

RETURNING HOME

SUPPORTING CONFLICT AFFECTED PEOPLE THROUGH HOUSING



European Union

இலங்கை அரசாங்கம்



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

RETURNING HOME

SUPPORTING CONFLICT AFFECTED PEOPLE THROUGH HOUSING



Funded by:



DISCLAIMER

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries regarding its economic system or degree of development. Excerpts may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations and its member states or those of the European Union, Government of Australia or the Swiss Government.

Photographs depicting children have been published with parental/guardian consent.

Copyright© United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) 2014

All rights reserved

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P.O. Box 30030 00100 Nairobi KENYA

Tel: 254-020-7623120 (Central Office)

www.unhabitat.org

HS: HS/063/14E

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributors: Tim McNair, Charmalee Jayasinghe, I A Hameed, Laxman Perera, Sahmir Shalih, S.Arumainathan, Mohammed Jezeer, Krishnarany Sinnapalani, Thushanthan, A.J.A. Thivakar, S. Rifal, M.S.Ubaitullah
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (Colombo and Jaffna Offices)

Editors: Tim McNair, Charmalee Jayasinghe, Ramona Miranda, Aziza Usoof

Design: Peter Cheseret, Charmalee Jayasinghe, Nipuna Kumbalathara

Layout and Printing: Gunaratne Offset (Pvt) Ltd

This book is dedicated to the families in the North of Sri Lanka
in recognition of their courage and dedication towards rebuilding
their homes and lives following years of conflict.





> RETURNING HOME
Supporting Conflict Affected People through Housing

TABLE OF CONTENT

FOREWORD	2
INTRODUCTION	7
PROJECT LOCATION.....	8
THE TRANSITION.....	9
THE TRANSFORMATION	19
A NEW BEGINNING.....	33
MORE THAN JUST A HOUSE	63
REBUILDING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE	83

FOREWORD



It gives me great pleasure to introduce this publication entitled “Returning Home” which documents the partnership between the European Union (EU), the Government of Australia, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in post conflict housing and infrastructure reconstruction for conflict affected families in Sri Lanka’s Northern Province.

Through a series of photographs, this publication highlights the key achievements of the programme “Support to Conflict Affected People through Housing” spanning three years of implementation from January 2011 to March 2014.

The book chronicles the stories of recovery from a cross section of homeowners and communities from the districts of Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Kilinochchi on diverse aspects including reconstruction of homes by women headed families and community participation in the reconstruction process. It portrays the benefits of permanent housing beyond the provision of shelter and the improvements to the lives and living conditions of returnee families by moving into permanent homes.

The publication is dedicated to all the families who rebuilt their homes with funding from the project as well as to thousands of other conflict affected families who showed remarkable resilience during years of hardship and were instrumental in their own recovery.

Joan Clos

United Nations Under-Secretary General and
Executive Director,
UN-Habitat – United Nations Human Settlements
Programme

MESSAGE FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION



UN-Habitat's publication 'Returning Home: Supporting Conflict-affected People through Housing' wonderfully illustrates a particularly meaningful attainment for over 5,000 Sri Lankan returnee families: the re-establishment of a sense of belonging, homeliness and hope after years of desolation caused by displacement; this is an important achievement, in addition to the building of the houses themselves.

The publication depicts the emotional return to normalcy, without undermining the losses and the challenges ahead. It underlines 'housing' as a process of return combining the reconstruction of 'hard' elements, including water wells, latrines, community buildings and rural roads with the 'soft' aspects of community rehabilitation, such as the establishment of village reconstruction committees, the creation of spaces for education, skills training, local production of materials, an array of measures empowering women through participation and joint bank accounts, grievances mechanisms, regularisation of land titles, tree planting and so on.

After a decade of grant aid to Sri Lanka, the European Union has contributed, among other things, to rebuilding over 20,000 permanent houses in the North and East. It did this through five consecutive housing programmes worth EUR 50 million. These were preceded by post-emergency aid (EUR 134 million) including transitional shelter and then complemented by livelihood assistance (EUR 240 million).

Support to the reconstruction of an additional 3,000 houses hopefully will commence in the course of 2015, through a EUR 14 million grant, with a stronger focus on local entrepreneurship, to promote income generation and a locally-sustained construction supply chain.

The EU celebrates the outcomes attained by implementing partners UN-Habitat and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). We thank other donors such as the Swiss and the Australian Governments, with whom we have replicated the programme in question between 2013-2015. Also, local authorities who have been instrumental in regularising land titles and mediating grievances and the Government whose facilitation has been central.

Ultimately, homeowners - who have contributed to rebuilding their houses with their own hands and resources - deserve the greatest commendation for their relentless efforts. May they enjoy a better life.

H. E. David Daly

Ambassador of the European Union to
Sri Lanka and the Maldives

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA



It is my great pleasure and honour to mark the publication of 'Returning Home', a book which documents the success of the post-conflict housing and infrastructure reconstruction project "Support to Conflict-Affected People through Housing".

The project was made possible through a unique partnership between the Government of Australia, the European Union (EU), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). It has supported conflict-affected families to reconstruct their homes using a "Homeowner Driven" process of reconstruction, placing the families at the centre of their own recovery.

The provision of permanent housing and essential community infrastructure has assisted returnee families to overcome vulnerabilities, restore dignity, and increase their sense of security. These are crucial ingredients for sustained peace. The project has achieved durable solutions for returnees and their host communities. It focussed on improving living conditions and social cohesion, and required beneficiaries to play a key role in the design and construction of their homes.

Australia is proud to have been a partner in this project. It has successfully assisted returning families to rebuild and repair their destroyed and damaged homes in the districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi in Sri Lanka's Northern Province.

I thank all the partners who have been involved in the process, particularly the Government of Sri Lanka.

I congratulate all the families who have shown such determination and resilience while participating in this project. I hope that their rebuilt homes will give these families the stability and security they need for a brighter future.

H.E. Robyn Mudie

Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka
and the Maldives

MESSAGE FROM THE SWISS GOVERNMENT



I warmly congratulate the publication of this photobook entitled “Returning Home” which documents the excellent collaboration with the Government of Sri Lanka and the partnership of Switzerland, the European Union (EU), Australia and the United Nations, in post conflict housing and infrastructure reconstruction for affected families in the North of Sri Lanka.

The entire project followed an “Owner Driven” approach, whereby beneficiary families are empowered to take charge of their own recovery process. The families contribute their labour towards the reconstruction efforts and material was procured locally, in turn helping the growth of local economies. This is an approach which the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC has found to be highly successful, mainly due to the impressive engagement of the families in the building process.

The partnership between the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and SDC in the implementation of the reconstruction programme proved to be a perfect match. This led the partners to extend the fruitful collaboration to a subsequent phase which is ongoing. I commend the staff members of UN-Habitat and SDC for the photos in this book which have been collated due to their dedication and commitment during the implementation of the project in the first phase.

Switzerland has been committed to support the durable return of displaced communities in the North by providing permanent housing and flanking measures such as the reconstruction of essential community infrastructure and restoration of livelihoods. The support for the development of the North is geared towards a better future for all Sri Lankans with the sincere hope that the country will benefit as well from economic stability and political consensus.

The photobook is a tribute to the courage, resilience and determination of the returnee families from the districts of Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Kilinochchi who have struggled to rebuild their lost livelihoods following years of displacement.

H.E. Dr. Heinz Walker-Nederkoorn

Ambassador of Switzerland to Sri Lanka
and the Maldives

A reconstructed house in Mullaitivu.



INTRODUCTION

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

With the end of the conflict, the country was presented with a unique opportunity for long term peace and sustainable development. The requirement for timely assistance to re-establish sustainable settlements was recognised by the Government, development partners and communities as vital in providing the families with a sense of safety, security and dignity. This foundation was seen as a crucial stepping stone in the process of social re-integration and recovery from the trauma faced during the conflict.

