



## Stories from the Field: Nalathamby Kanahasooriyan, Hijrapuram, Mullaitivu district, Northern Sri Lanka

### Indian Housing Project



The Indian Housing Project (IHP) is a housing reconstruction project funded by the Government of India and implemented through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Sri Lanka. Four Implementing Agencies (IAs) are executing this project, in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. UN-Habitat is one of the IAs implementing the project in the Northern districts of Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Jaffna. The 36 month project will be implemented from mid 2012 until mid 2015 following a home owner driven process. During this period, UN-Habitat is expected to support 16,800 families to reconstruct/repair their homes. Mr.Nalathamby Kanahasooriyan of Mullaitivu

is one of the beneficiaries selected by the Indian Housing Project to reconstruct his war damaged house.

Nalathamby Kanahasooriyan is a 40 year old farmer from Hijrapuram village in Mullaitivu district, where he lives with his wife Mathimanjula and two children Inthirajith aged 14, and Priyanka aged 17 years. The Kanahasooriyan family have been badly affected by the 30 year conflict and have experienced a multitude of challenges and hardship during their years of displacement.

The family was first displaced in November 2008 with the escalation of the conflict in the North, when they were compelled to relocate to Kombavil village in Mullaitivu for nearly 3 months. Thereafter, they moved to several villages in the Northern Province. Finally, with the end of the conflict in May 2009, the family was relocated to the Menik Farm Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, where they lived from 2009 to 2010. Nalathamby states that their displacement in different locations had been traumatic for the family especially as his daughter had been badly injured during this time. Without food, water, sanitation, shelter, and proper clothing, they were compelled to spend many days in the jungle without any protection from the elements and wildlife.

When the Government of Sri Lanka commenced the resettlement of IDPs, Nalathamby and his family returned to their own village in July 2010. As they did not have adequate funds to rebuild their damaged house, the family constructed a temporary shelter, where they have been living for the past 2 years. When the Indian Housing Project commenced in September 2012, the Kanahasooriyan family were also included in the list of possible beneficiaries for housing reconstruction support by the divisional administration. Following a mass public meeting at which the project was introduced to the community, Nalathamby completed an application form and submitted it for consideration for a housing grant.

Nalathamby was selected for full house reconstruction by the Indian Housing Project. The family selected a house plan of their choice in consultation with the UN-Habitat field staff. As the project follows a home owner driven methodology, Nalathamby is undertaking the role of Project Manager.



On 6<sup>th</sup> October 2012, Nallathamby purchased building materials for the construction of the new house using his own savings. The first grant instalment payment of SLRs. 100,000/= was deposited to his bank account by the Indian High Commission on 16<sup>th</sup> October. On 18<sup>th</sup> October, the family commenced the foundation work in accordance with auspicious times observed by the Hindu community. The house construction is now well in progress. Nallathamby has rapidly achieved the required level of construction to qualify for the second grant payment. In total, the family will receive SLRS.550,000 from the Government of India as a housing grant.

Their house plan includes a kitchen, a sitting room, a corridor and two bedrooms amounting to 555 square feet. Nallathamby is optimistic that he can complete the house construction by April 2013.

The Kanahasooriyan family has faced several challenges during the construction of their house mainly due to the onset of the monsoon rains. Foundation work and cement block making has been delayed due to the torrential rains. However, the family is determined to move ahead, undeterred by these minor setbacks.

Nallathamby stated that they are extremely fortunate to have received housing support as they were unable to find the funds to build the house themselves. He said that this financial support from the Indian Government is greatly appreciated by the family. His main objective is to complete the construction as soon as possible. "My family will have more security once the permanent house is completed and they will be properly sheltered from the rain and adverse weather conditions" he stated.



**Photographs depict:** Nallathamby outside his temporary shelter prior to commencing the construction of the house, Nallathamby and wife Mathimanjula and their house under construction.