

Evaluation Report for Green Movement of Sri Lanka (GMSL)

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APHRNR	Alliance for the Protection of Human Rights and National Resources
CEA	Central Environment Authority
CFS	Central Family Services
CO	Chief Organiser, GMSL
EF	Energy Forum
EFL	Environmental Foundation Ltd
ExCo	GMSL Executive Committee
DF	Development Fund, Norway
HDC	Human Development Centre
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MENR	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
MONLAR	Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform
NNAF	National NGO Action Front
OSLEN	Organization to Safeguard Life and Environment
RSL	'Regaining Sri Lanka'
SLCDF	Sri Lanka Canadian Development Fund
SLWGADB	Sri Lankan Working Group on the Asian Development Bank
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The TOR specifies the following aims for this evaluation:

This evaluation aims to assess the impacts of past activities covering the period 1998-2002 and to give useful guidance for future strengthening of GMSL's work and organization growth.

Specific questions that this evaluation will answer are:

1. Policy advocacy work

- *To what extent has GMSL managed to achieve the general intentions and objectives in its policy advocacy work in the following areas:*
 1. *Environment and consumer education.*
 2. *Promotion of sustainable development.*
 3. *The GMSL role as watchdog.*
- *What are the recommendations for the future strengthening of policy advocacy work in the areas mentioned above?*

2. Institutional Strengths and weaknesses

- *What is the structure of GMSL today ?*
- *Has there been positive/ negative development in GMSL's institution since 1998?*
- *What are the recommendations for future strengthening of the organization.*

Structure and development of GMSL

A “networked movement” for sustainable development.

GMSL today appears to be partly a network of members, and partly a movement of like-minded individuals who have shared a common political background, or who are inspired by the current vision of the GMSL. It is not led by its structure, but by a larger vision, and organises in ways that make best use of those who are prepared to work in favour of environmental issues. It draws its strength and identity through a series of interconnecting political, development and religious networks, developed since the 1980s.

GMSL clearly has a political agenda and seeks to effect social change. It has developed some solid basic principles. It is committed to sustainable development for all, and in particular takes its agenda from “development refugees”. It takes its work as a ‘watchdog’ very seriously, and believes campaigns against bad development decisions can be won, a belief which brings results.

The evidence generally from the evaluation was that a large number of people feel connected to and participate in GMSL activities. They are not, however, all members of GMSL, and indeed not all of those who are members participate. The refinement of GMSL's political purpose and strategies will probably mean that the membership will change and settle over the next period, and those who see sustainable development as a political issue (rather than a purely environmental one) will make up the core.

Structure

GMSL's structure reflects its hybrid nature, as both movement and network. While it has some democratic organising principles, it relies heavily on the CO and staff to guide it, and to recommend strategies, and activities.

Changes have been made in the structure and staffing over the last two years to increase participation levels, and enable GMSL to make decisions, and act, more effectively. It is as yet too soon to see the results of increased and reorganised staffing, and the streamlining of the structure, but the fact such changes have been thought through and introduced indicates that GMSL is more than capable of assessing its performance, and making appropriate changes in its structure.

One of the areas that is most challenging for the GMSL is co-ordinating between districts and the central office, and making sure people know what is going on. This is a general truth for all networks, and is one of the on-going challenges that has to be looked at regularly.

The curious 'gap' in GMSL's structure is that the CBOs and local people who participate in campaigns have no formal right to influence decisions, although it is clear from the culture and underlying principles of GMSL that it is local people, particularly 'development refugees' who count.

Participation

Participation levels by members in the work of GMSL indicate GMSL is a dynamic and creative network. Activity is generated by interest of members, and fluctuates depending on the issues. The goal is not to get all members actively participating in the network at all times, but to ensure a balance between work done by the centre and action taken by members.

Any network with a central coordinating body is likely to find that the balance of activities between that body and the members tends to weigh toward the centre. The energy members invest in the network will be less than the staff, and will tend to mirror the level of overlap between their interest, or mission / vision and that of the network. However, the CO and others in the Executive Committee were genuinely keen to find ways of increasing members' activity levels, while recognising that members needed something tangible from the network in return. Members of the ExCo are all concerned that GMSL maintain its unique nature of not being a funding body, but this gives them added challenges when seeking to generate greater commitment and participation from members. Many smaller members need funding for their activities, and GMSL is the obvious place to ask.

Due to the limited co-ordination, the successes, if they are not larger national level campaigns, are heard only at district levels. This is a missed opportunity for the GMSL to develop its identity and limits it to a body that only does protests. If GMSL aspires to develop a green way of living, it would be worth sharing in a more co-ordinated manner what different members do and what they learn across the country. At the moment the information flows largely from the co-ordinating office to the districts and from districts to the co-ordinating office at the annual general meeting, ExCo meetings, visits that the program manager does to districts and through the Arana newspaper. The movement could be further enriched if there were more opportunities for discussion among the general membership.

Leadership

The over-riding impression from all we talked to is that the CO is the key to GMSL. He clearly leads the movement and is the person most look to for direction, knowledge, analysis and strategy. As such he holds power, and is very aware of it, and seeks to make sure that he is accountable to those who he feels the GMSL has a moral responsibility to advocate for.

The CO is respected by everyone in the field as being extremely knowledgeable, well-informed, and analytically superior to others when it comes to green issues and their link to broader policy debates. There is, however, a shared concern that the gap between the CO's expertise and experience and the rest of GMSL staff and members is too great.

GMSL has been concerned with developing a new generation of leaders since it was formed. It is also committed to supporting local and shared leadership. The activity level of the GMSL could never be maintained without that growing base of support. From what the evaluation could see, the work training campaigners and young leadership is beginning to show results, but such values-based work is long-term and requires commitment.

Challenges and Recommendations

Political purpose and strategies

The office staff and the ExCo are sufficiently aware of the need to develop a membership more in line with the principles of the 'networked movement' and will need to pay attention to this over the next two years. The PM's role will need to be considered as key in any strategy to build and form a stronger membership.

GMSL needs some kind of community development strategy.

Structure

The curious gap in membership, where the active local people in CBOs are not 'members', is one that may need addressing, if people feel that they want a greater stake in the decision-making of the GMSL. However, many people working locally really want access to the knowledge and contacts of the GMSL, and to share in expertise, but may not be as interested in 'membership' as outsiders may think. The impression gained through this evaluation is that the central office, through having strong principles, view these local people as where their accountability lies, even if they do not have formal membership.

Participation

More resources need to be dedicated to improving communication and information exchange across the network. All those who talked to us indicated that the current feedback processes could be improved, at all levels; from members to members, from CO to staff, from CO to ExCo; from ExCo to members; members to CO, etc.

District level information and feedback is limited, and maybe a newsletter could help. Better links might need to be developed between districts near to one another, and encourage them to use each other as resource persons, work together on activities, and discuss and share in successes. This would help in the development of GMSL's identity.

A strategy to enable members to access funds (see above) needs serious thought.

Leadership

The GMSL needs a strategy to minimise the 'Knowledge gap' between the CO and the GMSL staff and members.

This could include enabling some of the up and coming leadership to develop closer working knowledge and expertise of different areas of the environmental and sustainable agenda, through a regular discussion group, with individuals responsible for researching and talking about a particular area. People could be enabled to shadow the CO in his work. While in the short term this might mean

that the CO is involved in less initiatives and activities, in the longer-term it would mean that the GMSL would be able to spread the work-load more effectively across a greater number of people.

Achievements in policy advocacy work

The report looks at four strategies employed by GMSL to advance its policy and advocacy work.: lobbying and advocacy; campaigns and protests; education and awareness raising; and networking and alliance-building. We conclude that the GMSL has achieved significant results through its lobbying and advocacy, and campaigns and protests.

Policy modifications have been achieved and awareness raised on aspects of government policy that will affect national assets, such as the Water Policy, and Forestry Sector Management. Protests and campaigns started or supported by GMSL have been effective in stalling the progress of some large infrastructure projects, like the Expressways and the Eppawala Phosphate Mine, on the grounds of unsustainability or negative social or environmental impact. Agencies such as the CEA and UNDP readily acknowledge that organisations such as GMSL are essential as 'watch-dogs' on the environment, to draw attention to the environmental consequences of policies and programmes. GMSL has used the 1980 Environment Act, the EIA process, fundamental rights guarantees and the 'participation' guidelines of multi-laterals to their maximum degree to influence outcomes in favour of the environment. Even the ADB accepts that advocacy NGOs like GMSL help to stop bad projects.

The main criticism made by multi-lateral agencies and the State of GMSL, and NGOs in general, is that they do not produce alternatives. They criticise the oppositional stand of NGOs, but maintain that they are keen to work 'in partnership' with NGOs. However, the rhetoric of partnership and consultation is poorly translated into practice, and may well be impossible given the conflicting paradigms of development that separate them. 'Partnership' and 'consultation' is certainly useful for access to information and 'having your say', but really affects only the limited area of projects and programme implementation. Any real shift in the balance of power, in which 'civil society' gets a meaningful stake in the decision-making process, probably has to be tackled through other routes and strategies.

Producing policy alternatives and following up on these has not been the main priority for the GMSL in the last two years, and members clearly do not want GMSL to turn into a policy think-tank. This may be a matter of resources, or of political priorities. As the report states, too much time on policy work tends to mean that the direction of energy goes upwards to the policy-makers and the grass-roots work gets forgotten. But without some policy development, the criticism about lack of alternative proposals beings to ring true. Members clearly want to connect up practical alternatives to local development. But there is a clear need for credible policy alternatives in Sri Lanka.

Challenges and Recommendations

Policy work

GMSL could usefully think about how it can dovetail more policy-proposal work into its lobbying and advocacy strategy. There are three gaps in GMSL's policy work that could usefully be addressed in the next period:

- ❖ Policy input into development planning at the local level, making best use of its decentralised structure, its political commitment to sustainable development, and local members' expertise
- ❖ Lobbying of political representatives, whether holding politicians to account, or building more sustainable contacts and alliances
- ❖ Research done by those other than ADB consultants. This may mean that the policy work needs to be done by another organisation, or institution, or that GMSL participates in a forum on such development led by others. There may be a future in GreenNet coming together to take that up and find funding for it.

Campaigns and Protests

GMSL have great accumulated expertise in this area, and despite the criticisms about the increasingly radical nature of the GMSL by one member, this is an effective and important strategy for their advocacy work. As a way of increasing their learning in this area, the GMSL might need to think through more carefully its criteria about local leadership capacity, the relationship between local impact and policy level work, and follow-up and accompaniment capacity, in order to assist in its decision-making processes about what to campaign on and how.

Awareness-raising and education

While the evaluation only had time to hear about the kinds of activities going on in a small number of local districts, it appears that GMSL makes the best use it can of its limited resources in this regard. The Arana newspaper is well-regarded and now translated into Tamil. The SLWGADB Coordinator publishes information on the monitoring work of the ADB. The CO regularly talks to the press and media about issues of concern. The main office responds to requests for information, and awareness raising by connecting up people across the network where it can. The exception to this is its management of the internet and web-sites.

Currently the GMSL gives occasional start-up money for projects that are considered to further the strategic aims of the network. But it needs to find a way to respond more effectively to this obvious need, especially from local groups with very limited or no resources.

Challenges and Recommendations

GMSL do not currently have the resources to promote the best practices in sustainable development that already exist. Helping to spread these practices, is one way this kind of development will spread.

- ❖ More attention could be paid to developing practical demonstration projects, and experimentation, through programmes that bring new knowledge and experience to members. One option would be to employ a funding advisor, who could assist members in the process of finding funds for their sustainable projects. Another might be to examine micro-credit possibilities for projects with an income-generating capacity. Linking people to funds will also help GMSL with providing concrete examples for use in their lobbying and advocacy work.
- ❖ One area that could be improved is the management of the various web-sites where GMSL disseminates information. GMSL needs to think hard about what resources it wishes to put into IT solutions, and commit to managing an integrated GMSL web-site more effectively.

Networking and Alliance-building

The GMSL is highly respected for its experience and expertise in environmental issues. Other national level NGOs look to GMSL for leadership and the CO of GMSL is regularly invited to speak at conferences and fora nationally and around the world. As a 'networked movement' GMSL has networking and alliance-building at its core, and such work should be considered a vital and necessary essential in the success of GMSL.

Challenges and recommendations

- ❖ One of the main challenges is knowing how to make best use of national and international opportunities, and yet not get caught up in spending too much time attending others' meetings as a resource person. The current excessive workload of the CO could be addressed through the strategies mentioned below under generating greater leadership capacity.
- ❖ If GMSL is to commit more resources and time to joint advocacy and lobbying with other organisations, greater attention needs to be paid to agreeing common agendas, and sharing out tasks.

Methodology used for the evaluation

The report is arranged to respond simply to the above aims. It is in two parts: institutional strengths and weaknesses, and Policy / advocacy work, with each section assessing the past and offering guidance for the future. The GMSL does a vast array of work, and the field work was able to sample a really small selection of the many activities which GMSL promotes, supports and in which it is involved.

Institutional strengths and weaknesses

The team of two used the following framework for guiding their thinking and approach to looking at the institutional performance of the GMSL. While this is designed to evaluate international social change networks, the framework permits us also to assess a network that works primarily at a national level.

While the team did not seek to 'mark' the project against these indicators, they helped us to think through how the GMSL is structured, how it develops and pursues its strategies and activities, what levels of participation exist, and what relationship the central office has to the members, other national actors, and complementary networks.

In order to make the report easy to follow, we will use the above framework to discuss the GMSL's political purpose and strategies, its organisation and management, and the qualities of leadership and participation.

The team interviewed and talked to as many members as possible in the time available, both very active and engaged members, and one more disengaged, or critical member. We talked to all staff members, and the Chairman and Executive Committee, plus a range of people who are not formally 'members' of GMSL, but have been active in campaigns.