The “Support to Conflict Affected People through Housing” project was developed with the overall objective of contributing to a sustainable solution for the returnees in the Northern Province, with

the specific objective of improving the living conditions and social cohesion of displaced people, returnees and their host communities by providing permanent housing. Funding was provided by the European Union (EU), the Government of Australia and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project was implemented by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and SDC in close coordination with other European Union funded projects to ensure holistic settlement development. The project was implemented over a period of 3 years, from January 2011 to March 2014, with total funding of approximately US\$ 23 Million.

Having established that a permanent house is the cornerstone for a family's recovery, the project assisted the reconstruction of 5,068 houses in the districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi. In addition, the programme also supported the reconstruction of community infrastructure including common wells and preschools. Thousands of trees were planted in project locations to replace those lost due to conflict and reconstruction.

The project followed a “Homeowner Driven” approach, whereby beneficiary families were empowered to take charge of their own recovery

process. The families also contributed their labour towards the reconstruction efforts and material was procured locally, in turn helping the growth of local economies.

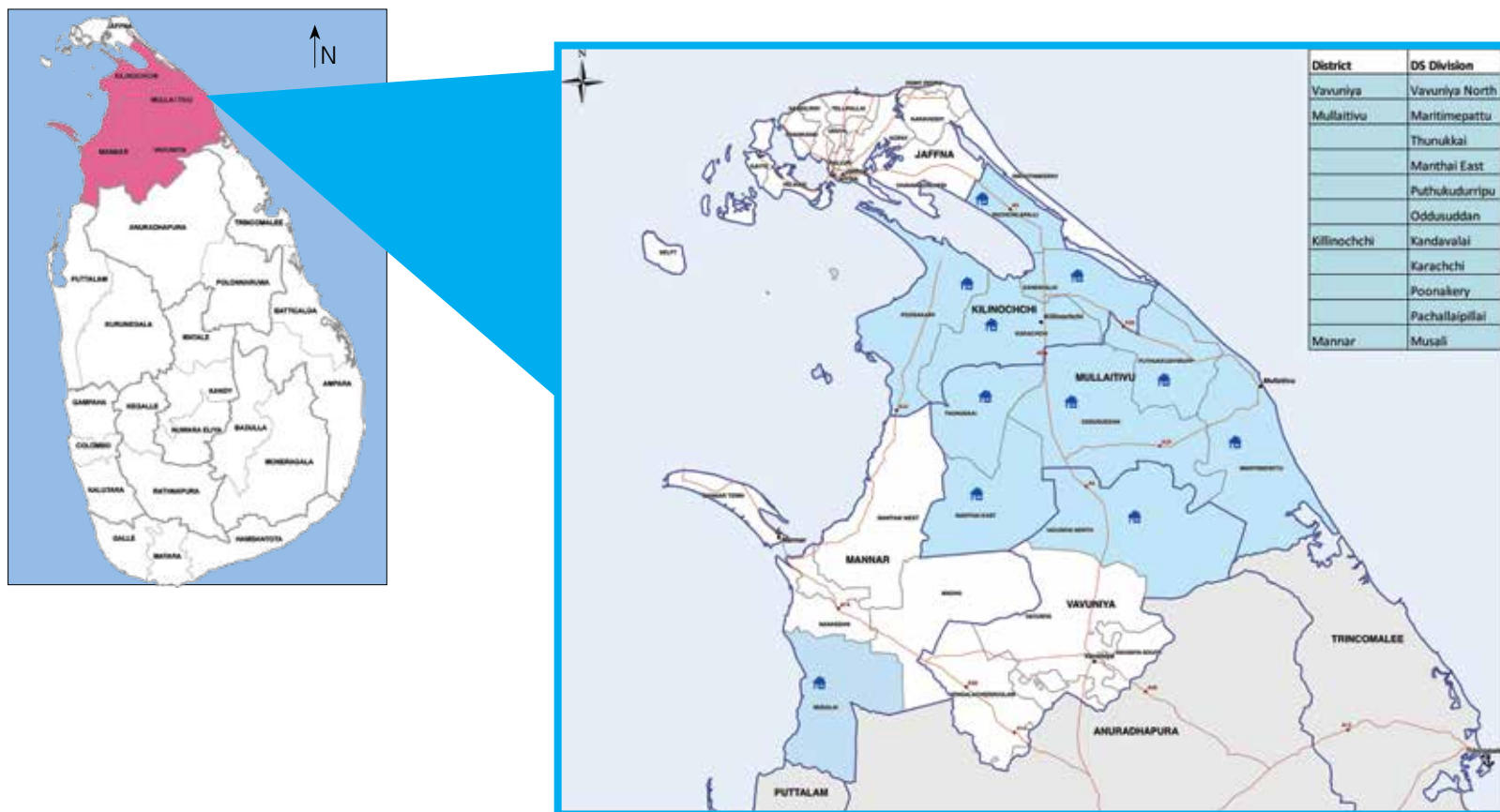
More than 100 villages were assisted for the reconstruction of 3,120 fully damaged houses and the major repair of 1,948 damaged houses. Technical assistance and guidance was provided by UN-Habitat and SDC. Vulnerable groups including female headed households, elderly homeowners and the disabled were given priority assistance. Due to destruction and loss of documents during the conflict, many families had difficulty in proving their ownership of land. SDC and UN-Habitat provided assistance to establish proof of tenure. The project also improved livelihood opportunities by providing construction skills training.

Through a series of photographs taken by UN-Habitat and SDC staff members during the implementation of the project, this publication documents the stories of courage, resilience and recovery of a cross section of the homeowners who have successfully reconstructed their homes.

PROJECT LOCATION

The 'Support to Conflict Affected People through Housing' project assisted 5,068 returning families across the districts of Kilinochchi, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Mannar in Sri Lanka's Northern Province.

The map indicates the 11 Divisional Secretariat (DS) Divisions in the four Districts assisted by the project.



THE TRANSITION

Thirty years of conflict displaced more than a million people from the North and East of Sri Lanka. The final stages of conflict resulted in major damage to infrastructure, particularly houses, water supply, schools and other public buildings. It is estimated that 145,000 houses were damaged or destroyed in the Northern Province alone.

By October 2009, there were more than 330,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), the majority of whom remained in camps in Vavuniya. In November 2009, the Government of Sri Lanka began an accelerated resettlement programme to assist families to return to their villages of origin. Thus began the return of tens of thousands of IDPs.

When families returned to their villages, they found their houses either badly damaged or



completely destroyed, thereby rendering them homeless. As many lacked the financial resources to rebuild, most opted to live in makeshift shelters constructed out of material including tin sheets, tent material, and cadjan. The living conditions in these temporary shelters was harsh due to lack of space, light and ventilation. They also offered little protection from the elements, especially during the monsoon rains, and from wildlife including venomous reptiles. Children had no indoor space to study or play and security was minimal due to the flimsy nature of the structures.



DAMAGED HOUSES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



4



2



3

1 : Damaged church in Mullaitivu.

2,3 & 4 : Damaged houses in the Northern Province. Most houses were structurally damaged, thereby requiring a complete rebuild.



It is estimated that over
145,000
houses were damaged
or destroyed in the
Northern Province.

CLEARING MINES AND UXOs



Some areas took time to be cleared of unexploded ordinances (UXOs) and mines. Families had to wait for clearance before resettling and rebuilding their homes.





For hundreds of thousands of families, returning home meant living in makeshift temporary shelters.

MAKESHIFT TEMPORARY SHELTERS



1: Homeowners in Mullaitivu outside their temporary shelter. Their damaged house is in the background.

