he wants to become a chef. I don’t like that – there’s not much status in that; they’ll ask him to come and cook at weddings. My brother is planning to go to Italy and wants my sons to join him after he is established. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I want my children to go abroad, I think you can earn a better income from that than doing a job in Sri Lanka. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Starter after Palama, Puttalam)*

A significantly large proportion (20%) of parents/influencers indicated business/self-employment as an option, as well as combining business with a government or professional (following tertiary education) job. Altogether around 23% of respondents expressed a preference for the business/self-employment option, as well as combining it with other options. While there was no noteworthy difference between the two districts, men in Polonnaruwa and women in Puttalam were more inclined to prefer business as a livelihood option for children. Independence, self-reliance and higher incomes were the main reasons provided for this option.

*I would want them to do a good business, such as a tailoring or grocery shop - without going and working in the sun. We can find some money for ourselves. Then, you are not under the control of anybody. (Female, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*It is important that they know who their mother, father, neighbours, other villagers are, and they do good by the village – they have to go into the society after they know what is right and wrong; not to use drugs or alcohol, for example. They can develop my business after studying to the highest level possible. To be strong and not under the control of others- that is best. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)*

*The first thing is to get a good education. There is no point in them doing a government job. I'd like them to do good work without harming society. Doing something of your own is best. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*If they can continue our business, that's the best. Otherwise, a government job would be good. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*I prefer that they do self-employment. I will not pressure them to do other jobs. But if they do something of their own, they do not have to bother anybody. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*Parents generally expect government jobs. If this enterprise improves, I'll let my children do business. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*I support children to do self-employment or government jobs. My sons are doing one or the other. We helped our oldest son to run a grocery until he got a government job. We have helped the second one to set up a tailor shop. I talk to the MP personally on behalf of youth in our village. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

The preference for business was especially true for youth – around 22% indicated a preference for business/self-employment, as well as a further 22% for combining business with a government or professional job, some despite other expectations by parents. There was no gender difference among youth in their preference for business. However, more male youth wished to combine business with a government job while more female youth desired to combine business with a professional job.

*Currently, I'm following a beauty culture course. My parents wanted me to do whatever I liked. I would like to start a beauty salon and earn some income. I want to start the salon somehow and improve my business. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*I could never study. I wanted to be a mechanic from childhood. Since I was always collecting pieces of metal and fixing machines like radios and TVs that's what my parents expected. I would like to start my own mechanic shop and develop my life. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)*

*I would like to do business after the "A" levels. It's best to do something of your own, the way the country is now. My parents would like me to go to university. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I would like to do a beauty culture course and start a business because you cannot improve your life if you do a government job. My parents don't force me to do anything. They would let me do anything I like. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I would like to be an accountant. My parents want me to do whatever good job I can. I have thought about doing a business. I would like to start a phone card centre because I like to earn something for myself. I would like to get good education first. Then while doing a job I would employ some workers and run a good business. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)*

*I want to be a lawyer. My parents want me to do a government job because of the pension. I would consider having a grocery shop. Then there's no need to work under anybody. It is worth doing something of your own and improving your life. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*I'd like to do a job –like joining the army. My parents haven't said anything for the moment. They want me to study to the highest level. I would consider doing a business. I would like to start a garment business because I would like to see improvements in my life and at the same time I can serve the country by giving a people a lot of job opportunities. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I am planning to do a government job. My parents want me to do that as well. I would consider starting a grocery shop, as an extra source of income. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

The proportion of youth who expressed a preference for business/self-employment and business combined with other livelihoods is considerably higher than during the 2006 Socio-cultural Assessment<sup>11</sup> where only 15% of school leavers interviewed considered business/self-employment as an option, whereas 40% indicated a preference for government employment and a further 15% for either a government or private sector job. It is also higher than the national-level survey data available from the Poverty & Youth Survey (2003)<sup>12</sup> and the National Youth Survey (1999-2000)<sup>13</sup>. The Poverty & Youth Survey revealed a preference for government sector employment by 43.4% of youth overall, with 35% of junior secondary, 42.5% of "O" level, 50.4% of "A" level qualified youth preferring this option. Meanwhile, 23.4% of youth overall expressed a preference for self employment with 35% of junior secondary, 26% of "O" level and 13.3% of "A" level qualified youth preferring this option. In the earlier National Youth Survey 53.4% of youth overall preferred government sector employment with 48.3% of junior secondary, 57.2% of "O" level and 62.3% of "A" level qualified youth desiring employment in this sector. Correspondingly lower proportions expressed a preference for self-employment.

Moreover, in the 2006 Socio-cultural Assessment the majority (60%) of parents expected their children to pursue higher education and/or a government job, while 20% were open to letting children pursue their wishes and a tiny minority (5%) expressed business/self-employment as a preference for their children.

### **3.6 Views on gender dimensions of business**

The largest minority (46%) of respondents indicated that women were better at business, with a significant minority (32%) indicating both men and women as equally competent. The number of respondents who perceived that men were better at business was a small minority (22%) and primarily male respondents. Those who perceived that women were better were significantly higher (51%) in Polonnaruwa district compared with Puttalam district (41%).

The perception that women were better at business was based on their hard work and effort, and ability to save.

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<sup>11</sup> Reinprecht and Weeratunge. 2006. *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Ibarguen, C. 2005. *Youth perceptions: Exploring results from the Poverty and Youth Survey*. Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis.

<sup>13</sup> Hettige, S.T. and M. Mayer. 2002. *Sri Lankan youth: Challenges and responses*. Colombo; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.



*They are clever, active, and not lazy in doing their work.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*They like to go forward and work. They save money and work neatly.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*Women are more careful than men. They are afraid of credit, so they pay it back on time.* (Female Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*Women are clever, they have good brains, they can save money. We, men, cannot save. They try to hide whatever they earn* (Male, Sinhala Catholic Starter after *Palama*, Puttalam)

*Women have courage, work hard and always have the feeling to improve their business.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)

They were also seen to be better able to attract customers and had advantages because of working from home.

*They get people's attention. They don't have as many problems – men have to face competition from other men. They can be successful because they work from home. Women are also efficient.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

Women were seen to be more shrewd and resourceful in business transactions.

*Women are good at business. Men make more debts. Women find it easier to get money out of customers.* (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*In our house women are better. I have too much compassion about people. My wife is not like that. Women are more clever – they can gage things. My wife also meets the customers, considers offers, calculates properly and collects the money. If a buyer has short-changed us, she would run after the van and make sure we get what is due to us.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*Unlike men, women are much more skilled at business. They buy at a lower price and sell at a higher price. Men don't even know how to use a weighing scale properly.* (Female, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

In many rural areas, women were perceived to be traders by tradition while men were farming, fishing or doing skilled craft work.

*Women are better – they are the ones who go trading to Chilaw. They sell vegetables, food and get some profit. They are used to it here. Men go for casual labour, mason work and so on. Chilaw is not far from here so women can travel conveniently.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*In the leafy vegetable business, women are better. We think of it as women's work, especially weeding and harvesting. Men are involved in marketing to some extent. But women are better at trading and often take the leaves to the fair to sell. Occasionally, both men and women go to the fair.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)

Respondents who considered both genders equally competent at business, referred to the talent, skills and knowledge both possessed, as well as complementary attributes.

*There is no difference between men and women. If you have the talent and knowledge any one can do business. Men are strong physically, women are not. But women wake up very early in the morning and they are very active compared to men.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*Both men and women do business well and accurately.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur)

*They both know how to attract customers to the business.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*It depends on their abilities. If you know the job, it does not matter whether it is men or women. You have to keep everything in your mind; you should know how to handle money.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*It all depends on their knowledge. Some men get ideas from their wives to improve their businesses, while some women get ideas from their husbands.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*If you take a grocery shop, women are more skilled, they know how to attract people to the business and talk to customers nicely. They know how to get back credit. They can easily handle small businesses. In other bigger businesses, men are more skilled, they use their brains. Women cannot handle big businesses.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*Both are equally skilled. There is no difference - everyone can do business successfully.* (Female, Tamil Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

Those who considered men as more skilled pointed out to their freedom of mobility and strength.

*Men have the ability to do business and they can go anywhere they want and do business. They know to take responsibilities.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*Women have barriers culturally. There are some places that they cannot go. It always differs according to their talents and abilities. Male can go anywhere they want to and do business. They also have strength.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*In Tamil villages they are not used to sending their women here and there. They are Hindus. Women hardly do their own businesses here.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*If you take a prawn hatchery, men are skilled in running it. Very few women do this business. They do not have much knowledge about this business.* (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

These results reveal that the proportion of respondents perceiving that men were better at business has significantly declined relative to the findings of the 2006 Socio-cultural Assessment<sup>14</sup>, especially in Puttalam district. Some of the gender themes of the plays could have contributed to this. In discussing the most memorable parts or the most liked parts of the *Palama* performance, both women and men identified with female characters who struggled to overcome the constraints of society.

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<sup>14</sup> Reinprecht and Weeratunge. 2006. *Ibid.*

### 3.7 Views on ethnic dimensions of business

While a clear majority (65%) in Polonnaruwa district perceived Muslims as better at business, followed by Sinhalese (19%), in Puttalam district this was more varied with respondents considering Muslims (36%), all groups (20%), Tamils (16%), Sinhalese (9%) and a combination of two groups (such as Muslims and Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese) as more skilled in that order.

Respondents who perceived Muslims as more skilled at business attributed this to a tradition in trading, ability to attract customers, to communicate well with customers and win their hearts/minds.

*Muslims are more skilled. They are systematic. They are able win the hearts/minds of customers and are efficient. Maybe this is inherited.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*They are a little better than others. They have been doing business from the past. They came to Sri Lanka from historical times to do business – from generation to generation. They live in a business environment.* (Male Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)

*We don't like it that Muslims are more skilled. They can talk nicely in a way to draw people's hearts/minds. Sinhalese get angry and scold customers but Muslims don't do that.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*There is no difference between the Sinhalese and Tamils. Muslims are better because they are doing business from generation to generation. Even small children go to school in the morning and do business in the evening. They have business minds; they have it in their blood.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)

They also referred to the honesty, fairness, humility and dedication of Muslim business people.

*Muslims are more skilled. They also have good character. They have a better sense of justice than the Sinhalese.* (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*Muslims are kind, patient and talk to customers nicely - better than Sinhalese.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*They are dedicated, knowledgeable and try to give good products to their customers.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

In addition, respondents perceived a sense of discipline provided by the religion and unity within the ethnic group.

*They have good commitment and unity. When it's 12.00 pm [prayer time] they will all close their shops. We, Sinhalese don't have unity – we undercut each other. They think "We all need to develop". We copy from each other – when someone else improves.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)

Those respondents who considered all ethnic groups as equally skilled referred to individual abilities, as well as skills and experience in different sectors of business by the different ethnic groups.

*There is nothing special about different groups. All are skilled at doing business. Everybody tries to earn money. All have good brains.* (Female, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*Tamils are skilled at handling big businesses like export and import. Sinhalese are second – they are skilled in doing prawn farming. They have good experience. Muslims are skilled in the jewellery business.* (Male Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*All are good at doing business. All can dedicate their time to improve their business.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)

*There is no difference between the ethnic groups. The bicycle fish traders of all groups are doing well. They deliver from home to home and earn more than us, women traders.* (Female, Sinhala catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*They have different degrees of knowledge in different areas. If you have money and skills, anyone can do business and succeed.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*Muslims are generally considered better. I don't really believe in it. Anyone who has abilities and skills can succeed.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

While the proportion of respondents perceiving that Muslims are more skilled at business has increased in Polonnaruwa, this has decreased considerably in Puttalam district, relative to the findings of the 2006 Socio-cultural Assessment<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Reinprecht and Weeratunge. 2006. *Ibid.*

#### 4. The impact of the *Palama* performances on behaviour relating to enterprise

The number of respondents, who had changed their behaviour following the performance, was relatively lower than those who had changed their attitudes. This was partially due to the fact that all those who had started or improved businesses in some villages were not captured by the assessment, either because they were not in the village during the time of the assessment or because the team had to interview respondents of other categories. In some villages no respondents who had started or improved businesses were encountered. This was especially true of Puttalam district where respondents had seen the performance only 3-5 months ago. It has to be expected that changing behaviour will take longer than changing attitudes of people towards business.

Around 6% of total respondents had started or re-started business after *Palama*, considerably more in Polonnaruwa district than Puttalam, and somewhat more men than women. Around 60% of these were sustainable; two of the enterprises had collapsed by the time of the assessment.

*I had the idea to start a business even before; I had received CEFE training and made a business plan for a bakery but I didn't manage to. I didn't really know what to start. But after palama, I decided to do chilli grinding and started my business. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*I discussed the ideas with other villagers. I started my own business after the performance – a rice flour mill. I have got courage to improve this business as well. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*I discussed the plays and ideas with other villagers. Everybody said that we should bring similar dramas to the village so that people can enjoy them. I started my own business – ornamental plants, after Palama. But it collapsed due to lack of water. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*We heard about Palama. We were not in the village when they performed. X from the theatre group visited our business and encouraged us. We decided to restart our ornamental fish business. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama)*

*I started my own business, selling fish in front of my house. That business lasted only a few days. People here do not earn much money to buy fish, so it collapsed. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Starter after Palama, Puttalam)*

Around 13% of existing entrepreneurs said they had improved their business after the performance, more in Puttalam than in Polonnaruwa. There was no major gender difference here.

*I discussed the play with others and got some courage to improve my business – water cress cultivation. I decided to apply for a loan from a bank and expanded my business. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I discussed the plays and ideas with other people. I decided afterwards to improve the business I already have – a prawn hatchery. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I discussed the plays and ideas with other villagers and improved my current business – a small poultry farm for village chickens. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

Additionally two influencers and a youth had encouraged others to start business after the performance.

*I encouraged several of my family members and the members of the People's Company to start a business after Palama. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

In two villages visited, it was reported by officers of the World Bank supported *Gemi Diriya* project which has established community-based people's companies, that the number of clients and loans disbursed had increased.

*People discussed the play. Some came into our organization – we had about 30 new members who formed 4 -5 new groups. People who didn't believe in doing business before came to us. Gemi Diriya has been very important in this village in getting people to do business. After the Palama performance we got quite a number of new members and gave out more loans. We asked Palama to come to the village for a second time. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*People in this village did not know much about the VISHLI [micro-finance/enterprise program] that currently operates in this village. But after seeing this play they got to know more about the program. Before about 150 people had membership; later another 150 got to know about the program. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist, Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*The performance attracted a large crowd – even the monk from the village temple was surprised. A lot of people liked it. There was a good response from villagers to our loan programme after Palama. The village asked them to come here for the second time. We had given out around Rs 24 lakhs of loans before Palama. Now our loan portfolio is around Rs. 67 lakhs. (Female Officer, Gemi Diriya, Polonnaruwa)*

The performances also encouraged organizations to emulate the forum theatre concept. In two villages visited local CBOs had been influenced by *Palama* to develop their own street drama/forum theatre performances on problems encountered in villages, such as loan recovery and alcoholism, as well as promotion of micro-finance.

*Later we also organized a drama by the People's Company to encourage people to pay back loans on time and to promote the benefits of getting loans to start a business. That drama was a big help for us to convey these messages. We got the idea from the Palama group. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa district)*

*Most people here don't stay doing nothing in our village. They will earn even a little bit by doing something. After the performance, the youth society got the idea to make a street play about social problems such as alcoholism and we performed on Good Friday at the church. (Male, Sinhala Non-Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

Two other influencers expressed the idea that they thought it would be good to introduce forum theatre groups in their villages as well, to discuss social issues and change people's attitudes.

Several respondents pointed out that the impact of the Palama performances could have been higher if the theatre group had come into villages with the support and sponsorship of local CBOs promoting livelihood and business activities or through religious institutions respected by the people. Others thought that some follow-up after the performances might have resulted in higher impact. However, this indicates a rather low level of initiative.

