

REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES IN NORTH AND EAST PROVINCES

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Introduction

The Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconciliation was established in April 2004, under the new Government. The functions are to:

- 1] Provide relief to Internally Displaced Persons, (IDPs) both conflict and Tsunami affected;
- 2] Resettle and relocate IDPs in the North-East and adjacent areas;
- 3] Rehabilitate damaged social and economic infrastructure in the 8 Districts of the North & East and the adjacent areas;
- 4] Promote activities leading to ethnic reconciliation, and
- 5] Payment of compensation to conflict affected persons.

The Vision of the Ministry is to sustain a peaceful, harmonious and a prosperous Sri Lanka, while its Mission is the creation of a conducive and sustainable environment through appropriate policies, programmes and projects for the restoration of normalcy in the country, special attention to conflict affected areas, fostering socio economic development by promoting ethnic harmony through measures for reconciliation and ensuring the provision of equal opportunities to all communities.

Relief

The Government provides the IDPs with dry rations including rice, dhal, flour and Sugar. The rations are provided to IDPs for 12 months from the date of permanent resettlement. The income of the IDPs should be Rs.1500/- or less per month. The value of the rations provided by this Ministry is as follows:

	<u>No. in the Family</u>	<u>Value in Rs. Per Week</u>
1]	05	Rs.315/-
2]	04	Rs.252/-
3]	03	Rs.210/-
4]	02	Rs.154/-
5]	01	Rs.84/-

While it is accepted that the quantity of rations distributed does not satisfy the physical and nutritional food standards, lack of funds prohibits the enhancement of the amounts of rations which have not been revised.

The number of Welfare Centres as of 31st January 2005, were 241 with 19,173 families. 127,479 families (496,516 persons) have been given dry rations during the month of January 2005, at a cost of Rs.127.5 Million. Prior to September 2004, 233,226 families (870,094 persons) were given dry rations at a monthly cost of Rs.212.5 Million (August 2004).

Since, almost all the IDPs in the Jaffna District were given the rations, the Government decided with effect from September 2004, to strictly adhere to the minimum income and the 12 month period requirements in the issue of dry rations. In the circumstances, the number of eligible families for the dry rations were reduced by almost half, 127,479 families receiving rations in January 2005.

It is envisaged that those persons who have become non-eligible under the Dry Ration Relief Scheme, will receive Samurdhi assistance provided they are eligible to receive same. Also it is a reasonable proposition that the eligible IDPs should receive more rations. The World Food Programme gave (10% of the total requirements distributed) about Rs.4,000/- worth of rations per family.

The United Nations World Food Programme has assisted this Ministry from 1st January 2002, to provide Food Assistance to the conflict affected people under the Project WFP PROO 10067, the duration of which was 1st January 2002 to 31st December 2004. This project provided assistance to over 200,000 beneficiaries in the worst affected areas of the North & East and included Puttalam District. The total cost of the operation was US\$ 35.96 Million, out of which the WFP contributed US\$ 17.9 Million. The commodities provided totaled 55,500 Metric Tonnes of rice, lentils, sugar and salt.

Upon completion of the above project by last year, the WFP extended the programme by two years ending December 2006. This grant aid is for conflict affected areas in the North-East districts and adjacent areas. The number of beneficiaries will be 730,000 in 2005, increasing to 850,000 in 2006. The total cost of the project is US\$ 25.9 Million.

In addition, a special project for Tsunami victims is being implemented as a Emergency Operation Assistance (No.10405.0) to Tsunami Victims. This project is for 6 months ending 15 July 2005. The anticipated beneficiaries during the first three months are 750,000, while during the last 3 months it will be 540,000. The beneficiaries will be from the North & East and from the districts of Hambantota, Matara, Galle, Kalutara, Colombo, Gampaha and Puttalam. The criteria of selection of beneficiaries will be based not only on internal displacement, but also include of Tsunami pictures. The total value of the Project is US\$ 24.4 Million.

In addition, compensation (subject to availability of funds), is being paid to conflict affected persons for death, damaged property, injuries and funeral expenses.

Mine Action

During the last two decades of the civil war, the Sri Lanka Army and the LTTE have planted several anti-personnel mines as defensive weapons. There are an estimated 1.0 million mines in the North-East in about 640 villages. Of this, about 500,000 landmines are in the Jaffna district. The experience of other countries having to cope with landmines infestation, indicates that preparations for the rapid clearance of contaminated areas should be undertaken well ahead of the advent of peace. Delays have often crippled vital rehabilitation and development work.

With this mind, the GOSL is implementing a comprehensive Mine Action Programme with the assistance of the UNDP, UNICEF and NGOs. The programme targets a mine-free North-East area and border districts by the end of 2006. About 40% of the mines have been cleared.

In order to coordinate mine action, a National Steering Committee on Mine Action had been established. This Committee comprises, as Chairman, the Secretary, M/RRR, Ambassadors and High Commissioners of concerned bilateral agencies, relevant ministries and departments, UNDP, UNICEF, International NGOs, local NGOs and other stakeholders.

The Sri Lanka Army is a pioneer in mine clearance. In addition, there are seven International NGOs and two local NGOs doing clearance work in the North and East. The entire programme is just about two years old, and has built-up local capacity, particularly the de-miners. There are over 2,500 Sri Lankan de-miners and team leaders working in the field.

