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On the Ground



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Because Every Sri Lankan Counts

From the southernmost point of Dondra Head to the northern most tip of Point Pedro, every square inch of the island will be covered and every citizen counted as Sri Lanka embarks on its first nationwide census since 1980. Covering all 25 districts, the 2011 census will include data from the north and east that has been excluded from recent censuses due to difficulties caused by the war.

For a country like Sri Lanka that is well on its way to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, data collected from a comprehensive census of this sort will be invaluable. By providing a better understanding of the situation and needs of all segments of the population, this census will help development planners to identify the people who are most urgently in need of help, and design their development programmes to suit these needs.

Despite the many mechanisms that have been set in place,

countries like Sri Lanka face great challenges in conducting exercises of this magnitude. Realizing the importance of a countrywide census and the difficulties that may occur in carrying out such a task in a post conflict environment, UNDP, through its poverty cluster will support the Government in this endeavor.

UNDP's role in this mammoth task will be to provide support to the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) and the staff responsible for conducting the census. This support will include the recruitment and training of Tamil speaking enumerators who will be able to work in the north and east, and the provision of computer equipment for data processing and vehicles for



supervision. UNDP will also help the Government with publicity campaigns, and training on coding, editing and data tabulation.

While UNDP support will cover the entire island, special emphasis will be placed on the Northern and Eastern provinces. Through its support UNDP hopes to help the government conduct a comprehensive and accurate census. In a more long term sense, UNDP believes that the technical assistance provided to the DCS will contribute to the overall development of the department, helping it to expand its data collection services. ■

Project Details

Implementing Agency	:Department of Census and Statistics
Estimated Start Date	:July 2010
Estimated End Date	:December 2011
Project Duration	:18 Months
Total Budget	:US\$ 1 Million
Funding Gap	:US\$ 700,000

Expanding Access to Justice

A walk to the ferry and a two hour boat ride. That's what it took for the 5000 odd residents of the island of Delft to get to the nearest Circuit Court in Jaffna or in the island of Kytes. The law, or easy access to it, was one of the many things they lost as a result of the conflict. Having not had their own courthouse since the 1980's these people have faced extreme barriers in accessing legal services.

Now, things are different. In April 2010 a new Circuit Court was opened in Delft, with the support of the UNDP Access to Justice Project -Phase II (A2J). Collaborating closely with government authorities since February this year UNDP provided the material support to establish the court room and also facilitated the involvement of judicial officers.

To make sure the new court is used to its maximum potential, the A2J team also conducted legal aid clinics in Delft and Kytes. Through these clinics the team hoped to make citizens aware of the existence of the court, the benefits it can provide, and the rights they are entitled to. In total around 600 people participated in the clinics which addressed issues ranging from property concerns, documentation queries, pension issues and disappearances to citizenship issues.

The citizens of Delft are only some of the many Sri Lankans who have benefitted from A2J (Phase II) which expanded its activities to Jaffna in 2009. Since it was identified as a priority area for support Jaffna has benefitted from a number of A2J initiatives that have attempted to build trust and confidence in the justice system. Funded by UNHCR, the UNDP Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery and UNDP Target Resource Allocation from Core (TRAC), A2J -Phase II has introduced many interventions targeting both the users and providers of legal services

Implemented through the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration (formerly the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration), the project works closely with key justice sector actors, helping them to strengthen their ability to address the concerns of the most vulnerable groups of the population.



Chief among them is the IDP population, now returning to their homes in the north and east. Documentation is a key concern in these areas. In Jaffna the issue has heightened with the return of more than 20,000 families, many lacking basic papers. Without the necessary documentation returnees are unable to vote, obtain social security benefits, register for schools or national exams or even open a bank account. Working with several government partners including the Ministry of National Languages and Social Intergration, the Registrar -General's Department and the Resgistry of Persons Department, the A2J team has implemented large scale mobile clinics where multiple forms of documentation can be issued free of charge on a single day. Clinics were held in Delft on the 9th of June and in Kytes on the 10th and 11th of June. Documentation work in the divisions of Velenai, Thellepalai and Karai Nagar is scheduled for June-August 2010.

