

Sri Lanka

Main objectives

In 2005, UNHCR aimed to promote and protect the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, with a special emphasis on traumatized and extremely vulnerable individuals and other groups at risk; address the emergency humanitarian needs of those who returned of their own accord and those who remain in displacement; promote durable solutions for the remaining IDPs and facilitate preparations for the organized voluntary return of refugees; improve policies and conditions for displaced people, returnees and victims of the conflict through capacity building among the institutions of the Government of Sri Lanka and national NGOs.

Impact

- The unprecedented scale of donations for tsunami victims created an enormous gap between those displaced by the tsunami and those displaced by the conflict. In 2005, UNHCR actively promoted the principle of equity, resulting in a greater understanding amongst donors and agencies – as well as within the Government – of the need to assist and find solutions for both categories of IDPs. Funds were consequently channelled into projects for IDPs, regardless of the reasons for their displacement, and the Government became more flexible in allocating land not only to tsunami victims, but also to landless conflict-related IDPs.
- A comprehensive IDP profiling exercise was conducted in July 2005 in all districts affected by the conflict to review the current situation of each group, their preferred solution and remaining concerns. The outcome of this exercise paved the way for a joint Government, UNHCR and World Bank intervention strategy aimed at reducing the IDP population in welfare centres in 2005 and 2006. The exercise had revealed that IDPs in villages outside welfare centres or with friends and relatives were less exposed to endemic violence, helplessness and suicidal trends.
- In November 2005, UNHCR handed over responsibility for coordinating the tsunami-related transitional



- shelter sector to the Government of Sri Lanka. UNHCR supported the Government and over 100 implementing partners in the coordination and construction of over 55,000 transitional shelters. In the worst-affected district of Ampara, UNHCR built over 4,000 transitional shelters.
- By December 2005, more than 27,000 IDPs had returned to their homes in former conflict areas, in addition to nearly 3,000 registered refugees who returned from India in organized or spontaneous movements.

Working environment

The context

The level of violence in the former conflict areas of Sri Lanka escalated during 2005, raising fears of a return to full-scale war. The instability of the political climate was

all too apparent in the aftermath of the assassination in August of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. This was viewed as a serious attack on the Government and a breach of the ceasefire agreement. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) denied any involvement.

A closely contested presidential election was held in November 2005. With the Tamil vote effectively nullified by what was widely believed to be pressure applied by the LTTE, the result was a win for Mahinda Rajapakse of the ruling party. While the elections passed with minimal unrest, the ensuing weeks were marred by outbursts of violence not seen since the signing of the ceasefire. By the end of the year, around 100 Sri Lankan military personnel had been killed in a series of attacks throughout the North and East, centred mainly in Jaffna. The East also underwent a gradual post-election deterioration in security, including the throwing of a grenade into a mosque during Friday prayers; regular attacks on Sri Lanka Army checkpoints; assassinations; and the added complexity of an aggressive breakaway LTTE rebel faction. The result was the displacement of more than 1,000 families during the months of November and December 2005. Under these circumstances, UNHCR suspended the programme of return for Sri Lankan refugees living in southern India.

Constraints

To achieve enduring peace, fundamental concerns need to be addressed, including security, the ongoing violation of human rights and minority rights, and forced

recruitment. Politicization, as well as a lack of capacity in Government institutions, especially since the tsunami, have been hindrances. Other major obstacles impeding solutions for the internally displaced included a lack of basic infrastructure, employment or economic opportunities; landlessness; and the continuing presence of landmines. The lack of basic infrastructures affected returning IDPs and host communities alike. The return of significant numbers of displaced people, whose original places of residence are situated within militarized zones, will also depend on tangible progress in the peace talks.

The resistance of local communities or other groups of IDPs constrained relocation efforts. These sentiments need to be addressed through discussions with host and surrounding communities, and activities designed to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. A strategy involving quick-impact projects was devised at the end of 2005 to address these concerns.

