



## Background

Human suffering in Sri Lanka is deeply embedded in nearly two decades of conflict (1983-2002) compounded by the devastation caused by severe natural disasters. While the 2002 ceasefire agreement between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam raised hopes for lasting settlement, escalating violence in 2006 resulted in the official abrogation of the peace accord and renewal of civil conflict at the onset of 2008.

During the last 25 years, the conflict has taken more than 70 000 lives, generated over 520 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and left large-scale devastation in its path. With the core of violence shifting from east to north, it is foreseen that 2008 will mark a time of return for thousands of conflict-affected families in eastern districts, while uprooting households by the masses along the northern front.

Prompt assistance is critical at this time to address the changing needs of Sri Lanka's most vulnerable communities en route to and away from home. The United Nations (UN) and Partners 2008 Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) has outlined strategic priorities for Sri Lanka that, alongside Government efforts, aim to protect and reduce suffering among conflict-affected groups most in need.

## Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

Over one-third of Sri Lanka's population partially derives their livelihoods from agricultural activities and, for many, it provides the basis of household food security. Conflict and repeated displacement have devastated the food production levels and purchasing power of IDPs, returnees, host families and other vulnerable groups.

The lack of agricultural, pastoral and fishery inputs has impeded rural households from producing sufficient food to feed their families, let alone generate enough income to contend with increasing food costs and meet other basic needs. FAO and Government assessments reveal that 176 658 hectares of farmland have not been cultivated owing to violence or land access restrictions, disrupting the traditional livelihoods of over 215 000 households.

These trends have forced many to resort to harmful coping strategies, such as selling property and household assets, further marginalizing vulnerable groups and distancing them from recovery. In conflict-affected areas, levels of acute malnutrition have nearly doubled the national average. With agriculture as a means to sustainably improve household nutrition and food security, rehabilitation of the sector will be paramount to recovery throughout the country.



*FAO project beneficiary tending to her crops*

## FAO in Sri Lanka

As the lead agency in the agriculture and food security sectors, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been assisting rural communities in Sri Lanka since 1978. FAO interventions empower crisis-stricken households with the means to resume livelihood activities and provide for their families, while preparing them to better cope with future shocks.

Through the provision of training and essential inputs, such as quality seeds, agricultural tools, healthy livestock, veterinary supplies and safe fisheries equipment, FAO has helped many thousands of families in Sri Lanka to increase their self-reliance and improve their nutritional intake, while boosting local rural economies.

Within the framework of the 2008 CHAP, FAO's main objectives in Sri Lanka are to:

- **improve sustainable food and nutrition security** through increased local food production;
- **enhance crop yields** through the provision of high-yielding seed varieties, fertilizers, agricultural tools;
- **increase livestock production** by providing healthy animals and veterinary services;
- **build capacity** among farmers, pastoralists and fishers in improved livelihood practices; and
- **strengthen coordination** in the sector among partner agencies to better identify/respond to needs, improve information exchange and avoid duplication.

As part of the 2008 CHAP for Sri Lanka, FAO is appealing for **US\$4 513 399**.



## FAO's COMPONENT OF THE 2008 COMMON HUMANITARIAN ACTION PLAN FOR SRI LANKA

**Project title:** Immediate coordinated food security assistance to IDPs, returnees, host families and other conflict-affected families in the districts of Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Mannar, Kilinochchi/Mullaithevu and Jaffna

**Objectives:** Support the immediate resumption of agriculture and food security activities of IDPs, returnees, host families and other vulnerable conflict-affected families for sustainable food security and increased local food production

**Beneficiaries:** 13 750 returnees, IDPs, host families, female-headed households and other disadvantaged groups

**Implementing Partners:** Ministry of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Services Development, international NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBOs)

**Project Duration:** January – June 2008

**Funds Requested:** US\$1 562 345

FAO's proposed project, "**Immediate coordinated food security assistance to IDPs, returnees, host families and other conflict-affected families in the districts of Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Mannar, Kilinochchi/Mullaithevu and Jaffna**" seeks to help conflicted-affected families in northern and eastern Sri Lanka to immediately resume farming activities. FAO's intervention will equip 13 750 vulnerable households to begin crop production in time for the upcoming agricultural season, which spans from January to April 2008, while improving coping mechanisms, enhancing farming-based livelihoods and building confidence and self-reliance.

With support from the donor community, vulnerable families in the most conflict-affected areas of Sri Lanka will receive key livelihood inputs, such as seeds, agricultural tools, fertilizers, livestock, and fishery and poultry inputs. The project will also provide veterinary services as well as training in improved cultivation practices, on-farm seed multiplication, improved storage techniques and capacity building among partner agencies.

**Project title:** Sector/cluster coordination support project

**Objectives:** Support sector/cluster coordination to effectively coordinate the efforts of international NGOs, CBOs and the Government providing agriculture-based humanitarian livelihood support to the most vulnerable conflict-affected families

**Beneficiaries:** A wide range of stakeholders of the agriculture and food security sector, including implementing partner agencies, NGOs and CBOs. Indirect beneficiaries will exceed 40 000 households and include returnees, IDPs, host families and economically-affected families who will benefit from coordinated agriculture and food security assistance, with special focus dedicated to female-headed households

**Implementing Partners:** Government line ministries and departments, international NGOs and CBOs

**Project Duration:** January – December 2008

**Funds Requested:** US\$657 686

Activities of the "**Sector/cluster coordination support project**" endeavour to strengthen the impact of aid interventions in Sri Lanka through enhancing coordination among stakeholders involved in the agriculture and food security sector. With FAO as the lead technical agency, the project aims to foster coordination and greater engagement on agriculture and food security matters among relevant sector/cluster actors, such as WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, international NGOs and community-based organizations.

Activities include: (i) regular coordination meetings and information exchange in Colombo and district-level field offices; (ii) the elaboration of guiding principles for food security assistance, policy and planning frameworks; and (iii) information and product sharing to consolidate experience and knowledge within the sector. These actions will lead to faster, more appropriate and effective early relief and recovery efforts. The outcomes will have a resonant impact on future interventions throughout the region.

**Project title:** Agriculture assistance in support of the returnees, IDPs, host families and other vulnerable families in the districts of North East province during 2008 *Maha* season

**Objectives:** Support the agriculture and food security activities of returnees, IDPs, host families and other vulnerable families during the *Maha* season for sustainable food and nutrition security and increased local food production

**Beneficiaries:** 15 970 returnees, IDPs, returnees, host families, and female-headed households, among others

**Implementing Partners:** Ministry of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Services Development, international NGOs, UN agencies and CBOs

**Project Duration:** June – December 2008

**Funds Requested:** US\$2 293 368

"**Agriculture assistance in support of the returnees, IDPs, host families and other vulnerable families in the districts of North East province during 2008 *Maha* season**" aims to assist 15 970 conflict-affected households to resume agricultural practices in time for the main food production season (early September to December 2008). In addition to increasing food availability in conflict-affected areas, the cultivation of local paddy, pulses, root crops and vegetables will enhance beneficiaries' diet with vitamin- and mineral-rich foods.

To maximize the impact of the inputs distributed (seeds, tools, fertilizers and livestock), the project will provide training in improved cultivation practices, on-farm seed multiplication and storage techniques. By building the production capacity and self-reliance of vulnerable communities, the project will also contribute to reducing dependency on food aid as well as the risk of adopting harmful coping strategies.

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