Among other initiatives, A2J has committed to support the construction of a women's wing for the new Jaffna Prison, and in the meantime is providing legal aid to prisoners on remand and working to promote the use of alternative sentencing techniques with a view to reducing overcrowding in the current prison premises. ■

Project Details:

Duration	:2009 -2012
Total Budget	:US\$ 7,740,000
Funding Gap	:US\$ 4,158,250
Implementing Partner	:Ministry of National Languages and Social Intergration

Since the end of the war last year scores of businessman, investors and developers have been making their way north along the A9, as the northern region of Sri Lanka opened up to trade and development. There is no doubt that this plentiful region, with its abundance of natural resources and untapped potential will soon become a hub for business and development.

In preparation for this influx of investors, the Government launched an Integrated Strategic Environmental Assessment (ISEA). Through the assessment the government hopes to support the development of the region, while at the same time protecting the environment and natural resources. Using the expertise of various governmental and non governmental agencies, this assessment will study the unique environmental landscape of the north with the aim of understanding the area before attempting to develop it.

The ISEA however is more than just a study of the environment. With the hope of minimizing the damage caused to the environment and also by the environment, the study will also look at disaster risk reduction



potential use of marine and coastal resources, the CEA and Ministry of Local Government will tackle the management of solid and liquid waste and the Departments of Forestry and Wild Life Conservation will be in charge of identifying sensitive forest and wild life areas.

Needless to say, the results of this comprehensive assessment will prove to be a valuable resource

to anyone interested in development activities in the north. Having identified the

Mapping out the North

concerns. Led by the Central Environmental Authority (CEA) of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, this comprehensive assessment goes hand in hand with “Uthuru Wasanthaya (Northern Spring),” the government’s development programme for the north.

The ISEA has brought together several specialized agencies which will undertake a set of targeted studies. Among them, the Geological Survey and Mines Bureau will handle the identification of sites to provide sand and building materials, the Water Resources Board in association with the National Water Supply and Drainage Board, the Irrigation Department and the Department of Agrarian Services will study the extraction capacity of ground water and the availability of surface water, the National Aquatic Resources Agency will analyze the optimum

environmentally sensitive areas in the region, the study will help developers to see which areas are off limits. The disaster risk reduction component will help them understand the particular environmental risks in the area, and the measures that can be taken to minimize these risks. This information will help development actors to reformulate their projects and activities to better suit the environment.

The data collected in the ISEA will be compiled into a single database by the Urban Development Authority. The information will then be used to create an “Opportunity Map” which will give a clear image of the environmental landscape of the north, so that the natural resources, environmentally sensitive areas and other features of the region can be identified at a glance. As the study progresses more and more data will be added to the map. Much progress has been made thus far and on the 26th of April, the first

cut of the “Opportunity Map” was presented for discussion by the key partner agencies.

The information generated from the assessment will be distributed among planners

and development agencies and special awareness and training sessions will be held for staff in the Northern Provincial Council and five Districts. Financial resources for the ISEA including the field studies are provided through UNDP.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has been providing technical support in the design of the ISEA and will also support the training of CEA and other staff. ■

UNDP Organizes Visit to the North

To pave the way for a better understanding of the early recovery needs in the north and east, UNDP organized a donor visit to Kilinochchi, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu. The visit was held from the 3rd to the 5th of May.



Accompanied by the UNDP Country Director Douglas Keh, Pierre Heroux, the Head of Aid of the Canadian International Development Agency, and Philipp Beutler, Deputy Country Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, met with several government and non government actors, who provided them with a comprehensive account of the current situation in the region.

The UNDP staff who have been working closely with resettled communities in the area were able share valuable knowledge and experience on the needs and issues surrounding resettlement. It was also an opportunity for the staff to share best practices and lessons learnt from the resettlement process in the east, which is further along than the process in the north.

Useful information was also provided by the Government Agent of Kilinochchi, Mrs.R.Kethisvaran. Listing the top priorities for the district, the GA, shared area specific details about the resettlement process and early recovery needs.

The visit also included a stop at a Sri Lanka Army demining site in Selvapuram where donors had the opportunity to observe the ongoing humanitarian demining process. By speaking to the deminers themselves the donors were able to gather some ideas about the progress being made in Sri Lanka and also ascertain the requirements for speedy demining and resettlement.

The final component of the donor visit was the face to face discussions with resettled communities. Having met with resettled families in the villages of Uruthirapuram East and Kanagarayankulam North, in

Kilinochchi and Vavuniya, the donors were able to collect first hand information on the early recovery needs of the area.

