

On the Ground

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*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

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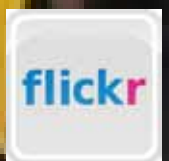
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Overcoming disparities through collective initiatives

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The visit of Mr. Ajay Chhibber, the UN Assistant Secretary General and Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific to Sri Lanka

Mr. Ajay Chhibber, the UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and Chair, UN Regional Director's Team, Asia and the Pacific visited Sri Lanka from 4 to 6 October.

During the visit, Mr. Chhibber met and exchanged views with high-level Government officials, including with Hon. Basil Rajapaksa, Minister of Economic Development, Hon. G. J. L. Neomal Perera, Acting Minister of External Affairs, Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Disaster Management and Hon. Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Minister of National Languages and Social Integration. The development priorities of Sri Lanka as well as the UN's and UNDP's role in the country's changing context we outlined during these discussions. Mr. Chhibber also met with Dr. P. B. Jayasundera, Secretary to the Treasury, Ministry of Finance and Planning and witnessed the formal signing of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2013-2017.

A highlight of the visit was the launch of the Sri Lanka Human Development Report 2012, on 5 October 2012, titled, 'Bridging Regional Disparities for Human Development'. With UNDP in Sri Lanka gradually shifting focus to look at issues of regional disparities and socio-economic inequalities across the country and promoting multi-stakeholder approaches to policy advocacy and reform, this Report comes at a significant juncture, explained Mr. Chhibber.



Meeting with Hon. Minister Basil Rajapaksa

"Sri Lanka has led the way in performance in human development indicators, and my hope is that it can once again show the region the way forward on the issue of how to address growth and inequality, along with addressing the challenges of reconciliation for durable peace," said Mr. Chhibber.

During his visit, Mr. Chhibber also engaged in a round table discussion with eminent economists and representatives from think tanks on policy support options within Sri Lanka's development context, and with a cross-section of women leaders from the political, civil society, academic and corporate sectors where issues pertaining to women in Sri Lanka were discussed.

On the final day of his visit, Mr. Chhibber undertook a visit to Jaffna, where he held discussions with the Regional Human Rights Commission and civil society representatives, followed by a meeting with the Government Agent of Jaffna and a visit to a UNDP livelihood development project. He was briefed about the recovery and development priorities in the District, about UNDP's work in the areas of local governance, mine action, access to justice, socio-economic recovery and disaster risk management, and also heard about challenges that still remain in the domain of reconciliation and bringing peace dividends to the people. Allocation of land and job creation were highlighted as key issues that needed greater attention.

For more information on the visit, watch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEXsPdL-5M&feature=youtu.be>



During the visit to the livelihood development project site in Jaffna

UNDP launches the Sri Lanka Human Development Report 2012

UNDP launched the Sri Lanka Human Development Report 2012 on October 5, 2012, in the presence of Hon. Sarath Amunugama, Senior Minister for Monetary Co-operation and Mr. Ajay Chhibber, the visiting UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and Chair, UN Regional Director's Team, Asia and the Pacific.

Titled, 'Bridging Regional Disparities for Human Development', this is the second National Human Development Report (NHDR) for Sri Lanka, with the first Report having been produced more than a decade ago in 1998. The 2012 NHDR examines the social and economic disparities across Sri Lanka's geographic regions. It assesses the health, education, employment and governance sectors, and puts forth a set of policy recommendations to help overcome gaps, enabling Sri Lanka's people to contribute to and participate in its overall socio-economic progress.

Noting that the Report will be a useful input for the National Budget for 2013 that the Government is currently formulating, Hon. Minister Amunugama stated, "The nature of poverty reduction is undergoing rapid changes. We need to seize the opportunity in a bold way, and create opportunities so that a new class of people will take charge, and be able to transform the Sri Lankan economy".

