



International
Labour
Organization

ILO *Celebrates*
90
years working for social justice

International Labour Organization and
Sri Lanka

“The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.”

*Juan Somavia,
ILO Director-General*

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Foreward by the Country Director

This publication highlights a number of outstanding landmarks in the history of the ILO and its relationship with Sri Lanka.

The year 2009 marks the 90th anniversary of the ILO. It also stands for 61 years of cooperation between Sri Lanka and the ILO, and 25 years since the establishment of the ILO's permanent office in Sri Lanka.

It is not possible to encapsulate 61 years of working together in one small book. However, I would like to use this opportunity to thank ILO and other UN agency staff both in Sri Lanka and outside, and also our many national partners, for their strong support.

Throughout our time in Sri Lanka, we have worked with all major national stakeholders including Government agencies, trade unions and employers, to promote social justice through decent work.

We believe that decent work is central to reducing poverty, and is a means of achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development.

Our 'Decent Work Agenda' is captured through four strategic objectives. These are, fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards, employment and income opportunities, social protection and social security, and social dialogue and tripartism.

We believe that these objectives hold good for all workers, women and men, in both formal and informal economies, in wage employment or working on their own account, in the fields, factories and offices, in their homes, or in the community.

In Sri Lanka, we work with our partners in a number of technical areas all related to the creation of decent work. These areas of collaboration include wages, dispute settlement in the public sector, industrial relations and labour market governance, social security, employment policy development, strengthening of employers' and workers' organizations, prevention of child labour, promotion of youth employment, enterprise promotion and value chain development, community based vocational training, livelihood recovery in conflict and disaster affected areas, labour migration, labour-based technology, including planning of small-scale infrastructure, HIV/AIDS in the work place, gender mainstreaming and sexual harassment in the workplace.

It gives me great pleasure therefore, to present this booklet to all of you as a gesture of appreciation, in memory of our work together. I look forward to many more years of cooperation.

Tine Staermose

Country Director
ILO Sri Lanka

April 2009

The ILO's global role today

Universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based
on social justice

- *The ILO Constitution*

The ILO is a United Nations specialised agency, which seeks to promote social justice and internationally recognised human and labour rights. In 2009, the ILO commemorates 90 years of working towards social justice for all people, through decent work. Today, more than ever, there is growing recognition of the need for a strong social dimension to growth and globalization.

The ILO: From then to now

1919: The birth of the ILO, through the Treaty of Versailles

1944: The Philadelphia Declaration sets out the aims and objectives of the ILO

1946: The ILO becomes the first specialised agency of the UN

1949: Decision to start technical cooperation

1969: The ILO is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on its 50th anniversary

1998: Adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work by ILO member countries

2008: Adoption of the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization by ILO member countries

Since its inception in 1919, the ILO has developed and overseen international labour standards to promote decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. It provides technical assistance in the fields of employment policy and employment creation and promotes the development of independent employers' and workers' organizations.

Today, 90 years after its inception, the ILO continues to believe that;

"And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required,"

- *The ILO Constitution's Preamble*

ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization

In the face of widespread uncertainty in the world of work, ranging from financial turmoil and economic downturn to growing unemployment, informality and insufficient social protection, governments, workers and employers of the ILO adopted a landmark Declaration designed to strengthen the ILO's capacity to respond to the growing challenges of globalization.

The Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, adopted unanimously, on 10 June 2008, expresses the contemporary vision of the ILO's mandate in the era of globalization. This landmark Declaration is a powerful reaffirmation of the ILO's values and comes at a significant moment in history.

"The demands of the modern world of work are changing and this Declaration strengthens our effort to respond through the Decent Work Agenda", said ILO Director-General Mr. Juan Somavia. "Not only does it signal a major change towards balanced economic and social policies, but it equips the ILO with a formidable tool to pursue the promotion of a fair globalization based on Decent Work."

The Declaration acknowledges the benefits of globalization but calls for renewed efforts to implement decent work policies as the means to achieve improved and fair outcomes for all. The Declaration calls for a new strategy to sustain open economies and open societies, based on social justice. It endorses



Working together

The ILO's tripartite nature of operations makes it unique among the UN family. Tripartism refers to collaboration between governments, employers and workers in the creation of international labour legislation and in the implementation of ILO programmes in different countries.

the concept of decent work and the Decent Work Agenda, with its four inseparable and mutually supportive strategic objectives (employment creation and sustainable enterprises, social protection, workers' rights and social dialogue), as an effective response to the challenges of globalization.

The ILO's 'Decent Work Agenda' response to the global crisis

The ILO is actively engaged with international agencies and local governments to mitigate the impacts of the global recession.

The ILO Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia notes that; "The Decent Work Agenda is an appropriate policy framework to confront the crisis. There is a powerful message that tripartite dialogue with employers' and workers' organizations should play a central role in addressing the economic crisis, and in developing policy responses."