*People talked about the issues in the plays, jokes, gifts, of the people who went and acted but they did not do anything much to change the situation afterwards. If the performance had come to the village through CBOs, then office holders like us could have explained more and guided people to change their behaviour. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)*

*We discussed that going abroad is a false thing and it is better to stay and do something here. I read the brochure but didn't do anything afterwards. We saw the play but nothing happened afterwards. If someone like you came and followed up, then something might have happened. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

## 5. The process impact of *Palama* theatre performances

To understand changes in attitudes and behaviour of respondents, their process of experiencing the *Palama* theatre performance becomes very important. The assessment reveals a very positive response by the majority of respondents to the performance as a whole and a considerable extent of active participation and engagement in the performance. It also shows the significance of both business-related messages, as well as combined business-related and social messages among respondents, and varied responses in behaviour, following the performance.

### 5.1 Overall assessment of *Palama*

An overwhelming majority (99%) of respondents had a positive overall assessment of the *Palama* performance. They commented on the skilful acting, the stories, the entertainment value and the social messages.

*It was a good performance – beautiful. The acting was good and the story as well.* (Male, Sinhala Christian Youth, Puttalam)

*Both plays were very good. The leader of the group was very skilled and the money lender's character was acted very well.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*It was a very good performance – the rape scene was well acted. It was exemplary for family life.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*It was both entertaining and joyful. It had a lot of jokes. I enjoyed it a lot.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after *Palama*, Polonnaruwa)

*I liked the whole drama, they acted really well. One person is trying to make a box to transport bread but finally he ends up making a coffin. I liked that scene because it was very funny.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*It was very good. We only have TV here. We don't see a live play that often. It was the only outside performance we had seen, so we liked it. It was also special because we have two actors from our village that perform with the group.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur)

*It was a good performance. I have seen some plays that have no meaning and not worth watching. *Palama* was not like that. It is a meaningful drama - you can get some examples and lessons for your life.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*It was a good performance. It shows how a poor person gets out of poverty - not to say "can't" but to do something. There are not much plays here – not even annually. Everyone comes when there is such an event; there are no cinema halls here either.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*Villagers have skills that need to be exposed, hidden talents that should be revealed. Poverty is not the heritage of people – the plays show that one can overcome it.* (Female Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)



*At the beginning it seemed like a joke with the thovil and hooting. I didn't like it but as it progressed I understood the importance of the play. At first the main character was insulted by people; but he remained committed and later developed – he overcame all his obstacles. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*It was a very attractive drama - they tried to convey a good message. It shows that there is nothing that you cannot do. If you have the strength you can do anything. I like to see the play again and again. Many did not know about the performance due to a lack of publicity and people having to attend an almsgiving on the same day. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*The whole drama was good. It is a meaningful, exemplary drama for both parents and children to make their lives. And it tells you how to start a business with the money available in your hand. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*It was a very good, important drama, it showed us whether one wants to remain poor or move out of poverty. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*It was a good performance. I videoed parts of it on my mobile phone. They also gave a brochure. The play gave a hand to the fallen – how to get on the correct path. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Non- Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I watched Palama twice - villagers liked it very much. It encourages unemployed people to start self employment. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)*

*The drama was very good. There are about three people who got some examples/ lessons from the play to make their lives better in our village. (Female Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

Some respondents commented on the actors' interaction with the audience, the opportunity they got to participate and the responsible behaviour of the actors.

*They all acted really well. They also gave the audience a chance to act in this drama. If the group tries to convey a wrong message the audience can correct it. The people also got a chance to show their abilities to act. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*It was a good exemplary drama. They gave people from the community a chance to act and contribute their ideas as well. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*The characters were good and the actors showed a lot of responsibility. They were not the kind of actors who just come and go. They involved people from the village to improve their skills and knowledge. They even came another day to have a small group discussion. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*The play was very good and depicted the real concerns of villagers. The theatre group also interacted with the villagers well. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

Several identified with the narratives and the characters of the script.

*I thought and I felt that it was certainly my story [Katherine's Dream]. My husband also drank and I had a hard life. It is important to make husbands aware not to drink. I particularly remember the scene where the husband harassed his wife, drank a lot and tried to get what she earned out of her. I liked that because I also had the same experience. I actually did not go there to watch the play I went there to sell peanuts but I stopped selling and watched the play instead. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I liked both plays – both are related to what happens in society. Katherine's character was acted very well. She took money from the money lender. She did her best to take care of her children. The man takes even that money from her. There are people like that here. In fact a man like that just died a few days ago here. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*It was very good and meaningful. They acted really well. They had chosen characters that you normally meet in society. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

The single dissenting opinion came from an influencer in Puttalam district and related to the acting, although the concept of forum theatre was commended.

*Rather than giving a sermon with a message, this was a more useful and entertaining way to get the message across. The acting was not of the highest standard. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Influencer, Puttalam)*

Respondents enjoyed the humour portrayed in the performance plays; *Mahadenamutta* by the Polonnaruwa group and *Simon Florists* by the Puttalam group were particularly remembered for their entertainment value, as much as for the business message. Respondents also identified with the trials and tribulations of the main characters in the forum plays: the daughter in *In Search of Wealth* (Polonnaruwa group), the female trader in *Katherine's Dream* and the younger brother in *Italy Trap* (both from the Puttalam group). These scripts and characters were often referred to when recalling the most memorable parts of the performance.

## **5.2 Participation and engagement by the audience**

The majority (58%) of respondents interviewed had not actively participated in the performance – either by performing in the forum theatre or having an idea to present which they were unable to do so due to lack of time or shyness. However, 18% of respondents had performed and a further 24% indicated that they had ideas to present in the forum theatre in their minds, although they had not presented them. The number of respondents who performed was somewhat higher (21%) in Polonnaruwa than in Puttalam (16%). In contrast, the proportion who had ideas was considerably higher (34%) in Puttalam than in Polonnaruwa (13%). Men were somewhat more predominant both among those who had performed and who had ideas to present.

Most performers were confident and pleased at the opportunity they had received to act in the play and present their ideas. Many presented business ideas as an alternative option to earn a livelihood, so that the main character could find a way out of his/her dilemma.

*I performed the role of the mother who sells leafy cunjee. I was so happy because I never got such an opportunity before. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I showed them that you can do something like livestock rearing instead of trying to go to the Middle East. Here, I could show them my talents. I liked it and enjoyed it. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*I also performed in the drama. One son wanted to commit suicide so I went on the stage and gave them a solution - that he can make bricks by using his little brother's savings instead of going to the Middle East. Committing suicide was not the solution. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*I was a bit scared when I performed. I acted the role of the mother to persuade the son to join the coir business. I felt the mother hadn't communicated with the son well before.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*My wife and I both went and acted. Some people don't believe in the small group system, I wanted to show that Gemi Diriya [project] is doing something. People are sick of NGOs that are doing nothing. It was an opening to change their views.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)

*I gave a business idea – to make good quality leafy cunjee for foreign tourists who visit Polonnaruwa. I have experience in acting as I'm in the CARE theatre group on gender-based violence.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)

*I played the role of a good mother who told my daughter that she should do a business - start a tailor shop. I also explained the benefits of having something of your own. You do not have to work under anybody.* (Male, Tami Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*I performed the role of the woman who borrows money from a money lender and tries to do business. I liked it very much and I was happy to perform.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*I performed and advised the woman to go to the bank for a loan instead of the money lender. I conveyed a good message to the public.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)

*I performed the role of a good shop owner in Italy Trap. I asked the person who wanted to sell his cattle to go to Italy, "Why do you want to sell your cattle?" I said, "Do not sell your cattle. I did not go to Italy. I stayed here and improved my business. In the same way, you also can start a business. There are places where you can get loans, such as banks".* (Female, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*I played the role of the older brother. I advised the younger brother, "Do not try to sell the cattle and go abroad, use your cattle for a business, produce curd, sell that in shops. And you can also sell cow dung as kind of fertilizer". I was happy as everybody appreciated my performance. I also got some gifts from the group.* (Female, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)

Others who performed primarily conveyed moral or social ideas, relating to the forum play.

*I was very happy to perform. I had never acted in front of so many people before. People said that I performed well in the drama. I acted without any fear. I like to act in such dramas. I played the role of a good child that helps to make sure that her parents do not spend any money on alcohol.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*I performed the role of the wife and showed that even if your husband asks you for money to drink, you must not give him that and you must not be afraid of your husband.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*I played the role of good mother who tries to keep peace between the two brothers.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)

Those who had ideas in their minds but did not perform had very similar ones to those who had performed.

### 5.3 Messages from *Palama*

Individual respondents received a business/enterprise message, a business message combined with a social one or a social message, according to their perceptions and interpretation of the plays. Among total respondents 42% received a business or livelihood-related message, while 33% received a combined business and social message. A minority (14%) got only a social message from the plays while 11% could not remember or could not say what message had been given by the performance. In Polonnaruwa, more respondents (41%) received a combined business and social message while in Puttalam more respondents (52%) grasped a business-related message. In contrast, around 31% received a business message in Polonnaruwa, while 25% interpreted a combined business and social message in Puttalam. Overall slightly more women than men grasped a purely business-related message, while more men grasped a combined business and social message. A considerable minority of women interpreted a purely social message, while men were predominant among respondents who could not remember or did not get any message. Interestingly more non-entrepreneurs grasped a business-related message than entrepreneurs and influencers.

Those who received a combined social and business message referred to alcoholism, overseas employment, status of women, in addition to poverty and economic improvement.

*The messages from Palama were the consequences of alcoholism, importance of women, women's role to protect society, equality and respect for women and the correct path to overcome poverty and experience economic development. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*The messages that were given were on awareness of business, consequences of alcoholism, women's migration and consequences for children, starting small and making the effort to find markets. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*The message was that you don't always have to go the Middle East leaving your children behind here. You can start a business of your own. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*Palama gives you some ideas on how to have success in whatever you do. Not only in business but in whatever you do. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*The message was that you don't need to go abroad, you don't need to send your women out since you can do something here. There is Gemi Diriya for example; you can improve that way. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*The play said, don't drink alcohol. Help mother's and father's business and other activities. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*Palama shows that you must not say 'No' all the time. If you have the courage and think carefully you can do anything you want. You can even start a business. It also gives the message that going to the Middle East is not the only option for one to earn money; there are several options like doing business. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama)*

*I cannot remember the drama but if I am correct it says that unity is an important thing - stop violence and alcohol, and encourage people to start business. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*Usually we are anxious when NGOs come to the village because they can destroy the good values that exist in villages like ours - such as the sense of community and helping one another. However, this theatre group's messages were not offensive to anybody. People complain generally when there is an inappropriate performance in the village but there were no complaints this time. In fact the group performed here twice at the request of the villagers. The plays were about making an effort to improve one's life – this is in keeping with the Buddha's teaching. (Male Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Polonnaruwa)*

*The message is that husbands should not drink - this affects their children's life. There is no point in doing business if the father or husband drinks - they would try to use all their earnings on alcohol. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*It gives you some idea about the things that generally happen in a village. It gives you messages about how to get loans for businesses and also about the things that should not happen in a family or society. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*We have to leave bad habits behind and become good. You have to think about the ways to improve your lives personally – change your bad habits. (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)*

*The message is to do our own enterprise. A father should not get drunk in front of the children. A money lender exploits poor people and destroys their families. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*They gave a different message. Young people have ideas that run all over the place. So if they focus on an idea, they want to do that – like going to Italy. This play gave the message that there are alternatives to going to Italy. Some young people here try to do that without success for 10 years. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Influencer, Puttalam)*

Respondents who received a primarily business-related message referred to starting of small business, employment options and improving livelihoods.

*It gives you the message that one can start a business with the money available in your hand and improve your life. (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*The main message was not to go to the money lender, that banks are better, that you can save there and borrow for lower interest. So you can direct people to the banks. (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*The message is that we can start a business of our own and come up in life. (Male, Tamil Hindu Youth, Puttalam)*

*The play, Simon Florists, tells you how important it is to work hard and also tells you to experiment and try new things. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*The play gives the message "Don't get cheated, don't consider insults you might receive from others, improve by your own effort by believing in yourself". (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*The message is: Do not put away your life, do not wait until everything comes closer to you. Start at least some self employment and improve your life. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*We should not be lazy - they persuaded the people to do something with their life for survival. It gave the message that people can consider business as a livelihood option. (Male Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)*

*If you have the courage you can do a business. Do not just keep your certificates; try and do self-employment.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)

*The message from the performance is that if you are unemployed, you can create a new job for yourself.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*It shows you how to start a small business and how one can gradually improve this business.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*It tells you, don't waste your time – engage in some self-employment and improve your life.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*It showed us how to select a business that suits your family.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*It tells you that even a poor person can start at least a grocery shop.* (Male Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

Some respondents perceived primarily a social or moral message from the plays.

*If the mother goes abroad, the children should learn to protect themselves. The mother goes overseas to improve the family's income so the daughter needs to protect herself.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*You must look after your parents. You should not take any alcohol. Use your money on good things.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*It was an exemplary drama about a man who has a bad character. It gives you a message on how to help a family to go on the correct path in life.* (Female, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur)

*It shows the problem of a big family in an economic and social situation like this. In the future they will have problems, their minds will be crippled – it is difficult to bring up children in that situation and that will affect society negatively. The household head should be a role model to children and not drink. The wife should be given support.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Influencer, Puttalam)

*Do not always follow what others say. First you go and check whether it is true or not.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)

#### **5.4 Responses to *Palama***

Responses to the performances included a range from discussing the play, thinking about the idea of starting a business, finding strength to continue existing enterprises, and as discussed above, to improving existing enterprises and starting new enterprises.

The most frequent response was to discuss the performance with family, friends, neighbours and relatives – around 73% respondents did that. Considerably more respondents in Polonnaruwa district (80%) than Puttalam (66%) discussed the plays. Interestingly also, considerably more men (78%) discussed it, than women (68%). A high proportion of youth (78%) discussed the play with friends and family. Many respondents simply stated that they had discussed the play with others but had done nothing concrete after that.

Several respondents pointed out that it had made a deeper impression on the community than other events.

*People discussed it because it was important. They really liked it and after a while it went into their hearts. It was also very entertaining. People who didn't know that they have to walk on the right path took an example from it – not us who knew that from before. People in our village didn't start new businesses after Palama but it might have been an example for other villagers. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

Some considered the notion of business but decided that it was not appropriate for them.

*I discussed with my wife who didn't see it. It was a very good play with lots of things to learn from if you have a bit of brain. I didn't get the brochure. It's difficult to start a business but it makes us think of something – prices are so high to make ends meet. I learnt after doing fish trading for a little while that if your heart/mind is good, you can't do business. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

However, some referred to changes in their thinking and attitudes.

*We discussed the plays and ideas with other villagers at the Gemi Diriya [organization] meetings. I also thought I must change the way of thinking from old attitudes. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*We discussed with my teenage sons that we shouldn't get caught to thieves but do something with our own efforts. I realized I was glad that I'm doing my own business. I had been abroad before and decided that I shouldn't go abroad all the time, that it was better to stay at home, take care of the kids, do my part-time business and develop ourselves. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

Some younger respondents in a coastal village had video-taped parts of the play in their mobile phones to show family and friends.

*We discussed with the family about the people from the village who performed on stage. We have a livelihood so we don't have to find another one. But it gave an idea to start for those who don't. I recorded it in my mobile and showed the video to my mother, brother and friends on the beach. Pity, they couldn't make it. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam).*

Around 18% of respondents said that they have considered the idea of starting a business after *Palama* – more in Puttalam district than in Polonnaruwa. As only 3-5 months have passed since respondents in Puttalam saw the performance, the possibility remains that some of these potential starters would actually start. Considerably more men than women considered starting a business, and around 39% of youth said they have considered this idea, following *Palama*. Tamil respondents had thought more about the idea of starting a business than Sinhalese respondents.

