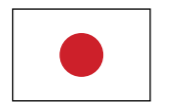




CRISIS TO RESILIENCE

The generous contributions of our partners have touched the lives of millions across the island.

Here are some of their stories...



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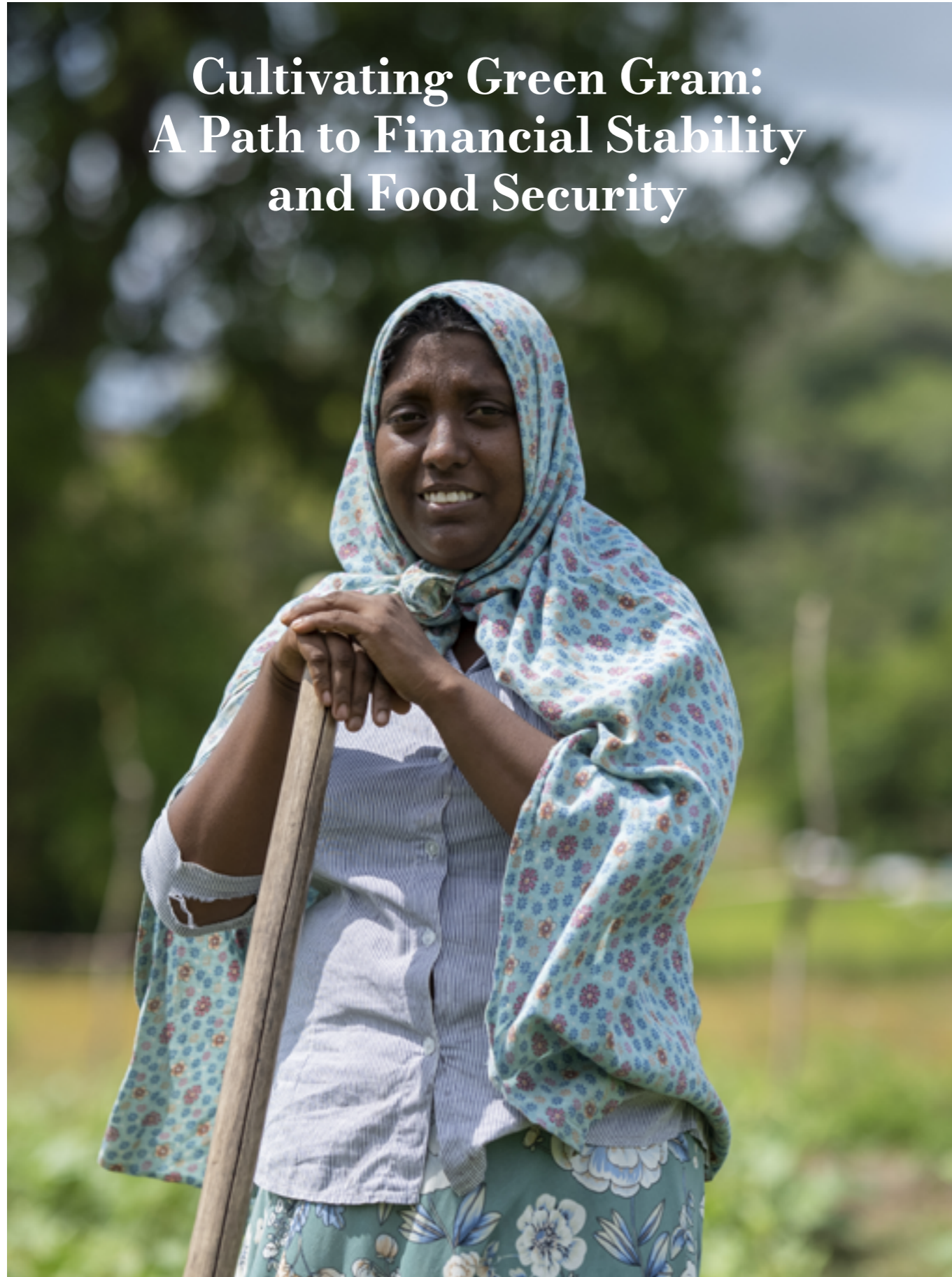


The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Sri Lanka established The Facility last year to raise funds and mobilize resources towards procuring medical supplies and strengthening food security.