The global economic crisis is expected to cause a dramatic increase in the number of unemployed, working poor and in vulnerable employments. In 2008, total global employment was estimated at three billion. However, the labour market projections for 2009 show deterioration in global labour markets for both women and men.

The ILO projects that the global unemployment rate could, depending on the timeliness and effectiveness of recovery efforts, reach between 6.3% and 7.1%. This would result in an increase of between 24 million and 52 million people unemployed worldwide. These findings mean that some 200 million workers, mostly in developing economies, could be pushed into extreme poverty. The number of working poor – people who are unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the US\$ 2 per person, per day, poverty line, may rise up to 1.4 billion. The greater impacts on the more vulnerable populations such as women, children and the disabled, will also cause deterioration of equity and equality gains achieved so far, both in formal workplaces and in informal spheres.

Therefore the ILO recommends policy measures to mitigate these impacts at a country level. These include;

- Wider coverage of unemployment benefits and insurance schemes, re-skilling redundant workers and protecting pensions from devastating declines in financial markets
- Public investment in infrastructure and housing, community infrastructure and green jobs including through emergency public works
- Support to small and medium enterprises
- Social dialogue at enterprise, sectoral and national levels.

The ILO is confident that if a large number of countries, using their own accumulated reserves, emergency IMF loans and stronger aid mechanisms, put in place coordinated policies in line with the ILO Decent Work Agenda, the impacts of the downturn on enterprises, workers and their families, could be cushioned and recovery would be faster.

“Our efforts must be to look at labour afresh, where the ILO has worked over a period of time to bring about a Decent Work Agenda. A Decent Work Agenda is important because it is central to people's lives ...

I must sincerely thank the ILO, the oldest specialised institution in the UN system, for being an organization that has encouraged the whole world to recognise the value of the worker. This is one organization which concentrates on the individual, his skills, his happiness, his working conditions, occupational health and safety and also the environment in which the work is done ”

His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa

President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

International Labour Conference, Geneva, 2007

The ILO in Sri Lanka

The ILO set up its office in Sri Lanka in 1984. Its mandate is to promote social justice by ensuring respect for human and labour rights through the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). The ILO promotes the development of independent employers' and workers' organizations and provides training and advisory services to them. Its main aim is to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment and livelihood opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue in handling work related issues.

Some of the key activities of ILO in Sri Lanka have been;

- Facilitating capacity building of employment services and assisting in the creation of JobsNet, an employment network to connect job seekers with potential employers
- Promoting factory improvement programmes
- Initiating the HIV/AIDS workplace education programme
- Providing tsunami recovery assistance through labour based approaches
- Taking action against child labour in Sri Lanka through the ILO-IPEC (International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour)
- Facilitating a National Child Activity Survey
- Promoting micro and small enterprise development for pro-poor growth in Sri Lanka
- Supporting institutional development of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower
- Providing assistance on the 4Rs (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) in the North and East through a joint programme with the UNDP, UNICEF and UNHCR
- Promoting youth employment
- Assisting the Government prepare a National Action Plan for Youth Employment
- Collaborating with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to rehabilitate 400 km of rural roads in the Ampara District
- Helping the Government formulate a National Policy and National Plan of Action for Decent Work
- Facilitating vocational training and skills development for children in the North and Eastern Provinces affected by war
- Supporting the formulation of a national wage-setting mechanism
- Providing assistance to formulate a Vocational Training Policy for Vulnerable Groups
- Helping the Government develop a National Labour Migration Policy
- Providing technical assistance in developing a National Framework on Reintegration of Ex-combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka

Decent Work in Sri Lanka

Work is central to the wellbeing of people. It provides income and can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement by strengthening individuals, their families and communities.

'Decent work' means opportunities for men and women to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.



Sri Lanka has ratified all 8 ILO Core Conventions

- C29 Forced Labour Convention
- C87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention
- C98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention
- C100 Equal Remuneration Convention
- C105 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention
- C111 Discrimination (employment and occupation) Convention
- C138 Minimum age for admission for employment
- C182 Prohibition and immediate action for elimination of worst forms of child labour Convention