*I thought of starting a business after Palama - a prawn farm. I want to find money to start it. I am planning to save money from my current job. (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*We discussed the possibility of doing our own business. I encouraged my family members to start our own business. (Male Tamil Hindu Youth, Puttalam)*

*We discussed the play – everything went into our minds. We were also happy that it happened in the kovil, which is our religious centre. I thought of going to some of the places in the brochure to find out more about business but didn't have the time as I work in Colombo. (Male, Tamil Hindu Non-entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I discussed the possibility of doing my own business. I also encouraged other people to start business. (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)*

*I have considered doing business as a livelihood option. After my A/Ls I am planning to start a shop that sells phone cards. I am planning to borrow some money from my elder brother. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)*

*I discussed the plays and ideas with my friends. Most of them liked Simon Florists because it was very funny. They gave us brochures. Later I also thought of starting to cultivate water cress. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*Previously I had some ideas to start a business. The Palama group gave more courage to reinforce that idea. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)*

*I gained a lot of strength from this play and decided to start a business, such as a grocery shop in the future. (Female Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I discussed the ideas with other villagers and considered doing a business as a livelihood option. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Non-entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I considered doing business as a livelihood option but did not pursue it because of financial problems (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Non-entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*We discussed the play in the village since everyone liked it. I got the idea to do business- perhaps in the future. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I discussed the plays and ideas with the friends. I also thought I must start a business one day. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*I discussed the plays and ideas with other villagers. I did a small business before – tailoring. It collapsed due to my other social work. I'm thinking of starting another business again because I already got some training from the People's Company on various things. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Non-Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

Around 39% of existing entrepreneurs said they got the idea to improve/expand or found more strength to continue their business following *Palama*. This was considerably higher among male (44%) than female (29%) entrepreneurs.

*We discussed the play with enthusiasm. Everyone thought it was good entertainment. Unfortunately, there was no follow-up or guidance after that. I went to the Chamber of Commerce to get information for my brother, who has a fertilizer business. I wanted to see whether he could improve it but they asked me to bring some documents and I didn't go back. (Male, Tamil Hindu Influencer, Puttalam)*

*I discussed the plays and ideas with other villagers. I also got some ideas to improve the business. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I also thought of improving my business after *Palama*. I would like to get a loan to buy more cattle to expand the business. (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I found more strength to continue my current business. (Female Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*I found more strength to continue my current business. I thought that whatever problems I face I must run the business. My dedication and courage is the main reason why I could improve the business so far. *Palama* gave me some kind of support to reinforce this idea. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*The message given by the *Palama* group was always in my mind. I kept the idea of improving my business in my mind. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*



## 6. The impact of *Palama* relative to other enterprise development programmes

In assessing the significance of the *Palama* performances in relation to other business or livelihood-related activities that took place in these villages, around 44% of respondents revealed that they considered the *Palama* theatre performance as “very important”, “important” or “somewhat important” in changing their view or behaviour towards enterprise. The proportion of respondents were considerably higher in Puttalam district with 48% considering it “very important”, “important” or “somewhat important” while in Polonnaruwa district the comparative proportion was 40%. These data on impact for Polonnaruwa district is consistent with the results of the Quasi-experimental Study of 2007<sup>16</sup> which found that 41% of the sample was strongly involved in the performance and were significantly affected in terms of their beliefs about business.

The respondents, who considered *Palama* performances as “very important” or “important”, ranged from those who has started or improved their businesses to those who were more open to business as a livelihood option. They identified *Palama* as the primary or catalytic factor in changing their attitude or behaviour.

*CEFE had given me the training and Gemi Diriya gave me experience of small group facilitation but Palama gave me the resolution to start my business. I got a grant from my grandmother to purchase the machinery and credit from Gemi Diriya twice now to buy supplies. It was a live performance so my idea to do a business became alive. Earlier it had just been a dream. I made up my mind to do a business that will not collapse.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after *Palama*, Polonnaruwa)

*I never thought of starting a business before Palama. I got the strength and idea to start my business, a rice flour mill, after the performance. My courage and strength was also very useful. I took loans and other help from Gemi Diriya.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after *Palama*)

*My dedication and courage is the main reason for the improvements in my business. Palama supported me to reinforce the idea in my mind.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)

*The Palama performance was a big influence in changing my attitudes. I started to think that one day I must start a business of my own.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*Palama, the Entrepreneurial Studies course and discussions I had with friends all have influenced me to consider to do business after “A” level and to learn more about doing business. Earlier I had thought about it only a little.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*I never had an idea to start a business before I saw Palama.* (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)

*To improve my business the loan and training from Sarvodaya was very important. I also took a loan from Samurdhi after Palama to improve the business.* (Male, Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)

*It gave a new life to my thinking. I now have new hopes about doing business.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)

*I got courage to start a business. I think that some people in this community got a lot of ideas from the play to start or improve their businesses - just like us.* (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Puttalam)

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<sup>16</sup> Hakemulder, F. 2007. *Ibid.*

*Ceylinco Grameen was very important for me to start my business. Now I'm not a member because I don't need any loans. They were sorry that I left because I was a good client – I was even photographed in their newsletter. Palama gave me courage to continue my business and not go overseas. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*Palama was important to become aware of doing business without becoming indebted. (Male, Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*After seeing Palama I wanted to start a business. The message became already established in my mind. I was very impressed by the drama. I also performed. (Female, Sinhala Catholic Youth, Puttalam)*

*Palama was important to respect people doing business. (Male, Tamil Hindu Youth)*

Other respondents saw Palama being one of the factors contributing to their decisions or change in attitude and considered it as “somewhat important”. They also pointed to their own courage and strength, as well as the services of other organizations.

*Palama encouraged us to join the People's Company - otherwise we would have continued on our own and not restarted. I had got credit from Sarvodaya before to do a mud pond. Palama was somewhat important to improve our business – we made new tanks and a second mud pond and bought breeding stock by getting a loan from Gemi Diriya. I'm planning to lease more land and construct three more mud ponds, as well as buy new breeding stock. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Starter after Palama, Polonnaruwa)*

*To improve my chicken farm I got some ideas and advice from the drama. Palama somewhat contributed to improve the businesses of this village while the Gemi Diriya programme provides loans for the people to start businesses. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa).*

*The training I got from the Mahaweli Authority and Milco was useful to improve my livestock business but I got courage from the Palama group. (Female Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*After working with the youth services, I thought that it is important to start a business of my own. I got this idea from my teachers. And I respect the idea of doing something of your own. I think Palama was very useful for village people to improve their businesses. There are other programs in the village to support village people. The youth co-operative association for example provides loans for small and medium enterprises such as mushroom, fish, dried fish, and envelopes. I am planning to get a loan from the Samurdhi to start my business. (Female, Sinhala Buddhist Youth, Polonnaruwa)*

*The message given by the Palama group was always on my mind, I also thought I must use those ideas to improve my business. I got strength from the group. (Male, Sinhala Buddhist Entrepreneur, Polonnaruwa)*

*I also thought of starting a prawn farm and improving my life. I think the Palama performance somewhat helped village people to improve and to start businesses. (Male Tamil Hindu Non-Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*That was the time I re-opened the prawn hatchery that my father started. I got courage to continue the business. (Male, Sinhala Catholic Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

*My courage is the main thing for me to improve my business. Palama somewhat helped me to get new ideas for the business. (Male Tamil Hindu Entrepreneur, Puttalam)*

## **7. The impact of the Entrepreneurial Studies course**

The main role of the Enter-Growth project was supporting the introduction of an Entrepreneurial Studies (ES) course in the secondary school curriculum and assisting the National Institute of Education in its design. However, there were several institutional issues around the introduction of the course by the Ministry of Education not conducive to its smooth implementation. Among these were the time of introduction (prior to teaching materials and text books being available) and the basket within which this optional subject was placed (first as a replacement to the more established Business and Accounts Studies (BAS) course, and eventually as an alternative). The project had little influence over these factors, as the policy decision on introducing the new course, as well as its implementation was within the mandate of the Ministry of Education and NIE. While teachers were mostly positive about the content of the course, they expressed a number of institutional obstacles. The majority of students who participated in focus group discussions were very positive about the course as being both useful and interesting and those who were no longer taking it expressed the view that they would have continued with the subject if the school had provided them with the option.

### **7.1 Institutional issues**

The Entrepreneurial Studies (ES) course was introduced as a two-year “O” level (Year 10-11) optional subject of the “first category”<sup>17</sup> in 2007. Master teachers were trained at the National Institute of Education (NIE) for seven days the previous year. The training covered two model lessons and the new teaching methodology introduced by the NIE – the more interactive E-5 system. Two master teachers were trained from Thopawewa M.V. and Bendiwewa M.V. for the Polonnaruwa district and one from the Zonal Education Office in Chilaw for the Puttalam district. Within the zonal educational offices of the districts, teachers were trained in a 3-day programme by the master teachers. Five schools in the Polonnaruwa district are reported to have started the ES course – Thopawewa M.V., Seva Mukta Kandawura M.V, Bendiwewa M.V., Rajakeeya National School and Hingurakdmana M.V. of which the former three continue to offer the subject. The course was introduced in six schools in Puttalam district in the Chilaw Zonal area in 2007 –Vadivambika Tamil M.V., Nasriya M.V., Karukupanai Tamil M.V., Al Jira M.V. and Al Mizba Muslim M.V. All six have stopped teaching the course after six months.

In the more “urbanized” school in Polonnaruwa, 60 out of 88 students chose the ES option among the “first category” subjects in 2007. The rest chose Geography. However, in 2008 only 25 out of 119 students chose ES. In 2007, when ES had been first introduced into the school system, a subject that had been taught in the school system for over 20 years in Year 10/11- Business Management and Accounts Studies (BAS) – had been taken out of the “first category”. Thus, ES effectively replaced BAS. However later in 2007, BAS was reintroduced and the majority of students of Year 10 in 2008 chose this over ES and Geography. In the rural school in Polonnaruwa, 10 students out of 31 chose ES in 2007. However, three months later the teacher discontinued teaching the subject and shifted the students to BAS. At another urban school in Polonnaruwa, 39 out of 180 students chose the subject in 2007 and are continuing with the course. However, the subject was given over to another teacher in 2008, since the previous teacher had to teach “A” level students – this led to the course no longer being taught to Year 10 students, as the other teacher was reported to be not interested in teaching the course.

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<sup>17</sup> Optional subjects are offered in three “baskets” of categories at Year 10 level.

In one of the urban schools in Puttalam district, the subject was discontinued after three months when the volunteer teacher who had been teaching it left. All (14) students in the English medium and a minority (14) of students in the Tamil medium had chosen this subject before they too were moved into BAS. In the other urban school in Puttalam district, 12 students out of 65 took the ES option, while the majority did Geography and a few chose Sinhalese. The school discontinued ES after six months and students took BAS instead.

Among the two main reasons offered was that teaching materials came too late into 2007 to teach the course effectively, as well as a lack of teachers or lack of interest by teachers to teach this subject. It was pointed out in the Polonnaruwa schools that text books and the first teaching manual for Year 10 came in March 2007, although the subject was introduced in January 2007. The second teaching manual for Year 10 came in September 2007. For Year 11, the text book came on time in January 2008, while the teaching manuals came in March. Now all teaching materials are in place but the previous delays discouraged both the teachers and students currently in Year 11, teachers argued. This resulted in lesser numbers of students choosing the subject in Year 10 in 2008, if at all. In the rural school, the first teacher's manual had been used to cover the syllabus for the first three months; but when no new one was forthcoming, the teacher said that she did not know what to teach the students, so she discontinued teaching ES. It was pointed out that although the students had been shifted to BAS, it was difficult to cover the BAS syllabus because of the time lost in students taking and dropping ES. The school had a shortage of teachers in commerce-related subjects in any case, resulting in students no longer having the commerce option available for "A" level as in the past. Thus, this school was currently teaching the subjects of Commerce and BAS only to "O" level students.

In one of the Puttalam schools, the Principal said the subject was discontinued due to the lack of a teacher. They did not even have a teacher for BAS but students offered the subject at "O" level by taking private tuition. Tuition teachers of BAS had discouraged students from taking ES and lobbied for the reintroduction of BAS, arguing that students needed the "O" level foundation to continue on to "A" level Business Studies or Commerce. Other teachers in Puttalam district also confirmed that many teachers and unions protested and lobbied until BAS was reintroduced. It was a problem that both subjects were in the same basket. If they were in two separate baskets, more students might combine the two subjects. Right now ES was in the same basket of subjects with BAS and Sinhala language. At one school, they encouraged students to take Sinhala language because it was considered important to know all three languages for both the local and international job markets. Sinhala was the option made available at school because they had no difficulty finding a teacher. The tuition teachers impressed upon students that they would find BAS useful if they go abroad to study or work. There was insufficient support from those with influence in the education system to ensure that subjects like ES, although useful for students, would be taught. At the other Puttalam school too, the teaching materials came too late and the volunteer teacher who was more familiar with BAS discontinued teaching ES after six months. This school also had a problem with the shortage of teachers - 13 of their cadre were missing. The principals of both schools attributed the teacher shortage to the general neglect of Tamil medium teaching in the country. They pointed out that this made it particularly difficult to introduce new subjects such as ES.

## 7.2 Assessment by teachers

All master teachers in the two districts, as well as one of the teachers in Puttalam district, thought that Entrepreneurial Studies was a good course in terms of content because it provided more practical, general knowledge than subjects such as Business and Accounts Studies. They pointed out that ES oriented children towards enterprise as a livelihood option, rather than government jobs. The ES course was considered very useful, especially for school leavers, who cannot go on to the “A” level or university. It was argued that only 2-5% of the age cohort goes to university in any case. By following this course, students could learn to start their own business, using resources available in their villages with small or big amounts of capital. It was noted that all students were not brilliant and ES was useful for weak students who could explore self-employment possibilities. It was important to promote self-employment, especially among girls, since they could earn something and be independent, even after marriage, it was argued. Both partners needed to earn an income under the present economic conditions. Enterprise was a real livelihood option for them to improve their lives without any barriers. ES could also benefit students even if they continue with “A” levels. Unfortunately since the subject was new, parents are unaware and do not encourage children to take this option, they pointed out. ES can also give the opportunity to hold exhibitions and showcase the talents of children in handicrafts. Parents have a lot of expectations from their children but they need to realize that all students cannot get into university, they said. If the subject is taught properly, it would help children earn a livelihood and not burden the parents. As in India, there needs to be more technical education for school leavers in Sri Lanka, they argued.

For the subject to gain a higher level of acceptance in the school system, principals and teachers needed to decide that it was useful, a master teacher pointed out. More teachers need to be trained. If NIE did more awareness-raising on the benefits of this subject with principals it would catch on, he pointed out. Although he was doing his best – he had trained seven teachers in both Sinhala and Tamil media in this subject – students were now taking BAS. Another master teacher noted that since all materials were in place, the present Year 10 batch of students could be taught the course properly if students and teachers opted for ES. In terms of content, one master teacher commented that the curriculum of the ES course had become longer and more cumbersome with new elements from BAS added onto ES because some curriculum developers thought that it would provide a better foundation for students who wished to continue business studies at “A” level.

Several teachers expressed concern with the response of students to an examination paper on the subject. Teachers had not yet seen a model examination paper for ES, although some guidelines on this had been sent to schools recently and they wondered whether students would lose out by choosing this subject over the familiar BAS, with which teachers had more experience. Some said they were not sure about the limits of the topic – how broadly or focused they should be teaching the subject for the students to be able to perform well in their examination. They thought that it would be difficult to set an examination in a practical subject such as ES. A dissenting view was that it was not difficult to prepare an examination paper on the subject because students could be tested on their understanding of concepts and application around case studies of enterprises. Students, he pointed out, are very interested in the subject but they are being encouraged to take BAS because everyone is used to it.

The majority of teachers identified institutional problems in teaching ES in the school system. These include the inflexibility of school time tables, making it difficult to implement the E-5 system and cover the syllabus, the constraints in implementing new concepts in the existing school environment, and the low level of knowledge among teachers on Entrepreneurial Studies compared with Business and Accounts Studies. It was pointed out that the E-5 system was not implemented for any other subject because no instructions were available, unlike in the ES

course where the E-5 system was integrated into the curriculum. Children were not used to doing group work and found some of the tasks difficult and there were some contradictions between the text book and the teacher's handbook. It was also pointed out that it might be a bit difficult for rural children to get information and knowledge relevant to the subject, relative to children in an urban environment. Moreover, it was argued that a new subject such as ES was difficult to teach in a school that had few resources, textbooks for most subjects were late in coming, and the best students were constantly going to larger and better schools in the area.

