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Issue 14

On the Ground



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FROM THE FIELD

Engaging with the private sector for the further development of communities

With displaced communities in the North and East of Sri Lanka returning to normalcy and many looking to regain their lost livelihoods, paving the way for a more sustainable and self-sufficient future is essential for their future development. The Foreign Direct Investment into Sri Lanka is also targeted to reach USD 1 billion by the end of 2011. The private sector has come to play an increasingly significant role in economic growth and employment creation in post-war Sri Lanka and engaging with the private sector will be crucial to ensure the further development of these communities.

Past initiatives

Earlier this year, UNDP took steps to link crab fishermen in Manthai West, Mannar with Taprobane Sea Foods Pvt Ltd, the local partner organization of Chicken of the Sea Frozen Foods Company, which was keen on purchasing crab of these fishermen, thereby enhancing their income earning opportunities. A training programme was conducted by Taprobane Sea Foods for women on crab meat picking, while a mini crab processing plant was also established to further support this partnership. The plant currently provides employment to around 50 women in the village.



In addition, UNDP facilitated linkages with the Academy of Design (AOD) to provide technical know-how and market access for 31 women engaged in palmyrah handicraft making in Mannar. Through this support the women have been able to enter into new production areas and market high-value palmyrah-based products ranging from table mats, bread baskets and trays to laundry bins to waste bins. The intervention also saw the increase of the average income of these women. While women earned between Rs. 3,000 and Rs. 5,000 per month prior to the engagement with AOD, with improved knowledge of market trends and new techniques, the women were able to earn up to Rs. 8,000 per month. This initiative also raised awareness of the value and demand for local products and created a renewed interest in palmyrah, found in abundance in the area.

To minimize risks during landslides, the UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme provided assistance to the National Building Research Institute (NBRO) to map out landslide vulnerable areas in the Central Province and develop a community led early warning system for rainfall monitoring and timely evacuations. This initiative was also supported by Dialog Axiata PLC. The company facilitated communication support between the rain gauges installed in vulnerable communities and Colombo based NBRO modeling team through Dialog mobile networks.

Emerging priorities

The tourism sector is one of the main income generating industries in Sri Lanka. As such, UNDP is in the process of identifying livelihood opportunities that can be promoted for marginalized, local communities in the tourism sector. With tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka expected to reach 2.5 million by 2016, increasing the number of accommodation and providing quality services will be crucial, noted Mr. Rummy Jauffer, Managing Director, Tourism Promotion Board during a recently held Early Recovery Group meeting at UNDP that brought together representatives from the private sector, donors and UN agencies involved in early recovery.

Mr. Jauffer further explained that the emerging hotels will provide consistent and reliable flow of employment for skilled and unskilled workers in the local construction industry. The hotels will also get the support of local suppliers for sourcing fresh produce and other products for hotel use where possible. But to sustain the quality of services, awareness raising and on-going training and development is needed.



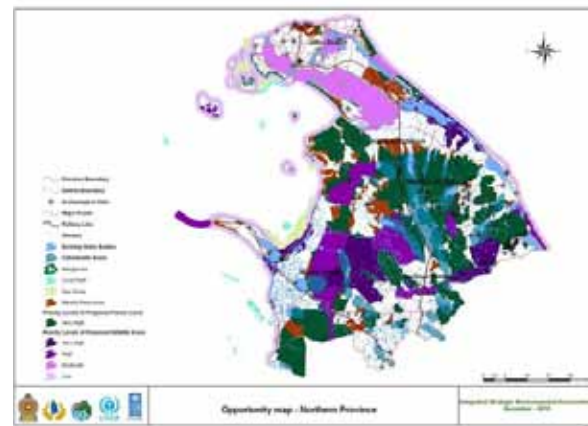
During the meeting, Mr. Trevor Reckerman, CEO of Jetwing Hotels and Mr. Indrajith Fernando, Manager – Milk Procurement, Milco also outlined their plans for expansion in the North and East, and highlighted the opportunities for partnership with local communities including providing employment for communities during the construction, sourcing fresh produce and other products from local suppliers and improving capacity of communities by rebuilding infrastructure.

The Early Recovery Group meeting was aimed at exploring potential areas for partnerships as UNDP moves in the direction of facilitating linkages between communities and private sector companies to ensure sustainable development of conflict affected communities.

NEWS & UPDATES

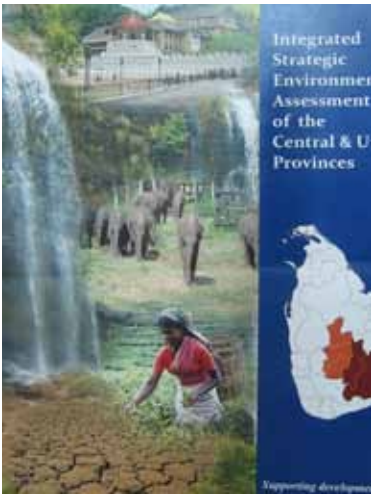
Promoting sustainable use of natural resources in the Uva and Central provinces

Sri Lanka's Uva and Central provinces are home to a wealth of natural resources. They boast of rich ecosystems consisting of diverse flora and fauna as well as forests, rivers and mountain ranges. These provinces are also frequently impacted by disasters such as droughts, floods, forest fires, landslides and high winds, seriously affecting households and livelihoods and hindering the development of these areas. This disaster potential could further increase if land use practices are not sustainable and climate change impacts are not considered during development activities.



