

Indian Housing Project

Rebuilding Homes.
Transforming Lives.



UNHABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



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Rebuilding Homes. Transforming Lives.

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This book celebrates the achievements of thousands of families in the North of Sri Lanka who successfully rebuilt their homes following years of conflict and displacement.



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Indian Housing Project

Rebuilding Homes.
Transforming Lives.



Foreword



It gives me great pleasure to introduce this publication entitled “Indian Housing Project: Rebuilding Homes; Transforming Lives” which documents the partnership between the Government of India, Government of Sri Lanka and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in post-conflict housing reconstruction for 17,945 conflict affected families in Sri Lanka.

Through a series of photographs, this publication highlights the key achievements of the Indian Housing Project implemented from October 2012 to December 2015 through a homeowner driven process.

This participatory process has provided returnee families with a sense of achievement by managing the house construction process themselves, with technical assistance from UN-Habitat.

The publication documents the stories of recovery from a cross-section of homeowners and communities in the districts of Mullaitivu, Jaffna and Kilinochchi on the

construction of homes by female headed homeowners and elderly families, construction training for youth, uses of alternative, environmentally friendly building materials and the incorporation of disaster risk reduction features and technologies in construction.

This publication is dedicated to all the families who rebuilt their homes with funding from the Government of India, as well as to hundreds of thousands of other conflict affected families who have shown remarkable resilience in the face of hardship and displacement, and are instrumental in the recovery of their communities.

Dr. Joan Clos

*United Nations Under-Secretary General and
Executive Director, United Nations Human
Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)*

Message from the Government of India



I warmly congratulate UN-Habitat for bringing out this publication entitled "Indian Housing Project: Rebuilding Homes, Transforming Lives", which documents post-conflict housing reconstruction efforts in the North of Sri Lanka through the Indian Housing Project.

In June 2010, the Government of India announced that it would construct 50,000 houses as part of its post-conflict rehabilitation assistance to Sri Lanka. The flagship Indian Housing Project, with a grant of USD 270 million, is perhaps the largest such project undertaken by the Government of India overseas. The project is being implemented in three stages. The pilot phase to construct 1,000 houses in the Northern Province through a contractor-driven model was completed in July 2012. The second phase to construct or repair 45,000 houses in the Northern and Eastern provinces is being implemented through an innovative owner-driven model, wherein the Government of India arranges technical support and financial assistance for the owner-beneficiaries to undertake the construction / repair of their houses themselves. Financial assistance of LKR 550,000 per beneficiary (LKR 250,000 for repair cases) is being released in stages, and transferred directly into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries by the High Commission of India. Four Implementing Agencies (IAs), UN-Habitat, the International Federation for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, National Housing Development Authority and Habitat for Humanity are implementing the project in the North and East of Sri Lanka

in close consultation with the Government of Sri Lanka and the beneficiary community. UN-Habitat was responsible for the reconstruction or repair of 17,945 houses in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. The project followed the highest standards of objectivity and transparency, both for beneficiary selection and grant disbursement, ensuring sustainable resettlement.

The third phase to construct 4,000 houses for the estate workers in the Central and Uva Provinces through a community-driven approach will be taken up soon. Under this model, the same IAs will facilitate construction through the cooperative societies.

This book, through a series of photographs taken by UN-Habitat staff members, celebrates the achievements of a cross section of homeowners who have rebuilt their damaged homes by contributing their own time and effort in the true spirit of the owner-driven process of construction.

I congratulate all the beneficiaries of the Indian Housing Project for their commitment and resilience in ensuring the successful completion of their houses. I hope that these permanent homes will provide families the stability and security they need for a bright, peaceful and prosperous future.

H.E. Mr. Y. K. Sinha

High Commissioner of India in Sri Lanka

Message from the Government of Sri Lanka



On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I warmly congratulate UN-Habitat's publication "Indian Housing Project: Rebuilding Homes, Transforming Lives", documenting post-conflict housing reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka with funding from the Government of India.

On 18 January 2012, the Governments of India and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide housing assistance for conflict affected families and plantation workers. Through this partnership, the Indian Government pledged a grant of USD 270 million to build 50,000 houses. The Indian Housing Project, implemented through a participatory "Homeowner Driven" methodology, is providing 46,000 houses in the North and East with a further 4,000 houses allocated to the plantation sector. This approach ensures that the families themselves are central to the design and reconstruction of their homes.

UN-Habitat, a trusted development partner of the Government of Sri Lanka for over 30 years, is one of the implementing agencies engaged by the Indian Government supporting almost 18,000 families to reconstruct their houses in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, in collaboration with the District and Divisional Administration and the returnee families themselves.

I gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the Government of India, UN-Habitat and the district and local administrators in implementing this project. This photobook illustrates the key achievements of the Indian Housing Project and is a testament to the courage and commitment of Sri Lankan families who are rebuilding their homes following years of conflict and hardship.

Hon. D. M. Swaminathan

*Minister of Prison Reforms, Rehabilitation,
Resettlement and Hindu Religious Affairs*



Introduction



It is estimated that up to 160,000 houses were damaged or destroyed in the Northern Districts.



