

SRI LANKA STATUS REPORT 1 DECEMBER 2006

FAO's emergency relief and rehabilitation programme in Sri Lanka has been funded by a total donor contribution of US\$26.8 million, and has administered 15 projects in the fisheries, agriculture and forestry sectors in tsunami-affected areas of Sri Lanka. The programme's largest donor is Italy, followed by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO), Norway, Japan, Belgium, the UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Finland, Spain, FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme, Laos, Ireland and Germany.

Security update: The escalating violence in the north and east of the country has hampered general humanitarian efforts in the region, including all FAO interventions. Particularly affected by the conflict are the districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara.

Coordination:

As the UN's coordinating agency for the rehabilitation of the fisheries and agriculture sectors, FAO established fisheries and agriculture-sector coordination mechanisms at the national and district levels. These coordination mechanisms, led by the line ministries and supported by FAO, identified organizations that work in the fisheries and agriculture sectors, helped avoid an overlap of efforts by sharing plans and information with all actors and ensured that the humanitarian community was aware of pertinent issues and Government policies affecting the rehabilitation of these sectors.

FAO, in addition to providing technical guidance and expertise to the Government of Sri Lanka through its close collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (MFAR), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ministry of Forestry and Environment, provided the line ministries with equipment and vehicles to boost their capacity to respond to the disaster. FAO also worked closely with the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) to help coordinate humanitarian efforts in the country.

Fisheries:

FAO supported the recovery of the fisheries sector by repairing fishing boats, repairing/replacing engines and distributing fishing gear. FAO also provided employment opportunities and business development training to affected fishers. Specifically, FAO supported the repair of some 3 109 boats and 1 329 engines, as well as distributed 842 engines, 75 290 nets with accessories and 5 000 bundles of tuna long-lines. A total of 949 members of fishing communities and 880 Government officials received technical training. It is estimated that over 95 percent of the fisheries sector has recovered from the tsunami.

A country-wide fisheries training programme of MFAR extension workers and fishers was conducted by FAO in collaboration with the National Institute of Fisheries and Nautical Engineering (NIFNE), the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA), the Department of Fisheries Cooperatives and the MFAR. The training programme covers new techniques and methods related to post-harvest fishing, extension and fisheries management.

A total of 322 women, graduates and fishers, received training. Of these, 79 newly recruited graduates of the MFAR were given an orientation course in the workings of the MFAR and inter-related agencies, an overview of the fisheries sector and interactions between different stakeholders within the sector; 16 Assistant Directors, Fisheries Instructors and Extension Officers were trained in fisheries extension and management; 30 men and women belonging to fisher communities were trained in net rigging and mending (Jaffna), and in engine and hull repair (Negombo); 60 women from Matara and Hambantota participated in a workshop aimed at the socio-economic empowerment of women through AIDS awareness and training in cooking, sewing and other self-employment activities; and 137 Fisheries Cooperatives' leaders were trained in accounting and banking procedures, group dynamics, improved leadership skills.

In order to better plan and coordinate fisheries rehabilitation, FAO assisted the MFAR in various damage, needs and recovery assessments of the sector. FAO also helped the MFAR prepare a 'Strategy and Programme for Post Tsunami Reconstruction and Development of the Marine Fisheries Sector', officially launched in April 2006. The strategy provides a framework for a single overall programme for the relief and rehabilitation of the fisheries sector and outlines short-term as well as medium to long-term projects which extend into a five-year time frame.

Agriculture:

FAO's agricultural rehabilitation activities have assisted more than 14 800 crop and livestock farmers in returning to their agriculture- and livestock-based livelihoods in the districts of Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara. Two years after the Tsunami it is estimated that more than 90 percent of the 8 370 affected farmers have received inputs and that the agricultural sector has recovered well.