In addition to the institutional constraints, one teacher thought that the ES curriculum had no secondary educational value and it was primarily suitable for school leavers.

Teachers who thought that ES should be promoted as an option proposed that teaching manuals should be improved and that additional hand-outs and guidelines were needed. They proposed the inclusion of sections on costing and calculations for investments and ideas about how to obtain capital from banks. Teachers also needed more training on this subject, they said. It was pointed out that the curriculum was a good one in general and with some modifications both commerce and social studies teachers could be trained to teach it within the district, and more students would opt to take it together with BAS, if it were placed in a different basket.

### **7.3 Assessment by students**

In all four schools the students had been informed about the new subject option by their class teachers and decided to take it on their own initiative. In one of the schools in Polonnaruwa district the majority of students decided to take ES, in one school in Puttalam, the entire English medium students took the subject, while in other schools a minority chose the option. The main reasons offered for taking it was that it was a new subject, it seemed easy, interesting and it was useful for their future to know about enterprise. In Puttalam some students pointed out that they were planning to specialize in the commerce stream for the "A" levels and they thought this subject would be particularly useful.

All students, except those in the Tamil medium in one of the Puttalam schools, said they liked the subject and enjoyed what they had learnt. Students in a Polonnaruwa school assessed it overall as a good course because it was easy to learn and they had been able to gain knowledge about enterprises and business that they had not known before. If something was not clear to them, they could ask their teacher and clarify any topics or questions. Among topics which they had particularly liked or considered useful was "entrepreneurial environment", "enterprise and shares", and "enterprise and book-keeping". The first two topics were considered of value because they got an understanding of the difference between an urban environment and a rural environment, especially in terms of pricing. The book-keeping part was also seen to be useful for determining prices if one starts an enterprise. In the other school in Polonnaruwa, the students said that they liked the sections on "what is entrepreneurship" and the "characteristics of an entrepreneur" because it was knowledge that they could make use of in their lives. In one of the Puttalam schools, the English medium students said that they liked ES because it was based on mathematics and related to economics, business and banking. It was both interesting and easy. It brought out their talents. They had learnt about entrepreneurship and made crafts to sell, they pointed out. They liked the problem-solving and practical aspects, and the teaching method – role playing by teachers and the activity based syllabus, they said. It was taught to them in Tamil because that was the only teacher available, although they would have preferred to have been taught in English. In the other Puttalam school, students said that they liked the course because it was very interesting and brought out their talents. They learnt to utilize waste and make something useful. It was easier to learn than

other subjects, they claimed. They liked producing handicrafts because they could use that knowledge even after they finished school and do small industries, such as from coconut shells.

The students (all of whom were boys), who did not like the subject in the Tamil medium of one school, said they found the course boring because there was too much handicraft making in it. The only good part was marketing what they had made, they added. The students in all four schools, who were positive in their assessment, said that there were no components of the ES course that they disliked. In one Puttalam school, students said: "We liked 100% of it". In one Polonnaruwa school students suggested adding a section on the type of enterprises where profit margins were higher than the ones they were used to, such as a grocery store. Their teacher confirmed that the topics were good but the book-keeping sections which now come at the end of Year 11 could be divided between Year 10 and 11.

In three of the schools where the ES was no longer being taught, students said they stopped taking the course because the school discontinued teaching it as there were no teachers to teach the subject or there were no textbooks. They pointed out that they were advised by teachers to switch to BAS, which they could continue on at the "A" levels.

### ***Views on starting one's own business***

All students who participated in the focus group discussions were unanimous that starting one's own business was a good idea. The main reasons provided were that it was good to do something of one's own and not to be under the control or dependent on someone else. Students in the Puttalam schools, as well as in one school in Polonnaruwa also concurred that business was a good idea because one can provide employment to others. In two schools the use of new technology and inventions in business was considered a benefit.

Students in one school in Polonnaruwa pointed out additionally that self-employment was a good alternative if one did not get a job, that one could earn a profit, and provide good quality goods in the market. In the other school, students mentioned that through business one got experience for life, learnt to meet challenges and make decisions. In one of the Puttalam schools English medium students pointed out that one could produce one's own goods according to one's wishes, using one's brains. It was good for the future of the children if parents did business. They also added that sometimes there could be losses and that profits were not assured all the time. In the same school, Tamil medium students thought that a person could improve his/her life and economy and be satisfied with her/his effort by doing business. There was exposure to people of other countries and one could find a place in the world market for products by improving the quality of these products. In the other school in Puttalam, students pointed out that in the current economic situation, money played an important role. The next generation they thought would need even more money to live and that this could be earned through business.

### ***Views on business people in their communities***

The majority of students offered positive views about the characteristics and skills of people doing business in their communities. Most emphasised good customer relations and their role in introducing new products, technologies and ideas to their communities, and thought highly of their ability to improve their lives and that of their families. Students in one Polonnaruwa school perceived that business people in their communities were able to attract customers, produce new goods, had creative ideas, could bear losses if they had them and tried to make customers happy. When queried for weaknesses of business people, it was pointed out that there were some who were not reasonable because they sold goods at high prices, they were not cordial with customers and got angry easily ("they try to butt you if you ask something twice from

them”), they sold bad quality goods or gave less weight. In the rural Polonnaruwa school, students perceived business people in their village as efficient, cordial in their relations with others, hard working and rising in life through their own effort. When queried about weaknesses, they added that some business people used wrong ways in conducting the enterprise.

In one of the Puttalam schools, English medium students saw business people as very busy, improving their economic situation and family life, sending their children to international schools so that they could have bright futures. They also pointed out that if they have losses, the whole family can suffer. They had new ideas, introduced new technology and were able to solve problems. They have exposure to foreign countries and introduced new business practices and products to the country. The Tamil medium students in the same school perceived business people as experiencing a step-by-step improvement in their lives and pointed out that they inevitably improved their lives. In the other Puttalam school students said that business people had unity and were practical, although they did not speak much. Their aim was focused on business, not on their individual welfare but contributing to that of others, such as their family.

All students who participated in the focus groups were very positive about the social and economic role performed by business people. They referred to social welfare activities and said that business people helped society by donating funds to schools, temples/churches/mosques, hospitals, orphanages, the elderly and the handicapped. They also provided support for household rituals, such as alms-giving ceremonies and funerals, and assisted the poor with food and clothing. The majority of students mentioned the economic role of entrepreneurs in providing employment to other people. Students in Puttalam district emphasised that entrepreneurs helped the development of villages by applying new techniques, introducing new ideas and products. They supplied goods that were not usually available in the district or country. They developed small industries in the district. They pointed out that entrepreneurs bring the economy of the country to a higher level by providing good services. They helped the country by producing exports. They also contributed to society by paying taxes, they said.

### ***Views on gender and ethnic dimensions of business***

Students views were mixed on whether men or women were better at business. In the urbanized Polonnaruwa school, the majority of students (most girls and some boys) perceived that women were better at business than men, while a minority (most boys and some girls) thought both men and women were equally skilled. It was argued that women were in the forefront in self-employment in their villages, that they made additional money for the household and knew how to get a profit, that they were more creative and they could attract more customers, because of their beauty. Those who said both were equally skilled perceived that men brought home more money than women. The majority (all girls and some boys) in the rural Polonnaruwa school thought that both men and women were equally skilled at business because they both had good ideas and creativity. The minority (all boys) which thought men were better at business said this was because men could meet challenges, bear risk, could get directly involved in any kind of work and there was more support for men to do business within their cultural setting.

The majority (all girls) of the English medium of one Puttalam school perceived women were better at business. They argued that it has been scientifically proven that they have more strength than men and they can achieve more, so they have success, they think brilliantly and have new ideas. Women were also considered to be more humble and patient and thus able to solve problems better. Although more men did business in the past, women were more active, coming forward in society and able to achieve their goals now, they said. Women have a say in society now, it was emphasised. The minority (all boys) in the English medium thought men



were more skilled at business because they were braver than women. They argued that all big business leaders, such as Bill Gates and Ambani, were men. Who is a woman business leader, they asked. The majority (all boys) of the Tamil medium students considered that men were better at business, while the dissenting view was that both were equally good. Men were considered brave, having more strength, power and knowledge, and more experience in society. Women were said to offer jobs to other women and get ahead in life. In the other Puttalam school, the majority (both boys and girls) thought men were better at business. They explained this by referring to social traditions and expectations that encourage men do business. They said that men have the interest for business and the strength to face problems. Although women can also do business, society did not accept that, they pointed out. Women were also seen to have language/communication problems because women often knew only their mother tongue, whereas men learnt other languages, as well.

All students in Polonnaruwa district and the majority of students in Puttalam district concurred that of all ethnic groups resident in their district, Muslims were the best at business. Muslims were perceived to sell goods at reasonable prices to improve their economic situation (unlike Sinhalese who tried to increase prices) and to be able to attract customers by talking nicely. They brought goods that customers wanted from faraway places and were always willing to get goods from another enterprise if they did not have stock. They were seen to keep their shops in an orderly fashion. They were also considered very efficient and cunning. Many students referred to a historical tradition in business among Muslims. In one of the Puttalam schools students perceived that Muslims had special knowledge about food and thus operated restaurants/hotels and that they had gained experience in business-oriented foreign countries such as Dubai, where they had learnt new things.

Some of the students of the Puttalam schools perceived that all ethnic groups were equal at business. They pointed out that the Sinhalese were the majority and owned many businesses in Chilaw. Moreover, Tamils and Sinhala Catholics were dominant in enterprises in the fishing sector. However, Sinhalese tended to prefer government jobs and thought “within Sri Lanka” while Tamils and Muslims wanted to go out of the country and expand their enterprises.

### ***Views on future career options***

The majority of students who participated in the focus group discussions from all four schools wanted to continue their education to the highest level possible and hoped that they would pass their examinations to enter university or a higher educational institution and pursue professional careers. Medicine, engineering, IT, law, banking, accountancy and insurance were mentioned as the most desirable fields. In the more urbanized Polonnaruwa school, the majority said that their first preference was a government job because it provided a stable career; some also referred to the pension that would be available. If they were unable to get a government job, the majority said they would opt for a job in the private sector, while a considerable minority considered going into business. In the rural Polonnaruwa school, students said that if they did not pass their examinations, they would like to have a job appropriate to their skills and related to the subjects they have studied. The majority here expected to have jobs in the private sector, especially as sales assistants in businesses, a job which they were familiar with, while a minority thought of engaging in self-employment/ business.

In Puttalam district students were open towards professional employment in both private and government sectors. Some said they would consider business, depending on their results and if their ideas changed about what would be a good job by then. Several students who came from business backgrounds said they had no intention of taking over their family business but might start new businesses of their own with new ideas. Their parents had no influence over their decisions, they said – “our future is our choice”. Some students in this district saw business as an opportunity to earn part-time income (“side business”). Among such side businesses identified as desirable were grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, prawn hatcheries and tutorials.

In Polonnaruwa district, the minority of students who said they wanted to do business stressed the importance of independence. They pointed out that business was something that could be pursued for one’s own improvement, that one was not working under anyone else and could follow one’s own schedule. The money earned through enterprise was seen to be their own. They could develop their business according to their own liking and ideas, would learn new things and gain a lot of experience. Several of these students said that the idea to do business came after following the ES course and was directly influenced by it. They would not have considered it an option for the future if not for the course. Otherwise, they pointed out, they knew little about business, especially those who came from farming backgrounds but even those who had parents who were self-employed. One student added that since she took the course she convinced her mother who was “doing nothing at home” to start a tea shop one year ago and that this business was doing well now. One student thought enterprise was appropriate for her because she was a creative person. Several students, who were interested in the enterprise option for their future in the rural Polonnaruwa school, said that although the ES course had been terminated in their school it would be a good idea to teach it again, if text books and teaching materials were available.

Several students who were considering business in Puttalam district said they had support from family or teachers for considering that option. One student pointed out that subjects like medicine were tough and she was encouraged by her teacher to consider business after “O” level. She considered business as something she could continue even after marriage – such as running a hotel or producing handicrafts. She could give job opportunities to others, she said. Another student had aspirations to study management abroad and come back to Sri Lanka and start her own business. Both her teacher and family members encouraged her to consider this option, she said. Yet another student said that he wanted to do business because of the regular cash flow in his hands. He emphasized the potential for creating jobs and exchanging new ideas. He pointed out that he spent a lot of time with older family members and friends who shared their experiences and gave him ideas and advice.

## **8. Overall changes in the enterprise culture of the districts**

The findings of the focus group discussions with influencers and entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa and Puttalam districts reveal a positive assessment overall of the idea of doing business, views of business people within the district and their roles, and openness to women doing business. The majority of participants of the focus groups were also affirmative about the abilities of all ethnic groups to do business. The majority were positive about changes in enterprise culture and overwhelmingly positive about the contribution of Enter-Growth to these changes. They made valuable suggestions to enhance the enterprise culture component of the project. The only dissenting views were offered by entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district who were pessimistic about the macro-economic situation in the country and the enabling environment for doing business. However, they too were positive about the efforts made by Enter-Growth to improve the enabling environment within the district.

### **8.1 Attitudes towards enterprise and business people**

#### ***The idea of starting a business***

The idea of starting one's own business was viewed positively by influencers of both districts. Influencers in Polonnaruwa pointed out that they would encourage people to start businesses and that there were many programmes within the government, private and NGO sectors which supported starters. Many banks had loan programmes for starters, as long as they were willing to operate a bank account for six months prior to receiving the loan, they said. Institutional coordination among the three sectors had improved due to the Micro Small Enterprise (MSE) Forums, initiated by Enter-Growth, they pointed out. Influencers in Puttalam said that consideration had to be given to the type of enterprises that could be started – products need to be in demand and raw materials need to be available in the district. Attitude, training and advice from knowledgeable people, traditional knowledge, and good organization were all important for starting a business. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam district mentioned sufficient capital, time and mental independence as significant for starting a business. It was difficult to start enterprises with employees because the cost of on-the-job training was high. Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district, however, pointed out that the economic situation in the country was not conducive to starting businesses; expenses were high and they were making a lot of effort to operate, maintain and protect current enterprises. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam district said it was not a good idea to start large-scale businesses in the current situation but it was possible to start micro and small enterprises. Awareness-raising about business needed to be continued to change attitudes of banks and make government regulations more conducive, they said. Influencers in Puttalam district pointed out that although it was difficult to start businesses in the present economic situation, people also had no other option than business, as other employment opportunities were limited.

#### ***Views towards business people in the district***

The views towards business people in the district were very positive among influencers and entrepreneurs in both Polonnaruwa and Puttalam. All perceived that entrepreneurs in the two districts had the necessary skills and abilities to do business. Influencers in Polonnaruwa said that the number of entrepreneurs in the district was higher than in neighbouring districts, and proportionately larger, considering the population density of the district, that they won many

entrepreneurship awards both at the provincial and national levels and that there were nationally recognized large-scale enterprises in the district. They also considered that entrepreneurs in the district were economically strong, had invested in innovative industries, were well-organized in associations, cooperated for common interests and had political support. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam district thought that entrepreneurs in the district developed with their own skills, despite the circumstances around them, that they had dreams and goals, thought differently than other people, and that they had effort, resolution, commitment and creativity. They also perceived business people to be customer-oriented, aware of the need for quality and used new technologies whenever they were able to. Influencers in Puttalam perceived that entrepreneurs in the district had the mental capacity to identify resources and that they were able to face and win challenges. Business was done using traditional knowledge and to some extent modern knowledge, they said, and that business people had access to enterprise development services within the district. Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district were less positive about the capacity of entrepreneurs to access finances and new technical knowledge, beyond what they already possessed. They said that loans were difficult to obtain and repay, and payments due to them from clients did not come on time and that there was no agency to assist entrepreneurs. Influencers in Puttalam also mentioned indebtedness among entrepreneurs, and dependency on middlemen in both the farming and fishing sectors.

