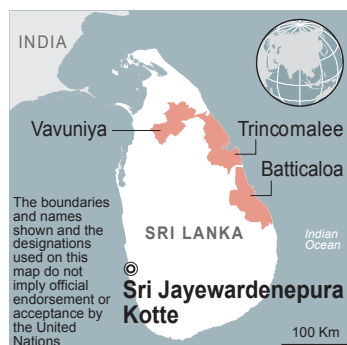


# Support for sustainable livelihood recovery among conflict affected populations in the North-East Regions through improved agricultural productivity and community based entrepreneurship



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Sri Lanka

**Duration:** August 2006 – March 2011

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNIDO

**Other Implementing Partners:** District Chambers of Commerce; the Ceylon National Chamber of Industry

**Budget:** \$1,779,298

**Key Words:** Post-conflict reconstruction; agricultural development; food security

## BACKGROUND

Twenty years of violent conflict coupled with the significant destruction wrought by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami had taken its toll on agricultural production in North-Eastern Sri Lanka. Together with on-going assistance for resettlement, reconstruction and rehabilitation, there was an urgent need to

increase agricultural productivity and improve food security among the affected population. Moreover, the revitalization of small businesses in rural areas was crucial for improving market opportunities for locally produced agro-based products and increasing the economic stability of the productive sectors.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In collaboration with District Chambers of Commerce and the Ceylon National Chamber of Industry, the project took a multi-sectoral, community-based approach that revitalized agricultural activities and increased food production through investments focused on small-scale farmers, including women and other vulnerable groups. Subsequently, the project worked to: (i) promote social integration and the

development of productive assets as a means for sustainable livelihoods and social stabilization; (ii) increase agricultural productivity through the application of improved technologies and the strengthening of artisanal production; and (iii) strengthen the capacity of local institutions in small business development in rural areas.

### BENEFICIARIES

The primary beneficiaries of the project were communities in the conflict-affected districts of Jaffna, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa, which were directly engaged in agriculture and agro-based small production business. These included internally displaced persons (IDPs), small-scale farmers, female-

headed households and women's groups, as well as former combatants. The project targeted 3,000 households as direct beneficiaries, while many more households benefited indirectly through improvements in overall socio-economic conditions.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

- (i) Food insecurity presented one of the most critical threats to the human security of communities affected by the conflict and tsunami. In response, the project assisted over 3,000 households to revitalize agricultural productivity through the mechanization of crop-tending practices and the provision of training to over 800 farmers to operate and maintain the machines. For example, in Batticaloa, the use of a tractor supplied to the local farmers organisation allowed one beneficiary to increase his cultivated land from five to 14 acres and generate not only enough income to meet his family's basic need but also to send his children to school.
- (ii) In a bid to revitalize economic capabilities of affected families and communities, the project successfully engaged the most vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, IDPs and returnees, in entrepreneurial development activities. In addition to training on improved production technologies

including fruit processing, reed rush handicrafts, batik production, as well as rice flour production and packaging, beneficiaries were also equipped with knowledge of export markets, quality control and branding. Subsequently, a husband and wife team, displaced 3 times by the conflict, was able to multiply their flour production from 35 to 250 packages a month after participating in training.

(iii) Lastly, a 3-day trade fair was conducted in Trincomalee that was successful in showcasing local products and skills, as well as promoting the district's vibrant small industries. With over 100 local businesses represented, the fair brought rural entrepreneurs together with local producers, representatives from Government and the private sector, as well as international marketing and business associations. The trade fair brought a significant boost to local businesses and was subsequently replicated in Batticaloa.

## LESSONS LEARNED

With its emphasis on the interconnectedness of threats, the advancement of human security requires the development of interconnected networks of diverse stakeholders, drawing from the expertise and resources of a wide range of actors from across the UN, as well as the private and public sectors and local communities. By bringing together the necessary stakeholders from Government, the private sector, district chambers of commerce, and UN agencies, the project demonstrated the added value of such a participatory approach. In this regard, a steering committee which was established to engage stakeholders and beneficiaries in the project's initial strategy development was continued throughout the project to ensure a multi-sectoral partnership in its implementation, as well as to raise awareness of the project's activities at the community level.

Towards strengthening the capacities of individuals and communities to capitalise on available livelihood opportunities and improve their food security, the project recognised the importance of applying human security's dual protection and empowerment framework, which combines top-down norms and policies with bottom-up participatory processes. In this regard, the project learned that effective capacity building and empowerment initiatives, such as vocational skills and entrepreneurship training, must be accompanied by measures to strengthen institutional structures, including rural production groups and banking facilities. The project recognized that this mutually reinforcing approach was essential to guarantee the long-term sustainability of efforts to empower individuals and communities towards attaining economic self-sufficiency and food security.