

UN-Habitat Implements Disaster Risk Reduction Initiatives in Mannar Town in Sri Lanka's Northern Province

May 2014, Mannar, Sri Lanka. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in collaboration with the Mannar Urban Council, is implementing a number of small scale Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) initiatives to assist communities cope with the adverse impacts of natural disasters through the *Disaster Resilient City Development Strategies for four Cities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka (Phase II) Project*. Funded by the Government of Australia, the project is being implemented by UN-Habitat in the towns of Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Akkaraipattu in collaboration with the Local Authorities, the Ministry of Disaster Management, and Urban Development Authority (UDA), Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance (SLILG), Institute for Construction Training and Development (ICTAD) and the University of Moratuwa.

Implementing small scale DRR interventions is a key output of the *Disaster Resilient Urban Planning and Development Unit* that has been established at the Mannar Urban Council. The need for such DRR activities was identified by the project partners as a key priority during the implementation of Phase I during 2012-2013. As a result, additional funding has been allocated to implement small scale DRR activities in the four cities during the second phase. Small scale infrastructure has been identified by the communities and the LAs to reduce the vulnerability to disasters of settlements and communities.

In the Mannar Urban Council area, the infrastructure activities identified included rehabilitation of two internal roads and laying of Hume pipes and culverts to release storm water from flood-prone areas. The rehabilitation of *Manohara Kurukkal Road* located along the Sithivinayagar Kovil pond and the *50 Housing Scheme Road* were selected as priority interventions by the Urban Council and local communities.



50 Housing Scheme Road before rehabilitation



Repair work in progress along the 50 Housing Scheme Road

During the monsoon rains, the Manohara Kurukkal Road floods due to inundation of the Sithivinayagar Kovil pond, making the road impassable. The 50 Housing Scheme Road is located in a low lying area and also becomes inundated during heavy rains, causing a significant flood risk to the community. With the guidance of the UN-Habitat technical team, the roads have been rehabilitated by the Mannar Urban Council using council resources including skilled construction workers and equipment. These activities have highlighted to the Council staff how small scale DRR interventions can positively impact communities. Another outcome of the project was the creation of a budget line for DRR. This budget line will enable future needs to be identified and responded to in a similar manner.

Another small scale DRR activity involved laying 10 linear meters of concrete pipes at Emil Nagar, with labour support from community members. Emil Nagar is a flood prone area where most roads are inundated during the monsoon rains due to a lack of adequate drainage. Installing Hume pipes in flood-prone locations is expected to assist the flow of water during the rainy season, thereby reducing the risk of flooding.

Implementing these DRR activities has resulted in immediate benefits to the community while enhancing the motivation of the Mannar Urban Council. A Mannar Council Member stated "It is good to provide opportunities to local authorities to select and address their urgent issues. Instead of using a contractor, these activities have been implemented using council resources, which have ensured the effective use of funds."

Following the rehabilitation of the *Manohara Kurukkal Road*, residents of the area stated "We are thankful to the Mannar Urban Council and UN-Habitat for this intervention. Rehabilitation of these roads will help us cope better during flood situations."

The *Disaster Resilient City Development Strategies for four Cities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka* Project aims to establish sustainable disaster resilient and healthy cities and townships in disaster prone regions of Sri Lanka.