2 & 3: Makeshift temporary shelters in Mullaitivu.



1: Mr. and Mrs Sritharan with their children outside their temporary shelter constructed from tin sheets in Mullaitivu.

2 & 3: Temporary shelters constructed from cadjan (dried coconut leaves) in Mannar.

Life is harsh in temporary shelters as they offer inadequate protection from the elements and little ventilation or light. Families had to make do with tiny, makeshift kitchens with little space or facilities to prepare their daily meals.



Some families opted to cook in the open air during the dry season.



Preparing meals in temporary shelters constructed from cadjan posed safety risks due to the danger of accidental fires.

LIFE IN A TEMPORARY SHELTER



1



2



3

1: Makeshift kitchen built with tin sheets belonging to Mr. Balachandran Nageswaran, Mullaitivu. His two daughters are shown.

2 & 3: Village hairdresser runs his makeshift salon in a semi permanent structure in Mullaitivu. He and his wife lived in a temporary shelter constructed from cadjan.



The majority of returning families built makeshift shelters to live as they lacked the financial resources to rebuild permanent homes. Children have little indoor space to study or play in temporary shelters.

THE TRANSFORMATION

Commencing in January 2011, the tripartite donor partnership between the European Union, Government of Australia and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation assisted with the reconstruction of 5,068 houses. Following a homeowner driven process of reconstruction, the project assisted families to act on their own behalf and rebuild their homes with technical assistance from UN-Habitat and SDC.

A grant of LKR 500,000 was provided in instalments to selected homeowners, based on the physical progress of construction, to fully reconstruct a house, while a grant of LKR 250,000 was provided to repair damaged homes. The project also provided land tenure assistance to families who had difficulties in proving their property ownership due to the loss or destruction of documents during the conflict.

The reconstruction process followed a "People's Participatory Process" which involved the communities from the inception of the project. Village Rehabilitation Committees were established

to assist families, especially female headed households, the elderly and disabled, through bulk procurement of building materials, monitoring of construction work and labour contributions.

Homeowners hired skilled construction workers to rebuild their houses while the family members provided their own labour support wherever possible. The houses were built according to minimum standards while adhering to Local Authority guidelines. The minimum floor area of each house was 500 sq. ft. Construction of a sanitary toilet was mandatory.

House plans, taking into account cultural and religious beliefs of the communities, were designed by UN-Habitat and SDC, while the homeowners had the freedom to modify the plan according to their needs and aspirations.





PEOPLE'S PROCESS OF RECONSTRUCTION



UN-Habitat's People's Process

of reconstruction ensured community participation from the inception to the conclusion of the project.

Settlement Improvement Planning workshops and public meetings were held in project locations to identify priority community infrastructure needs and to facilitate community monitoring of the housing project. This process gave a voice to women and youth in planning the development of their villages.



1: Women participating in a Village Rehabilitation Committee meeting in Kilinochchi.

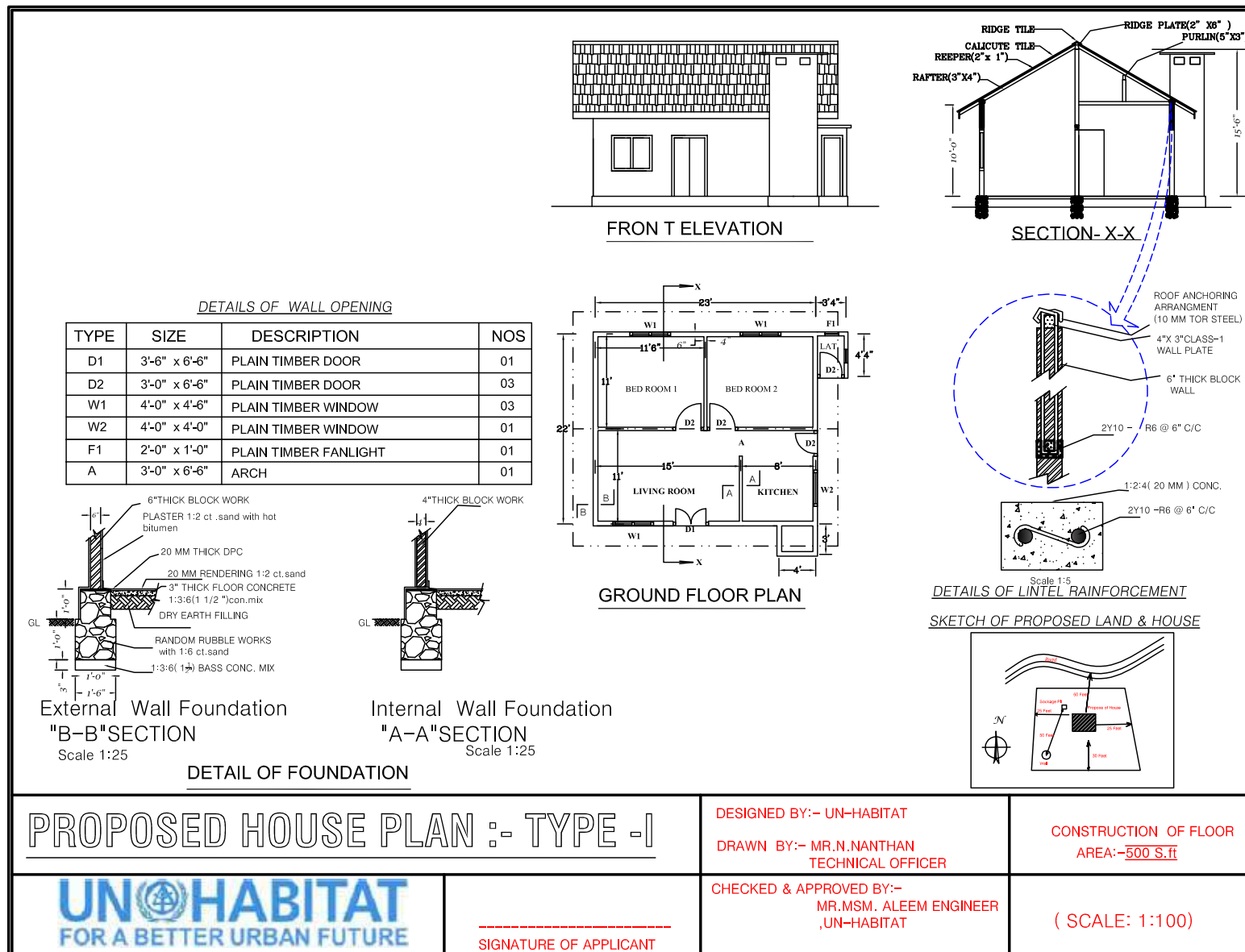
2: Village Rehabilitation Committee meeting in progress in Mannar.

3: Public mass meeting in Koolamurippu Village, Mullaitivu.



Members of Village Rehabilitation Committees collaborated to help vulnerable beneficiaries, such as elderly or female headed homeowners, to construct their houses.

HOUSE PLANS



A typical house plan designed by UN-Habitat. From the eight house plans designed, homeowners had the opportunity to select one and modify it according to the family's needs and aspirations. The concept of "Vastu Shastra" was taken into consideration when developing the house plans in order to ensure adherence to cultural practices of the families.

HOMEOWNER DRIVEN HOUSING CONSTRUCTION



1: Homeowners in Mullaitivu discussing specifications of the house plan with UN-Habitat Technical Officers.

2: Skilled masons were employed by homeowners while families provided unskilled labour support in order to save labour costs and maximize the housing grant.

3, 4, 5 & 6: Different stages of construction at a glance.

**Sense of Ownership**

By managing the house construction process, homeowners, especially women, improved their social standing in the community through active involvement in decision making.

