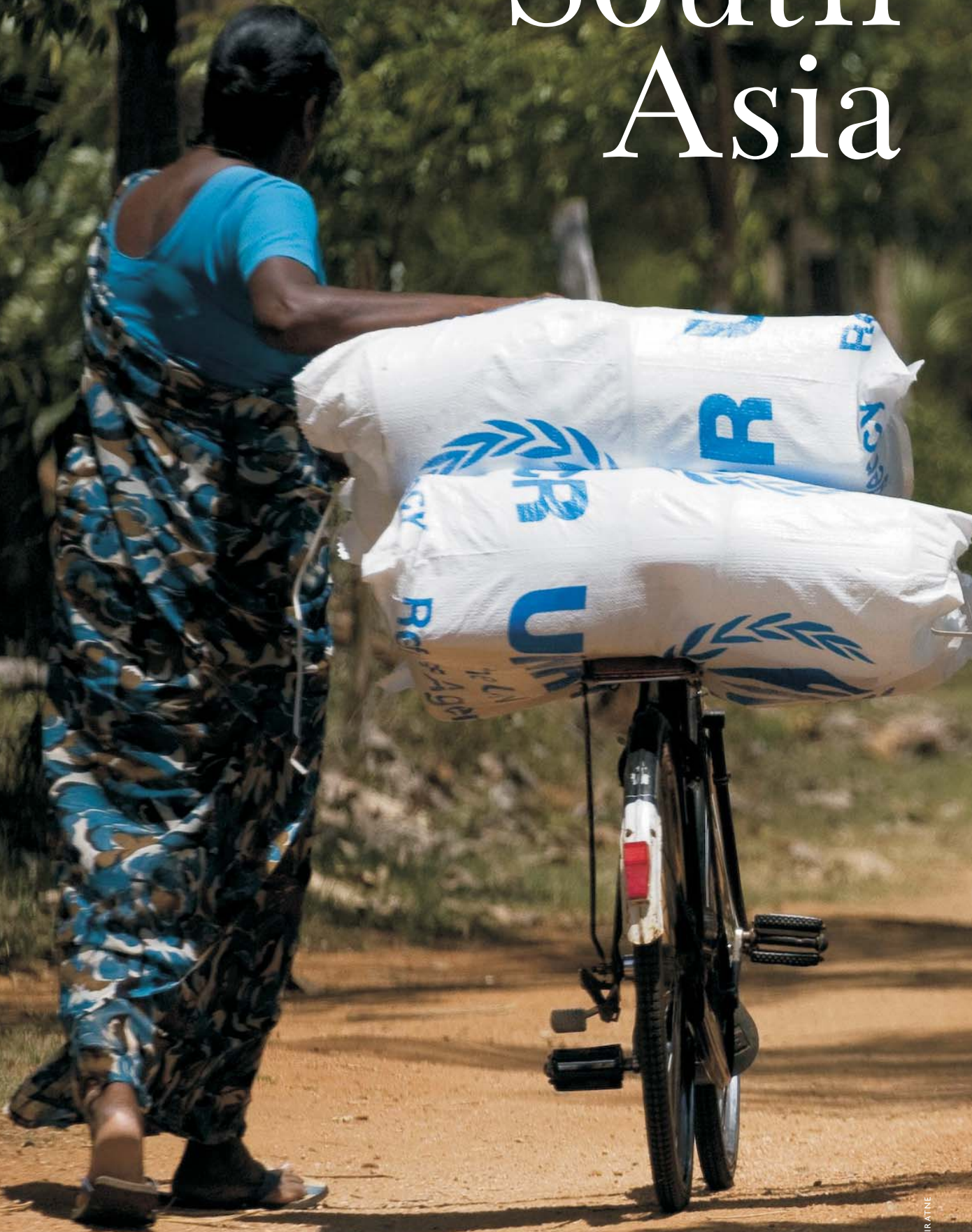


# South Asia



India  
Nepal  
Sri Lanka



Recently resettled IDPs collect their non-food relief item pack, comprising jungle clearing tools, cooking utensils, buckets, tarpaulin and lantern among other necessities. Oddusudan, Mullaitivu district, north-east Sri Lanka.



