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LARGEST RICE MILL IN VAVUNIYA NORTH REOPENS

More than 2,500 people to benefit

(Vavuniya): A significant step in the socio-economic recovery of Vavuniya North took place on 24 January 2012, with the official handing over of the re-equipped Multipurpose Cooperative Society (MPCS) Vavuniya North Rice Mill in Nedunkerny.

The MPCS mill will be the largest rice producer in Vavuniya, capable of producing up to two tons of rice per hour (02T/Hr). As well as creating decent jobs for workers at the mill it is expected to raise the incomes of around 2,500 people in the region, members of the cooperative.

The original mill was destroyed during the recent conflict in the area. The reconstruction and repair work was carried out by the Government of Sri Lanka's "Vadakkinn Vasantham (Northern Spring)" post-conflict, early recovery and development programme for the Northern Province. The mill was re-equipped with the assistance of a grant of 12 million Sri Lanka Rupees (US\$105,000) from the Australian Government through the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Local Empowerment through Economic Development Project (LEED).

The rehabilitated mill was officially handed over to the Government Agent/ District Secretary of Vavuniya Mrs. P.S.M. Charles, by Ms. Sally McKay, First Secretary (Development Cooperation)/ Sri Lanka & Maldives, Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), Australian High Commission, Colombo.

The ceremony was also attended by Mr. Ravindranathan, Assistant Commissioner of Cooperative Development and Mr. K.Thevarajm the President of MPCS Vavuniya North.

The restoration and re-opening of this rice mill is an excellent example of the benefits brought to ordinary Sri Lankans by the partnership between the Government of Sri Lanka, the Australian Government, the ILO, the MPCS and the Institute of Post Harvesting Technology (IPHT), under the overall guidance and support of Divisional Secretary - Vavuniya North and the District Secretary - Vavuniya.

The cooperative sector is viewed by the ILO as a key stakeholder and partner in the Government's reconstruction efforts in the Northern Province. The ILO is supporting cooperatives as a partner in empowering communities to seek new and sustainable approaches that respond to their aspirations for decent work.

The three-year Local Empowerment through Economic Development Project (LEED) is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations and the ILO. It is funded by the Government of Australia.

Photo slide show - <http://www.ilo.org/legacy/english/colombo/index.html>

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