



Stories from the Field: A Permanent Home for a Young Family in Killinochchi District 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. UN-Habitat is implementing this project in the Northern districts of Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Jaffna. The 36 month project follows a homeowner driven process. During this period, UN-Habitat is expected to support over 17,500 families to reconstruct their homes.

Mr. Thankawel Jayaseelan was selected to reconstruct his damaged house in Udayanagar West GN Division in Karachchi DS Division. Using the housing grant of LKR.550,000 provided by the

Government of India, Mr.Jayaseelan has successfully completed the construction activities within 4 months.

40 year old Jayaseelan undertakes casual labour work in Killinochchi, the main source of income for his family. He lives in Udayanagar with his wife, 36 year old Jayaseelan Sathajinie and 7 children. Their eldest daughter, 21 year old Disanthinie works as a sewing machine operator at a garment factory. Their eldest son, 17 year old Pratheepan has left school and is seeking employment while the other children, aged 7 to 16 years, attend school at Kanagapuram Maha Vidyalaya in Killinochchi.

The Jayaseelan family has been badly affected by the 30 year conflict, having faced multiple displacements since 1996. During their most recent displacement in February 2008, the family were compelled to move to several locations in the North to avoid conflict affected areas. During this time, Jeyaseelan had been injured in a shelling incident and still retains an injury in his right arm which causes him discomfort.

With the end of the conflict in May 2009, the family moved to Vavuniya and temporarily lived at the Poonthottam and Zone 6 IDP welfare camp for 10 months.

With the commencement of the Government's Accelerated Resettlement Programme, the family returned to their village in February 2010. As their house had been destroyed during the conflict, and the couple had no savings of their own to reconstruct a permanent house, Jayaseelan constructed a semi-permanent shelter of approx. 100 square feet with financial support and material provided by the Government of Sri Lanka. Although the shelter had facilities such as electricity, the cramped living space was inadequate for the family of nine.





Jeyaseelan is recognised by the community as an industrious and enterprising person who is willing to undertake new initiatives to earn extra money for the family. In order to supplement the household income, Jayaseelan had commenced rain fed rice cultivation by leasing a paddy field in Periyaparanthan GN Division. However, this venture has been unsuccessful this year due to the severe drought in the Northern Province. Therefore, Jayaseelan has been mainly engaged in husking and selling coconuts at the Killinochchi market.

In February 2014, Jayaseelan was selected for housing support by the Indian Housing Project. He had received the first grant instalment of LKR 100,000 in March 2014. This was a joyful day for the entire family. As the project followed a “homeowner driven” method of construction, Jayaseelan and his wife were jointly responsible for the planning, organizing and construction of their house from the outset. The UN-Habitat field team had helped the family select a suitable house plan and provided advice on construction work and building materials. Jayaseelan and his eldest son, Pratheepan, had contributed their labour towards the construction which had helped in reducing labour costs. They hired two masons and two carpenters to undertake the skilled construction work.

By contributing their own labour and carefully managing the construction process and finances, Jayaseelan was successful in completing the house construction within four months. Their new permanent house is 560 square feet cement blocks walls and clay tiles for the gable style roof. The house consists of a living room, a shrine room, bedroom, kitchen and an outdoor toilet.

One of the key challenges faced by Jayaseelan and his wife during construction was the lack of water due to the drought, meaning water had to be fetched from a common tube well in the neighbourhood.



Discussing the construction process, Mr. Jayaseelan stated “I was determined to complete the construction work as quickly as possible as my family was very keen to move into a permanent house. This housing grant has been a wonderful gift for us. This house has given our family much needed privacy and security.”

“As we didn’t have enough living space in our temporary shelter, our children had to spend time outdoors most of the time. But now space is no longer a problem. Now our children can play and study in comfort” Mrs. Jayaseelan Sathajinie added.

Photographs: 1: Jayaseelan family outside their new home; 2: Two children outside the temporary shelter before the house was built; 3: Three of Jayaseelan’s children playing in the living room.