### ***The role of business people in the district***

Influencers and entrepreneurs identified positively the social support provided by entrepreneurs to religious and cultural events, such as temple and church festivals, as well as welfare services to pre-schools, schools, orphanages and hospitals in their communities. Influencers in Puttalam pointed out that entrepreneurs were self-sufficient in meeting their own needs, as well as selling surplus to markets. Their social and cultural support had positive impacts on health, education and communication within communities. Influencers and entrepreneurs in Puttalam also referred to the *zakat* system among the Muslims and a similar proportion of earnings set aside by Catholics for social welfare activities and the poor. Influencers in Puttalam recognized the contribution of entrepreneurs in transmitting “business thinking” or the “business mind” from generation to generation within communities.

In addition, all participants in Puttalam and influencers in Polonnaruwa were positive about the economic role of business people - job opportunities created by entrepreneurs within the district. Influencers and entrepreneurs in Puttalam also mentioned the multiplier effects of employment creation – i.e. jobs resulted in positive impacts in developing the household economies of employees. In contrast, entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa said that new job opportunities were difficult to create within the current economic situation, it was not easy to pay wages of existing employees and there had been some retrenchment in the last year. They also pointed out that their contribution to community welfare activities had declined due to this situation and that they had neither the resources nor the state of mind for helping the community: “Only if we have good earnings, we can give to others”. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam also concurred that giving to others was relative to the success of their enterprises.

### ***Gender dimensions of business***

The majority of influencers in both districts and entrepreneurs in Puttalam perceived that both genders were equally good at business. Some pointed out that the individual skills and abilities or the quality of the product were the most important factors, rather than the gender of the person. Others said that there were different types of enterprises more appropriate for men or women. Influencers in Polonnaruwa said that men were better at large-scale businesses while women were better at small-scale ones.

Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa and a minority of participants in the other focus groups perceived that men were better at business, because the majority of people doing business within that district was men and that the cultural environment did not support women (who were said to show *lejjabaya* – shyness/fear). Men were considered to make more effort, have more commitment, technical knowledge and strength to meet challenges and the ability to bear higher risks. In addition, men were seen to have a better capacity for building business networks and freedom to move around at any time of the day or night. Some influencers in Puttalam also pointed out that since girls had higher achievement rates in education and were therefore more eligible for state and private sector employment, the only sector available for boys was business.

The minority of participants, who thought women were better at business, expressed this in terms of women being better able to attract customers and having better memory that helped them in business negotiations and accounts. They also referred to women's higher ability to multi-task and repay loans. Others said that a household's development was primarily in the hands of women and behind every successful man, there was an intelligent woman.

### ***Ethnic dimensions of business***

Influencers of both districts and entrepreneurs in Puttalam district considered that all ethnic groups were equally skilful at business. Individual skills and experience were considered the most important factor for business success. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam also mentioned that luck was important as well.

Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa and a minority of participants in other focus groups perceived that Muslims were better at business. They explained this positively in terms of ability to attract the customer and other business strategies, being good with words, having patience, honesty and cordiality. They also pointed out a past tradition in trading and unity among the group, readiness to engage in small and difficult businesses and change from one business to another in case of failure. Some among entrepreneurs in Puttalam referred negatively to the cunning of Muslim entrepreneurs.

Influencers and entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district mentioned that the leading entrepreneurs in the district were Sinhalese, although in the past most rice mills had been owned by Muslims.

### ***Openness to business as a livelihood option***

Entrepreneurs in both districts and influencers in Puttalam concurred that their advice to school leavers on their career options would depend on the individual skills, talents, preferences and attitudes of the youth themselves. In Polonnaruwa district, both influencers and entrepreneurs emphasized higher education to the extent possible for school leavers, and then formal vocational training or self-employment. Influencers pointed out that knowledge of English and computers was vital. Entrepreneurs commented on the low earnings from the government sector, relative to the private sector. Influencers in Puttalam district prioritized vocational training as a preparation for either self-employment or employment in the government and private sectors. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam were divided between those who prioritized higher education and self-employment/business for school leavers.

Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa and influencers in Puttalam also perceived that migration overseas for employment was the best option because the job opportunities in Sri Lanka brought very little earnings. Vocational training was seen to be important as a prerequisite for

foreign employment as well. Influencers in Polonnaruwa pointed out that although they supported the message of the social marketing campaign, *Palama*, to engage in business/self-employment, government was still pushing state sector employment and there was only a small positive change in attitude in government institutions towards both vocational training and self-employment. They also pointed out that the number of youth going in for vocational training was still insufficient to meet the needs of the market, such as for carpenters.

Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa felt that youth should engage even in casual employment, if they have no other options, and not be a burden to society. Influencers in Puttalam perceived that school leavers should be directed to employment sectors that demonstrated excellence and be encouraged to do something new. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam thought additionally that youth should be disciplined, cultivate a feeling for the country and be aware that there will always be changes in the future (relative to what they prepare for as a career option). They also advocated comprehensive change in government policy on education – they perceived, that without such changes, giving advice to school leavers on their career options was not meaningful.

## **8.2 Changes in the enterprise culture of the district**

Influencers of both districts and entrepreneurs in Puttalam district saw positive changes in the enterprise culture of the two districts. Support for enterprise among government and private sector institutions promoting business development, as well as banks, have increased, they pointed out. Influencers in Polonnaruwa perceived that the value of business has increased among government institutions. They referred to attitudinal changes among the highest-level officers in the District Secretariat as a result of the MSE Forum, initiated by Enter-Growth. The MSE Forum has become an important platform to discuss problems and issues of entrepreneurs and provide direct access to high level district officers. Influencers in Puttalam felt that people's orientation towards self-employment/business has increased and the preference for government employment has decreased in that district. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam thought that those with skills and capital were increasingly engaging in business, compared to the past.

In Puttalam district influencers and entrepreneurs said that the number of enterprises and markets has increased. All ethnic groups were now engaged in business, compared with the propensity for more Muslims and Tamils to do enterprise in the past. They also thought that new technologies have been introduced and the quality of products has increased. Products dependent on local raw materials have also increased, they said. Purchasing power of consumers and the expanded economy due to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) also helped the expansion of enterprise in the district, not only in urban areas but also in villages, influencers in Puttalam pointed out. An increase in awareness about regulations pertaining to business among entrepreneurs and an improved relationship with the media, were pinpointed by entrepreneurs in Puttalam. Influencers in Polonnaruwa referred to increased awareness about business due to the business service fairs held in the district at Enter-Growth's initiative. They emphasised the development of the district chamber of commerce (which won the award for best district chamber) and the growth of a number of new business associations. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam also referred to the bringing together of producers and entrepreneurs with the support of both government and non-government institutions.

The dissenting opinion came from entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district who perceived that laws and regulations pertaining to business were not sufficiently responsive to the needs of entrepreneurs and state interventions in some trade/business associations were seen to make them ineffective. Trade associations that operated independently of government were felt to be doing better.

### 8.3 Contribution of the Enter-Growth Project towards these changes

Participants of all four focus groups were very positive about the Enter-Growth's contribution to changes in the enterprise culture of the two districts. All emphasized the significance of the MSE forums in addressing the concerns of entrepreneurs, offering direct access to powerful state officers and changing the attitudes of government officers and institutions towards business and entrepreneurs. All participants pointed out that bringing the stakeholders of all three sectors – state, private and NGO – around the same table was a difficult task that Enter-Growth had accomplished successfully. Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district referred to the easing of restrictions in transporting and exporting ornamental fish, and mediation of water conflicts with farmers through discussions at the MSE forum. Influencers in Polonnaruwa said many problems that the private sector had encountered for years with government regulations, such as business registration, have been sorted out within the last years. Influencers in Puttalam referred to solving of issues relating to transport of clay for potters through the MSE forum. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam mentioned Enter-Growth's contribution to increasing the strength of MSMEs by bringing them together, better knowledge of regulations relating to business among entrepreneurs and also the increase in awareness of politicians in the district towards the MSE forum. Influencers and entrepreneurs in Puttalam district both referred to a new relationship with the media and positive outcomes on the concerns and progress of enterprises within the district.

In addition, all participants also mentioned awareness creation of local industries and their development potential due to LOCA and value chain activities. Influencers in Puttalam district particularly appreciated the branding of Puttalam Salt, as well as new technological development in the coir industry. Influencers in Polonnaruwa and entrepreneurs in Puttalam referred to the role of Enter-Growth-promoted business development fairs in creating awareness, as well as linking entrepreneurs and producers with banks, business service providers and machinery/tool suppliers, and identifying new markets. The support provided to increasing training opportunities within the district and thus contributing to increasing the entrepreneurial and technical abilities of entrepreneurs was noted by influencers in Puttalam. They were appreciative about the personal skills, commitment and cordiality of Enter-Growth officers towards enhancing enterprise development. They pointed out that the continuity in the activities of Enter-Growth had led to the winning of trust by all stakeholders in the district. The project had effectively become the data bank for the district's economy, they said.

Entrepreneurs in both districts and influencers in Polonnaruwa district were very positive towards the contribution of *Palama*, the social marketing campaign launched by Enter-Growth, in changing the enterprise culture of the districts. They perceived that the actors were very skilled and were successful in conveying a clear message about encouraging people to start and develop micro/small businesses at the village level, and youth to do something new. Audiences really valued these performances, they said. Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district considered the theatre group to be doing a service to the country and conveying a powerful message to change the views of people towards enterprise. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam thought that people valued the forum concept because it brought forth their thoughts and desires. Influencers in Polonnaruwa district argued that if the *Palama* performances, managed to change people's attitudes towards business in 10% of the audience, that was already good but if it were 30% it would be very good.

Influencers in both districts thought that *Palama* has given an opportunity for the young actors and actresses to develop their talents and skills, and in the case of the Polonnaruwa group, that they had already established a company of their own. Influencers in Puttalam district while positive about the overall message conveyed by the performances, were critical about the lack of coordination between the social marketing campaign and the MSE Forum, as well as other activities of the Enter-Growth project, such as value chain development and promotion of associations. They also thought the theatre group was not always aware of the nuances of cultural/social differences among the four districts.

#### **8.4 Proposed improvements to enhance the enterprise culture in the districts**

Participants of all four focus groups perceived that the Enter-Growth project had merely laid the foundation for change, and a further period (another three years, according to influencers in Puttalam) was necessary to consolidate the activities and their impact. Influencers in both districts felt that Enter-Growth's role in coordinating the MSE forum was critical and further support was needed until several rotations of higher level officers had occurred at the District Secretariat and led to attitudinal changes at all levels in state institutions towards the importance of MSMEs. Influencers in Polonnaruwa noted that not only the current higher level district officers, but future ones also needed to know that calling MSE Forum meetings was part of their job portfolio for the district. Influencers in Puttalam pointed out, "Culture equals socialization, and socialization cannot be done in a hurry".

Influencers in Polonnaruwa felt that Enter-Growth needed to support the district chamber of commerce further to become independent and effective in its negotiations with government. Influencers in Puttalam saw the need for Enter-Growth's involvement in developing a Code of Ethics for enterprises, and inculcating enterprise culture through the school system. They pointed to several problems with the introduction of the new Entrepreneurial Studies course in school, and suggested that the textbook needed to be improved, to be more accessible to students. Entrepreneurs in Puttalam also concurred that providing knowledge about enterprises to students before they left school was important. They also proposed broader-level information dissemination on enterprises appropriate to the district – product-related knowledge on value addition and markets, as well as progress of current enterprises at the district and national levels. They advocated support for exchange visits among entrepreneurs in the four project districts and the establishment of a district information centre on enterprise through the MSE Forum. They also identified the need for more awareness-raising within the political structure, in addition to the state administrative structure.

Influencers in Puttalam perceived that the *Palama* social marketing campaign was isolated from other project components and MSE Forum members at least should be kept informed about the activities of the theatre groups, so that they could be involved in promoting the performances within the district. They also thought that they could be called upon to provide feedback to the theatre group to improve the scripts, so as to make them more effective. Influencers in Polonnaruwa and entrepreneurs in Puttalam pointed out that the active involvement of local CBOs/NGOs working on enterprise and livelihood development activities within villages in bringing performances to a specific village would ensure larger audiences and higher impact.



## 9. Conclusions

The enterprise culture component of Enter-Growth, a pilot initiative, comprising the *Palama* social marketing campaign and the Entrepreneurial Studies course<sup>18</sup>, was implemented within the last two years in the two districts (Polonnaruwa and Puttalam) covered in this study. At the time of assessment, the *Palama* campaign has been completed so far only in Polonnaruwa district, where respondents who had seen the performance over a year ago could be interviewed. In both districts the ES course had been taught for 3 months to 1.5 years, depending on the school. The *Palama* programme in the Puttalam district had been implemented only for six months. Thus, any impact at this stage needs to be considered as preliminary. In this impact assessment we have primarily focused on the attitudinal and behavioural changes that might already be observed among respondents who had seen *Palama* or taken the ES course, as well as influencers and entrepreneurs at district level with some exposure to Enter-Growth project activities.

### Changes in attitudes

Results for the indicators used to assess change in attitudes of people who had seen the *Palama* performance and students who had taken the ES course revealed a largely positive trend. Significant majorities of all categories of respondents were positive about the idea of starting/running a business, in their views towards business people and their role within their communities, and about women engaging in business.

In assessing openness to business, altogether around 79% of respondents who saw *Palama* were positive about the idea of starting/running one's own business. Youth respondents who had seen *Palama*, as well as those who taken the ES course were the most positive about this idea, followed by women, who had seen *Palama*. Influencers and entrepreneurs at district level qualified their views on the idea of starting a business, by outlining the necessary conditions for success, while entrepreneurs who had seen *Palama* were more likely to express both advantages and disadvantages of doing business, in comparison to others. Slightly more respondents who saw *Palama* in Polonnaruwa were positive towards the idea of starting or running one's business than in Puttalam, although entrepreneurs at the district level in Polonnaruwa were pessimistic about the current economic situation in the country, as an enabling environment. The overall positive attitude towards starting/running one's own business is consistent with the results of the Quasi-experimental Survey of 2007<sup>19</sup>.

Negative attitudes towards business people as exploitative have been widespread in all four project districts – among 73% of people in the North Western Province (to which Puttalam belongs) and 51% in the North Central Province (to which Polonnaruwa belongs), according to one 2005 national survey<sup>20</sup>. This impact assessment in contrast revealed a clear majority (74%) in both districts holding positive attitudes business people in their communities. Unlike in the survey, respondents in Puttalam district were slightly more positive than those of Polonnaruwa. There was no gender difference but influencers and non-entrepreneurs who had seen *Palama* were more positive than entrepreneurs and youth at village level. In contrast to these youth, students who had taken the ES course were overwhelmingly positive about business people in

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<sup>18</sup> The findings of the assessment on introducing the Know-About-Business (KAB) module into vocational training, initially proposed to be incorporated within this impact assessment of the cultural component of the project, are not covered as the report on KAB was not available at the time of writing.

<sup>19</sup> Hakemulder, F. 2007. *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> International Alert. 2005. Peace through profit: Sri Lankan perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility. Colombo:IA.

their communities. On the other hand, the majority of respondents who had seen *Palama* said they had little knowledge of business people in the district, beyond their village; of the minority who did, most held negative views. District level business people were compared with village business people and were found to be wanting in their sense of fairness and humanity. They were often characterized as exploitative, competitive and interested primarily in high profits. In comparison, both influencers and entrepreneurs at district level were very positive towards business people in the district.

There has been no clear consensus of the role of business people in society - thus according to the same 2005 national survey, while 66% of respondents in the North Central Province believed that business helped society by providing goods and services, only 30% did so in North Western Province. In this impact assessment in contrast, the majority (82%) of respondents saw a positive role by business people in contributing to the social welfare of the community and to a lesser extent, in providing employment opportunities. Consistent with the national survey, a higher proportion of respondents identified the positive role of entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district, relative to Puttalam district. In Polonnaruwa, male respondents were slightly more positive towards the social and economic roles of business people, while in Puttalam district female respondents were similarly more positive. Both students who had taken the ES course, as well as influencers and entrepreneurs at district level were overwhelmingly positive towards the role of business people in society. Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa pointed out that the social role of business people depended largely on the performance of their businesses in the prevailing economic situation.

