

May - June 2011

Issue 13

On the Ground



Inside this issue:

Linking Communities
for Progress

Subinay Nandy begins
office as UNDP's new RR

RCI-II addresses
recovery needs in
Batticaloa

Spotlight: Learning
Committee

IYV+10: Visualising
Volunteerism

'On the Ground' is a bi-monthly
newsletter produced by:

Communications Unit
UNDP Sri Lanka
202-204 Bauddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka
Tel-94-11-2580691 (367)
www.undp.lk

Contributions:
(Words and photographs)

Leora Fernando | Sonia Josserand-Mercier |
Gaya Nagahawatte | Ananda Mallawatantri |
Muradh Mohideen | Madhushala Senaratne |
V Force - IYV+10

FROM THE FIELD



Linking communities for progress

There was chatter and laughter, buzz and excitement as students and teachers of diverse ethnicities from the Northern, North-Central and Eastern provinces came together for the inaugural Twinning School Programme of the Communities for Progress (C4P II) project, of UNDP's Transition Recovery Programme (TRP).

What they say:

"It enabled us to learn to face challenges and work as a team to get the best outcome" - Jayawarnan, a student from Jaffna

"I am happy that my child participated in this workshop as it will strengthen her ability to face challenges in the future. It also enabled us to get to know a lot of people from diverse backgrounds." - Sujatha, a parent



Held from May 12 to 16, 2011 at the scenic Ella Adventure Park, the programme saw participants experience different cultures, form new friendships, explore creativity and strengthen leadership skills and team spirit through a series of activities. Activities included healthy lifestyle practices, negotiation sessions, physical activities, games, role play and stage performances. Participants were encouraged to discuss their future goals as they prepared a 'Vision Tree' on the third day, where discussions were also initiated on exchange visits between the participating schools, as the next step in the programme.

Funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), C4P II is the second phase of the Communities for Peace (C4P) project. The project is specially aimed at promoting social cohesion and empowering vulnerable groups in nine conflict-affected DS Divisions including Cheddikulam, Dimbulagala, Kebetigollawa, Maha Oya, Samanthurai, Sandilipay, Vavuniya North, Vavuniya South and Welioya. Around 100 students from 21 schools from these divisions, along with 40 teachers and parents and staff of UNDP TRP participated in the programme.



NEWS & UPDATES

Subinay Nandy begins office as UNDP's new Resident Representative



Subinay Nandy assumed office as the UNDP Resident Representative in Sri Lanka on May 5. He will also serve as the United Nations Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator and as the Designated Official for Security. Mr. Nandy comes to Sri Lanka with almost 20 years of experience with the United Nations. Following his arrival in the country, Mr. Nandy presented his credentials to the Government of Sri Lanka on May 10, 2011 and held discussions with President Mahinda Rajapaksa and several other senior ministers and government officials.

Prior to his appointment in Sri Lanka, Mr. Nandy served as the UNDP Country Director in China, where he played a leading role in driving UNDP's contribution to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in China. As Country Director from 2007 to 2011, he was instrumental in developing a new strategic partnership between the Government of China and UNDP on global development issues and leading UNDP's support to China following humanitarian disasters, including in the aftermath of the earthquake in Sichuan in 2008. Mr. Nandy also led the formulation and implementation of several innovative joint programmes, some of which have been recognized as examples of best practice. Among them are programmes on youth, employment and migration (\$6m, 9 agencies) and culture-based development for ethnic minorities (\$6m, 8 agencies).

Previously, Mr. Nandy held the position of UNDP Deputy Resident Representative and Country Director a.i. in Vietnam. While developing and expanding UNDP's support to Vietnam, he played a key role in the development of the 'One UN' approach in Vietnam. In recognition of his contribution to the development programme in Vietnam, Mr. Nandy was awarded the President's Friendship Award. Prior to this, Mr. Nandy served as Chief of the Regional Programme and Policy Division of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in New York and as the Deputy Resident Representative in Turkmenistan. He was also the Assistant Resident Representative of UNDP Bangladesh, with which he began his career in the UN serving as National Programme Officer.

A national of Bangladesh, Mr. Nandy holds a PhD in Economics from the Moscow Agricultural Academy and is fluent in English, Bangla and Russian. He is married with one son. Mr. Nandy is the 18th Representative of the United Nations in Sri Lanka.

UNDP gifts new bridge to people of Wangamam and Madeenapuram

Smiles adorned their faces as villagers of Wangamam and Madeenapuram, in the Ampara District, gathered around the newly constructed overhead bridge running across the main irrigation channel in Wangamam. Implemented under the Livelihood Development Project funded by the Government of Japan (Japan LDP), under UNDP's Transition Recovery Programme (TRP), the bridge addresses a long-felt need of the villagers in the area.