Delivering the keynote address, Mr. Ajay Chhibber expressed his views that, "If Sri Lanka is to achieve its full potential moving forward, it is necessary to look at the dynamics of growth and development

across the country and across different segments of the population. Bridging regional disparities for



Mr. Subinay Nandy, Mr. Ajay Chhibber, Hon. Minister Sarath Amunugama, Mr. W. D. Lakshman, Chairman, IPS and Ms. Nisha Arunathilaka, lead author of the Report during the launch

human development and addressing inequities at this point in Sri Lanka's history, is extremely timely."

Commenting on the significance of the Report, Mr. Subinay Nandy, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, stated, "I believe this NHDR will serve as the foundation for joint Government and development partner engagement, bolstering the collaboration so essential to addressing regional disparities and targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups".

The research and analysis of the Report was conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka. Key findings of the Report were presented by Dr. Nisha Arunathilaka, the lead author of the Report. Four eminent speakers, Prof. Kshanika Hirimburegama, Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo, Dr. Palitha Mahipala, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health, Dr. Anura Ekanayake, Immediate Past Chairman, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and Prof. Savithri Goonesekere, Former Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo reviewed the education, health, employment and governance aspects, respectively.



The full Report is available at: <http://www.undp.lk/Undp%20Documents/Sri%20Lanka%20Human%20Development%20Report%202012.pdf>

An interview with Mr. Fredrick Abeyratne

On October 31, 2012, Fredrick Abeyratne, fondly referred to as Fred, Team Leader of UNDP's Poverty Cluster, retired after 21 years of service with UNDP.

One of the long-standing staff members of UNDP Sri Lanka, he joined the organization in January 1992 as a National Programme Officer, and thereafter went on to act in various capacities. He served as the team leader of several teams, including in Poverty, Governance, as well as the North East Rehabilitation Programme. One time, the Learning Manager and the United Nations Information Officer, Fred boasts of vast experiences and knowledge. In all his work, Fred showed commitment, passion and strength.

Fred took time to share his experiences with us on UNDP's work over the years, some of his fondest memories, his love for research and his future plans. In addition, he also left some words of advice for colleagues.



During the visit of James Gustave Speth, the Administrator of UNDP, to Sri Lanka in 1993



A visit to a project site

Tell us about your experiences with UNDP?

Well, it's a fairly long journey; it's almost two-thirds of my career. Over the years, I had the opportunity to act in various capacities which helped me acquire a lot of knowledge. I was a team leader of several teams, including Poverty, Governance, as well as the North East Rehabilitation Programme. I worked in the Environmental programme as well. On top of that I was the focal point for various areas, like HIV Aids, ICT, aid coordination and private sector development. I was also the Learning Manager and at one time, during UN 50 celebrations, I was the United Nations Information Officer. All this gave me a lot of experience and helped me gain a lot of knowledge...



At the launch of the Sri Lanka Human Development Report 2012

What is the best thing about working here/any unforgettable experiences?

One of my experiences is to say that UNDP has been very much at the forefront in supporting the Government's needs over time. UNDP was a trusted partner of the Government at all times. Whenever there was something changing at the top level, the Government used to come to UNDP requesting assistance. I could recall a few, for example, when the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper was to be produced, we were the first call. We were able to give top quality consultants and scientists at that time to support in this setting. When the Government wanted to introduce Results Based Management into our system, they requested our help. Also, UNDP did the feasibility study for the Mahaweli Development Programme. So, I'm trying to suggest that with larger changes, the Government was always happy to come to us, and we were willing to support and I feel very proud to have worked in an organization such as UNDP and I strongly think we have made difference...

Watch the full interview here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzZhrz__vI&feature=youtu.be

Discussion with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus on Women, Peace and Security

On the morning of Friday 21 September, 8 Members of Parliament from the Women's Parliamentary Caucus and several of their colleagues from Parliament joined UNDP and several civil society partners for a half day session to explore issues and ideas related to women, peace and security. The event was supported by UNDP's regional N-Peace network.

Taking UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as the starting point, the event looked at the resolution's relevance to Sri Lanka and in particular how the Parliamentarians can promote the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in post-conflict peacebuilding and governance.