Finally, the team interviewed the majority of national level NGOs and networks with which the GMSL manages relationships and strategic alliances, as a way of understanding the quality of GMSL's work as perceived by outside 'friends'.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR THE EVALUATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORK

O P E R A T I O N A L D I M E N S I O N S			
P E R F O R M A N C E C R I T E R I A			
	Political purpose and strategies	Organisation and management	Leadership and participation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision and mission are shared. Members have a sense of belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Network focuses on the essential—fulfilling its political purpose. <u>All the members have the opportunity to collaborate in activities that make best use of their skills and contribution.**</u> The members have equitable access to the resources (people, funds, goods and services) and reputation of the Network. The structure is not hierarchical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The decision-making process is considered just, inclusive and effective. Participation is generalised and voluntary.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>The strategies of the network reflect the range of political positions in the network.**</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of opinions and ideas of the members have a place in the activities of the Network. Importance is given to building relationships of trust internally and externally. <u>Conflicts don't paralyse the network's capacity to act**</u> The human and financial base of the Network is sufficiently broad to avoid the dependence of many on a few. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The diversity of members is appropriate for the Network's purpose and strategies. <u>Members are enriched by the difference**.</u> The strategies are developed with the contribution of all of the members. The interaction between the members is creative and constructive.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The priority is to act. Goals are pursued seizing the opportunities and adjusting to obstacles without losing sight of the political purpose. The Network learns from experience. Achievements serve as a basis for reformulating the strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The responsibility and authority is effectively balanced between that vested in the secretariat or co-ordinating entity and that decentralised to other bodies of decision-making and execution. The structure is light, facilitative and supportive. The rules are minimal. <u>Organisational culture is in tune with network principles – it 'thinks' and 'acts' as a network, not an institution**</u> The resources expand and contract, quantitatively and qualitatively, according to the strategic needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The members take initiative and influence the development of the Network. The co-ordination between the members is effective. All the members contribute to and benefit from the achievements. The effect and impact are more than the sum of the activities of the individual members.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social changes that are pursued are clearly defined. The strategies are based on an up-to-date analysis of the environment. The strategies and lines of action are coherent with the social changes the Network seeks. There is a clear organisational identity embraced internally and externally. The Network achieves results at the local and international levels. The Network is <u>a key player in the work</u> ** to achieve structural, long-term change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work is planned, monitored and evaluated. Policies on how the Network should and should not function are followed. The financial function is well structured. Internal communication is effective. <u>The Network understands what qualities and skills are needed in the Coordinating Function, and people are managed in ways that allow those skills and qualities to be utilised. **</u> The assets—material or immaterial—are appropriate for the requirements of the strategic lines of action. A financial strategy is pursued and the financial resources are adequately managed. Learning is a basis for innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Leadership combines co-ordination, facilitation, new ideas, and encourages innovation, and focus.**</u> <u>Leadership is not just vested in the coordination function, but emerges around the network where appropriate to activities or issues. **</u> The Network is able to involve and lead other social actors. Alliances contribute to the implementation of the lines of action and lead to the formulation of new strategies. Members become more effective and committed actors and protagonists.

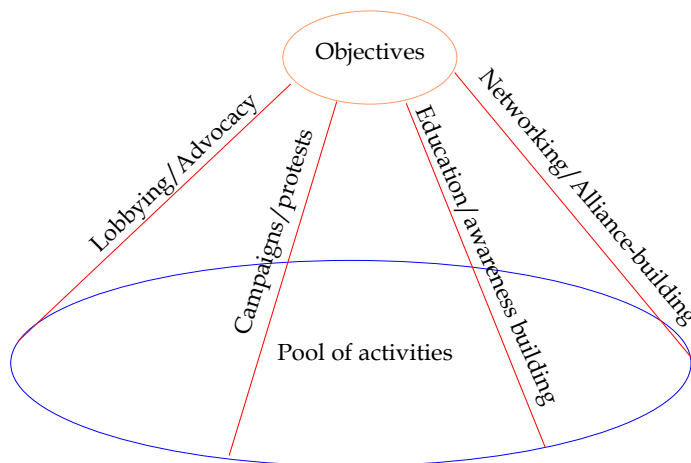
Source: Martha Nuñez and Ricardo Wilson-Grau.

*Based on Madeline Church, et al 2002 ** These aspects have either been added or changed, Church & Kiriwandeniya 2003

Policy and Advocacy

Four strategies

In order to look holistically at the way in which the GMSL does its policy and advocacy work, we decided to think about it as four interlinked strategies: lobbying and advocacy, campaigns and protests, networking and building alliances, and education and awareness-raising. The GMSL uses all four ways of working to further their aims, and many of its activities contribute to more than one. The interlinked nature of the work means that it makes most sense not to waste time attempting to decide which activity contributes to which strategy, but to imagine a pool of activities that can be undertaken.



As the project has few evaluation indicators already established (it does a very good job of monitoring and reporting on its activities) the team asked the Chief Organiser to suggest some of the indicators of change the GMSL uses in order to know if it is having an impact. The team also used the interviews with those 'targets' of GMSL's work - the Asian Development Bank, the IMF, national authorities responsible for the environment - to extract indicators of change, and understand what such change might mean for future strategies. Finally, the team met and talked with four small groups in order to understand better the factors that have helped bring about successful outcomes, and the role played by GMSL: those most closely involved in the successful campaign to keep the Eppawala Phosphate mine under national ownership; those closely involved in resistance to the Turuwila water project; those involved in organising resistance to the Expressways; and local members in Kalutara who have been involved in many awareness-raising and educational activities.

Definitions

Lobbying and advocacy: while these terms are often used interchangeably, the team is using the following definitions in this report

Lobbying: attempts to influence policy by going directly to the power-holders; building relationships behind the scenes to secure information and access that is not available to others; 'off-the-record' meetings and briefings;

Advocacy: speaking on behalf of people who do not have the power, resources or access to do so for themselves, with their consent and participation; accountability and transparency to those who are being represented; advocacy also carries an implication of empowerment, with a commitment to find ways to ensure people can speak for themselves.

INTRODUCTION

A network or a movement?

The recent research done by the team leader suggests that we are at the very early stages of understanding when it comes to assessing the work of loosely-organised networks of people and organisations striving for social change. These are organisational forms that have a political purpose, may have members, and often some kind of representative structure, but they are not political parties.

GMSL appears to be partly a network of members, and partly a movement of like-minded individuals who have shared a common political background, or who are inspired by the current vision of the GMSL. It seems to be a mix of both. Not all protest campaigns, for instance, come from members. GMSL is just as likely to get involved in supporting people who have been put in contact with them by others who know them. They may become members, or may see themselves as part of 'Green' without any formal relationship to the GMSL. In this sense, GMSL is not led by its structure, but by a larger vision, and organises in ways that make best use of those who are prepared to work in favour of environmental issues

'GMSL is not concerned with registered NGOs, they will work with anyone who has energy, anyone who wants to do something, and work with the resources they have.' (Mr Moonagama, Secretary, GMSL)

Indeed, the name Green Movement of Sri Lanka suggests that it is more like a movement, although with a structure something like a network. It has a charismatic and highly-respected leader, who certainly makes decisions and drives the work forward, but one who appears to be trusted both inside GMSL and by others who are involved in common struggles to act in a transparent way and on behalf of those who have less opportunity to be heard. In some ways such a set up could be said to be less 'democratic' than a movement, in that the 'leader' and staff are not subject to election. One person interviewed was equally unclear, and suggested they could be called an umbrella organisation.

'The GMSL has facilitated a lot of other organisations to do campaigning but those organisations don't necessarily have the 'right' to take decisions, or influence things, because they are not members. So it's not really a network.' (Asoka N Abeygunawardana, EF)

In fact, GMSL describes itself as a consortium in its project proposals. But it is not at all like the consortia arrangements that have been common in the Sri Lankan context. These are usually set up by an external funder, such as the SL Canadian Development Fund, to bring together the partners

they support either regionally or nationally. They are largely organised around funding opportunities. The GMSL is again unique in that it does not offer any funding to its members. While this creates challenges for keeping members involved, as they are often in need of funding, no-one we interviewed thought that the GMSL should change and become a funding organisation.

GMSL certainly seem to 'think' like a network. It taps into and works with networks and consortia already in existence. It places emphasis on linking members to one another, encouraging them to share expertise, and help each other make the best of opportunities.

'GMSL works as a broker, not a membership recruitment agency' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

This is well illustrated by the membership in Galle. Having had a history of consortium organisation, through the Sri Lankan Canadian Development Fund, they maintained working relationships when the SLCDF left. The 13 NGOs funded by them plus another 8 joined together to form a District Consortium to make the best of local funding opportunities. They are a diverse group of local development NGOs with a keen interest in the environment. One of the main NGOs, Help O, has long term connections to GMSL. So the local GMSL District Committee in this area piggy-backs on the back of this Consortium, and includes the 21 NGOs plus a number of community groups who are not formally constituted.

'The tendency with networks is to pay a coordinator and then expect them to do all the work. In the District Consortium we plan within our own organisations, but we share out the tasks between members, ensuring that those best placed to do the work do it, and we also capitalise on the social base that we have. Our idea in the Consortium is to apply for money, but then share it out to those best placed to do work.' (Chathura Welivitiya, Help – O, Coordinator of GMSL Committee in Galle District, and Vice-Chair of District Consortium)

What is clear is that while on paper the GMSL seems to be 'structured' like a network to some extent, it is made up of a large number of members, CBOs and volunteers, some of whom only relate to the national office, some only to one campaign and a local leader, and others who are fully incorporated into GMSL activities and policies. Maybe we could call it a "networked movement".

Background to GM

The background to the current GMSL is helpful in understanding exactly what a networked movement might mean. GMSL has a group of people who share a common history. Prior to the birth of the GMSL there were at least four groups from which GMSL membership was drawn. These four groups were very different from each other, but all had some commitment to sustainable development. The kind of membership GMSL has today and the rich diversity of its resource pool come from these four channels.

NNAF: In the 1990s, SLCDF facilitated a network of NGOs who were primarily funded by them, called the National NGO Action Front (NNAF). This had an environmental committee, made up of some of the current members of GMSL. This source brought NGO Members familiar with development jargon, and common funding approaches. They depended on outside funding, larger programming, and were not very political. They took a softer approach, and were more concerned with growth oriented development, and poverty reduction

OSLEN (Organisation to Safeguard Life and Environment): an Environment and Consumer NGO, from which GMSL draws intellectual policy-related skills and a discursive approach to the environment. OSLEN worked on national-level advocacy based on indigenous strengths. The current Chief Organiser and Programme Manager both have a background in OSLEN.

SEDEC: A church organization, which at one time was involved in national-level labour and environment protests, as a result of leadership who sought links beyond Christian networks. Some of the members and partners of GMSL today have a history of collaborative struggles in this organization.

Friends of the People (Janatha Mituro): A youth pressure group seeking an alternative, people-friendly, political path. It had a green socialist identity, and a strong Sinhala Buddhist identity. Most of the members of this pressure group were involved later in the formation of the political party Sihala Urumaya. GMSL gains support and blessing from some of the original members of this pressure group

As such, GMSL draws its strength and identity through a series of interconnecting political, development and religious networks. For example, members of OSLEN in the Kalutara District joined GMSL when it started. The Fisheries Solidarity Group in Kalutara got involved in GMSL because of one person linked to them attended a one year vocational training in the Temple and supported by GMSL. As a result the FSG then joined GMSL.

But it also has to be understood that GMSL emerged from the wider political context of the late 1980s. There were a large number of green organizations in early 1990s, which then diminished significantly during the decade. One of the reasons for this is the way in which green issues became a political alternative after the serious government repression of the youth insurgency in 1988-1990. Talking about green issues was another way of bringing alternative voices to the surface, without getting killed. Once the political space was created some of these green groups became other kinds of political groups, while others remained politically committed to another view of development.

Early GMSL

GMSL was born out of a split with the NNAF. SLCDF recruited Suranjan Kodithuwakku, currently CO of GMSL, as a consultant to write an environmental policy for NNAF to promote. One outcome of this work was an action plan, and a proposal for a specialised network focused primarily on environmental issues, rather than having environment as a secondary item in the development agenda. The NGOs in the environmental committee, who were already receiving funds through the DF, applied to the DF for funds. This resulted in them breaking from NNAF and starting the GMSL. The first grant was \$30k in 1998. Suranjan Kodithuwakku completed the consultancy and remained as a member of the movement but did not hold a key position.

The original action plan for GMSL, developed through consulting many environmental activists and academics, suggested the need for a second generation of environmental activists outside Colombo, in the field.

"The core idea was to bring scientific knowledge to the rural areas and bring those living closely with nature into the discussion, thus breaking the elitist nature of the debate and making it more of an every day discussion" (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

A training programme was developed to do skills training on environmental campaigning and the Environmental Impact Assessment process. The objective was to train 150 campaigners, and put

200 people through a training for trainers programme, in order to implement this Plan of Action. The idea was to train cadres of CBOs and NGOs in environmental education, biodiversity, climate change, environmental law, human rights, and local strategies for education. Simultaneously they wanted to train 150 campaigners, in advocacy and policy work, as they needed skilled people who knew how to lobby.

'They were too emotional, were not using enough data, they had no stepped-approaches about how to lobby at the political, bureaucratic, media and community levels.' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

The syllabus covered how to organise people, information dissemination, creating awareness, basic legal environment, organisational and communication skills, values and used some 20-30 resource people, experts, media people, community leaders, lawyers, campaigners.

Although the CO's evaluation of this programme is that the productivity of these groups was very low, 125 of them, mainly campaigners, are still active.

Structurally GMSL was organised much as it is now, although some recent streamlining has taken place. District level committees sent representatives to central committees, and the membership could all play a part in the General Assembly. The GMSL had a small staff of a Programme Coordinator (PC) and an Administrative officer. The first PC served one year. The Chairman was Mr Podinilame of the Human Development Centre in Kegalle, who is no longer an active member in the GMSL.

