

# On the Ground



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# Made in Mannar

On the 20th and 21st of May the Mannar Town Hall was in full swing, as people from around the District made their way to the Trade Exhibition organized by the UNDP Mannar Field Office. The exhibition involved the participation of Eight Community Based Organizations (CBO) and the Palmyrah Development Board.

From broomsticks and colorful Reed bags to buckets of rice and flour, the hall was filled with a wide variety of products manufactured with locally available raw material. With the dual intentions of helping local communities to develop new livelihood activities and promoting the use of local raw material, UNDP, with funding from the Japan Livelihood Development Project (LDP), supported 8 CBO's in the district to begin small scale industries.

The exhibition allowed these CBO's to display their products to prospective buyers. "We sell our products mainly in our own village, but now we are hoping we will be able to sell more things to more people," smiled 17 year old Munsida, a resident of the village of Erikalampitty who has been involved in the manufacture of coir products.

Many of the exhibitors shared Munsida's excitement about the prospect of expanding their



our Reed handicraft products from exporters who want to send them abroad," said some CBO members involved in Reed and Palmyrah handicraft production.

In addition to creating new connections, many of the exhibitors were able to make a fair profit by selling their products at the exhibition. The rice by products from Uyirtharasankulam topped sales, while other items like Keeri palmyrah products, Puthukkamam rice products and Periyakaraisal cashew also brought in considerable profits.



markets. "We got three new orders from local shop keepers for our product Nutritious Flour and we were even able to introduce our new product, roasted rice flour," said Mrs. Anthoniya, President of Women's Rural Development Society in Uyirtharasankulam.

The market linkages established at the exhibition will help ensure the sustainability of these businesses. Some of the CBOs were even able to take a small step towards the international market by providing samples to exporters who showed interest in selling the products overseas. "We are very happy because we got three new orders for

Business aside, the exhibition gave these CBOs an opportunity to share their talents and hard work with the outside world. The praise and admiration from the community was no doubt a big boost in the confidence in

their own capabilities. "This nutritious flour has a very good combination of grains and my kids love it! I am really proud of our producers for providing such a good product at a reasonable price," said one regular customer. "I am really impressed by the quality of the products made from our resources," says Government Agent of Mannar, Mr A.Nicholaspillai.

As they went back to their villages after a strenuous two days, the CBO members took with them the concrete results of their talent and hard work.

# Cabinet approval for Sri Lanka's Mine Action Center

On the 14th of July 2010, Sri Lanka reached an important milestone on its path to mine clearance. At the cabinet meeting held in Killinochchi, approval was granted by the Government of Sri Lanka for legalizing Sri Lanka's National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) under the Ministry of Economic Development. Cabinet's endorsement of the NMAC is an important step towards complete national ownership and responsibility of the management and coordination of mine action in Sri Lanka.

UNDP, through its support to Mine Action Project, funded by AusAID, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Peace Building Fund (PBF), remains committed to strengthening national capacities for mine action in Sri Lanka. This is primarily hoped to be achieved by establishing a fully fledged National Mine Action Centre to coordinate and monitor all mine action operations in the country.

Currently, the NMAC has an operational head office in Colombo, located within the Ministry of Economic Development. The centre is headed by Monty Ranatunga who functions as the Director of the centre, which at present consists of a total of 7 staff. The NMAC is expected to expand its operations with the setting up of regional/ district offices, in the mine contaminated districts of the country. These district offices will be staffed with regular government personnel. The location of these regional/ district offices should will be linked to the already existing UNDP supported District Mine Action Offices (DMAO) in Jaffna and Vavuniya, with a view to facilitating the regional/ district NMACs, gradually taking over some of the functions of the current UNDP DMAOs.

Mr. Nihal Somaweera-Additional Secretary –Ministry of Economic Development states that, "We are now in the process of drawing

up a ten year plan to see the country free of land mines and Explosive remnants of war and the legalization of the National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) as a national body to coordinate all mine action activities is an important step towards achieving this goal".

