

## Working environment

### The context

The conflict in Sri Lanka continued to escalate in 2008. The ceasefire agreement of 2002 was abrogated in January 2008. The focus of the fighting shifted to the north of the country as Government forces closed in on the stronghold of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The hostilities produced a new wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs), whose totalling 211,850 as of July 2008. Additional large-scale displacements were expected before the end of 2008.

However, there was a measure of stability in the east of the country, where the Government organized a large-scale return operation in 2007. Provincial elections were held in the first half of 2008, and UNHCR assisted IDP returnees to the area with their reintegration. Between August 2006 and the end of July 2008, some 180,610 individuals had returned to Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts.

In addition to the large number of IDPs, Sri Lanka is also host to refugees and asylum-seekers. The country is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol; UNHCR

therefore conducts refugee status determination (RSD) in Sri Lanka and seeks a durable solution for recognized refugees through resettlement.



### Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2009		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Pakistan	250	250	350	350
	Iraq	40	40	40	40
	Various	60	60	60	60
Asylum-seekers	Pakistan	160	160	250	250
	Various	10	10	10	10
Returnees (refugees)		2,000	2,000	6,000	6,000
IDPs		470,000	470,000	600,000	600,000
Returnees (IDPs)		143,360	143,360	19,040	19,040
<b>Total</b>		<b>615,880</b>	<b>615,880</b>	<b>625,750</b>	<b>625,750</b>

## The needs

Most UNHCR activities in Sri Lanka are geared to meeting the needs of IDPs and returnees for protection, emergency shelter and non-food relief. The Office also seeks to find durable solutions for IDPs and returnees. The continuing violence generated more displacement which fuelled the need for more education and health programmes, income-generation opportunities and basic facilities for the displaced.

## Main objectives

### Annual Programme

- Protecting refugees and asylum-seekers, including ensuring their security and basic rights, access to asylum procedures, legal aid, education, health services and the labour market.
- Raising awareness and understanding of international refugee legislation in Sri Lanka, and promoting the country's accession to international refugee and statelessness instruments.
- Achieving durable solutions for Sri Lankan refugees by facilitating where possible their voluntary repatriation from India; assisting the two countries' governments with the modalities of return.

### Supplementary Programme

- Protection monitoring, reporting and advocacy for IDPs, undertaking their registration, and providing legal assistance and individual protection as necessary.
- Ensuring emergency protection during flight, and access to physical security.
- Coordinating the work of all actors concerned and providing emergency shelter, non-food relief items and camp management to IDPs, particularly in conflict-affected areas.
- Preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and carrying out awareness-raising, training and capacity-building activities in this regard.
- Reducing tensions and enhancing stability by building confidence between communities and facilitating returnees' reintegration.
- Using a rights-based approach to find durable solutions through the return, integration and relocation of IDPs.
- Enhancing partnerships with national authorities and other actors to ensure continuity of assistance until durable solutions are found.
- Raising awareness of, and providing regular reporting on the situation of IDPs in Sri Lanka; generating support for initiatives that benefit the displaced.

## Key targets

- New displacement is met with an effective emergency response, including protection and the provision of emergency shelter and non-food relief items.
- IDPs benefit from greater physical security and freedom of movement.
- The authorities, security forces, NGOs and IDPs increase their knowledge of human rights, the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and good governance through workshops and training.
- IDPs receive civil documentation and gain better access to national protection mechanisms, including free legal aid.
- Community structures to protect women, children and persons with specific needs are strengthened, which will include improving procedures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.
- Protection risks and human rights abuses affecting persons of concern to UNHCR are identified and reported; adequate responses, advocacy and monitoring prevent further violations.
- Protection interventions and advocacy are undertaken for individuals as necessary.
- Confidence is built among different communities, government authorities and security forces.
- Durable solutions for IDPs are identified and attained.
- The work of protection partners is coordinated for effective and cohesive delivery of protection.
- Asylum-seekers enjoy fair and efficient RSD; refugees receive assistance with resettlement procedures.
- The repatriation and reintegration of Sri Lankan refugees from India is facilitated in coordination with the relevant national and international actors.