Background

Thirty years of conflict left communities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka with their houses damaged or destroyed, severely damaged physical infrastructure, limited livelihood opportunities and little or no productive assets. Around 160,000 houses were affected in the Northern Province and communities had neither the skills nor resources for self-recovery.

The social structures providing support and leadership to the conflict affected communities were weakened as a result of the conflict. Displaced families returning to their places of origin were housed in temporary shelters constructed by humanitarian agencies or by the families themselves. These shelters were basic and families experienced severe hardships as a result. Families survived with minimal security, limited facilities for study and livelihoods and scant protection from the elements.



The Indian Housing Project in Sri Lanka

In June 2010, the Government of India, as part of its post-conflict rehabilitation support to Sri Lanka, announced its intention to fund the construction of 50,000 houses. This project, with a grant of USD 270 million (approximately LKR 30 billion), was one of the largest international grant assistance projects undertaken by the Government of India. Phase I of the project piloted a "contractor driven" approach for the construction of 1,000 houses for extremely vulnerable households in the North. Phase II, which consisted of 45,000 houses, was implemented through the "Homeowner Driven" Methodology, where homeowners themselves managed the construction of their houses.

For thousands of families, the last stages of the conflict and the ensuing years meant living a difficult life in temporary shelters made of tin sheets, cadjan or tarpaulins.

The Indian Housing project followed a homeowner driven methodology where families managed the construction of their own homes.

Four Implementing Agencies – UN-Habitat, International Federation for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in partnership with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) of the Government of Sri Lanka and Habitat for Humanity were selected to implement the project.

The project followed the highest standards of objectivity and transparency, both for beneficiary selection and grant disbursement. Each beneficiary family was provided a grant of LKR 550,000 to construct a house and LKR 250,000 to repair a damaged house.

Contribution by UN-Habitat

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) facilitated the construction and repair of 17,945 houses across the conflict affected districts of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Jaffna in the Northern Province, comprising 17,500 fully constructed houses and 445 house repairs.

Commencing in October 2012, UN-Habitat implemented the Indian Housing Project in over 140 Grama Niladhari (GN) Divisions in 10 Divisional Secretariat (DS) Divisions. This project succeeded in helping thousands of families to fulfil their housing

needs and expectations whilst ensuring a sense of ownership through a fully participatory

process undertaken with the “homeowner driven” methodology of construction.

This publication, through a series of photographs taken by UN-Habitat staff members, provides a window to the project’s key achievements and outputs. It celebrates the transformation of lives of the conflict affected families in the North of Sri Lanka.



The map indicates the DS Divisions assisted by the project through UN-Habitat.





People's Process of Reconstruction

A participatory process was adopted to implement the Indian Housing Project in Sri Lanka's Northern Province. This methodology ensured stakeholder participation from inception whilst giving a voice and ownership to all beneficiary households.

The highest standards of objectivity and transparency were followed to select housing beneficiaries. Beneficiary lists were placed on noticeboards in villages to ensure all residents had access to information, while public mass meetings were held to raise awareness on the project objectives and methodology. A transparent grievance redress mechanism was established to enable community members to raise grievances throughout the selection process.

Village Reconstruction Committees (VRCs) were formed in all project locations, with beneficiaries elected as office bearers. These community organisations were responsible for monitoring the project progress whilst assisting vulnerable beneficiaries with construction activities.



Targeting the Vulnerable

The highest standards of objectivity and transparency were followed to select the most vulnerable families for housing assistance. Eligibility criteria to pre-qualify for assistance and weighted criteria to select the most vulnerable families were developed through a consultative process involving representatives from the Government of Sri Lanka, Government of India and the Implementing Agencies.

Public mass meetings were facilitated by UN-Habitat staff to raise awareness of the project methodology and roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders.



Scoring for beneficiary selection underway in villages with community members scrutinising final beneficiary lists displayed at prominent locations.





Strengthening Community Social Structures



Village Reconstruction Committees (VRCs) were formed with office bearers selected from among the beneficiaries. VRCs facilitated bulk purchasing of building materials and sourced skilled labour. VRCs also organised activities to support the most vulnerable beneficiaries who faced difficulties in completing construction.

Community Monitoring Committees monitored project implementation in the villages by identifying issues affecting construction progress and bringing them to the notice of the project partners for resolution. Regular public meetings with the community helped to motivate beneficiaries to actively contribute to the construction of their houses while acting as a forum to share information and best practices.



Community Action Planning (CAP) workshops were initiated to identify and prioritise the infrastructure needs of the conflict affected settlements in the project locations. These workshops were facilitated by UN-Habitat's community mobilisation team with the active participation of beneficiaries and Government officials.


Empowering Conflict Affected Women

The Indian Housing Project proactively developed the capacity of conflict affected women. 40% of the leadership positions in VRCs were held by women, enabling active participation in the development of their communities.

Small savings groups were established in villages, in partnership with the Sri Lanka Women's Development Services Co-operative Society Ltd and Helpage Sri Lanka. The membership of these groups were almost exclusively female. The Savings Groups enabled women to access loans at low interest rates for household emergencies and to invest in livelihood activities.

