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Sri Lanka: ICRC helps Musali returnees resume livelihoods

Colombo: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the local authorities in Mannar on 2 July 2009 to facilitate the resettlement of displaced persons in Musali through agricultural and capacity building initiatives.

The project, targeting more than 3000 returnees in 13 villages in the Mannar district, is aimed at reactivating agricultural activities to enhance food security through the cultivation of paddy and highland crops and home gardening. The ICRC will provide beneficiaries with paddy seeds to cultivate around 500 acres of paddy and a variety of seeds such as cow pea, green gram and groundnut to cultivate an estimated 32 acres of highland crops. Around 135 beneficiaries will receive plants - coconut, mango, lime and pomegranate – for home gardening.

To help cultivate the land beneficiaries will receive a range of agricultural tools, fertiliser and barbed wire to protect crops from wild animals. Agro Purpose Centres (APC) will equip beneficiaries with the know how to improve cropping practices, post harvest mechanisms and value added techniques.

"Beneficiaries, by diversifying crops, will enjoy enhanced food and economic security at the end of the project because of the increase in paddy and vegetable production. The produce can be used for their own consumption and for sale as cash crops", said Caroline Clarinval, who heads the ICRC's economic security department in Sri Lanka. " We expect this initiative to help these returnees recover from their displacement quickly and be self reliant".

The estimated duration of the project is eight months.

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