

SOUTH ASIA



UNHCR

2014 - 2015
GLOBAL APPEAL

India

Nepal

Sri Lanka

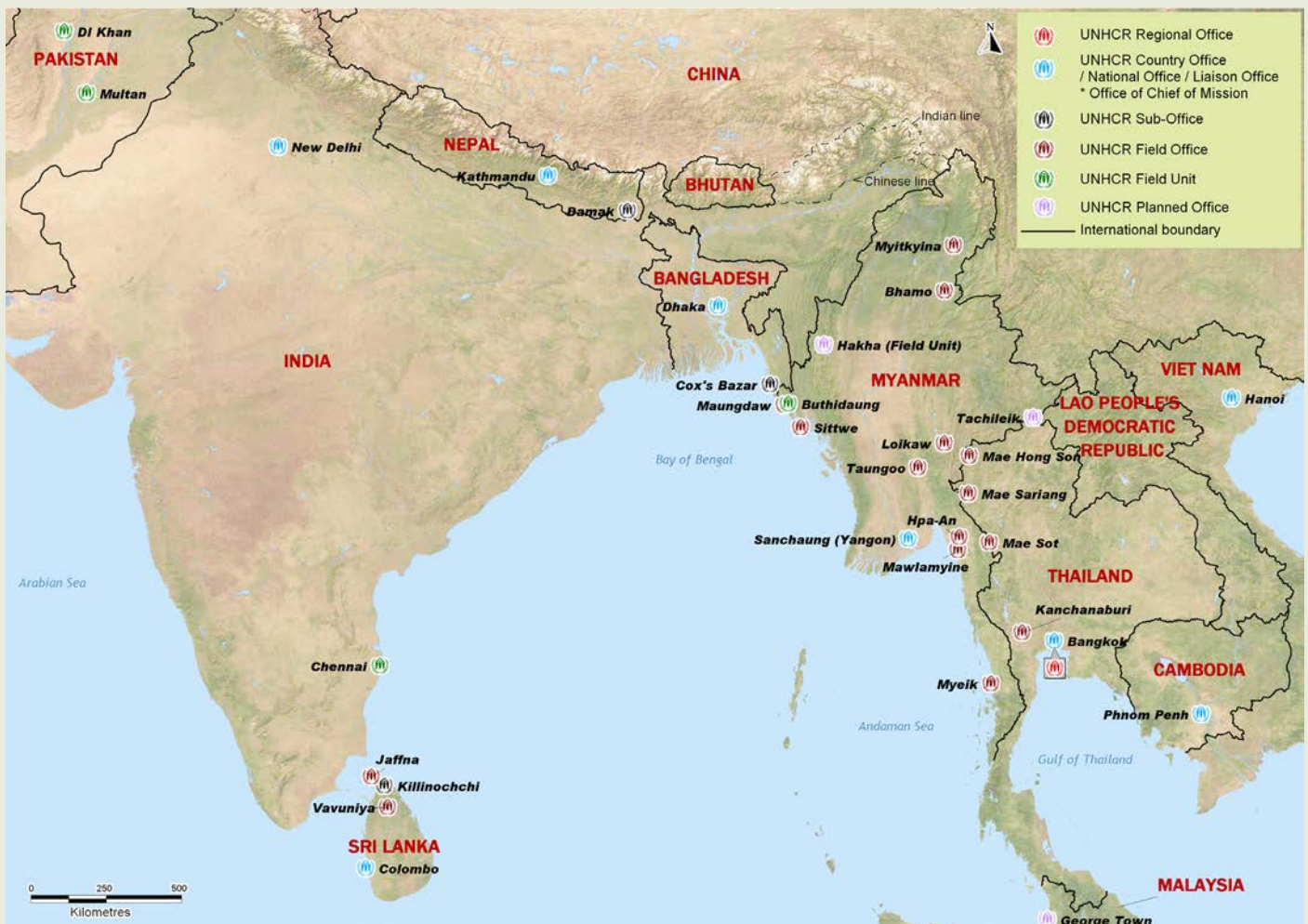


Children playing with water
in Beldangl refugee camp in
eastern Nepal (December 2012)

UNHCR / S. BHATTARAL



Overview



Working environment

Although India, Nepal and Sri Lanka are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, they offer asylum to a considerable number of refugees. For its part, UNHCR cooperates with the Governments of these countries, as well as with NGOs and other stakeholders, to protect and assist urban refugees. It also helps to seek comprehensive solutions for internally displaced people (IDPs) and protracted refugee situations.