Opening joint bank accounts enabled women to play an active, decision making role on allocating the housing grant while providing them access to finances for construction.



A photograph of a woman and a young child. The woman, Mrs. Srikanthy, is smiling and looking down at the child. She has dark hair and is wearing a yellow t-shirt. The child, a young girl with dark curly hair, is also smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a yellow and white t-shirt. They are standing in front of a wooden door with a decorative archway. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window with a mesh screen.

“ My greatest wish is to provide a proper education for my children. I have improved my tailoring business after moving to the new house. I believe this income will help in fulfilling my children’s needs without having to depend on any external assistance. ”

Mrs. Srikanthy
Kilinochchi district

Empowering Female Homeowners

Mrs. Inkaran Srikanthy, a 32 year old mother of three, suffered multiple displacements and lived in temporary shelters in several locations. When the family returned to their village of Ponnagar in July 2010, they found their home badly damaged and uninhabitable. As Srikanthy had no regular source of income and no support from her husband, she started working as a casual worker in the village and undertook sewing orders, supplementing her monthly household income.

In October 2012, Srikanthy was selected as a housing beneficiary of the Indian Housing Project and as a female head, she was given priority support by UN-Habitat. As the project followed a “homeowner driven” process, Srikanthy was responsible for the planning, implementation and monitoring of the construction with the assistance of UN-Habitat’s technical team.

The family had faced several challenges during the construction process including the lack of access to a regular water source, meaning they had to collect water from common wells in the village for construction and daily household consumption. Despite this, Srikanthy successfully completed the construction within a period of 8 months. Her permanent house is

“Srikanthy has gained knowledge and skills in construction work through the technical training provided by UN-Habitat as well as practical experience through her own labour contribution. Due to her careful planning, commitment and the contribution towards the construction, she completed the house on schedule while saving labour costs. Other project beneficiaries are now seeking her advice.”

Ms. M. Geetha,
UN-Habitat Technical Officer

550 square feet with two bed rooms, a living room, kitchen and toilet.

The “homeowner driven” methodology followed by the Indian Housing Project strengthens family relationships and enhances beneficiary’s skills in construction and leadership. It also empowers men and women to manage their own recovery, thereby reducing dependence. Srikanthy’s remarkable achievements in rebuilding her home demonstrate the resourcefulness and resilience of women in the North of Sri Lanka.



1



2



3

1. The family near their temporary shelter.
2. Srikanthy engaged in construction.
3. Srikanthy with her family outside their new home.



Female masonry trainees undergoing
"on the job" training in Kilinochchi district.

Supporting Women in the Construction Sector

In Sri Lanka, masonry and carpentry trades have been traditionally dominated by men, with very few women engaged in these sectors. UN-Habitat, with funding from the Indian Housing Project, implemented the ***"Vocational Skills Development of Post War Resettled Communities in Northern Sri Lanka Programme"*** to support young people to enter the construction industry. This programme gave opportunities for women to break traditional barriers by moving into previously male-dominated occupations in the construction sector. The National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA), German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and CEFE NET Sri Lanka partnered with UN-Habitat to deliver this training. The Programme encouraged youth participation with the twin objectives of enhancing their skills and creating a cadre of skilled workers that were urgently needed for post-conflict housing construction activities in the North.

The training programme was of six months duration, including three months each of class room and practical training on a construction site. Trainees were divided

into groups and allocated project sites under the guidance of a head mason or trainer. The masonry curriculum included

“ This training programme was very useful, not only because it gave me a job opportunity, but also provided vital knowledge on masonry work. I was able to monitor the masonry work in our house and ensure the masons followed good construction practices. ”

Mrs. Mangaleshwaran Sivaneshwary
Kilinochchi district

modules on basic setting out and excavation of foundations, mixing of cement and concrete, construction of foundations, junction and corner construction, plastering and skirting, floor construction, tiling and toilet construction. For carpentry trainees, the training module included planning and seasoning of timber and planks, manufacturing joints, fixing and adjustments, roof work, shuttering, manufacturing doors, windows and frames as well as varnishing, polishing and spray painting.



1. Carpentry training in Mullaitivu district.

2. Classroom masonry training in Kilinochchi district.

Improving Construction Skills



Training on construction good practices was provided to skilled and semi-skilled local artisans engaged in construction of the houses by UN-Habitat, including training on eco-friendly, cost-effective, alternative construction practices and disaster risk reduction measures. Local youth participated in formal construction training, enabling them to engage in masonry and carpentry as livelihoods. The majority of trainees were women, who used their skills to construct their own houses and find employment as skilled artisans.





Rebuilding Homes

From 2012 to 2015, UN-Habitat worked closely with the beneficiary homeowners, Village Reconstruction Committees, the Government of Sri Lanka and the Indian High Commission to construct 17,945 conflict damaged houses in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.

A grant of LKR 550,000 was provided to each beneficiary family in four installments to construct a new house while a grant of LKR 250,000 was provided to repair a partially damaged house. All families built their homes according to Local Authority guidelines with a minimum area of 550 square feet.