The 10 feet wide and 33 feet long bridge, which directly benefits 137 families, facilitates greater connectivity between the two communities, while also enabling improved access to paddy fields, main roads, other neighboring villagers and service providers. The bridge was declared open by Ms. R. U. Abdul Jaleel, Divisional Secretary, Irakkamam DS Division and Ms. Razina Bilgrami, UNDP Deputy Country Director (Programme).

Villagers faced great difficulties in reaching town centers and service providers due to the lack of an overhead bridge, often having to travel over 8 km to reach other locations. "However, through this bridge, the people are now able to improve their livelihoods and lifestyle," explained Ms. R. U. Abdul Jaleel, Divisional Secretary, Irakkamam DS Division. Describing this as one of the greatest gifts the village has received, Mr. L Mohamed Haneefa, one of the villagers, stated that it is with pride and gratitude that he now watches the youngsters make their way to school, across the bridge, with ease. With the bridge now handed over to the Department of Irrigation (Akkaraipattu Division), Mr. Abdul Jabbar, Engineer, Department of Irrigation, noted that they would take all measures to safeguard this on behalf of the people.



RCI – II : Addressing recovery needs in Batticaloa

With newly resettled communities in Batticaloa District keen on taking the next step towards leading a normal life, 2009 – 2010 saw several UN agencies come together to help these communities realize their aspirations and ensure their long-term stability under the second phase of the Recovery Coordination Initiative (RCI II). Jointly implemented by UNDP, FAO and ILO, with financial contribution from UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP-BCPR), the second phase was developed to respond to the critical recovery needs of these communities by focusing on capacity development, market integration and networks.



Building on the results of RCI-I, implemented in 2008-2009 with support from the Government of Australia, RCI-II aimed to provide an integrated package of recovery assistance to these communities, thereby facilitating their transition from aid-dependent communities to those who are self-reliant.

Under the initiative, UNDP took the lead in implementing the construction of community based small scale livelihood infrastructure, strengthening of CBOs and environmental management activities. FAO provided livelihood related assistance and technical training to over 2,000 households, while ILO provided vocational training, micro-credit and enterprise development. Other UN agencies such as WFP and UNHCR were consulted in the project planning stage and participated in the national and district coordination structures. WFP provided assistance under for Food for Work (FFW) programme for beneficiaries engaged in providing unskilled labour for the construction of several infrastructure projects. Thus, while providing recovery assistance to resettled communities, RCI - II also created a platform for UN agencies to capitalize on their comparative advantages to produce tangible results on the ground.

RCI II: At a glance

Project location:
Kiran, Chenkalady
and Vavunatheevu
DS Divisions in
Batticaloa

Project duration :
July 2009 to
December 2010

Total amount spent :
USD 1,188,137

Key results:

- Livelihood related assistance provided to over 2,000 beneficiary families, targeting the agriculture, fisheries, livestock and small-business sectors. Seeds, fertilizer and farm tools were provided to cultivate over 1,400 acres of paddy, other field crops and vegetables and 9,000 chicks were distributed among vulnerable women headed households. Two community gardens were established to demonstrate sustainable agricultural practices and communities were provided support in restocking two irrigation tanks with 200,000 fingerlings of freshwater fish.
- Construction/rehabilitation of 61 livelihood and social infrastructure units benefitting approximately 19,000 individuals. This was designed to create enabling conditions for communities to engage in income-generating activities, and specifically focused on increasing their opportunities to improve production and access markets.
- Vocational training, micro-credit and micro-enterprise development assistance provided to over 170 beneficiaries, 24 enterprise groups and 19 CBOs. This was aimed at developing the capacities of communities to move towards conducting profitable income-generating activities, by improving their entrepreneurship and linking them to wider markets.
- Enhanced social cohesion and gender empowerment across and within communities in crisis affected areas. Under this component, the Rural Development Society of Vahanery with the support of people in Vahanery and other villages successfully staged a cultural event following four months of joint interactions at trainings and rehearsals.



Knowing what to do to save lives and property: Development of the National Emergency Operations Plan (NEOP)

At a time of a disaster, national, provincial and district level agencies including the police, armed forces and non Governmental organizations play a key role to ensure the safety of lives and property. International assistance is sought depending on the magnitude of the disaster and in such situations additional agencies such as Customs, Immigration and Ports get involved. The complex nature of disaster response, involvement of large stakeholder agencies, potential for miscommunication and the need for timely actions, require a set of clear pre-agreed procedures to be used during an emergency by stakeholder agencies.