Other ILO Conventions ratified by Sri Lanka

- C8 Unemployment indemnity (shipwreck) Convention
- C11 Right of Association (agriculture) Convention
- C16 Medical examination of young persons (sea) Convention
- C18 Workmen's compensation (occupational diseases) Convention
- C26 Minimum wage fixing machinery Convention
- C45 Underground work (women) Convention
- C58 Minimum age (sea) Convention - revised
- C63 Convention concerning statistics of wages and hours of work
- C80 Final articles revision Convention
- C81 Labour inspection Convention
- C90 Night work of young persons (industry) Convention - revised
- C95 Protection of wages Convention
- C96 Fee-charging employment agencies Convention - revised
- C99 Minimum wage fixing machinery (agriculture) Convention
- C103 Maternity protection Convention - revised
- C106 Weekly rest (commerce and offices) Convention
- C110 Conditions of employment of plantation workers Convention
- C115 Radiation protection Convention
- C116 Final articles revision Convention
- C131 Minimum wage fixing Convention
- C135 Workers representatives Convention
- C144 Tripartite consultations to promote the implementation of ILS Convention
- C155 Occupational Safety and Health Convention
- C160 Labour statistics Convention
- C185 Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention
- C186 Maritime Labour Convention

The ILO's technical and financial assistance to Sri Lanka is delivered through a Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP).

The latest DWCP, for the four year period of 2008 -2012, was developed in full consultation with the tripartite partners - the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), the Trade Unions and the Government (Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower as focal point).

The focus in Sri Lanka is not only on unemployment but also on the conditions of work of those employed, as well as on effective labour administration and industrial relations. The programme prioritises the three areas of:

- Enhanced access to more and better jobs in economically disadvantaged and crisis affected areas
- Enhanced labour administration and promotion of equitable employment practices
- Improved tripartite cooperation initiatives linking job security, productivity and competitiveness

In addition, the programme mainstreams the cross cutting areas of informal economy, gender equality, International Labour Standards and HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

“ Sri Lanka welcomes the initiative taken by the ILO to mainstream decent work throughout the United Nations system ”

Hon. Athauda Seneviratne

*Minister of Labour Relations and Manpower
Sri Lanka*



BUILDING TRUST

One of the most important activities of the ILO in Sri Lanka is in promoting social dialogue on work related issues at sector and national level. The ILO provides a platform for stakeholders to arrive at consensus through discussion.

- The ILO provides support to strengthen capacities of social partners by providing technical and advisory assistance to trade unions and employers' organizations.
- The ILO also provides technical and advisory support to the Government, to improve tripartite cooperation and build capacity.

National Framework on Social Dialogue

As a part of the ILO's 90th anniversary celebrations, on 24 April 2009, the ILO was instrumental in developing and launching, through tripartite consultations, a National Framework on Social Dialogue, for employers and employees. The framework will be used as a tool to promote social dialogue at national and enterprise level, in principle and in practice.

NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The ILO supports policy development in the world of work in Sri Lanka by providing technical assistance and by facilitating dialogue among stakeholders.

National Policy and National Plan of Action for Decent Work in Sri Lanka

The ILO supported the Government in the development of a National Policy for Decent Work and a National Plan of Action for Decent Work. The National Policy for Decent Work, which was developed in August 2006, identifies existing weaknesses in the focus areas of decent work and sets out policies to overcome them. The National Plan of Action converts these identified policies into action. Together, the National Policy and Plan of Action, provide Sri Lanka with comprehensive guidelines in creating employment and in ensuring the quality of work.

National Action Plan for Youth Employment

In promoting decent work for young people in Sri Lanka, the ILO supported YEN-SL (Youth Employment Network of Sri Lanka) in formulating a National Action Plan for Youth Employment, in consultation with major stakeholders, including young people themselves. The Action Plan, launched in September 2007, is aimed at analysing the problem of youth unemployment in Sri Lanka, developing responses to this problem, determining implementation aspects, coordinating implementation and monitoring results. The ILO has been requested by the Government to assist in the implementation of this Action Plan over a five-year period.

National Labour Migration Policy for Sri Lanka

Another recent policy level achievement is the National Labour Migration Policy for Sri Lanka. The policy, finalised in October 2008, is a pioneering accomplishment in the South Asian region and is based on the ILO's Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. The Multilateral Framework is a set of non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration.

Sri Lanka's Policy on Labour Migration articulates state commitment to ensuring a labour migration process that is within the principles of good governance and relevant international conventions.



National Wage-Setting Mechanism

A comprehensive National Wage Policy is essential for the effective functioning of Sri Lanka's labour administration. There is also a need to improve wage-setting mechanisms and institutions in the country. Therefore, the ILO is assisting the formulation of a national wage-setting mechanism for Sri Lanka.

Vocational Training Policy for Vulnerable Groups

Although, traditionally, in most countries, the vocational training sector does not cater to the needs of groups that have been labeled as vulnerable, Sri Lanka has decided to focus on these people. Therefore, the ILO is involved in assisting the Government in formulating a Vocational Training Policy for Vulnerable Groups.

National Framework on Reintegration of Ex-combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka

The ILO is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights in developing the framework designed to enable a smooth transition of former cadres and armed service personnel completing their contracts, out of military groups into their broader communities. Thus, the broader objectives will be to foster societal reconciliation, and create opportunities for economic revitalisation in order to build sustainable peace and restore stability in the country. The development process of the framework is nationally driven and owned, and is carried out with broad consultations with the Government, UN agencies, I/NGOs and the civil society.

