



## South Asia

### Working environment

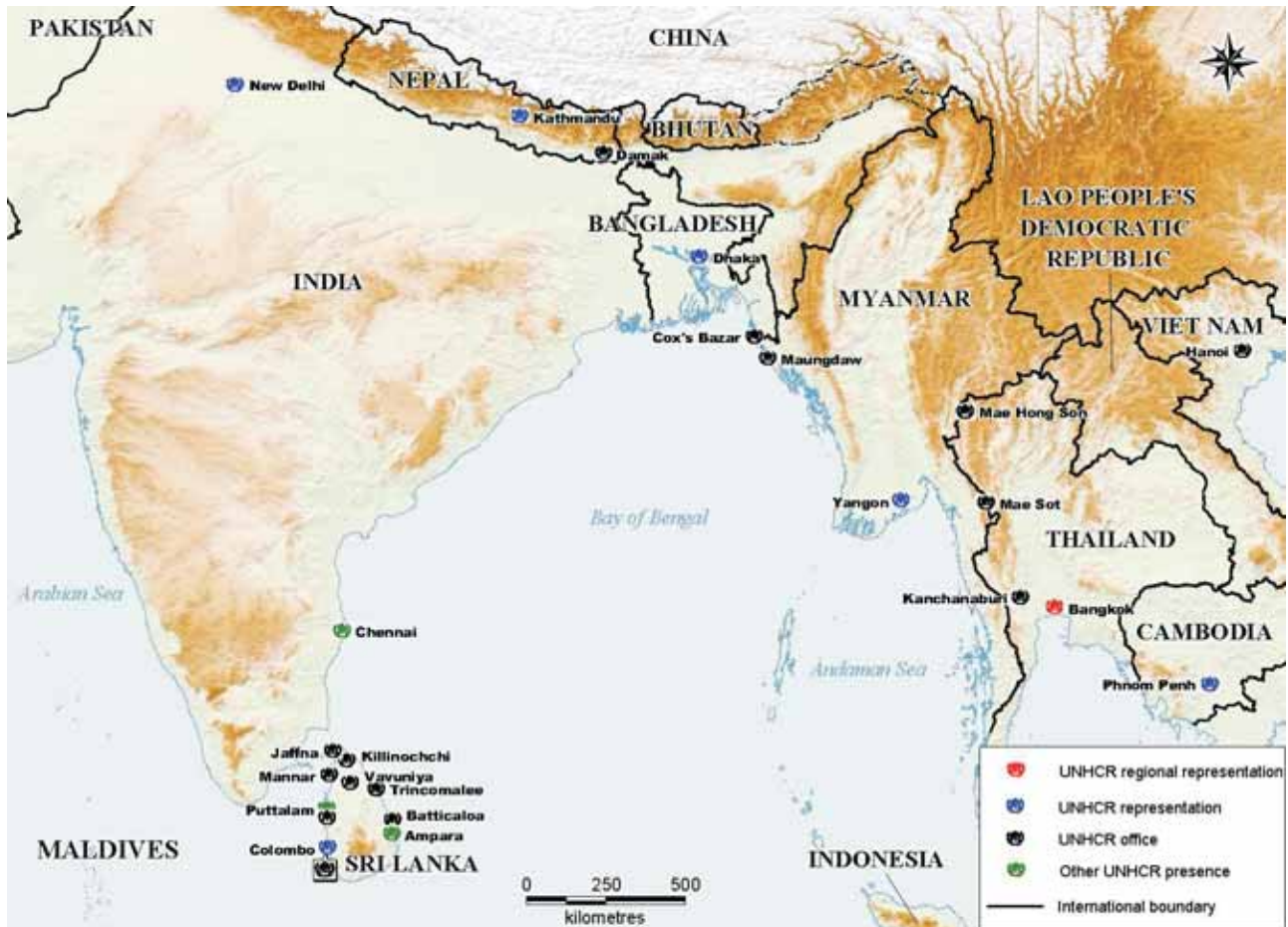
The interim Government in Bangladesh has established an Election Commission and preliminary announcements are being made regarding the issuance of national identity and voter cards by late 2008 or early 2009. UNHCR will hold discussions with the Government on the Office's role to ensure that refugees and others of concern are recognized and provided with special documentation. Recent developments in the country and the progress made so far may facilitate the promotion of a longer-term perspective in the search for solutions to the protracted refugee situation, in addition to the Bihari/Urdu-speaking population.

Bangladesh

India

Nepal

Sri Lanka



In Nepal, the cessation of hostilities between the Government and Maoist insurgents following the King's surrender of power and the reinstatement of Parliament have brought significant improvements in security. However, the situation remains somewhat fluid since the withdrawal of the Maoists from the Government in September 2007 and the postponement of general elections to 2008. A census in the refugee camps was completed in May 2007 with the full cooperation of the new Government. The Nepalese authorities have also accepted third-country resettlement as a component of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy for the 107,000 refugees living in seven camps in the eastern part of the country.

With the adoption of the 2006 Citizenship Act and Interim Constitution, and the implementation of the citizenship campaign, some 2.6 million citizenship certificates have been issued to stateless persons in Nepal.

With India's tradition of generosity and hospitality toward refugee populations under increasing pressure from mixed migration flows, its Government is considering a national legal framework to ensure protection for refugees. The engagement of several resettlement countries over the past two years has resulted in new partnerships and more resettlement opportunities for long-staying refugee populations.

In Sri Lanka, the security situation has deteriorated steadily over the past two years. The Government's military campaign to regain territory in the east of the country displaced some 160,000 persons. More military movements and fighting in the north have led to speculation that new, large-scale military activities may be expected, resulting in a further wave of displacement. The peace process, introduced by the 2002 ceasefire agreement between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, is stalled. It is widely believed that the two sides will not return to the negotiating table in the near future.