These agreed procedures or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) consist of detailed step-by-step guidelines on the actions to be taken by an agency. Having a set of comprehensively developed SOPs and a clear understanding by the user agencies is important for effective disaster response. The collection of all SOPs will form the National Emergency Operations Plan (NEOP). The NEOP establishes the specific roles and responsibilities of different agencies involved in disaster response under different hazards at national, provincial, district and local levels, thereby ensuring a more coordinated and effective emergency response.

Having supported the establishment of Disaster Management Systems and partnerships to support response efforts in Sri Lanka, during the last six years, the UNDP Disaster Management Programme has extended its support to establish the National Emergency Operations Plan (NEOP) to further strengthen the response capacity in Sri Lanka.

During the coming year, UNDP will work with multiple stakeholders to develop agency level SOPs for different hazards at national and sub-national levels and compile all SOPs into the NEOP using an internet based database. This internet based NEOP database will serve as a one-stop-shop to learn about SOPs of agencies and for agencies to update their SOPs.

The initial stakeholder workshop to introduce the NEOP development process was held on the 28th of June 2011. Chief Guest of the event, Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Disaster Management, explained that "In the recent National Council for Disaster Management, members of the Government as well as the members of the Opposition agreed unanimously that Disaster Risk Reduction has to be a national priority". Key officials from more than 30 stakeholder agencies participated in this initial workshop, where they gave their inputs for the draft 'Framework' and discussed the way forward to formulate the proposed NEOP.

POSTCARD

Senake Ratnayake on mission to India

Senake Ratnayake, Finance Analyst of UNDP Sri Lanka, undertook a detailed assignment to the UNDP Country Office in India, from May 23 to 27, upon a request made by the UNDP HQ Audit Mission to India to review their cost recovery system through independent analysis. The assignment provided an opportunity for Senake to engage in new learning and career development, while he was also able to share his experiences with colleagues in India.

Expressing his thoughts on the visit, Senake stated, "the purpose of this review was to strength the extra budgetary income of UNDP India by reviewing the existing ISS system in place and offer recommendations for improvement. My work involved analyzing cost of services provided for the implementation of programmes according to their portfolios. In carrying out my tasks, I had to conduct several interviews with staff of the Operations team and some colleagues of the Programme team there."

He further added, "the staff there was very helpful. I am extremely thankful to all the staff of UNDP India for their support given to me at every step. They demonstrated a high level of knowledge and while sharing my experiences with them, I was able to enhance my knowledge as well. In fact, there is much that we can gain from them, for example, their Country Office practices on simplifying workload is something to think about." Noting that the management commended his report, which was completed during a very short time frame, Senake expressed that this was indeed a valuable experience.



SPOTLIGHT

PAVING THE WAY FOR NEW LEARNING...

Established in 2009, the Learning Committee works to improve the capacity of UNDP colleagues by honing their skills and knowledge in diverse fields. With a series of activities planned throughout the year, there's a lot in store for all, says Dilshana Kareema Sathar, Learning Manager, who took us through the objectives, benefits and future plans of the Learning Committee.

What were the objectives of establishing a Learning Committee?

The Learning Committee aims to build capacity of colleagues in the Country Office and Field Office through a stringent training plan for year 2011/12. We also strive to ensure that we meet the corporate mandatory requirements in the Learning Management System (LMS) and the most important training requirements on time.

What is the role of the Learning Committee?

There are four main roles. Firstly, we conduct an annual training needs analysis and develop an action plan. Thereafter, further discussions are held with the management and the Learning Committee to address these needs.

Secondly, the Learning Committee is responsible for the formulation of an annual training budget and providing support to the management for rational use of their resources.

Thirdly, the Committee evaluates and assesses cost implications of the trainer proposals and identifies suitable partners to facilitate the finalized training activities for the upcoming year.

Finally, we act as a staff counseling entity to advise staff members on available learning options in general and also through LMS, for career development.

Who constitutes the Learning Committee?

The Learning Committee members work closely with the Country Director Douglas Keh. Members include Fiona Bayat and Surekha Perera, who are co-chairs of the committee, Dharshini Kathiragamatamby, Judith Vannitambi, Rukshani Gunasekara, Duminda Wijethilake, Madhawa Mirihagalla and Shanek Fernando, while I serve as the Learning Manager. The members are appointed on a rotational basis,



with the membership rolling every six months.

What are some of the programmes conducted by the Learning Committee?

Programmes are conducted in four broad areas: 1) systems, policies and procedures; 2) professional skills development; 3) language, information technology and related tools and 4) miscellaneous.

The induction programme for new colleagues was successfully held on April 29. The first Let's Learn More (LLM) session for 2011 took place on May 27, which was attended by a large number of Programme and Operations colleagues. The session focused on four themes, viz., Excel Skills, IPSAS, Sexual Exploitation and Best Practices of the Management Support Unit. Two Brown Bag sessions were also conducted during the year, one on 'climate Change and its impact on agriculture with particular focus on Sri Lanka' by Dr. B. V. R. Punyawardena and the other on 'Sri Lanka Parliament' by Prof. Rajiva Wijesinghe.

