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On the Ground



Highlights

Returnee database paves way for a brighter future for IDPs

Promoting best practices in the region: Sri Lanka helps introduce RBM in the Maldives

Not exactly 'business as usual' for Government officials in the North

Saying Farewell to Beate Trankmann, Deputy Resident Representative (Programme)



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Returnee database paves way for a brighter future for IDPs

Since the return of peace in Sri Lanka, last year, a growing number of families have started to move back to their places of origin. Jaffna, too, is receiving its fair share of returnees. Practically cut off from the rest of the country during the long years of the conflict, host families in Jaffna now have to accommodate the hundreds of families that come in search of livelihoods and better futures. The Government machinery is working overtime to meet the needs of the approximately 23,000 families that have arrived since May last year. UN agencies and other I/NGOs are eager to contribute to the resettlement process. The biggest obstacle, though, is lack of information. In order to provide real and effective help to returnees an understanding of their needs and requirements is essential. For Government agencies and I/NGOs to plan humanitarian assistance and early recovery in an open and transparent manner it is essential that information be made available. It becomes essential to have a systematic database of returnees to coordinate the recovery, resettlement and re-integration efforts of different agencies operating in the District and

also to plan for the future. The task is especially difficult given the fact that the returnees are not confined to one particular village or location but are, in fact, spread out across the District. Given UNDP's technical expertise and extensive network on the ground, it was requested by the local Government authorities to help in the formulation and implementation of a Joint Returnee Database in all 15 DS divisions in the District. The process began late last year. IOM supported 76 graduates responsible for collecting data at the field level. Data includes information on livelihood, housing, documentation and disability needs of people. The graduates also participated in a month-long training



workshop conducted by UNDP to help them perform their tasks more efficiently. UNDP has been supporting the Government in data entry, analysis, and report writing. UNDP is also providing training and capacity development for the 76 staff members. Other agencies and the sector leads are involved in the community consultation process for qualitative data collection. Data from 10 of the total 15 Divisions has been collected and will be available to the GA for use from end-April.

A clean-up operation for the North

The Disaster Risk Management team at UNDP, in partnership with UNDP's Transition Recovery

Programme, organized an exposure visit to the South for Government officials and environmentalists from the Districts of Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya and Killinochchi. The visit was intended as an exercise in learning about waste management. The team of 20 officers from the

North visited a number of projects that focused on composting, use and generation of bio-gas and waste recycling as a micro-finance initiative. The delegation also met with experts who gave them practical advice and suggestions. The visit provided insight into the established methods and technologies being used in waste management in the South of Sri Lanka so that these could be replicated in the North.

Visit www.undp.lk for more information

Sri Lanka helps introduce RBM in Maldives

For a little over 3 years UNDP has been assisting the Government of Sri Lanka, through the Ministry of Plan Implementation (MPI), to introduce Results Based Management (RBM) in Government offices. As the name suggests, RBM is a results based monitoring system that helps the Government to ensure efficient and effective implementation of policies and programmes.

Last year, the initiative was linked to the national budgetary process of Sri Lanka. The Budget Call 2010

issued by the Treasury to the Secretaries of Ministries, requested Ministries to submit their budget requirements and, at the same time, identify their Key Performance Indicators in the Agency Results Framework. Simply put, this means that funding for Ministries will be closely tied to their performance or how well they are meeting their identified targets. The success of this programme has been appreciated by many Governments in the region and delegations from several countries such as India, Yemen, Bangladesh and Afghanistan have visited Sri Lanka to study the

system.