## | Working environment |

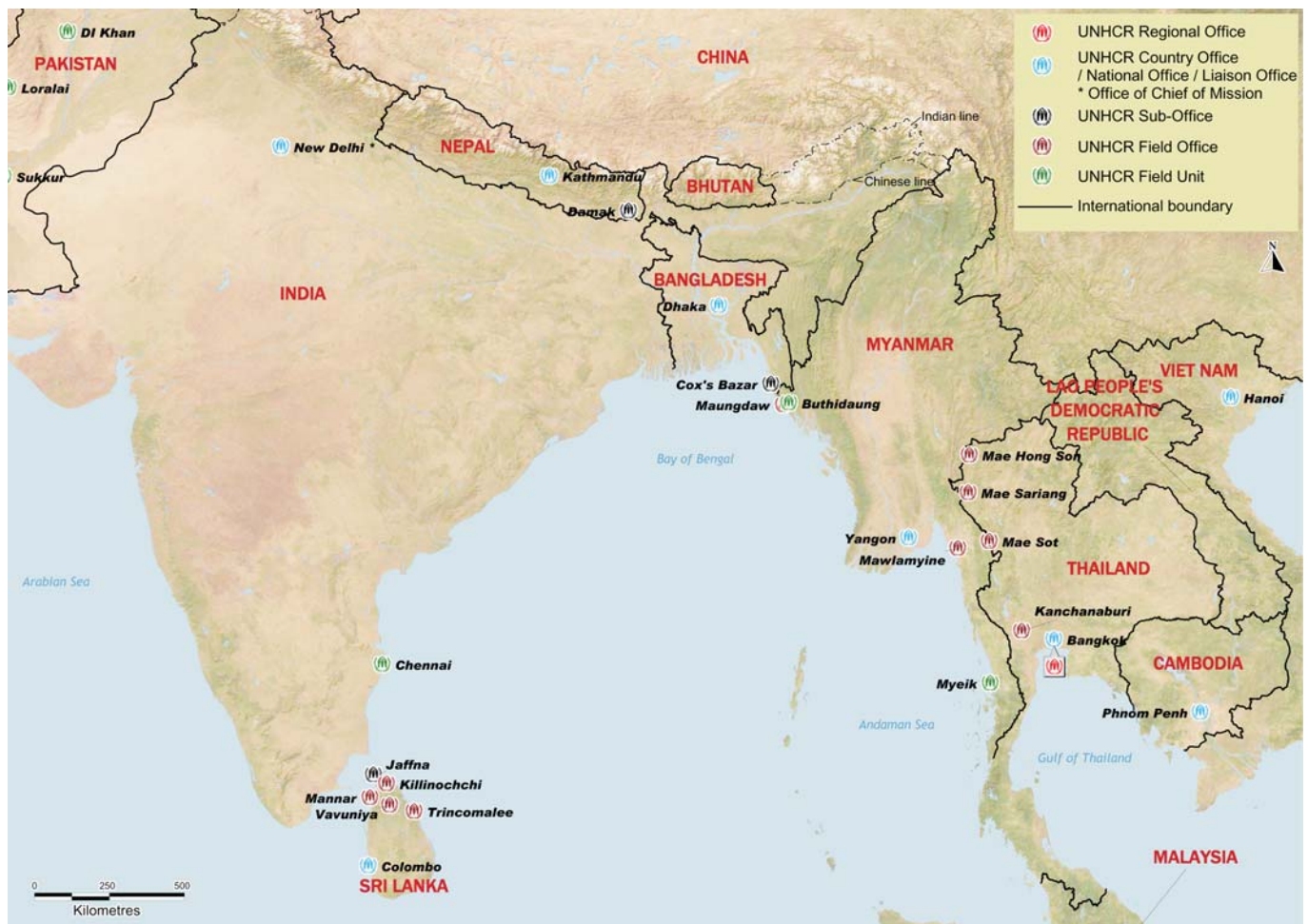
Although there are still significant humanitarian challenges in Sri Lanka, two years after the end of the armed conflict between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the operational focus is shifting to early recovery and development. In a movement which peaked in mid-2011, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) have now returned from Government-run camps to their places of origin. By late July 2011, only about 9,400 people remained in the camps, compared with approximately 280,000 at the end of the conflict. In total, some 386,000 people have returned to their places of origin. However, another 97,000, in addition to those still in the camps, continue to be displaced in various parts of the country.

