JAPAN FUNDED FAO PROJECT DISTRIBUTES FISHING EQUIPMENT TO TSUNAMI AFFECTED FISHERMEN IN JAFFNA
PRESS RELEASE
FAO

Jaffna, July 12 – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources distributed 1 000 nets and 100 outboard motors to approximately 330 tsunami affected fishers from Sunday to Tuesday. The nets and motors distributed in Jaffna district were purchased through an FAO project funded by the Government of Japan.

The Government of Japan contributed US$5 million in emergency assistance to FAO for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction work in tsunami-stricken countries, of which US$2.671 million was provided to Sri Lanka to be utilized in all adversely affected districts.

Around 5 000 fishers were killed by the tsunami waves in Sri Lanka whilst tens of thousands of others saw their houses destroyed and their means of earning a living - their boats and nets - washed away. FAO’s objective is to restore and enhance fisheries and agricultural based livelihoods to reduce vulnerability and increase self-reliance.

Approximately US$26 730 worth of fishing net kits complete with ropes, floats and twine were distributed to beneficiaries in five locations of Jaffna district. These nets, procured with Japanese funds, will be used for fishing sardine and mackerel off the northern coast of Sri Lanka.

“This additional fishing gear will help me catch more fish per outing” said sardine fisher Anapala Singham Kulasingham who lost his boat and nets during the Tsunami. The mackerel fishers received five nets and sardine fishers received four nets.

“The Ministry required that the minimum amount of nets required be distributed to the beneficiaries to ensure that as many fishers as possible are helped to restart their livelihoods”, said G. Piyasena, Director General of the Department of Fisheries.

There are 19 different organizations in Jaffna district working on fisheries livelihoods. They are involved in boat repair, provide boats and fishing equipment, rehabilitate fisheries infrastructure as well as work directly with fishers to ensure that their livelihoods are restored.
“Additional distributions by other actors in Jaffna will ensure that fishers are provided with the full complement for optimal fishing”, added FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator.

FAO has already ordered more than US$1.3 million of fishing nets and equipment on the international markets to be delivered between now and August and is in the process of ordering US$4 million more.

“The current overwhelming demand for nets in the region has made it difficult to procure a sufficient amount to replace those lost and destroyed as a result of the tsunami. We’ve had some suppliers balk on their orders and have had to procure the majority of the fishing gear from overseas” said FAO Master Fisherman and Fishing Gear Specialist Cyril Binduhewa

FAO also issued the equivalent of US$114,000 worth of outboard motors in Jaffna with funds received from Japan’s Official Development Assistance. The 8 eight-horsepower engines meet the requirements of the lagoon and coastal fisheries of Northern Province.

“The outboard motor will allow me to go out farther in search of fish. I’ll spend less time sailing and more fishing or taking care of my family”, said Bala Krishnasami who takes care of his five children as well as his parents in his Valveddithurai home. Mr Krishnasami lost many of his possessions as a result of the Tsunami.

Many of the fishers have already had their boats repaired by NGOs and the government-owned boat repair company Cey-Nor Foundation. FAO supports Cey-Nor technically and financially using funds received from international donors. The governments of Japan, Italy, Norway, Belgium as well as the Italian Civil Protection, ECHO and GTZ have contributed funds to ensure that boats damaged by the tsunami are expertly repaired and returned to service as soon as possible.

According to government estimates, 54 percent of the total fishing fleet was either made un-seaworthy or was totally destroyed by the tsunami.

Through its partnership with the government and Cey-Nor, FAO, has already repaired circa 3,500 fishing boats in Sri Lanka and has supplied 75 percent of the funds and raw materials made available to Cey-Nor. FAO also funds the repair of inboard and outboard marine engines. Close to 230 inboard and 660 outboard engines have already been repaired by Cey-Nor using FAO funds. A further US$750,000 of FAO-funded engine repairs is planned as soon as the spare parts arrive from abroad.

FAO is the UN’s lead agency for the rehabilitation of the fisheries sector. Whilst FAO and the Sri Lankan government’s immediate priority following the tsunami disaster has been to get the fishers fishing again as soon as possible, the longer-term strategy is to improve the sector as a whole with a view to raising the incomes of coastal communities.