The growing commitment to political change and empowerment led to a second key moment in the GMSL's development, when the movement split roughly in half. While there are some immediate and personal reasons for the split, the clash appears to be one primarily of identity, and the way identity works in the development context in SL. Firstly not all the original members of GMSL were environment organisations. Environment was only part of their agenda, one that needed to be compromised to some extent with economic-oriented development agendas. Secondly, these NGOs saw the GMSL network as similar to the NNAF, a channel through which large funds could be coordinated and channelled. As such, they were prepared to take a more conciliatory line and compromise environment policy for relative funding advantages. One indicator of this clash is the argument about the ethics of receiving money from the ADB as an implementing partner, while at the same time taking on a vigilance role. A second is the way in which the training programme described above was being implemented. While the programmes were taken up, the current CO felt that

'the emphasis was on filling the places, not on the kind of qualities in a leader, or trainer, that we would want. The majority of NGOs did not have principles, or real ideology about green issues.' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

The remaining NGOs, to some extent the smaller, non-Colombo based members, had an agenda rooted in changing power relations (between large and small NGOs, between academics and rural people, between people and multi-nationals) which is, fundamentally, a political question. They raised some serious questions about the management of funds, especially about who was benefiting from funding. A number of NGOs left, and the current GMSL has its roots in this latter, politically committed, group. The new CO took up the coordination post in 1999. Since then, the leadership has pushed the GMSL to mature and develop a clearly defined agenda and set of transparent principles.

Section 1 – Organisational Strengths and Weaknesses

Structure

The current structure of GMSL can be seen from its organisational chart. (See Annex 1 – Suranjan needs to provide this)

Grass-roots and community organisations are to some extent the bed-rock of GMSL's support, especially in specific campaigns, although they are not formally members of GMSL. The number of these fluctuate considerably depending on what campaign is actively running at the time. The fact that they are placed at the 'top' of the organisational chart indicates that they are considered to be the most important 'stakeholders' in the GMSL, to whom accountability is owed in the last resort.

Membership

There are 130 members at the current time, organised into 13 Districts, with formal committees. It is intended that each committee has a District Coordinator, who bears the responsibility for communication with the GMSL office.

Members are entitled to vote at the annual General Assembly, and pay a nominal R100 to join. They receive the GMSL publication Arana. Members expect skills, information, help with fundraising, project proposals, and monitoring, in return

To join GMSL, a prospective member fills in questionnaire. The District Coordinator visits them, makes a recommendation to the Executive Committee (ExCo) according to criteria in the Constitution. Provisional membership will be granted until General Assembly (GA) when they will get approved by all current members. If a new member is from a district without a District Coordinator or Committee, then they try him out for 6 months, send him information and ask him for some data,

'If he responds in the way we like, we will make him permanent coordinator.' (Sumana D Liyanage, President of GMSL)

Membership has changed over the years. Originally there were 80 members, which went down to 40 when the split detailed above occurred. Every couple of years they might lose or gain 20 members. CBOs and community groups not formally constituted are not 'members' as such.

The GMSL now has 6 staff: Office Manager, Accounts, Chief Organiser (CO), Programme Manager (PM), Information Assistant, and Coordinator of Sri Lankan Working Group on the Asian Development Bank (SLWGADB). The staff works as team, while each having their own responsibilities, and meets regularly to share issues and activities.

The Executive Committee (ExCo) now has 12 members, and meets once a month. 7 district / provincial representatives, and 5 office bearers. The CO, PM and Coordinator of SLWGADB participate in meetings. This was streamlined a year ago, from an ExCo that used to have 25 members, with a further Management Committee on top.

The ExCo has the following duties:

- ❖ Meets with and supports office staff
- ❖ Monitoring of Action Plan
- ❖ Evaluation of monthly activities
- ❖ Planning

❖ Policy decisions

Such a structure reflects the hybrid nature of GMSL, as both movement and network. While it has some democratic organising principles, such as voting at GAs, it relies heavily on the CO and staff to guide it, and to recommend strategies, and activities. The office is responsible for management issues, and as such prepares the project proposals every year, and is accountable to the funders. So such responsibility invested in the Office is essential and proper. The curious 'gap' is the fact that the CBOs and local people who participate in campaigns have no formal right to influence decisions, although it is clear from the culture and underlying principles of the office and the staff that this is where their true accountability has to lie. In some way, the very strong guiding principles ensure that the people with least power are at the 'top' of the tree.

The removal of the Management Committee, and the slimming down of the ExCo appear to have increased participation levels, and enabled it to make decisions, and act, more effectively. The new Chairman comes from the private sector, and was intentionally 'recruited' to bring in more rigorous management controls. All agreed that it is now more dynamic, and that genuine participation is strengthened. Monthly accounts are presented to the ExCo, and agreed, and the Chairman has taken on the job of ensuring that weaknesses identified in previous auditor's reports will be ironed out in this project year.

The decision to have two posts, the CO and the PM, was taken in order to improve the coordination between the office and the districts, and allow time for participation in national and international activities. The intended outcome is that the coordination and communication between districts, and between districts and the office, improves, and that a good balance between local, national, and international focus can be maintained. Similarly the PM post should ensure that accountability continues to work outwards to the local level, and does not become focused on accountability to funders. Most communication between the office staff appears to be oral, rather than written, so that the CO briefs the PM and the Coordinator for the SLWGADB in person about his activities. Staff meetings are supposed to happen regularly, but it is not clear how often they get cancelled.

It is as yet too soon to see the results of increased and reorganised staffing, and the streamlining of the structure, but the fact such changes have been thought through and introduced indicates that GMSL is more than capable of assessing its performance, and making appropriate changes in its structure.

Political purpose and strategies

GMSL today appears to be unique in SL, in that as a 'networked movement' it seeks political change, and sees the relatively powerless, those subject to unsustainable development models, as its natural constituency. All those interviewed agreed that the GMSL is not like other environmental organisations. GMSL takes a broad, macro view of development, looking at it through an environment lens, with a clear focus on bringing the sustainable practice at the micro-level to the attention of macro-level policy makers. It has developed a clear political position, which differentiates it from other project-focused NGOs. Its main activities are protesting, campaigning and lobbying: against large development projects that will damage local sustainability; for retaining national natural resources in the hands of Sri Lankans; against privatisation; and for appropriate policy responses that value sustainable development. It is also committed to building its members' resources and capacities to live sustainable lives, and to sharing that knowledge with others. As such it plays a vital

role in not only 'giving a voice' to the environment, but 'giving voice and power' to those people affected by development, and who are committed to doing things another way.

That is not to say that there is agreement on all strategies or even political positions by all the current membership, or that the early tensions between political and project-focused NGOs have disappeared. In the limited time the team had to undertake the field work we interviewed and talked to those most involved in and committed to the activities, and sought out opposing views.¹ The position taken by the leadership on the super-highways, for example, is seen by Mr Podinilame to be rather extreme. He sees the point of trying to limit the damage to the environment, but does not think the highways are necessarily a bad thing. In contrast, the CO's position is that "superhighways are a crime, and we are not going to help them do a crime." This is not to say that the attention such 'extreme' activity brings to the issues is not valued. Just that all political positions are not necessarily shared by all.

The sense of belonging that members feel to GMSL may well be affected by such political differences. Sometimes they feel that involvement in outspoken national-level activities may negatively affect their other interests. Indeed, there appear to be obvious contradictions between some of the membership and the GMSL's watchdog work. The GMSL office hosts, and is a key part of, the Sri Lankan Working Group on the ADB, part of an international monitoring group for ADB funded projects. The SLWGADB has about 15 members, of which GMSL is one, but it specifically excludes those who are receiving ADB funds for implementing ADB projects. However, a significant number of GMSL member NGOs in Kegalle district are implementing ADB-funded water-management projects. It is not clear from the field work whether such contradictions unduly affect whether members identify themselves with GMSL or not, but interviews with the national office suggest that they probably do.

There are equally other members who are committed to playing a leading role at the national level, and are committed to the political purpose outlined by the current GMSL leadership. The process of development that the GMSL has undergone means that it is now clearly identified as being *in opposition* to the growth model that ADB promotes, in the political sense. This is a worthwhile and important role to play in itself, and may be a consequence of the drive to broaden out the leadership through training campaigners, even though it may not reflect the political position of a portion of its membership.

'Take highways and water. We see the projects will cause environmental damage but both sides have clear explanations for why they are doing this. The ADB and WB are saying that the economy is changing fast and we need to fit into global requirements, need to change our infrastructure. This has validity. We cannot totally depend on our traditional agriculture and sources, we have to change. On the other hand, this will damage the environment. We are trying, as HDC, to address the situation by addressing the balance, but the younger generation, maybe the young blood, they want to do resisting actions, challenge the other side. So this has gradually become the tendency. On the other hand we want the young to take up leadership' Mr Podinilame,

But GMSL does not only engage in protesting and campaigns against multi-laterals, nor is it an organisation that engages in agitation for the sake of it. Its opposition to ADB projects or any process for that matter, is a product of its political vision, its understanding of "development" and its critique of the dominant paradigm and related practices of development.

¹ The team only managed to interview one member with dissenting views. There may be more, but we have no idea of knowing what proportion of the membership may have these opinions. Time and resources prevented us from doing further field work.

The politics, purpose and relevant strategies adopted by GMSL fundamentally flow from an understanding that human beings are part of the environment. Issues of sustainability, for example, are not just about conserving fauna and flora, and ensuring that natural cycles are not seriously compromised. They are also about the capacities of human beings, both individuals and collectives, to enjoy sustainable livelihoods.

In this regard GMSL has a broader understanding of the term “refugee” which, in the discourse of displacement in Sri Lanka, is often reduced to those affected by war. “Development Refugees” then are a key factor in the politics of GMSL.

Large scale irrigation projects, mostly initiated in the 1980s, have resulted in thousands of people being displaced, losing their ancestral homes, livelihoods and social networks, and in return have been given poorer lands without access to even basic amenities. The Kirindi Oya Project in the Hambantota District is a case in point. Whereas the general level of malnutrition among children in the district stands at 18%, the figure is a staggering 44% within the project area, i.e. among the “beneficiaries”. GMSL’s protests against this and other mega-projects stem as much from concern regarding the damage to the environment as the direct and detrimental impact on the relevant communities, women and children in particular.

GMSL’s views on the government’s key policy document, “Regaining Sri Lanka” also flow from such concern. For example, GMSL objects to the government’s plan to expand the tourist industry. GMSL points out that there are 80,000 prostitutes and 38,000 child prostitutes (concentrated along the Western and Southern coast) “servicing” the needs of some of the 250,000 annual tourists to the island. “Regaining Sri Lanka” aims at expanding the number of tourist arrivals to 1 million, with the development of “eco-tourist” sites all over the island.

GMSL points out that in this and other sections of “Regaining Sri Lanka” the least consideration has been given to the protection of women and children. The network of express highways, for example, would displace at least 100,000 families.

GMSL organises demonstrations and other forms of protest at various levels, from affected communities right up to policy-making forums. Education, awareness-creation, development alternatives, promotion of best-practices, etc., also receive their attention, although the overt protests, naturally, get the best publicity.

‘The Southern Expressway doesn’t go anywhere near here, but we are against it because of our vision, we don’t believe it necessary for development. Others are against it because it goes through their land, they are then paid off through compensation, but they don’t have the vision.’ (Rev. Dodampahala Sirisugana, Kalutara)

Such vision is not by any means fully shared by the broad membership. When we asked the Executive Committee, “If we were to go around the island and ask members, Who are the GMSL?, Would they say ‘we are’, or would they say ‘Suranjan’s organization based in Colombo’”. The ExCo said that most of the people would say the latter. However the ExCo also said that they need to build the identity so that the members would feel like saying the former. It is also inevitable, however, that with the increased focus and clarity the GMSL is achieving, those who do not agree with the movement’s principles will leave.

"We want to improve the capacities of small but ethically and visionarily rich CBOs in the next two years. Our goal is to bring environmental related discussion from technical expertise to common people. We want our members to be models that can show that sustainable livelihood practices are nothing but a way of living, and it does not involve lot of technical expertise or technical assistance. We could have done this had our membership been GREEN from the beginning. But since this did not happen, we gained legitimacy at the national level first, and need to work on our membership at a later stage. But we are slowly doing it." (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL).

There is a continuing emphasis on training new leaders, training young staff in the central office, training youth groups and women's groups connected to other national organisations.

'Now we feel that we have a good second generation.' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

Action, analysis, adjustment

Action – 'the priority is to act'

The GMSL is incredibly active. The sheer quantity of activities is way above anything that the small core staff team can manage themselves (and this staff increase is relatively recent). Over the last four years the GMSL has been involved in 25-30 campaigns, holding some 2,500 meetings of one sort or another. All have been minutely detailed in the annual project reports.

One of the ways it manages to be so productive is the involvement and energy brought by those who identify with either GMSL, or one of the campaigns they are helping to run. The office is constantly full of both members and other individual volunteers, doing press-cuttings, helping write news items for their newsletter, compiling videos, getting ready to participate in protest actions.

Nor is the activity random. It is all directly related to the GMSL's overall goal, in halting and preventing non-sustainable development, while promoting good practice and encouraging sustainable living. Most of the activities contribute to one or more of the four strategies used to work toward the goal (see Section Two). The activities are a mix of those proposed and undertaken by members locally, by connected people locally, and those undertaken primarily by staff.

The emphasis on action is also evident in the ExCo meetings. The agenda is action-focused, although not exclusively. Each set of minutes has a list of activities and whose responsibility it is by district to follow up.

An Executive Committee meeting at GMSL

The coordinator from a community organisation in the industrial zone feeds back on the **history and issues** in the area, having done some basic research through meeting affected people:

- Three industries operating in the area
- Industrial pollution and chemicals in soil
- Very low water table, affects the entire area, water is contaminated, and fish affected.
- Early planning of area was good, later very chaotic. Originally planned two zones for a certain number of industries but now development is out of control, industry attracts people. There are no proper environmental controls.
- Sound pollution is bad.
- Industry doles out money for little things, like funerals, so people are reluctant to come forward and complain, because the company supports them. They sort of bribe them and they withdraw their complaints.
- The Environment Authority sometimes send inspectors but the companies know in advance, so they reduce sound levels for that day for instance. There is thuggery and intimidation. There are strict controls on paper but they are not enforced. They say technology to combat pollution is too costly to introduce. Govt is not pressing industry to do it. 1980 Environment Act is very powerful regulation but is not enforced. There is only one local official issuing licences to those applying for business licences, too much work. Companies are very influential. Some officers are good, some not so good. Not professional, the infrastructure is in place but people are not trained.

The Chairman asks **what can be done**, seeking to keep the meeting action focused.

