

## Promoting Agricultural Mechanization in Sri Lanka

Through the United Nations Trust Fund For Human Security (UNTFHS) funded project, *"Support for sustainable livelihood recovery among the conflict affected population in the North and East Regions through improved agricultural productivity and community-based entrepreneurship,"* a programme for the revitalisation of agriculture through the introduction of appropriate mechanization technologies was conducted in 2009 and 2010 in Batticaloa and Trincomalee. This programme distributed efficient agricultural equipment to 167 families and trained 800 beneficiaries in the operation and maintenance of farm equipment.

One of the many successful participants in this programme is Mr. Amirthalingam, a 51 year old father of three from Nairpalthodam, Batticaloa. While Amirthalingam's life has improved greatly since his involvement with UNIDO's project, he still recalls the hardship endured to reach this point. *"At the age of 16 when my father met a fatal accident, I was forced to quit school in order to support my family."* Amirthalingam worked long days as an agricultural labourer while continuing to farm his family's two acres of land. Still Amirthalingam is grateful for his experiences, and also his life. On a day of intense fighting in Batticaloa in 1984, Amirthalingam and his friends found themselves suddenly caught in

cross-fire; while Amirthalingam managed to narrowly escape the fighting, two of his friends unfortunately did not.

After such great personal loss, Amirthalingam moved forward and began to farm five acres of paddy by hand. Amirthalingam knew that the use of a tractor would allow him to farm much more than five acres of land more efficiently; however, his attempt to save for a tractor on Rs. 12,500 (\$113) of monthly earnings was next to impossible. He continued to search for financing opportunities but faced rejection from the banks or high rates, of up to 100% from the financing companies. In order to address this issue UNIDO implemented a programme to provide tractors as a grant to Farmers' Organisations (FO). These tractors were then distributed to screened beneficiaries who were responsible to pay the FO back for 50% of the tractor cost. For increased sustainability, funds collected from the beneficiaries are pooled together in a revolving fund to purchase more equipment for the community. Tractors currently in operation are also rented to the community's farmers at reduced rates. UNIDO complimented the dissemination of machinery with comprehensive training programmes in operation and maintenance.

Amirthalingam has successfully completed all trainings and is now able to farm 14 acres of land with continuously increasing monthly earnings, currently at Rs. 29,000 (\$263) per month. Amirthalingam's wife is happy to provide more opportunities for her children, *"Sometimes in the past I cried, I could not even satisfy the basic needs of my children, but today they have things other children have and are able to attend a national level school in town."* With an expanding farm, these proud parents could not be happier to see a bright future for their three children.



Amirthalingam using Mould Board Plough

## Creating Opportunities through Fruit Farming in Sri Lanka

Through the United Nations Trust Fund For Human Security (UNTFHS) funded project, *"Support for sustainable livelihood recovery among the conflict affected population in the North and East Regions through improved agricultural productivity and community-based entrepreneurship."* Within this scope a training programme in *Fruit Farming as a Business Enterprise* was organised in co-operation with the Rural Women's Development Society, the Department of Agriculture and the District Chamber of Commerce in Trincomalee. This programme was conducted in 2010 and targeted rural women entrepreneurs for increased skills and capacity in entrepreneurialism.

Ms. Subaskaran Ranjani, a 44 year old mother of two children from Kumpurupitty Village in Trincomalee has been displaced by the civil conflict for much of her life, but was fortunately able to return home to Kumpurupitty in August 2009 accompanied by her husband, Mother and Father. Upon returning home, Ranjani had no plan to improve her life. With a continued fear of return to conflict it has been hard for many displaced persons to adjust after the conflict ended in May 2009. Unfortunately, the adjustment

has been extremely difficult for Ranjani's husband who now suffers from depression. Ranjani's nine year old child has also returned injured and often incurs medical expenses.

Ranjani now lives in a basic clay hut with her husband, two children, Mother and Father and has a few acres of land. Since the conflict, Ranjani has struggled to provide a basic subsistence living for her family as an agricultural labourer approximately 10 days per month earning a monthly income of Rs. 7,500 (\$66). Ranjani's fight for the economic wellbeing of her family has been difficult and this was recognised by the Women's Rural Development Society who recommended her for the project's training in *Fruit Farming as a Business Enterprise*. *"I was quite happy when [I] saw my name in the selected participants list ... really; I am fighting to get income to manage my family's cost of living."*

After successful completion of the *Fruit Farming as a Business Enterprise* training programme, Ranjani gained skills in modern farming techniques and increased her entrepreneurial capacity. Now Ranjani is an entrepreneur who continues to learn new skills through the support of UNIDO's activities. As a successful beneficiary Ranjani also supports others in the cultivation of their papaya through knowledge sharing exercises.

During the training Ranjani received papaya seedlings and fertilizers to start her farm, now enabling her to earn an additional monthly income of Rs. 6,000 (\$53) for a total of Rs. 13,500 (\$119). In an innovative manner, Ranjani has decided to grow green gram between her papaya trees to fetch additional income.