As the project followed a participatory “homeowner driven” process of construction, UN-Habitat provided technical assistance to homeowners so that they could in turn manage the construction process themselves. Technical support was provided for the house design, preparation of bills of quantities and assistance with land tenure documentation. UN-Habitat’s Technical Officers regularly visited the construction sites and assisted beneficiaries to source good quality building materials and supervise skilled labour.

The Indian Housing Project promoted the use of environmentally friendly building materials and alternative technologies including compressed stabilised earth blocks, fair faced masonry and treated plantation timber, to minimise the impact on the environment.

Two ‘demonstration’ houses were built in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu to showcase environmentally friendly, alternative technologies to other beneficiaries in the wider community.



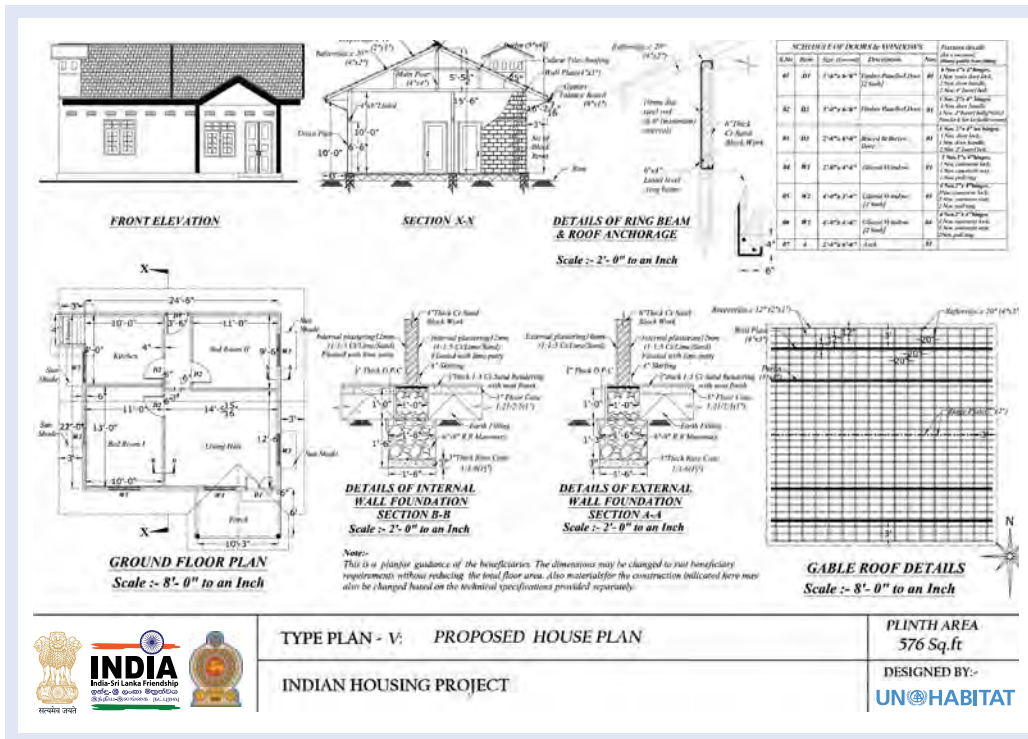
Providing Technical Support



To assist beneficiaries to construct permanent homes, UN-Habitat technical teams provided basic construction skills training. UN-Habitat technical staff visited individual construction sites to monitor construction progress and

quality. Provision of on-site technical support to beneficiaries and artisans assisted in the timely resolution of technical issues. Technical staff also regularly updated beneficiary log books with their observations and instructions.





House Designs

Several house designs were prepared by UN-Habitat to assist homeowners to conceptualise and construct their new home. Homeowners had the opportunity to modify the plans according to their family's needs and aspirations. The concept of "Vastu Shastra", the traditional Hindu system of astrology in architecture,

was taken into consideration when developing the house plans in order to adhere to local cultural practices. Each design was 550 square feet and consisted of a living room, two bed rooms, a kitchen and a toilet. Some plans included front verandahs while other families added them later.



Helping Vulnerable Beneficiaries

Many community members assisted fellow beneficiaries who needed additional support, in particular the vulnerable including the elderly and persons with disabilities.



Improving Resilience to Natural Disasters



Floods, droughts and high winds are the primary natural hazards affecting the project areas. Raised foundations have enabled the families and their assets to be safe from prevailing floods.

A minimum external wall thickness of 150mm and a ring beam at lintel level was introduced to provide stability.

Anchoring of the timber roof structure to the masonry superstructure with stub columns and steel anchors provided protection from high winds. Plaster bands on roofs protected tiles from being displaced by high winds.





“ Many families in our village, who had no money to build permanent houses, have been supported by this project. On behalf our family, we want to thank everyone who helped us to build this beautiful house. ”

Mr. and Mrs. Sivarasa
Kilinochchi district

A Brand New Home for the Sivarasa Family

Mr. Vellupillai Sivarasa, a farmer and toddy tapper from Jaffna and his family were displaced in 1996, with the intensification of hostilities in the Jaffna district. Mr. Sivarasa and his family moved to Kilinochchi, where they lived for over 12 years. When the conflict ended, they returned to Jaffna but found their family home damaged beyond repair, requiring a complete rebuild.