Following the visit, a Donor Roundtable discussion was held on the 12th of May in the UN Conference Room. The event was organized with the intention of bringing the donor community up to date on UNDP activities and also to inform them of the current

situation in the country and the corresponding needs.

UNDP projects for the upcoming months will aim to introduce sustainable initiatives to its beneficiaries by building the capacity of communities, and connecting them with the right partners, thereby empowering them to develop their own lives and livelihoods. In this transition period from humanitarian to development aid, sustainability will help reduce dependence and provide an exit strategy for the donor community.

The discussion, which gave members of the donor community an opportunity to raise their concerns, questions and suggestions aimed to create a better understanding of Sri Lanka’s and more specifically, UNDP’s funding requirements and how best they should be met. ■

Early Recovery in the Vanni

As they leave the camps and make their way back to their villages, many returnees have had to come to terms with what is left of "home." Three decades of conflict has left much of the north and east in a state of disrepair. Houses are destroyed, roads are damaged and most public institutions like schools and hospitals are left with little. Now returning to these severely damaged areas, many people, having also lost most of their assets and belongings during the displacement, really are starting from scratch.

To extend a much needed helping hand to the newly returned communities, the UNDP Transition Recovery Programme (TRP) will be stepping up early recovery assistance in the Vanni region. Through the Vanni Recovery Project (VRP) funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNDP TRP hopes to support the resettlement and recovery of returning communities. While helping them to lay sustainable foundations for their lives and livelihoods the VRP will also strive to reduce tensions between communities by improving their socio-economic conditions.

The VRP will be implemented in the 5 Divisional Secretariat Divisions of Thunukkai, Oddusuddan, Manthai East, Karachchi and Poonari in the Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi Districts. Within the 18 month period of implementation the project hopes to reach 3000 families in the said divisions.

Having faced several displacements in the recent past, many of the returnees in these areas are in a particularly vulnerable situation. Considering the wide ranging needs of these returning communities, the VRP will include several types of interventions aimed at addressing different needs.

Many of the interventions are designed to facilitate a smooth transition from humanitarian to development assistance. The project will for instance help communities to achieve food security by growing and selling their own food, thereby reducing their dependence on food aid.

The livelihood component of the project will attempt to introduce short term income generation opportunities and also provide necessary support for startup livelihood activities. In addition the VRP will also provide micro-credit, and micro-enterprise development support to particularly vulnerable communities.



The VRP also aims to help returning communities to establish or reform community structures, enabling them to become more equitable and inclusive. With the ultimate aim of handing over the project to respective Community Based Organizations (CBO) and Local Government bodies, UNDP hopes to strengthen and mobilize these parties by involving them in the implementation and management of the project. ■

Rebuilding Kilinochchi



Government Agent of Kilinochchi. Yet return is only the first and most basic step towards resettlement. Amid the hustle and bustle of the returning population, various individuals and groups are hard at work, trying to bring a sense of normalcy to this war torn city.

Signs of life are slowly but surely beginning to show amid the vast green jungles of Kilinochchi. Splashes of color can now be seen against the thick

green backdrop as women dressed in colorful saris make their way along the dilapidated tar roads. Makeshift structures of tin sheets and blue polythene have taken root beside the cement skeletons of houses. Sounds of laughter can be heard in the distance as groups of children enjoy a game of cricket under the blazing Kilinochchi sun.

With the resettlement process in full swing, Kilinochchi is becoming home once again to the thousands of residents who were forced to leave during the war. "So far, around 16,000 families have returned, and out of 4 Grama Niladari divisions, 1 has been fully resettled," says Mrs.R. Ketheesvaran,

Most people, like P. Ramakrishna returned to Kilinochchi with nothing. "I spent a year in the IDP camp, and I came home carrying nothing but a small plastic bag," says Ramakrishna, a resident of the Kanagarayankulam North resettlement village. Most residents of this village came back to find their homes destroyed and their belongings missing. Many lost important documents including land deeds, and birth, death and marriage certificates during the displacement. Having returned home they are now facing difficulties claiming their land and belongings. The loss of documents has become a serious concern for both the local government authorities and the returnees as it has led to numerous land and other disputes in the district. Given this situation, legal and other services needed for the restoration of these documents is seen as an urgent requirement in Kilinochchi and other resettlement areas. Though the UNDP Access to Justice Programme plans on addressing this need to some extent, the increasing numbers of the returning population has called for

more help in this regard.