Highlights of the morning included an illustration by Professor Savitri Goonesekere of the many provisions included in the Sri Lanka Constitution, national laws and policies that address issues related to women, peace and security. Linked to current policy discussions, the MPs especially appreciated the Professor's identification of commitments in the LLRC Action Plan and National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights that address issues linked to equality of women and protection of women from violence.



Meanwhile, Deshabandu Jezima Ismail, Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission and Civil Society representative encouraged the Caucus to establish a structured mechanism for regular dialogue on these and similar issues, and then went on to speak about the importance of women's economic empowerment as a key to recovery and peacebuilding. In terms of next steps, the MPs expressed willingness to work collectively through the Caucus to promote implementation of national commitments linked to women, peace and security. They also emphasized the importance of finding ways to better engage and share knowledge with male policy makers, while also taking the messages of women's participation and empowerment to the village level.

UNDP supported N-Peace Awards recognizes contributions of women to society

The UNDP supported N-Peace Awards for 2012, held on October 9, 2012 in Manila, recognized women leaders from across Asia and the Pacific for their exemplary work in the field of peace building. The awards were presented by the President of Philippines, H. E. Benigno S. Aquino. Sri Lankan, Mrs. Rupika Damayanthi De Silva, who currently serves as the Chairperson of Saviya Development Foundation and Saviya Women's Organization, was honoured for her community services, inter-society programmes and community projects implemented towards women's empowerment.

Receiving the award, Rupika explained that, since her childhood, her ambition was to serve the marginalized and the vulnerable sections of the community. She pursued her social development work through the strategies of Saviya Development Foundation, the objective of which is to build a society of moral values and a self-sustainable way of living. Further expressing her views, she said. "I consider this achievement as a great honor and recognition of the community service activities for social and economic development. This is a big motivation for all of us to work harder towards the welfare of the poor and deserving". A short documentary film based on the 20 years of community service of Rupika was also screened at the awards ceremony in Manila.

Residential student camp on institutionalizing the Twinning School Programme and peer mediation groups

A two-day student camp was held in Ampara from September 22-23 2012, in an effort to institutionalize the concepts of the Twinning School Programme and the Peer Mediation Groups. The camp was organised within the Communities for Progress Project (C4P II), supported by the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID) and also saw the involvement of Education Department officials and school authorities. The event was organized by UNDP together with the Zonal Directors of Education in the Sammanthurai and Mahaoya Divisional Secretariat Divisions. The sessions focused on developing leadership qualities, team-work strategies and positive thinking as well as the value of diversity and peer mediation, ethics and social development.



Celebrating International Peace Day and International Children's Day, the camp became a site of interaction and integration for the participants who had come from different DS divisions, mediums, ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds. 15 schools in total were represented by 6 students (with equal gender representation), a teacher and a parent from each school. The event ended with each school group presenting their plan of activities to use the skills and ideas gained from the Student Camp.

Introducing SLSI to Jaffna Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Yarlpananam



Local economic development is an integral part of post-war recovery, which includes securing Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) certification. Despite major

The meeting was chaired by the Vice President of the Chamber and was followed by an informative presentation by SLSI introducing the institute, prerequisites to obtaining the SLSI certification, advantages of the certification and the general process of obtaining certification.

Accordingly, the President of the Chamber made use of the occasion to make a request to the SLSI to open a branch in the North to meet the demand for such certification. In addition, sharing stories of success about its efforts to strengthen local industries, UNDP highlighted the Rebuilding Agricultural Livelihoods in Sri Lanka Project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA-RALP) which supports local producer organizations to become active entrepreneurs in the local market.

setbacks during the war, local producer groups involved in the production of palm, fruit, agriculture, fisheries and livestock-based products have been able to revive their industries.

On October 04, 2012 members of the SLSI and the Jaffna Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Yarlpananam came together to engage with 19 participants who are entrepreneurs and those looking to start businesses.