All present make **suggestions**. They include: do a report on pollution and send to newspapers, media, tv to enlighten public opinion; prepare a list of polluting organisations; work towards mediation through EFL mediation centre.

Decision: They need more data, ask for the maximum available data before next meeting, then they can decide on a Plan of Action.

While the energy and activity levels are high, there was less evidence of connecting these actions to longer-term considerations, or evaluating the strategic usefulness of doing one thing rather than another.

Analysis

It is clear from all the interviews that the leadership of GMSL is highly respected for the access to information they have, often information that is not publicly available. This is true at the national level, with regard to EIAs and policy proposals, but also at the local level through the officials who may have similar views to the GMSL and want to help them. This access comes largely because the CO is held in such high regard.

The CO is also seen by other national level NGOs as being extremely knowledgeable, well-informed, and analytically superior to others when it comes to green issues and their link to broader policy debates. His analysis of what a certain policy or piece of legislation will mean in practice is one that others depend on. It is this analysis which determines which opportunity or opening the GMSL can use to make its point, and which drives the adjustments in strategy or activity. At a more local level, such as that detailed above, the analysis of the context is vital to determining what kind of action is warranted and how much support can be garnered from the local community. Local people addressing local issues enables the project to continue to enjoy legitimacy.

There is, however, a concern that the gap between the CO's expertise and experience and the rest of GMSL staff and members is too great. This was noted by all the other NGOs we interviewed, for some it is a really serious one. It certainly looks as if a strategy to minimise that gap would be worth working on.

Adjustment

The planning process of the GMSL appears to be flexible enough in nature to enable it to make adjustments in its programmed work to take account of new opportunities. The new streamlined structure, which has removed a layer of committees, seems to have re-energised the decision-making processes, and builds in a feedback mechanism from the staff to the local districts, and vice-versa, which enables them to reflect on the work, and think about new avenues. In the ExCo meetings, the district co-ordinators benefit from the input, advice and experience of other districts, when examining the issues and deciding on what action to take. The Programme Manager is in theory well-informed about other districts not represented in the ExCo to advocate on their behalf. Both the Programme Manager and the SLWGADB Coordinator up-date the ExCo on the activities going on in their particular area. The CO is supposed to attend these meetings to inform members about national level activities, although this rarely happens in such a formal way. Overseas travel, field trips and his intense involvement in lobbying and advocacy activities mean that he is often out of the office or the country. All those who talked to us indicated that the current feedback processes could be improved, at all levels; from CO to staff, from CO to ExCo; from ExCo to members; members to CO, etc.

Participation

The team managed to hold discussions with members of the District Committees in Galle, Kalutara and Kegalle. We also participated in two ExCo meetings, with representatives from Ratnapura, Nuria Elya, and others.

We were looking to see if the GMSL provided opportunities for participation in a variety of areas: in the management of the GMSL itself, in setting strategies and decision-making, in policy and advocacy activities, and in sharing best practices and developing practical knowledge about sustainable development. We wanted to assess the dynamism of the GMSL – was it just the office doing all the work, or were activities going on across SL involving diverse groups of members, and willing volunteers? We were also seeking to understand how people feel they benefit from being members of GMSL, and what GMSL could do in the future to improve that.

Power and decision-making

Decision-making fora in the GMSL include the General Assembly and the ExCo. Levels of participation in the ExCo had clearly improved since the new streamlined structure has been put in place, but we aren't clear exactly what participation levels are like at the GA, or how decisions are made. The member from Kegalle suggested that the GA is attended by 30-40 of a membership of

over 100, and attributed this low attendance to the direction of activities and to the greater concentration of decision-making in the centre. However, given what we have said about political purpose, it may well be that this level of participation reflects the way in which the direction and purpose of the GMSL is consolidating, and that members unconvinced by the direction are not participating.

There can be a dynamic in networks where the participation falls off, the decision-making gets concentrated in a few hands, as a result of which the participation reduces still further, and tendency is centralising. The evidence generally from the evaluation was that this is not happening in the GMSL, and that a large number of people feel connected to and participate in GMSL activities. They are not, however, all members, and it may be that the membership will change and settle over the next period.

The over-riding impression from all we talked to is that the CO is the key to GMSL. He clearly leads the movement and is the person most look to for direction, knowledge, analysis and strategy. As such he holds power, and is very aware of it, and seeks to make sure that he is accountable to those who he feels the GMSL has a moral responsibility to advocate for.

Co-ordination and Communication

One of the areas that is most challenging for the GMSL is co-ordinating between districts and the central office, and making sure people know what is going on. This is a general truth for all networks, and is one of the on-going challenges that has to be looked at regularly.

While the ExCo provides a certain forum for exchange of information, and the District Committees are intended to enable local members to hear from each other, there is clearly concern from the Chairman and others at the district level that the communication is inadequate for the needs of the membership. All communication in SL is done in person, on the phone or in newsletters, as email is not commonly available outside Colombo and other cities, and some members or CBOs do not have phones.

The PM post is intended to overcome some of these difficulties, but the task is a challenging one. It means that the PM has to be kept up-to-date on national level activities by the CO in order to relay that information when he visits the field. It also means that he must collect local input and feed it into national level work. This clearly works better in some areas than others.

From the staff point of view, the members also have a responsibility to be active in finding out what is going on rather than waiting for the GMSL coordinating office to always update them with what goes on. According to the PM, many members do not feel the need for information about what is happening at the national level, as they are more interested in local issues. Most of the people we met said that the critical help they received from GMSL is the knowledge GMSL provides to them. The impression was largely that when a member or DC was in need of knowledge, GMSL was always there to provide it without reserve.

That said, the GMSL does appear to have a more basic communication set-up than is really ideal. The email system appears not to be very effective, and the web-site of the GMSL is out of date and difficult to find.

The Arana publication, considered of high quality, is now being translated into Tamil, and it covers topic issues in some depth, and carries more general information. But an internal newsletter might prove useful as a way of informing the membership of on-going activities at the national level.

Dynamism

Since the political purpose of GMSL is wide and expands beyond the pure environmental issues, the network has attracted people and groups who bring very different experiences and ways of working. The demands they make from the network, the types of services they do and the times they allocate also vary depending on personal commitments, interests and capacities

Although GMSL has a co-ordinating body and 13 district committees the co-ordination of activities and the implementation of work is done through a light, facilitative structure. There is no single program to which every one contributes, or meetings where a central body monitors activities. Instead when a particular issue comes up regionally the co-ordinating body works along with the organisations interested in addressing the situation.

" We do not insist on having monthly meetings. We cannot, since we are a network. Instead people meet when they have things to do. Depending on the work, the moment and the interest they have for the work, the organisations would decide when to meet" (Program Manager, GMSL)

The resources are not accumulated at a central point, instead they get distributed according to the priorities. Priorities are decided after they are discussed and analysed adequately by the co-ordinating office and the ExCo (the decision made by the ExCo to fund a small herbal garden project in Gampaha is an example). Members bring new people and organisations to the network (Kalutara) and stronger organisations encourage smaller organisations to develop their program, resource base and contacts (Galle, and Kalutara).

*"Some times we build capacities of small organisations or community groups who are not our members. They might later become members officially or unofficially. Whether these organisations are **us** or not is determined by the final vision their work contributes to. (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)*

When involving itself with protest campaigns, GMSL strives to retain its ideological focus, working with communities and, thus centred, learning and expanding the circle of the awareness creating activities.

The team was unable to get an idea of the sum total of the activities the movement does. Yet the general impression was that most of the members are involved in activities that are regionally relevant. However due to the limited co-ordination, the successes, if they are not larger national level campaigns, are heard only at district levels. This is a missed opportunity for the GMSL to develop its identity and limits it to a body that only does protests. If GMSL aspires to develop a green way of living, it would be worth sharing in a more co-ordinated manner what different members do and what they learn across the country. At the moment the information flows largely from the co-ordinating office to the districts and from districts to the co-ordinating office at the annual general meeting, ExCo meetings, visits that the program manager does to districts and through the Arana newspaper. The movement could be further enriched if there were more opportunities for discussion among the general membership. According to the CO, such a discussion has only begun since the membership has concentrated around those who seem to be politically aware of the green issues, and don't see green agendas as a way of getting some more funds. This is apparent in the minutes of the annual general meeting held on March 09 2003, which illustrates a clear shift in the discourse. Most of the

early general meetings were dominated by a few districts from where the key office bearers came. Thus there had been a tendency to form “cliques”. The minutes show that the discussions revolved largely around field implementations and did not go beyond the activity output level to discuss topics that are more political and relevant at a national level. After 2001 this tendency has slowly reduced and smaller organisations across the island have begun to be active in the movement. The last general meeting had spent a considerable amount of time discussing the role of the GMSL in the face of big development projects in Sri Lanka.

Benefits – Capacity-building and Information-Sharing

We came across many examples of members and CBOs who had benefited positively from their involvement with the GMSL.

Capacity-Building

Capacity-building is a vital benefit from participation in the GMSL. In the words of Chathura Welivitiya – Help – O, Coordinator of Green Forum in Galle District, and Vice-Chair of District Consortium:

‘Capacity-building is a value, not an activity, it is better to develop strong networks, based on principles of collaboration, sharing out resources, linking smaller organisations to more established ones in the same area, than to engage in skills training in isolation. For instance, Help O is providing human rights workshops to other organisations in the Consortium.’

Example of Capacity-Building in Galle

A new community organisation in Galle has emerged out of concerns from fisher-men and others about the impact the Free Trade Area. A project cut the sand-bar separating the Koggala river mouth from the sea, causing sea water to flow up into and change the river. This negatively affected the local fisheries and the eco-system of the Koggala river. Although several people went to the local government and complained they weren’t organised. The Government made an attempt to limit the damage, by replacing the sand-bar with rocks, which didn’t work. Another mouth of the river area was sold to a foreigner, an acre of mangrove, which added to the problems. Through the personal connections of one of the concerned locals to Suranjan Kodithuwakku and the GMSL they asked Suranjan Kodithuwakku to come and talk to them and the local community about the importance of the sand-bar. This started the organisational process, the community organised to sand-bag the river mouth, and thus began the Koggala Protection Group. Now the government is promoting the idea of eco-tourism, and to sell Bird Island, with an extensive mangrove system, to an Australian company to promote eco-tourism, build a hotel, and have motor-boats service it. This will impact on fisheries, as motor-boats affect the nets. The Chairman of the Provincial Council of Southern Province has rejected claim that the fisheries are important in this area, and is committed to eco-tourism. The Group say there are between 60-70,000 fisherfolk dependent on river. They are suggesting not using motor-boats, and the promotion of local sustainable environmental products. The Group say that the communities themselves are also responsible for degrading the river, through land-filling, and that public awareness-raising is necessary. River also affected by polluted water from FTA causing algae, and a shoe factory dumping rubber. The Group wanted GMSL to help them with funds for poster campaign. GMSL doesn’t have funds, Help O as district coordinator doesn’t work in this area, but linked them to the Participatory Development Foundation that does, and they have helped them with poster campaign. This awareness-raising is directed at the community, governments and police and environmental protection officers. GMSL have helped them do training with local authorities, officials and fisher-men. Plan to do more awareness-raising at local level. This has all been done so far without another ‘project’ being written, funds applied for, etc. This Protection Group now has 40 active people and about 200 supporters.

Example of Capacity-Building in Kalutara

The current secretary of GMSL, Mr Moonagama, started his organisation, Mihithala Mithuro, in Kalutara, a CBO of young people concerned about protecting the environment. Under the direction of the GMSL they formed a vision, grew, gained direction. He is now secretary of GMSL. His secretaryship indicates the nature of participation and leadership. His CBO depends on the contribution of the community and the people.

For a young person in the Kalutara meeting, interested in environmental issues, the benefit of joining the GMSL is to learn from more experienced people, and the legitimacy of being a registered organisation gives them credibility. They focus on education, on research into processes in their own area, tree-planting and conservation, and as such they educate themselves and their families. They get involved on a regional level, participate in national competitions, and are planning to do a workshop on the environment facilitated by GMSL.

Leadership

Leadership in a networked context is about qualities, rather than individuals. A network needs to be sure that it has a range of leadership qualities, but be sure that they are not concentrated in one individual.

'Probably the most important and dynamic part of the success of the networked 'organisation' is the relationship between leadership and co-ordination. This may well be best expressed as 'facilitative leadership'. Such leadership may be shared out around the network. It needs to include consensus-building, knowledge of context and the membership, making the right connections, and spotting the gaps, the opportunities and the actions that could be taken to move the agenda forward.' (From Church, M et al, 2003: 32)

The biggest challenge is in finding a way to do things, to 'act', and keep moving forward, while making sure that the coordinating function doesn't do all the work, have all the capacity, and leave the network members behind.

In the short time we had to do the field work, we were impressed by the way in which GMSL has developed its identity over time, through defining with greater clarity its vision and purpose. There is a wealth of knowledge and understanding concentrated in the central office, combined with a commitment to build leadership capacity outside the normal 'elite' and across the Island. During the time period the evaluation covers, Sri Lanka witnessed several environment-related people's protests, yet these struggles were not led by one single person or organization. Even in the same struggles different people seem to take leadership at different junctures. We met some of these leaders, in Eppawala, Turuwila and Kalutara. While GMSL had a major role in these struggles, their role had been mainly that of strengthening local capacities and enabling local leaders to emerge.

'The best thing about GMSL is that it helps to develop personalities in struggles so more leaders come up from the people' (Mr Moonagama, Secretary, GMSL)

This recognition of the need for greater leadership capacity is shared by those at a local level, whether they feel comfortable with the style of it or not.

'We had a 14 year training programme in the Temple, and then we realised that short-hand and typing were less important than leadership training, we saw the potential of the latter, linked to spiritual development, you can't expect people to understand the environment without spiritual development.'