While some returnees are struggling to regain their belongings, others are trying to come to terms with what little they have left. For the residents of the newly resettled village of Uruthirapuram East the return process has been grueling. Many of the returnees had spent nearly one and a half years in IDP camps before returning to their villages. For most of them, this was their third displacement. "We really are starting from the bottom. Even the natural resources in the area have changed or been destroyed," says K. Lakshmi, one of the 1100 people who returned to the village. The villagers explained that agriculture had been their main source of income prior to displacement. While most women in the village had contributed in some way to the family income, few had any experience being the sole breadwinner. Now things are different. The number of women headed households has increased drastically. Many of these women will have to find ways to fend for themselves and their families. "Women in this village need some sort of psychological help, because of all the pressure that is on us," says Rani, one of the younger residents.

Thinking for the first time about new livelihood options, some women expressed an interest in running a rice mill, or trying their hand at the coir industry. "We are not lazy, and we are willing to work hard. All we need is some help to get started," says Kamala, who felt that a small scale industry would be successful in

the village, if they could work, initially at least with a more experienced implementing partner. Keeping this in mind, the Government is working with UNDP to introduce sustainable livelihood initiatives in newly resettled areas.

While their parents are trying to pick up the pieces of their lives, the children of these villages are facing difficulties of their own. "They don't want to go to school alone and when they hear thunder they hide under the sheets. They are always so scared," says one mother. Though most of the children have now returned to school, parents say that transportation has become an issue. "We used to have bicycles but we lost everything, so now it is difficult for us to send them to school," says Lakshmi. Despite all their problems, education is foremost on the minds of these people, who are determined to help their children succeed in life. "We just want to go back to our normal lives and stabilize ourselves," says R.Shanthi adding that this time they hope to stay.

Paving the Way for Resettlement...

While much of Kilinochchi has now been cleared for resettlement, there are still some areas that are off limits to returning families. Fenced off by strips of red polythene, these heavily mined areas are still to be released. Within the boundaries of these forbidding red strips however,



a brave group of people are hard at work. Clad in their white helmets and blue protective overalls, these deminers make their way slowly, inch by inch, sifting gently through the soil looking out for any deadly remnants of the war. Demining is the most essential pre requisite to resettlement, and the invaluable work done by these individuals has paved the way for safe return.

10 districts in Sri Lanka were heavily mined during the conflict. Given the enormity of the task, the demining process cannot be undertaken by any one party. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Development, demining efforts are currently being carried out by 7 demining organizations, together with the Sri Lanka army. The UNDP District Mine Action Offices (DMAO) provide coordination support to the ministry by helping them to prioritize and assign clearance tasks, conduct quality assurance operations, and organize District Mine Action Steering Committee meetings.

The 8 demining groups currently working in the country; the Sri Lanka Army

Humanitarian Demining Unit, the Milinda Moragoda Institute for Peoples Empowerment, the Danish Demining Group, the Mines Advisory Group, the Swiss Foundation for Demining, HORIZON, the HALO Trust, and Sarvatra, use a combination of mechanical and manual clearance



methods and follow international demining standards and marking systems.

Among the units currently working in Kilinochchi is the Sri Lanka Army, 8 Field Engineer Regiment, which is in the

process of clearing the village of Selvapuram, an area of about 26,000 m². Considering the level of care and concentration necessary for this job, no deminer is able to work more than an average of 6 hours a day. This too varies depending on the weather conditions each day. So far, the 40 officers of the 8SLE unit have uncovered 146 mines. Collaboration between the demining groups, the government and the UNDP was seen as a major factor behind effective demining. "The fact that so many groups are working together to achieve the same purpose makes our job so much faster," says one officer working on the site.

For speedy and effective resettlement and early recovery, this collaboration must necessarily extend beyond demining. Kilinochchi is only one of many areas in Sri Lanka, struggling to get back on its feet. Amid all the chaos and suffering, the people of Kilinochchi have one thing to keep them going. Hope. Hope that they will be able to live in peace. Hope that this time they will be here to stay. Hope for the beginning of a new life. ■