Refugees from Sri Lanka have also been returning home in steadily rising numbers: more than 1,200—mainly from India—have returned by the end of July 2011, and more are expected in the near future.

In Nepal, the generous support of resettlement countries and the cooperation of the Government have allowed more than 50,000 refugees from Bhutan to restart their lives in third countries. With the number of Bhutanese refugees in camps in Nepal having shrunk by some 60 per cent since its peak, the Government has agreed to a camp consolidation plan which will be completed by the end of 2012.

The Government of Nepal has also agreed to allow UNHCR to implement its Community-Based Development Programme (CBDP) in refugee-affected and hosting areas. UNHCR has worked closely with the Government, the UN Country Team, NGOs and development actors to develop the multi-year, inter-agency programme, which will support both refugee and host communities under the aegis of UNHCR's Transitional Solutions Initiative.

In India, growing concerns about national security threaten to further squeeze the protection space. India is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, nor does it have a national refugee protection framework. Nonetheless, the country hosts a large number of refugees and respects the principle of *non-refoulement* for holders of UNHCR documentation. India continues to grant asylum to a large number of refugees from neighbouring States, protecting and assisting some 200,000 Tibetans and Sri Lankans. In the absence of a national legal framework for asylum, UNHCR registers asylum-seekers and conducts refugee status determination (RSD) in New Delhi, mostly for arrivals from Afghanistan and Myanmar. It also works to protect and ensure the well-being of more than 24,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers.



## | Strategy |

In Sri Lanka, UNHCR will step up its activities to facilitate the voluntary return of Sri Lankan refugees. At the same time, it will cooperate with development actors to promote the sustainable reintegration of both refugee and IDP returnees, by improving their livelihoods and self-reliance. UNHCR will also continue to provide humanitarian assistance to those who remain displaced, and seek durable solutions for them. Returnee monitoring will be strengthened, and support for civil society and national protection mechanisms will be increased.

UNHCR will endeavour to ensure that land and property issues affecting people of concern are addressed through the justice system. It will also press the Government to find durable solutions for those in protracted displacement—and stands ready to support the authorities in this regard. In the longer term, the aim is to enhance the capacity of national institutions and local NGOs in order for them to take over UNHCR’s protection, assistance and coordination roles in an effective manner. UNHCR will continue to conduct RSD, provide basic assistance and find durable solutions through resettlement for urban refugees and asylum-seekers in Sri Lanka.

In Nepal, UNHCR will continue to work with the Core Group countries and the Governments of both Nepal and Bhutan to find durable solutions for the refugees from Bhutan. While seeking durable solutions through the ongoing large-scale resettlement programme, UNHCR will also cooperate with the Government, the UN Country Team, NGOs and other stakeholders to promote and implement the Community-Based Development Programme (CBDP), which is designed to foster peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host communities. The consolidation of camps will continue: only two of the original seven are expected to remain open by the end of 2012.

Tibetan arrivals transiting through Nepal to a third country where they are able to obtain asylum will be protected and

assisted. Furthermore, UNHCR will continue to advocate the issuance of appropriate legal documents to persons of concern within the long-staying Tibetan population in Nepal. It will also work to prevent statelessness in the country through advocacy, awareness-raising and legal aid.

In India, UNHCR will improve RSD systems and strengthen protection outreach for all communities through centres in areas where refugees reside. Particular efforts will be directed towards addressing the protection needs of women and unaccompanied minors through the Women’s Protection Centre in New Delhi, and the Learn and Train Programme.

UNHCR will also focus on addressing the requirements of people with specific needs, by collaborating with community service providers, community-based organizations and local NGOs, in order to provide increased livelihood opportunities for those of concern. It will also help refugees who wish to repatriate voluntarily, use resettlement to address compelling protection needs that cannot be met in India, and provide legal assistance to eligible refugees who wish to be naturalized.

The cooperation of the Government of India will be sought in order to strengthen UNHCR’s programme to facilitate the voluntary return of Sri Lankan refugees living in India. The offices in India and Sri Lanka will coordinate closely in this area. UNHCR will also engage in an exercise to survey and identify stateless persons, and conduct advocacy and training on the issue.

