

Sri Lanka

Main objectives

Promote and protect the rights of IDPs and returnees, with a special emphasis on traumatized and other groups at risk; address the immediate humanitarian needs of spontaneous returnees and those who remained displaced; facilitate preparations for the organized, voluntary return of refugees and durable solutions for IDPs; promote conditions conducive to the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees; and increase respect for the rights of displaced persons, returnees and victims of conflict through capacity-building of government authorities and national NGOs.

Impact

- In 2004, over 33,700 IDPs returned to their places of origin, bringing the total number of spontaneous returns since the signing of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement to almost 380,000. UNHCR's field presence continued to be a vital means of monitoring returnees, ensuring respect for their rights and providing them with emergency humanitarian assistance.
- In addition, nearly 10,000 registered refugees returned from India in 2004, either spontaneously or in an organized fashion. Durable solutions still need to be found for the remaining 352,40 IDPs, of whom 73,000 live in government-run welfare centres, and the 131,000 refugees who live abroad, approximately 61,000 of them in camps in Tamil Nadu, India.
- Following a comprehensive study on SGBV, UNHCR increased its advocacy by raising media visibility and distributing pamphlets in English, Sinhala and Tamil to the areas worst affected by the displacement of large numbers of the population.
- In the immediate aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami, UNHCR supported relief efforts within 24 hours, releasing some USD 380,000 worth of



relief items and transporting the injured and dead. A response strategy was developed, and an appeal issued for USD 15.3 million. UNHCR's involvement in the tsunami recovery effort will be limited to the emergency phase.

Working environment

The context

The Norwegian-brokered Ceasefire Agreement, signed by the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in February 2002, continued to hold. Following the April 2004 general elections, several attempts were made to restart the peace talks suspended in 2003, but with little success. As in 2003, donors had to negotiate appropriate mechanisms for the release of sufficient funding for reconstruction and rehabilitation in conflict-affected areas. Though fewer in number than the

previous year, IDPs continued to return spontaneously to, and within, the north and east of the country in 2004. Continued protection problems, including human rights violations such as forced recruitment of children and adults, are believed to have contributed to the lower return rate. Nevertheless, significant numbers who were able and willing to return did so in safety in 2003 and 2004.

On the morning of 26 December 2004 the Indian Ocean tsunami struck the coast of Sri Lanka, causing enormous devastation. Over 30,000 people were killed and some 860,000 displaced. Twelve of the country's 25 districts were severely damaged. The Government of Sri Lanka immediately declared an emergency and requested international assistance to complement national efforts.

Constraints

In order to achieve enduring peace, fundamental issues such as human security, violations of human rights and forced recruitment need to be addressed. Other significant challenges to achieving solutions for IDPs include lack of basic infrastructure, employment or income-generation opportunities, landlessness and the continuing presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance. The lack of basic infrastructure is a challenge for returning IDPs and host communities alike. The return of significant numbers of displaced people will depend on tangible progress in the peace talks.

Funding

UNHCR's Sri Lanka operation continued to enjoy good donor support in 2004. Sufficient funding was made available to the programme, enabling the Office to implement planned activities, including the Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (4Rs) Programme.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

While Sri Lanka has not yet acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, the Government continued to respect UNHCR's mandate and the basic rights of asylum seekers and refugees. UNHCR succeeded in involving local human rights lawyers in the RSD process, formalizing the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and published the South Asia Declaration on Refugees and Migration.

UNHCR's protection interventions focused on extremely vulnerable individuals. Implementation of protection activities was carried out directly by strengthening UNHCR's field presence and indirectly by maintaining a protection network consisting of national organizations, national and international NGOs and UN agencies.

| Persons of concern | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Main origin/Type of population | Total in country | Of whom UNHCR assisted | Per cent female | Per cent under 18 |
| IDPs | 352,400 | - | - | - |
| Returned IDPs | 33,700 | - | - | - |
| India (returnees) | 9,900 | 3,081 | - | - |

| Income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Revised budget | Income from contributions ¹ | Other funds available ² | Total funds available | Total expenditure |
| 8,304,384 | 3,114,247 | 5,333,176 | 8,447,423 | 8,191,980 |

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

UNHCR continued to mainstream gender concerns into all its programme activities. At the national level, UNHCR and the Centre for Women's Research gathered baseline data on the prevalence of SGBV and existing response mechanisms in the north and east of the country. Using this background information, a media campaign was designed and launched in December 2004. This involved a helpline which in its first month received over 450 telephone enquiries, most of which led to counselling delivered in person at the centre.