What has been the response so far?

So far we've received very positive feedback. Colleagues are becoming more aware of learning aspects and are showing more interest. Before 2009, there were only a very few



training programmes. But, with the establishment of the Learning Committee much has changed. There is more understanding amongst each other now, and colleagues work more cohesively to develop closer rapport with each other.

Who are the resource persons?

We have had the opportunity to use the 'in-house' expertise, with many colleagues having different skills. There were also external

organizations and individuals through whom certain workshop sessions were organized, for a different flavour.

What are the future programmes?

There'll be a training programme, organized by an external facilitator, on 'Emotional Intelligence', which is the 'buzz' topic in today's working environment. In addition, programmes on ATLAS training, time management and presentation skills will also be held.

There is also an ongoing programme on Writing Skills, which is being conducted by Doug for the second consecutive year.

Any other comments?

These programmes provide an opportunity for colleagues not just to learn and develop their skills, but also to interact with each other. So, there is much to gain from these programmes and we always strive to improve and cater to the needs of our colleagues.



Learning Committee events:
(July - August 2011)

- Workshop on Emotional Intelligence
- Brown Bag Session
- Atlas Training

**Dates will be notified closer to the event*

PHOTO STORY

Lighting the lives of the people in Udaweriya

The village of Weerakoongama located in Badulla District is a hilly area situated 40 km away from Bandarawela town. The 100 families living in the Udaweriya Estates in Weerakoongama especially in the Yahalatenna, West Haputale and Ginihiriya Divisions do not have access to electricity through the National Power Grid due to the geographical remoteness of the area.

ART Sri Lanka (ASL) together with the Uva Province Ministry of Power and Estate Infrastructure proposed and constructed a mini-hydro power system using the natural water stream of the West Haputale Division of the Udaweriya Estate. This enabled the 100 families living in the proximity of 1.5 km of the power station to be provided with electricity.



ASL facilitated the project by providing machineries and materials required for the construction, while the Provincial Ministry provided technical guidance. The community in the village provided their skilled labour and continues to maintain the system through the Cooperative Society with the technical assistance of the Ministry of Power and Estate Infrastructure in the Uva Province.



EVENTS

IYV+10

Visualising Volunteerism

V Workshop

With lessons learnt, bonds formed and action plans started last March during the V Forum, time warranted for another round of discussions, mingling and sharing to take place. A follow-up event, the V Workshop, was therefore organised by the IYV+10 National Steering Committee on June 14. The V Workshop had the additional objective of preparing the ground for the establishment of the upcoming IYV+10 Provincial Sub-Committees.

Mr. Kirby de Lanerolle, Adviser to the Minister of Social Services, delivered a captivating and inspiring welcome speech followed by a brief introduction to the workshop. The audience was then taken through the major landmarks in the journey of IYV+10 in Sri Lanka with a presentation by Mr. Fadhil Bakeer Markar, the IYV+10 National Coordinator, and a slideshow capturing the spirit of the March V Forum.

Following were the group sessions, each tackling a different theme: education, health, poverty and environment, to map out related volunteer activities in the 9 provinces and 24 districts. The underlying idea was to identify stakeholders from different parts of the country, and the potential partnerships that could be built Islandwide. The result was a colourful visual mapping of volunteer-involving activities providing an easy-to-grasp overview of organizations and activities' geographical distribution based on participants' inputs.

Group sessions ended on a positive note with participants having learnt a lot about each other's work, and the emergence of partnerships particularly in the education and environment groups.

Preparatory meeting for the launch of provincial sub-committees

Many of the outcomes achieved during the V Workshop were used for yet another significant event, the preparatory meeting for the launch of the IYV+10 provincial sub-committees, which was held on June 23, 2011. In his address during this event, Hon. Felix Perera, Minister of Social Services reiterated his commitment to volunteerism and welcomed the initiative to establish provincial structures.

Around 60 participants from across the country took part in the group discussions, which were held as the first step towards establishing the IYV+10 provincial sub-committees. Nine groups were formed, with one for each province, consisting of representatives of the Government, civil society and youth groups to engage in the initial discussions that would lead to the formation of the sub-committees.

"This will serve as a platform through which various volunteers who are already working on their respective projects, will be more effectively networked, and will come together to ensure that provincial volunteer activities are better coordinated," said Ms. Razina Bilgrami, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in her opening address.

All nine provincial sub-committees are expected to hold their first meetings in July. The provincial sub-committees will now need the support of the National Steering Committee to take this forward and firmly put Sri Lanka on the global IYV+10 and volunteerism maps.

