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**SRI LANKA**

## SNAPSHOT Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

Business training and start-up support for small enterprises allow women to provide for their families and to help their communities.



*Women from Kallappadu North set up operations at their newly opened food processing center.*

*“This center will support the rapid growth of our [group] and help the community as a whole flourish.”*

*--Janet Jeyarani  
President, Kallappadu South women's group*

### Telling Our Story

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**April 2013** – With USAID assistance, newly empowered, multi-ethnic women's groups in northern Sri Lanka embarked on new entrepreneurial endeavors, including a dry fish production and sales center, a food processing center, and a grinding mill. The new enterprises bring together Tamil and Muslim returnees from this war-affected area, encourage community integration and reconciliation, and offer new economic hope for the 345 women involved.

Thirty years of conflict in Sri Lanka's northern region produced nearly 2,000 women-headed households in Mullaitivu District. The resettled population of 12,000 families in this area comprises both Tamil and Muslim returnees. With a dual purpose of providing livelihood opportunities for women and supporting peaceful reintegration for ethnically mixed communities, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives provided training to ten women's groups on business plan development, networking skills, advocacy, society management, book keeping, and financial management. Nine of the 10 women's groups then submitted business plans, of which USAID funded three for start-up.

Ragunathan Kalanidhi, President of her local Women's Rural Development Society, notes how the new grinding mill in Mulliyawalai will contribute to the community as whole: “This Society has been functional for a decade, through our displacement and after we returned. But until [USAID] came in with assistance, we had no funding,” she said. “The center has provided us with an excellent opportunity to bring in a regular income for our families, primarily our children.”

These activities will have a tangible impact on not just the 345 women directly involved, but on their communities. During the opening ceremony of the dry fish production and sales center, Kallappadu South women's group President Janet Jeyarani remarked, “This center will support the rapid growth of our [women's group] and help the community as a whole flourish.”

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