'We need young people to work for the environment voluntarily, not for profit.' (Rev. Dodampahala Sirisugana, Kalutara)

'The younger generation, maybe the young blood, they want to do resisting actions, challenge the other side. So this has gradually become the tendency. On the other hand we want the young to take up leadership' (Mr Podinilame, HDC, Kegalle)

At the same time, the CO of GMSL is clearly someone with leadership flair. He is extremely well-respected by those who share the vision and purpose of the GMSL. He is also trusted by those GMSL works with, as someone who is transparent and committed. While we heard some criticism about power accruing to the CO, the majority we talked to liked the GMSL because of its commitment to build the capacities of ordinary people. We saw evidence of this commitment in the leadership qualities in Eppawala, Kalutara and Galle, and those taking a lead through the Executive Committee, such as the new Chair. Although power and decision making may be vested in individuals the leadership of GMSL is clearly shared, and the struggles and achievements are shared. There was no sense that GMSL, or any individual within GMSL, wanted to be seen as 'owning' successes. In fact, in interviews with policy and decision-makers, it was EFL's name that came up regularly, as 'owning' the environmental NGO agenda, not that of the GMSL.

'There is no one sort of leader. You need to take leadership in the way you are comfortable and in the struggles you are capable of leading. You need to know the limits and skills.' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

Conclusions, Challenges and Recommendations

Structure

The current structure, with the reduction in committees and greater emphasis on communication and exchange between districts and the central office, should improve the sense of shared identity and participation. The curious gap in membership, where the active local people in CBOs are not 'members', is one that may need addressing, if people feel that they want a greater stake in the decision-making of the GMSL. However, many people working locally really want access to the knowledge and contacts of the GMSL, and to share in expertise, so may not be as interested in 'membership' as outsiders may think. The impression gained through this evaluation is that the central office, through having strong principles, view these local people as where their accountability lies, even if they do not have formal membership.

Political purpose and strategies

While the central office and leadership now has a very clear political purpose and strategies designed to fit with it, the membership is less coherent in its understanding of that purpose. Given the development of the GMSL this is to some extent inevitable. Even without a strong membership, GMSL has been able to achieve a great deal. But most of these achievements currently depend on personal networks. This drains the energy out and increases risks to individuals, since decisions can be seen as personal decisions. The office staff and the ExCo are sufficiently aware of the need to develop a membership more in line with the principles of the 'networked movement' and will need to pay attention to this over the next two years. The PM's role will need to be considered as key in any strategy to build and form a stronger membership.

Participation

This follows on from the recommendation above. Any network with a central coordinating body is likely to find that the balance of activities between that body and the members tends to weigh toward the centre. This is an inevitable tendency, given that the central coordinating body is staffed by people who work full time for the network, implementing activities of one kind or another, whereas the members are likely to work full-time for their own organisation first. Therefore the energy members invest in the network will be less, and will tend to mirror the level of overlap between their interest, or mission / vision and that of the network. The goal is not to get all members actively participating in the network at all times, but to ensure a balance between work done by the centre and action taken by members. This makes a network dynamic.

Given the natural centralising force at work, part of a network's regular internal processes will need to be continually looking at ways to encourage greater participation. But this is a job that never gets finished. The important aspect to note is whether the centre is aware and conscious of this tendency, and takes active steps to counter-act it.

The GMSL has a programme manager, whose job is to maintain the flow of communication, support the members, identify the issues coming up, and ensure this part of the network's activities doesn't get disconnected from the work of the GMSL office. The Executive Committee has a permanent agenda item headed How to Strengthen the Network, and a significant amount of attention is paid to how to build capacity of members, and encourage them to be more active. The lead person in the office has the job title of Chief Organiser, and seeks to spend 10 days of the month in the field, and 10 on national level activities, thus balancing out time spent in Colombo and time in members own areas. The job title is significant, in that the word 'organiser' implies facilitation, support, and leadership, a balance between driving the GMSL forward, and ensuring that the accountability works backwards to the members or community organisations as far as is practical.

The CO and others in the Executive Committee were genuinely keen to find ways of increasing members' activity levels, while recognising that members needed something tangible from the network in return. The discussion is coloured by the nature of the development context in SL, one in which NGOs have in the past been organised into consortia-like set-ups by the international agency that is funding them. Thus this type of organisation has largely been driven by funding opportunities or agendas. Members of the ExCo are all concerned that GMSL maintain its unique nature of not being a funding body, but this gives them added challenges when seeking to generate greater commitment and participation from members. Many smaller members need funding for their activities, and GMSL is the obvious place to ask.

Currently the GMSL gives occasional start-up money for projects that are considered to further the strategic aims of the network. But it needs to find a way to respond more effectively to this obvious need, especially from local groups with very limited or no resources. One option would be to employ a funding advisor, who could assist members in the process of finding funds for their sustainable projects. Another might be to examine micro-credit possibilities for projects with an income-generating capacity.

Linking people to funds will also help GMSL with providing concrete examples for use in their lobbying and advocacy work. GMSL doesn't have to implement, but members suggested that it needs some kind of community development strategy.

At another level, it's possible that more resources need to be dedicated to improving communication and information exchange across the network. District level information and feedback is limited, and

maybe a newsletter could help. Better links might need to be developed between districts near to one another, and encourage them to use each other as resource persons, and work together on activities.

Leadership

GMSL has been concerned with developing a new generation of leaders since it was formed. The activity level of the GMSL could never be maintained without that growing base of support. Building new leadership occurs through the kind of action, capacity-building, volunteering and experience-sharing that the GMSL seeks to foment. From what the evaluation could see, the work training campaigners and young leadership is beginning to show results, but such values-based work is long-term and requires commitment.

However, many people commented on the 'Knowledge gap' between the CO, and the rest of the staff at GMSL, and between the CO and all others involved in the work of GMSL. This was acknowledged by all as being 'of concern'.

A strategy could be developed that enables some of the up and coming leadership to develop closer working knowledge and expertise of different areas of the environmental and sustainable agenda. A regular discussion group could be set up, with individuals responsible for researching and talking about a particular area. People could be enabled to shadow the CO in his work. While in the short term this might mean that the CO is involved in less initiatives and activities, in the longer-term it would mean that the GMSL would be able to spread the work-load more effectively across a greater number of people.

Section 2 – Policy and Advocacy

Policy Environment

“They have to propose alternatives, they can’t just criticise”

The team met with and talked to as many relevant people working within Government, state and multilateral institutions as was possible in the time-frame of the evaluation. These include the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Central Environment Authority and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. The relevant people from the World Bank were on annual leave. All have been exposed to the lobbying, protesting and campaigning activities of the environmental movement in general and of GMSL in particular.

Most of them seemed highly sensitised to and aware of the criticisms levelled at them by environmental NGOs. The multi-nationals have engaged in enough discussions and fora with a selection of SL NGOs on these issues to know and understand the positions. Not one professed to be ignorant of dissent or criticism of general policies, such as overall strategies, nor of individual projects and programmes. This is a good indicator that the messages are getting through, and being heard or understood. A necessary first step in any policy and advocacy work.

They have also been highly frustrated by action organised by environmentalists against large development projects funded or proposed by them. Protests and campaigns started or supported by GMSL have been effective in stalling the progress of some large infrastructure projects, like the

Expressways, on the grounds of unsustainability or negative social or environmental impact. (see Campaigns and Protests) Ordinary Sri Lankans knew about the Eppawala Phosphate Mine, even if they had never heard of GMSL. Policy modifications have been achieved and awareness raised on aspects of government policy that will affect national assets, such as the Water Policy, and Forestry Sector Management (see Policy box, page 35). Agencies such as the CEA and UNDP readily acknowledge that organisations such as GMSL are essential as 'watch-dogs' on the environment, to draw attention to the environmental consequences of policies and programmes. GMSL has used the 1980 Environment Act, the EIA process, fundamental rights guarantees and the 'participation' guidelines of multi-laterals to their maximum degree to influence outcomes in favour of the environment (see Watchdog box, page 40)

Yet one of the phrases repeated in all the interviews held with the staff of the ADB, the IMF, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Central Environment Authority, was

'They have to propose alternatives, they can't just criticise'

This phrase is a common one these days used by those on the receiving end of lobbying and campaigning, and not just in the Sri Lankan context (Colombia, UK, European Union, Inter-American Development Bank, USAID, to name a few). It is something that sounds reasonable and logical. In fact many NGOs, and networks, put long hours, thoughtful research and creative energy into developing alternative policy proposals. While the GMSL has done less of that work recently, it started life with an alternative policy called National Environment Policy for People's Action, with the idea of lobbying to get it incorporated and implemented.

The criticism of the 'lack of alternatives' is not, however, an indicator of failure. The reality is more complex, and quite simple.

The ADB strategy is built on the premise that liberalisation of markets, and globalisation of trade will bring benefits to the poor through growth. While they concede that you can't just have this as a policy, they start from the position that this is 'the only model that has ever worked, that has demonstrated even partial and flawed success,' (Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB). In their framework, there is no alternative, only degrees of implementation of, or tinkering with, the basic model, while paying more attention to mitigating the negative impacts.

The argument from the other side is that the trade, aid and development policies pursued by market-favouring governments and the multi-lateral institutions have demonstrably failed to bring benefits to the poor, and have served to increase income inequality and remove safeguards across the world. The environmental activists in Sri Lanka advocate a radical change in approach, one which prioritises sustainable livelihoods, food security, and a proactive role for the state in managing resources for all.

We are here talking about two separate paradigms of development. Sustainable development is, for the environmentalists, the alternative. Market-led and managed growth is not considered to be development by these activists. While the ADB, IMF and State and government institutions urge the NGOs to propose alternatives, they inevitably cannot accept the alternatives that are then proposed.

'We only get to oppose and criticise because things are already decided, there is no option but to criticise. Is there still space to make proposals? There are, we are convinced, other ways to make really sound proposals on the environment, social policy, sustainable development. This needs time. It's not that there are no alternatives, just no opportunities. For instance, can we suspend this super-

highway project for three years, and spend small amounts giving farmers the opportunity to increase yields?' (Sarat Fernando, MONLAR, at the ADB briefing meeting)

The Superhighway projects are a good example. When asked to elaborate on *what* the alternative proposals would be to the programme of privately-managed toll roads, most of the environmentalists talked about the need to reform and upgrade the railways. When the evaluation team challenged the IMF and ADB on this point, both dismissed such an alternative as entirely unworkable. They cited pricing policy, the number of vested interests, the labour laws and union resistance as some of the many obstacles. The IMF advice to the Government was that if they wanted to reform the railways, this would use up all their political capital and it would be the only infrastructure development project possible in their period in office. The ADB said clearly that this was not an either / or decision, either roads or railways. It was a do-something or do-nothing option. Either roads, or nothing. GMSL said in response that no-one was denying that railway upgrading and reform was a challenge. Yet there had been no attempt to really consider it, build consensus around it, or provide convincing arguments for its benefits, etc. The free-market solution, rushing through legislation allowing it to be sold to international investors, was the only 'alternative' being considered. The important aspect for GMSL is that railways are a sustainable transport option, available to all, whereas toll-roads are not.

The current SL Government has recently issued RSL, a macro-policy document intended to draw in international loans and investment in anticipation of a peace dividend. The policy is starkly neo-liberal. It favours wholesale privatisation of public services, 'flexibilisation' of labour laws, tax incentives for international investors, and export-led agri-business. It acknowledges that SL's relatively good performance in terms of poverty indicators is a result of protectionist policies and state-intervention, yet proposes that free market policies are the only way to achieve poverty reduction. Having signed up to WSSD objectives in Johannesburg, the government shows no evidence of building sustainability into its agenda, despite the protestations of the Ministry for Environment. In many ways RSL offers precisely the opposite view. Many NGOs have argued that the government failed to consult 'civil society' properly about the policy, a requirement of the WB under PRS guidelines. The IMF response was a clear enough statement that the political difference between NGOs and the RSL-type agenda is insuperable:

"Sarat Fernando has been consulted. His views have been heard and rejected. This is not the same as not being consulted." (Jeremy Carter, Senior Resident Representative, IMF)

'They are doing a good job, that I must admit, they make a voice for the environment. We need someone to look at the other side of the story. But they have to be constructive, come out with alternatives.' (Thosapala Hewage, Secretary, MENR)

The general impression from interviewing the Government representative is that they are largely very annoyed by the work of people like the GMSL, and they use the 'lack of alternatives' as a convenient excuse. The work done by GMSL raising environmental issues means that they have to explain their policies more widely, and spend time defending them against legal action. They also have to amend projects and programmes.

Again, there is a clear political difference between two models of development. The Secretary believes GMSL's position on the energy sector to be unreasonable, and that such opposition deprives rural people of the right to electricity. He also justified the Expressways project on ecological grounds, by saying that eco-tourists want to get from the airport to the jungle as fast as possible. Railways, he said, are not cost-effective.

'It is easy to get people together and protest because the government is taking your land, that is easy, but you have to propose alternatives.' (Thosapala Hewage, Secretary, MENR)

Again, here the issue is not about lack of dialogue or opportunity to exchange views. Both sides know what the other believe and think. They are largely in opposition to one another. They reject each others alternatives.

Partnership – what does it mean?

In such a context, then, what do the overworked terms 'partnership' and 'consultation' actually mean? And how should NGOs, particularly NGOs with opposing political views and advocating a different world-view, respond?

This 'alternatives-rather-than-criticism' demand is complemented by a new language of 'working in partnership with NGOs', 'consultation' and 'working groups'. The multi-laterals have now built such language into their frameworks, and the Government and State institutions are similarly urged to do the same. RSL simply failed to incorporate the earlier PRSP when it was first drafted. The WB, having taken over the PRS process from the UNDP, insisted with other multi-laterals that poverty reduction is essential to development funding and that the PRS be merged with RSL, and be consulted with civil society, of which NGOs form a part.

All those interviewed wanted to 'work in partnership' with NGOs. We questioned them about what they meant by partnership and consultation. The ADB was pretty clear that it didn't know what that really meant when talking about advocacy NGOs. Certainly with project-delivery NGOs it means working with NGOs to deliver ADB projects. It has never had a consultative mechanism with advocacy NGOs, nor is there any best practice to go on in any other country they work in. They were particularly unclear what partnership might mean with such NGOs, especially as the majority of such NGOs are in general highly critical of the underlying framework which dominates most ADB and SL government thinking. The IMF, however, was much blunter.