ENDING CHILD LABOUR

A National Child Activity Survey in 1999 found that 926,037 children in Sri Lanka were economically active. This number includes children that are attending school while also participating in economic activities. A majority of the working children (52%), were below 15 years of age.

As a response to these findings the ILO developed appropriate interventions to prevent specific types of child labour, identified by national constituents, as priority areas. These were children in domestic work, children who were victims of trafficking for exploitative employments, children who were victims of commercial sexual exploitation and other sectors such as fisheries, agriculture and plantation sectors where children are vulnerable to child labour.

The programme was primarily a preventive initiative, delivered through educational and vocational training interventions, awareness raising at grass root level and policy advocacy activities for decision makers. Following the Ceasefire Agreement. A programme to address special needs of children and families affected by war, was undertaken. The ILO was responsible primarily for the vocational training component of this Action Plan.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, in 2004, the ILO-IPEC (International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour) programme stepped in, to provide emergency responses in the districts of Galle and Trincomalee, to prevent children affected by the tsunami from falling victim to child labour. Child labour monitoring units were set up at divisional level to act as vigilante units against child trafficking and

“Whatever the motivation, Sri Lanka can boast of some very progressive labour laws. Perhaps, there is still room for improvement, and that is where organizations such as the ILO can guide us ”

Hon. Ratnasiri Wickramanayaka

Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



school drop outs were supported through non-formal education, back to school programmes, and vocational training for older children and young men and women.

The ILO, with the tripartite constituents, is currently in the process of coordinating a second National Child Activity Survey. The findings of the survey will be made available by the end of the year.

• Children affected by conflict

IPEC supported the vocational training component of the Action Plan for Children Affected by War (CAW). This was done by strengthening vocational training institutions to provide VT and skills development programmes for children in the North and Eastern Provinces. This programme was implemented in the eight severely war affected Districts of Ampara, Mullaitivu, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Vavuniya. Coastal areas of four of these districts, were also devastated by the Tsunami. This situation exacerbated vulnerability of children in these areas.

The programme contributed to the withdrawal of children in exploitative forms of labour, specifically child soldiers. The withdrawal of these girls and boys was followed by a reintegration effort undertaken in partnership with UNICEF and other vocational training partners such as WUSC and FORUT. Apart from this, prevention of entry of children into child labour through employment-linked training programmes, were implemented with a view to reducing the vulnerability of girls and boys affected by the ongoing war.

The types of training supported by the programme, range from sewing and the construction trades, to home gardening and bakery products. The skills acquired helped them to support small-scale initiatives undertaken by their own families, while some of them were able to move into self-employments.



Ms. Lemini and her home garden

To date, over 1,300 children, including over 150 child soldiers, have benefited from the programme. The programme also assisted more than 20 training-providing organizations upgrade their technical capacities and training equipment, to deliver quality programmes. Trainers and staff of implementing agencies have also been provided with information on child labour and basic occupational and safety standards in their training delivery.

“I am very happy that I underwent this training. Now I can help my mother by providing an income, as well as by giving vegetables for our daily consumption. This has helped us to cut down our living expenses by a fair amount,” says Ms. Navarathinam Lemini from the Kiran DS Division in the Batticaloa District.

Ms. Lemini is an example of how the ILO-IPEC CAW project is bearing fruit in a conflict affected part of the country.

Ms. Lemini was 16 years old when she joined the ILO-IPEC CAW project in the Batticaloa District. She comes from a female headed family of five. Her father had passed away and her mother was forced to support the family by working in the agricultural fields. However, they could not make ends meet and Ms. Lemini had to stop her studies and work as an agricultural worker.

Under the ILO-IPEC CAW project, Ms. Lemini was selected for a one-month home gardening training programme. The training was conducted as a centre base training, where and Ms. Lemini was given



hostel facilities and meals, free of charge. She was given additional training from ILO trained consultants in career guidance, life skills and in 'Starting Your Business.'

At the completion of the one month training period she was given Rs. 7,000 worth of equipment to start her livelihood. Ms. Lemini was able to use the equipment and her training to develop a successful home garden in her own land and contribute to the family income.

Ms. Gopalapillai Dharshini, from the village of Korakallimadu in the Batticaloa District, was also 16 years old when she joined the ILO IPEC CAW project.



Ms. Dharshini and her home garden

Ms. Dharshini comes from a family of six. Her father was unable to work due to illness and her mother was forced to earn a meagre income by selling vegetables every day. Ms. Dharshini had to stop her education to support her family but as she could not find a job, she started a small home garden to earn an income.