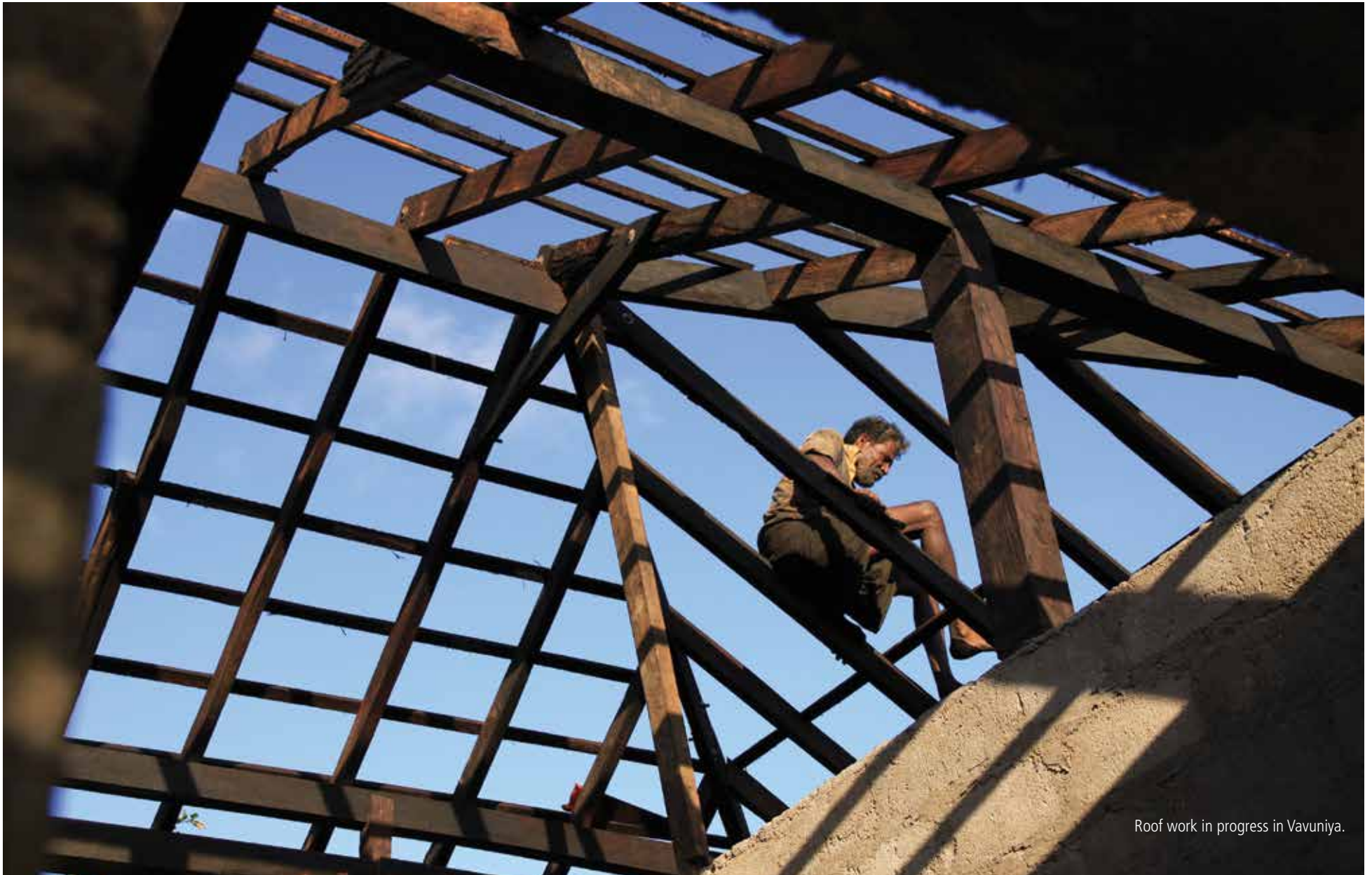
CONSTRUCTING NEW HOUSES



UN-Habitat and SDC Technical Officers and Engineers provided input on the construction process and the use of building materials through regular site visits and training programmes.

1 & 2: Roof work in progress in Mannar.

3: UN-Habitat staff inspecting a construction site.



Roof work in progress in Vavuniya.

CONSTRUCTION SKILLS TRAINING



Training opportunities

were provided to young women and men in the project locations, thereby improving livelihood options. This training was provided in collaboration with NAITA through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Over 80 youth were trained in masonry through this programme.

ACCESS TO FRESH WATER



Water

is a scarce and precious resource in the Northern Province. By providing funding to construct common wells, the project assisted communities to gain access to clean, potable water.

BUILDING MATERIAL PRODUCTION



Families were provided with **skills training** to produce their own building materials, enhancing their livelihood opportunities. Homeowners produced their own cement blocks to build walls. Block making moulds were provided on a rotational basis to families, saving valuable resources.





Palmyrah trees are prized by the communities in the Northern Province and have multiple uses including as roofing timbers.

MONITORING PROGRESS



Technical teams

from UN-Habitat and SDC provided support to families on design, construction techniques, bulk purchase of building materials and sourcing skilled labour. The funding partners made frequent field visits to the project locations to discuss progress with the homeowners and field teams.



A NEW BEGINNING

From Temporary Shelters to Permanent Homes

For families who were affected by many years of conflict and displacement, the completion of houses signified the dawn of a new chapter in their lives. Families celebrated this happy occasion with traditional ceremonies filled with symbolism of prosperity.

The transformation of living conditions with the building of new houses is apparent everywhere. Family aspirations and personalization is evident in all reconstructed houses, from the choice of door and window designs to the selection of paint colours for walls. Exterior spaces have been personalized with flower beds and thriving home gardens, creating a sense of place and belonging for each individual family.

For the families returning to damage and destruction, these permanent houses are an important, once in a lifetime, investment.

The newly completed houses have reinforced human dignity and peace of mind, by providing the returnee families with a permanent and sustainable living environment. This sense of permanence has fostered the re-establishment of the spirit of togetherness in communities fragmented by the conflict. Communities have rallied around the more vulnerable households to assist them with the construction of their houses and have actively participated in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of community infrastructure.





> NEW HOMES

Permanent homes reconstructed by families with project funding in Musali DS Division, Mannar.

A TRADITIONAL WELCOME



1: A house warming ceremony in Kilinochchi. The traditional welcome table with oil lamp is in front of the house.

2: Traditional receptacle with water (Kumbham) is placed on rice together with mango leaves on the welcome table. The Kumbham is considered a symbol of abundance, wisdom, and immortality by the Hindu community.



1 & 2: Guests are greeted by homeowners by placing a “bindi” on their foreheads made with kumkum (red turmeric) and sandalwood.

3: Mango leaves adorn doorways in Hindu homes during special occasions including house warming ceremonies. Mango leaves are considered a natural disinfectant and are believed to dispel evil.



A traditional "welcome table" in Mullaitivu during the house warming ceremony with oil lamps, incense, kalasham and welcome garlands made with fresh flowers.



Mr and Mrs. V. Munusamy, Kilinochchi,
during the house warming ceremony of their newly
repaired house.



"I am very happy that we got the opportunity to construct a permanent house according to our wishes. We are sharing this new home with our son and his wife. We have enough space to live comfortably."

Mr and Mrs. M.S.M. Mohamed,
Palaikuli GN Division, Mannar.



Temporary shelter of Mr. and Mrs. Mohamed,
Palikuli GN Division, Mannar.



Newly constructed permanent house belonging to Mr. & Mrs. Mohamed.



"We are extremely happy to be part of this housing project and really appreciate the support from the donors. Since we had the freedom to build our own house, we used good quality materials and selected a house plan of our choice. My family was closely involved in the construction process. We provided our own labour towards the foundation work. We also manufactured our own concrete blocks. Our dream was to build a secure home where my family can live peacefully. We hope this initiative will continue to help conflict affected people who need assistance with permanent housing".