Funding for the tsunami response was generous but the post-tsunami situation has brought to light many problems and challenges. The influx of many new agencies unfamiliar with the situation in the North and East created problems due to a lack of understanding of the complexity of the post-conflict situation there. Among the issues that UNHCR and other UN agencies had to contend with were a lack of equity in the treatment of different groups and the frequent reluctance to coordinate activities with other actors. Relief efforts were also hampered by the failure of the Government and the LTTE to agree on a joint mechanism for tsunami assistance.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
IDPs		325,000	-	51	34
Returnees (IDPs)		27,200	-	-	-
Returnees	From India	2,700	1,200	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Pakistan	100	100	31	25

Budget, income and expenditure (USD) Annual and supplementary programme budgets					
	Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual programme	8,970,046	7,286,907	1,225,881	8,512,788	8,512,788
Supplementary programme ³	14,352,430	14,912,255	(1,043,858)	13,868,397	9,256,933
Total	23,322,476	22,199,162	182,023	22,381,185	17,769,721

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

³ The supplementary programme figures apply to the Supplementary Appeal for the South Asia earthquake - Tsunami Emergency.

Note: The supplementary programme budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.



Many people who had been displaced by the conflict were also affected by the devastation caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami. Here, a displaced woman receives a plastic mat at the temporary centre set up in Paddiruppu school, Kaluwanchikuddy, eastern Sri Lanka. *UNHCR / V. Tan*

These problems were compounded by a lack of skilled labour and the inflation caused by the widespread presence of well-funded international agencies with a remit to spend rapidly.

Funding

As in previous years, the support rendered by donors was exemplary and the operation was well funded with a rather large carry-over in 2006.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

While Sri Lanka has not yet acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, the Government continues to respect UNHCR's mandate and the basic rights of asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR succeeded in involving local human rights lawyers in the refugee status determination (RSD) process by providing lawyers from the Legal Aid Commission and the National Centre for the Victims of Crime with training on refugee law and RSD procedures to enable them to provide legal assistance to asylum-seekers in the appeals process. At the end of 2005, over 100 refugees, recognized by UNHCR under its mandate, were awaiting durable solutions, mainly through resettlement.

In 2005, UNHCR and its partner organizations organized several training sessions and workshops on international protection and human rights, with a particular focus on the rights of IDPs. These training sessions targeted police,

army, government officials, the LTTE and the IDPs themselves. The sessions led to a decrease in arbitrary detentions and a greater understanding of IDP rights. UNHCR provided support for improved access to justice for IDPs, including free legal aid and assistance in obtaining replacement documentation.

UNHCR also focused on improving the protection and standards of living of populations for whom solutions could not be foreseen in the immediate future. Various age and gender focus groups were set up within communities in welfare centres to address daily programmes and improve living conditions. These included environment-related work; cultural activities; mobilization with regard to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and alcoholism; and tailored solutions for single older people to avoid their being sent to old people's homes. This approach contributed to a gradual restoration of self-esteem and self-confidence among IDPs.

Activities and assistance

Community services: In the welfare centres housing the most vulnerable of those displaced by conflict, UNHCR improved the physical security of almost 6,700 families by providing material to renovate shelters; constructed 40 new latrines and renovated 148 others; dug 20 new wells; renovated 55 tube wells; and constructed two new community halls.

Priority was given to households headed by women and to extremely vulnerable individuals when offering microcredit enterprise training in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and other areas. Training was offered to over

4,200 women and extremely vulnerable individuals in masonry, carpentry, sewing, paper sack-making, food processing, and animal husbandry, while other training sessions covered gender awareness and conflict management.

In an effort to promote self-help and to galvanize local civil society, UNHCR helped to establish 20 community-based organizations that will monitor the revolving funds used to provide loans to small businesses.

In the North and East almost 3,600 families received agricultural relief packages designed to preserve agricultural traditions, raise nutrition levels and improve the environment. These contained garden tools, tree seedlings, vegetable seed and fertilizer to assist families in maintaining a home garden.

Domestic needs and household support: During 2005, UNHCR distributed over 20,200 packages to families affected by the tsunami, to returnees from India, and to extremely vulnerable individuals in welfare centres.