## Strategy and activities

The framework for UNHCR's operations in Sri Lanka is based on confidence-building and stabilization measures. The aim is to prevent further displacement by restoring trust among different communities, the civil administration and security forces. The Office will also undertake emergency response activities and make efforts to reduce new displacement while continuing the search for durable solutions.

A long-term objective of UNHCR's operation in Sri Lanka is to create a domestic protection network that will ensure the rights of the internally displaced as well as IDP and refugee returnees. Meanwhile, UNHCR will adapt its contingency measures to address the rapidly changing situation on the ground.

## Protection

Following the departure of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) as a consequence of the abrogation of the ceasefire agreement, UNHCR's protection role in Sri Lanka has grown in importance.

UNHCR and its partners will continue to monitor the general welfare and security of all IDPs. Special attention will be paid to those with specific needs by ensuring gender and age-sensitive protection and assistance. The emphasis will be on preventing and addressing all forms of sexual and gender-based violence by means of awareness-raising workshops on the issue as well as on HIV and AIDS; implementing training and information programmes; providing legal aid and medical and psychosocial support; and improving the infrastructure in IDP sites.

Advocacy and capacity building are central to the protection strategy. To ensure that IDPs enjoy the same level of governmental protection as other nationals, UNHCR has developed a national protection network of NGOs and government

ministries. The Office will continue to assist the Government to undertake country-wide registration of IDPs to establish a comprehensive database. This will allow UNHCR to target protection where it is needed and ensure that all IDPs have access to humanitarian assistance.

UNHCR will continue to advocate for Sri Lanka's accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

## Durable solutions

UNHCR will conduct surveys and participatory assessments and support "go-and-see" visits to identify durable solutions for IDPs. It will regularly assess the possibility of return, and returnees will be monitored closely. It will also provide phased assistance, including shelter kits and non-food relief items, for returnees. Quick impact projects will help restore infrastructure, provide income-generation opportunities and build trust between communities.

UNHCR will support the Government to find alternative solutions for the displaced, such as relocation or local integration. The Office will focus on land allocation and the creation of secure environments to sustain returns. Other actors will be supported in their work in return areas.



An internally displaced boy listens to radio in Savukady camp.





IDPs in Kaluwankerny camp, Sri Lanka.

UNHCR/PIG: Anbasimthe

The Office will support IDP advocacy groups and peace committees to promote peaceful co-existence. It will also hold regular meetings with IDP and host communities to reduce tensions and build confidence. These measures will be combined with the restoration of community infrastructure and the strengthening of community-based organizations.

Conditions permitting, UNHCR will also assist in the organized voluntary repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees from India, in close cooperation with relevant national authorities, communities and beneficiaries.

## Constraints

The Sri Lanka operation is hampered by security concerns for UNHCR's staff and partners arising from the ongoing hostilities. Other constraints are the lack of humanitarian access to conflict areas, particularly in view of military action in the north; the closure of key access roads; restrictions on the transportation of various materials into operational areas; and the difficulties faced by staff of UNHCR's partners in obtaining work permits.

Restrictions on the transport of relief items and the lack of fuel in some areas often lead to delays or failures in the delivery of basic supplies. The high number of government counterparts on IDP issues sometimes complicates the work of the Office. Some government

institutions and NGO partners lack adequate human and technical resources.

## Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence	
Number of offices	7
Total staff	120
International	24
National	88
UNVs	6
JPOs	2

## Coordination

The Office works through coordination mechanisms and a division of tasks established under the framework of the UN Country Team and UN Focal Points/OCHA at district level. The IDP Protection Working Group in Colombo, chaired by UNHCR, plays a vital coordinating role, as do similar structures in the districts. District-level protection concerns are analysed and relayed to the national IDP Protection Working Group.

In close coordination with its partners, UNHCR created the shelter coordination cell to monitor and guide interventions in the shelter sector by the humanitarian

community in Sri Lanka. In addition to coordinating the emergency shelter response, the shelter coordination cell develops policies on host-family support, return assistance and the decommissioning of IDP sites.

UNHCR is also a member of the Consultative Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, which is chaired by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights and attended by the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and others. The Office co-chairs the Sub-Committee on IDP Welfare which keeps all government interlocutors informed about IDP concerns.

