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## Stories From the Field A New Beginning for a Young Family

*Musalai DS Division, Mannar District, Northern Province, Sri Lanka*



The “Support to Conflict Affected People through Housing” project is a housing recovery initiative supporting returning Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the North of Sri Lanka. Funded by the European Union (EU), the Australian Government (AusAID) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and jointly implemented by UN-Habitat and SDC, the project provides cash grants and technical support to home owners in the districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi to reconstruct and repair their conflict damaged houses. Mr.Kachchi Muhammadu Hasbullah, a 32 year old farmer, is a project

beneficiary from Mannar District.

Hasbullah was only 8 years old when he was displaced from the village of Palaikuli in Mannar District in 1991. His family was forced to leave the village following orders by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) to vacate the area within 36 hours. His wife, Mrs. Hasbullah Farhana’s story is similar. She was only three years old when her family was forced to gather a few belongings and leave their village of Kondachchi. Her childhood was spent in a transitional shelter in Palliwasalthurai village close to Kalpitiya town in the Puttalam District, while Hasbullah lived in a wattle and daub hut in Kalpitiya with his parents. Farhana and Hasbullah were married in September 2006 while they were both residing in Puttalam.

With the end of the conflict in 2009 and the commencement of the resettlement of IDPs to their villages of origin, Hasbullah and Farhana decided to return to Mannar to start a new life with their daughter and son Muhamad Kasreen and Muhamad Kaseer. Their third child Pathema Semra was born in 2012.



As Hasbullah’s family home had been damaged beyond repair during the conflict and as they lacked financial resources to rebuild a permanent home, Hasbullah was selected for housing assistance by the project “Support to Conflict Affected People through Housing” in March 2012. He was one of 75 beneficiaries selected from Palaikuli GN Division under this housing recovery project. Within eight months, he completed constructing their 600 square foot home which includes two bedrooms, a kitchen, living room and a sanitary toilet.

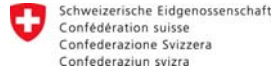


Hasbullah and Farhana were very pleased to be selected for housing support. They received financial assistance of LKR.500,000 (approx. 4,500 USD) in four instalments to construct the house. The couple received technical assistance from UN-Habitat in construction activities including selecting a house plan, obtaining local authority approvals, selecting skilled labour and quality building materials. Hasbullah was responsible for the planning, implementation and monitoring of the construction with the assistance of the UN-Habitat technical team. Similar to other families selected under this EU/AusAID/SDC/UN-Habitat initiative, both Hasbullah and Farhana contributed their own labour as well as their own funds towards the reconstruction effort in the spirit of the “home owner driven” process.



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Farhana states that they have significantly saved on labour costs as her husband had undertaken most of the masonry work while her father had helped with the carpentry work. The couple estimate that they have saved approx. LKR.50,000 by contributing their own labour towards the construction. They had also borrowed LKR. 60,000 from family members to supplement the housing grant.

Returning to Palaikuli has opened new opportunities for this young family. Hasbullah is cultivating his father’s two-acre paddy field. With the profits from the recent harvest, he has already repaid Rs.10,000 of the loan obtained from their relatives.

Farhana has started sewing as a livelihood. Having followed training in dressmaking organized by the Government during her displacement in Puttalam, Farhana has been earning an income of LKR.4,000 to LKR.5,000 per month. Although their new house has very little furniture at present, Farhana’s sewing machine takes pride of place in one of the bedrooms. In December 2012, just a week after moving to their new house, she had received several sewing orders from neighbours to sew school uniforms, dresses and children’s clothes. She hopes to supplement the monthly household income with her earnings and to purchase cooking utensils and furniture for their new home. “We will need another LKR.50,000 to complete the house with all the fixtures, fittings and furniture. God willing, we can eventually achieve this with our earnings” stated Farhana.

With the resettlement of IDPs in Palaikuli, the village and the surrounding areas are undergoing rapid development. Internal roads and pathways in the village have been cleared of thick scrub jungle and the Puttalam - Mannar Trunk Road is nearing completion, opening up many business opportunities for the residents of Palaikuli. A new settlement of over 250 houses is being developed along the main road while health care and other essential facilities are being established to cater to the returning families. For the first time in their lives, Farhana’s and Hasbullah’s young family is enjoying living in their own permanent home. “We are very happy and grateful to have a house of our own. This house will provide a firm foundation for our children to grow up to be happy and healthy adults” stated Farhana.



The **Support to Conflict Affected People Through Housing in Sri Lanka** project is supporting over 5,000 families to reconstruct and repair their conflict damaged houses. The Government of Sri Lanka is supporting this initiative through the identification of priority community needs in the project locations. The project will be completed in early 2014.

**Photographs: Hasbullah near the house during construction; Farhana and her mother upon their return to Mannar; The house during construction; Farhana, Hasbullah with two of their children outside their new home.**