With the ILO-IPEC training Ms. Dharshini learned the proper methods of planting, replanting nurseries, the use of fertilizer and correct harvesting methods. Because of this knowledge the quantity of her harvest increased, compared to before her training.

"I was able to do all this because I got the proper training. This has helped me face the challenges in life and I can develop a very good livelihood to build a good future for my family," says Ms. Dharshini.

■ SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS

The ILO supports the Government and other national institutions and social partners in formulating strategies, policies and programmes to increase efficiency and coverage of social protection programmes.

This involves providing technical assistance for capacity building of policy makers and social partners for more effective delivery of occupational safety and health and social security schemes, particularly for workers in the informal economy.

The ILO also actively promotes social inclusiveness through work opportunities for the disabled and for those living with HIV/AIDS.

• HIV/AIDS prevention in the world of work

The ILO's first HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Programme in Sri Lanka was initiated in 2005. Within 2005–2008 the project reached 7,000 employees in 13 enterprises in the hotel, plantation and manufacturing sectors, through Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) interventions. All 13 workplaces have by now adopted Workplace AIDS Policies.

The project has enhanced the capacities of employers' and workers' organizations, private sector enterprises, large corporate enterprises, the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment and the Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower, to implement policies and programmes for prevention of HIV in workplaces.

The programmes also helped strengthen the national policy environment on HIV/AIDS. The project contributed towards the inclusion of 'prevention of HIV in the workplace,' in the draft National AIDS Policy and facilitated the development of the 'National Tripartite Declaration on Prevention of HIV/

AIDS in Workplaces.’ In addition, the project contributed towards including the ‘World of Work’ in the National Strategic Plan (2007 -2011) of Sri Lanka and supported the ‘Joint Trade Union Policy on HIV/ AIDS Prevention and Management in the Workplace.’

An impact assessment on the project in mid 2008 showed that;

- Knowledge of HIV transmission had increased from 82% in 2005 to 98%
- 85.3% were able to identify misconceptions on transmission of HIV compared to 22% previously
- Workers who correctly identified means of protection from HIV infection increased from 86.3% to 99.3%
- The number of workers with supportive attitudes towards HIV+ co-workers increased by 60.7%
- The use of condoms during risky sexual behaviour increased by 33%

The Dalkeith Group, located in the Kalutara District, is a major latex producing plantation in the country. The estate has a total resident population of 1,800, a majority employed on the estate. Some work outside the estate on neighbouring plantations, or are temporarily located outside for education purposes or employments in restaurants, in recreational clubs and as domestic aids in cities and towns.

A survey conducted in 2005 revealed that casual sex is practiced by both married and unmarried residents, with persons other than their spouse or regular partner. In addition, those who work outside are also identified as a HIV vulnerable group that can infect their spouses or partners.

Under the HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Programme, Master Trainers of the estate were trained on HIV prevention. They, in turn, trained peer educators who were co-workers. The peer educators disseminated information at meetings such as Estate Worker Housing Corporative meetings, crèche meetings, religious, sports and entertainment events etc. The message of HIV prevention and the need to change, or modify risky behaviour, was communicated to workers using Behaviour Change Communication material developed by the project. The peer leaders also targeted small groups such as youth in the estate cricket team, school leavers and volunteers.



Ms. Irene, estate midwife

“After a period of approximately two and a half years of this programme, I now see that condom usage has increased by almost 500%. Nobody feels shy anymore and is quite comfortable to come and ask for condoms. Prior to this programme such openness was never observed. A worker approaching a peer leader to obtain a condom has now become a non-stigmatising issue,” says Ms. Irene, the estate midwife who plays a key role in implementing the HIV prevention programme on the estate.



ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL, CONFLICT AFFECTED AND TSUNAMI AFFECTED AREAS

Development of skills, particularly among the young, is of vital importance to improve employability, to generate new employments and to fuel economic growth. Therefore, the ILO is facilitating an integrated system for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and is promoting a multiplicity of training institutions.

The ILO is also involved in enhancing access and outreach of such service delivery mechanisms, specifically to rural and conflict affected parts of the country.

The ILO also believes in supporting micro, small and medium enterprises for rural development. An enabling environment for micro, small and medium enterprises, particularly in the informal sector, is essential for promoting livelihood opportunities. The ILO's interventions in this area are aimed at bridging coordination-gaps in programmes for reviving livelihoods in conflict and tsunami affected areas, that are delivered by Government, donors, development agencies, INGOs, NGOs and the private sector. The ILO's many tried-and-tested tools and planning methodologies will be used for this purpose.

In addition, the ILO will also assist in building a knowledge base of Sri Lanka's informal sector. This information will guide future policy and programme interventions of both the ILO and its constituents.