Mrs. Raskruban Yogamalar,
Homeowner,
Kanagarayankulam village, Vavuniya.





1 : Mrs.Yogamalar's temporary shelter, where the family lived before their house was constructed.

2 : Mrs.Yogamalar's permanent house, during the final stages of construction. The construction work on the front verandah is in progress.





Mr. Balasingham Jeyakumar and family next to the transitional shelter where they lived prior to the construction of their house.



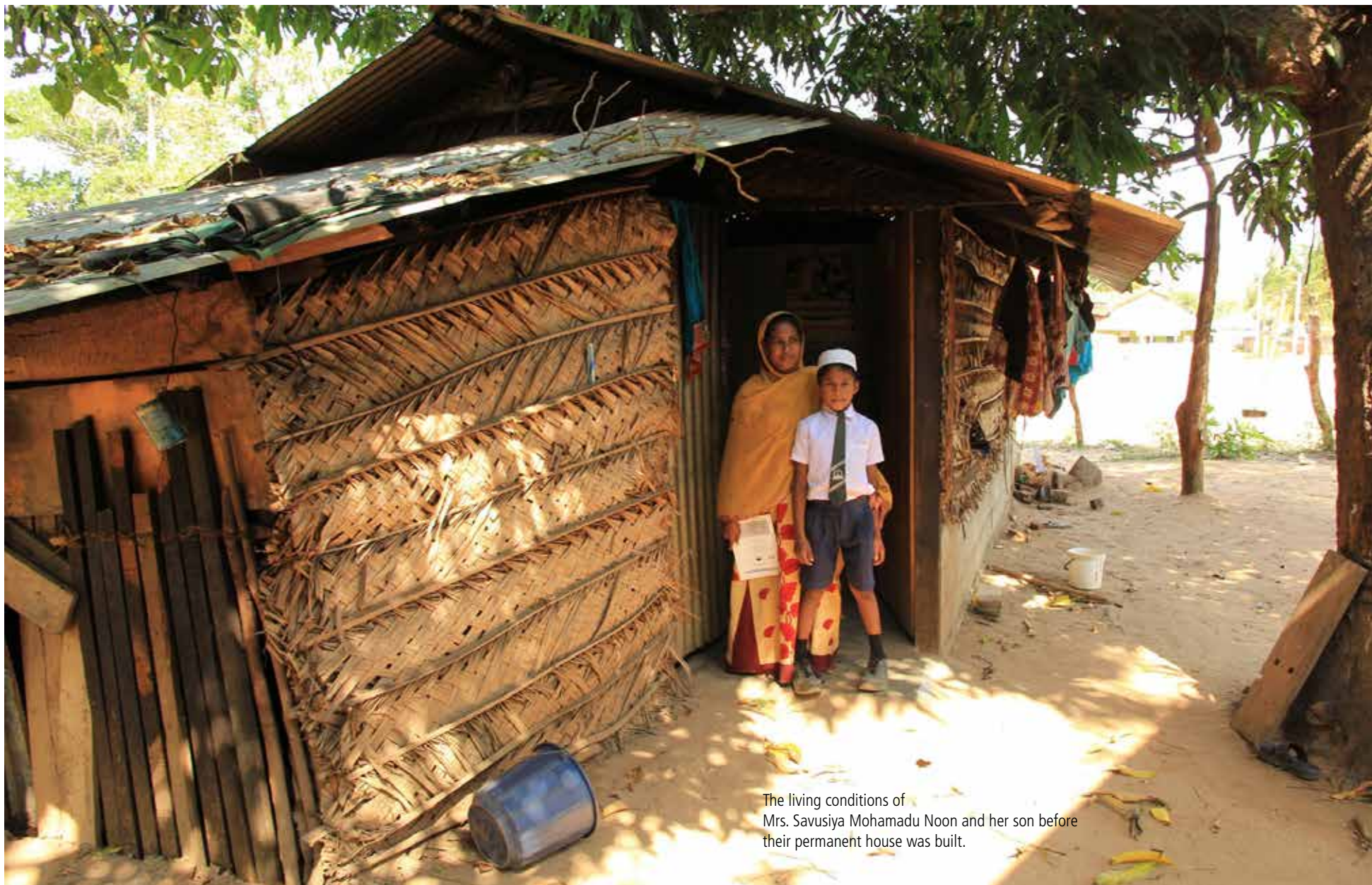
Mr. Balasingham Jeyakumar and family at the housewarming ceremony of their newly completed house.



Temporary shelter where Mrs.Karupaiyah Susilathevy's family lived in Malayalapuram village, Kilinochchi. The shelter is now used for storage of garden produce.



Newly reconstructed house of Mrs. Karupaiyah
Susilathevy, Malayalapuram village, Kilinochchi.



The living conditions of Mrs. Savusiya Mohamadu Noon and her son before their permanent house was built.



The permanent home of
Mrs. Savusiya Mohamadu Noon, Mullaitivu.



The temporary shelter of Mrs.Sarop Lisha Haisar. Her permanent house, under construction, can be seen behind the shelter.



The newly constructed home of Mrs. Sarop Lisha Haisar of Mullaitivu.



The temporary shelter of Mrs.Jeyantharan Arulmathy of Mullaitivu.



Mrs. Jeyantharan Arulmathy stands at the doorway of her permanent house.



Side by Side: Mr. Alex Mahendram and his family next to their house in Maritimepattu DS division, Mullaitivu. Their temporary shelter is in the foreground.

PERSONALISING SPACE



Through the

Personalization of indoor and outdoor spaces

the aspirations and individual styles of families is evident in all the reconstructed homes.

- 1: Some innovative homeowners have used saris to decorate their ceiling.
- 2: Bright external walls in pink, green and yellow in Kilinochchi.
- 3: Beaded curtains denoting the separation of living space from the kitchen in Mullaitivu.
- 4: Decorative grill depicting a horse drawn carriage constructed in cement on a front verandah.