By making toddy with palmyrah fruits and cultivating a half acre of paddy land, Sivarasa earned about LKR 7,000 per month. This was not enough to build a permanent house to replace their damaged home. With no savings, the family lived with friends for several months. In 2011, Sivarasa built a temporary shelter for the family using tin sheets, cadjan and tarpaulin. Although they were happy to have their own living space, the shelter had insufficient facilities for the family of six.

In May 2014, Sivarasa's family were selected as beneficiaries for housing support. Sivarasa and his wife were jointly responsible for planning, designing, organizing and constructing their house. They hired two masons and a carpenter for skilled construction work while the older family members contributed their own labour by undertaking unskilled masonry and carpentry work.

Their completed 550 square foot house consists of a living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and a toilet. It has been constructed using cement blocks for walls, clay roofing tiles and Palmyrah timber for the roof structure. Mahogany timber has been used for the doors and windows whilst timber from the Neem tree has been used for the shrine room. The family also saved money by producing their own cement blocks using moulds provided by UN-Habitat to beneficiary families in the village.

Disaster Risk Reduction features have been incorporated into the house design. 150mm thick blocks have been used to build external walls tied with a reinforced concrete ring beam at lintel level. The hipped roof has been anchored to the ring beam and restraining bands have been incorporated over the roof to resist high winds. In addition, raising the foundation above the annual flood level will prevent flood damage during the monsoon rains.

With the completion of construction, the family moved into their house in early 2015. Their temporary shelter is now used as an alternate kitchen, where non-vegetarian meals are prepared. The family is now gradually extending the house by building a front verandah.



Before and after:
the Sivarasa
family near their
temporary shelter
and outside their
permanent house.

Promoting Cost-Effective, Eco-Friendly Construction Practices



Alternative cost effective construction practices, favourable to the local environment and contributing to local economies, were introduced to local artisans. Training programmes were held at the National Engineering Research and Development Center.

Newly introduced 'fair faced' blockwork was popular with many families as walls do not require plastering, thereby reducing the use of sand, cement and skilled labour. Sand in particular was a scarce resource throughout the construction process in the North.





House constructed using fair faced block work in Kilinochchi district.



Using Local Building Materials

UN-Habitat encouraged the use of building materials that are readily available in the local market. Clay roofing tiles were the preferred option for roof cladding while many families opted to recycle tin sheets from their temporary shelters to build verandahs.

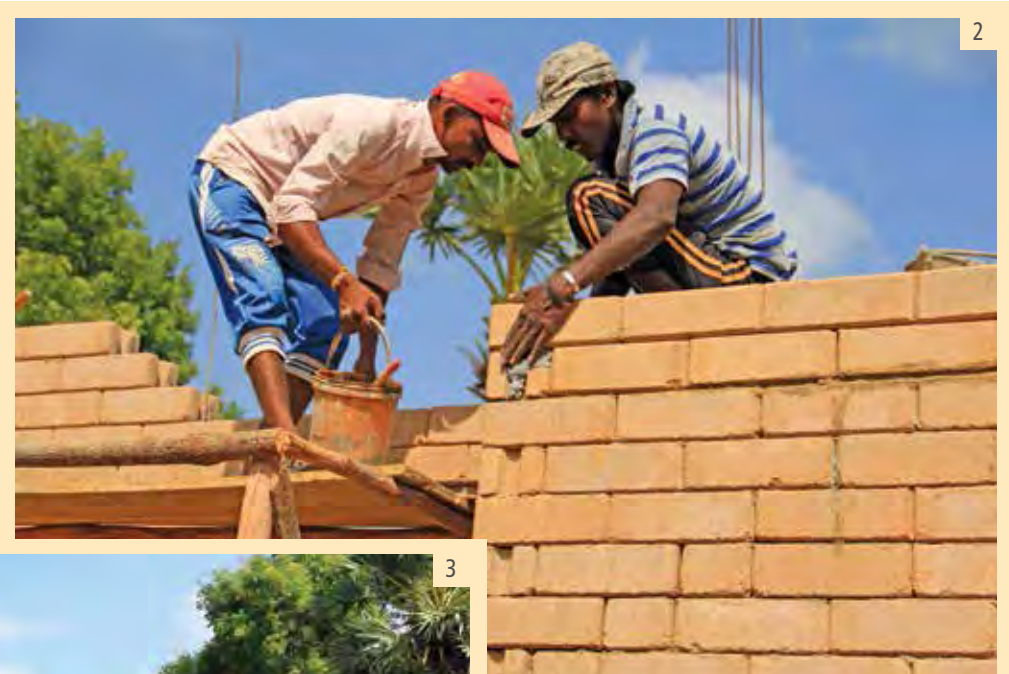
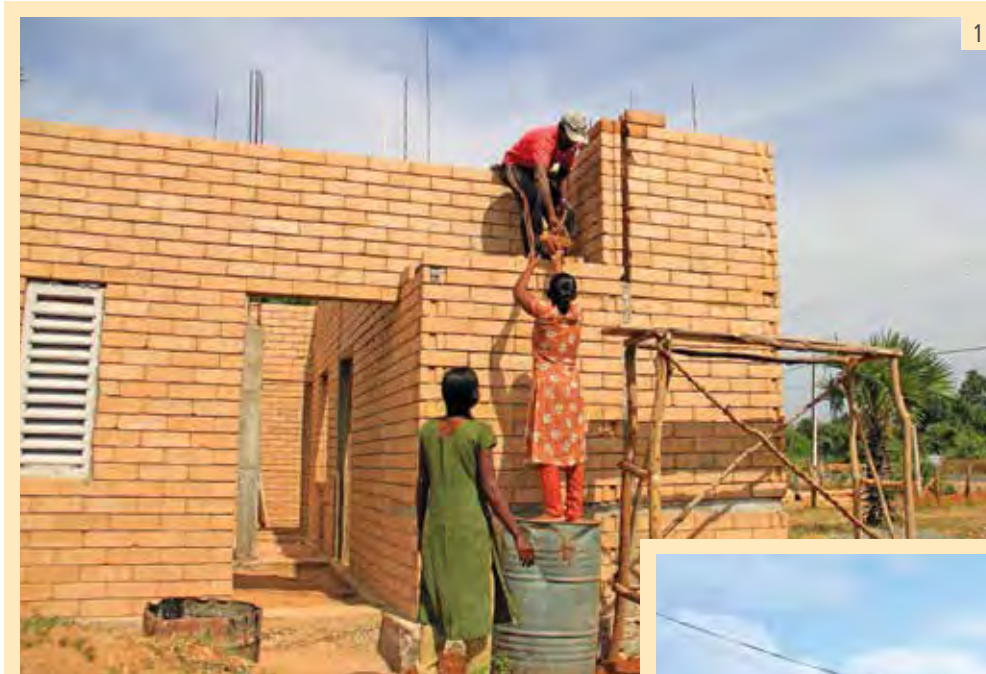
Roof work in progress in
Mullaitivu district.