To ensure the sustainability of programmes, UNHCR works with NGO partners and the Government at national and local levels. The Office also consults selected civil society organizations and academic institutions. Partnerships with civil society are crucial for the harmonization of field programmes and the engagement of NGOs, particularly those working for community mobilization as implementing partners.

## Partners

### Implementing partners

**Government:** Ministries of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure, Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services

**NGOs:** Danish Refugee Council, Jaffna Social Action Centre, Norwegian People's Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council, OfERR Ceylon, Refugee Rehabilitation Organization, Rural Development Foundation, Sewalanka Foundation, World Vision

**Others:** National Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, United Nations Office for Project Services

### Operational partners

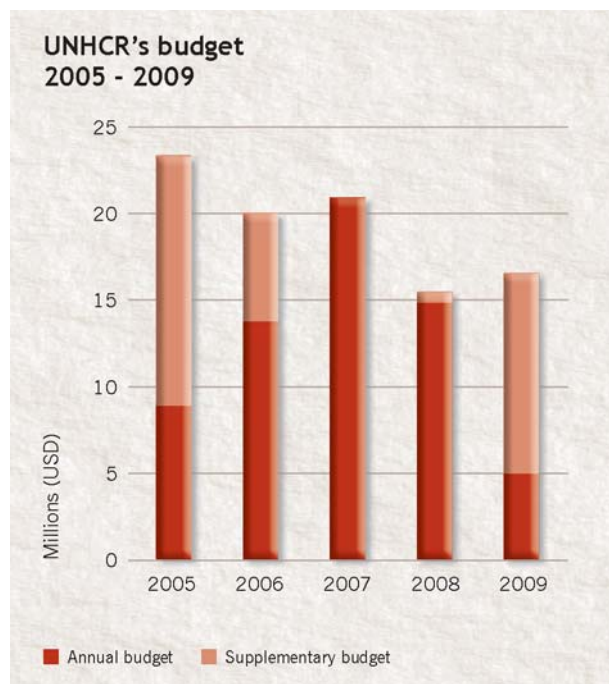
**Government:** Ministries of Constitutional Affairs and Foreign Affairs

**NGOs:** Centre for Policy Alternatives, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, Foundation for Coexistence, Legal Aid Foundation

**Others:** Asian Development Bank, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*, FAO, ICRC, ILO, JICA, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNDSS, UNFPA, UNHABITAT, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, World Bank

## Financial information

A sharp increase in requirements in 2006 and 2007 was due to the increased protection and assistance needs of a large number of people newly displaced by the intensified conflict. The initial budget for 2008 was established at a lower level than in previous years, taking into account the stabilization of the situation in the east. However, during the course of the year, the budget underwent incremental increases. This was necessary to respond to the additional displacements in the north following the shift of military activities from the east to the north. The Sri Lanka operation also received an allocation of funds under a supplementary programme for water and sanitation activities to improve water and sanitation facilities at the IDP sites. In 2009, UNHCR's requirements for IDPs will be presented in a supplementary programme.



Budget (USD)						
Activities and services	2008			2009		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget Water and sanitation	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget IDPs	Total
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,860,652	0	4,860,652	2,317,588	2,955,143	5,272,731
Community services	750,072	0	750,072	437,903	628,210	1,066,113
Domestic needs	717,380	0	717,380	153,468	1,475,521	1,628,989
Legal assistance	775,337	0	775,337	1,165,511	1,068,755	2,234,266
Operational support (to agencies)	175,000	0	175,000	0	465,809	465,809
Sanitation	0	184,860	184,860	0	0	0
Shelter and infrastructure	750,000	0	750,000	0	1,710,897	1,710,897
Transport and logistics	283,200	0	283,200	29,153	603,482	632,635
Water	0	431,340	431,340	0	0	0
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>8,311,641</b>	<b>616,200</b>	<b>8,927,841</b>	<b>4,103,623</b>	<b>8,907,817</b>	<b>13,011,440</b>
Programme support	2,477,700	0	2,477,700	829,073	2,748,012	3,577,085
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,789,341</b>	<b>616,200</b>	<b>11,405,541</b>	<b>4,932,696</b>	<b>11,655,829</b>	<b>16,588,525</b>

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.