## | Constraints |

While restrictions on humanitarian access to people of concern in Sri Lanka have been eased, the slow pace of mine clearance in some heavily contaminated return areas, and the continuing military occupation of private land are hindering the return of the remaining IDPs. Damaged or non-existent infrastructure and a dearth of livelihood opportunities, added to land- and



property-related problems, also impede IDP and refugee returns. A considerable number of refugees from Sri Lanka in India, who do not have formal Sri Lankan citizenship and lack information on how to obtain it, will face difficulty in gaining access to services and documentation upon their return.

The steady increase in the number of asylum-seekers in India is testing the limits of the protection space and stretching UNHCR's assistance capacity. The lack of a national refugee protection framework remains one of the major constraints facing UNHCR in India. The poverty of refugees and asylum-seekers is another challenge in a context where almost 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, and where refugees do not have the formal right to work. Furthermore, despite greater prevention and response efforts, women remain vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence.

The lack of direct access to the camps in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu hampers UNHCR's efforts to support the voluntary repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees. UNHCR now conducts repatriation interviews outside the camps, while relying on civil society groups to monitor the situation within them.

In Nepal, frequent changes in government over the past few years have disrupted the dialogue with the authorities on key refugee issues. The ongoing departure of skilled refugee workers, and the limited resources available in local communities make it difficult to maintain the quality of services in the camps. This is particularly acute in the case of quality mental health and psychosocial services. Other challenges arise from frequent strikes in the country's eastern region where the refugee camps are situated, and affect the camp consolidation process.

## Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Nepal** and **Sri Lanka** are presented in separate chapters.

In **India**, some 16,400 refugees and some 5,300 asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR as of 31 August 2011, comprising mainly Afghan, Myanmar and Somali nationals. The steady rise in the number of refugees and asylum-seekers without a corresponding increase in resources has prompted UNHCR to find innovative ways to meet the growing needs, mainly through a shift towards self-reliance, providing limited financial assistance for refugees with specific needs, and strengthening community-based support mechanisms.

Pending the adoption of a national refugee protection framework, UNHCR will continue to conduct individual RSD through improved and streamlined procedures, and support all refugees and asylum-seekers in accessing Government health and education services, while monitoring their situation either directly or through implementing partners.

UNHCR will support refugees in the voluntary repatriation process, use resettlement to address compelling protection needs that cannot be met in India, and provide legal assistance for the naturalization of eligible refugees. The Office will continue to engage with the Government of India and civil society in Tamil Nadu through advocacy and specific interventions to ensure a favourable protection environment for Sri Lankan refugees, including opportunities for voluntary repatriation.

## Financial information

UNHCR's requirements in South Asia have come down slightly from past highs, mostly due to a downscaling of IDP-related activities in Sri Lanka. The budget for 2012 in South Asia mainly covers the protection of a growing urban refugee population and measures to facilitate the return home of Sri Lankan refugees in India; a large resettlement operation in Nepal, promoting camp consolidation and maintaining basic services in the remaining camps; and assisting refugee and IDP returnees in Sri Lanka with cash grants, non-food items and Quick Impact Projects.

Major unmet needs have been identified in the areas of livelihoods, education and basic assistance, especially for urban refugees and asylum-seekers in all three countries in this subregion. Other notable gaps include shelter for returnees in Sri Lanka and community-based coexistence activities in Nepal.

### UNHCR's budget in South Asia 2008 – 2013



### UNHCR Budget in South Asia (USD)

OPERATION	2011 REVISED BUDGET	2012				TOTAL	2013
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4		
India	13,276,507	13,127,135	81,278	0	0	13,208,413	15,377,233
Nepal	17,879,488	12,948,190	1,351,420	1,411,101	0	15,710,711	12,972,434
Sri Lanka	27,171,694	10,100,618	68,724	0	7,553,889	17,723,230	18,573,231
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,327,689</b>	<b>36,175,943</b>	<b>1,501,422</b>	<b>1,411,101</b>	<b>7,553,889</b>	<b>46,642,354</b>	<b>46,922,898</b>