India grants asylum and provides direct assistance to some 200,000 refugees from neighbouring countries. As the country lacks a national legal framework for asylum, UNHCR conducts registration and refugee status determination (RSD), mostly for arrivals from Afghanistan and Myanmar. More than 24,000 refugees and asylum-seekers of diverse origins are protected and assisted by the Office in India.

While a large majority of those registered by UNHCR in India live in Delhi, an increasing number are settling outside the capital. The Government of India allows UNHCR

mandate refugees to apply for long-term visas and work permits. Refugees and asylum-seekers have access to basic government services such as health care and education. In addition, they have access to the law-enforcement and justice systems. UNHCR and its partners work to facilitate this by providing information and interpretation services.

Nepal has generously hosted a large number of refugees, mainly from Bhutan, for many decades. However, in the absence of any formal refugee legislation, the Government has adopted various approaches to deal with different refugee populations. UNHCR continues to advocate for the adoption of a national refugee framework and Nepal's accession to international refugee instruments.

Under a large-scale group resettlement programme which began in 2007, more than 83,000 refugees from Bhutan have started new lives in eight countries. The camp population has been reduced to a third of

its original size and the two refugee camps in eastern Nepal currently host some 34,000 refugees.

Five years after the end of the conflict in **Sri Lanka**, the majority of those who were IDPs in the country have returned to their place of origin. However, an undetermined number of individuals remain in protracted displacement, unable to return home owing to housing, land and property issues. Although there has been significant progress in re-establishing infrastructure in the north, some returnees continue to face difficulties in earning a livelihood and meeting their basic needs.

Sri Lanka has seen a growing number of people arriving seeking asylum, and this trend is likely to continue. While national security is expected to be the Government's primary concern, problems of *refoulement* or the deportation of people of concern are not anticipated. The return of Sri Lankan refugees will continue, albeit at a slower pace.

| Response |

Strategies

- In India, UNHCR will conduct registration and RSD in a timely and efficient manner and protect the growing number of people of concern in Delhi through outreach services, including legal, social and educational support, in areas where they reside. UNHCR will focus on responding to people with specific needs through collaboration with community-based and local NGO networks. Community development initiatives are designed to help refugees become more self-reliant. UNHCR will also facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees in cooperation with the Governments of India and Sri Lanka.
- In Nepal, UNHCR will continue to implement the third-country resettlement programme for refugees from Bhutan. It will request the Core Group of resettlement countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States) to continue to support the search for durable solutions, resettlement included. To allow refugees to make informed decisions on resettlement, UNHCR will strengthen its mobile information and counselling services. It will also address the issue of the increasing number of refugees failing to show up at resettlement interviews.
- In Sri Lanka, UNHCR will conduct RSD and find durable solutions for recognized refugees while engaging with the Government to preserve and expand asylum space. UNHCR will also facilitate the voluntary return of Sri Lankan refugees in conditions of safety and dignity and help them to reintegrate into their communities. To support durable solutions for IDPs, UNHCR will strengthen national institutions and local authorities to enable them to deliver adequate services in the north.

Challenges

Many refugees in South Asia face protection risks and livelihood challenges, given their lack of formal status and in the absence of national refugee legislation, while opportunities for durable solutions are limited. At the same time, an increase in the number of asylum applications throughout the subregion has stretched UNHCR's response capacity.

In India, poverty is a key challenge for the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers, who also face discrimination from local communities with little understanding of refugee issues.

In Sri Lanka, IDP and refugee returnees have difficulty in meeting their basic needs. The lack of a comprehensive national policy on land rights has had an adverse impact on sustainable return. More recently, the Government has engaged in dialogue with UNHCR on asylum issues with a view to broadening the asylum space in the country.

The quality of public health and education in the camps in Nepal has been adversely affected by the departure of skilled refugee workers who are resettled. At the same time, the processing of resettlement submissions for the refugees from Bhutan in Nepal is extremely labour-intensive, a situation that is expected to intensify as more complex cases are considered.

| Implementation |

Operations

By July 2013, there were over 20,000 refugees and some 3,800 asylum-seekers in **India** who were registered with UNHCR, mostly from Afghanistan and Myanmar. Pending the adoption of a national legal framework for refugees, UNHCR registers and conducts RSD for people of concern and helps refugees and asylum-seekers to gain access to

government health and education services.

