

# Sri Lanka

## Main objectives

- Promote and protect the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, with a special emphasis on minority rights and the problem of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
- Address the emergency humanitarian needs of spontaneous returnees.
- Facilitate preparations for the voluntary return of refugees and durable solutions for IDPs.
- Promote conditions conducive to the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Government and national NGOs, through training and direct engagement, leaving them better able to answer to the protection and humanitarian needs of IDPs and refugees.

## Working environment

### Recent developments

Prospects for a peaceful settlement of Sri Lanka's 20-year conflict remain promising, despite the suspension of peace talks in April 2003. The ceasefire agreement signed in February 2002 between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has for the most part been respected, with both parties remaining committed to the peace process. Since the ceasefire and after several rounds of peace negotiations, a number of confidence-building initiatives were introduced, including the creation of joint emergency bodies, such as the Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (SIHRN). This has allowed the LTTE to exercise greater influence over the north and east of Sri Lanka and provided it with a degree of legitimacy. While the

SIHRN has not met since April 2003, its secretariat continued to provide a joint forum for planning and project implementation discussions. As a result of intense diplomatic efforts, peace talks are expected to resume and will focus on the creation of an interim administration for the north and east of Sri Lanka. The starting point for these negotiations is the concept of a federal structure holding together a single state.



### Planning figures

Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
Asylum-seekers	20	20
IDPs	340,000	240,000
Returnee (IDPs)	200,000	100,000
Returnee (refugees)	1,400	10,000
Other refugees	40	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>541,460</b>	<b>350,070</b>

**Total requirements: USD 8,342,335**

Continued international engagement is essential for a peaceful and prosperous future for Sri Lanka. This was exemplified by the June 2003 Tokyo donor conference, during which USD 4.5 billion was pledged. The durability of the peace process has been underlined not only by returnee trends, but also the growing involvement of international financial institutions and NGOs in former areas of conflict.

Between 1983 and 2001, the conflict produced 800,000 IDPs and drove an additional 200,000 Sri Lankans to seek refuge in Tamil Nadu in southern India. While the majority have repatriated over the years, 64,000 refugees remain in camps in India.

Since the ceasefire, there has been an uninterrupted flow of IDPs returning spontaneously to the north and east of Sri Lanka. By July 2003, more than 312,000 IDPs had returned to their homes in former areas of conflict. In addition, nearly 2,800 registered refugees returned from India across the Palk Strait in organised or spontaneous movements. Such returns are likely to continue in 2004, in numbers largely dictated by the success of the peace negotiations.

## Constraints

In order to achieve lasting peace, fundamental issues need to be addressed, including human security and minority rights. The major obstacles to solutions for the remaining IDPs are: the presence of landmines; insufficient investment in basic infrastructure in war-torn areas; the need for restitution of property; and the inadequate efforts to integrate those IDPs, who, in 2002, elected to remain where they were living. IDPs often return to communities which have suffered extensive physical destruction. Agricultural land or alternative income generation opportunities have to be identified and created for a large number of landless IDPs. The return of a sizeable number of those still displaced will depend on tangible progress at the peace talks, as their home areas form part of the strategic High Security Zones (HSZ). These are areas occupied by the Sri Lankan army and remain off-limits to civilians.

While commitments made at the Tokyo conference can address most of these concerns, many donors have made contributions conditional on the resumption of peace talks, respect for the ceasefire and the improvement of basic human rights. In order to avoid potential gaps in the continuum of return, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction ("4Rs"), UNHCR remains engaged in dialogue with international and national actors, including donors, to ensure continuity during the transitional period.

## Strategy

### Protection and solutions

Notwithstanding the present political stalemate, the overwhelming expectation is that the conflict will be settled through negotiation. The mood of optimism is expected to be supported by further progress in 2004, allowing the flow of spontaneous returnees to continue.

UNHCR's presence in key returnee areas remains a vital means of ensuring effective protection and timely assistance for refugees and IDPs. It is widely recognised that UNHCR's monitoring of human rights, undertaken as a part of the ceasefire agreement, is objective and impartial. UNHCR will strengthen its capacity in Sri Lanka in order to deal with the demands expected of it in 2004. It will maintain the level of protection staffing established in 2003, develop field protection networks, and sharpen the focus of programmes to improve the quality of protection and information it provides.

