

Rebuilding Lives through Rebuilding Homes Shelter Support to Conflict Affected Families in Northern Sri Lanka

Theiventhiram and Kalairangitham, Kallaru, Killinochchi district



Thirty four year old Kalairangitham is adept at multitasking as she juggles the roles of wife, mother, teacher and construction worker in her daily life. As a volunteer teacher at the Kallaru Tamil Vidyalayam, Kalairangitham teaches music, general knowledge and Hindi language to middle school children from her village. She is also a mother of three small children – two daughters and a son, who require her care and attention. Despite these multiple roles, Kalairangitham has completed the rebuilding of her damaged house together with her husband Theiventhiram, with financial assistance from the Australian Government. Their new house was ceremonially handed over to the family by the Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Ms.Kathy Klugman, when she visited the village of Kallaru in September 2011 to mark the completion of the Project.

Hailing from the coastal village of Kallaru in the Killinochchi district, Kalairangitham married A.T.Theiventhiram in 2002. Having started his working life as a fisherman, Theiventhiram branched into motor mechanics in 2005. Their daughter Menaka was born in 2004, followed by son Menan is 2005. In early 2009, with the escalation of the conflict between the Sri Lanka Armed Forces and the LTTE, the family was displaced from their village. In order to escape the fierce fighting, they were eventually forced to move to Puthumathalan and Vattuval in Mullaitivu District during the final stages of the conflict. With the end of the conflict in May 2009, the family was relocated to an IDP camp in Vavuniya. They were resettled in Kallaru in February 2010, returning home after more than a year of displacement.

The family of five lived in a small makeshift hut as their house had been destroyed and they lacked the resources to rebuild. Almost all houses in the village were either fully or partially damaged due to the conflict and needed significant repair/reconstruction work.

Project Quick Facts

Project: Shelter Support to Conflict Affected IDPs in the North of Sri Lanka

Duration: 2010-2011

Location: Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi districts

Funded by: Australian Government (AusAID)

Implemented by: Communities, UN-HABITAT

No of houses reconstructed/repared:
3,785

In November 2011, Kalairangitham's family was selected for assistance under the project "Shelter Support to IDPs in the North" which was implemented by UN-HABITAT with funding from the Government of Australia. As the project followed a "home owner driven" housing construction process, both Kalairangitham and Theiventhiram were actively involved in the reconstruction of their house. They participated in most of the construction activities including excavation work for the house foundation, cement block casting, as well as minor masonry and carpentry work. By providing their own labour towards the construction process, Thieventhiram and Kalairangitham succeeded in significantly reducing the total cost of construction, whilst attaining a real sense of ownership of their new home.

Home Owner Driven Approach (HOD)

The home owner-driven approach for reconstruction of houses includes a contribution from the beneficiary family. This ensures active engagement of household members and provides opportunities for consultation with the family members regarding the construction/repair and house design.



While the house was being constructed, the family lived in a makeshift shelter made of tin sheets, tent material and cadjan next to the construction site. After the hardships faced during their displacement, the family is happy to finally move into their permanent home, where the three children have adequate space to study and play in comfort. Kalairangitham is also delighted to have a fully functional kitchen of her own and comfortable bedrooms for the family. Kalairangitham's children attend the village school-Kallaru Tamil Vidyalayam. Her eldest daughter Menaka is seven years old while son, Menan has just turned six. The youngest of the family - Meena, is two years old and is yet to start pre-school. The two older children are keen pupils and enjoy studying Mathematics, Tamil and English.

At present, Theiventhiram earns his living as a fish seller while undertaking work as a mechanic, whenever there is demand. Operating a small workshop in their premises, he undertakes repairs of water pumps and outboard motors earning about Rs.1,000 (US\$ 9)¹ per day. Despite their busy schedule, the couple also find time to engage in village development activities by participating in community meetings and Settlement Improvement Planning which identifies critical development issues in the village.



The photos depict: 1. Kalairangitham with the Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka during the official hand over of her house; 2. Kalairangitham with her youngest daughter outside her house, 3. Kalairangitham with her three children and 4. Theiventhiram with UN-HABITAT staff during the house construction.

For more information on the project, please contact:

Shelter Support to Conflict Affected IDPs in the North of Sri Lanka Project

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¹ US\$ 1 = SLRS 112