

Sri Lanka

Main objectives

- Promote durable solutions for the remaining conflict-related internally displaced persons (IDPs) through targeted return and relocation projects.
- Monitor the overall protection and security situation of vulnerable IDPs, especially women and children, with special emphasis on addressing issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
- Provide protection and legal advice to individuals in recovering lost documents, including birth and death certificates, national identity documentation and land and property documentation.
- Assist the Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of India to implement a voluntary repatriation programme for those refugees residing in camps in southern India.
- Continue to lobby for accession to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- Assist in the UN-wide effort to mitigate the effects of the tsunami in line with the UN Transitional Strategy for Sri Lanka with an emphasis on parity of treatment for conflict-displaced and tsunami-displaced people.



Planning figures		
Population	Jan 2006	Dec 2006
IDPs	337,000	317,000
Returnee IDPs	49,000	35,000
Returnees	15,000	20,000
Asylum-seekers	100	250
Other refugees	100	120
Total	435,120	320,330

Total requirements: USD 8,827,990

Working environment

Recent developments

Sri Lanka stands at a crucial juncture, with signs of increasing political and military turbulence ahead of the November 2005 presidential election.

Military clashes and targeted political assassinations contributed to a generalized climate of fear. These developments, as well as the devastating effects of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster on 26 December 2004, are serious setbacks and are proving detrimental to the country's early recovery. The international community has consequently intensified its efforts to inject renewed energy into the peace process, and a proposal to resume peace talks has been negotiated.

UNHCR immediately responded to the tsunami disaster by opening up its local supplies for distribution to affected areas. This intervention was largely in response to humanitarian needs that emerged in areas where UNHCR was operating, and was part of the UN response to the Secretary-General's call to all agencies to assist regional governments to effectively address immediate needs. Given the history of UNHCR's work in protecting and assisting IDPs affected by the conflict, the Office advocated for equitable treatment of both those displaced by the conflict and the tsunami.

When the tsunami struck, there were already some 353,000 persons displaced by the conflict who were still in need of a dignified and durable solution. Amongst these, over 70,000 persons resided in government-run welfare centres and were considered to have the most acute needs. The natural disaster further displaced over 570,000 persons; many sought refuge with family and friends, while the rest were sheltered in public buildings and collective accommodation. It was recognized that such structures would only provide a temporary solution and that reconstruction will take several years. Consequently, the concept of the transitional shelter was developed by UNHCR, which played a key role in assisting the Government to coordinate international aid to the affected areas. By September 2005, all those in need of a transitional shelter had been provided with one, and of the 55,000 transitional shelters built for the tsunami victims, 4,000 were provided by UNHCR.

In addition, an estimated 130,000 Sri Lankan refugees were living abroad at the beginning of 2005, of whom approximately 70,000 were housed in camps in Tamil Nadu, India.

Constraints

Although the ceasefire has held, small-scale violence has continued throughout 2005, especially in the east. The very fragile state of peace, unstable and frequently interrupted, makes the planning of programme interventions for Sri Lanka a demanding process. Major obstacles impeding solutions for those who remain internally displaced related to continuing security concerns; landlessness and general poverty; the lack of adequate investment in restoring basic infrastructure in war-torn areas; the lack of opportunities for local integration, especially income generation; the need for property restitution; and the continuing presences of landmines.

In late 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami caused further devastation. It is expected that UNHCR's involvement in all tsunami-relief sectors except protection will have ceased by the beginning of 2006. UNHCR will continue to advocate for a parity of efforts for those displaced by the conflict and those displaced by the tsunami.

Strategy

Protection and solutions

It is reasonable to assume that the majority of the people displaced by conflict who are willing and able to return to their place of origin should have done so by the end of 2005. In 2006, the focus will be on finding alternative solutions, such as relocation and local integration, for those remaining. Therefore, UNHCR has initiated a profiling exercise in the conflict-affected IDP communities to identify those individuals who need assistance to find a permanent solution. In 2006, UNHCR will concentrate on intervention to mitigate obstacles to return. This will include advocacy for the allocation of land, jungle clearance, building of shelters, water and sanitation facilities, and addressing protection and security concerns.