Assessing the impact of the tsunami

• Increasing rural accessibility

Inadequate access to basic amenities is a major obstacle to rural development in Sri Lanka. Lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads and transport facilities, cause large populations to remain isolated and reduces livelihood opportunities.

To address this situation the ILO is collaborating with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in implementing the Community Access Programme (CAP) to rehabilitate 400 km of rural roads in the Ampara District, over a period of three years.

The primary objective is to provide a sustainable, community based, planning mechanism to reduce poverty of the most vulnerable communities by providing all year accessibility to basic minimum needs and other social and economic services.

The project utilises Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) as the participatory planning tool for investment prioritisation. The IRAP component will build a sustainable planning capacity within the Provincial and District Planning authorities of Ampara. The planning component will complement road rehabilitation and maintenance activities necessary under the CAP.

“Decent Work is an axial concept. It opens a road for constructive discussions on a range of vital global issues, from climate change to violence and terrorism... The roots of violence and terrorism cannot be eliminated without a fair globalization which provides decent work”

Dr. Dayan Jayatileka

Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body (2007-2008) and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva

ILO Forum on Decent Work For a Fair Globalization, Lisbon, 2007



The CAP works closely with relevant local authorities to transfer the institutional responsibility for maintenance, implementation and management of community access infrastructure in Ampara.

“During the past 90 years, the work done by the ILO towards achieving social justice for the working people of the world is truly commendable. It is hoped that the 90th anniversary celebrations of this unique organization will bring into focus the decent work deficit in Sri Lanka and launch a work plan to remove them”

Leslie Devendra

General Secretary
Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka
Sangamaya

By now community workshops have been conducted in the 16 Pradeshiya Sabha's in the Ampara District and through this process almost 800 kms of rural roads have been prioritised for investment, to improve connectivity of communities.

Accessibility Action Plans have been developed for the 16 Pradeshiya Sabha's to prioritise investments in drinking water, health, education and markets. Data books that list Pradeshiya Sabha and Provincial Council assets, Data Accessibility Profiles, to evaluate the accessibility of each village to essential services and an Ampara District Road Master Plan with Transport Infrastructure Inventories and GIS, that maps all roads in the district, have also been finalised. This information can be used for systematic development of the district's core road network.

The Chairman of the Uhana Pradeshiya Sabha, in the Ampara District, Mr Ranjith W. Ekanayake says the roads prioritised are the most important roads that required rehabilitation.

“The roads prioritised and being rehabilitated are the most important roads which have required rehabilitation for a long time,” says Mr. Ekanayake.

He notes that the projects community participation approach has been highly effective.

“It is very significant to mention that the road improvements implemented through community participation was of very high standard and that no objections whatsoever, were made. The methodology of involving the community leaders at Grama Niladhari (GN) and village cluster level, in the planning exercise for investments at village level, is highly appreciated,” says Mr. Ekanayake.

The project outputs have generated a wealth of information for the Ampara District that can be used in future development programmes.

“The data collected at the workshops and the information on other assets that were compiled into Data Books, Action Plans and the Transport Infrastructure Inventory, are a first of its kind for the Pradeshiya Sabhas in Ampara,” says Mr. Ekanayake

Overall, the accrued benefits from the infrastructure and road improvements are expected to help eradicate poverty in the remote villages.

• Conflict recovery

The Emergency Livelihood Recovery Project is the ILO's instrument to support early recovery of conflict affected people in Sri Lanka by creating temporary employment opportunities, income generation opportunities and skills development, to enhance employability.

The project targets the most vulnerable groups in conflict affected populations, such as women headed families, young people, the elderly, the disabled, host families and those living with HIV/AIDS. The project provides opportunities for productive activities that deliver fair incomes.

The project focus is twofold - addressing community needs, and individual-and-host-family employment needs. Community requirements are met through rehabilitation and reconstruction of critical livelihood infrastructure, such as irrigation channels and rural roads.



Individual employment needs are addressed through the creation of income generation opportunities and quick-impact income generating activities, such as home gardens, small livestock operations, micro enterprises and businesses. Individual employability enhancing activities are also undertaken through short-cycle vocational and skills training.

Through the project, to date, 300 families have benefited from new employment avenues, 538 persons have obtained temporary employments in irrigation and road rehabilitation work and over 450 families are supported through needs based activities.



Mr. Sanmuganathan at work

Mr. Kanapathipillai Sanmuganathan from the village of Thikiliveddai, in the Kiran DS Division, in the Batticaloa District, is now making a regular income as a skilled mason because of the ILO's livelihood recovery project.

Mr. Sanmuganathan and his family of two children went through multiple displacements since 1983 because of the conflict. In May 2008 they were resettled by the government. However, food rations were only available for six months and the family needed a steady income to survive.

"Fortunately our village was selected for the ILO project and I was selected for the vocational training programme," says Mr. Sanmuganathan.

