

# Sri Lanka: Smoothing to Rapid Return of Internally Displaced People in Sri Lanka's Northern Province

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## Resettlement Program Focused on Recreating Facilities, Roads, Work Opportunities

### Overview

After the historic cessation of hostilities in Sri Lanka's long-running civil war in 2009, tens of thousands of people displaced by the war naturally wanted to return to their original villages and towns and the government was faced with a considerable challenge resettling these families and helping them restart their lives. The World Bank worked with government to resettle more than 100,000 people – of a total relocation of 187,533 people – in Sri Lanka's northern province and worked to provide them water, better roads, new public buildings, and work.

### Challenge

The displaced people wanted to return home but there weren't the facilities to serve them and livelihoods to sustain them, and the government's capacities were limited and often altered to match the resources on offer by donors.

### Approach

It was a watershed event in recent Sri Lankan history when President Mahinda Rajapaksa on May 19, 2009, announced an end to the lengthy internal armed conflict in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The government announced its intention to return a significant number of the displaced people to their places of origin by the end of January 2010. However, demining was a critical first step, and the destruction of physical and economic infrastructure in the North was extensive and the longer-term reconstruction needs were substantial.

The government requested the Bank's urgent assistance primarily for rapid return of the displaced persons, under Phases III and IV of its Resettlement Plan. Beginning in September 2009, the government engaged extensively with the Bank in seeking support to implement its return plan. Bank missions visited the project area in July and September 2009 to identify and prepare a possible response

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More Results 

**100,000**  
displaced people rapidly returned to their communities

strategy, which it prepared in October 2009 in consultation with the government. The Bank's strategy was to utilize its existing portfolio of projects to support activities and investments in the Northern Province; and prepare new operations in support of livelihood activities and infrastructure rehabilitation targeted in that region.

# 12,000

hectares of land were brought back to production

## Results

This project provided assistance to returned households to restart livelihood activities such as farming and fishing. It also complemented the emergency assistance provided by the government to the returning displaced households. The work-fare component provided employment opportunities for returnees immediately to bridge the income gap until they are able to obtain income from regular livelihoods. The project ensured flexibility for work-fare to be extended beyond the period originally envisaged, and indeed given the restoration of normal economic activity took longer than expected, some vulnerable households still require continuing safety net assistance.

The primary outcome of the project is that it helped in the rapid return of about 100,000 displaced people. Other results included (i) commodity grants (seeds and implements etc.) and assistance were provided to about 15,000 farming households to be able to restart pre-conflict economic livelihoods such as paddy farming and marine fishing; (ii) 50 days of labor work opportunities per person were provided to about 45,000 households to ensure that they had access to means of support before the basic village economy and livelihood activities resumed fully; (iii) about 12,000 hectares of agricultural lands were brought back to production; (iv) 650 km of rural roads were rehabilitated, ensuring inter-village connectivity and market linkages; and (v) eight drinking water supply schemes are being restored to benefit about 30,000 households.

Altogether, the total number of displaced persons resettled to date through the government's resettlement plan stood at 57,935 families (187,533 persons); 6,652 ha of farmland have been cleared and cultivated; 1,700,000 person days of employment were generated through a cash-for-work program assisting 48,537 families; 2,000 ha of lands under 65 irrigation schemes have been rehabilitated and cultivated; 329 km of rural roads have been rehabilitated, and; 240 public buildings have been rehabilitated and returned to use. Reconstruction of nine drinking water supply schemes is ongoing and they will benefit 57,625 families.

### MORE INFORMATION

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- » [ENREP Project Website](#)
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## Voices

“The cash-for-work made me a small entrepreneur.”

—Thurayan Ketheeswary, *Beneficiary*

## Bank Contribution

The project includes four project components together worth US\$75.5 million, co-funded by the International Development Association (IDA), with US\$65 million, and Australia's AusAID with US\$10.5 million.

## Partners

Several UN agencies provided parallel support to the return process: the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (initial relocation support and protection issues); the United Nations Office for Project Services (rehabilitation works); the United Nations Children's Fund (water and

sanitation, child health and nutrition, and mine risk awareness); the World Food Program (short-term dry food provisions); the Food and Agriculture Organization (provisions of seeds and agricultural equipment); the United Nations Development Program (livelihood and early recovery, plus mine action coordination, with funding for mine clearance being provided by China, Japan, India, the UK and USA); International Organization for Migration (logistics support for transporting displaced people back to their homes), and; the World Health Organization (health and nutrition support).

## Toward the Future

There is a strong possibility of the government soon requesting additional financing to cater for the needs of the returnees in the newly released high security zones. This could be considered in May 2012, since it is confirmed that all available funds are committed. Emergency Northern Recovery Project is preparing to carry out a needs assessment in North to identify total additional needs.