



HDI

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Communiqué

THE HUMPTY DUMPTY
INSTITUTE

Monthly Communiqué from Sri Lanka

January 2008

HALO Trust cleared 3,869 square meters of land in the month of January. The cumulative area of land cleared for HDI since January 2007 is 147,501 square meters of which 143,261 square meters were cleared manually and 4,240 square meters were cleared mechanically. A total of 429 mines have been removed from the ground. Work begins this month on a large minefield that was the site of a major battle in 2000/01 between the Sri Lanka Army and the LTTE. The area is covered with trench lines, shell craters, UXOs, small arms ammunitions caches and landmines. The area originally marked for clearance is being extended as continued communication with local residents has revealed adjoining areas which may contain landmines and UXOs.

Our program enjoyed an excellent month in terms of Dairy Development in spite of the difficult security situation in Jaffna. 40 farmer group trainings were conducted on clean Milk Production and on-site field visits were conducted with 448 farmers by extension staff. Selection of the 2nd rotation of beneficiary farmers began and will expand to three islands in the Jaffna District. LOL hosted a 5 day management training program targeting 30 Yarlco and Libco staff management and board members, and provided technical assistance on milk distribution and paneer processing. Libcos were trained in their milk collection system and general bookkeeping. Milk collection at Yarlco increased in volume by 41% in the last 5 months of 2007 compared to the same period in 2006. At the end of January 2008, 10 Yarlco and 12 Libco sales branches were refurbished. In the first 8 months of 2007, 4,230 liters of raw milk was further processed into value added products. After our intervention 9,373 liters of value added products were processed and sold between September and December 2007.

Interview with Malcolm MacGregor HALO Trust's Official Photographer.

Malcolm MacGregor is a landscape photographer whose work has taken him to remote places in countries like Alaska, Scotland and Oman. Interestingly Malcolm has been commissioned by the HALO Trust to photograph their work in the countries they work around the world. He visited Sri Lanka in January 2008 and went up to Jaffna to record the work of HALO on film.

What were your first impressions of Jaffna?

Whilst photographing lagoons dominated with mackerel skies, always in the back of my mind was what lay below ground – mines. I was only there for three days but for the locals to live with the ever



present threat is tough and unstinting. There were many signs to indicate that minefields had been cleared by HALO such as Urumpirai and the school at Neervely. Not only does it take time to clear mines, but it takes time to rebuild local economies.

Despite the end of the ceasefire, work for the HALO trust continues unabated. I was taken straight to a minefield at Kalvayal, a mix of ruined houses and farmland. Red pegs of which there were many, denoted the areas where the mines were located and yellow pegs indicated spots from which they had been removed. To the uninitiated it was confusing as a minefield is not necessarily laid out in a logical manner – particularly when it comes to anti personnel mines of which these were the P4 made in Pakistan.

Tell us something about de-mining in Jaffna?

Most of the de-mining work is hard and manual. All the de-miners who are Tamils report for work at the HALO compound at 7.30 a.m. where all 350 form up on a military style parade with section commanders ensuring that their men are there and any final briefings for the day are given. Metal detectors, cutters, water, medical kits and supplies are checked off quickly so that by 8.00 a.m. trucks are rolling out of the compound laden with de-miners as they head the minefields fulfilling the HALO mission statement of ‘getting the mines out of the ground now’. The work is dirty and laborious if you are on your hands and knees, wearing a visor, body armor and an 80 degree sun burning down. De-miners cover ground slowly and methodically with no chances taken. Nothing is assumed to be clear until it has been physically checked. The proof of the work is in the statistics. 2003 saw 7,225 mines being cleared. This number increased to a peak of 10,140 in 2005 and the number has decreased to 3,570 in 2006 – proof that the clearance programme is working successfully. Correlated with this is the accident ratio for locals – an all time high of 90 in 2001 down to just 10 in 2006.

You visited a cleared mine site area. What were your impressions?

One such place was llaivalai where a school now stands and basket weaving is the order of the day rather than picking ones’ way haphazardly through a minefield to get to the bus stop or simply into the fields. The Point Pedro Road that leads from Jaffna to Point Pedro, a major communications artery was dotted with minefields until relatively recently, but is now completely clear of debris and villages and schools are rejuvenated. One can feel the energy and gusto with which farmers now go to their work and the spring in the steps of the locals.

What of the future in Jaffna?

Maximum agricultural use is made of land cleared right up to a minefield. Without land there is not much the locals can do and best use is made of every available area. Whilst hostilities can break out any time between the warring parties, local economies are maintained through mine clearance which gives people optimism that one day life will return to normal. And the mine clearance teams of the HALO Trust will have moved on in their quest to clear mines in other affected locations, with the cycle beginning over again.



HALO De-miner



Putting numbers in perspective

Malcolm was brought up in Scotland, Malaysia and the USA. He joined the Scots Guards in 1980 and served with the 6th Gurkhas in Hong Kong. On completion of his service with the Army in 1997, he went on to do an MBA at Cranfield School of Management. Two years later, he became a full time landscape photographer. He has many books and publications to his credit.

His limited edition prints of landscapes from remote areas of Oman, Scotland and Alaska are held in private collections, in the Troubadour Gallery in London, and the Bait Muzna Gallery in Muscat.

Malcolm MacGregor lives in Scotland and he is Chief of Clan Gregor.

For more information on HDI's work, please contact Jeanne Samuel, the Director of the Sri Lanka office of HDI, #05-03, East Tower, World Trade Centre, Echelon Square, Colombo 1. Tel: 2421258. www.thehdi.org.