When asked about her current situation, Ranjani informed that *"we are ok now; I am gradually increasing my earning through [cultivating] papaya. I have no doubt it will give my family income [for] at least 2 1/2 years. I plan to plant more papaya and lease more land. She further added with a soft smile, You know, my husband is also ok now, and he is doing a job as unskilled labour."*



Ranjani with her Son and Papaya Trees



## Improving People's Lives through Papaya Cultivation in Sri Lanka

Through the United Nations Trust Fund For Human Security (UNTFHS) funded project, *"Support for sustainable livelihood recovery among the conflict affected population in the North and East Regions through improved agricultural productivity and community-based entrepreneurship,"* a technical skills development programme in *"One Village One Crop"* – Papaya cultivation was organised in co-operation with the Rural Women's Development Society, the Department of Agriculture and the District Chamber of Commerce in Trincomalee. This programme was conducted in 2010 and targeted rural women entrepreneurs for increased skills and capacity in entrepreneurialism.

Ms. Annathurai Theepamalini, a 30 year old mother of one 10 year old child, from Kumpurupitty, Trincomalee, became an internationally displaced person in 1990. After living in India for five years and a refugee camp in Alashtodam, Sri Lanka for another seven

years, Theepamalini was able to finally return to her hometown in 2002; however, her return was not as she had hoped. Theepamalini and her family faced great hardship in the refugee camps, so much so that her husband committed suicide leaving her and her infant son to fend for themselves.

Theepamalini's return to Kumpurupitty, after 12 years of displacement and the loss of her husband, was a struggle. Still she was determined to improve her life and was lucky to find work as a pre-school teacher in her village run by the Women's Rural Development Society. However, on her monthly salary of Rs. 5,000 (\$45) per month paid out only twice a year she was still unable to support her child. While this situation was challenging for some time, Theepamalini was able to conduct an evening class for children and do tailoring work late at night to make a total earning of Rs. 10,000 (\$90) per month.

Raising her child alone and working day and night became quickly unsustainable, but Theepamalini was left with no choice until her participation in the *"One Village One Crop"* – Papaya cultivation training programme conducted by UNIDO. Through participating in this programme Theepamalini gained skills in modern farming techniques and increased her capacity to manage the marketing and financial aspects of running a smallholder operation. Theepamalini is excited to have gained the skills and knowhow necessary to cultivate and market papaya and doubled her salary to Rs. 20,000 (\$180) per month.

Theepamalini's additional skills and income have also made her more confident to help others. *"The trainings with UNIDO gave me [the] confidence and knowledge to guide others in Kumpurupitty and adjoining villages to improve their cultivation techniques and improve income after six months."* Theepamalini is now confident in herself and her future. She has since remarried, and, putting her child first, Theepamalini is happy to have purchased Rs. 500,000 (\$4,545) worth of insurance for her child.



Theepamalini with her Papaya Trees

## Rice Flour Production and Packaging in Sri Lanka

Through the United Nations Trust Fund For Human Security (UNTFHS) funded project, *"Support for sustainable livelihood recovery among the conflict affected population in the North and East Regions through Improved agricultural productivity and community-based entrepreneurship,"* a technical skills development programme in *Rice Flour Production and Packaging* was conducted in 2009 in Batticaloa. This programme trained 30 rural rice flour making businesses, rural small business counsellors, co-op society members in rice quality standards, production methods, quality testing, packaging, branding and marketing linkages.

Mr. Thambirasa Nadarasa, a 43 year old father of three from Manmunai, Batticaloa faced three displacements from 1990 to 2007 making it hard for him to continuously provide for his family through

subsistence livelihoods activities. With seven acres of land, Nadarasa was able to earn about Rs. 7,500 (\$68) per month. During this time Nadarasa faced great financial barriers in his effort to support his children's education, but continued to search for more sustainable income sources.

After prolonged hardship, Nadarasa took a bank loan of Rs. 25,000 (\$227) to explore his idea of making rice flour; however, he still lacked the technical expertise needed for effective production. Sometimes his flour was rejected due to inferior quality and he was able to produce only 35 packages of rice per month. As such, Nadarasa was keen to participate in UNIDO's training programme in *Rice Flour Production and Packaging* in 2009. In this programme Nadarasa and his wife both learned the technical skills necessary to package and market higher quality rice.

Today, Nadarasa focuses on farming paddy and marketing with shops in Batticaloa, while his wife focuses on the processing activities, like roasting, weighing and also packaging. This skilled family effort has resulted in multiplying their production to 250 packages of rice per month; which, through effective marketing techniques, are available for sale in five shops in Batticaloa. Nadarasa's income is now Rs.13,000 (\$118) per month and continues to increase.