In the course of a year, ten leading private sector organizations and three development partners came on board The Facility. UNDP also worked closely with the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Sri Lanka, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Through this collaborative effort, The Facility raised over USD 6 million and supported 200,000 beneficiaries on the medical front and close to 50,000 beneficiaries on food security support. Indirectly, these generous contributions have touched the lives of millions across the island.

Cultivating Green Gram: A Path to Financial Stability and Food Security



Polpithiyagama, a quaint village nestled in the heart of the Kurunegala district in Sri Lanka, has been home to traditional paddy farmers for generations. However, with the onset of a deepening socio-economic crisis, many farmers, including 37-year-old Deepika Sampath Dissanayake and her husband, found themselves in need of an additional source of income. Their journey to financial stability and improved food security began when they decided to venture into cultivating green gram.

For over a decade, Deepika and her husband relied solely on paddy cultivation as their primary livelihood. However, the income generated from this traditional practice proved insufficient, leading them to engage in brick-making as a supplementary means to make ends meet. They were not alone in facing this predicament; numerous farmers in Polpithiyagama were grappling with similar challenges and urgently sought alternative income-generating opportunities.

Recognizing the pressing need for additional income sources and the importance of maintaining food security in Sri Lanka, a programme was initiated by UNDP to encourage farmers to cultivate alternative crops that required less water and fertilizers. Deepika and her fellow farmers were provided with green gram seeds and training sessions to enhance their knowledge and expertise in cultivating this nutritious legume.

Filled with enthusiasm and hope, Deepika embarked on this new agricultural journey, embracing the cultivation of green gram for the first time. The outcome was nothing short of a resounding success. Deepika was elated as the green gram harvest exceeded her expectations, allowing her to supplement her family's income substantially. With a gleam of pride in her eyes, she shared, "I am so excited to earn an extra income by cultivating green gram during this season. We never did this before. But we tried it this time and it was a success."

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The impact of this newfound source of income was profound for Deepika and her family. Not only could they provide their two children with a better education, but they were also able to ensure access to healthy, nutritious meals. Deepika emphasized, "Unlike in the past, now I can earn an extra income, and at the same time, we are able to provide our two children with healthy food. This makes me really happy."

The financial stability Deepika experienced was not an isolated incident. The project extended its support to numerous struggling farmers in several parts of Sri Lanka, empowering them to explore alternative crops and new cultivation methods. The provision of green gram seeds and comprehensive training helped bridge the gap in technological knowledge and resources that hindered many farmers from diversifying their crops.

Deepika's success story serves as a testament to the transformative power of this initiative. With a wide smile, she noted, "I made an additional income of fifteen thousand rupees, which I was able to utilize for my children's studies and other basic needs thanks to this project." The project not only provided financial stability but also instilled a sense of hope and resilience within the farming community.

Life has never been easy for farmers in Polpithiyagama, especially amidst the prevailing socio-economic crisis. Rising costs associated with paddy farming have left many uncertain about its viability. However, through the cultivation of additional crops such as green gram, this programme has emerged as a ray of hope, offering farmers a pathway to financial stability and improved food security.

As Deepika's inspiring journey demonstrates, the introduction of alternative crops has the potential to uplift the farming community and alleviate their economic struggles. Her success shows how embracing innovative cultivation methods and capitalizing on knowledge gained can reap rewards by arming communities with the know-how that will be beneficial for years to come.



From Paddy to Prosperity: Sri Lankan Farmers Embrace Change

A transformative program empowers farmers to diversify and secure their livelihoods



Galoya, Anuradhapura District - W.M. Wijerathna, a 67-year-old farmer with weathered hands and a twinkle in his eye, recalls a time when paddy cultivation was the backbone of his life. For decades, he toiled on his 5-acre paddy land, providing for his family and building a future for his children. However, as the economy faltered, Wijerathna found himself facing insurmountable challenges. The scarcity of resources and the onslaught of climate change made traditional paddy farming increasingly untenable. Yet, amidst the adversity, a glimmer of hope emerged for Wijerathna and many farmers like him.

