

31<sup>st</sup> December 2010: U.S. Embassy New Release:

U.S. Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis announced a new donation from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) of \$5.5 million (Rs. 610.5 million) of food aid to support the return of people displaced by the conflict in the North during a ceremony with Hon. Basil Rajapaksa, Minister of Economic Development and Special Advisor to the President. Consisting of 6,740 metric tons (MT) of wheat flour, pulses and vegetable oil, USAID's donation will support the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) to fulfill the essential food needs of 300,000 people.

With this latest donation, USAID, the development agency of the U.S. Government, has provided over \$75 million (Rs. 8.32 billion) of food aid from 2008 to 2010. Recognizing the U.S. Government's significant support to assist displaced people, the Hon. Basil Rajapaksa received a symbolic handing over of emergency food aid from Ambassador Butenis during the ceremony held at the Presidential Secretariat.

"USAID remains the largest and most consistent food aid donor to Sri Lanka and we are happy to support the food needs of 300,000 returnees" stated U.S. Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis. "None of us can forget the enormous challenges that Sri Lanka faced at the end of the war and how far the country has come since then in meeting these overwhelming physical needs. The Sri Lankan government has every right to be proud of its progress in resettlement and we are also proud to have contributed to this massive effort," she continued.

Coordinating with the Government of Sri Lanka, WFP distributes food aid from USAID and other donors to people who have already returned to their homes or are living in camps and host families. Resettled people receive a six-month ration upon their return to their places of origin. In addition to this donation, WFP received another tranche of \$2.4 million (Rs. 266.4 million) last September to purchase 3,768 MT of rice from the local market.

"This very generous donation from the United States comes at a critical juncture for the returnees," said Adnan Khan, WFP Country Representative. "It will allow WFP to continue providing much-needed food and nutritional support to the returnee population and increase their food security. WFP's new one-year initiative for Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation intends to provide food and nutritional support to 371,000 people in the North and we are very grateful to the United States, WFP's largest donor, for this latest contribution of \$5.5 million. This reaffirms the United States' commitment to partnering with the Government of Sri Lanka and WFP in supporting the conflict affected population in Sri Lanka. Our target is to raise \$40 million for this new initiative and we sincerely hope that other donor countries will extend their support to fulfill the needs of affected people."