Since February 2002, over 2,800 refugees have returned spontaneously, or as priority cases in assisted returns from India, whilst some 64,000 Sri Lankan refugees still remain in camps in Tamil Nadu. UNHCR will continue to work closely with the Governments of Sri Lanka and India to facilitate the repatriation of priority cases and prepare for organised voluntary repatriation. This approach will be sustained until the Sri Lankan environment favours large-scale voluntary returns.

The Office will support initiatives at the local level to address issues of human rights, SGBV, minority rights and peaceful co-existence within the framework of national reconciliation programmes.

### Assistance

In 2004, the scope of assistance extended will be significantly reduced, as the supplementary programme comes to an end in 2003. UNHCR will therefore encourage all its partners, multilateral and bilateral donors as well as national organisations, to deepen their engagement in Sri Lanka and thereby ensure continued assistance. UNHCR will of course continue to undertake protection interventions, and these will frequently entail assistance in the form of community development and basic household support. Through its presence and material support, UNHCR will monitor the general well-being of returnees and those who remain displaced.

### Desired impact

In Sri Lanka, UNHCR will ensure that IDPs have access to national protection and durable solutions. It will respond





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effectively to the emergency humanitarian needs of persons of concern. The Office will also seek to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups at high risk. Through its field presence, UNHCR will monitor the situation in areas of return and ensure that the rights of returning IDPs and refugees are protected. In addition, the Office will evaluate transitional reintegration arrangements to ensure that these are effective and viable. Community-based reconciliation will be a closely related priority.

## Organisation and implementation

### Management structure

In 2004, UNHCR will operate with 99 staff (22 international, including four JPOs, and 77 national). In addition, 19 UNVs will support the operation. The UNHCR Representative in Colombo is responsible for the overall management of the programme and for liaison with the Government, embassies and NGOs. To respond immediately to a changing environment on the ground, UNHCR will maintain three field offices in Jaffna, Vavuniya and Colombo which will supervise four satellite offices in Kilinochchi, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa.

### Co-ordination

The Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction initiative (4Rs) is the basis of UNHCR's approach to transitional issues. UNHCR will actively promote joint planning and co-operation with Multi-lateral Group actors – including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the UN Country Team, which includes UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and FAO.

UNHCR co-ordinates its protection and assistance programme directly with the Government. Through a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees, and the Office of the Commissioner General, UNHCR ensures that programmes accord with Government and national priorities. The Ministry and the Office of the Commissioner General define and co-ordinate the Government's policy on relief and rehabilitation assistance to IDPs and refugees in close consultation with the National Co-ordination Committee (NCCR) of the Framework for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (Triple R Framework). UNHCR is a member of the Framework Committees and is expected to continue to play a leading role in IDP and refugee-related matters.

**Distribution of non-food items to the internally displaced returnees.** UNHCR / R. Wilkinson

### Offices

#### Colombo

Batticaloa  
Jaffna  
Kilinochchi  
Mannar  
Trincomalee  
Vavuniya

### Partners

#### Government agencies

Office of the Commissioner General for Co-ordination of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation  
Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees  
District Government Agents

#### NGOs

Association of Women with Disabilities  
Campaign for Development and Solidarity (FORUT)  
Centre for Women's Research  
Community Trust Fund  
Danish Refugee Council  
Jaffna Social Action Centre  
*Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya*  
Legal Aid Foundation  
Rural Development Foundation  
Save the Children Alliance  
Sri Lanka Red Cross Society  
Women's Development Centre

#### Others

FAO  
Legal Aid Foundation of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka  
National Human Rights Commission  
UNICEF  
UNDP  
UNV  
WFP  
WHO  
World Bank

### Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	2,241,355
Community services	658,000
Domestic needs	958,059
Education	4,539
Health	2,688
Legal assistance	1,913,414
Operational support (to agencies)	695,000
Transport / logistics	130,000
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>6,603,055</b>
Programme support	1,739,280
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,342,335</b>