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*The HDI forges innovative public-private partnerships to find creative solutions to difficult humanitarian problems through a series of unique programs.*

*Currently, HDI's mandate is to improve U.S.-U.N. relations, to support mine-action programs around the world, and to help alleviate both domestic and international hunger.*

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# Sri Lanka Communiqué

Spring / Summer 2009

## Demining Comes To An End

As the "Mines to Milk" project in Sri Lanka nears completion, the 30 year civil war that racked the island nation has finally ended. National and local leaders are now beginning to develop new opportunities to rebuild a peaceful and prosperous Sri Lanka. Our project in northern Sri Lanka lays a strong foundation upon which the local population can begin to rebuild their livelihoods. Hundreds of acres of formerly contaminated land are now being cultivated with rice paddies and the first harvests are bringing in rice after 15 long years. This trend will increase as more and more farmers begin to use demined land for agriculture and raising livestock. The full impact of HDI's work will be felt in the next year or two as people gradually return to a life of normalcy. With the end of the conflict, the timing could not be better.



Rice paddies ready for harvest in Jaffna



Rice harvest on land cleared of landmines

Our dairy development partner, Land O'Lakes will remain in Jaffna for a few more months and has begun to wind down operations. An additional rotation of 450-500 farmers is being trained currently, bringing the total number of farmers trained to 1,933. Milk production will continue to increase as farmers use their training in improved animal husbandry practices. The phase out process will see staff leaving through the year as they move on to new jobs. The new skills they have learned will place them at an advantage in the job market.

HDI's demining partner, the HALO Trust will continue to work in Jaffna as new mine removal tasks are released by the government with the end of hostilities. This is a positive sign as gradually most of the Jaffna peninsula will become mine-impact free. The opening

of the A9 road from the south (the only road connecting Jaffna to the rest of the country which has been closed for 20 years) means additional demining will become easier as heavy equipment can now be moved to mined areas in the south where there will be much work to do.

In terms of sustainability, HDI has laid a firm foundation by clearing landmines for development. The farming sector is capitalizing on this and agriculture is booming in Jaffna. Through the project, the capacity of farmers and the dairy cooperative staff has been rebuilt and a thriving dairy industry has been resurrected. By increasing production and incomes, providing job skills, and improving the quality and availability of dairy products and developing a viable market, HDI has delivered a sense of hope to the people of Jaffna. As milk production increases to meet demand, farmers are earning higher income. Hence the project results will be sustained long after HDI moves on. The same is true for the agriculture sector. Now that agricultural land has been cleared, more and more farmers are cultivating their fields, whether it be for rice or cash crops such as onions, beans, tomatoes and corn.

HDI and our partners have worked hard for two and a half years to achieve these goals. We are planning an extensive review of our program with a particular emphasis on sustainability. We are also excited and proud of an additional program that was created from the success of the “Mines to Milk” project. In partnership with the One Sri Lanka Foundation, we are giving some of the extra milk produced through this project to nearly 500 students in 5 schools in the community of Vellanai, providing these young children with their first nutritious meal of the day. This “home grown” school feeding project translates into over 89,000 cups of fortified milk over the course of the school year.

## Life After Demining - Reflections on HDI's work in Jaffna

By Jeanne Samuel, HDI Country Director



Kandiah working in the field

Years and years of sifting soil, painfully but surely going inch by inch on land contaminated by landmines truly has its reward. I was overwhelmed when I visited land cleared at the village of Pandatrippu in the North Western part of Jaffna. I have visited this site many times in the past two years, so when I went back there a few months ago, I was pleasantly shocked. At first I didn't recognize the area. The dirt track we usually took was not there- it was a ploughed field ready for planting. Acres upon acres of rice paddies on the de-mined land were golden brown ready for the harvest. What joy it was. All of this was so *so* worth it. I talked to many of the farmers who own the land...

Kandiah Thiagarajah was a happy man as it was harvest time. He employed about 20 people to help him with his harvest for the first time in 15 years. HDI handed over his land in 2007 after it was cleared of mines. His land had been the site of heavy fighting used by both the Government Security Forces and the LTTE and was heavily mined...

A little beyond Kandiah's land was a field of vegetables. R. Rajanayagam beamed with happiness as his land was finally free of landmines. He had planted eggplant, tobacco and chilies. Rajanayagam did not have the use of his land for 15 years. He sells his produce at the local market and makes a good profit...

As we drove along Pandatrippu we came across a beautiful market garden. This land was also in the vicinity of the previous two areas and was also cleared under HDI's program. Sathasivam, the owner of the land had cultivated a wide range of cash crops which was irrigated from a well nearby using an improvised water pump. His crops included chilies, onions, tomatoes, lettuce, winged bean, maize, pumpkin and sunflower...

We drove from Pandatrippu towards the south east and headed to the community of Madduvil South in Chavakachcheri which was also cleared by HDI. Madduvil was an oasis of green and gold. Golden as the rice paddies were being harvested, green where cattle grazed and cash crops thrived...



R. Rajanayagam