Activities and assistance

Under the 4Rs programme, UNHCR initiated in 2004, a process whereby it disengaged from activities relating to education, health and nutrition, income generation, sanitation, shelter and infrastructure, and water on the basis of phase-out/phase-in approach with other UN agencies. No activities were carried out under these sectors with the exception of limited stop gap measures carried out in welfare centers and 2003 activities not completed until early 2004. For details, refer to the "Community services" sector below.

Community services: UNHCR renovated 22 welfare centres (including 85 toilets and 23 wells) and five community halls. Roofing materials were provided to 140 families. Temporary shelters were constructed for some 2,600 families and permanent shelters for some 1,300 families in return communities. Shelter materials were made available for repair at welfare centres and relocation sites, benefiting over 6,500 families.

UNHCR also arranged mobile health clinics to raise awareness of health care and reproductive health. These daily mobile clinics reached over 93,000 beneficiaries. UNHCR also facilitated the access of some 4,500 IDPs to information and awareness programmes on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

In 2004 UNHCR increased the availability of psychosocial services. Twenty-five counselling assistants were trained in Mannar district to disseminate information to IDPs on psychosocial illnesses and available assistance.

Capacity building and skills-development training for over 1,100 IDPs and 7,600 returnees covered income generation and livelihood activities

including agriculture, tailoring and microcredit. Some 1,700 women and youths at risk were targeted for skills training programmes.

In an effort to prevent outbreaks of disease and improve hygiene, sanitation was provided for 11,000 IDPs with the construction of some 1,100 latrines at welfare centres and relocation sites. Furthermore, some 350 wells were chlorinated, making clean drinking water available to over 69,000 IDPs.

Domestic needs/Household support: UNHCR provided over 34,000 packages containing household items such as buckets and mosquito nets to some 153,000 IDPs in welfare centres, and to persons returning and relocating.

Legal assistance: UNHCR implemented 46 projects with the objective of protecting the rights of IDPs and returnees and enhancing their access to justice. A notable achievement was the campaign to help stateless persons obtain citizenship, which commenced in 2003 and continued throughout 2004. Government officials and volunteers were trained and a large media campaign was conducted. As a result, approximately 190,000 Tamils obtained citizenship. Over 60 mobile legal clinics for stateless issues opened in the hill country and the north and east.

To provide legal assistance to IDPs and returnees, one partner expanded its activities. Over 2,500 IDPs received free legal aid mainly in connection with obtaining personal documentation.

One NGO implemented an information campaign on durable solutions for more than 12,000 people in 18 welfare centres. The campaign stressed the importance of documentation. Training was organized for partners and community-based organizations in 32 communities on human rights, protection and documentation issues, reaching almost 11,000 beneficiaries. The NGO also conducted or facilitated over 80 protection-related workshops for NGOs and community leaders for some 2,700 participants.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR partially funded the operational cost of some 20 implementing governmental and non-governmental partners. In addition, costs related to the services provided by twenty-three UNVs were covered under this sector.

Transport/Logistics: During 2004, the rehabilitation of roads benefited some 2,300 IDP families.



In December 2004, in an unprecedented response to a natural disaster, the UN refugee agency - whose mandate is to protect refugees fleeing violence and persecution - kicked off a six-month, multi-million dollar emergency relief operation to aid tsunami victims in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Somalia. UNHCR has worked in Sri Lanka for nearly 20 years and has the largest operational presence in the country with seven offices, staff and a strong network of partnerships in place. The day of the tsunami, UNHCR opened up its warehouses in the island nation and began distribution of essential items. *UNHCR/V. Tan*

UNHCR maintained three warehouses and a fleet of nine trucks for timely delivery of relief items.

Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR retained its seven offices during 2004 in Colombo, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Killinochchi, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. A total of 116 staff worked in the operation, including three JPOs, 18 UNVs, and eight national UNVs. UNHCR's Code of Conduct was signed by all staff. It was also discussed with implementing partners and is included in partnership agreements.

Working with others

UNHCR had 20 governmental and non-governmental implementing partners in 2004. In collaboration with other UN agencies and the International Financial Institutions, UNHCR continued to support the Government of Sri Lanka to strengthen its coordination and oversight capacity, establishing a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. UNHCR encouraged and facilitated the establishment of the Policy, Planning and Coordination Unit to assist the Ministry in formulating policies on the protection and relief needs of refugees and IDPs and on project coordination.

Overall assessment

In 2004, UNHCR Sri Lanka implemented effective projects benefiting returning refugees and IDPs alike. Despite the lack of a resolution to the ethnic conflict of the last two decades, UNHCR met its objectives for 2004, making a significant impact in ensuring national protection and durable solutions for IDPs and establishing a foundation for the eventual return of Sri Lankan refugees from India and other countries. UNHCR was greatly assisted by the excellent support of donors.

UNHCR continued to realign its operation away from relief and towards more protection-oriented programmes. The protection focus was exemplified by key developments such as the highlighting of the prevalence of SGBV in conflict-affected areas. In addition, protection interventions focused on informing IDPs and returnees of their rights.

UNHCR faced challenges with respect to finding durable solutions for the remaining IDP populations. The Office gained a better understanding of their intention to return and related concerns through a comprehensive survey conducted in welfare centres in 2004. For some, relocation was identified as a medium term solution. While the Government assisted relocations, UNHCR played a vital role in ascertaining the voluntary character of such movements. As land and property rights issues are the greatest obstacles identified by the remaining population, UNHCR expanded its legal assistance activities.

Offices

Colombo

Batticaloa
Jaffna
Kilinochchi
Mannar
Trincomalee
Vavuniya

Partners

Government agencies

District Government Agents
Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (formerly the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees)
Office of the Commissioner – General for Coordination of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation

NGOs

Association of Women with Disabilities
Bridge Asia Japan
Campaign for Development and Solidarity (FORUT)
Centre for Policy Alternatives
Centre for Women's Research
Community Trust Fund
Danish Refugee Council
Foundation for Co-existence
Jaffna Social Action Centre
Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya
Peace and Community Action
Rural Development Foundation
Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya
Save the Children Alliance
Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (Mannar, Trincomalee, Vavuniya)
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

Financial Report (USD)

| Expenditure breakdown | Current year's projects | Prior years' projects |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| | Annual programme budget | Annual and Supplementary programme budgets |
| Protection, monitoring and coordination | 2,300,856 | 0 |
| Community services | 606,372 | 208,069 |
| Domestic needs / household support | 907,928 | 0 |
| Education | 24,742 | 83,223 |
| Fisheries | 0 | 21 |
| Health and nutrition | 46,148 | 179,113 |
| Income generation | 14,580 | 299,774 |
| Legal assistance | 1,738,164 | 453,691 |
| Operational support (to agencies) | 316,237 | 241,865 |
| Sanitation | 4,812 | 107,319 |
| Shelter and infrastructure | 32,317 | 1,002,658 |
| Transport and logistics | 124,264 | 37,279 |
| Water | 16,060 | 166,622 |
| Instalments with implementing partners | 435,337 | (2,779,633) |
| Sub-total operational activities | 6,567,817 | 0 |
| Programme support | 1,624,163 | 0 |
| Total disbursements | 8,191,980 | 0 |
| Instalments with implementing partners | | |
| Payments made | 1,641,016 | |
| Reporting received | (1,205,679) | |
| Balance | 435,337 | |
| Prior years' report | | |
| Instalments with implementing partners | | |
| Outstanding 1 January | | 2,391,760 |
| Payments made | | 673,486 |
| Reporting received | | (2,779,633) |
| Refunded to UNHCR | | (265,117) |
| Balance | | 20,496 |
| Unliquidated obligations | | |
| Outstanding 1 January | | 1,663,556 |
| Disbursements | | (1,441,449) |
| Cancellations | | (222,107) |
| Outstanding 31 December | | 0 |