Gender disparities in enterprise are widespread in Sri Lanka, including the project districts, with women facing more obstacles than men in engaging in business. The Socio-cultural Assessment of 2006<sup>21</sup> revealed the larger minority (40%) of respondents perceiving that men were better at business than women. This impact assessment, in contrast shows a reverse trend with more respondents (46%) perceiving women as better at business, with the proportion (32%) of respondents believing that both genders are equally skilled, remaining relatively unchanged. Thus, the openness to women engaging in business appears to have increased overall. While more respondents in Polonnaruwa district perceived that women were better at business than in Puttalam, as in the past, the proportion of respondents who thought men were better at business had declined considerably and those who thought both genders were equally skilled at business had increased substantially in the latter district. Among students who took the ES course girls tended to think that women were better at business while boys perceived that men were better. The majority of influencers and entrepreneurs at the district level perceived that both genders were equally skilled, with the exception of entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa who believed that men were more skilled.

In terms of attitudes towards business as a livelihood option for youth, as well as ethnic stereotypes in business, the findings are more varied.

Openness to business as a livelihood option by both parents and youth has been very low in the past. The National Youth Survey (1999-2000)<sup>22</sup> revealed 53% of youth as preferring government sector employment, while 23% preferred self-employment; the Poverty and Youth Survey (2003)<sup>23</sup> showed 43% of youth expressing a preference for government employment with 23% preferring self-employment. In the Socio-cultural Assessment of 2006 conducted in all four project districts, around 40% of school-leavers expressed their preference for the state sector, while 15% considered self-employment/business as a livelihood option; at the same time, around 60% of parents wanted their children to pursue higher education and obtain a state-sector job,

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<sup>21</sup> Reinprecht and Weeratunge. 2006. *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Hettige and Mayer. 2002. *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Ibarguen. 2005. *Ibid.*

while only 5% were open to their children pursuing self-employment/business. In contrast, this Impact Assessment revealed a decreased preference for the state sector - 33% of parents/influencers who had seen *Palama* and 15% of youth. Around 20% of parents/influencers and 44% of youth indicated self-employment/business, as well as combining business with state, private-sector or professional employment, as a livelihood option. The preference for a government job was higher in Polonnaruwa than in Puttalam, among non-entrepreneurs, rather than entrepreneurs. Men in Polonnaruwa and women in Puttalam were more inclined to prefer business as an option for their children. In comparison to respondents who had seen *Palama*, a larger proportion of students who had taken the ES course were oriented towards state sector and/or professional employment, following higher studies, with a smaller minority indicating preference for business. Taking the ES course (and dropping it in most cases due to institutional reasons) does not appear to have significantly increased students' openness towards business as a livelihood option, although it had influenced a minority of students to consider the option. Influencers and entrepreneurs at district level emphasized livelihood options based on the skills and abilities of youth, pursuit of higher education to the extent possible and formal vocational training as a preparation for both employment and self-employment/business. Entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa and influencers in Puttalam also advocated overseas employment.

Ethnic stereotypes related to enterprise and the perception that Muslims are more skilled than other groups at business have been prevalent and were clearly revealed in the Socio-cultural Assessment of 2006 – the majority (around 62%) of respondents in both Polonnaruwa and Puttalam districts perceived that Muslims were better at business. In comparison, this impact assessment shows a slight increase among respondents in Polonnaruwa perceiving Muslims as more skilled than others, with a considerable decline in that perception in Puttalam. This was corroborated by the focus groups of influencers and entrepreneurs in Puttalam district; they pointed out that the propensity for all ethnic groups to engage in business had increased in the last three years, relative to the past, when mostly Muslims were involved in business. All student respondents who took the ES course in Polonnaruwa, as well as the majority in Puttalam district, considered Muslims as better at business than other ethnic groups. In contrast, the majority of influencers and entrepreneurs at district level considered all ethnic groups as equally skilled at business, with entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district being the only exception.

## **Changes in behaviour**

The extent to which the *Palama* social marketing campaign changed people's behaviour in terms of more people seeking information, or starting or improving their businesses is more difficult to establish than changes in attitudes towards business. In some villages several respondents who had started or improved their business were encountered and although we heard of others who had done so, they were away from the village at the time of the assessment or could not be interviewed due to the lack of time, as respondents of different categories had to be interviewed. In other villages there were no respondents at all who had started or improved their businesses. Around 6% of the respondents interviewed during the assessment had started new businesses (of which around 60% were sustainable) - considerably more in Polonnaruwa district than Puttalam, and somewhat more men than women. Around 13% of existing entrepreneurs said that they had improved their businesses after the performance. There were no gender differences here. Several non-entrepreneurs indicated that they had gone to one of the service providers listed in the BDS brochure that was handed out by the theatre group with more information on training, finance and business advice available within the district. However, this was also a small minority of respondents. Among students who had taken the ES course, one had persuaded her mother to start a business, which was being operated successfully one year after.

An indication of more widespread behavioural change comes from officers of a NGO implementing micro-finance and livelihood development programmes in Polonnaruwa district. They revealed that their loan portfolios had significantly increased after the performance – in one village, by around 179 per cent. The number of new clients joining small savings groups had increased, as well as loan repayment among existing clients, they pointed out. In several villages, such organizations requested the theatre group to perform a second time, indicating that they saw a link between the performance and the positive behaviour of villagers.

## Processes of change

To determine whether the enterprise culture component of the project contributed to changes in behaviour or attitudes outlined above, it is necessary to understand the processes related to the *Palama* social marketing campaign and the Entrepreneurial Studies course that might have contributed to such changes. The *Palama* performances drew relatively large audiences. This meant that everyone who wanted to actively participate in the forum theatre plays did not necessarily get the chance due to time constraints or were too shy to perform in front of such a

large audience, although they might have been more comfortable in a smaller setting<sup>24</sup>. The ES course attracted small number of students in most schools, although in a few schools, the subject was selected by the majority of students in that year.

In terms of the overall assessment of the *Palama* performance, an overwhelming majority (99%) of respondents considered it positive experience. They commented on the skilful acting, the stories, the entertainment value and the social messages. Similarly, the majority of students were positive in their overall assessment of the Entrepreneurial course, finding it both useful and interesting.

In looking at active involvement in the performance, the majority (58%) of respondents interviewed had not actively participated – either by performing in the forum theatre or having an idea to present which they were unable to do so due to lack of time or shyness. However, 18% of respondents had performed and a further 24% indicated that they had ideas to present in the forum theatre in their minds, although they had not presented them. The number of respondents who performed was somewhat higher in Polonnaruwa than in Puttalam. In contrast, the proportion who had ideas was considerably higher (34%) in Puttalam than in Polonnaruwa (13%). This might be due to the shorter recall period for Puttalam, relative to Polonnaruwa, as several respondents indicated that they had ideas but could not remember them any longer. Men were somewhat more predominant both among those who had performed and who had ideas to present. Overall, however, a considerable minority (42%) of respondents had been actively involved, and among others the number who remembered the plots and characters were relatively high, even among those who had seen the performance more than a year ago. Thus, the performance appeared to be a memorable one for most respondents. Among those who performed in the forum theatre, most were confident and pleased at the opportunity they had received to act and present their ideas. Many had presented business ideas, as an alternative option to earn a livelihood, so that the main character could find a way out of his/her dilemma.

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<sup>24</sup> The original design for the forum theatre concept envisaged audience sizes of 30-50, with larger audiences for the exemplary “performance” plays.

Students who took the ES course said they particularly enjoyed the course because of the interactive teaching methods and role playing. Thus, interest and involvement in the course has been relatively high. However, some teachers said that students were not accustomed to doing group work and that was seen as a constraint to the implementation of the course in the school system, as much as the time constraints faced in interactive teaching. However, the process of implementing the course was marred by institutional issues, over which students and the project had no control.

The *Palama* social marketing campaign was designed by Enter-Growth with the purpose of promoting enterprise as a viable livelihood option to overcome poverty and to increase the respect for people, including women and youth, doing enterprise in their communities. It is important to understand whether the intended messages were conveyed to audiences and how these messages were received or interpreted. Three kinds of messages were received by audiences, according to their own perceptions and interpretations: a business/enterprise-related message (the benefits of starting/operating a business); a business message combined with a social one (the benefits of starting/operating an enterprise, as well as refraining from undesirable social behaviour); or a social message (refraining from undesirable social behaviour). Among total respondents, around 42% received a business or livelihood-related message, while 33% received a combined business and social message. A minority (14%) got only a social message from the plays while 11% could not remember or could not say what message had been given by the performance. In Puttalam, more respondents (52%) grasped a business-related message, relative to Polonnaruwa, where more respondents (41%) received a combined business and social message while. Overall slightly more women than men grasped a purely business-related message, while more men grasped a combined business and social message. A considerable minority of women interpreted a purely social message, while men were predominant among respondents who could not remember or did not get any message. Interestingly more non-entrepreneurs grasped a business-related message than entrepreneurs and influencers. Social messages related to issues of alcoholism, overseas migration, and domestic violence.

Prior to a change in attitudes or behaviour, respondents experienced a process of communication with others and/or thinking over the ideas and experiences presented in the performance. Thus, the most common responses to the performance included discussing the play, thinking about the idea of starting or improving a business and finding strength to continue existing enterprises. Of these, the most frequent response was to discuss the performance with family, friends, neighbours and relatives – around 73% respondents did that. Considerably more respondents in Polonnaruwa district (80%) than Puttalam (66%) discussed the plays. Interestingly also, considerably more men (78%) discussed it, than women (68%). A high proportion of youth (78%) discussed the play with friends and family. Many respondents simply stated that they had discussed the play with others but had done nothing concrete after that. Around 18% of respondents said that they have considered the idea of starting a business after *Palama* – more in Puttalam district than in Polonnaruwa. As only 3-5 months have passed since respondents in Puttalam saw the performance, the possibility remains that some of these respondents would actually start. In cases where respondents had started businesses this was often after a year of seeing the performance. Considerably more men than women considered starting a business, and around 39% of youth said they have considered this idea, following *Palama*. Tamil respondents had thought more about the idea of starting a business than Sinhalese respondents. In some cases, respondents indicated that they were saving money to start an enterprise. Around 39% of existing entrepreneurs said they got the idea to improve/expand or found more strength to continue their business following *Palama*. This was considerably higher among male (44%) than female (29%) entrepreneurs. Again, the possibility that they would do so in the future remains, especially in Puttalam district, where insufficient

time has elapsed since the performance to assess behavioural change. Several respondents pointed out that the impact of the performances could have been higher if the theatre group had come to villages with the active support of local CBOs, NGOs or religious institutions, which could have offered follow-up activities and guidance.

For the students of the ES course, only a small minority were seriously considering engaging in business, immediately after their examination. However, the longer-term impact of the course in changing their attitudes and behaviour towards business as a livelihood option, as they struggle to overcome the examination hurdles through the school system, is still too early to predict.

In their overall assessment, the majority of influencers and entrepreneurs at district level perceived positive changes in the enterprise culture of the two districts. These included increased support for enterprise development among government and private sector service providers, a better understanding of the value of business in the state sector and attitudinal change in high-level government officers. In Puttalam, influencers and entrepreneurs mentioned a rise in ethnic groups, other than Muslims, engaging in business, as well as an increased orientation towards business as a livelihood option among people. Influencers and entrepreneurs associated the process of improving the enterprise culture of the districts primarily to the work of the MSE Forums, initiated by Enter-Growth. The MSE Forum was seen to have become the most important platform to discuss problems and issues of entrepreneurs and provide entrepreneurs direct access to high level district officers. The only dissenting views were offered by entrepreneurs in Polonnaruwa district who were pessimistic about the macro-economic situation in the country and the enabling environment for doing business. However, they too were positive about the efforts made by Enter-Growth to improve the enabling environment within the district.

Influencers and entrepreneurs at the district level also saw the *Palama* social marketing campaign, the business development fairs, as well as LOCA and value chain development work as increasing awareness about enterprise within the districts. The majority considered the messages conveyed by the *Palama* performances as appropriate and powerful. However, influencers in Puttalam expressed a dissenting opinion – while the messages of the performances were considered appropriate, they suggested that the manner in which they were conveyed could be improved in consultation with MSE Forum members. They were also critical of the lack of coordination between *Palama* and the other components of Enter-Growth.

### **Attribution of impact**

The present impact assessment shows considerable positive changes in attitudes towards business in the two districts and some changes in behaviour, as well. However, to what extent can these be attributed to the enterprise culture component of the Enter-Growth project? The government has promoted micro and small business development in the country for at least 20 years, through the Small Enterprise Development Division (SEDD), Samurdhi and a number of other state institutions. There are several major NGOs, as well as local-level CBOs, promoting enterprise, micro-finance and livelihood-related activities within these districts such as Sarvodaya, CARE, Ceylinco Grameen and Gemi Diriya. One of the main reasons for the inclusion of a pilot enterprise culture component in the Enter-Growth project was the view by stakeholders that all those who could potentially start or improve businesses did not access service providers due to a lack of a dynamic enterprise culture in these districts.

In assessing the significance of the *Palama* performances in relation to other business or livelihood-related activities that have taken place in these villages, this impact assessment reveals that around 44% of respondents considered the *Palama* theatre performance as “very important”, “important” or “somewhat important” in changing their view or behaviour towards enterprise. The views and behaviour ranged from those who were more open to business as a livelihood option to those who had started or improved businesses. A relatively higher proportion (48%) of respondents in Puttalam district considered the performance “very important”, “important” or “somewhat important”, compared to respondents (40%) in Polonnaruwa district. These data on impact for Polonnaruwa district is consistent with the results of the Quasi-experimental Study of 2007<sup>25</sup> which found that 41% of the sample was strongly involved in the performance and were significantly affected in terms of their beliefs about business. Considering that the national surveys conducted by International Alert<sup>26</sup> found a considerably higher proportion of people with negative views on business people and their role in North Western Province (which includes Puttalam) than in North Central Province (which includes Polonnaruwa), a higher proportion of respondents responding positively to the *Palama* performance in Puttalam becomes relevant.

In indicating the contribution of *Palama* as “somewhat important” to changing their attitudes or behaviour, respondents referred to other programmes or organizations that had made an impact on these and implied that *Palama* had merely been a contributory factor. However, when respondents perceived that *Palama* had been “very important” or “important” in changing their attitude or behaviour, they clearly stated that it was the primary or catalytic factor in these changes – if not for *Palama* this change would not have occurred. Around 23% identified *Palama* as the primary factor, with 21% considering the performance as a contributory factor to their change in attitude or behaviour. In terms of the project goal of increasing by 20% the number of people who consider enterprise as a desirable livelihood (of those who had been exposed to project activities), this impact has been achieved already by considering the proportion of respondents who identified *Palama* as the primary factor for change in their attitude or behaviour. If the contributory factor of *Palama* to these changes is also taken into account, the proportion of respondents affected by the social marketing campaign doubles.

Overall, the impact assessment clearly shows positive impact among respondents in changing attitudes towards business as a way of making a living, business people and their role in society, as well as women engaging in business. Impact in changing behaviour (especially accessing service providers, starting or improving businesses) is not revealed as clearly through this assessment. However, there is some qualitative evidence, based on information provided by officers of NGOs that such behavioural change has occurred as well. This can only be confirmed by a larger-scale quantitative survey that would cover a representative sample of villages. It is evident, however, that impact of the social marketing campaign has been enhanced wherever the performances were coordinated with local NGOs and CBOs engaging in enterprise/livelihood-related activities, and synergies could be created.

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<sup>25</sup> Hakemulder, F. 2007. *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> International Alert. 2005. *Ibid.*

## 10. Recommendations

The ILO Enterprise for Pro-Poor Growth Project has three main components – increasing market access of micro and small entrepreneurs, improving the policy and regulatory environment for the growth of micro and small enterprise and enhancing the enterprise culture by positively changing the way enterprise is perceived and valued in society. In achieving its goals, Enter-Growth follows an approach of supporting institutional structures, linkages and networks that provide services to micro and small enterprises (MSEs), rather than work directly with the ultimate beneficiaries, i.e. MSEs. In such an approach, it is important that the institutions, linkages and networks which are involved in the different components of the project coordinate to increase synergies in the service of clients.