Education: School fees, uniforms and books were provided to 28 refugee children of various nationalities. It should be noted that there are over 100 refugees recognized by the Office under the mandate who are living in and around Colombo.

Health and nutrition: Basic but adequate health services were delivered to over 100 recognized refugees on the basis of a reimbursement scheme established by UNHCR.

Income generation: In Jaffna and Mannar, training was offered to those who met vulnerability criteria (such as female-headed households and people with disabilities) as a prerequisite to eligibility for the UNDP microcredit scheme. The training was one element within a joint UN provision to support the establishment of community-based organizations concentrating on income generation, skills development and saving schemes.

Legal assistance: During the immediate aftermath of the tsunami there was an urgent need to replace lost documentation including birth, marriage, death and identification certification and land title deeds. In taking the initiative UNHCR conducted 68 legal clinics, reaching out to approximately 7,000 beneficiaries. The challenge was immense and the process was slow due to the ambiguity of land ownership, policies relating to a coastal no-build zone and ever-shifting policies pertaining to land-related issues. An increase in SGBV was of concern among many organizations during the immediate post-tsunami period. In 2005, UNHCR ran SGBV awareness and prevention programmes for the benefit of 12,800 people in the districts affected by conflict and/or the tsunami.

Operation support (to agencies): During 2005, UNHCR provided partial financial support to 29 governmental and non-governmental partners. Operation support costs also included the services of 23 UNVs.

Shelter and infrastructure: The scale of the tsunami devastation made the response a complex and challenging task. UNHCR made a significant contribution by assisting the Government to facilitate and coordinate implementation of 55,000 transitional shelters. The key constraints to progress were access to LTTE-controlled areas; identification of land; availability of construction materials; delays in customs clearance for imported material; a shortage of skilled labour; and the limited capacity of local agencies. Initially UNHCR itself planned to fund and commission the construction of some 13,500 transitional shelters, but that target was revised (ultimately it built over 4,400 shelters in Ampara and Jaffna districts). This was due to an over-subscription of the shelter sector, as almost 100 international NGOs had substantial funding at their disposal. In this context, UNHCR's coordination role served to develop common standards and promote a shared understanding that the purpose of these shelters was not merely to provide temporary shelter from the elements, but also to offer privacy and security, allowing families to re-establish a livelihood and a normal routine.

Transport and logistics: Timely delivery of construction material to the building sites was essential to the successful implementation of the transitional shelter programme, which was completed before the October monsoon. To that end, funds were also used to maintain three major warehouses in Colombo, Vavuniya and Jaffna and smaller operations in Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Kilinochchi. The warehouses, as well as UNHCR's fleet of 14 trucks, were instrumental during the early days of the tsunami emergency in providing relief supplies and transporting affected families to temporary shelters.

Water: In Jaffna, 10,600 IDPs in welfare centres received maintenance assistance for 22 wells. In Anuradhapura, 37 welfare centres (housing 2,000 IDP families across four relocation sites) were upgraded through the repair of 50 existing tube wells, and the construction of 17 new ones, as well as the repair of eight open wells and the construction of 60 new ones.

The 4Rs Initiative: The Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (4Rs) pilot project that was launched in Sri Lanka in 2003 continued to provide operational agencies with a common framework for implementation. In this context, a UN joint initiative that comprised UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF and ILO was introduced in 2004. The project consisted of an integrated programme of assistance worth approximately USD 5 million, targeting 20 communities in three

war-affected districts in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. Its main activities were protection, livelihood and income generation, community infrastructure, health, water and sanitation, education and local governance. This initiative was predicated on the principle of “phase in, phase out” between agencies, designed to ensure that the relief to development process is successfully relayed between the respective UN humanitarian and development agencies. It should be noted that expenditures reported under income generation and water sectors fall within the scope of this project, which is fully described in the UN joint report on the 4Rs implementation for 2005, available at www.unhcr.org.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR operated through a representation office in Colombo, two sub-offices in Vavuniya and Jaffna, and five field/satellite offices in Colombo, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Batticaloa and Trincomalee. The organization and management of the offices in Sri Lanka underwent major changes in 2005, mainly due to the tsunami emergency. As the southern and eastern regions were badly affected by the tsunami, two additional satellite offices were opened in Matara and Ampara.