Completed demonstration house constructed with Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks in Kilinochchi district.

Building Demonstration Houses



Two “demonstration” houses were constructed to promote Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks and other alternative technologies in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.

1 & 2: Walls constructed using compressed stabilised earth blocks.

3: Completed demonstration house in Mullaitivu.



Concrete Blocks

Production of concrete blocks for wall construction is a common practice in the Northern Province, as they are cheaper than clay bricks and can be produced on-site.



Using Recycled Building Materials

Waffle or filler slabs, were introduced to provide a low cost solution to replace costly concrete used for toilet roofs, sunshades and roofs for verandas. These slabs, while reducing the consumption

of sand, cement, coarse aggregates and steel, uses discarded tiles and curd pots to reduce the volume of concrete.

Using recycled debris significantly reduced the cost of construction.





Ms.Vasuki's newly constructed house stands out in the village.

Building Environmentally Friendly Demonstration Houses



Ms. Vasuki, from Ponnagar village in Kilinochchi, was selected as a housing beneficiary of the Indian Housing Project in November 2012. As a female head of household with five children, she was given priority support. As Vasuki showed a keen interest in building a house with environmentally friendly features, she was selected to build a “demonstration” house. Technical assistance was provided by UN-Habitat including the selection of a house design, obtaining local authority approvals and sourcing eco-friendly building materials. Vasuki was responsible for the planning and supervision of the construction work with UN-Habitat’s technical team.

During the construction period, she hired several masons and carpenters while providing her own labour support.

In April 2014, Vasuki completed her house using Compressed Stabilised Earth Blockwork (CSEB). It is 550 square feet with two bed rooms, a living room, kitchen and an outdoor toilet. A rain water harvesting system has been installed to address the scarcity of water.

For roof construction, a plantation timber species, Grandis, has been used. This timber was treated on-site using heated engine oil, an alternative low cost treatment method. Pre-cast concrete door and window frames also assisted to save precious timber resources and cut costs.

In addition to using alternative building materials, Vasuki had practiced several methods to minimize wastage and construction costs, including using salvaged building materials for the foundation and concrete, tile and brick pieces converted to coarse aggregates for the concrete floor.

Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks



Compressed Stabilised Earth Block walls are cost effective and environmentally friendly requiring no plaster, consuming less cement mortar for bonding and having a reduced sand and cement content. The houses constructed with stabilised earth bricks also provide greater thermal comfort.



Before & after: Ms. Vasuki’s sons outside their temporary shelter; Mother and son near the new house during construction.



“ This house is a wonderful gift we received from the Indian Housing Project. We never imagined that we would be able to build a home like this in our lifetime. ”

Mr. Thajeeakaran,
Mullaitivu district

New Beginning for the Thajeekaran Family

Following many years of displacement and hardship living in Internally Displaced Persons camps and temporary shelters, Thajeekaran and Lingeswary returned to Sivanagar in 2013. As the couple had no funds of their own to build a permanent house, they constructed a temporary shelter with tin sheets and cadjan.

When the family was selected as housing beneficiaries of the Indian Housing Project, Thajeekaran and Lingeswary started clearing the land and excavating for the foundations. As Thajeekaran had previous experience, he was happy to undertake most of the construction work with technical assistance provided by UN-Habitat.

Lingeswary, in addition to her household work and cattle farming, assisted Thajeekaran with masonry work.