Maldives has also expressed their interest in learning more about RBM from Sri Lanka. Currently preparing for a donor forum to be held in March Maldives is working towards developing a framework to be presented at the forum. The Ministry of Plan Implementation has been requested by Maldives to help in the development of this framework. Officials from the Government of Sri Lanka are scheduled to travel to Maldives to share their inputs on incorporating RBM in development planning. ■

UNDP joins other agencies in Recovery efforts in the North



With the Government-led resettlement process in full swing in the North, several UN agencies have come together to work in a coordinated manner to effectively respond to the needs and interests of returnee communities in the North and to support ongoing recovery efforts. The process began in January this year and so far 8 locations in the 5 Districts of the North have been selected. Each of the four UN agencies (FAO, WFP, UNDP, UNHCR) has decided

UNDP has taken the initiative to lead the design and implementation of the joint early recovery programme in the North. In addition, UNDP will also share information and updates on mine-clearance, and will complement the work of other agencies in establishing sustainable livelihoods for the returnees. UNHCR will be providing information on return and vulnerability of the returnees, and protection aspects. WFP will provide food rations to the returnees for the first six months. Additionally, they

to focus on their comparative advantage to offer a comprehensive package of benefits to IDPs and more importantly to support a seamless transition from the humanitarian to the early recovery phase.

will support other agencies in establishing more sustainable livelihood initiatives for the beneficiaries through cash-for-work programmes. FAO will provide support to the other agencies in the phasing-in of early recovery assistance, through agriculture, fisheries and livestock related income-generating activities.

The joint-programme is already in operation in certain districts of the North. Families have been receiving the six-month food rations and FAO has distributed seeds to farmers to help them establish home gardens. Other livelihood initiatives are scheduled to be launched soon.

The joint early recovery programme aims to provide effective help to the local administration by providing returnees with a foothold in establishing sustainable livelihoods. The cash-for work and other livelihood generating programmes will help the beneficiaries reduce their dependence on short-term humanitarian aid. At the same time, a coordinated, joint approach on the part of the aid agencies will go a long way in building donor confidence and will help in delivering assistance efficiently while reducing duplication of efforts. ■

Not exactly 'business as usual' for Government officials in the North

UNDP's Capacity Development for Recovery in the North (CADRIN) project will support the Government of Sri Lanka in the recovery process in the North. Government efforts to rebuild the North place special emphasis on areas that were most affected during the fighting. These areas face acute challenges in terms of mine-clearance, infrastructure rehabilitation, return and resettlement, and livelihood regeneration. As past experience from the tsunami shows, in order to address these challenges effectively

Government officials to lead recovery efforts in the North. Last month UNDP visited all five districts in the North of Sri Lanka and held extensive consultations with the Government Agents (GAs) and other officials to identify



priority needs in the region with respect to restoring civil administration. The conflict has impacted local governance institutions in the North to varying degrees. The recent UNDP visit to the North confirmed that the needs of

during the war. Additionally, in areas that were not under direct Government control during the conflict years, the local authorities focused only on providing basic services. Unlike in other parts of the country they were not widely engaged in development activities and, therefore, have relatively little experience with development-related planning. In order to take the recovery process forward it is important to reestablish the de-concentrated Government offices.

and sustainably, a top priority must be ensuring the full participation of local government, community-based organizations and civil society in the recovery effort. UNDP was requested by the Government of Sri Lanka to provide assistance in restoring civil administration—a core component in the recovery process. CADRIN will, therefore, help the Ministry of Public Administration and Home affairs to strengthen capacity of local

local government offices with respect to infrastructure, equipment and records varied. In some cases records and equipment were relocated early on, while in others the buildings were completely or partially destroyed

Capacity Development for Recovery in the North (CADRIN)

Total Budget: USD 6,100,000

Resources mobilized:

- USD 1,000,000 (Finalizing agreement with Norway)

-USD 40,000 (UNDP)

In some cases, the offices need to be revived to not only deliver their regular services to the population, but most importantly to take on the pressing task of recovery planning, coordination, management and monitoring. It is not 'business as usual' and intensive support is needed to develop and strengthen both institutional and individual capacities, and also to re-orient the mindsets of the government officers who will be required to deliver new services in a significantly changed environment.

