

Stories from the Field

Improving Accessibility in Northern Villages: Rehabilitating Internal Roads in Mullaitivu District *Project for Rehabilitation of Community Infrastructure, Improvement of Livelihoods and Empowerment of Women in the Northern and Eastern Provinces (RCI)*



WRDS members discussing road rehabilitation with UN-Habitat officer.

The project for *Rehabilitation of Community Infrastructure, Improvement of Livelihoods and Empowerment of Women in the Northern and Eastern Provinces (RCI)*, funded by the Government of Japan, is supporting the construction of community infrastructure including 32 km of access roads in the North and East of Sri Lanka. The RCI project is implemented by UN-Habitat through a participatory process with the community.

Murippu is a village in interior Mullaitivu situated in Kumarapuram GN division in the Maritimepattu Divisional Secretariat. Located 7 Km from Mullaitivu town, the GN division has 263 families with a population of 1,146, the majority being Tamil speaking Hindus. The main livelihoods of the residents are agriculture and daily wage labour while some residents are engaged in skilled occupations such as masonry and carpentry. The community had been displaced during the intensified conflict between the Government forces and the LTTE in 2009, resettling in the village in 2011.

When UN-Habitat commenced the infrastructure reconstruction programme in the area, the community members were given the opportunity to discuss and prioritise their main infrastructure needs. As several internal access roads in the village were in a bad state of repair, the community selected road rehabilitation for funding by the RCI project. The rehabilitation of three internal gravel roads - Noordeen road (1.1 km), Maniyam Road (500m) and the Pichchaiappa road (1.2 km) were selected.

Due to the damage caused during the conflict and lack of regular maintenance, the roads and culverts were in a bad state of repair, making accessibility difficult for residents. Driving and transporting goods along the road was also difficult as parts of the road were narrow with many pot holes and broken culverts. This resulted in residents facing many difficulties in their daily activities. Due to the bad state of the road and the lack of transport facilities, residents



Internal road before rehabilitation.



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Road during construction.

wasted valuable time. The drainage system was also in a state of disrepair, resulting in flooding during the monsoon season.

As UN-Habitat follows a participatory people's process in implementing its programmes, the rehabilitation of the road network was handed over to a Community Based Organisation in the area. The Murippu Women's Rural Development Society (WRDS) was selected and was responsible for the hiring of skilled construction workers and purchasing building materials. The planning and implementation of the project was driven by the community while UN-Habitat provided technical assistance. The WRDS provided their own labour contribution to the effort through voluntary labour contributions and through "Shramadana" activities with the community members.

The total road construction cost was LKR 4.9 million. The road has four single row, 2 feet diameter hume pipe culverts. These internal roads are providing easy access to several locations within the village, particularly for the farmers and school children, benefitting over 1,000 people.

Government officers were key partners, assisting in obtaining planning approvals and monitoring the progress. The Grama Niladhari of Kumarapuram GN stated "This is a much needed initiative. These three roads were badly damaged during the conflict. Some of the roads could not be used at all as they were overgrown with shrubs and caused safety concerns."

Ms. R. Jasmin, a resident of Murippu, said "All residents encountered much hardship without a well-constructed access road. Children could not attend school on time and sick people could not get emergency treatment. But now these problems have been solved. The rehabilitated road will make it easier for residents to obtain electricity connections. My heartfelt gratitude to the WRDS, UN-Habitat and the Government of Japan".



The WRDS members cycling along the repaired road.

The RCI Project is a community infrastructure development project, contributing towards the sustainable rehabilitation and reconstruction of the conflict affected Northern and Eastern Provinces. Funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UN-Habitat, it is assisting communities to overcome the hardships caused by the lack of basic services, whilst rebuilding human capital and empowering women. Implemented in the districts of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar in the North and Batticaloa in the East, the key project interventions include the construction and rehabilitation of community centres, preschools, storage facilities, small irrigation channels, internal access roads and storm water drainage systems.