"Since I was interested in masonry they gave me masonry training for two months. They provided the necessary tools and a daily stipend during the training period. Later, the on-the-job training, which was arranged for me, gave me an opportunity to practise my skills," says Mr. Sanmuganathan.

Now Mr. Sanmuganathan earns around Rs 15,000 a month from his masonry work and looks forward to rebuilding his life.

Mrs. Punithakala Thayanathan from the village of Kulathuveddai, in the Kiran DS Division, in the Batticaloa District, is now successfully self-employed with a small shop, after the ILO training.

Mrs. Thayanathan, her husband and her son were displaced many times due to the war. In 2008, the family was resettled in Thikiliveddai, one of the many resettlement areas in Batticaloa. Most of the families in the area engage in paddy and high-land crops cultivation, inland fishing and temporary employments to earn livelihoods.



Mrs. Thayanathan at her store

"When we resettled there was nothing to support our new life other than WFP/Government dry rations for only six months. We had nothing to restart our farming activities" says Mrs. Thayanathan.

However, she was selected for a training under the ILO Livelihood Recovery Project.

"I enrolled for training in a 'Start Your Business' programme. It was conducted at a convenient place enabling me to participate without any difficulties. The course was very useful for women like me without prior experience, to learn how we could start and operate a business. I attended the full course and learned a lot, including how to develop a business plan," says Mrs. Thayananthan.

At the end of the training Mrs. Thayananthan started a mobile business. She collected vegetables and pulses from the village farmers and sold them in the nearest town.

"From my mobile business, I earned around Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 per month. This was an additional income other than what my husband could earn," says Mrs. Thayananthan.

In January 2009 she opened a small shop. She now earns Rs 300 to Rs 500 as daily income.

"I am thankful to the ILO for bringing this service to me and my village. Now I plan to expand my business and save money for my son's education. I am also interested in learning more business skills in the future for this purpose" says Mrs. Thayananthan.

• Restoring tsunami affected livelihoods

The ILO helps the Government restore livelihoods in tsunami affected areas through the project for Community-Based Training for Economic Empowerment (CB-TREE Project). The project supports target groups to start up economic activities and to expand them, and sustains them until the target group makes a choice to remain at the informal level, or to participate in local economic development. The project has been active in the Ampara District since February 2006.

Under the project, tsunami victims are provided with technical and financial assistance to restart their lost livelihoods. The main strategy is to enhance production skills and transform the traditional concept of livelihood into profit conscious, micro-enterprises, in order to be more sustainable. This is done through skills training coupled with practical entrepreneurship schemes, while simultaneously developing community support mechanisms through the creation of internal market structures, coordinated by community-owned financing systems.

To date, 1,010 persons have been trained in skills and enterprise development and 748 persons are engaged in regular group enterprises. Over half, 63% of the beneficiaries of the

training, are women and 30 are differently-abled persons. In addition, a national policy paper was formulated on 'Community-Based Training,' to assist the Government develop effective and efficient policies and programmes for poverty reduction in future.

"The Employers' Federation of Ceylon is happy to be involved with the ILO in the Decent Work Country Programme. We have identified two specific objectives, namely, employment generation and increasing productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises. We have also embarked on to activities in relation to these two objectives. It is important that we, as stakeholders, recognise that decent work is continuous improvement in every aspect of employment. The standards achieved in relation to the same in different countries could be different because of many reasons. Therefore, we cannot have uniform standards of comparison between states in relation to this concept. Each country should identify its objectives in relation to their own capacities and requirements and strive to improve the working life of the people. In doing so, it is very important that one should strike a balance between efficiency and equity"

Ravi Peiris

Director-General
Employers' Federation of Ceylon



WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Unemployment and underemployment are serious problems affecting young people in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the ILO has been involved in improving employment opportunities for young people in Sri Lanka through a number of activities.

The ILO assisted the Government of Sri Lanka in establishing the Youth Employment Network (YEN-SL) involving senior policy-makers from Government agencies, private sector and civil society. With technical support from the ILO, the YEN-SL has also developed a National Action Plan for Youth Employment.

• Youth employment

The ILO's Youth Employment project targets young people in the Sabaragamuwa Province, which is one of the poorest regions in the country. The project is active in a number of estates owned by six plantation companies. The surrounding villages are also targeted. The project uses a local development approach in its implementation, engaging with, and developing partnerships with all ILO constituents and stakeholders for the benefit of young people.

The project focuses on three main objectives:

1. Enhancing knowledge on youth employment for constituents, policy makers and the public.
2. Building and increasing the capacity of labour market institutions and labour market service providers
3. Improving labour market access of individual marginalised young women and men

The project's baseline study showed that only 6.5% of targeted young people had local access to vocational training prior to project interventions. However, after one year of project implementation, around 400 officials have been trained to enhance services for youth, a career guidance manual for young people was developed together with other information material for youth and capacities of local authorities to plan vocational training, especially for young people, were strengthened. Plans highlighting present and future provision of services for youth, were also developed.

MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES

The ILO's Micro and Small Enterprise Development for Pro-poor Growth Project (Enter-Growth Project), is operational in four districts – Puttalam, Kurunegala, Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura - that have high levels of poverty and are also affected by the conflict. The project focuses on developing micro and small enterprises as a means of poverty reduction and employment generation.

The project facilitates action by local people and organizations to improve the market system – through more cooperation between enterprises, better services and regulations and a more supportive environ-

“Tripartism is something unique within the ILO structure and an essential pre-requisite for effective social dialogue at all levels, namely, the international, regional, national and workplace levels. The ILO is involved in capacity building of the tripartite constituents in order to make them play an active role in both policy formulation and their implementation. Social dialogue is important in finding a consensus between the employers' demands and the workers' needs. The technical assistance of the ILO has contributed in findings different avenues for consensus building ”

Mahinda Madihahewa

Secretary

Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower

*Media Workshop - ILO 90th Anniversary Celebrations
Colombo, 2009*



ment. Central to the approach is the establishment of sustainable Micro and Small Enterprise Forums (MSE Forums) with representation of the Government, service providers and the private sector, chaired by the District Secretary and/or Provincial Chief Secretary. These forums have developed into viable and effective public-private dialogue forums where no such dialogue existed before.

The project also formulated its own Value Chain Development methodology. With participation of local businesses and organizations, as well as relevant authorities, constraints in a specific value chain are identified and proposals are developed to address them. These are usually simple and concrete interventions that can be implemented by local stakeholders themselves.

Some however, require action at the national level. LOCA (Local Competitive Advantage) is a tool to identify and develop competitive advantages on an area basis, usually in a Division. The approach applies the same participatory principles that the Value Chain Development methodology is based on. Local facilitators were trained on both methodologies.

Two years ago, ornamental fish breeders in Polonnaruwa found it difficult to access water for their ponds. Much of the District is part of the large Mahaweli irrigation scheme and the water was reserved for paddy farmers. Farmer Associations had blocked fish ponds receiving water and development of the ornamental fish sector had come to a standstill, despite its potential to generate jobs and incomes in this poor district.

This obstacle was highlighted in an analysis of the ornamental fish value chain by local organizations supported by the ILO's Enter-Growth Project. Some of the constraints, such as improving the skills of the breeders, access to finance and providing information on market requirements, could be solved easily. However, improving access to water was not in the power of the local organizations involved.

Therefore, the issue was raised with the District Enterprise Forum, an informal body for dialogue on enterprise development between the public and the private sector. After several discussions, eventually, the authorities agreed to grant the breeders access to water. Farmer Associations were informed and explained the reasons.

Since then, this sector has grown rapidly to some 600 fish ponds. Many young people have also taken up fish breeding. With facilitation from Enter-Growth, breeders have set up an Association to promote their interests.

As one ornamental fish breeder says, "Individually we can't solve most of our problems, especially because we cannot individually supply the market demand. With the Association, we can try to do this".

• Building bridges to prosperity

The market system also depends on what people think about business. An in-depth assessment indicated that in the Districts targeted by the Enter-Growth project, attitudes to business were often negative, which limited business start-ups and growth.

Enter-Growth's Palama ('Bridge' – from poverty to prosperity) Campaign aims to change this.



An ornamental fish breeder in Polonnaruwa



Theatre groups were set up in each of the four districts. These theatre groups make use of a combination of performance and forum (participatory) theatre, to make people re-think their attitudes towards enterprise.

Later, in 2008, an in-depth qualitative research was carried out with 87 villagers by a social anthropology team to assess the nature of Palama's influence on the development of enterprise culture in financially poor rural Sri Lanka.

Negative attitudes towards business people as exploitative, have historically been widespread in all four project districts – among 73% of people in the North

Western Province (to which Puttalam belongs) and 51% in the North Central Province (to which Polonnaruwa belongs), according to one 2005 National Survey.

In contrast, this impact assessment revealed that a clear majority (74%), in both districts, held positive attitudes towards business people in their communities.

Around 79% of respondents who saw Palama theatre productions were positive about the idea of starting and running their own business, in their views towards business people and their role within their communities, and towards women engaging in business.



The "Palama" theatre group in action



The design depicts the wave of social change, initiated by the three ILO constituents, the government, workers' organizations and the employers' organizations, uniting them through social dialogue to transform the world of work into a more equitable and non-discriminatory platform for a fair globalization.



The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the tripartite UN agency that brings together governments, employers and workers of its member states in common action to promote decent work throughout the world.

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