

# Housing for Returnees in the North

Funded by the Government of Australia, Implemented by UN-HABITAT



## Message from the Australian High Commissioner

It is my great pleasure to send this message on the occasion of the handover of permanent houses to the residents of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and northern Vavuniya.

The conflict displaced many families in the Northern Province and deeply affected lives and livelihoods across Sri Lanka. After the end of the conflict, the Australian Government responded to the urgent reconstruction needs in the Northern Province.

Permanent housing is an essential element of rebuilding damaged communities. In early 2010 Australia established a partnership with UN-HABITAT to help conflict-affected families to rebuild their homes.

Australia is proud to have funded the repair or reconstruction of 3,785 houses in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts over the past 18 months under this program.

This initiative was one of the earliest and largest permanent housing projects to support Internally Displaced People in the Northern Province. The program used a home-owner driven approach. This not only helped people to rebuild their houses, but it has also enabled families to do this for themselves and to have control over the process. Using this approach, the project has helped to strengthen people's dignity and independence.

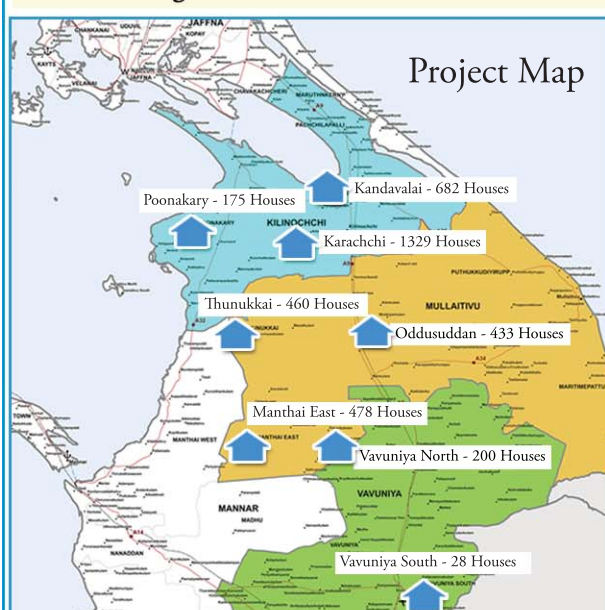
Northern communities have faced so many challenges. While a great deal remains to be done, secure homes are an essential early step in helping communities to recover.

Australia is also supporting a range of other initiatives for conflict-affected areas. We have funded a LKR 2 billion initiative to clear the north of landmines, and through a new program with UNICEF to rebuild 20 schools in the Province. I am proud that these programs are making a major difference to the lives of conflict affected people.

We will continue to be a partner in supporting the Government and the people of Sri Lanka in their reconstruction and recovery efforts.

I congratulate all families who have reconstructed their homes through this project. And I wish you success, peace and security in the future.

**Kathy Klugman**  
Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka



## Message from UN-HABITAT

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN HABITAT) has been assisting thousands of Sri Lankan families rebuild their lives and regain normalcy in post conflict and post disaster scenarios over the past three decades. We believe that reconstruction of permanent housing solves both immediate recovery and development needs of those affected, restoring a sense of human security, protection and human dignity.

The Australian Government's immediate response to fund the project "Shelter Support to Conflict Affected IDPs in the North of Sri Lanka" is the very first large scale permanent housing initiative to support the conflict affected families in the North. Within the last 18

months, this first phase of the programme has assisted 3,785 families from Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts to rebuild and repair their damaged and destroyed houses, whilst revitalizing the local economies and traditional livelihoods.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Australian Government for their generous financial support.

I am gratefully appreciative to the Presidential Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security in the Northern Province, and the Government Agents for their unstinted support to make this project a success.

UN-HABITAT remains committed towards further supporting communities to restore permanent housing and to assist them in reaping the positive benefits of peace.

**Laxman Perera**  
UN-HABITAT Programme Manager for Sri Lanka



## About the Project

The Housing Recovery Project for the North (Phase 1) has assisted 3,785 returnee families with financial and technical support; 1,110 families totally rebuilt their homes and 2,675 families completed major repairs to their damaged houses.

The three decades of civil war displaced more than a million people from northern and eastern Sri Lanka and resulted in an estimated 160,000 damaged or destroyed houses in the Northern Province alone. Recognizing the urgent need to facilitate the dignified return of those displaced, the project partners quickly responded by mobilizing 9.34 Million USD (10 Million AUD) funded by the Government of Australia.

Moving directly to a sustainable and durable housing solution for the families, the project reached out to 40 villages in Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi, complementing the efforts of the Government of Sri Lanka towards the sustainable development of the Northern Province.

Using a 'home owner driven' approach, the project has assisted families to actively take charge of their own recovery. The families were responsible for the planning, implementation and monitoring of their own progress. Their early involvement in the process further ensured that the end result was a "home" that reflected their own aspirations. A critical component of the process was the local procurement of materials and labour which ensured that the funds go directly to supporting the local economy. Additionally, the affected families also contributed their own labour towards the construction process.

Message from the Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Chairman, Presidential Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security in the Northern Province



The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) is implementing a strategic resettlement plan with the objective of providing a dignified and safe return for the displaced families and better social and economic infrastructure facilities for the Province. The number of families already resettled is 125,000, which includes approximately 85,000 families who were in the welfare centers and 40,000 families who were with friends and relatives and returned when the villages were cleared of land mines and opened up for resettlement. It is the commitment of the GoSL to develop the Province after three decades of conflict that engulfed the country and ravaged the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

While the GoSL has provided enormous amounts of funds for revival and reconstruction of infrastructure including the road network, railway lines, power supply, water supply schemes, bridges and ports, the UN Agencies and NGOs were invited to participate in humanitarian development work. The housing was accorded high priority as a majority of houses in the region were reported completely or partially damaged. Simultaneously, with resettlement, action was taken to provide shelter materials for temporary shelters but permanent houses with minimum facilities was considered a priority as housing is one of the critical criteria in measuring the living standards of the community.

Participation of the UN-HABITAT in housing repair and construction programme and the contribution of the Government of Australia in funding the programme are greatly appreciated. Completion of 3,785 houses in Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts in the first phase of the permanent housing programme for returnees funded by the Government of Australia has given the necessary direction for other Agencies, Donors and NGOs to keep the momentum of the permanent housing construction programme for the Northern Province.

The GoSL is looking forward for further support from the Government of Australia and UN-HABITAT in the process of achieving stability in the Northern Province.

**Basil Rajapaksa, MP**  
Minister of Economic Development and Chairman of the Presidential Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security in the Northern Province