Nadarasa and his family now feel more secure in their day to day life and put much effort into continuously expanding their family businesses for a brighter future. *"I had never had the opportunity to participate in any sort of training before; this has provided us the direction and moral support we needed to upgrade our business."* With a smile he reports, *"I am happy now, I will never leave this business."*



Nadarasa's Final Product



## Linking Rural Enterprises to Global Markets in Sri Lanka

Through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) funded project, *"Support for sustainable livelihood recovery among the conflict affected population in the North and East Regions through improved agricultural productivity and community-based entrepreneurship,"* in partnership with the Zonta International funded project *"Rehabilitation and reconstruction support for rural community based self-help initiatives among women in the tsunami affected provinces of Sri Lanka"* UNIDO conducted a technical skills development programme in *Rural Small Business Development Counsellors (RSBDC)* in 2010 in Batticaloa and Trincomalee. This programme equipped beneficiaries with the skills to design and embark on an action plan to encourage business development in their villages.

Ms. Paramasivam Sharmila, is 26 years old from a family of 5 in Periyapollumalai, Batticaloa. Sharmila was first displaced at the age of five years old in 1990 when her house was burned to the ground during fighting. She and her family spent six years relocating to several villages before settling in a new village, Maylambavali, in 1996. Unfortunately, just two year later, Sharmila's father passed away. This forced the family into harsh conditions, and at the age of 12 Sharmila began working as child labour where she was able to earn \$0.25 per day, giving her

just enough to eat, but little time for school. After some time Sharmila managed to graduate and began to volunteer with an NGO. Fortunately for Sharmila, this volunteer position turned into a career allowing her to earn Rs. 15,000 (\$136). Still this amount was barely enough to support her sister and two brothers through school.

Sharmila has always been ready to work hard and grasp any opportunity to further support her family. When she heard about the UNIDO training in RSBDC she knew it could be her ticket to success. Since her completion, Sharmila has successfully applied her entrepreneurial character with the expertise learned in the RSBDC programme to write several successful business proposals approved for loans by the Bank of Ceylon. Now Sharmila has become quite business savvy, linking with Palmyra producer groups and consumers to export orders of Palmyra products from Batticaloa. Sharmila's most successful venture was an export order for Rs. 1,500,000 (\$13,636) worth of Palmyra products. Sharmila worked with 509 weavers to fulfil this order within four months.

Today Sharmila feels very happy with her life and genuinely feels she has achieved success. *"I have experienced so much change in my life ... I used to work in child labour, I know hardship. But today we have a computer, motorbike and a water tank system [running water]."*

On average Sharmila now earns Rs.50,000 (\$454) per month. She feels proud and is motivated to continue pushing forward innovative business ideas to further link Batticaloa's entrepreneurs to national and global markets. *"Many people in my village still work as I did in the 1990s ... I am now happy to be in a position to help."*



Sharmila working with the Palmyra Producer Group

## Improving Lives through Efficient Crafts Production in Sri Lanka

Through the United Nations Trust Fund For Human Security (UNTFHS) funded project, *"Support for affected population in the North and East Regions through improved agricultural productivity and community-based entrepreneurship,"* As part of this project a technical skills development programme in *Sea Shell Crafts Production* was conducted in 2010. Due to the local tourism industry in the Trincomalee district, sea shell ornaments are marketable and in demand, which current supply cannot meet. This training increased the supply of such products through the promotion of sea shell ornaments to promote house hold income generation accompanied with training in micro-enterprise innovation, management and marketing skills.

Ms. Faris Sitheek Farzana, a 31 year old woman with four children from Chinnampilachenai, Trincomalee, was displaced in 1997 due to a confrontation between the Sri Lankan Army and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) around her home. Although the displacement was less than a month, when Farzana and her family returned they found their home partly destroyed. Farzana and her husband worked hard to rebuild over time through fishing; however, as crossfire between the Sri Lankan Army and LTTE spread to open water, fishing quickly became an

unstable and unsafe source of income. Left with few options, Farzana and her husband were forced to continue fishing fetching up to Rs. 500 (\$4.50) on days when the seas were navigable. This was barely sustainable until the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 when all their fishing equipment was lost. This tragic event forced the family into greater hardship unable to eat three meals a day.

When Farzana was selected to participate in the UNIDO training on *Sea Shell Crafts Production*, she was desperate for any source of reliable income. After learning how to create sea shell ornaments and handicrafts for the local and tourism market, Farzana has been able to increase her family's income to Rs. 15,000 (\$136) per month. While this income has to support six people, Farzana is happy to report that *"our children are happy and we are having three meals per day since UNIDO's intervention."*

Farzana and her husband co-operate together to make the most income through the production of handicraft items. Farzana's husband focuses on production improvement and the purchase of all raw materials while Farzana creates the items as she had learned in UNIDO's training programme. They have successfully implemented UNIDO's marketing and promotional strategies and now take advantage of increased demand during festivals to fulfil orders for suppliers.



Farzana with her Handicrafts