"We are traditional paddy farmers, where we cultivated for decades. We managed to survive. However, with the economic crisis, it was difficult for us to continue paddy farming. However, as we started to cultivate additional crops, we gained a little hope of continuing our livelihood," Wijerathna confides.

In Galoya, a farming community in the heart of Sri Lanka, the struggle to sustain paddy cultivation became

a common narrative. Economic instability, coupled with the challenges posed by climate change, pushed many farmers to seek alternative means of subsistence. However, the lack of knowledge in cultivating other crops further compounded their predicament.

Recognizing the need for change, a transformative program was introduced, offering technical expertise and support to farmers seeking to diversify their crops. Green grams, cowpea, and peanuts became the beacon of hope for farmers living amidst hardship. With access to training, consultations, and seeds, the farmers began to see a glimmer of possibility.



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"I used to cultivate over 5 acres of paddy land. Life was not so complicated then. We had all the resources, and we were living well. However, with the deterioration of the economy, it was not easy to continue cultivation. There was no fertilizer or other resources we needed. I went to ordinary labor jobs. Life was not easy for me," Wijerathna reflects on his past struggles.



Armed with newfound knowledge, Wijerathna decided to cultivate 1 ½ acres of green grams. To his delight, the harvest yielded an income of 60,000 rupees. Encouraged by this success, he turned to cowpea, earning a further 80,000 rupees. The relief and newfound hope were palpable as the couple realized they could sustain themselves solely through agriculture. Wijerathna proudly proclaims, "We didn't have the technical knowledge on this previously, however, thanks to the training, consultations, and seeds, we overcame the obstacle."

The program, which supported over 30 farmers in the area, aimed to uplift their economic status and bolster Sri Lanka's food security. The initiative proved to be a resounding success, as farmers embraced the opportunity to cultivate additional crops and displayed remarkable enthusiasm.

The shift from paddy farming to diversification brought with it a renewed sense of purpose and resilience. Galoya's farmers, once faced with uncertainty and financial strain, now feel a glimmer of hope. They have not only secured their livelihoods but have also contributed to the resilience of their community in the face of climate change and economic instability.

As the sun sets over the fertile fields of Galoya, a sense of determination permeates the air. Wijerathna and his fellow farmers stand as beacons of change, showcasing the power of knowledge and innovation in transforming lives. With every successful harvest, they reinforce the belief that embracing new ways of farming can lead to prosperity and a sustainable future.





Harvesting from the Heart

In the face of the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, women farmers remain determined to produce for their families and communities*

Sri Lanka's agricultural sector is a cornerstone in the country's economy, supporting many rural small-scale producers. The current crisis has limited their capacity to cultivate, leaving resource poor farmers with little or no options to recover.

S.M. Pradeepa Nilmini is one of many farmers in Sri Lanka who face this plight. From Gal Oya, in the North Central Province of the island nation, Pradeepa is the only hope for her family. Her husband lost his job during the pandemic and turned to accepting paying clients in their family tuk-tuk. But due to the economic crisis and the shortage of fuel, this too has now come to a standstill. He now relies on the ad-hoc manual labour jobs he manages to find in town, making Pradeepa the primary bread winner for the household.

*originally published on UNDP global website in November 2022

A mother of three, Pradeepa hopes for better days. Her eldest moved away after marriage, her second is set to sit for his GCE Advanced Level examinations, and her youngest is moving into grade 10 next year.

"This situation has left me helpless," Pradeepa said. "I have struggled to afford the tuition lessons that my son goes for as he prepares for his exams in the commerce stream. As a mother, this breaks my heart."

Due to skyrocketing food prices, Pradeepa says she needs to earn a minimum of Rs. 2,500 (nearly US\$7) a week to make ends meet, something she didn't have to face before.

It's the worst economic crisis the country has ever seen, stemming from mismanagement of macro-economic policy, coupled with a ban on fertilizer, lack of fuel stocks in the country,

all compounded by the effects of COVID-19. Farming families were left on the losing end, undermining food security for everyone.