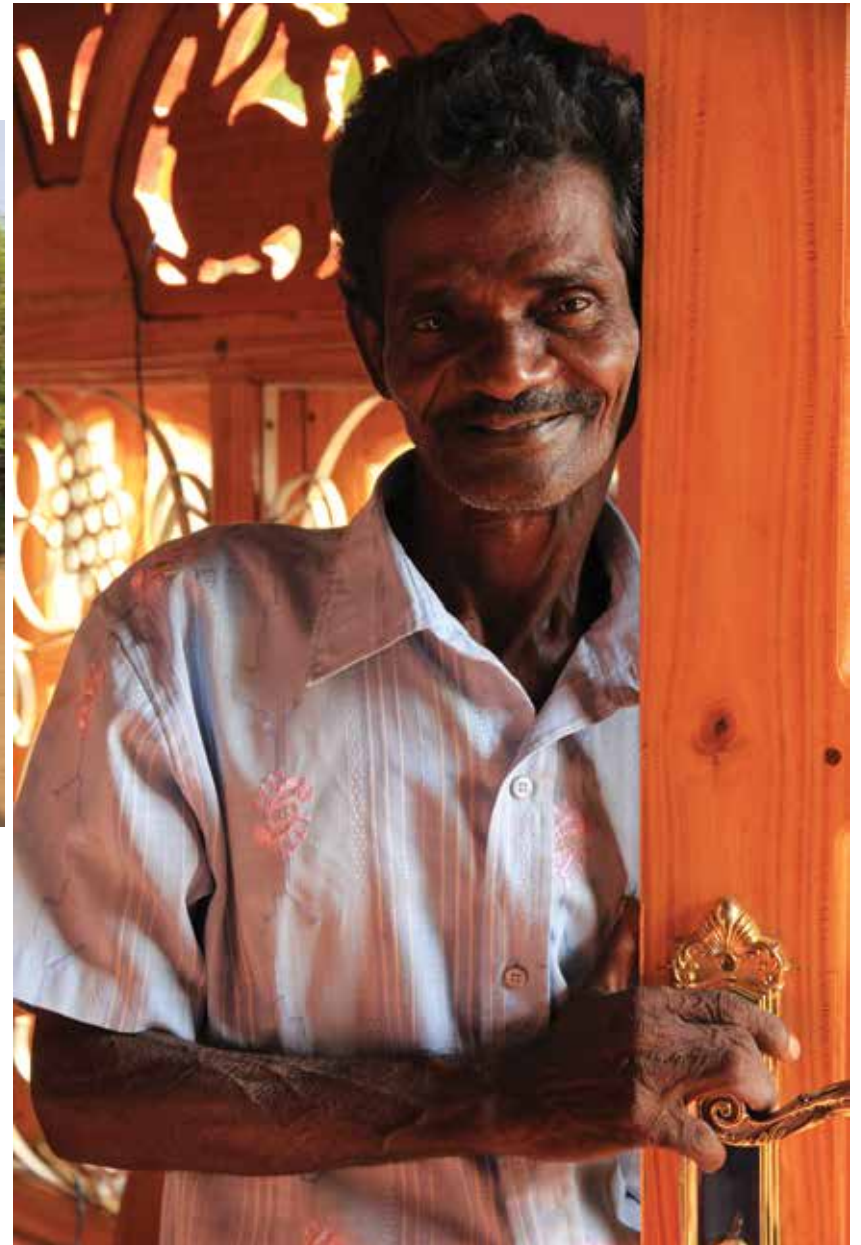


Intricate wood and cement carvings depicting diverse designs have been incorporated in many newly reconstructed houses. The home of Mr. Luxmanan Ramasamy and Mrs. Parameswari incorporates carvings and grillwork produced by the family.

"We contributed own labour towards the construction of the house. Our eldest son Manoharan, who is a trained carpenter, undertook most of the skilled carpentry work."

Mr. Luxamanan Ramasamy

Piramanthanaru Village, Kilinochchi.



ENTRYWAYS



Homeowners devoted time and energy in making the exterior compounds and the entrances to their homes appealing with flowers, neat driveways and well swept sandy footpaths.

EMPOWERING FEMALE HOMEOWNERS



“When I remember the hardships I underwent during the past few years, I couldn’t even think of undertaking minor repairs to the house. I was so happy when I was selected as a beneficiary for this housing project. I am thankful to the donors for providing us with a cash grant to repair our house and for giving me the courage to repair the house through my own efforts”.

Mrs. Anton Catherine,
Female Headed Homeowner,
Kilinochchi.



1



2

Mrs. Ganesamoorthy Anton Catherine, a 38 year old single mother from Malayalapuram GN Division in Kilinochchi, was selected by the project to repair her damaged home. Separated from her husband, she is the sole bread winner of her family consisting of her children, sons aged 12 and 15 years, and elderly parents. Receiving no financial support from her husband since their separation in 2003, Catherine currently earns a living by jointly managing a cooperative shop and by selling produce from her home garden.

With the escalation of the conflict in 2008, Catherine, along with her parents, brothers and two children, were

compelled to leave their home and move to several locations, finally moving to Mulaivaikal in Mullaitivu District during the last stages of the conflict. Following the end of the conflict in May 2009, the family were relocated to Menik Farm Internally Displaced Persons Camp in Vavuniya District where they lived with hundreds of thousands of other IDPs.

Catherine and her family eventually returned to Malayalapuram in July 2010. However, their house had been badly damaged with the roof completely destroyed and the walls significantly damaged, requiring major repairs to

bring it back into use. As the family had no savings or regular income, they had no means of repairing the house. Catherine constructed a temporary shelter with tin sheets and cadjan, where she lived with her parents for over a year.

In March 2012, Catherine was selected as a beneficiary for housing assistance. As a female head of household, Catherine was provided with priority assistance. She received a cash grant of LKR 250,000 in four installments which enabled her to rebuild the roof, walls and toilet, including plastering

and painting, completing the work in four months. After Catherine's family moved into their permanent home, their temporary shelter has been given to another homeless family to occupy.

1: Catherine outside her temporary shelter where the family lived before the house was repaired.

2: Catherine's repaired house.



“With the difficulties I have undergone during the past few years, I never dared to hope for a permanent home for my family. I was more interested in making ends meet to ensure my children and mother had their basic needs. I am so proud that I contributed to the construction of my own house as a labourer throughout the process. I am grateful to the donors for funding this project and giving us a secure place to live. My children now have space to study and do their school work and my family have proper shelter from seasonal rains”.

Mrs. Kamalathan Maheshwary
Homeowner, Vavuniya.

Kamalathan Maheshwary is a 30 year old single mother of three from Vavuniya. Her family was selected for housing support as their house was badly damaged during the conflict and they were living in a temporary shelter. In mid 2011, Maheshwary began reconstruction of her home, and brought the two bedroom house to completion in early 2012.

Mrs. Maheshwary has been the sole breadwinner of her family over the past six years since her separation from her husband. In order to ensure the wellbeing of her mother and three children, she started a small poultry farm which helped the family earn some money to meet their basic needs. In addition to her responsibilities as a single parent, Maheshwary also had to deal with issues caused by the conflict. Originally from Kandy in central Sri Lanka, her family had settled in the Northern Province over 20 years ago. The family had been subject to multiple displacements over the past thirty years.

Maheshwary was delighted to be selected as a beneficiary. As a female headed household, her family was given priority assistance. Financial assistance of LKR 500,000 was provided in five instalments to employ a mason to construct the house. Maheshwary was responsible for the planning, implementation and monitoring of the construction with the help of her mother, 65 year old Muniyandi Velamma and the UN-Habitat technical team. Similar to other families selected under this initiative, Maheshwary also contributed her own labour towards the reconstruction effort in the spirit of the 'Homeowner Driven' process.



1



2

1: Maheshwary with her mother and daughter outside their temporary shelter.

2: UN-Habitat technical team inspecting the completed house while her mother looks on.



Building a permanent home is a source of pride and accomplishment to families. Mr. Mohamed Kulaththan, father of the home owner K.M. Jabbar outside his newly constructed home in Mannar.

MORE THAN JUST A HOUSE

The Multiple Benefits of a Permanent Home

By moving into new houses, families are beginning to reap the multiple benefits of a permanent home. These houses have become essential spaces where men, women and children live their daily lives, learn their lessons, entertain friends and family and enhance their livelihoods.

Safety and security from external threats are one of the key benefits of a permanent home. Safety from the elements of weather and wildlife, security for life and property, is extremely important for families who have lived with the impending fear of displacement for many years.

Smoke-free kitchens, sanitary toilets, improved ventilation and light in the permanent homes have provided families with healthier living

environments. Preparation of meals has become more enjoyable for housewives with the design of smoke free kitchens with functional storage areas.

School children have gained much needed indoor space to study coupled with good lighting, which has increased the number of hours available for school work.

These new permanent homes have also provided men and women with space to engage in livelihood activities that have been interrupted for many years due to displacement and lack of space in temporary shelters. Verandahs are now used to store goods and produce, and small workshops and grocery shops have been set up by enterprising homeowners.



REVIVING LIVELIHOODS

MR.SANTHIRASEKARAM, MOTORCYCLE MECHANIC, KILINCHCHI

Sixty five year old Mr. Santhirasekaram is the proud owner of a recently constructed house in Akkarayan village, Kilinochchi District. His house provides not only shelter from the elements but also a comfortable space to practice his livelihood.