CADRIN will help establish 'Recovery Support Units' (RSUs) within the Government Agent and the Divisional Secretariats, to support their role as

the focal agencies for overall planning, coordination and management of the recovery process. At the same time, UNDP will support the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs to strengthen the capacity of Government staff through training programmes and exposure to 'model offices' in other parts of the country to help bring them up to speed.

The visit to the North also confirmed that the current lack of community based organizations poses a key challenge to the speed at which the recovery effort can move forward. The delivery of community infrastructure projects and livelihood programmes, for example, most often requires the presence of local bodies

especially in areas where the reach of government and development partners is thinner. UNDP will, therefore, also provide assistance to support the emergence of community organizations such as rural development societies, women's groups and agricultural cooperatives, to partner with local government, articulating their communities' needs and serving as extension service providers.

CADRIN will be nationally implemented by the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs, under the umbrella of the UNDP Local Governance Project (LoGoPro) with financial support in 2010 from the Norwegian Government for \$1 m and \$40,000 seed funding from UNDP. ■

A successful 'innings' at UNDP Sri Lanka



Ms. Beate Trankmann, Deputy Resident Representative (Programme), recently joined UNDP Indonesia as Country Director after spending more than four years in Sri Lanka. Ms. Trankmann came to Sri Lanka

during fairly challenging times. In August 2005, when Ms. Trankmann arrived, the country was gearing up to recover from the devastation caused by the tsunami. UNDP had to be in a position to respond to the challenges effectively. To deal with the large 'tsunami portfolio' changes had to be implemented both in the organizational structure and capacity. Under her guidance, UNDP Sri Lanka successfully assisted the Government in the rehabilitation process and in managing, planning and monitoring the recovery process.

The Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) for 2008-2012 outlines UNDP's support for the development agenda of the Government and provides an overview of UNDP priority areas for the period. As the head of the Programme unit and in consultation with Government partners, Ms. Trankmann played an

invaluable role in the formulation of the document.

May 2009 brought to Sri Lanka new opportunities to build peace. An important challenge remains in terms of the recovery and rehabilitation work in the areas previously affected by conflict. Again, thanks to the initiative and hard-work of the DRR (Programme) and her team, UNDP finds itself well-placed to help the Government in the recovery efforts. During her time in UNDP Sri Lanka, Ms. Trankmann helped establish UNDP as a trusted partner of the Government in bring about sustainable development in the country. UNDP also made significant progress in strengthening partnerships and mobilizing resources to support progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). ■

From the Districts...

'Padma Akka' is a heroine among the residents of Nikawevagama. Modestly dressed in an ankle length 'Cheeththa' cloth and a long sleeved cotton blouse, she looked like an average Sri Lankan woman. Yet there was nothing average about Padma Manike Subasinghe. Hidden behind her tall, thin frame was a story of admirable strength and resilience.

Happily married to her husband who is 16 years her senior, 43 year old Padma is the mother of three children; a daughter aged 26, and two sons aged 24 and 19. Originally from Polonnaruwa, Padma moved to Weli Oya when she and her husband were given a plot of land in the Nikawevagama Left Village,



through a resettlement programme. Having moved to the North Eastern part of the island during the early stages of the conflict, Padma, like many of the other residents of the area has endured the trauma of living in a warzone. With hundreds of lives being lost in the crossfire, fear had become a way of life. "When we heard bombs falling we would run into the forest and hide," says Padma.

Forced to adapt to a life of uncertainty and fear, many residents of Weli Oya have developed their own strategies for survival. None however have gone so far as Padma and her husband. "We have divided our land into two sections," she explains, "he farms on one section and I farm on the other." Their reason for working separately is simple. "If he dies, I don't want to be helpless, and if I die, I don't want him to be helpless," she says. Most of the Weli Oya residents are farmers, and many widows have faced great difficulties fending for themselves and their families. Having stuck to this system since 1998, Padma is quite capable of tending to her own farm. She digs and prepares the soil, ploughs the field, plants the seeds, fertilizes the crops and even drives a tractor. With a heavy tank strapped onto her back, she sprays pesticide on her crops. "Now I'm not scared because I'm not dependent on anyone," she smiles.

