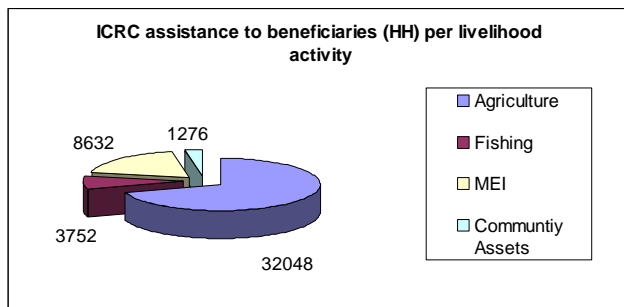


ICRC livelihood projects 2008 – 2009: New beginnings for local communities

A. Background

In 2008 and 2009, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) continued to support communities to resume or strengthen their primary and secondary livelihood activities in agriculture, fishing, craft and trade sectors. During the 2-year period, a total of 51 projects were implemented in the Northern and Eastern provinces which assisted 45'708 beneficiaries of Muslim, Sinhalese and Tamil origin. Projects were implemented based on a thorough analysis of needs, availability of resources and considering people's capacities.



'The programs were tailor-made and designed in a manner where beneficiaries directly participated in the decision-making process. Local authorities have been supportive and their involvement has significantly contributed to the successful implementation of the projects' said Caroline Clarinval, head of the ICRC's Economic Security Department.

B. Helping local fishermen restart livelihoods

Across the Northern and Eastern districts, over 3'700 individuals who lived off water tank, lagoon and sea fishing saw their lost assets replaced. Additionally, with the support of the Fisheries Department in Batticaloa, the ICRC purchased and injected 400'000 fingerlings into four fresh water tanks.

'Injection of fingerlings is of great help to the fishermen as well as the Aquaculture Department. Every year the government allocates a budget towards the injection of fingerlings into the tanks, but it is not enough to cover the needs, therefore we mainly focus on the larger tanks in highly populated areas' said an official from the Department of Aquaculture in Batticaloa.

Fishing nets, canoes and vocational training on net repair and maintenance as well as protection of natural resources were provided to the beneficiaries with the support of the Fisheries Cooperative Societies. The overall impact of the projects was an increase of about 50% to each household's economy, which for

vulnerable families is a significant rise in income. The increased access to fresh fish also contributes to an improved nutritional intake for the families.

The Fisheries Cooperative Societies were able to generate additional income from over 140 canoes provided by the ICRC for lagoon and sea fishing. By distributing bicycles and freezers the ICRC was able to help fishing communities to transport and store their catch.



C. Boosting incomes through paddy and vegetable cultivation

Returning and vulnerable resident communities living in Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Ampara saw their access to good quality seeds and tools eased through in-kind or conditional cash grants provided by the ICRC. Families cultivated paddy and vegetable crops, providing both a primary and secondary source of income for many. Diversifying crop production by including varieties such as chilli, beans, okra and tomato enabled families to restart generating an income within one month of cultivating. Through the sale of the products in the local market, some beneficiaries increased their personal income by as much as 50% in addition to providing for their own household consumption.



Monitoring outcomes show that increased job opportunities have also emerged from secondary activities such as paddy threshing and bagging. Further, the farmers who participated in this assistance programme earned a higher income, which also allowed them to repay their private loans. Subsequently, this repayment of loans allowed communities to provide farmer's access to future loans. The farmers themselves expressed their future desire to diversify their livelihoods and branch out into private businesses.

The district's economy benefited from an injection of capital with the ICRC promoting the local purchase of agricultural tools, seeds and fertilisers provided to beneficiaries.

D. Promoting traditional livelihoods through Micro Economic Initiatives (MEI)

Through the MEI program, the ICRC provided conditional cash grants to individual households or communities and thereby aimed to strengthen income generation in a sustainable manner. MEIs entail a high involvement of beneficiaries, community representatives and local authorities. The provision of conditional cash grants above all empowered the beneficiaries and contributes to restoring their dignity.

Many of these projects targeted the disabled and vulnerable single female-headed households that were compelled to sustain their families. Women set up tailoring or pottery businesses and attended vocational trainings to diversify their options to generate sufficient income to cover their essential household expenditures. During 2008 – 2009, over 2'150 households have been assisted with in kind and cash inputs for MEIs. The projects produced excellent results. About 90% of the households were able to increase their income by approximately 60%, evidence of the beneficiaries high motivation towards their activity.

“Following the long displacement we do not have anything in our hand, especially money to re start livelihoods. After resettlement most organizations look to assist cultivators. Sometimes all the widows, disabled persons and single headed households may be neglected as a result but through this cash grant

programme all the families can be involved and they can select their suitable livelihood activity” said Lakshmi, a beneficiary of the cash grant programme in Batticaloa

E. Community assets projects

The projects take a community based approach working closely through local committees and providing them with large capital assets. This built on local capacity, a cooperative sense of ownership and use of the goods, which benefited the villages in the longer term. The projects provided collective assets that supported livelihood activities at community level, while every household involved was also able to benefit directly from the assistance.



A total of 191 ladies and gentlemen's bicycles, three tractors and trailers were distributed to project beneficiaries to reduce the amount of household income spent on transportation. Some of the indirect benefits of the projects were that one or more boat, tractor or bicycle repair shops were opened in the villages and professional tractor drivers were able to find employment opportunities, thereby further boosting the local economy.

Key facts and figures:

- During 08 - 09, the ICRC, implemented 51 projects that created income generation opportunities for the vulnerable populations.
- These projects reached over 11'400 households through fishing, agro and MEI support
- Average income from the programmes reported an increase in earnings of over 60 %.
- Conditional cash grants were proven to effectively target populations whilst restoring their dignity within a project cycle of 6 to 9 months.
- Engagement of the communities in decision-making and support of local authorities were critical factors for the success of livelihood programmes.