Collective initiative by four children's clubs

Mulli, Kakaitivu, Sillalai East and Shanthai are adjoining villages in Sandilipai DS Division in Jaffna, which are part of the C4P II Project. In UNDP's efforts to overcome social, economical and cultural disparities, collective initiatives conducted through CBO Fora play a key role. One such collective initiative was a field excursion held in collaboration with four children's clubs of the focal villages.

Bearing the theme "We are united", the field excursion comprised 61 children of the age group 14 and 16 years. 19 youth volunteers (representing each village) came forward to assist and lead the children motivated by the thought: "we will generate and we will become".

Forming 4 groups under the joint leadership of a girl and boy in each, the children were able to interact and make new friends. Being informed of the ground rules and code of discipline by the volunteers, the troop first visited the Jaffna Museum and then the Subramaniyam Park where they held an essay competition under the theme, "we will be uplifted by unity", a singing competition under the theme "eliminating differences" and an art competition under the theme: "village vision - our village in 2020".



The group visited the Casurina beach where both the children and the volunteers participated in team building exercises. The enthusiasm shared by the children was certain proof of their willingness to partake in events that promote social transformation. Ending on a positive note the field trip culminated with the suggestion to organize a community sports event in the near future.



New Community Forestry Programme to support 90,000 farmers in Sri Lanka's dry zone



From left: Mr. N. K. G. K. Nammewatta, Ms. Razina Bilgrami, Hon. Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, Mr. Edward Archibald, and Mr. K. P. Ariyadasa

Since ancient times, communities in Sri Lanka have lived in harmony with the forest environment. In fact, communities themselves played an integral role in managing the forest areas sustainably. Yet, during the past hundred years Sri Lanka has lost half of its forest cover. Deforestation and forest degradation lead to lack of water for farming and drinking, more time needed to collect firewood and increase the risks of drought and fire, and ultimately all these lead to aggravating poverty among the rural households. Forests in the dry and intermediate climatic zone have been particularly vulnerable to these pressures. Therefore, striking a balance between preserving the resources, while ensuring development, is crucial.

In this light, the 'Sri Lanka Community Forestry Programme' aims to increase forest cover and support small farmers living in Sri Lanka's dry zone to manage forest resources sustainably. Implemented by the Forest Department, with technical assistance from UNDP and financial assistance from the Government of Australia's Aid Programme, the programme was ceremoniously launched on October 11, 2012..

During the launch of the Community Forestry Programme, the Hon. Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, Minister of Environment, mentioned that this programme will support Government efforts

towards achieving its target of doubling forest cover over the next 10 years. Elaborating further on the significance of the Programme, he also emphasized the importance of increasing knowledge and involving communities in protecting forests. "We all know community participation is part and parcel of sustainable forest management. You cannot conserve the forests without the help of the peripheral community," he stated. He also noted that the Community Forestry model is gaining popularity and by implementing the new programme, the country can draw on the experiences gained through previous such activities.

The Community Forestry Programme aims to build on the pilot activities implemented through the Sri Lanka Australia Natural Resources Management Project (SLANRMP) by the Forestry Department, with support from Australia, during the period 2003 to 2008. The SLANRMP saw the community forestry model being tested in 55 areas across Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Matale, Moneragala and Puttalam districts. This resulted in regeneration of 11,000 hectares of forest and an increase in the monthly income of beneficiaries by almost 100 per cent. The Forestry Department has expanded the community forestry model into another 24 communities following the end of the project.

"The new Community Forestry Programme will tackle both poverty and deforestation. It also aims to regenerate an additional 23,000 hectares of forests through planting of trees and better protection, and will benefit 90,000 rural people with new alternative sources of income," explained said Mr. Edward Archibald, Counsellor, Australian High Commission in Sri Lanka. The program will expand the community forestry model to 167 new communities across 15 districts, including the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

The program will support microfinance and micro-enterprises such as bee keeping, rice and vegetable cultivation, fruit gardens, food

processing, handicrafts and livestock development with the aim of reducing dependency on forest resources.