Unable to survive on farming alone Padma and her husband take on other work to bring in an extra income. "We used to cut trees and sell the wood" says Padma explaining that the Government had during a certain period granted permission



for the residents of the area to cut trees to build houses and other necessities. The couple had provided wood for many families living in the area. Padma, not surprisingly, was actively engaged in their timber business. From cutting the tree to preparing the wood, she was with her husband all the way.

By 1997 the couple had quite unknowingly outrun their grace period and were confronted by the authorities about their activities. "We were working in the forest when they came to arrest us," says Padma adding that she and her husband were confused by this as they were unsure of what they had done wrong. "They arrested my husband, but said they could not arrest me because I was a woman. They wanted to take my nephew, who was visiting at that time, instead of me," she says, adding, "I refused to let them take him. I told them to take me since it was I who did the wrong." The arrest led to a court trial where Padma was acquitted of her crime, while her husband was fined. "The Judge told me that I was the only woman in Sri Lanka to be arrested for cutting trees," she grinned.

Since the arrest the couple has obtained a permit for their timber business, which sustains the family when farming fails to do so. Even in this regard, Padma manages just fine on her own. "My daughter and I built her house all by ourselves," she says proudly, "we cut the trees and prepared the wood and then measured and cut the necessary planks and put them together. We used to clay to build the walls."

With the dawning of peace life in Weli Oya has had a change of pace. Having spent most of her life fighting to survive, Padma is now beginning to relax. With her children grown up she now has some

time to spend on herself. Padma uses this time to attend the Rush and Reed Training Course organized by the UNDP Communities for Peace programme, together with a local organization, Gamegedara. Having heard the announcement about the programme Padma and her daughter, along with 70 other women in the area, sent in their applications. Both mother and daughter were selected. Unfortunately, Padma's daughter was forced to drop out due to the increasing needs of her two year old son. Padma stayed on, hoping to learn the skills and pass it on to her child.

Admitting that it was a sense of nostalgia that really attracted her to this course, Padma says "my mother used to do rush and reed work. I used to help her when I was little." Though she picked up the basic skills from her mother Padma says that she did not really know how to make anything. "Now I can do patterns and make some nice things," she smiles. Padma's interest in the course also stems from a desire to preserve the ancient Sri Lankan art form. "This is something from our past and I really want to keep it going so that our children and their children can also see and learn it," she says.

With the end of the war residents of war torn areas like Weli Oya can finally get on with their lives. Padma and her friends thoroughly enjoy the training sessions, which give them the opportunity to relax and spend time with friends. Though seemingly insignificant, these little pleasures are luxuries to these people who have lived most of their lives in fear. "Once the sun went down we would not leave our houses. We didn't even light a

lamp. We would sit quietly in the darkness, hoping we would not be disturbed," say Padma adding that she cannot express the relief she feels in this new climate of peace. For Padma and the 19 other women in the course, this is also a business opportunity. "We hope to work together and do this as a business and sell our products," says Padma. With her new found interest, Padma does not have much time to dedicate to her farm. "I'm hoping to get my children to help me more with the farm so that I can continue with this work," she



says adding that this to her is more than just an income, it's a passion. Padma has many new ideas for the business venture. "I want to try some new designs and I also want to make some clay items to sell," she says. For a woman as talented and capable as Padma, nothing is impossible. While many of the

other women in the course say they may have problems acquiring a weaving machine for the rush and reed work, Padma sees no such problem. "I will cut a tree and make one myself," she says simply. ■



FAST FACTS

Communities for Peace (C4P) Project

Objective: C4P aims to improve the socio-economic recovery of conflict-affected communities through livelihood, housing, infrastructure and social transformation.

Dates: 2008-2010

Budget: USD 2,374,461.10

Donors: Government of Australia (AusAid)