'We will consult with civil society, but we will never negotiate with civil society.' (Jeremy Carter, Senior Resident Representative, IMF)

The IMF insisted that consultation simply meant hearing others' views, and indicated no commitment to act on those views. A kind of first stage, 'open door' stage, in the policy and advocacy process, through which you are guaranteed a hearing, but nothing more. The Government of the day is, in their view, elected to represent the views of society, and are the only legitimate negotiating partners. For the IMF, wide consultation on RSL had occurred, and alternative views had been 'rejected.'²

The MENR seemed to want to be able to use NGOs to comment on and make suggestions to policy detail, rather than engage them in debate about policy frameworks. And the CEA wanted NGOs to play the 'watchdog' role that they themselves do not have the resources or the political will to achieve.

'In general, Green environmentalists are very helpful, if they don't raise their voice development will destroy the environment. They are necessary.' (Manel Jayamanna, CEA)

² Interestingly, when the ADB was explaining its work, it described how all the IFIs had negotiated with the LTTE over the A9 road recovery loan, a process that took 8 months of negotiation on procurement guidelines, and procedures. Real concessions and change are therefore possible, when they have a powerful partner and the requisite political will.

Both the demand for alternatives and the drive to work 'in partnership' are indicators that the multi-laterals have had to change the way they do business in a world in which civil society in general and NGOs in particular have been recognised as valid constituents in the development agenda. The world commitment to sustainable development and to halve world poverty by 2015, is a result of pressure applied world-wide, and has legitimised NGOs as interlocutors. The multi-laterals can no longer block access, either to information or conversation, about development. They can no longer forge ahead with large infrastructure projects which involve involuntary displacement without expecting to be met with serious protest. They can no longer expect to operate in isolation: the watchdogs are now linked to each other across the world. This has an inevitable knock-on effect on national governments dependent on multi-lateral loans and grants.

In such a context, however, the rhetoric of partnership and consultation is understandably mistrusted by advocacy NGOs. While all multi-laterals in SL are happy to talk with NGOs, the position of the IMF is probably wide-spread. They do not believe it to be their job, but the Government's, to negotiate with civil society. They are happy to accept the government's protestation that they have consulted NGOs and civil society. However, this is a political topic and the current government is unapologetic about being very in favour of 'finishing off' the project of rapidly opening up the economy. NGOs in opposition claim, rightly, that the government consults with those who agree with government policy, and dismiss the opinions of those who don't. Some environmental NGOs in SL, such as EFL, believe that compromises can be made with this model, through modifying project impacts, whereas GMSL is, along with MONLAR and maybe others, fundamentally *in opposition* to the ADB strategy, and that this is a worthwhile and important role to play in itself. 'Partnership' and 'consultation' is certainly useful for access to information and 'having your say', but really affects only the limited area of projects and programme implementation. Any real shift in the balance of power, in which 'civil society' gets a meaningful stake in the decision-making process, probably has to be tackled through other routes and strategies

Four strategies

In order to look holistically at the way in which the GMSL does its policy and advocacy work, we decided to think about it as four interlinked strategies: lobbying and advocacy, campaigns and protests, networking and building alliances, and education and awareness-raising. The GMSL uses all four ways of working to further their aims, and many of its activities contribute to more than one. The interlinked nature of the work means that it makes most sense not to waste time attempting to decide which activity contributes to which strategy, but to imagine a pool of activities that can be undertaken.

Lobbying and advocacy

'Policy lobbying and advocacy on environmental issues is a major strategy of GMSL approach'
(taken from annual reports 2000-2002)

'We know we are making a difference when they postpone their targets, when there is suddenly discussion in the media, when academics and professionals talk about these things, when we get invited to Forums. The Water Policy was supposed to be implemented in 2001, we did a country-wide campaign, they had to postpone it til 2002, and it is now postponed til Sept this year. All the basic, main programmes have been blocked or postponed.' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

In general terms, effective lobbying and advocacy work requires a cocktail of knowledge, expertise, and contacts, alongside an ability to talk credibly and with legitimacy on behalf of others. This mix of

credibility and legitimacy generally means that you have access to policy makers and political actors, and can speak authoritatively when you get there. It also means that you see yourself as being accountable.

The lobbying and advocacy strategy in GMSL largely functions at a national and international level, and the range of activities undertaken include: commenting on draft policy and legislation; the development of alternative policy proposals through consultation with grass-roots and disseminating information and outcomes from Alternative People's Tribunals; and monitoring and vigilance of mega-projects funded by multi-lateral grants and loans.

Activities at this level are mainly undertaken mainly by the GMSL office in Colombo. As a 'public face' of the GMSL, the CO is invited to national level consultations, meetings and discussion fora with members of multi-lateral institutions, state and government institutions, and members of the international diplomatic corps. He is also invited to speak in the international arena, at core moments such as the AGM of the ADB, and the WTO meetings. Such invitations indicate that GMSL has both credibility, and legitimacy and is an important political actor in environmental protection. Such recognition is the result of many years and much accumulated knowledge inside the GMSL (many of the founder members of GMSL have been working on the issues for years) and four years of formal operation.

As mentioned above, GMSL is unique in both its structure and focus in the context of SL environmental NGOs. As a social change movement, with a network structure, GMSL can say with some credibility that it is working on behalf of, and advocating on behalf of, those least powerful in the 'development chain'. It is also known to be very vocal and active in its work, particularly in 'keeping a watch' on the programmes and projects of the ADB in very public ways. This differentiates GMSL from EFL, for example. EFL was most often 'name-checked' in the interviews the team conducted with multi-laterals, government and state, as an important partner in dialogue, but it was the active protests by those affected that caused them to take notice, to halt or to change their plans. As such, the protest and campaigning work feeds into the lobbying and advocacy work, and gives the latter its credibility and legitimacy.

The more discreet aspect of lobbying work, of building relations with those who know what is happening on the inside of the policy-making machine, is a crucial aspect to the work. Most agreed that the GMSL CO has a very wide range of contacts, in many of the key areas, which allow him to know what is upcoming, what is currently being discussed, and to get hold of key documents to which others do not have access.

'We get access to information, we have contacts in many of the relevant prestigious committees.'
(Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

Yet their commitment to transparency means that they make such documents available to others where they can.

'They have vast amounts of information, documents, facts, figures, they have a finger in every government department, spies everywhere, a lot of this information is not available to the general public.' (Gloria da Silva, CFS)

They demand that the Government do translations of draft policies (all Government and multi-lateral policies are drafted in English, and are thus only accessible to the Colombo elite) and they do

translations themselves. Such lobbying has been effective on getting the Land Use Policy postponed, and other policy documentation made more widely-available:

'On transparency, we have been calling for all documents to be translated into Sinhala. The Planning Ministry only issued draft introductions in Sinhala, only the most basic information. Now all summaries are distributed in Sinhala. We have provided better access to this information, we translated all the docs related to Tokyo conference, this has helped build awareness at national level.' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

Policy Recommendations and Alternative Policy development

At the level of activities, it appears from a review of the annual reports and other documents that the GMSL manages to make serious policy criticisms to the Government and politicians and have them taken seriously.

Policy recommendations and results

1999-2000: TRIPS: the Govt delegation to TRIPS recognised GMSL's proposals on issues related to patents [Suranjan: did they reform the agreement in line with recommendations?]

2000-2001: National Water Management Policy and Institutional Arrangements: changes made in sections on privatisation, water entitlements, pricing and allocations as a result of GMSL and others' lobbying. The National Report prepared by the Govt for the WSSD says 'some of the proposed policies such as transferable water entitlements and diversifying into crops with low water demand have met with criticism from the public, and hence the adoption of the policy document has been deferred.' Middle Path, p39

2000-2001: Tropical Forest Conservation Act: the process through which projects were identified was stopped; draft agreements under TFCA were distributed to media and others to raise awareness; demonstrations

2000-2001: National Policy on Involuntary Resettlement: comments made

2001-2002: National Report by Govt to WSSD: Ministry of Environment agreed to make changes based on inputs by GMSL and NGO community

2001-2002: National Land Use Policy: Govt agreed to translate this policy to Sinhala and Tamil after GMSL protested at way this policy was prepared without consultation

The GMSL seems to be experienced and effective in getting access to draft policies, analysing them, sharing that analysis and creating awareness in the media about their implications, and then making a detailed critique to the relevant institutions. The MENR were specific in their praise for GMSL contribution to the development of the Forestry Sector Master Plan. This work seems mainly to be done through the media, Ministries and in alliance with other national NGOs, with less done with elected representatives.

It seems that producing policy alternatives and following up on these has not been the main priority for the GMSL in the last two years. The National Environment Policy for People's Action could be said to be a defining policy document for the GMSL, but it is not clear to the team how the current work programme stems from this, if indeed it does.

'The consultation done for the National Environment Policy for People's Action document generated new members, this was one of the first projects of GMSL. There are some who really wanted to see the programme follow on from this document, and prioritise ecological agriculture, environmental problems caused by industrialisation, deforestation, etc. That was the original intention.' (Mr Podinilame, HDC, Kegalle)

Similarly one of the comments made by a partner in the GreenNet is that the WSSD report did not provide policy alternatives or follow on from an earlier process.

'I felt the report should have been a follow-up to the People's Agenda 21 report which was done for Rio, that included certain radical alternatives, but there was no strategy, no policy alternatives in the WSSD report. We didn't really have time to interact and discuss it.' (Asoka N Abeygunawardana, EF)

Given the criticism levelled at GMSL and environmental NGOs generally by the Government, State and multi-laterals, for not 'proposing alternatives', it may be that the GMSL could think more about how it can dovetail more policy-proposal work within its lobbying and advocacy strategy. Reading the annual reports, for example, there are references to the possibilities of producing a National Energy Policy for SL in collaboration with EF, and a clear need for other policy alternatives done by Sri Lankans for Sri Lankans:

Alternative Policies and APTs

1999-2000: National Environment Policy for People's Action, discussed with all four political parties, and some MPs agreed to lobby on certain issues

2000: Programme to prepare [Suranjan: did this ever get developed?]

2001-2: People's Report on Sustainable Development

APTs

2000: Uva-Pelwatta golf course

Moragahakanda Agriculture Development Project

2002: Super-Expressways

Conservation Plan for Central Hills

Kirindi-Oya – drought associated with ADB project

Nilwella Hotel Complex

Protected area Management and Wildlife Conservation

Project

'We did an APT on the Conservation Plan for the Central Hills, which are the starting point of most rivers. The outcome of the APT was the need for a national plan on how responsibility is distributed, how drought is managed, etc. What we want is that such a plan can be done using our expertise and our academics, we don't need ADB consultants to do this.' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

It is, however, worth noting, as did the monk in Kalutara, that while donors seem to be keen to support policy-writing and analysis, most members are interested in practical projects and spreading knowledge and understanding through horizontal means.

'To do the WSSD report, they visited 200 villages and asked their views, promised to return and haven't yet done so. Where is the programme? It is difficult to get money for this, donor agencies are mostly interested in theories, not practices, it's not considered a priority. \$44m was spent on WSSD, but not a penny was spent on sustainable development. Taking a small project and actually doing something practical would be more useful. Most people get stuck into frameworks designed by donor agencies. There should be more practical demonstration projects, experimentation, but donors don't want to fund this. They prefer to pay for books such as those produced by MONLAR. The WSSD document can only be considered a success when we have implemented this kind of programme.' (Rev. Dodampahala Sirisugana, Kalutara)

Becoming a policy think-tank will not in isolation bring benefits to members, nor engage them in the important aspects of developing living sustainability.

The WSSD process

The UNDP GEF fund and DF provided funds for GMSL for the work on WSSD in Johannesburg. The Peoples Report on Sustainability was the result of a mobile exhibition and visiting over 200 villages around the country.

UNDP's evaluation (all quotes from *Shireen Samarasuriya, Global Environment Facilitator*): The UNDP funded both the NGO report and the Governments one. The UNDP were much more impressed with the NGO report. 'The GMSL did a good job, we liked the GMSL caravan going round villages, thought this was satisfactory, and were very pleased with the quality of the report. The Government report had unsubstantiated statistics in it, it was called the Middle Path, which made many NGOs angry as this is an appropriation of a Buddhist approach. Neither NGO nor UNDP comments were taken up by Government. They did one day workshop, they claim that the modifications were made but I can't see any difference'.

How the document is used?: 'For follow-up at local level, NGOs use it as a generic document, it gives recognition to people, surfaces the issues, sets people thinking. INGOs are very pleased with it, it has been reprinted. Sinhala and Tamil translations are much in demand, distributed at workshops, and supposed to be sold to make money for GMSL. I distribute the Tamil one in the North and East, it was a good move to do the Tamil version first, environmental awareness in the N and E is very low. They are now focused on reconstruction and rehabilitation but need awareness-raising on quality of projects and proposals.'

What is the future of WSSD? 'WSSD was 'a waste of time and energy, it's not going to go forward. UNDP is now concentrating on MDGs, poverty reduction is now the main focus. The whole thing has been dumped on the Ministry of Environment. UNDP will probably take up the MDG 7 on the environment, will probably do a report through a consultant and then maybe an Action Plan.'

MENR's evaluation (quotes from *Thosapala Hewage, Secretary*): The SL government produced a report for the WSSD called 'The Middle Path to Sustainable Development'. They wanted the environmental organisations to join with them in submitting a joint report. The Secretary believes the Green Network Report to be extreme. 'Being the government, we can't go to extremes, we always follow the middle path.' The Secretary, however, insisted that Government would be prioritising sustainable development as it had signed up to the WSSD Final Declaration, despite the old-style growth strategy represented by RSL. He said they are taking follow-up action to WSSD, proposing a National Sustainable Development Council, which they want the Prime Minister to co-chair with Minister of Finance and Environment. They want to develop a 'road-map' for the coming years and work with other line ministries and the private sector on various unspecified projects.

Local member evaluation: The temple in Kalutara has been a centre for Green activities for years, and participated in the WSSD, Rio+10, mobile exhibition. This has led to green clubs being set up for children, and the members act as resource people for these clubs. But they are sceptical about real progress. '\$44m was spent on WSSD, and not a penny spent on sustainable development. The People's Report can only be considered a success when we have implemented this kind of programme'. (*Rev. Dodampahala Sirisugana, Kalutara*)

Watchdog Work

The GMSL engages more consistently in being a 'watch-dog' on policies and programmes that affect environmental sustainability, and the lives of local people. This means that it uses the legal mechanisms available to challenge such policies and programmes, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment process, and fundamental rights legislation. It also does regular field trips to monitor impact, writes follow-up reports on large multi-lateral funded projects, and exposes shortcomings and evasions of environmental controls in the national and international arenas.

