



Partners in Aid

AUSTRALIA

YGRO, SRI LANKA – SUSTAINABLE DAIRY FARMING ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024

Background

The full name of this project is “Empowering women-headed families economically through sustainable dairy farming initiatives toward the long term goal of ending the cycle of poverty in Sri Lanka”.

In June 2024, Partners in Aid (PIA) commenced a two year partnership with Y Gro (Pvt) Ltd. This followed the successful completion of an earlier project with Y Gro that also sought to empower female-headed families economically through sustainable dairy farming initiatives. The implementation of this project in two different villages in the Jaffna District is effectively an extension of that earlier project. It is being implemented in Sandilippay which is the adjoining division to Uduvil where the previous dairy project was implemented.

Local Context

The project is located in the war affected area of the Jaffna District, in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

The Northern and Northwest Provinces of Sri Lanka have been identified as climate change hotspots, with Jaffna one of the districts most likely to be impacted by climate change... Rising sea levels, soil salinisation, floods, droughts, coastal erosion... weather volatility and extreme heat – these processes are already wrecking the livelihoods of farming and fishing communities (Amita Arudpragasam, 2024)

All this is taking place in an area where much of the population, especially women, are vulnerable, traumatised by the war and often the loss of their spouse as a result of the war. In the 1980s, the war caused extensive damage in Jaffna, and expulsion of part of the population. Since the war ended in 2009, refugees and internally displaced have been returning home and have had to start to rebuild their lives.

Since 2014, Y Gro has worked in two main geographical divisions in the Jaffna District and has facilitated setting up 50 dairy farms. Their experience has proved that dairy farming is a viable livelihood initiative in Jaffna which can simultaneously contribute to the household economy and add value to the country’s economy. Y Gro therefore intends to continue to assist in setting up dairy farms in new geographical locations within Jaffna.

Based on poverty/vulnerability and market accessibility for the sale of milk, Y Gro identified two small villages in the Sandilipay District as the appropriate locations for the current project. As Sandilipay adjoins the village area where the initial PIA supported project was implemented, the expansion into Sandilipay was a natural progression.

Like the location of the earlier project, Sandilipay has poverty pockets. Indicative of the level of poverty, when the women in the earlier dairy project were asked about what the extra income had meant to them, the most frequent responses were that it had enabled them to

get out of debt or, less frequently, to access more credit, to make debt and other payments, such as school fees, on time. It also helped them simply to keep pace with high rate of inflation the country had been suffering.

Despite this poverty, Sandilipay is known to be a good location for agricultural activities and has conducive marketing options in Jaffna.

Project Goals

The women selected to participate in the current project are 30 war widows or female heads of families. Many, if not all, had been displaced during the war. According to Y Gro, all are vulnerable, having been traumatised by the impact of the war on their lives.

The overall goal of the project is the empowerment of these female-headed families economically through facilitating sustainable dairy farming initiatives, and thus contributing to the long-term goal of ending the cycle of poverty in Sri Lanka.

The specific goals of the project are:

- that 30 women dairy farmers are empowered through multiple interventions over two years, designed to enable them to improve their farms,
- that the volume of milk and sales across these farms increases by 20 % in the first year and 30% in the next year,
- that the 30 women are enabled to earn their livelihoods in a sustainable way through production and sale of milk,
- that an enhanced livelihood enables these women and their families to have a better quality of life, and
- that a cooperative movement or farmer managed society be established to better manage the sale of milk for small dairy farmers.

These goals will be achieved through the following:

- the provision of 7 training sessions covering milk production and health and safety for the milk and the animals,
- the holding of Vet Clinics which will include worming of the cows,
- the growing of grass which, along with hay, will be shared with the farmers for their cows,
- the assurance that water will be available for the cows,
- The provision of milk cans, cow sheds and/or other simple infrastructure, if appropriate, and
- the provision of special diet supplements for pregnant cows during the last month of their pregnancy.

Milk production and sales will be closely monitored throughout the project. A review of the farmers will take place before the project moves to the second year of the project cycle.

Outputs/Outcomes Against Specific Goals

By the end of the project, it is intended to have achieved the following outputs.

- Thirty women will have been helped, through training, mentoring and provision of equipment, to establish sustainable home-based dairy enterprises.
- These women would have increased family income, and improved quality of life for women and children.
- The women would have high quality healthy cows that product high quality milk.
- The quality of produced milk would have higher fat SNF.
- There would be a stronger relationship between local government stakeholders and dairy farmers.
- Farmers' mindsets would have changed to technical dairy farming.
- The success of the dairy enterprises of the women in the project would motivate other women to adopt some of the effective new dairy practices the project participants had adopted.

The Y Gro project in Jaffna, Sri Lanka began in June 2024. In contacts with Y Gro in July and in October and the NGO staff confirmed that all is currently going well. However, the first formal reporting is not due at the end December 2024 (this should cover the period June 2024-December 2024). The Chief Secretary of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka called for a progress meeting of various organisations in the area in October and the team presented the PIA/Y Gro project progress on the 10th of October 2024 in the presence of the relevant Government Heads of staff.

It is hoped to visit the project again in early 2025.

Expenditure

The estimated total project investment over the two years will be AUD86,000. The first instalment, AUD 17,965, was transferred in June 2024. The next instalment of AUD7,622 will be paid in January 2025, subject to receipt of a satisfactory narrative progress report and financial acquittal of the initial funds transferred.

Current and Anticipated Risks and Action to Mitigate Risks

RISK	PROBABILITY	SEVERITY	ACTION TO MINIMISE RISK
Disease that may affect livestock	Medium	High	Maintaining a good relationship with vet doctors and treating cows on time for prevention, awareness for farmers on disease prevention.
Climate change such as drought, floods, and cyclone affecting the income of the family due to inability to maintain the dairy farm.	Low	Low	Encourage savings for the family Provision of relief in case of a dire emergency
Farmers dropping out of the program	Low	Medium	Ensure that farmers are genuinely keen on the intervention at the time of selection. Encourage contributions from the farmers in setting up and maintaining the dairy farm. The initial phase of the program will be based on capacity building and depending on the interest level the other interventions will be provided.
High inflation impacting the livelihood	High	High	Provision of special economic relief for dairy farmers when impacted
Increase in prices of cow nutrients/lack of nutrients due to high demand and lessor imports	High	High	Connect farmers to sustainable sources Promote home based nutrient productions such as Azola.
Sudden cow deaths	Low	High	Cow insurance to recover cost

Note: Probability = how likely is it to happen? (low, moderate, high)

Severity = how bad would the results be if it did happen? (low, moderate, high)

References

Amita Arudpragasam, (2024). 'Climate Change Brings a New Emergency to the Tamil Homeland in Sri Lanka'. <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/climate-change-brings-new-emergency-tamil-homeland-sri-lanka>