With the assistance of UNICEF, a Mine Risk Education (MRE) Programme is being undertaken by the GOSL. MRE is being done in the field, in schools, and in other areas. This MRE Programme has reduced the number of mine accidents from 20 per month, to 5 to 7 per month. The MRE Community-based programme is well established in the North-East areas through a network of local NGOs. Adequate coverage on IDPs and affected communities has been possible through this programme. Television and radio campaigns are ongoing islandwide, in all three languages. Audio-visual aids are being used by NGOs while working with the local communities. A school-based programme is also underway with several teachers already trained in the MRE expansion programme which is also now part of the school curricula.

Communication materials including posters have also been developed to supplement the community-based MRE.

Victims assistance is also being undertaken by UNICEF in collaboration with the Government.

Support to psycho-social services to help children go back to school, support to ortho-paedic centres run for the disabled, and rehabilitation centres for survivors and UXO-accident victims is given.

Japan, USA, UK, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, EU (including ECHO, AIDCO, etc), Norway, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia and Sweden, have financially supported the mine action programme.

Even though Sri Lanka has not acceded to the Landmine Treaty, it is fully committed to the removal of landmines and UXOs by the end of 2006. It also has not laid any mines after February 2002.

The entire mine action programme (except for the Sri Lankan Army) is foreign funded. The Sri Lankan Army too has recently got assistance from USA and Norway.

Resettlement and Relocation

The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) has undertaken several projects and programmes to resettle internally displaced persons and refugees from India and to rehabilitate the damaged infrastructure.

Of over 1 million persons affected, some 800,000 remain in the country as IDPs. An unconfirmed number have left for foreign countries. In September 2004, it was recorded that there were 227,000 families displaced, of which 42,000 families were living in welfare centres and the balance being with friends and relatives. During this time, 66,000 persons were in camps in Tamil Nadu as refugees.

The Government, the LTTE and donors agree that the IDP issue and with it the issue of resettlement and relocation of IDPs and refugees should be placed centre stage. Since the beginning of 2002, some 365,000 IDPs, about 2,500 refugees returned through UNHCR and 12,000 illegally did spontaneously return to their places of origin. It is expected that such returns will continue but on a reduced scale. Over 100,000 returnee families have been paid the Livelihood Assistance.

The majority of the IDPs are fishermen, subsistence farmers, agricultural labourers and the unemployed. There is an urgent need to revive the economy of the North & East of the country and to secure the livelihood of returning IDPs and refugees. Income transfer schemes directly to households will provide the start-up capital for sustainable economic livelihood.

At present, the Government, under its Unified Assistance Scheme (UA), offers a Rs.25,000/- grant to returning IDPs and refugees to acquire basic tools, inputs and temporary shelter, and to restart productive livelihood. In addition to this, housing assistance of Rs.250,000/- is to be provided to each permanently resettled refugee/IDP family. However, due to fiscal constraints only a very limited number of returning IDPs or refugees have received the full UAS amount. The World Bank will be assisting about 30,000 families with housing from this year. The ADB too has approved a large Project including housing.

In parallel to the UAS scheme, additional activities will be carried out to ensure that the necessary assistance will be provided to those returnees who do not meet the UAS eligibility criteria. These community-based assistance activities will provide support to the local non-displaced community. This will, inter-alia, help to avoid tensions between those who receive UAS support and others living in the same community, possibly experiencing similar hardship. As recommended in the Triple R framework, Village Rehabilitation Committees (VRCs) have been established in each village, and office-bearers elected. In addition to preparing the lists of eligible resettling families, the attention of the VRCs should be focused on the development and improvement of community-based facilities and services.

Rehabilitation assistance is to be made available only to families who have returned to land/property that they own, or which has been granted by the authorities or is available to returnees for the purpose of durable settlement, and where the returnee and his family have demonstrated a clear intention to remain in the location in a permanent capacity.

Over 100,000 families including those in adjacent areas have been paid the livelihood assistance of Rs.25,000/- per family up to date totaling Rs.2.5 billion.. More funds are available to pay another 25,000 families. The immediate case load is 125,000 families.

A crash-programme to relocate 5,000 families is, being implemented in the Mannar, Vavuniya, Kilinochchi and Jaffna districts.

Reconstruction

The conflict has brought about severe damage to infrastructure in the North-East, particularly, to schools and hospitals. The Government has undertaken rebuilding of schools, hospitals, roads and other infrastructure during the last two years. These reconstruction programmes are funded mainly through Foreign Aid – World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Japanese Bank of International Co-operation and several other Bilateral Agencies. A list of Foreign Aid projects is annexed. The total Budget for the year 2005 is Rs.8,322,647,000/- of which Rs.5,637,547,000/- is Foreign Aid in the form of grants and loans. The major projects that contribute to the reconstruction programme are NECORD, NECORD Extension, NEIAP I & II, NEERP, NECCDEP, NEHRP, Bridges Project and the Livelihood Assistance Programme. A breakdown of the estimated expenditure is also annexed.

Reconciliation

Promotion of activities leading to ethnic reconciliation is another function of this Ministry which is implementing,

- (a) The Truth Commission Report;
- (b) Action Plan for Reconciliation The recommendations are being reviewed;
- (c) With assistance from the UNDP, the MRRR will be assisting the Official Languages Department to:
 - (i) Training translators with tri-lingual capabilities;
 - (ii) Promote awareness creation for Head of Organizations and members of the civil society about language policy, and
 - (iii) Prepare of training material to training public servants in 2nd/3rd language.