Working with others

UNHCR had 19 implementing governmental and non-governmental partners in 2005. In collaboration with other UN agencies and international financial institutions, UNHCR continued to support the Government to strengthen its coordination and oversight capacity. Its main strategic partner was the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees. The Policy, Planning and Co-ordination Unit, which was established in 2003, assisted the Ministry in formulating overall policies on the protection and relief needs of returnees and IDPs. The Unit also assists with the coordination of project implementation.

UNHCR funded local and international NGOs to increase IDPs' access to justice through awareness-raising activities, the provision of free legal aid, assistance in obtaining property and personal identity documentation and by improving access to complaints procedures. Within the framework of the IDP Working Group, UNHCR also actively participated in various consultation bodies, organized by governments or donors and mandated to focus on the reconstruction and the rehabilitation of the conflict-affected areas. UNHCR chairs the IDP Working Group and established a secretariat to improve inter-agency coordination, set up thematic sub-groups and monitor results.

Overall assessment

In 2005, UNHCR effectively implemented projects benefiting both returning refugees and IDPs. Despite the absence of a permanent peace, UNHCR was able to meet the country objectives as formulated in the Global Appeal. UNHCR's activities had a significant impact in ensuring national protection and durable solutions for IDPs, while also establishing a firm foundation for the eventual return of Sri Lankan refugees from India and other countries. The Office's tsunami-related work was well received by both the Government and the beneficiaries.

Having handed over post-tsunami rehabilitation responsibilities to the Government and other actors, UNHCR now stands ready to refocus on people displaced by the conflict.

Offices

Colombo

Ampara (closed 31 December 2005)
 Batticaloa
 Jaffna
 Kilinochchi
 Mannar
 Matara (closed 30 June 2005)
 Trincomalee
 Vavuniya

Partners

Government agencies

Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement

NGOs

Advocates for Human Rights and other Causes
 Association of Women with Disabilities
 Bridge Asia Japan
 Campaign for Development and Solidarity
 Centre for Policy Alternatives
 Danish Refugee Council
 Eastern Rehabilitation Organisation
 Eminent Persons' Group
 Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
 Jaffna Social Action Centre
Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya
 National Centre for Victims of Crime
 Peace and Community Action
 Rural Development Foundation
 The Refugee and Rehabilitation Organisation
 Trincomalee District Development Association
 Women in Need

Others

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society
 UNV

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,782,599	1,633,048	4,415,647	0
Community services	820,468	0	820,468	120,421
Domestic needs and household support	604,511	1,034,320	1,638,831	2,370
Education	21,801	0	21,801	0
Health and nutrition	10,863	10,200	21,063	197
Income generation	37,498	0	37,498	22,605
Legal assistance	1,222,389	466,046	1,688,435	150,884
Operational support (to agencies)	394,915	45,612	440,527	558
Shelter and infrastructure	71,926	4,065,436	4,137,362	14,764
Transport and logistics	159,985	1,596,613	1,756,598	2,938
Water	10,423	0	10,423	9,885
Instalments with implementing partners	625,970	405,658	1,031,628	(324,622)
Sub-total operational activities	6,763,348	9,256,933	16,020,281	0
Programme support	1,749,440	0	1,749,440	0
Total expenditure	8,512,788	9,256,933	17,769,721	0
Cancellation on prior years' expenditure				(395,404)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	1,863,046	1,423,464	3,286,510	
Reporting received	(1,237,076)	(1,017,806)	(2,254,882)	
Balance	625,970	405,658	1,031,628	
Prior years' report				
Instalments with implementing partners				
Outstanding 1 January				455,833
Reporting received				(324,622)
Refunded to UNHCR				(74,027)
Adjustments				354
Balance				57,538