"In the past, after the Maha cultivation season, we would harvest around 100 stacks of paddy. But this time around, we only managed to receive a harvest of 36 stacks," Pradeepa notes.



A primary focus of the food security intervention is diversifying agricultural livelihoods. This includes expanding on traditional paddy-only cultivations to diverse crops such as cowpea and mung beans not only to boost stagnant activities but also to increase farmer's incomes and enhance food security. Tapping into UNDPs established relationships with farmer communities through ongoing climate adaptation projects across the country, the crisis intervention was timely to help farmers stay afloat.

"I managed to sell the green gram harvest at a market rate of Rs.540 per kilo, which was a great relief," Pradeepa said as she proudly displayed her harvest.

From the profit she made, she was able to settle her outstanding loan payments and get her family's finances back on track. Like her, other women farmers who are a part of the Women's Farmer Society in Gal Oya are finding

ways to get through the tough times.

"We are a farming community. We hardly have people engaged in [other types of] employment. Therefore, all of us are skilled farmers," she said.

Members of the Women's Farmer Society use their monthly meetings as a platform for sharing experiences and consulting with UNDP technical experts who visit regularly. From learning about crops that require less water for cultivation and other climate-smart agricultural practices that consider the tumultuous context, the women farmers have equipped themselves with the tools and knowledge to make informed decisions in their cultivations.

"I too was not aware of some of these agriculture practices like diversification of crops. So, there have been seasons where we have not been able to cultivate due to various issues," Pradeepa said.

“Once I had gained this knowledge, I wanted to share this with my fellow members - all of us who are sisters, daughters, mothers, striving hard to make a living.”



Pradeepa is now looking to rally support towards purchasing their own water pump, which can be used to water their fields during the dry season.

“So far, we have managed to survive by borrowing pumps, while being dependent on the rains. Having our own pump could help boost production and ensure our crops survive the cultivation periods,” she said.

For Pradeepa and the other members of the Women’s Farmer Society, the road ahead is not easy. But with sound strategies and a supportive community, they are looking to the future with determination and hope.

“Women are the backbone in our farming community. Through our tears and sacrifices, we have been determined to ensure that every season, no matter the hardships and the lack of availability of water for farming, we have tended to our lands to produce a harvest that benefits our entire community.”





Resilience in the Fields: Sri Lankan Farmers Thrive Against All Odds

"We are grateful to this programme for providing seeds when we needed them the most," emphasizes Thangavel Ajanthan, his voice filled with gratitude. "We were devastated by the economic crisis. We were helpless. However, by receiving the necessary support, we are now able to prosper," says Ajanthan.

In the lush landscapes of the Madhu area in Sri Lanka's Mannar District, a resilient community of farmers has emerged from the ashes of a devastating conflict that spanned three decades. Once known as the 'rice bowl' of the country, this region faced immense challenges during the economic downturn, leaving its farmers, like Thangavel Ajanthan, in a state of helplessness. However, a ray of hope shone through the darkness as UNDP stepped in, providing much-needed support in the form of seeds that transformed the lives of these resilient farmers.

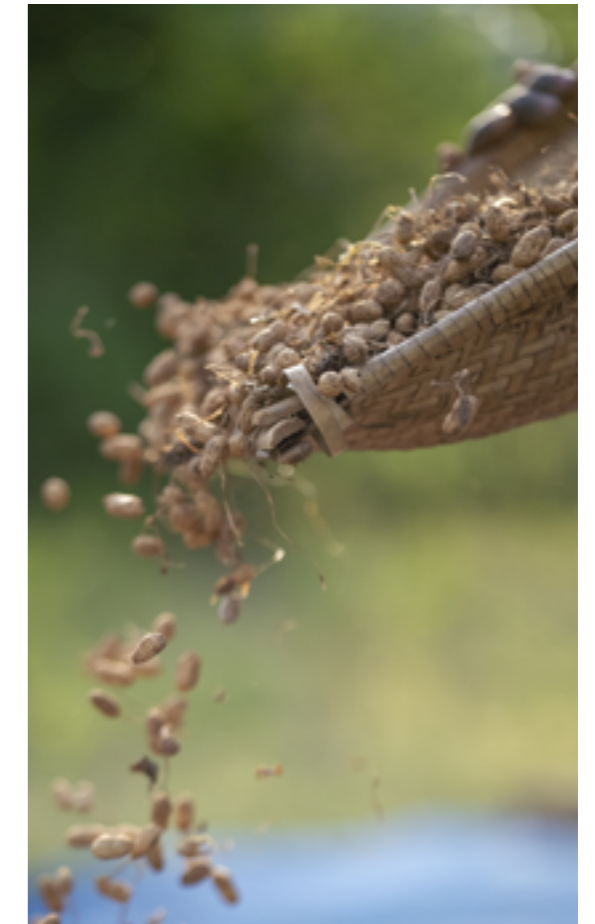
A farmer deeply rooted in the paddy cultivation of the Northern Province, Ajanthan vividly recalls the hardships his community faced in the aftermath