UNHCR continues to advocate with the Government to ensure that all eligible refugees obtain long-term visas and work permits in India. It is also strengthening its livelihood programme to provide the skills and language training that can help lead to gainful employment for refugees. Partnerships with civil-society groups will continue

to help identify ways in which the growing number of refugees and asylum-seekers living outside Delhi, especially women and children, can avail themselves of basic services and protection. For those refugees whose protection needs cannot be met in India, UNHCR will facilitate resettlement. Refugees who wish to voluntarily repatriate will be assisted. Legal assistance will be provided to eligible refugees who wish to obtain Indian citizenship.

In **Nepal**, where UNHCR is expected to facilitate the resettlement of some 7,000 people in 2014, refugees still in the camps will continue to receive protection and assistance. UNHCR will also protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas, who are considered by the Government to be irregular migrants. UNHCR will continue its advocacy with the Nepalese authorities to simplify the visa-waiver process to make it easier for refugees who are accepted for resettlement to leave the country.

UNHCR will also pursue advocacy efforts to assure the safe transit of Tibetans arriving in Nepal

into India, and for the issuance of refugee documents for the long-staying Tibetan population. It will work with UN partners and civil society to advocate for the inclusion of citizenship laws that comply with international standards in a new Constitution that may be adopted in 2014.

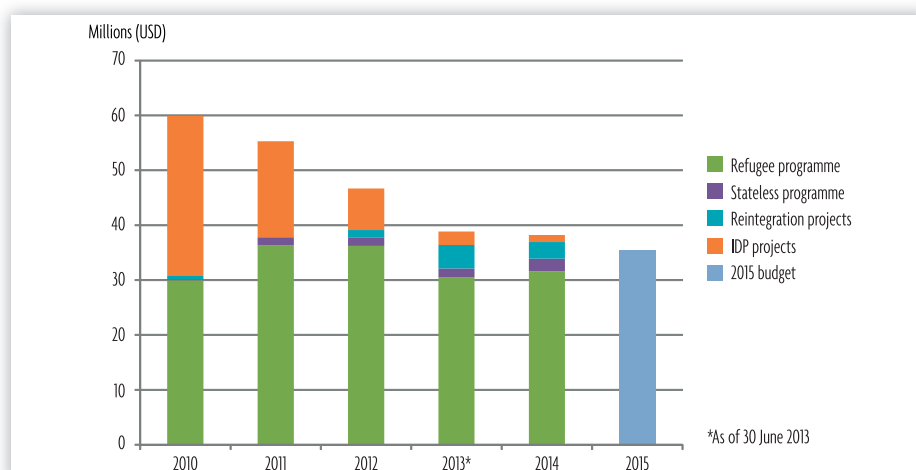
In **Sri Lanka**, the rising numbers of asylum-seeker arrivals call for an increase in UNHCR's RSD capacity and resettlement support in the country. The organization will ensure that effective RSD systems are in place and strengthen its capacity to provide basic assistance to urban refugees, especially women and children at risk.

UNHCR will continue to facilitate the voluntary return of Sri Lankan refugees and assist them during the reintegration process, including through post-return monitoring. In partnership with development actors and other UN agencies, UNHCR will pursue its efforts to advocate for durable solutions for the remaining IDPs, as well as for those who have returned to their place of origin, relocated to a new area or are integrating locally. Depending on the developments on the ground, it is envisaged that direct UNHCR assistance for IDP returnees will be reassessed by 2015.

Financial information

UNHCR's overall financial requirements for the South Asia subregion have decreased over the past few years, with the 2014 budget for South Asia set at USD 38.2 million. This trend is mainly due to the downscaling of IDP-related activities in Sri Lanka and a reduction in the size of the refugee population in the camps in Nepal. However, both the Sri Lanka and Nepal operations continue to require adequate resources to ensure protection and maintain standards of basic assistance for people of concern, especially in view of the considerable increase in the number of asylum applications in both countries. Meanwhile, the financial requirements for India have been growing steadily, in accordance with the rise in the number of refugees living in urban areas in the country.

Budgets for South Asia | 2010–2015



Budgets for South Asia | USD

Operation	2013 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2013)	2014				TOTAL	2015
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects		
India	13,007,112	13,606,075	30,000	0	0	13,636,075	14,594,199
Nepal	15,579,191	10,176,263	2,231,142	3,030,049	0	15,437,453	13,288,681
Sri Lanka	10,253,602	7,785,524	75,742	0	1,264,439	9,125,705	7,541,497
Total	38,839,905	31,567,862	2,336,884	3,030,049	1,264,439	38,199,234	35,424,378