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Improving Living Conditions in Returnee Areas of Sri Lanka through Housing

Funded by	: European Union, Government of Australia (AusAID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
Partners	: Government of Sri Lanka, Local Authorities and Communities
Implemented by	: UN-Habitat, SDC
Budget	: EUR 17,664,600
Locations	: Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar districts in the Northern Province; Batticaloa district in the Eastern Province
Duration	: January 2013 - June 2015 (30 Months)



Background

In May 2009, more than 25 years of conflict came to an end in Sri Lanka. While the entire country has suffered as a result, districts of the North and East have been devastated. Families have been displaced on multiple occasions, often being forced to leave their homes for many years. When people eventually returned, most of their houses had been either badly damaged or completely destroyed. As the majority of people affected are relatively poor with marginal incomes and little or no savings, they have been unable to sustain major financial shocks, such as loss of livelihoods and housing.



The Project

This project aims to contribute to a sustainable solution for the returnees with the specific objective of improving the living conditions and social cohesion of displaced people, returnees and their host communities in the North and East through the provision of permanent housing and infrastructure.

Having established that a permanent house is the cornerstone for a families' recovery, the project will assist the reconstruction of over 4,000 conflict damaged houses in the districts of Mullaitivu, Killinochchi, Mannar and Batticaloa.

Funding for the project is provided by the European Union, the Australian Government and SDC. The project is implemented by UN-Habitat and SDC in close coordination with other projects, in order to ensure holistic settlement development in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

This programme builds upon the success of the ongoing "Support to Conflict Affected People through Housing" project, which is being implemented in the Northern Province with funding from the EU, AusAID and SDC. (see project page for details: <http://www.unhabitat.lk/project7a.html>).

Project Approach

Housing is considered a multi-faceted need, consisting of rehabilitation and development needs of the affected families in addition to human security, protection and human dignity. It also provides opportunities for livelihoods, enhanced quality of life, safety and improved health. In order to assist conflict affected families to overcome vulnerabilities, this project seeks to empower families to act on their own behalf by supporting them to become strong and active members of communities through a series of widely tested community development activities and processes.

Through a "Home Owner Driven" approach, this project seeks to empower the beneficiary families to take charge of their own recovery process. More than 100 villages in the identified districts will be assisted through this programme for the full reconstruction of 3,350 fully damaged houses, and the major repair of approximately 1,000 damaged houses.

Technical assistance and guidance for reconstruction is provided to all conflict affected families by field based UN-Habitat and SDC teams. Vulnerable groups such as female headed households, elderly and disabled persons are given priority assistance in order to ensure their safety and welfare. Due to destruction and loss of documents during the conflict, many families have difficulty in proving their ownership of land and it is anticipated that up to 2,600 families will benefit from assistance to establish security of tenure.

'Disaster Risk Reduction' (DRR) features will be incorporated to mitigate effects of natural disasters. The introduction of low-cost construction technologies and techniques and improved house designs will also assist with reducing the overall cost of construction. Several model houses incorporating DRR and eco-friendly features, low cost technologies, alternative power sources, recycled building materials, locally produced materials and other key features will be constructed in order to educate home owners and encourage smarter building practices.

The project will provide formal construction skills training to approximately 200 youths from the beneficiary communities. The families will also contribute their labour to the reconstruc-



tion efforts and material will be procured locally, in turn assisting with the growth of local economies.

Approximately 20,000 people in 50 villages will benefit from additional small scale infrastructure initiatives such as internal roads, wells and community centers. The social mapping and community action planning exercises will be conducted to identify priority community needs in the villages. This activity will be implemented with the communities playing an active role in identifying priorities and implementing the project through community contracting.

Key Activities

- Housing Construction through the owner driven process
- Building community capacity through participatory planning processes.
- Essential community facilities to be provided based on community priorities identified through "Settlement Implementation Plans"
- Training provided in construction and leadership (e.g. women in decision making roles).
- Partnership building with State Agencies and Development Partners.
- Security of tenure.



Contact Us:

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