The social marketing campaign was designed to promote enterprise as a viable way out of poverty. As Enter-Growth does not work with MSEs directly, people who are reached by the social marketing campaign have to take initiative and seek the services of these intermediary organizations to start and improve businesses. The impact assessment reveals that the changes in attitudes are taking place, to a great extent, in the two districts studied. However, there is room for improvement in reaching both youth and parents to increase openness towards business as a livelihood option for youth. Better implementation of the Entrepreneurial Studies course by the Ministry of Education could also contribute to reaching this goal. In addition, more effort can be made to change ethnic stereotypes about business in Polonnaruwa district, although there appears to have been considerable success in this direction in Puttalam district.

Changes in behaviour, in terms of seeking information on enterprise, as well as starting and improving businesses, have not taken place in the two districts, to the same extent, as changes in attitudes. This is not necessarily surprising, as changes in practices generally take longer than changes in perceptions and views. It is also desirable that people who want to start or improve businesses take some time to think of good business ideas that result in sustainable businesses and prepare adequately for this change - by getting training and/or advice and ensuring that they have sufficient financial resources to invest in such ventures. However, the number of people seeking information, advice and training could be increased by coordinating the activities and performance schedules of the theatre groups with the district-level MSE forums, business associations and NGOs/CBOs with proven experience in enterprise/livelihood-related development activities at the village level. Influencers at both district and village level suggested that this would greatly increase the impact of the *Palama* programme.

In the case, of the Entrepreneurial studies course, the institutional issues surrounding its introduction into the school system need to be addressed proactively by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with NIE. While Enter-Growth has been willing to support the initiative with more monitoring and follow-up, the Ministry has not made use of this opportunity. First, the Ministry of Education needs to ensure that all teaching materials and text books are in place at the school level. Since the course has been taught for at least 1.5 years in at least a few schools, the Ministry also needs to initiate a comprehensive assessment of its current status in the school system, as well as of its structure and content. This could be done with teachers, students and education officials, so that the course could be improved to meet the requirements of the local school system. Principals and teachers need to be made aware of the value and purpose of the course. It is also important that ES is taken out of the current subject basket and placed in another basket, so that it does not compete with Business and Accounts Studies but much rather complements it.



To enhance the impact of the *Palama* social marketing campaign, it is recommended that the theatre groups

- coordinate better with MSE Forum members, business associations, as well as NGOs and CBOs working on enterprise and livelihood development in planning and scheduling performances in villages to increase participation and support for the programme by these organizations
- Create awareness about the messages conveyed by *Palama* among NGOs/CBOs so that they can encourage audiences to access their business development or financing services
- improve the scripts dealing with unemployment and livelihood choices for youth, so that there is a more comprehensive discussion of these issues in a manner that would be attractive to youth
- address ethnic stereotypes relating to business by conveying the message that all ethnic groups can be equally skilled at business
- enhance the skills of the actors to convey business-related messages to audiences in a stimulating manner and without simplifying the complexity of some of the issues (for example, going to the Middle East or Italy is not necessarily a bad option in all circumstances, to be rejected in favour of starting one's own enterprise; one could go to overseas and earn the capital to start a business, if one goes about it the right way)

To improve the impact of the Entrepreneurial Studies within the secondary school system, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and NIE take the necessary steps to

- ensure that all teaching materials and text books are available at school level
- conduct awareness-raising on the value of the course among principals and teachers, as well as training more teachers to teach the subject
- place the subject in a different basket so that it does not compete with the more established Business and Accounts Studies option.

It is also recommended that that the Ministry of Education and NIE seek the support of Enter-Growth to

- conduct a comprehensive assessment of current status of the subject in the four project districts, the reasons for some schools to continue or discontinue the course, and the views on the structure and content of the course of teachers and students who have taken this course for 1.5 years, as well as relevant officers of the Ministry of Education/NIE, leading to proposals to improve the course as appropriate for the local school system

To ensure the promotion of enterprise culture within the four districts in the long-term, following project completion, it is recommended that Enter-Growth

- works with the MSE Forum to prepare for the transition of handing over the successful initiatives of the project to ensure continuity and sustainability
- supports the MSE Forum in promotion of enterprise culture activities, such as awareness-raising on enterprise as a viable livelihood option, as well as becoming a clearing house for information and knowledge related to enterprise training and development

Considering that an enterprise culture component was piloted for the first time in Sri Lanka by the Enter-Growth project, the preliminary outcomes are promising – especially in its impact in changing attitudes towards business at the village level. However, better coordination with institutions involved in the other components of the project, as well as NGOs/CBOs working on enterprise and livelihood development at the grassroots level will greatly enhance the impact of this component by increasing synergies in achieving common goals.

## ILO Enter-Growth Project: Enterprise Culture Impact Assessment on *Palama* Case Studies

### Case Study 1: As the performance was live, starting my own business became no longer a dream

Anil is 32 years old and lives in a village near Polonnaruwa town, where most inhabitants work as wage labourers or run micro-enterprises. He and most of his fellow villagers are Sinhala Buddhists. He has held a number of posts in *Gemi Diriya*, including social mobilizer, community representative, secretary and coordinator, and has worked in a number of districts for this organization. He is also a member of the village Funeral Assistance Society. Three years ago he received CEFÉ training and made a business plan to start a bakery but did not start one because he could not get together the credit. He lives in a relatively large household with his mother, grandmother, aunt, older sister and two small nieces. His sister works as a hospital attendant and the two siblings are the main breadwinners of the family.

He heard the performance announced from the loudspeaker of the *Palama* van and decided to go because he was curious about what this “*palama*” was all about. He had no idea until he attended the show. Over 150 people had turned up for the drama, he said.

*At the beginning it seemed like a joke with the thovil [spirit healing ceremony] and hooting. I didn't like it but as it progressed I understood the importance of the play. At first the main character was insulted by people; but he remained committed and later developed – he overcame all his obstacles.*

Anil liked the main character in “Dream Come True” best of all. He also liked the way the mother of the young entrepreneur encouraged the son to develop. In the second play, he remembered the scene where the women discussed different ideas for business at the well. During the forum theatre play he decided to go up on stage and act out his idea. He had acted before so he was not nervous.

*I gave a business idea – to make good quality leafy cunjee for foreign tourists who visit Polonnaruwa. I have experience in acting as I'm in the CARE theatre group on gender-based violence.*

He received both business-related and social messages from the performance. The messages that were given, he pointed out, were on awareness of business, consequences of alcoholism, and women's migration and the consequences for children. The performance stressed the importance of starting small and making the effort to find markets.

Anil was very impressed with the performance. He had thought of the idea of doing business before but never seriously enough.

*I had the idea to start a business even before; I had received CEFE training and made a business plan for a bakery but I didn't manage to. I didn't really know what to start. But after Palama, I decided to do a chillie grinding mill and started my business.*

His grandmother helped him with seed capital and his mother, aunt and older sister help him now with the day-to-day activities of the business. He considers that he is averagely successful with a profit around LKR 3,000 per month. His biggest cost is electricity, which he considers much too high for a small business like his. He would like to grind rice flour as well but wants to know more about preservation technology before he invests in this product.

He thinks that running one's own business is a good livelihood option.

*It is a good idea to do business. If you do a job, you have to go where they want you to. If it's my business I can do what I want. I am not under anybody. I can start small and develop. There is a good demand for our chillie powder.*

He did not see any real disadvantages, except the only problem he faced was a labour shortage, as people often did not have sufficient knowledge in his line of business. He was the only one who could operate the grinding mill there.

His view of other people doing business in the village was mixed.

*They are improving and developing. They are starting small and becoming bigger. They must be systematic. Other people want to give chillie powder at lower prices. The market is competitive. Some people cheat customers by offering lower quality, I don't cheat. Some people try to make a big profit in some businesses.*

Anil said that business people in his village gave support for development work, roads and buildings in the village – they provided both money and labour. Some also provided employment but not enough and these were not often good jobs.

He did not have a high opinion of business people in the district. He thought that most people at the district level looked at their own profit and were not interested in quality. Until the market was captured at least, they should not sell low quality products and even afterwards if one were a good entrepreneur. But there were large-scale grinding mills which cheated and sold cheaper products, he claimed; customers bought these, nevertheless - despite the lack of quality, he pointed out.

Anil thought that men were more skilled at business because they can face any challenges. He added that there were also women who could meet any challenges. His sister, for example, managed to sell the chillie powder they produced in the hospital, when he did not yet have a market. Both men and women can be good at business he said. However, men find it easy to go outside the house and negotiate business deals, such as at the Dambulla Economic Centre. A lot of his negotiations are by telephone now, he added.

Of all the ethnic groups in the district, he felt that Muslims were more skilled at business than others.

*They are very skilful. They can talk and draw people. They have good commitment and unity. When it's 12.00 pm [prayer time] they will all close their shops. We, Sinhalese don't have unity – we undercut each other. They think "we all need to develop". We copy from each other – when someone else improves.*

He does not have children. He pointed out that most parents expect their children to get government jobs. However, if his enterprise improves, and he had children, he would let his children do business.

In discussing what “*Palama*” meant, he said that a bridge was for people to go back and forth; it was a guide, a linking of hands, he pointed out. Anil considered *Palama* very important and instrumental for his decision to finally start a business. He described how the idea came alive to him as he watched the performance and went on stage to act out his idea.

*CEFE had given me the training and Gemi Diriya gave me experience of small group facilitation but Palama gave me the resolution to start my business. I got a grant from my grandmother to purchase the machinery and credit from Gemi Diriya twice now to buy supplies. It was a live performance so my idea to do a business became alive. Earlier it had just been a dream. I made up my mind to do a business that will not collapse.*

## **Case Study 2: You must not say “no” all the time**

Kusuma is 43 years old and is from a Sinhala Buddhist farming family from a village in the Medirigirya D.S. Division in Polonnaruwa District. Her husband is a postman but they also own and cultivate their own paddy-fields. For some years she has been a member of a small group in the *Gemi Diriya* programme (self-help and micro-finance) in her village, where she had some savings. She saw performances by the *Palama* group twice in her village because villagers liked the plays so much that they requested a second performance 10 months later. It was a month after this second performance that she decided to start a business.

When the group came and announced the performance in the village, Kusuma decided she wanted to see it because she wanted to get information and an exemplary message from it. She said that about 500 people attended the drama the first time, but the second time because there was an alms-giving in the village and less publicity, the numbers who attended were lower. She was greatly taken up with both performances.

*It was a very attractive drama - they tried to convey a good message. It shows that there is nothing that you cannot do. If you have the strength you can do anything. I like to see the play again and again.*

Kusuma particularly liked the forum theatre play, “In Search of Wealth” because it gave good messages to the community. She herself was averse to women going to the Middle East for work, leaving their children with their husbands.

When the group performed for the second time, she participated in the forum play.

*I also performed in the drama. One son wanted to commit suicide so I went on the stage and gave them a solution - that he can make bricks by using his little brother's savings instead of going to the Middle East. Committing suicide was not the solution.*

She got both business-related and social messages from the play.

*Palama shows that you must not say ‘No’ all the time. If you have the courage and think carefully you can do anything you want. You can even start a business. It also gives the message that going Middle East is not the only option that one can earn money; there are several options like doing business.*

Following the performance, she discussed the ideas from the plays with her family and neighbours and decided to start a business – a rice flour grinding mill. She pointed out that she wanted to do a business that was new and that would be useful to the villagers. Until she opened her mill, villagers had to travel far to get their rice ground. She got some advice from her husband but otherwise had no business knowledge or training. As she was a member of the *Gemi Diriya* society and has savings, she was able to take out a LKR 15,000 loan from the society in January this year. She has already paid back the loan in full. She also got the courage

to improve this business because of the performance. She considers her business successful as she earns a reasonable profit. Her husband helps her in the business. In the future, she would like to learn more about technology for preserving rice flour, so that she could sell to a more extended market. She would also like training to start a coconut oil mill – in which case, she would even employ several workers.

Kusuma thought that starting one's own business was a very good idea, as it filled her time and gave her an independent source of income.

*You can earn some money and you do not have to waste your time. You can use your time on doing something useful and not feel bored with your life. You do not have to depend on husband's salary. If you earn some money you feel happy. There are no disadvantages. Only if there is an emergency situation like a funeral house, you have to go. It affects the customers because they cannot get their work done and they have to wait until the shop is open.*

She was generally positive about people who do business in the village, although she thought that they often did not have sufficient knowledge about doing business.

*People here have rice mills, oil mills and flour mills. Some businesses will not last for years because others try to copy the same business. If somebody wants to start a grocery store others also want to start the same thing. If there are a lot of grocery stores nobody can earn a profit. Even though they do not have much knowledge (that is why they try to copy the same business), people doing business in the village are fair in running their business.*

Kusuma said business people in the community helped in every way to improve the village. They supported the temple, school and any kind of self-help work. They also provided employment for people without jobs. One rice mill owner, she pointed out, provided job opportunities for 10 villagers.

She thought that people doing business in the district too were similarly fair - comparing price ranges in the village and town, there was not much difference. She pointed out that she did not know of any exploitative business people.

Kusuma thought that women were better at doing business than men, but there were exceptions among men.

*Women are skilled and know how to save money. They do not waste money - but I also think that there are some men who have the same qualities.*

She wanted her older son to do a job where he could go in the morning and come back in the afternoon (like her husband) but he could not find one. So he joined the police. She and her daughter would both like her to do teaching because it is a permanent and secure job. She said that she would consider her children to do business but she was concerned somewhat about the risk.

Kusuma saw "Palama" as bridge that helps one to cross the river. She said it was very important in influencing her to start her business;

*I never thought of starting a business before Palama. I got the strength and idea to start my business, this rice flour mill, after the performance. My courage and strength was also very useful. I took loans and other help from Gemi Diriya.*

### Case Study 3: I heard about *Palama* and restarted my ornamental fish business

Ruwan is 25 years old and lives with his 22 year old wife, Kamini. They have no children – Kamini's parents live in the same house. They are of Sinhalese Buddhist ethnic origin and live in a village, where people are mostly employed as daily labourers or engaged in enterprises, in Polonnaruwa district. Ruwan had been running an ornamental fish business from time to time, alongside his employment in a private company but discontinued two years ago. Initially he had taken a loan from Sarvodaya to start the business. He was interested in fish from childhood, catching fish first in the canal and rearing them at home.

Kamani and he were both away from the village visiting relatives when *Palama* performed. However, they had heard about the performance and met some of the actors when they later visited their village.

*We heard about palama. We were not in the village when they performed. X from the theatre group visited our business and encouraged us. We decided to restart our ornamental fish business.*

Kamini had helped in the business previously but Ruwan got her more involved. They made several new tanks and a mud pond by getting credit from *Gemi Diriya*, which they joined for the first time. They had no problems paying back the loan. They employed some casual labour for the construction of the pond. Once the breeding stock is ready in two months time Ruwan expects to get a stable income of around SLR 20,000 per month. He is also planning to lease in land for three more mud ponds, if they are successful with the breeding stock.

Ruwan is positive towards the idea of running one's own business as one does not work under anybody and has independence. He is also positive about other business people in the village.

*They are not bad people. The coir industry is doing well. Most business people here are reasonable. There aren't a lot of people doing their own business.*

He said that business people support the community to a great extent, both with labour and money. They give help for religious and other activities, including village societies. People in the coir industry provide jobs to other people, he pointed out. He is less positive about business people in the district.

*There is more competition in the district. Some are a bit exploitative. There is some difference between the village and the district.*

Ruwan thinks women are better at business than men. Since most men are engaged in farming in Polonnaruwa, women have more experience with business.

*They get people's attention. They don't have as many problems – men have to face competition from other men. They can be successful because they work from home. Women are also efficient.*

He would like to register his business in his wife's name and let her take over once she has more knowledge because it would be good for the family income if she ran the business and he had employment with a company.