The new home is particularly special to the homeowners as they have contributed their own labour towards its construction. Their house is 600 square feet with a living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and an outdoor toilet. Thajeekaran used palmyrah timber from his garden for the roof structure and has planted coconut and mahogany saplings to replace the felled trees. The couple also saved money by recycling building materials for the flooring. The foundation of the house was raised by one foot to safeguard against floods during

monsoon rains. The roof has been anchored firmly to protect the house during heavy winds.

Both Thajeekaran and Lingeswary are proud of their active engagement in the construction of the house. The positive experience has given Thajeekaran the confidence to undertake masonry work in the village and he now provides masonry support to other families.



- 1: The family outside their temporary shelter.
- 2: Mrs. Thajeekaran undertaking plastering work.
- 3: The Thajeekaran family outside their new home.



Colourful wall murals of indigenous fauna and flora gives a vibrant, personal touch to the exteriors of the newly completed houses.



Personalising Indoor and Outdoor Spaces



Colourful Exteriors

The homeowner driven process gives families the freedom to decide on their own house design and finishes according to local authority regulations and in-kind contributions.

Showcasing the vibrancy of the Northern Province, homeowners have 'personalised' their homes by using numerous designs, colours, murals and motifs.



Intricate Floor Designs

Intricate motifs on the floors of newly completed houses express the creativity of the families.



Homeowners in their new permanent home in Mullaitivu district. The floor designs add a unique touch to the house.



Decorative Grillwork

External wall murals and decorative window grills adorn many houses in the Northern Province. Window grills provide security to the families while expressing their individual tastes.

A family outside their new home in Mullaitivu district. Decorative white grills can be seen in the background.



Fences and Entryways



1



2



1: The palmyrah fence is the typical element which separates the home plot from the street, providing privacy and enabling families to go about their day to day activities within the compound.

2. A cross on the gate is often seen in homes of Christian families, particularly in coastal villages.



Transforming Lives

By moving into permanent homes, families have gained not just shelter from the elements but also safety, security, and space to engage in their livelihood activities. It has provided space for children to play and study and for families to cook in comfortable indoor kitchens. Additional storage space has ensured that agricultural produce and items of value can be stored safely.

Many families improved their livelihoods by using the permanent homes to practice their livelihood activities including tailoring, fish net repair workshops and bicycle repair shops. Many farmers use their rooms to store produce while temporary shelters have also been used as storage areas and to house livestock and to operate retail shops.

Moving into a permanent home with more space and freedom, has transformed the lives of families.





Fishermen in coastal villages of Jaffna use their front verandahs to mend and store fishing nets.

Reviving Livelihoods



The additional spaces in permanent homes have helped many homeowners to engage in their livelihood activities with greater ease and comfort.



Using Compounds for Livelihood Activities

Homeowners have more space and time to spend on livelihood activities since moving to their permanent houses. The compound makes an ideal space for drying excess fish for family consumption.

Re-Using Temporary Shelters



Families are re-using their temporary shelters or material from their shelters for other purposes, usually to support

livelihood activities including storing agricultural produce, housing livestock and using the shelter as retail shops.

Mrs. Elysamma's living room transforms into a sewing workshop during the day.





Mrs. Sebastian Elysamma moved to Killinochchi district from Matale district in central Sri Lanka in 1977. As she had no property of her own, she initially lived in an Internally Displaced Persons Camp with her young family. Later, she and her husband cleared a two acre plot of land in Malayalapuram GN Division in Killinochchi and settled there with their children. "Elephants used to frequent this area when we first settled here and we lived in a mud hut" says Elysamma, recalling the early years in Malayalapuram.

When Elysamma's husband died over twenty years ago she brought up her family, undertaking sewing orders to make ends meet. Four of her five children are now married and three live on land she subdivided. She and her family were displaced twice from Killinochchi during the conflict. Upon returning to the village, she lived in a temporary shelter with her youngest son.

“ My son and I provided unskilled labour for the mason as labour costs are high and unskilled labour is hard to come by, as there is a great amount of construction going on in the area. ”

Mrs. Sebastian Elysamma
Killinochchi district

In late 2012, Elysamma was selected as a beneficiary to construct a permanent house. She selected a house design of her choice from those presented by UN-Habitat. This design was then amended to suit her needs and the standard Bill of Quantities was also modified. With the grant provided by the project, Elysamma worked diligently to complete the foundation work of her new house. She worked closely with building material suppliers to purchase material including rubble, sand and cement.

A skilled mason was hired from the village to undertake the construction work while Elysamma closely supervised the construction of the foundation. As her son was busy with his vocational studies at this time, she provided unskilled labour assistance.

Elysamma and her son moved into their new house in 2013. They are happy to have their own home after years of displacement and living in temporary shelters. The living room now acts as Elysamma's tailoring workshop where she makes clothes for neighbours and friends.



1



2

1: Mrs. Elysamma discussing construction progress with her skilled mason.

2: Mrs. Elysamma and her son outside their newly constructed permanent house.



Living rooms in permanent houses have become extended “learning spaces” with children using whitewashed walls as makeshift blackboards to practice their writing skills.