While highlighting the link between poverty and environment, Ms. Razina Bilgrami, UNDP acting Resident Representative said "this Program will improve the livelihood opportunities of forest communities in the dry and intermediate zones and will in turn, help reduce the poverty levels of these communities and also their dependency on forests. These results will have a positive

impact on the socio-economic development of the country and especially on reducing regional disparities". The Forest Department will work with village institutions and households to promote alternative sources of income, improved farming systems and develop joint management plans for forest reserves and will be supported with management assistance from UNDP.

During the occasion, the new Community Forestry website (www.communityforestry.lk) was also launched in the presence of the Hon. Minister.

Finalizing the Sri Lanka National Hazard profiles

Although Sri Lanka faces increasing disasters, including floods, drought, landslides and coastal erosion, there was a lack of information on where disasters take place and the frequencies of such disasters. Therefore it was difficult to convince key decision makers on how to incorporate disaster resilience in development planning process.

Having realized this need, UNDP, together with the Disaster Management Centre (DMC), Ministry of Disaster Management and other stakeholder agencies took steps to develop National Hazard Profiles for multiple hazards that frequently occur in Sri Lanka, such as droughts, landslides etc.

The process was started in March 2009 with an international workshop to agree on the methods to estimate individual hazards, their spatial distributions and data requirements. The approach aimed to provide an opportunity for Sri Lankan agencies to build their capacity in hazard assessments while developing hazard profiles. UNDP channeled assistance to each agency through DMC. The agencies progressed on hazard profile development steadily, reaching several key milestones during the process. These include development of the landslide, coastal, flood, drought and cyclone hazard profiles.

With the process nearing completion, and the capacities and knowledge of agencies strengthened, a workshop was held on October 23 and 24, 2012 to discuss the potential uses of the hazard profiles.

Attended by over 60 participants involved in developing the hazard profiles and key potential users, such as officials of different ministries, the Department of Census and Statistics and the Survey General's Department, the workshop aimed to share findings of each agency and ensure these profiles have been developed in line with international standards and requirements. It also sought to highlight and document potential applications and limitations of the present hazard profiles and identify opportunities and entry points to mainstream national hazard profiles in development.

The completed hazard profiles will be made available to the public as well as researchers, and steps will also be taken to develop a composite non technical report containing all relevant information of all hazard profiles for the use of the general public.

Acting as one in disaster response: Developing a National Emergency Operations Plan (NEOP) for Sri Lanka

Since the Tsunami of December 2004, the Ministry of Disaster Management and the Disaster Management Centre (DMC), have worked together with multiple stakeholders involved in disaster response to set up legal and institutional systems, prepare vulnerable communities for disasters and enhance efforts to minimize disaster risks. Sri Lanka is proud to have a 24/7 early warning and response capacity, which is one of the many significant outcomes of these efforts.

Supported by UNDP, the National Emergency Operations Plan (NEOP) of Sri Lanka will be the next level of disaster response enhancement. The NEOP identifies the roles and responsibilities of different agencies involved in emergency operations and includes communication mechanisms at the national and sub national levels and among relevant organizations.

On November 5 and 6, 2012, a live rehearsal was conducted to test the NEOP and identify the gaps and potential improvements. Agencies simulated their actions for disasters such as tsunami, floods, cyclone and landslides. An innovative web interface was also used by disaster management actors to upload, edit & share information (www.neop.gsa.lk) during the development of the NEOP.

As the next step, the NEOP will be submitted to the National Council of Disaster Management through the Ministry of Disaster Management. It will be made operational, with adequate training being provided throughout the island, as an integral part of the next phase of the Disaster Management Programme being developed to cover the period 2013 to 2017.

The disasters covered under the NEOP

Aircraft crash
Air raids
Chemical accidents
Civil or internal strife
Coastal erosion
Cyclones
Dam breach
Droughts

Earthquakes
Epidemics
Explosions
Fire
Floods
Forest fire
Industrial disasters
Landslides

Lightning & Thunderstorms
Manmade disasters
Maritime hazards
Nuclear disasters
Oil spills
Radiological emergencies
Tsunami



Rehearsal on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to NEOP held on November 5 and 6, 2012