Ruwan considers Muslims as the ethnic group which is somewhat ahead of the other groups in business. He explains this by pointing out that Muslims have been doing business from historical times, that they came to the island to do business – from generation to generation, and they live in a business environment.

If he has children, he would like them to do business, as the first choice.

*If they can continue our business, that's the best. Otherwise, a government job would be good.*

Ruwan thinks that *Palama*, even without seeing the performance, was somewhat important in contributing to their decision to restart the ornamental fish business.

*Palama encouraged us to join the People's Company [Gemi Diriya] - otherwise we would have continued on our own and not restarted. I had got credit from Sarvodaya before to do a mud pond. Palama was somewhat important to improve our business – we made new tanks and a second mud pond and bought breeding stock by getting a loan from Gemi Diriya. I'm planning to lease more land and construct three more mud ponds, as well as buy new breeding stock.*

#### **Case Study 4: I no longer give credit and have improved my welding shop**

Ramachandran is 41 years old and lives with his wife and small daughter in a farming village in Puttalam district. They are Tamil Hindus and live in a village, inhabited by both Sinhalese and Tamil families. He has operated his own welding shop for five years. He received training and a loan from Sarvodaya to set up his business. He is currently a member of a small group, initiated by the Samurdhi programme. He earns around LKR 8,000 per month. His earnings are higher during the harvest season when farmers bring in their harvesting machinery for repair and build houses.

He saw posters and also heard the announcements about the *Palama* performance in the village and was anxious to see it. He said that altogether around 600 people from his village and neighbouring villages attended the performance. He liked the performance.

*The play helps business people and gives idea to us. Overall it was performed well.*

What he liked most about it was that the play showed that people can take loans from the bank, rather than go to money lenders. It created the idea among the audience to get loans from the bank. Thus, the main message he received from the play was business-related.

*People who have problems when they start a business can take a loan and get support. There is no need to be trapped by money lenders when we can get loans from a bank.*

After seeing the play, he discussed the ideas with his family and other villagers. He decided that he would no longer do repairs for people who wanted their equipment fixed without making payments. He also decided to improve his business by taking out a loan from Samurdhi and earn more from his current business, rather than look for other work.

Ramachandran perceived that doing business was a good livelihood option with many advantages.

*With a business, we can come forward in life. We can satisfy our needs and requirements. We can earn money.*

His view of other business people in the village was mixed.

*I want to come up in life; in the same way they also do business and want to come up. Most of them are competitors - they will offer cheaper prices to capture the market.*



He pointed out that business people in his village contributed to all temple or church festivals with money and labour and they also offered other people job opportunities.

Ramachandran thought both men and women were equally skilled at business. In his village most people were farmers, in any case, and they were always helped by their wives in agricultural tasks. He felt that the Sinhalese in the district were better at business and they helped other ethnic groups, as they were the majority.

He expected his daughter to concentrate on her studies and obtain government employment when she grew up.

His perception of why the group was called *Palama* was explained in terms of the support it provided.

*They [theatre group] encourage poor people in their life, so that's why they act like a bridge and support them.*

He considered both the inspiration he had received from the play, as well as the support he had received from Sarvodaya previously very important for improving his business.

*To improve my business the loan and training from Sarvodaya was very important. I also took a loan from Samurdhi after Palama to improve the business.*

Since he no longer gives credit to his customers, he feels he has money in his hand to invest in new machinery and hire more workers.

### **Case Study 5: I decided to improve my father's prawn hatchery**

Ranjith is 22 years old and has passed his "A" levels. He lives with his mother, father, older sister and younger brother in a coastal fishing village in Puttalam district. Like the majority of people in his village, he is of Sinhala Catholic ethnic origin. His father started a prawn hatchery five years ago when he was still in school. His father had leased out the business for a while but he decided to take it back and run it recently. He is a member of the Prawn Hatchery Association and Youth Society of the village.

He heard about the *Palama* performance through announcements and decided to go because he liked to see stage dramas. He was very positive about the play and he liked the fact that he could identify with the characters.

*The performance was very good and meaningful. They acted really well. They had chosen characters that you normally meet in society.*

He especially liked "Italy Trap" – he was drawn to the entire drama, not to a single character or scene. Although he wanted to act his idea, there was no time for it. He wanted to present the idea that although the mother had given her children education, she had not given them sufficient love and protection; it was important for the mother to love her children.

He saw a business-related message from the performance.

*Even if you have big hopes to go to the Middle East, it is good to do a business and improve your life. And you need to try to manage what you have properly.*

After the play, he discussed the ideas he had heard and seen with friends and decided to improve the business they already had – the prawn hatchery. During slack time in their business, he also decided to go and learn welding.

Ranjith is positive towards the idea of running one's own business.

*I like to do business. My father leased out this business for some time. I wanted to reopen it to earn some money. You are not under control of anybody. My aim is to improve his business.*

The main disadvantage he sees is that prawn hatcheries can be operated only for about four months of the year. He points out that they, like many other business people who run hatcheries, have very little theoretical knowledge related to the business and mostly use their practical experience.

His opinions of other hatchery owners were mostly negative.

*Nobody has theoretical knowledge. They run these hatcheries using their own experience. Some are not fair in doing this business. Some go against the decisions taken by the hatchery association in the village. Especially when they sell prawn fry there is no standard price. Also there is no unity among the hatchery owners in this village.*

He said most business people in their village participated in community activities and contributed money to the church. Many hatchery owners also provided jobs in the community.

He was more philosophical about large-scale business people in the district.

*There are some big businessmen who have both technical and theoretical knowledge about these kinds of businesses [prawns]. Some are fair and some are not. That is the nature of business and of human beings.*

He perceived that men were better at business – especially prawn hatcheries, where men had more skills, knowledge and experience. Very few women were involved in his line of business, he pointed out.

He felt that both Muslims and Tamils were better at business than Sinhalese. They were more friendly and shrewd, he said, and knew better how to attract customers to their businesses.

Ranjith saw “Palama” as a bridge that links two sides. He pointed out that the bridge helps to understand what is good and bad and get across. He considered the performance as somewhat important in his decision to take over the business and improve it.

*That was the time I re-opened the prawn hatchery that my father started. I got courage to continue the business. Palama affected my thinking; I don't know about the others.*

### **Case Study 6: I got my mother to start a business**

Nimali is 15 years old and a Year 11 student at a Senior Secondary School, near town in Polonnaruwa District. She decided to take the new Entrepreneurial Studies course offered as an “O” level subject in 2007 with 60 other fellow students in her class, when they were informed of this option by the class teacher. She liked the subject because she learnt things about enterprise that she did not know before, it was taught in an interactive way and it was easy to learn. The parts she liked best were the modules on the entrepreneurial environment and business shares. She found the course useful because it showed the difference between doing business in urban and rural environments and how the pricing was done differently. It was

important to learn how to set prices when one starts an enterprise. She suggested that the course could be improved by adding a component about enterprises where profit margins are higher than those done in her village currently.

She thought doing one's own business was a good idea because it was doing something of your own, that you were not under working anybody and you could even provide employment to others. Business people in her village, Nimali perceived, were able to attract customers, had creative ideas and were able to bear any losses they made. They helped welfare activities in the village, such as related to temple ceremonies, self-help activities, and peoples' household rituals.

Nimali considered women better at running a business than men because they had more experience with self-employment and knew better how to make profits. After around six months into her course, she told her mother that it would be a good idea for her to start a Tea Room because she was not doing anything at home and they would be able to earn some income that way. Her mother agreed with her and started the Tea Room one year ago. Her mother has been running it successfully and Nimali helps her after school. Her classmates joke that there are more customers when Nimali is at the Tea Room. She points out that she would like to run her own business when she finishes her "A" levels.

### **Case Study 7: Loan portfolio increases**

Ranketha is a paddy farming village in the Medirigiriya D.S. Division of Polonnaruwa district. It has around 370 households. The World Bank supported *Gemi Diriya* (previously Village Self-help and Livelihood Improvement Project) has been operating in the village for over 10 years. The loan portfolio of the village was around SLR 2,400,000 before the first *Palama* performance at the village temple in February 2007, Nilanthi, the facilitator of the *Gemi Diriya* programme pointed out.

*The performance attracted a large crowd – even the monk from the village temple was surprised. There was not enough room in the hall for everybody who came. A lot of people liked it.*

Since more people joined the society and requested loans after the performance, they requested *Palama* to come and perform again in December 2007 at the primary school. This did not draw as large a crowd because the publicity was less and the time conflicted with another event in the village. However, the loan portfolio of *Gemi Diriya* in the village has increased to SLR 6,700,000 by now, Nilanthi added. This was due to existing members taking out loans, as well as new members joining and taking out loans.

The chairman of the society confirmed that the number of villagers who had joined *Gemi Diriya* increased after the performance - around 30 new members joined and formed 4-5 new small groups.

*People who didn't believe in doing business before came to us.*

The society has 180 members in 32 small groups now. Another member of *Gemi Diriya* pointed out that only around 150 people in the village knew about the enterprise and micro-finance activities of the society. The *Palama* performance was able to create awareness about enterprise among at least another 150 people in the village, he said.

The Chief Incumbent of the village Buddhist temple was among influencers who had a positive response to the *Palama* performance.

*The play was very good and depicted the real concerns of villagers. The theatre group also interacted with the villagers well.*

He also commented on the general attitude towards NGO activities in the village, the positive response of the entire village towards the performance, as well as the messages of the plays being consistent with Buddhist values.

*Usually we are anxious when NGOs come to the village because they can destroy the good values that exist in villages like ours - such as the sense of community and helping one another. However, this theatre group's messages were not offensive to anybody. People complain generally when there is an inappropriate performance in the village but there were no complaints this time. In fact the group performed here twice at the request of the villagers. The plays were about making an effort to improve one's life – this is in keeping with the Buddha's teaching.*

## APPENDIX 2

### ILO Enter-Growth Project: Enterprise Culture Impact Assessment on *Palama*

#### Open-ended Interview Questionnaire

##### 1. IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

Village: \_\_\_\_\_ DS Division: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth place: \_\_\_\_\_

Where else have you lived?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Interviewer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Interview:

##### 2. CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

Influencer

Entrepreneur

Starter since *Palama*

Non-Entrepreneur

School leaver/youth

##### 3. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE HOUSEHOLD

2.4 Relationship to respondent	Gender	Age	Education Level	In/Out of school	Occupation	Out – Migrant - same district (SD) - other district (OD) - overseas (OS)
1.Respondent						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						

## 4. Respondent Background

### 4.1 Influencer

- Occupation/s:
  - Leadership in organizations:
  - Membership in organizations:
  - What kind of work would you advise a school leaver in your village to do?
- 

### 4.2 Entrepreneur/starter after *Palama*

**Type** of enterprise:

Month/year **started**:

# **Employees**:

Has entrepreneur received **BDS**?

☐ ED training ☐ Credit ☐ Business Information

☐ Membership in business/trading associations; since \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Other associations; since \_\_\_\_\_

If respondent did a business and **discontinued**, **Period?**

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### 4.3 School leaver

- Name of school attended:
- Type of school: MV/Central/National
- Year last attended:
- Stream: Arts/Science/Commerce/Fine Arts
- Followed Entrepreneurship Studies/KAB course: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- What did/do you plan to do after school?
  
- What did/do your parents want you to do?

- Have you considered starting your own business?
  - Why yes or no?
- 

**4.4 Did you see/hear about a *Palama* performance?**

**5. What do you think of the idea of starting one's own business?**

Benefits

Disadvantages

**6. What do you think about people doing business in your village? What kind of characteristics/skills do they have?**

Do you think they are just/fair (*sadarana*)? Why?

Do you think they are exploitative? Why?

**7. What do you think about people doing business in your district? What kind of characteristics/skills do they have?**

Do you think they are just/fair (*sadarana*)? Why?

Do you think they are exploitative? Why?

**8. Do business people here contribute to the improvement of your village? How?**

**9. What would you like your children to be, when they grow up? Why?**

**10. Who is better at business: Men or Women? Why?**

**11. Is any ethnic group in the village/district better at business? Why?**

**12. How did you hear about the Palama performance?**

**13. Why did you decide to go?**

**14. About how many people from your village went to the performance?**

**15. What did you think of the performance overall?**



**16. What did you like best about the performance? Why?**

**17. What did you like least about the performance? Why?**

**18. Did you go up on stage and perform in the forum theatre? If yes, how did you feel about that?**

**19. Did you have an idea to contribute, even though you did not perform? What?**

**20. What did you think were the main messages conveyed by the performance?**

**21. Why do you think the theatre group is called *Palama*?**

**22. What did you do after the performance?**

- Nothing
  - Discussed the plays and ideas with other villagers
  - Began to respect people doing business
  - Considered doing business as a livelihood option
  - Discussed the possibility of doing my own business
  - Encouraged family member to start own business
  - Visited IDB/Small Industries/Entergrowth office/chamber of commerce
  - Made plans to do own business
  - Started own business
  - Found more strength to continue current business
  - Improved current business
  - Other
- 

**Entrepreneur/Starter after Palama (refer to question 4.2)**

**23. If you started/improved your own business in the last two years, what kind? How?**

**24. If you started/improved your own business, did you receive help or advice from anybody? Whom? Did you use the brochure provided by *Palama*?**

**25. If you started your own business/improved, what is the status of your business?**

**26. If you started/improved your business, what do you plan to do in the future?**

**27. How important was the *Palama* performance in making your decision to start/improve your business?**

Very important

Important

Somewhat important

Not important

---

**School-leaver (refer to question 4.3)**

**28. If you have considered/are considering doing business as a livelihood option, how important was the Palama performance in contributing to this idea?**

Very important

Important

Somewhat important

Not important

---

**29. Did you participate in any other activity organized by the Entergrowth project?**

LOCA

Value chain research

Producer/trader association

Other

**30. Did you participate in any activity related to micro/small enterprise of any other project in your district? Which?**

**31. Which of these activities was *very important/important/somewhat important* for you to: (refer to question 22)**

- Respect people doing business
- Consider business as a livelihood option:
- Learn more/seek information about business:
- Start your business:
- Find strength to continue your business:
- Improve your business:
- Join a producer/business/trade association:
- To be successful in business
- Other

**Any other comments:**

**ILO Enter-Growth Project: Enterprise Culture Impact Assessment  
Focus Group Discussion Schedule for students and teachers of the  
Entrepreneurial Studies Course**

1. What do you think of the idea of doing one's own business?
2. What are the characteristics and skills of entrepreneurs in your village/district?
3. What roles do entrepreneurs play in the economy and society of your village/district?
4. Who is better at business – men/women/both?
5. Who is better at business – Sinhalese/Tamils/Muslims/all?
6. What kind of career/occupation/livelihood do you expect to choose after school?
7. Would you consider business as an option? Why yes or no?
8. How did you find out about the course?
9. Why did you decide to take this course out of the options you were given?
10. What proportion of students chose this course?
11. How do you like the course overall?
12. What are the aspects/parts you liked? Disliked? Why?
13. Has the course changed your ideas about career choices? How?

## APPENDIX 4

### **ILO Enter-Growth Project: Enterprise Culture Impact Assessment Focus Group for Entrepreneurs and Influencers**

14. What do you think of the idea of doing one's own business in this district?
15. What are the characteristics and skills of entrepreneurs in this district?
16. What roles do entrepreneurs play in the economy and society of this district?
17. What kind of advice would you give to a school leaver/your child on their career/livelihood options?
  - a. Higher education/Formal vocational training
  - b. Employment
  - c. Informal vocational training
  - d. Self-employment/business
18. Who is better at business – men, women, both?
19. Who is better at business – Sinhalese/Tamils/Muslims/all?
20. Has the enterprise culture of this district changed in the last 3 years? How?
21. Why has it changed?
22. Has the ILO Entergrowth project contributed to this change?
23. Has the Enterprise Forum contributed to changes in values/attitudes towards business? How?
24. Have the Business Fairs contributed to changes in values/attitudes towards business? How?
25. If seen *Palama*, do you think it has contributed to changes in values/ attitudes towards business? How?
26. If familiar with Entrepreneurial studies course, do you think this has contributed to changes in values/attitudes towards business? How?