

## Sri Lanka – Tsunami Response

Ever since the tsunami struck the coast of Sri Lanka in December 2004, Oxfam has been implementing cash transfer activities as part of its emergency response programme to secure the food security and restore the livelihoods of disaster affected coastal communities. As the majority of tsunami-affected areas had well functioning and integrated markets where a diverse range of food and non-food items were available, a cash transfer programme consisting of cash for work activities and cash grants for livelihood rehabilitation has been the most appropriate response. This has allowed Oxfam to ensure household food security and timely restore the livelihoods of a large number of households.

The objective of Oxfam's cash transfer activities was to provide affected households with the cash necessary to meet their essential food and non-food needs via cash for work activities and rebuild their lives while empowering and giving them choice on the way they want to use the assistance provided.

To the end of November, **21,540** households (**86,160 men and women** - taking an average household size of 4) have participated in cash for work activities and **11,716** households (**46,864 people**) have started income generating activities via cash grants. Oxfam GB has distributed £238,610 in cash grants and £372,851 in cash for work payments. In most cases Oxfam GB and its local partners have delivered the cash directly into the beneficiary's hands and in some cases, e.g. in Trinco, the money has been transferred into their bank accounts.

Efforts were made to ensure a wide coverage of assistance: almost half of Oxfam's livelihood activity beneficiary households are inhabitants of the worst affected districts along the East coast (Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee), more than a third are from the LTTE controlled "Wanni area" in the North and a fifth from the southern districts of Matara and Hambantota.

Cash grants were provided for the restoration of livelihoods in the target coastal communities. Such livelihood activities included: mobile fish sellers, small shops, bicycle and engine repair shops, paddy and other crops cultivation, livestock rearing as well as hair-dressing and laundry. Cash grants were also used to provide affected people with tools and training to construct transitional shelters and to support 2,000 women and men who work in the coir industry as coir pits were repaired and materials provided.

Affected communities also participated in Cash for Work activities (CFW) that benefited the whole community. Such activities included the cleaning of irrigation canals in Hambantota, coir pits in Matara, market gardens in Batticaloa or tsunami debris in Jaffna and Mulaitivu. Workers received an average daily payment of 400 Rupees, which was mainly spent on food and household needs. Some families purchased productive assets (e.g. a bicycle or set up a small shop) or even started savings for example **1,503** beneficiaries in the North have joined the Ministry of Agriculture's pension & insurance scheme with income generated through CFW.

Oxfam is now developing a long-term livelihood strategy based on social mobilisation and participation and that will target communities living in poverty. Longer-term livelihoods work will focus on building peoples capacities equitably, developing sustainable solutions for disaster preparedness and undertaking 'relationship building work' in contexts of conflict and/or tsunami displacement.

### Lessons learnt.

Project design: Improvements should be made to simplify cash transfer procedures, to make them faster and more flexible. Such changes are necessary to respond more timely to beneficiary household capacity, needs and seasonality livelihood activities. . Better incorporation of the whole household economy (visualizing male and female contributions) and its seasonality in the "application form is required to ensure this. Potential solutions also include the use of community grants to strengthen the ownership and acceptance of the project

Gender and intra-households issues: The programme identified female-specific activities, and encouraged female participation in activities and decision-making. Limiting the number of

grants to one per household may have reduced women's access to grants and may have created intra-household issues. Oxfam teams will investigate this, as the contribution of female activities to the household economy should be recognised and supported.

Targeting: was facilitated using a community based approach and in most cases by establishing livelihood committees in targeted villages. Better accountability and fuller involvement of local partners in targeting criteria selection is required..

Implementation: Local partners were often micro-finance institutions. Positive attributes included their existing networks and a good understanding of financial procedures. However, care had to be made to ensure there was no bias towards ex-clients, and towards the provision of long-term loans instead of cash grants.