The NMAC will be tasked with liaising with Government authorities, humanitarian and development agencies to determine and address priorities for mine action, establishing and managing an information management system, which will collect and analyze mine action information, Preparation of a national mine action strategic plan, in line with national recovery, reconstruction and development plans, developing annual work plans, accreditation of mine action

operators, tasking and monitoring of mine action activities and drafting and adopting national mine action standards.



Above: Monty Ranatunga, Director, NMAC



Left: Anusha Malimbada, NMAC Secretary, Wuriya Karadaghy, Senior Programme Manager, UNDP, Mahinda Bandara, Asst. Director, Planning, and Dimuthu Ranasinghe, Asst. Director, Planning.



# New additions to the UNDP family

In July this year UNDP Sri Lanka welcomed, Razina Bilgrami who joined our team as Deputy Country Director (Programme). Razina is not a new face to UNDP Sri Lanka, and has been an important part of our extended team for the last seven years, working as the Deputy Chief of the South and West Asia Division of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, having responsibility from New York to support our work in addition to other South Asian countries.

Razina began her career at UNDP in 1997 when she joined UNDP Pakistan, as a Programme Officer. She later became an Assistant Resident Representative, heading the Environment Unit. Razina has



a background in Environmental Engineering and she holds an MSc in Environmental Engineering from the Imperial College, London, with a graduate degree in Civil Engineering from the NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi.

Later in the month Enrico Gaveglia took over as the new Deputy Country Director (Operations). Prior to joining UNDP Enrico served from 2005-2010 as the Head of the Country Office Fund Management Unit for UNDP Sudan, where he provided overall



financial management of the 5 largest UNDP programmes. From 2003-2005, Enrico was based in India with the EC delegation to India, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, where he was part of the Contracts Finance & Audit Section, during that time, Enrico was responsible for the largest audit programme of the EC in Asia, covering 14 programmes. From 2001-2003, Enrico worked with the European Agency for Reconstruction as the Deputy Head of its Budget Unit in Macedonia and Montenegro. Prior to this, he was with the Italian Government, including the Ministry of Environment, and from 1999-2000 as a Lieutenant in the Italian Army. Enrico has a Master's Degree in Economics (Laurea) from the University of Florence and speaks Italian, English, Spanish and French.

## Sri Lanka launches its MDG Progress Report

It is now nine years since the signing of the Millennium Declaration, through which world leaders committed to achieve certain essential development targets called the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), by the year 2015. Since this commitment Sri Lanka has been doing its part to reach these targets. These efforts are reflected in

Sri Lanka's MDG Progress Reports which have helped to monitor the country's progress while showing the way forward. Following its first MDG Progress Report which was produced in 2005, Sri Lanka launched its second Progress Report in Colombo this week.

The launch was held on the 20th of September 2010, at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel under the patronage of Hon. Dr. Sarath Amunugama,

Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning. The report, which carries addresses from H.E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa and the United Nations Resident Representative, Neil Buhne, was formally handed over to the Government on this occasion.

To access the report please visit [www.undp.lk](http://www.undp.lk) or contact the UNDP Communications Unit on 2580691(ext 365)

# From Peace to Progress

Through various initiatives ranging from sports festivals to livelihood assistance, UNDP's Communities for Peace Programme (C4P) has touched the lives of thousands of men, women and children around the country. With the ultimate aim of improving the socio-economic conditions of conflict affected communities, C4P, with funding from the Government of Australia, implemented various different projects focusing on livelihood, housing, infrastructure and social transformation needs.

Following the success of phase I, the UNDP Transition Recovery Programme initiated phase II of C4P in June 2010. This second phase titled, Communities for Progress (C4P II) will build on the results achieved through C4P by focusing essentially on livelihood and social transformation issues. C4P II, which is also funded by AusAID, will be implemented in 10 Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSDs) in the districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Ampara.

The goals of C4P II are twofold. Firstly, the project hopes to mobilize the various social groups of target communities, to work together to achieve socio-economic growth. Secondly, the project

will work towards improving the social interactions and acceptance among and within socio-culturally diverse communities. To this end, C4P II will take various approaches including intra and inter group dialogue, sports and recreational activities, and cultural and socio-economic recovery activities. Through these efforts C4P II hopes to build socio-economically empowered communities that are able to work together to strive towards progress.