Mr. Santhirasekaram, who lost his right leg in 2008 is a source of inspiration to his family and his community alike. Having overcome all odds, he is the main motorcycle mechanic of his village. Expertly attending to all motorcycle repair work in his workshop, his customers include men, women and school children with their bicycles. A widower for over two decades, Mr. Santhirasekaram lives together with his son, S.Pratheepan and daughter-in-law.

In 2008, Santhirasekaram's family was displaced as a result of the escalation of the conflict in the Northern Province. With thousands of other families, they lived in Menik Farm Internally Displaced Persons Camp in Vavuniya for almost one and half years. Once the Government resettlement process began, they returned to their village in 2011. However upon their return, Santhirasekaram found his semi-permanent house reduced to rubble. This was the turning point in Mr.Santhirasekaram's life. He soon successfully revived his livelihood as a motor mechanic in

a makeshift workshop. His son Pratheepan commenced work as a day labourer and farmer in order to contribute towards the household income.

Pratheepan said that his greatest wish was to build a permanent home where his father could live and practice his livelihood in comfort. However, for the Santhirasekaram family, building a permanent house was beyond their means.

In August 2011, when the housing recovery project commenced activities in Akkarayan, the family was selected for housing assistance. Mr. Santhirasekaram's newly constructed house is approximately 600 square feet, consisting of 3 bedrooms, living room, kitchen and a toilet. A front verandah has been added to the main house using their earnings during the past year. His motorcycle repair shop is located on the verandah of their new home, which helps him to engage in his livelihood in comfort.

'The donors gave us financial support to rebuild the house and helped us restart our lives in this new home. We are very grateful to the donors for including our village in this programme'. Stated Mr. S.Pratheepan, Mr.Santhirasekaram's son.



1



2

1: Mr.Santhirasekaram repairing a motorcycle.

2: Mr.Santhirasekaram with his son Pratheepan near their front door.



Mr. Santhirasekaram
at work.



Fishing is a major livelihood in the Northern Province. With the construction of permanent homes, many fishermen are using their temporary shelters to store fishing equipment.

1: The temporary shelter of Mr. Makendran Sivalingam.

Since rebuilding his permanent house, Sivalingam is using his temporary shelter to store fishing equipment.

2: Mr. Sivalingam with his wife and granddaughter in front of their home.

3: Mr. and Mrs. Sivalingam checking their fishing nets.





Fishing boats on Mullaitivu beach.



Home gardens

are a valuable resource for families. Having moved to their permanent homes, they are now free to engage in cultivation.

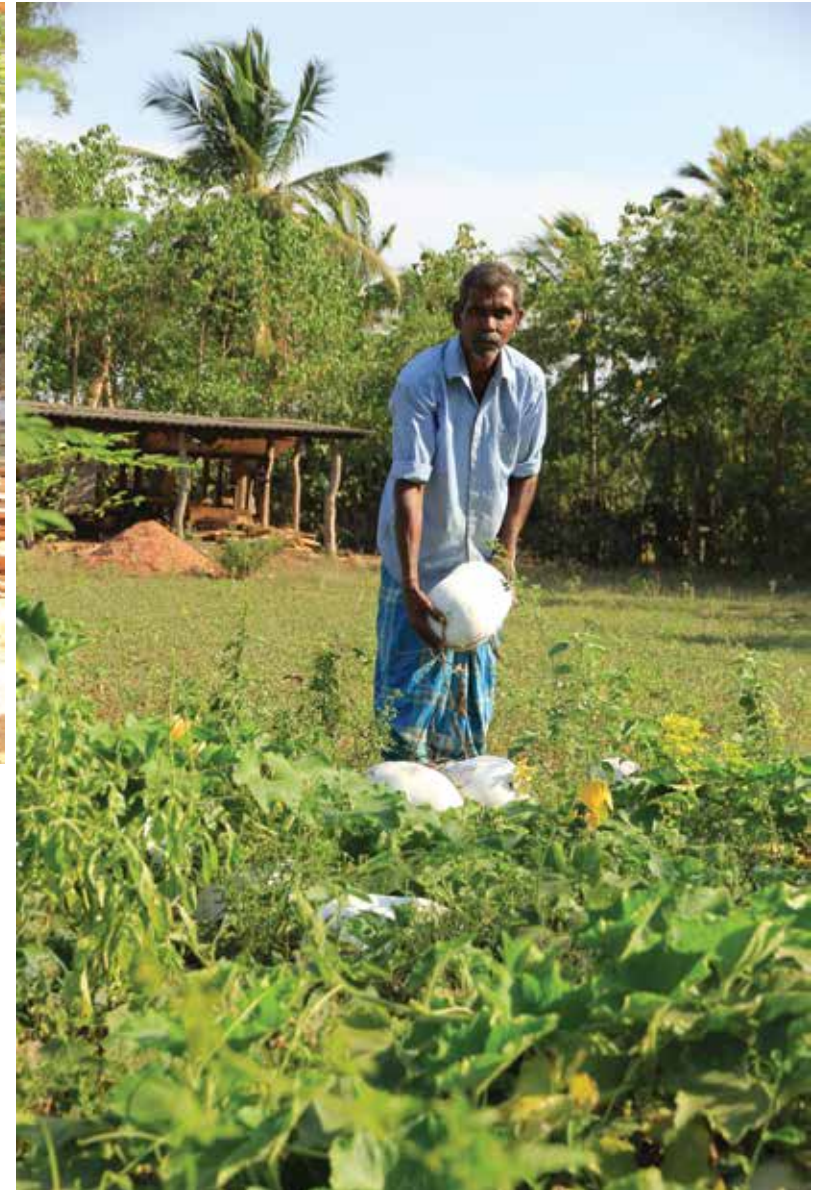
Mrs Velu Jesurasa tending to her broad bean cultivation. The family's permanent home can be seen in the background.



REVIVING TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS



Mr. Navaratnam Raveendran is a carpenter. Since moving to his new house, he is conducting his carpentry business in a workshop in the backyard. Mr. Raveendran's family has also started to cultivate vegetables and fruit in their home garden.



ACCESS TO SANITATION



Each permanent house included a

sanitary toilet,

improving the health and wellbeing of families. While most families opted for outdoor toilet units with cesspits, others constructed the toilet within the main house, sometimes with an adjoining bathroom.

1 & 2: Typical outdoor sanitary toilets built by the homeowners.

SAFETY AND SECURITY



Permanent homes have provided families with much needed

Safety and Security.

By owning a home with lockable doors and windows, homeowners are now free to pursue livelihoods away from their house with the confidence that their belongings and family members are safe and secure.

1 & 2: Mrs.Nageswaran Sithadevi with her husband and two children outside their permanent home.

COOKING IN COMFORT



Each house plan included an

indoor kitchen

with a chimney and windows for ventilation. These new functional kitchens provided families with space to store their produce and prepare and consume meals in hygienic conditions.



Space for storage of cooking utensils and produce has made lives easier for the housewives.



Homeowners had the freedom to design their own kitchens according to the minimum standards specified by the Local Authorities. Attention was given to adequate ventilation and light through strategically placed windows and the use of chimneys to safeguard the health of the family members.