of the conflict and subsequent resettlement. Starting their livelihoods from scratch was an arduous task, but with unwavering determination, the farmers came together and established a seed bank, becoming a beacon of resilience for the entire division.

"After the difficult process of resettlement, we were then faced with the daunting task of rebuilding our lives from scratch," recalls Ajanthan. "Yet, fueled by the unwavering courage that defines our farming community, we joined hands and embarked on the journey of cultivation once more", he added his voice filled with determination.

While paddy remained the primary focus of cultivation during the main seasons, farmers like Ajanthan also diversified their crops during the mid-seasons, cultivating an array of additional crops such as green gram, peanut, black gram, and cowpea. Through this diversification, they not only ensured their food security but also opened doors to new streams of income. Ajanthan's years

"The arrival of these seeds brought an immense sense of relief. In the aftermath of the crisis, we were left without any means to re-cultivate, having lost nearly all our crops. However, I witnessed an extraordinary outcome, reaping an astonishing ninety-nine per cent profit from the bountiful harvest,"



of experience have been able to support his family's needs through his successful cultivation practices, nurturing dreams of prosperity and a better life for his loved ones.

However, Ajanthan's dreams were shattered when the economic crisis deepened, exacerbating the already fragile situation. Fertilizers and other essential supplies became scarce commodities, leaving farmers unable to provide their crops with the necessary supplements. The farmers felt utterly helpless, with no avenues for assistance in sight.

"As we found ourselves unable to provide the necessary supplements to our crops on time, we witnessed the heartbreaking sight of our once-thriving fields gradually succumbing to decline," expresses Ajanthan, his voice heavy with the weight of the ordeal. "The helplessness we experienced

was truly overwhelming, as it seemed there was no way for anyone to come to our aid."

It was at this critical juncture that UNDP intervened, bringing renewed hope and resilience to the farming community. Recognizing the vital role of agriculture in combating food insecurity and improving livelihoods, the programme provided seeds for various crops, acting as a catalyst for rejuvenation and prosperity. The impact was immediate and profound.

Ajanthan's gratitude and relief come through as he recounts the transformation brought about by the received seeds. The renewed access to seeds enabled him to resuscitate his fields, cultivating black gram with resounding success.

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aftermath of the crisis, we were left without any means to re-cultivate, having lost nearly all our crops. However, I witnessed an extraordinary outcome, reaping an astonishing ninety-nine per cent profit from the bountiful harvest," Ajanthan added.

Ajanthan's triumph was not limited to his own gains; he also contributed to the seed bank, ensuring the continued growth and resilience of his farming community. His family's table is now graced with nutritious and healthy meals, allowing him to offer his children a promising future.

Ajanthan's story is not an isolated one. Farmers across the region reaped the benefits of this programme, cultivating additional crops and transforming their lives. The programme acted as a lifeline, allowing them to break free from the chains of adversity and embrace a brighter future. The

impact was not only economic but also social, as the sense of community and solidarity amongst the farmers was reignited, strengthened by the shared success and hope that sprouted from the seeds of change.

UNDP's unwavering commitment to supporting farmers in their time of need has garnered immense praise from the farming community in the Mannar District. By providing seeds and restoring the backbone of agriculture, UNDP has not only empowered farmers to overcome challenges but has also sowed the seeds of a resilient and prosperous future.





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