Restitution of documentation, such as birth, death and marriage certificates, and land and property deeds lost either due to the conflict or the tsunami will be part of the protection



UNHCR has been assisting people displaced by the internal conflict in Sri Lanka for more than a decade. In January 2005, UNHCR established Manatkadu camp for 210 IDP families displaced as a result of the tsunami disaster. Here, a family in Jaffna who survived the tsunami but lost all their belongings receiving new fishing nets. *UNHCR / H. J. Davies*

intervention. In addition, the Office will explore means to empower communities to become self-reliant and make informed, independent choices about their preferred durable solution. There will be increased focus on promoting local integration, and advising the Government on the

change of status for those who have found alternative durable solutions.

Since 2002, UNHCR has operated a small-scale programme of facilitated return from India, which was designed as a safety valve to prevent

repatriating refugees from resorting to dangerous and illegal travel routes when returning home. As part of its mandate, UNHCR will continue to monitor the protection conditions and reintegration possibilities for those refugees returning from India.

Assistance

By December 2005, UNHCR's engagement in shelter coordination and the provision of relief items to tsunami-displaced people will have been completed. For those displaced by conflict, UNHCR will focus on assistance activities that anchor returnees in their original communities or in their chosen place of relocation. This includes the upgrading of infrastructure and advocacy for small-scale income-generating projects. These efforts will be coordinated with the longer-term permanent rehabilitation/reconstruction projects. Through its presence and material support, UNHCR will monitor the general welfare of returnees and those who remain displaced. Immediate humanitarian assistance will be given to returnees and to extremely vulnerable IDPs. Given the focus on finding durable solutions, there will be an added emphasis on targeted assistance to communities who are willing to relocate or reintegrate. This assistance will take the form of shelter, small-scale rehabilitation of infrastructure, community mobilization, and income-generating activities.

Desired impact

The established protection network consisting of UNHCR field offices and local and international NGOs will continue to monitor the overall human rights situation and respond to the needs of the vulnerable groups at risk. In addition, the Office has various transitional arrangements to ensure that return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees are viable and effective. The Office will provide accurate information and immediate assistance to those who want to return, relocate and/or reintegrate. In pursuing this, the Office will also seek the support of the UN Country Team and other agencies, including bilateral donors, to help make solutions sustainable.

Organization and implementation

Management structure

In 2006, UNHCR will operate with a total of 18 international staff, including JPOs and UNVs, and 67 national staff.

The UNHCR Representation in Colombo is responsible for the overall management of the programme and for liaison with the Government, embassies and NGOs. To ensure adequate presence in affected regions, UNHCR will maintain six field-based offices, including sub-office Vavuniya (covering field offices in Mannar, Kilinochchi and Jaffna), and sub-office Trincomalee (covering field office Batticaloa).

Coordination

The Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction initiative ("4Rs") is the basis of UNHCR's approach to transitional issues. The Office will actively promote joint planning and cooperation among Multilateral Group actors – such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank – and various UN agencies. Furthermore, the programme strategy includes a joint UNDP, ILO, UNICEF and UNHCR "4Rs" project in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

UNHCR coordinates its protection and assistance programme directly with the Government of Sri Lanka. Through a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (MRRR), UNHCR ensures that programmes accord with Government and national priorities. The MRRR defines and coordinates the Government's policy on relief and rehabilitation assistance to IDPs and returning refugees.

Offices
Colombo
Batticaloa
Jaffna
Kilinochchi
Mannar
Trincomalee
Vavuniya

Partners
Government agencies
District Government Agents
Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation, and Reconciliation
North East Provincial Council
The Census Bureau
The Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs (Registrar General's Department)
The Ministry of the Vanni

NGOs
Association of Women with Disabilities
Bridge Asia Japan
Campaign for Development and Solidarity (FORUT)
Danish Refugee Council
Foundation for Co-Existence
Jaffna Social Action Centre
<i>Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya</i>
Norwegian Refugee Council
Peace and Community Action
Rural Development Foundation
Sri Lanka Red Cross Society
Women in Need
Women's Development Centre

Others
Asian Development Bank
FAO
GTZ
ILO
National Human Rights Commission
UNDP
UNICEF
UNV
WFP
WHO
World Bank

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,737,229
Community services	712,831
Domestic needs	673,927
Education	12,475
Health	9,980
Legal assistance	2,132,888
Operational support (to agencies)	463,666
Transport/logistics	165,235
Total operations	6,908,230
Programme support	1,919,760
Total	8,827,990