In this context, UNDP partnered with the Central Environment Authority (CEA), the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) and other stakeholder agencies to carry out an Integrated Strategic Environment Assessment (ISEA) in these two provinces. Building on the experiences of the ISEA-North, this Assessment aims to provide an improved understanding of the natural resource base, economic opportunities, disaster potential and the vulnerabilities of the population in these two provinces, thereby promoting Ecosystem based Disaster Risk Reduction.

The Assessment will also ensure healthy economic growth opportunities while taking into consideration the safety of the people and wise use of natural resources in the face of rapid development taking place in these areas.



The ISEA for the Central and Uva Provinces will help development partners, planners, project implementers, investors, resource managers and users gain a better understanding into critical issues affecting these areas such as soil, water and land management in sustainable development, protection of rare ecosystems, species and biodiversity amidst development, strengthen institutional frameworks to promote environmental sustainability and establish links for safe extraction of natural resources.

The assessment will also bring together different stakeholder agencies involvement in development and conservation, investors, project implementers, resource managers and users. A series of 'Opportunity Maps' detailing natural and cultural resources of the two provinces and information on current and proposed development plans will be produced following the assessment.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Showcasing the progress of the Local Governance Project

The progress achieved under the Local Governance Project (LoGoPro) of UNDP over the past few years will be showcased on September 22, 2011* at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute. The project has supported the Government's public administration reform activities and contributed towards the enhancement of service delivery through improvement of systems and processes. Key contributions include LoGoPro's assistance to the Ministry of Public Administration in its efforts to implement the Citizens' Charter, particularly in the Northern and Eastern provinces, streamlining of services and introducing automated processes to deliver regulatory functions at the District and Divisional level such as facilitating the electronic transfer and storing of personal data and development of a road map for rural development based on the Millennium Development Goals.

**Dates are subject to change. Please contact the Communications Unit for more information.*

Recognizing volunteerism

Marking the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteering (IYV+10), the V-Awards will recognize and honour individuals who make extraordinary contributions to society and will identify the role models and champions who can inspire a nation to volunteer for social causes. Initiated by the IYV+10 National Steering Committee in collaboration with News 1st, nominations are now open for the V Awards. For more information please visit www.vawards.lk and/or visit the Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/V-Awards/246775932021000>



PROFILE

Refinceyaa Patterson: Serving with vigour

A warm 'hello' beckoned us indoors as we reached the UNDP Field Office in Trincomalee. We had never met each other, but she seemed to know every one of us quite well. "Welcome to Trincomalee," she greeted us, cheerfully. This was Refinceyaa Patterson, the Head of the UNDP Field Office in Trincomalee.

Growing up in Jaffna, Refinceyaa attended Vermbeddy Girls' High School, where, encouraged by her parents, she went on to study biology with the aim of becoming a doctor. However, she later changed course, opting to study Agriculture in the University of Sabaragamuwa and subsequently pursuing a Masters Degree in Sociology. "All along, I wanted to do be in a dynamic environment, explore new avenues" she says. It was this zeal that led her to venture into the development and humanitarian fields.



Refinceyaa began her career at FORUT, as a translator. She later joined Oxfam in 2003. It was during this time that she moved to Trincomalee. After completing her assignment at Oxfam, she worked as the District Programme Officer for Save the Children. "Save the Children was a special place. That was where I met my future husband," she recalls with laughter. They married in 2004 and last year, she gave birth to a little girl. After leaving Save the Children, Refinceyaa served in USAID as a Grants Specialist and later as a Programme Development Officer. She joined UNDP as the Head of the Trincomalee Field Office in April 2009.

"This was an interesting job," says Refinceyaa of her first reactions to her new position. She was well aware of its challenges, but was determined give it her all. She is particularly thankful to her colleagues, a team she says she couldn't have done without. "The last two years have been interesting. I feel happy in UNDP. The Trinco team helped me to learn how the UNDP works. Without their cooperation, I wouldn't be at this level," she adds.

What she appreciates the most are the changes they bring about in the communities through their work. "Our projects have brought communities together. We have provided permanent shelter through housing projects. We have provided communities new livelihood opportunities. We've established early recovery coordination mechanism in Trincomalee. We work together with other agencies, especially in situations such as responding to floods. We have a very strong presence in the district. Even the Country Team knows what we are capable of. They have the assurance that the Trinco team can lead the way," she explains.

After work, she says, she would go home to play with her daughter, Kaitlin and spend time with her husband, who is currently working as the Regional Coordinator at Save the Children. "He's also one reason for me to be in this position in the humanitarian field. He helps me a lot, he encourages me and it is he who gives me the confidence. Refinceyaa is also grateful to her parents, who she says inspired her. She adores gardening, she says, adding that she would often spend her free time tending to her garden at home. She also enjoys reading. Historical books and fiction keep her busy.

Not everything came easy for her, she says. "When I was in University, I didn't know Sinhala. Sometimes when I had to do group work, I was the only one who spoke Tamil. It was hard, but I think I have non-communication skills," she says with a smile. "Somehow I managed to learn the language and jointly study," she adds. She continues to show this same determination as she addresses the challenges she faces in her work.

As for the future, Refinceyaa aims to grow further in this field. "I am determined to develop myself. I want to gain more experiences and new knowledge," she says. There's one more thing she's got to add, "Always stay positive. You can go higher if you have a more positive approach to life. There are challenges, but think that there's nothing impossible for human beings."