To achieve these ends, C4P II will primarily develop the capacity of Community Service Organizations (CSO) representative of the various community groups. By investing in such organizations C4P II will be empowering these communities to take control of their own lives by determining and then implementing development activities that they feel would be best suited for their communities.

In its efforts to develop CSO's that represent all segments of the community, C4P II will attempt to mobilize all

members of the communities, helping them to have a voice and be a part of the joint efforts. While C4P I was implemented in eleven districts around the country, C4P II will concentrate on just five districts. By reducing the geographic coverage of the project UNDP hopes to provide more focused attention on the beneficiary communities, thereby creating lasting inroads in the socio-economic conditions and attitudes of its members.

By building on the foundations made by C4P I UNDP TRP is taking a big stride forward in Sri Lanka's journey towards early recovery, development and progress.



## Project Details

Start Date : June 7 2010  
Proposed End Date : June 6 2013  
Donor : AusAID



## Sharing lessons on good governance

In June this year 90 participants, including 36 elected members of the Eastern Provincial Council, 21 Pradeshiya Sabha Chairman and other selected Government officials made their way to Kerala, India, for an exposure visit and training programme on local governance. The visit was organized by UNDP under the Local Governance Project (LoGoPro), with funding from the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) and the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR). The visits were conducted in three batches from the 7th to the 25th of June.

Since the initiation of the project in October 2009, UNDP LoGoPro has been working to enhance local service delivery and strengthen local democratic processes that enable citizens to hold their local government institutions accountable. Towards this end LoGoPro works on eight different pillars of activity dealing with various aspects of democratic governance. Within this framework UNDP works in partnership with the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government and the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs.

The good governance exposure visit to Kerala was designed to help participants better understand the benefits of devolution and to see it in practice. Through this visit, which is the first foreign exposure visit of its kind, UNDP hoped to facilitate a knowledge sharing experience, that would enable local government members to see and understand the functioning of other government mechanisms. The training programme was conducted by the Kerala Institute for Local Administration, an institute that is reputed for its work in developing the capacity of local government institutions in the region.



Following the training Eastern Provincial Council Chief Minister Sivaneshathurai Chandrakanthan said that “the programme was useful and a source of knowledge to our provincial councilors.”

# The Language of Life

Scattered around the dilapidated school hall of the Sampathnuwara Maha Vidyalaya, groups of children sat cross legged on the cement floor. With raised brows, and thoughtful expressions they seemed to be in deep discussion. Yet, few words were exchanged

among the group members who relied mostly on vivid gestures and expressions. Upon closer inspection the children appeared to be brainstorming about a theme for a group performance. "Lets make it about team work," said a young boy speaking in Tamil. No signaled the group leader, with a wave of his hand. "Team work is a better idea," he replied in Sinhalese. "But that's what he said, and you said no!" spoke up a teenage girl. "Really?" replied the leader as the group erupted into fits of laughter. Teamwork, they decided, was going to be the theme of their play.

Brought together in the name of peace, the 80 students from 4 different schools from Weli Oya and Mannar spent five days getting to know each other. The children were participants of the Twinning Schools Programme organized

by the UNDP. One of the most unfortunate effects of war in Sri Lanka is the rift created between various communities and regions of the country. Having been isolated by the conflict, many people in the north and east have never travelled out of their villages and have thus not had the opportunity to interact with fellow Sri Lankans from other parts of the country. Realizing the importance of building social peace and cohesion, UNDP launched the Twinning Schools Programme as part of its Communities for Peace Programme (C4P), funded primarily by the Government of Australia.

Nearly one year since its inception, the Twinning Schools Programme, under Phase I of C4P marked its conclusion, in July this year, as all 700 participants gathered one last time for a closing festival held in Kandy. Following the success of this project, the Twinning Schools Programme will be continued under Phase II of C4P which began in June 2010.

