

# SRI LANKA

## INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Improve access to national protection and humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the north and northeast of Sri Lanka.
- Minimise internal population displacement, and provide alternatives to flight from regions of instability.
- Create stability for displaced communities and conditions conducive to long-term solutions.
- Facilitate the return and reintegration of displaced populations, especially the vulnerable, to settlement areas.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

UNHCR field operations were significantly affected by renewed conflict between the Sri Lankan authorities and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This led to new population displacement. The IDP population increased significantly during the first six months of the year. By the end of June, a total of 569,172 persons remained internally displaced in Sri Lanka (as compared to 412,400 in January): 297,161 persons in the LTTE dominated areas (Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and northern Vavuniya districts), 86,732 persons in the government controlled areas (Mannar and Vavuniya districts), 153,822 persons in Jaffna and 31,457 persons in Trincomalee district.

The challenge for UNHCR was to quickly respond to the new emergency situation while maintaining its ongoing reintegration activities and promoting solutions. Frequent changes in the conflict areas and the operational environment have required UNHCR to be flexible and to review constantly its programme. Due to security constraints, access to civilians in conflict areas remained difficult and required constant negotiations with the authorities and the LTTE. UNHCR is making an effort to es-

tablish standard procedures for access to civilians in conflict zones and their evacuation.

As a result of the intensification of hostilities in the Jaffna Peninsula early in the year, over 160,000 persons were displaced within Jaffna by June. The focus of UNHCR's field operation on the peninsula therefore shifted from promoting the reintegration of returnees to Jaffna to the provision of emergency assistance. Interventions were made with the authorities and with the LTTE to ensure access to the displaced population and to ensure that civilians were able to evacuate from the conflict areas. Emergency assistance in the form of water, shelter, food and medical care was provided in co-operation with other agencies and implementing partners. Non-food relief items such as plastic sheeting, sleeping mats, utensils, books, clothes and other essentials were also provided to those who had few or no belongings. In addition, in view of the approaching monsoon season, 400 transportable semi-permanent shelters were provided. An ICRC vessel, which connects Trincomalee and Jaffna, remained the only secure arrangement for the transport of relief items and staff to and from Jaffna. This limited UNHCR's ability to stockpile emergency relief items in Jaffna.

In addition to displacement within the Jaffna Peninsula, some 3,340 persons moved south from Jaffna into LTTE-dominated areas in the Vanni region. UNHCR, in co-ordination with ICRC and local and international NGOs, distributed emergency relief items and maintained an active dialogue with government security forces and the LTTE to ensure the welfare of displaced persons.

Following the outbreak of hostilities in the Vanni region in November 1999, which led to displacement of 77,000 persons within Vavuniya, the majority of IDPs have returned to their places of origin, although some 4,400 were unable to do so and remain in Vavuniya. At the beginning of the year, surveys were conducted in 65 villages in Vanni to which those displaced had returned, to assess the security conditions and the types of assistance required.

After the assessment, 45 villages were selected and basic assistance and infrastructure support were provided. These interventions were followed by income-generating activities, as families became more settled and durable solutions could be identified.

Of 1,200 families proposed for resettlement in Vavuniya, 511 families have already moved to the respective new communities. For these communities, micro-project assistance will be provided based on the needs assessment and the projects would range from basic necessities to income-generating activities. In Mannar, of the proposed 688 families, 260 families have resettled to date and micro-projects are being implemented. The micro-project programme has assisted a total of 18,162 families in their places of origin in the Jaffna, Vanni and Trincomalee districts. During the reporting period, UNHCR implemented, 42 micro-projects through its partners in sectors such as water, sanitation, shelter, health, education, community services, income-generation, training and capacity building.

In Trincomalee district, increased conflict led 119 Sinhalese families to leave for Anuradhapura and ten Tamil families for Mannar. In the same district, a Return Task Force comprising representatives of the displaced, UNHCR, NGOs and the Government continued to identify areas of potential return and formulate joint plans.

UNHCR and the World Bank continued jointly to facilitate implementation of the Northeast Irrigated Agriculture Project in areas where UNHCR is operational.

A significant number of IDPs continued to be assisted in government welfare centres where they stay until they can either return to their places of origin or resettle to new sites. The UNHCR-supported Open Relief Centre at Madhu was reopened at the end of 1999 to accommodate those displaced and hosted an average of 12,643 IDPs during the first half of

the year. Overcrowding at the welfare centres has become a significant problem. In the absence of additional land for the congested centres, UNHCR launched programmes to facilitate community mobilisation and thereby help residents improve conditions at the centres themselves. To facilitate freedom of movement of the IDPs residing at the centres, UNHCR successfully negotiated the issuance of three-monthly security passes in some areas instead of the bi-weekly passes. UNHCR continued to intervene to secure the speedier processing and release of vulnerable individuals to relevant institutions, such as hospitals. IDPs no longer need to wait in transit centres to be admitted to welfare centres, following UNHCR's successful discussions with the authorities to modify the previous procedures.

In addition, sanitation and water facilities at some welfare centres have been improved. In the welfare centres in Vavuniya, the social mobilisation of women, with a view to empowering them, is continuing. To assist community activities within the welfare centres, community centres have been constructed. The population profiles of the Trincomalee welfare centres were completed. As a result of the findings, the enjoyment of basic rights, including the freedom of movement of the residents, has been improved.

### REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

UNHCR's overall objectives remain unchanged, although some adjustments need to be made to re-prioritise activities as a result of the significant change of circumstances on the ground. In Jaffna, for example, micro-project activities aimed at supporting reintegration have been temporarily suspended and efforts will continue to concentrate on responding to the emergency situation. Increased security incidents in all field locations, Trincomalee district in particular, will require intensive protection interventions by UNHCR in response.

### FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF	5,666,663	5,675,781	4,141,525	2,320,300

\*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region/country, opening balance and adjustments.