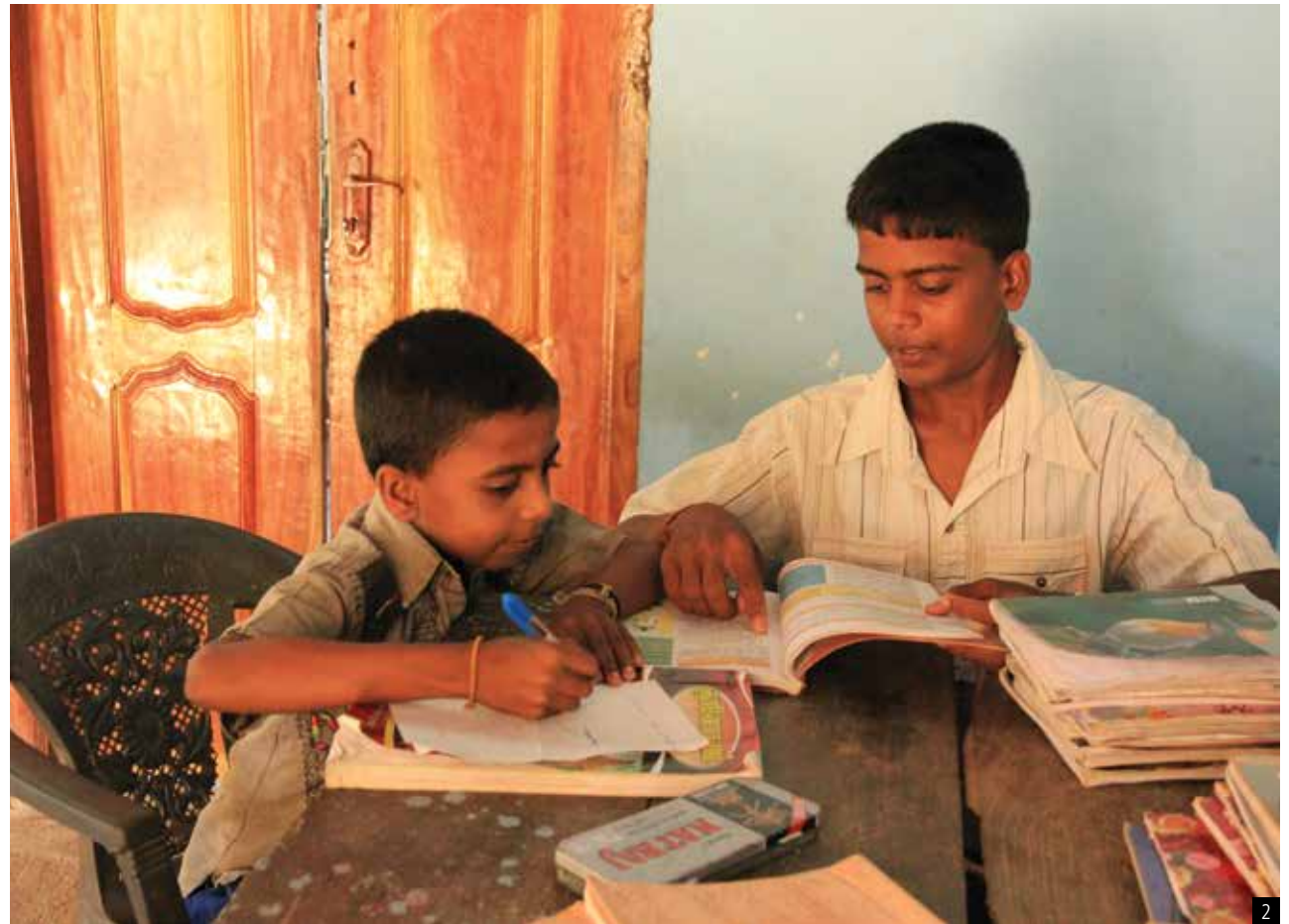


Mrs. Manjula Rajakopal Mangaleswaran of Kilinochchi serving lunch for the family in her new kitchen.

SPACE TO LEARN



New homes have provided school children with indoor space to study and attend to their school work, sheltered from the elements.



1: Mr. N.A. Kakeem's daughters studying in the living room.

2: Mr. Rajakopal Mangaleswaran's sons studying in the family room.

SPACE TO MEET

Families now have the space to meet and entertain their family and friends in comfort.





Mrs. Rajitha Rajalingam outside her repaired house with her daughter and brother.



Mrs. Thavalingam walking towards her house with her husband and UN-Habitat officers.



Community well in Mullaitivu.

REBUILDING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Displaced communities returning to their villages had poor access to basic infrastructure facilities such as roads, preschools and community centres due to neglect or destruction of these facilities.

Recognising that holistic development of settlements is essential for the improvement of living conditions of returnee communities, the project provided assistance for communities to construct small community infrastructure, prioritised during Community Action Planning Workshops.

While the infrastructure needs were many, the project prioritized access to water and provided support to rebuild common wells

in villages. Several preschools and schools were assisted with new buildings and roof repairs.

The rebuilding of community infrastructure also followed a "People's Process" of construction, where village level community based organisations were given the responsibility of managing the reconstruction process with technical assistance from UN-Habitat and SDC. This contributed towards building capacity of community leaders who enhanced their skills in management, leadership and construction methods.



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE



Vital community infrastructure

was provided by SDC for communities in Kilinochchi.

1,2,3 & 4: Newly constructed preschools in Kilinochchi.



1: Renovated tank in Pallikuda GN Division in Poonakary DS Division in Kilinochchi is used by the community for washing and bathing. The tank also recharges ground water.

2: Repaired well in Kilinochchi.

ACCESS TO FRESH WATER

The residents of Mamoolai village in Mullaitivu depend on common wells to meet their daily water supply needs as they have no access to pipe borne water, nor their own private wells. Following the devastation caused by three decades of conflict, infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed in this village. However, none of these affected the day to day functions of the community as did its poor access to water.

The women of Mamoolai village spent around six hours every day collecting water from a common well situated about 500 m away, due to low water yield and overcrowding at the well.

Recognising the need for additional common wells to easily access potable water, the project provided cash grants to construct two wells in the village. Two Women's Rural Development Societies (WRDS) were awarded grants of LKR 320,000 and LKR 410,000. The WRDS' managed the well construction with technical support from UN-Habitat. The construction work was contracted to local masons, while the WRDS members supervised the work and managed the finances.

The construction of the two wells was completed in November 2013. The women in the community worked hard during the planning and construction process to make this initiative a success. The wells are 40 to 50 feet deep and serve around 40 families. With the construction of these wells, the families save around three hours per day, due to the close proximity to their homes.

UN-Habitat provided training and awareness to the WRDS members on technical aspects and construction management during construction of the wells. This empowered the women with the knowledge, skills and experience to independently undertake future construction activities. These resourceful women are venturing into the traditional domains of men. On the completion of these wells, "well committees" have been formed and trained in order to maintain the wells and their surrounding environment.



1, 2 & 3: Construction of community well in Mamoolai village, Mullaitivu.



Community well in Mamoolai GN Division in Mullaitivu constructed by the Women's Rural Development Society.



Mrs. Rajkopal Mangaleswaran and her sons outside their permanent home in Kilinochchi.

After thirty years of conflict in Sri Lanka, when internally displaced families returned to their villages, they found their homes badly damaged or destroyed beyond repair. Lacking financial resources of their own, many families were unable to rebuild. For years, they lived in temporary shelters that offered little protection from the elements.

This book is a pictorial journey highlighting the lives of some of the families in the North of Sri Lanka who rebuilt and repaired their permanent homes with assistance from the project "Support to Conflict Affected People through Housing" funded by the European Union, Government of Australia and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and implemented by UN-Habitat and SDC.

UN-Habitat Sri Lanka,
202-204, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo - 07
Tel: (94-11) 2580691
Fax: (94-11) 2581116
E-mail: info@unhabitat.lk
Website: <http://www.unhabitat.lk/>



United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030, GPO, Nairobi, 00100, Kenya
Tel: (254-20) 7621234 (Operator) / 7 623120 (Information Services Section)
Fax: (254-20) 7624266 / 7624267
E-mail: infohabitat@unhabitat.org

UN HABITAT

www.unhabitat.org