The GMSL hosts the SLWGADB, which it co-convenes, and publishes information on ADB-funded projects and policies in Sinhala and English. It also closely monitors the work of the CEA. The CEA, as the regulating authority for the Environment, has a clear responsibility for approval and monitoring of projects. The main instrument they use for this is the EIA. The EIA became mandatory for all large-scale development projects with the entry into force of the National Environment Act of 1980. Since 1988 public participation in EIA processes has also been legalised.

ADB

The SLWGADB formed in 1998, and is co-convened by GMSL and EFL. It has about 15 members, and meets about 3 or 4 times a year, to plan and allocate responsibilities. It has two objectives: information to be able to monitor; to get a formal monitoring mechanism accepted by ADB. Membership is restricted to those who do not receive money from ADB projects through the government or Ministries.

In Sri Lanka the bulk of ADB monies are loans, adding up to approximately \$200m every year, with only \$5m in grants. There are two pools for borrowing. \$140m on a concessional basis over 32 years, with an 8 year grace period at 1% and the rest at 1.5%. They can access a further \$60m a year from a floating bond pool using ADB rating. The current strategy is to introduce a harder policy of increasing the non-concessional loans, and they will then decide which sectors still need concessional loans, such as natural resources, and some education and social policies. Colombo Port, for example, has obvious commercial possibilities, and will get non-concessional loans. A further \$50m may be made available as a result of Tokyo meeting.

They have 3 year rolling projects, which will be linked to RSL. They also run the NECORD programme – North and East Community Restoration and Development. This was designed before the peace process, in discussion with Government and LTTE because ADB was preparing poverty strategy and decided needed conflict awareness. % of all loans has to go to core poverty interventions

The staff members at ADB were very aware of the GMSL as a vocal advocacy group on ADB and development projects. They had read the Community Aid Abroad document, Too Little Too Late, which had had particular impact on them as they found out about it only after it was published and presented to the ADB annual meeting in 2001. They saw the tone as being very critical, and problem focused, and questioned the facts in the case study on Southern Transport.

In general, like the IMF, the ADB's position is that SL is a country with reasonable governance and is a relatively well-functioning democracy. As such, its primary negotiating partner is the elected government.

"We're not here to define government strategy, we're just here to provide loans" (Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB)

They are critical of what they see as the 'emotional' tone used to argue against policy by NGOs such as GMSL, leading to the issue becoming unnecessarily politically charged.

"The water resources issue, which is quite controversial because of changes in legislation, is about rights to water resources. Yes it opens the door for charging, but it is really about rights for all to water resources. It has now become politically charged, and called a 'water tax', and it gets caught up in mythology, and emotion, and stuff about Kandian Kings. A more appropriate response would have

been to say, 'Is this a good project?'. If not, What is an appropriate response? In many documents there is little constructive alternative.' (Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB)

Yet they believe there to be a role for a policing function and that NGOs have a role to play in mitigating bad impacts:

'There are enough bad projects out there. The EFL were critical of Upper Kotmale for a good reason, there were significant environmental impacts.' (Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB)

They were also aware of the short-comings of the EIA processes. During the last ten years, EIAs have been requirements on all projects, after an initial environmental examination, but this does not take into account long term impact.

'There is a new requirement to look at the entire three year rolling plan, confirmed projects and pipeline projects, and make an overall strategic environmental assessment of a whole sector. Eg Coal or hydro, is this an appropriate strategy?' (Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB)

Partnership with NGOs

As stated above, the ADB staff seem genuinely puzzled about how to work 'in partnership' with advocacy NGOs. They do not know what to do with the information they get, or how to take into account NGO views which are 'just one stakeholder amongst many.' They recognised the need to work with NGOs on environment issues, as RSL is very weak on the environment, and 'we need to make sure it doesn't fall off the agenda.' They seem more comfortable with traditional implementing NGOs. The fact that they made the Energy Sector Master Plan available to ITDG, means that there are some NGOs who are considered 'friendly', often those who are implementing ADB projects.

'we would like to see renewables properly addressed in this plan, not just on the fringes.' (Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB)

They specifically asked what would happen if the ADB had a neutral pool of money to provide resources for others to do decent research into alternatives. 'Would NGOs take it?' Yet they are fundamentally committed to thinking within their development paradigm, (they mentioned research into coal plants, which of course the GMSL are against on sustainability grounds) and seem not to realise that it is their framework that is under attack from the NGOs with a political vision.

"The only successes we have have occurred within the framework of economic growth, we have to work within it". (Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB)

Yet it appears that the most successful changes in projects and programmes have been brought about by the outright opposition to ADB strategies by organisations such as GMSL, through protesting and campaigning, changes that implementing partners working with the ADB would not have achieved alone.

Results of 'Watch-dog' work

2000: participation in AGM of ADB and reported on impact of Mahaweli Dam
 Lunugamwehera Reservoir Project: ADB started impact evaluation as a result of criticisms
 Muthukandiya Reservoir Reserve: GMSL activists stopped opening of large-scale farm
 Colombo – Matara Expressway: assurances given by ADB to reduce width, abandon proposal for tolls, avoid blocking rivers, and others
 Upper Kotmale Hydro Power Project: CEA Technical Committee rejected EIA three times due to public protest. MinEnv decided to go ahead

2001: Five case studies on water management projects funded by ADB
 Too Little Too Late report
 Advocacy support to rural farmers on WB policy alternatives and on ADB-funded Kirindi Oya

2002: Turuwila Reservoir Project: fundamental rights case lodged and environmental mediation agreed

EIA – reports criticised due to incorrect facts and data – led to people having to be consulted

1999: Colombo-Matara Expressway
 Hotel and Golf complex in Uva
 900 MW coal power plant in Norochocholai – President abandoned project in 2000

CEA

The CEA were very forthcoming about the impact the work on EIAs had had, and effective use GMSL had made of the EIA process to undermine large scale projects and force conditions to be applied to their management.

The Upper Kotmale Water Management Project had been refused approval because of objections about watershed management and the general nature of the plan to manage the watershed. An appeal to the Ministry of Environment had led to conditional approval, but with conditions attached: the proper development of a watershed management plan allowing only 2-5% of upper reaches to be tapped for electricity generation, leaving 95% for normal flow. The Ministry of ENR conceded that the protests and work by GMSL had led to the conditions being imposed.

The CEA mentioned several other projects in which NGO, CBO and local protests were having or had had an impact on the EIA process. The EIA for the Colombo-Kandy Expressway has difficulties:

'We are not satisfied with this EIA, we cannot justify this project, we will have difficulty approving this.'
 (Manel Jayamanna, CEA)

and the EIA on the National Park in the South:

'they will be up in arms unless we are very careful studying the EIA. The Kandalama Hotel project generated huge protests by NGOs, Buddhist monks setting fire to themselves, they were forced to introduce environmental measures.' (Manel Jayamanna, CEA)

The CEA also claims to have taken note of the CBOs/NGOs demanding that they evaluate the resources of those affected by involuntary resettlement in a different way. Eg, the value of a home garden, which is an economic resource,

'they are questioning the methodology we use, which is something we had never thought of.' (Manel Jayamanna, CEA)

Yet it was clear from the CEA that there are insufficient state resources allocated to the approval and monitoring procedures of projects, and a lack of professional expertise within the Authority.

'We cannot monitor, we are weak in this area, we don't have the capacity, the staff have academic skills but not competency in this. In Upper Kotmale and Southern Expressway we have to monitor conditions, but there is no clear-cut procedure for monitoring other EIAs.' (Manel Jayamanna, CEA)

They are planning to decentralise further, which means compliance will depend on the qualities of local staff as they intend to delegate more powers to regional level. They are also planning to review the EIA guidelines and potentially take into account a broader set of criteria, and context. Given that the Ministry of Environment blamed the narrow criteria in the EIA process for the original failure to approve the Upper Kotmale project, it remains to be seen whether a revised EIA process will be better, or worse, for the environment and sustainability.

Campaigns and protests

Campaigning and protesting require identification of issues that have weight and that are simple enough for the uninformed public to understand quickly; they demand a huge amount of work and commitment; they need leadership and an ability to speak simply, and with passion; and an understanding of how to work with the media.

GMSL organise, work on, participate in, and support many campaigns on environmental issues many of which last several years. Much of the lobbying and advocacy work highlighted above has its roots in the awareness-raising and the grievances of people in the local areas where mega-projects or policies will have a local impact. Lobbying and advocacy can often only be effective if it is backed up by protest and demonstrated opposition, and GMSL uses these two strategies very effectively together to bring pressure to bear on relevant decision-makers and power holders at critical moments. For instance, the work on the Colombo-Matara expressway began in 1999. Full advantage was taken of people's right to express their views in the EIA. Lobbying and advocacy work was done by GMSL with ADB offices, and certain assurances and change were agreed upon. In early 2002 an APT was held on all the SuperExpressway projects and the transport policy in general, and then demonstrations were held outside ADB and JBIC offices in Colombo. Campaigning work is still ongoing on all Expressway projects, and little progress has been made in constructing the Colombo-Matara route.

The most well-known campaign GMSL has been involved in is probably the Eppawala phosphate mine. (this is very well-documented, so the details do not need to be repeated here). Talking to the leader of the campaign and a local campaign group helped the team understand what GMSL did in this campaign that made it more effective.

- GMSL worked hard to support and build up the natural leader, Rev. Mahamankadawala Piyaratana. They explicitly advised Rev. Mahamankadawala Piyaratana not to permit political leaders or NGOs to take control of the campaign, but helped him to lead it himself, with the local community
- GMSL provided information to the judges who eventually took on the Eppawalla case during the course of the eight year campaign, so by the time they came to rule they were very well informed.

- GMSL provided advice and support in the background. They provided information about MacMoran and their constructions in other countries to illustrate the potential consequences, they provided human resources for protesting, and accompaniment when the legal case came to be fought. The conversation with the local community confirmed that the GMSL had indeed played a 'background' support role, and had never tried to 'take over' the campaign or grasp the publicity.

'We don't want any publicity, or for our name to be in the limelight, we just help to coordinate the activities and give advice' (Suranjan Kodithuwakku, CO, GMSL)

The campaign on the Turuwila Wewa Reservoir Water Supply Project, funded by the ADB to provide water to the Anuradhapura Township, has different lessons for the GMSL. The context is significantly different. The project did not have the power to convene in the same way as Eppawala, as the issue of local water supply is more complex than the multi-national take over of national assets, and cannot be considered an issue of national importance. However, some issues about leadership, ownership and transparency can be highlighted.

- Turuwila had no clear local leadership, or at least uncompromised leadership. Some of the leaders had political links which were only revealed when the case became a legal one
- The mediation process was done without full community involvement, and with a group who the community didn't know that well. When the case came up there were 33 issues and 7 alternative proposals but people hadn't read the documents, and the alternatives were not properly discussed.
- The wider issue of water privatisation was not fully incorporated and understood. People think that they will get water by tap but that it will still be free. This is unlikely. The French company is also likely to restrict access to the tank for those wanting to water their animals, as they have to control water quality to provide for 30,000.

The community is now very divided, and the main protagonists are now quite bitter. The agreement conditions have not yet been violated, but there are other impacts not considered at the time. The project has generated divisions over those working for it and those who continue to be against it. The effect of the protest is that some have become very radical, others just want a quiet life and make some money for their family. Despite the problems, GMSL played a significant role in supporting the community to take action, and to help sort out the problems that occurred with the mediation process. They also seem to be committed to following up on impacts of the development and helping document the pollution and impact on water supply for the community. It is unclear, however, who they can realistically hope to work with at the community level.

Contrary to the popular view in Sri Lanka that campaigns are just protests, GMSL takes the position that national campaigns can be won. GMSL enters campaigns with the sum of their learning from previous campaigns. GMSL believes that a campaign should first build its capacities before going public with the agitation in order to prevent it from degenerating into mob-type behaviour. The campaign against the setting up of a coal power plant in Norochcholai, Suranjan Kodithuwakku explained, is a case in point. Here, there was a temporary victory, but one person was killed in the process.

GMSL has also learnt that it is best for campaigns to be led by those who are directly impacted in order to prevent politicians and NGOs from either hijacking the protest for their purposes or entering into compromises that are not in the interest of the victims. (Eppawala campaign). GMSL may well want to further its learning from these experiences by formulating some core questions to ask about

local leadership capacity, the relationship between local impact and policy level work, and follow-up and accompaniment capacity in order to assist in its decision-making processes about what to campaign on and how.

Networking and building alliances

The strategy of networking and building alliances is intended to contribute to the overall work of challenging at the policy level, and creating awareness and commitment to sustainable development at the local level. The GMSL is also increasingly participating in meetings and forum at the international level, to bring the SL experience into the world community and learn from other national experiences.

At the national level GMSL has created and contributed to the Alliance for the Protection of Natural Resources and Human Rights, to the SLWGADB, and to the Green Network of SL. The former is mostly working on responding to the policy proposals contained in the RSL and in the Needs Assessment. It is headed by the Rev. Mahamankadawala Piyaratana from Epawalla, and brings together major Trade Unions, (Bank Employees Union, Ceylon Mercantile Union, etc) plus land and agricultural organisations. The Green Network is mainly a group of national level environmental NGOs who came together to publish the WSSD report. The CO is the staff member who mainly participates in the networking and alliances at the national and international level

The team interviewed the main players in the national networks and working groups mentioned above. Feedback was almost universally positive, with the expected rivalries and conflicts between NGOs held mainly in check.

The CFS NGO had originally contacted GMSL who helped file a case, which lasted 11/2 years.