With the aim of promoting social cohesion, the programme brought together Sinhala and Tamil children from different cultures, creeds and geographic backgrounds. None of these differences however stood in the way of the many friendships that blossomed between the students. Though majority of them spoke only Sinhalese or Tamil, the children managed, in their own creative way, to share their thoughts and feelings.

Among the schools twinned under this programme were the Sampathnuwara Maha Vidyalaya and the Janakpura Maha Vidyalaya in the remote area of Weli Oya, in the north eastern part of the island. These schools were twinned with the Pariharikandal GTM and the Murunkan MV in Mannar. Both Janakpura and Sampathnuwara have predominantly Sinhala populations. Living in a severely war torn area which was constantly caught in the crossfire, many of the Weli Oya children had preconceived notions about Tamil people. "My father was killed in an L.T.T.E attack," says 16 year old Milakshika Madushani, adding, "I was a little scared about meeting so many Tamil people." A day into the programme, Milakshika seemed to have forgotten her fears. Holding the hand of her new friend, Deborah Rukshila, a Tamil student from Mannar, Milakshika like most of the other Weli Oya children joined happily in the various activities.

A similar friendship had blossomed between Ruchira Neelakanthi, a student of the Sampathnuwara MV and Bromy Jayarajah a student of the Murunkan MV. Having met for the first time when the same four schools were twinned in Mannar, the two girls had found they had much in common. Since then they have found ways to keep their friendship alive. "I call her on the phone whenever I can," says Bromy. Because of the language difficulties Bromy



seeks the assistance of a Sinhala speaking neighbor. "I ask her to come to my house and then I call Ruchira," says Bromy, explaining that her neighbor then translates her messages to Ruchira. In person however, the girls manage just fine. Though Bromy speaks very little Sinhalese and Ruchira speaks no Tamil at all, Ruchira says, "We can somehow understand each other."

They were not the only ones. "When we can't understand, we use body language," explains 15 year old Deborah. A keen participant of the programme, Deborah has attended both the Mannar and Weli Oya visits. "I made so many friends the first time we met. My best friends in Weli Oya are Ishara, Ruchira, Milakshika and Sumudu," she says adding "It was so nice to meet them again."

In a world where language has caused hatred and bloodshed, these children demonstrated how differences in language can bring people together instead of pulling them apart. Their exemplary ability to overcome language barriers was evident at the "creative hours", during which they wrote and acted out small skits. Working well as groups, the students put together meaningful and well thought out performances. While some groups used both languages to communicate their messages, others used no language at all. Using just sounds and gestures these children communicated deep and powerful messages of peace, unity and acceptance.

The Twinning Schools Programme gave these children

a unique opportunity to get to know and understand people from different backgrounds. In the relaxed and peaceful atmosphere the children learned to look past stereotypes and see people in a new light, appreciating, rather than resenting their differences. "The people here are so different from people back home in Mannar. Their customs are so different and so nice. I'm happy we got to see how they live," says Bromy smiling shyly.

Many of the children had never traveled outside their villages and had little or no contact with people from other communities.



"When we were leaving Weli Oya, we felt a little scared because we knew that Mannar was a place where many Tamil people lived," says Milakshika adding, "we were surprised to find that people living in Mannar had also suffered a lot during the war, just like us."

Brought together for five days of fun, the children spent their time playing, dancing, singing and enjoying the simple pleasures of childhood. Yet underneath all the merriment, a far greater purpose was being realized. The children were rethinking the ideas they had grown up with. They were beginning to understand that difference was not necessarily a bad thing. They were sharing their experiences with others who had faced similar suffering. But most important of all, they were making friends for life. With programmes being carried out in 33 schools across the country, the Twinning Schools Programme reached over 660 children.

The success of this programme can only be measured by the responses of the children themselves. What spoke volumes more than the words they uttered was the sincerity and joy in their smiling faces, as they ran around the playing field, enjoying for once, a childish game of run and catch, free from fear and prejudice. "I can't wait to see my friends again. If we became so close after just 5 days, I can't imagine how close we would have become if we stayed a whole month! We would never have been able to leave each other!" smiled Milakshika, as she ran to join her gang of friends.