In September 2007, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka stood at some 503,000, including more than 190,000 people displaced since April 2006 and residing in the east and north of the country. From August 2006 to October 2007 over 152,000 IDPs returned to their homes in the districts of Batticaloa and Trincomalee in the east. The returns were organized by the Government and monitored and accompanied by UNHCR and other agencies.

As Sri Lanka is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or its 1967 Protocol, UNHCR continues to undertake refugee status determination and to seek durable solutions for recognized refugees.



Sri Lanka. IDP children in a tent fashioned out of UNHCR canvas in Kantale.

UNHCR/IN-NG

resettlement places have been offered to refugees in 2008 and 2009, with the objective of simultaneously creating opportunities for repatriation.

In India, UNHCR will continue to undertake individual refugee status determination until a national framework or an alternative mechanism for asylum-seekers is established.

The framework for UNHCR's operations in Sri Lanka is based on confidence-building and stabilization measures that aim to prevent further displacement by restoring trust among different communities, the civil administration and security forces. This is coupled with mitigation activities in response to new displacement and an active involvement in the search for durable solutions, including return. The long-term goal of UNHCR's operations in Sri Lanka is the creation of a domestic protection network that is fully able to ensure the rights of the internally displaced.

## Constraints

While the current political environment in Bangladesh could contribute to fundamental changes in the protection regime, it is also unpredictable and makes planning difficult. Opportunities to lead normal, productive lives remain limited for most refugees. Success in self-reliance and community development activities will depend largely on the active engagement of NGOs, some of which will require time to build stronger ties with UNHCR.

The peace process in Nepal—including the formation of an interim Government, the demobilization of insurgent armed forces, reconciliation between the former fighting factions and the holding of elections—is crucial for the country's democratic future. Its success will determine the political, operational and security environment for UNHCR's operations.

Violence has increased in the camps, with clashes occurring between refugees and the local population earlier this year. More recently, pro-repatriation groups in the camps have attempted to intimidate those considering third-country resettlement. The security situation in the camps will be closely monitored, while a mass-information campaign will provide all refugees with accurate information about their durable solutions options.

The operation in Sri Lanka is mainly constrained by security concerns for UNHCR and partner staff as well as for persons of concern due to the ongoing hostilities.

## Strategy

In Bangladesh, a comprehensive durable solutions strategy is being pursued for the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar's Northern Rakhine State. UN agencies have agreed on a joint community-based programme to enhance development in refugee-hosting areas in Cox's Bazaar. In order to enhance the conditions for durable solutions for the camp-based refugees, UNHCR will continue with its efforts to improve protection and assistance and ensure that minimum standards are met for all camp-based refugees. For urban refugees, the objective is to undertake registration and refugee status determination jointly with the Government, and to promote the establishment of national refugee legislation. In addition, the Office will work to protect refugees within broader migration movements.

For many years, any progress towards durable solutions in Nepal has been subject to the outcome of bilateral negotiations with Bhutan. Thanks to the efforts of a group of resettlement States, more than 35,000

## Operations

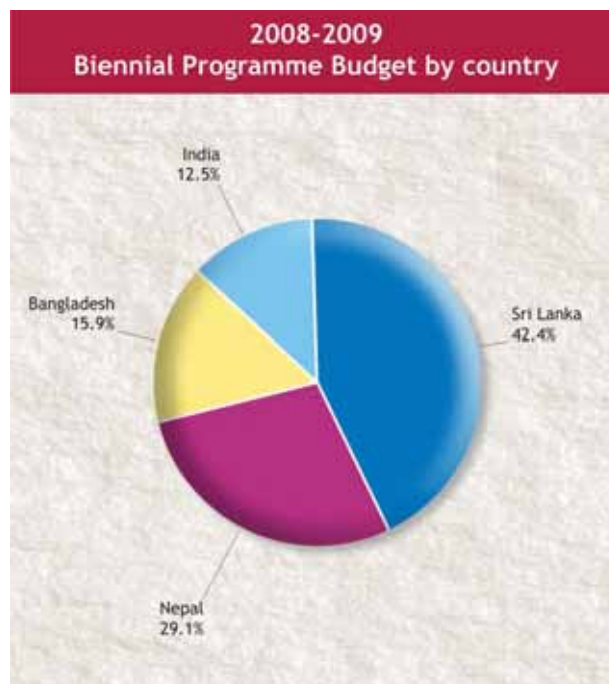
UNHCR's operations in **Nepal, Sri Lanka** and **Bangladesh** are covered in separate country chapters.

In **India**, UNHCR protects and assists some 11,000 urban refugees, most of them from Afghanistan and Myanmar. Some 200 Palestinians who had been living in Iraq have arrived since 2006. UNHCR will continue to pursue durable solutions for all these groups, focusing on resettlement. Local integration through naturalization has been negotiated with regard to Hindu and Sikh refugees from Afghanistan. The Office continues to promote self-reliance to strengthen refugees' coping mechanisms and reduce their dependence on assistance.

UNHCR manages a women's protection clinic in New Delhi which provides a safe, convenient and confidential place for refugee women to seek counselling for issues related to domestic and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Though India is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, it has been continuously broadening the humanitarian space for

persons of concern to UNHCR with solutions-oriented arrangements. The Office will continue to promote the conclusion of a country agreement and India's accession to the 1951 Convention.



Budget (USD)			
Country	Annual Programme Budget		
	2007	2008	2009
Bangladesh	2,890,103	5,097,910	4,599,423
India	3,438,192	3,756,783	3,858,752
Nepal	6,975,643	8,816,251	8,893,496
Sri Lanka	7,331,779	10,789,341	15,038,352
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,635,717</b>	<b>28,460,285</b>	<b>32,390,023</b>