Homes as Learning Spaces



The new homes have comfortable spaces for children to read and do their homework. Having a house that provides shelter from the elements has provided a more conducive study environment.

Functional indoor kitchens
have made life easier for
families who can now prepare
and consume meals in comfort.





1



2

Indoor Kitchens

1 & 2: Indoor kitchens provide a safe and hygienic environment to prepare family meals.

3: Smoke free chimneys reduce indoor air pollution, whilst improved cook stoves reduce the consumption of wood.



3



Female headed families, empowered to take charge of the construction of their houses, feel a sense of achievement on completion. They have also acquired construction skills, enabling them to earn a living as semi-skilled construction workers, while enjoying cost

savings in construction of their own houses. In addition to housing support, female headed households, affected by protection issues, have been able to access referral services through the project.





Shrine Rooms

In most homes, religious symbols are prominently placed in shrine rooms and entrances.

The shrine room serves a dual purpose in agricultural communities. Agricultural produce and seeds are stored together with the families' valuables as this room can be securely locked.



Newly constructed house belonging to the Sellaia family in Mullaitivu district.





“ I want to thank god for giving me strength during our difficult times and for keeping my parents safe. My greatest wish is to look after my parents, which is why I remained single. I was disappointed I could not provide them with a comfortable, secure house to live in. I am happy that I have now achieved this goal. ”

Ms. Sellaiya Sivasothi
Mullaitivu district

Ms. Sivasothi is the sixth child in the Sellaiya family of 11 children. During the conflict, her siblings had relocated to other districts leaving Sivasothi as the sole caregiver for her parents. With the resettlement of families in Mullaitivu district, she returned to the village with her parents and lived in a temporary shelter.

undertook the work herself with the help of an assistant.

By undertaking most of the work herself, Sivasothi saved about LKR 20,000 from the cost of the foundation. She was also able to complete the superstructure work to window sill level without external support. As a leg injury suffered during the conflict hindered Sivasothi from continuing construction work above lintel level, she hired a skilled mason for the remaining work while she continued to provide support. She also produced cement blocks for wall construction and constructed the outdoor toilet. Their 550 square foot house with two bedrooms, kitchen and living area was completed in April 2015.

After selection for housing support, Sivasothi commenced the foundation work which she planned to complete within a month by hiring a skilled mason. However, the mason's services were discontinued due to poor workmanship and Sivasothi

Ms. Sivasothi's parents, 88 year old Mr. Kanthar Sellaiya and 83 year old Mrs. Sellaiya Thangamani, were selected as beneficiaries from Pulimchchinathakulam village in Mullaitivu. However, being elderly and in poor health, the couple were unable to rise to the challenge of managing the house construction themselves. Their daughter, who resides with them, 52 year old Sivasothi, came forward to help her parents, using her masonry skills gained through a training programme she attended in 2003.



Before and after: Sivasothi and her mother outside their temporary shelter which is now used for storage and in their new indoor kitchen.

Greening Conflict Affected Villages and Reviving Home Gardens



To help green the conflict affected villages and recover lost forest cover, saplings of fruit and timber producing trees were distributed among beneficiary families to be planted in their home plots. Tree planting helped to reduce the negative impacts on the environment caused by

construction while greening project areas and improving nutrition for the families.

Seeds and training on organic home gardening were also provided to beneficiaries with the support of the Department of Agriculture.

Home gardens provide nutrition and additional income for beneficiary families.



Shelter and Security for All



New homes have provided families with safety and security and space to live their daily lives in comfort. Thousands of homeowners have been given a new lease of life by moving into a permanent home. After years of conflict and hardship, the comfort provided by a permanent house can be seen in their happy faces.

Shelter has benefitted all, not only the human inhabitants but also their pets, who have also found a place for themselves in the completed houses.



The smiling faces of homeowners express their new found security in permanent houses.

Transforming Conflict Affected Villages into Thriving Human Settlements



In order to support holistic village development, UN-Habitat implemented other donor funded reconstruction projects to provide community infrastructure facilities in Indian

Housing Project villages. These facilities, selected based on community priorities, included preschools, community centres, water supply schemes and internal roads.

Children at a newly constructed preschool in Mullaitivu district.





1



2



3

1: Preschool in Kilinochchi district.


2 & 3: School water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in Kilinochchi district.



Sense of achievement: A family sits contentedly on the doorstep of their newly completed house in Mullaitivu district.

A new beginning: Homeowner with her young daughters outside their permanent home in Kilinochchi district.





Three decades of conflict resulted in severe damage and destruction to houses and infrastructure facilities in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Unable to recover from major financial shocks due to poverty and years of displacement, the majority of families were incapable of rebuilding their damaged houses. For years, they lived in temporary shelters that offered little security or protection from the elements.

From 2012, the Government of India funded the construction of 45,000 houses through a homeowner driven process. The project was facilitated through four implementing agencies, including UN-Habitat, in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. This photo book provides a glimpse into the lives of the families who rebuilt their permanent homes with funding from the Indian Housing Project and technical support from UN-Habitat. It celebrates the transformation of their lives through the provision of permanent housing, the cornerstone of a family's survival and development.

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