FAO distributed agricultural inputs for two cropping seasons; the Yala (dry) season, lasting April-September 2005 and the Maha (wet) season lasting October 2005-March 2006. The programme distributed inputs covering 80 percent of the affected farmland and included 348.7 tonnes of paddy (rice) seed, 1 337.5 tonnes of fertilizer, 44 255 fruit trees, 4 158 packets of vegetable seed for home-gardens, 39 tonnes of other food crop (OFC) seeds as well as 9 250 mammoties (hoes), 270 sprayers, 65 water pumps and 540 m of hose. The distribution of these inputs enabled some 7 309 paddy farmers, 1 130 OFC farmers and 4 859 home-gardeners resume agricultural activities.

In addition, FAO trained about 9 800 farmers who received agricultural inputs, on land preparation techniques, fertilizer application, and water, weed and pest management systems.

FAO's livestock programme distributed 367 cows, 1 073 goats and 21 384 chicks with feed as well as barbed wire to beneficiaries. Moreover, livestock farmers were trained in improved animal husbandry practices including nutrition, back yard poultry farming, animal housing and disease and feed management. FAO also supported the Department of Animal Production and Health through the provision of 486 units of vaccine, 450 units of supporting medicines and three solar refrigerators for vaccine preservation, which will be used for the Department's disease prevention programme.

FAO has constructed five model horticulture nurseries in Galle, Matara and Hambantota to enhance the livelihoods of more than 350 tsunami-affected women. Community horticulture nurseries enable women rural development organizations to establish benefit schemes for their members and thus help women and their households increase food security and earn extra income. FAO also provided 2 476 tsunami-affected households in the north and east with nutrition training which enhances micronutrient, protein and energy intake for meals using locally grown horticulture produce, rice and fish. This training component was largely directed at the women of the household.

FAO carried out an assessment on salinity damage entitled “Assessment of damage caused by the Tsunami to Crop Production, Land and Irrigation Water Resources in Sri Lanka, Reclaim Ability of Soil and Water Resources and Suggestions for Short- and Medium-term Activities in General Agriculture” and distributed pH and electrical-conductivity meters and other equipment to HORDI and the provincial agriculture authorities in support of the soil salinity testing and land rehabilitation programme in the districts of Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. Further, FAO provided training to some 100 MoA officers on salinity control and land rehabilitation.

FAO supported the MoA in holding a workshop on “Developing Strategies for Advancement of Agricultural Sector in Tsunami-affected Areas of Sri Lanka” from 23 to 24 March 2006. The workshop provided a forum for actors to review the accomplishments in agricultural rehabilitation to date, to identify gaps and develop strategies for further development of the agriculture sector.

Arrangements have been made for a mid season cultivation (between the Yala and Maha seasons) for the first time in Jaffna District, to provide basic food security to the conflict affected IDPs and host families.

Forestry:

Many farmers and fishers in tsunami-affected areas are dependent on forests and trees for their livelihoods. Efforts to rehabilitate mangrove forests, to plant coastal shelterbelts, and to replant timber and fruit trees serve to protect human lives and inland assets, and improve household economies. FAO has developed a programme to identify opportunities for forest rehabilitation, reforestation, and agro-forestry to provide for coastal protection and the livelihoods needs of local populations. FAO assisted tsunami-affected communities in the districts of Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Ampara and Batticaloa. The programme established 121.5 hectares of coastal shelterbelts and rehabilitated 27.5 hectares of mangroves. Furthermore, 15 905 families, from both new and old settlements, were provided with fruit tree seedlings and other multi-purpose tree seedlings for their home gardens.

The education and awareness programmes and regular community consultation have created awareness amongst the Forest Department staff on the importance of participatory approaches. Village communities are realising the importance of trees and the need to establish protective shelterbelts in the vulnerable coastal belts. School children are also developing an interest in mangrove conservation, maintaining nurseries and the usefulness of trees in home gardens.

The FAO programme helped build the capacity of Forest Department staff in participatory techniques, report writing, coastal reforestation, mangrove rehabilitation and in effective coordination with Government staff in other departments and NGOs in the districts.