

**The Australian Community Rehabilitation Programme (ACRP) under Australia’s flagship development initiative works to support communities in rehabilitation and social inclusion in Sri Lanka.**

IOM’s ‘Transition Initiative for Sustainable Return & Reintegration of IDPs in Sri Lanka’ is a five year (2010-2015) project under the Australian Aid ACRP3 programme which focuses on sustainable return and socio-economic recovery of conflict and disaster affected communities in the Northern and Central provinces through stabilization and development of main sectors such as Agriculture, Fisheries, Dairy and Disaster Risk Reduction.

**Construction of 975 M retaining wall and 3 numbers of culverts at Vethuchchenai**

The Vethuchchenai village is located in Poratheevupattu Divisional Secretariat of Batticaloa District in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. There are 90 families (539 individuals) living in the village of Vethuchchenai and it is the first village in Batticaloa which gets affected by the flood every year during the North Eastern Monsoons. The floods come in from the border district of Ampara and from the Navagiri tank in Batticaloa. The floods are a result of the absence of a proper water retention wall and culverts that prevent massive water flows in to the village.

During peak seasons the water levels rise up to 8 feet, where the village is completely isolated causing displacement and severe damage to the paddy fields and other crops. During this period the villagers seek shelter at the Vellaveli school. The floods affect nearly 600 acres of paddy fields during every North Eastern Monsoon and farmers undergo severe hardships. The flood also affects the temporary and semi-permanent houses in the village. The Veththuchenai road is the only available access to and out of the village and thus limits transport during the monsoons. During the major floods in 2010/2011 all of the villagers were evacuated by boat and almost all of the houses were badly affected. In the floods in 2012, 40% of the houses were damaged. During the floods in 2014 all of the villagers were evacuated by boat and most of the houses were surrounded by water.

The constructed 975M retaining wall

A 975M long retention wall and 3 nos. of culverts were constructed in order to regulate the water flow and minimize flooding. The access road will be made available to all communities. This will minimize displacement and damages to the crops by 65-70% during the monsoons through improved flood mitigation measures which will be put in place. According to the Department of Irrigation it is predicted that the intervention will also increase the availability of irrigation water during the Yala season through the increase of the intensity of water retention. The displacement of persons and damages to the paddy fields and other crops will be minimized. Harvest will improve even during high rainy seasons. At the same time the non-point pollution can be minimized in farming and further salinization and industrial pollution can be avoided. Since the access road will be made available even during the monsoons, the day to day lives of the villagers will not be interrupted as in the past. The villagers will be able to continue sending their children to school without their education being interrupted.

The project was implemented in coordination with the Pradeshiya Sabha, the Divisional Secretariat of Poratheevupattu and the Government Agent of Batticaloa and technical advice/support was provided by the Engineer of the Department of Irrigation and the District Engineer. The Pradeshiya Sabha has taken the responsibility for the maintenance of the road including the culverts and the retention wall.

At IOM/DMC DRR Training

IOM also took initiatives in strengthening “Existing Village Level Disaster Management Committees” through needs based training on disaster management in order to ensure the regular maintenance of the road and culverts prior to the monsoon to prevent flooding of the area. The Community also received a basic training on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) conducted by the Disaster Management Centre (DMC).