'We won the case, [the villager] had to come to court, and undertake not to interfere in the future. Green found us a decent lawyer, the one the women had found was useless, then helped to interview the villagers, it was a real show of support. What is really impressive is how steadfast they are. They were with us right through the year and a half, they were with us on court days, if they said they'd do something they did it. It was a very positive experience.' (Gloria da Silva, CFS)

Their director has since got involved in doing more lobbying and advocacy work on the PRSP, and has worked more closely with the GMSL CO in the smaller working group called the The People's Response to RSL and Needs Assessment. They commend his blend of knowledge, principles, ideology and practical nature:

'We found we were kindred spirits, we looked at things not just through our own project experience but at a macro-level, at a national level, both short and long-term. While the GMSL focus is the environment they also look at all sectors. Suranjan has a very practical streak, along with his ideology, his feet are very planted on the ground. If you are criticising you must offer alternatives. Suranjan's ideas are rooted. The People's Response is a smaller group of people connected to the Alliance who get things done faster, there are 5 or 6 of us, we all sign things, there is a high level of consensus amongst the most dynamic people, we are all representing other networks and as long as we keep people informed it moves forward.' (Gloria da Silva, CFS)

The Alliance and the People's Response group have undertaken a series of activities, from the mass demonstration of 24 October 2002, to writing letters to national politicians, diplomats, the multi-nationals, and the media. Meetings have been held with the diplomatic community and multi-nationals. One of the advantages of this group is that it brings together Sinhala and Tamil speakers, and raises issues of development in the context of the peace process. It is an example of grasping

opportunities at the policy level as they emerge, and the background that a number working in this network share has enabled them to move forward together. It is also an example of how work done on campaigns links to national level activity, as the Rev. Mahamankadawala Piyaratana from Epawalla is the head of the Alliance.

“The GM has a good mechanism in place for the networking, they are more issue orientated in their networking, you need to have a practical focus.” (Gloria da Silva, CFS)

The CO plays a key role in the Alliance, according both to CFS and MONLAR.

“Suranjan motivates others, he has sincerity, experience, he has a way of bringing people to action. He has contacts and information.” (Gloria da Silva, CFS)

“We are very happy with role of GMSL, they play a very key role, pure environmental organisations do not link up policy-related issues to the environment, whereas GMSL connect up issues to policies and the wider development model. For instance, some organisations don’t tend to think across the board, and peace and human rights organisations tend to stay within their ‘sector’. GMSL make a special contribution to the Alliance, bringing in information on genetic modification, bio-piracy, TRIPS, Forest Act, Mineral resources, etc.” (Sarat Fernando, MONLAR)

This is not to say that there are no conflicts between those working on these issues. The main competitor to GMSL, could be considered to be EFL. They co-convene the SLWGADB.

The significant difference between the two is really in their identity. GMSL sees itself as being connected to, and representative of, people affected by development projects. EFL are a legal aid organisation, with a commitment to environment cases. EFL has no presence on the ground, whereas GMSL has local membership. EFL sees its work, particularly the SLWGADB, as using the instruments available, legal and policy, to effect change in ADB strategies and programming. GMSL sees itself as fundamentally opposing the model of development that ADB exemplifies. The EFL is critical of the ‘extremism’ of GMSL, while GMSL is critical of EFL’s commenting on and monitoring policies it opposes. GMSL is also critical of the nature of the international ADB Working Group and what he sees as its undemocratic nature.

Yet as the two organisations known as the main environmental groups, they work together as much as they can when they have overlapping interests. EFL says ‘some issues are ok, but we have our own territories.’ EFL provided legal support to the Epawalla case, and GMSL was responsible for getting them involved, and indeed mediating some of disputes that arose between the Epawalla process and EFL. The GMSL also helped train the mediators in EFL’s environmental mediation unit and regularly recommends it to people as one route for settling legal cases.

The evaluation team leader was able to participate as an observer in a meeting co-convened by the SLWGADB at the ADB, at which EFL, MONLAR, GMSL and CFS were all present, amongst others. The complexity of working together was apparent, and demonstrated the need to ensure that agendas are worked out in advance, and strategies and tactics shared.

The Green Network of SL, or GreenNet is as yet a group of organisations, Energy Forum, EFL, GMSL etc, who came together to do the People’s Report on Sustainability for WSSD. According to EF, GreenNet could be a useful networking body in the future in order to develop and promote an alternative sustainable development policy and promote it. But it is currently not clear if they continuing with GreenNet, if GMSL is doing the follow-up to WSSD or whether GreenNet should be doing it, or indeed if GreenNet is really needed.

He believes that the GMSL CO can be quite radical and that when you are networking compromise is an important element.

'Suranjan is very radical, I have no problem with that but I think others do. We have to be able to compromise if we are to do networking, up to a point at least.' (Asoka N Abeygunawardana, EF)

International networking

The CO has now started to be invited overseas a lot, as he has gained more profile in the GMSL. When the team were there he had been invited to Cancun to speak at three meetings, to another campaign in Germany, and to the Asian Labour Network meeting, as a result of the work on RSL and the People's Response. One of the challenges is how to make best use of international opportunities, and yet not get caught up in spending too much time attending others' meetings as a resource person.

Education and awareness-raising

A major strategy for the GMSL and its members is one of education and awareness-raising, in local communities, schools, youth groups, women's groups, and with local authority officials responsible for environmental protection. There are myriad activities being undertaken, from model composting schemes, organic farms and seed-saving, to mobile exhibitions, talks, and information dissemination on local issues and problems. The job of raising environmental awareness is a huge one, and GMSL takes its lead from its principles, in making sure that the issues move beyond the scientific and academic communities, and are rooted in people's everyday lives. Local issues are taken up, and often the awareness-raising turns into protesting, or lobbying, in which local people are involved and speaking for themselves.

At the same time the GMSL has a volunteering policy, which means that there are many more involved in 'spreading the word' than just the members and CBOs. The GMSL encourages people to volunteer with them, paying food and travelling subsistence. If people approach them wanting to do research or use the information, they do a deal, to ensure the GMSL get something in return. They have a Catholic father who is helping with the Tamil newspaper, open university students, and others who help with the press cutting service, journalists who help with articles, lawyers who when they graduate will only charge a % of their fee or work for free. This allows them to do the work of maybe 30-40 people, whereas the office has a paid staff of 5.

The GMSL also do a significant amount of awareness-raising for other national organisations, such as MONLAR and CENTRAL FAMILY SERVICES. For example the CO is running a series of talks with women's group leaders on RSL, highlighting the way it may affect people. In this way GMSL is being a resource for other organisations, as part of its strategy about awareness-raising about policies, enabling people to understand what policies might mean for them at local community level. This feeds into capacity-building, as these women will then take these ideas back to their local groups, and into protesting, as there is an anti RSL petition which people are being asked to sign.

The team met local organisations in Kalutara and Galle, and heard about the range of activities going on at a local level, and their comments about GMSL.

National Fisheries Solidarity Group, Kalutara

They run awareness-raising programmes with fisheries communities. An example is foreign fishing boats in Sri Lankan waters depleting fish stocks. They have three local people working together. Local communities were not aware of this, so they organised lobbying against this with organised

fishing communities, they protested against the national fishing policy decided on by government and the WB. In November they collected 1m signatures for a petition, they have 10 districts so they collected 100,000 in each. Some districts work closely with GMSL, others don't. (National Coordination, Kalutara, and Galle do).

'The education we receive from being part of GMSL allows us to pass on information and awareness to our communities. It is a very positive experience, we have gained a lot.'

Teacher, Kalutara

'There is limited environmental education in schools, the 1994 educational reforms allowed some curriculum attention to environment, but it is largely biology-focused. Our main priority is to get children interested, to work at the grass-roots level, and educate the future generation. We get support from GMSL in the form of facts, seminars, magazines, empowerment, mobile exhibition, and the students really are interested.'

Temple Compost project, Kalutara

This is done by the children, and composts the huge numbers of flowers brought to the large Temple that would normally be thrown into the sea. The GMSL offered seminars and free advice, and now the temple is training others to make compost and market it. It costs 10 rupees a bag, and has a spiritual verse on the front. The children make it and get paid 200 rupees every month.

'There are some outlets for sale, mainly local, but we mainly sell through the school-children, and the money goes back into children's education. We are seeing a changing relationship to the earth, not as dirty, but as a growing medium, and people are beginning to compost at home. Now we need to address the excessive use of polythene, people bring their flowers in polythene. There are other sacred sites and devotional areas with many flowers, we want to spread the compost-making across the island. Demand is growing, and we need some basic machines.' (Rev. Dodampahala Sirisugana, Kalutara)

They all see their work not as educational in the traditional sense, but more awareness-raising, and have seen acceptance and interest grow from the younger generation. *'It is very important to focus on young people, they can be change agents.'* People have also become more involved in national level activities, especially protesting, over highways, coal, and it is clear that through their relationship with GMSL they have been made aware of government policy.

'GMSL have been doing local level awareness-raising about RSL in Kalutara. They call it 'Forfeiting SL', and they are the only people seriously engaged in protesting about this. We attended a 2 day seminar on RSL organised by Rev. M, we allocated tasks, and talked about how to educate people against it. This is the most dangerous Plan of Action proposed for this country and we are not going to allow it.' (Rev. Dodampahala Sirisugana, Kalutara)

Web-sites

The least effective tool in GMSL's box is its use of web-sites. GMSL's work is spread around on various sites, with no clear linking. Looking at them after the field visit, it was clear that they are not regularly updated, nor maintained. The exception to this is the People's Response web-site, which is not managed by GMSL, and the WSSD process web-site, which of course is now quite old.

The GMSL web-site, that has information on a lot of GMSL's work, seems to be located inside the Jak Fruit Information Centre Web site (which also appears to be located at GMSL office, just like Green Network and People's Response), but it is not picked up by a Google search for GMSL. The Sri Lankan Working Group on ADB web-site has no date saying when it was last updated and

information on some sections of the site is out of date. The Monitoring Report of the Kirindi Oya Project for the year 2002 prepared by the Working Group and the Report on the Possible Alternative for the Project cannot be downloaded from the site, nor can the Water Policy and Wildlife Newsletter. This has the effect of making visitors to the sites think that they are no longer functioning. While the internet and email are not used extensively across the Island, they are important advocacy tools for the media work and international alliance-building.

Challenges and recommendations

The four inter-linked strategies the GMSL uses have all brought some results over the last four years, some significant. At the lobbying and advocacy level, the GMSL is respected for its grasp of policy and attention to detail, and feared for its capacity to rouse ordinary people to action.

Members we talked to made the following recommendations about GMSL's work:

Policy Alternatives

Follow-up work on watch-dog work with ADB seems better planned than producing policy alternatives and trying to get them accepted and implemented. This may be a matter of resources, or of political priorities. As the report states, too much time on policy work tends to mean that the direction of energy goes upwards to the policy-makers and the grass-roots work gets forgotten. But without some policy development, the criticism about lack of alternative proposals beings to ring true.

Members clearly want to connect up practical alternatives to local development. Members thought that GMSL should be trying to make input into development planning at the local level, as they have the sustainable development vision. Many organisations have done some environmental infrastructure work, but this is not sustainable unless there is some kind of community development plan. It was suggested the GMSL should formulate a broader strategy on water use – cultural, social and economic plan – which would take into account drought relief, the traditional system of small tanks for drought management, alternatives to big projects, a water management system, etc.

The GMSL itself recognises the need for research done by those other than ADB consultants. This may mean that the policy work needs to be done by another organisation, or institution, or that GMSL participates in a forum on such development led by others. There may be a future in GreenNet coming together to take that up and find funding for it.

Lobbying and Advocacy

The one area raised in interviews that seems to be less well developed is the lobbying and advocacy work with politicians and elected representatives. Without real understanding of how the political system operates in Sri Lanka it is difficult to know if this is a worthwhile area to pursue. But it is possible this could form part of a strategy for lobbying and advocacy done at a local level, with people holding their political representatives to account.

Awareness-raising and education

GMSL have not been able to promote best practices that already exist as much as they would like, and don't have the resources to popularise these experiences. This should be the next stage, to help spread these practices, which is one way this kind of development will spread. More attention could be paid to developing practical demonstration projects, and experimentation, programmes that bring new knowledge and experience to members. It might be that this would follow on from the work done on National Environment Policy for People's Action.

While the evaluation only had time to hear about the kinds of activities going on in a small number of local districts, it appears that GMSL makes the best use it can of its limited resources in this regard. The Arana newspaper is well-regarded and now translated into Tamil. The SLWGADB Coordinator publishes information on the monitoring work of the ADB. The CO regularly talks to the press and media about issues of concern. The main office responds to requests for information, and awareness raising by connecting up people across the network where it can.

One area that could be improved is the integration and management of the various web-sites where GMSL disseminates information. GMSL needs to think hard about what resources it wishes to put into IT solutions, and commit to managing an integrated GMSL web-site more effectively while at the same time not expending excessive resources on a tool that is not much used by its members.

Networking and alliance-building

One of the main challenges is knowing how to make best use of national and international opportunities, and yet not get caught up in spending too much time attending others' meetings as a resource person. The current excessive workload of the CO could be addressed through the strategies mentioned below under generating greater leadership capacity.

If GMSL is to commit more resources and time to joint advocacy and lobbying with other organisations, greater attention needs to be paid to agreeing common agendas, and sharing out tasks.

Meetings and Interviews Held

GMSL

- Staff of GMSL
- Sumana D Liyanage, President of GMSL
- Executive Committee of GMSL
- District Committee – Kalutera
- District Coordinator - Galle
- Mr. Podinilame, Human Development Centre, Kegalle

Campaign groups

- Epawalla Mine Group, Anuradhpura
- Turuwila Group, Anuradhpura

Colombo-based NGOs

- Sarat Fernando, MONLAR
- Gloria da Silva, CENTRAL FAMILY SERVICES
- Asoka N Abeygunawardana, ENERGY FORUM
- Hemantha Withanage, ENVIRONMENTAL FOUNDATION LTD

Other volunteers and allies

- Malinda Seneviratne

Sri Lanka State Representatives

- Thosapala Hewage, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
- Manel Jayamanna, Central Environment Authority

Multilaterals

- Joseph E Zveglic, Deputy Country Director, ADB
- Sanath Ranawana, Project Specialist, ADB
- Jeremy Carter, Senior Resident Representative, IMF

UN

- Shireen Samarasuriya, Global Environment Facilitator

Annex 1 [the organisational chart needs to be added here]