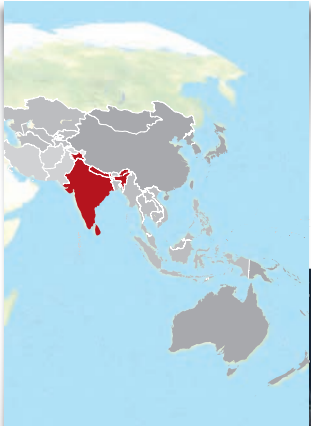


# SOUTH ASIA



UNHCR

2013 GLOBAL REPORT

India  
.....  
Nepal  
.....  
Sri Lanka



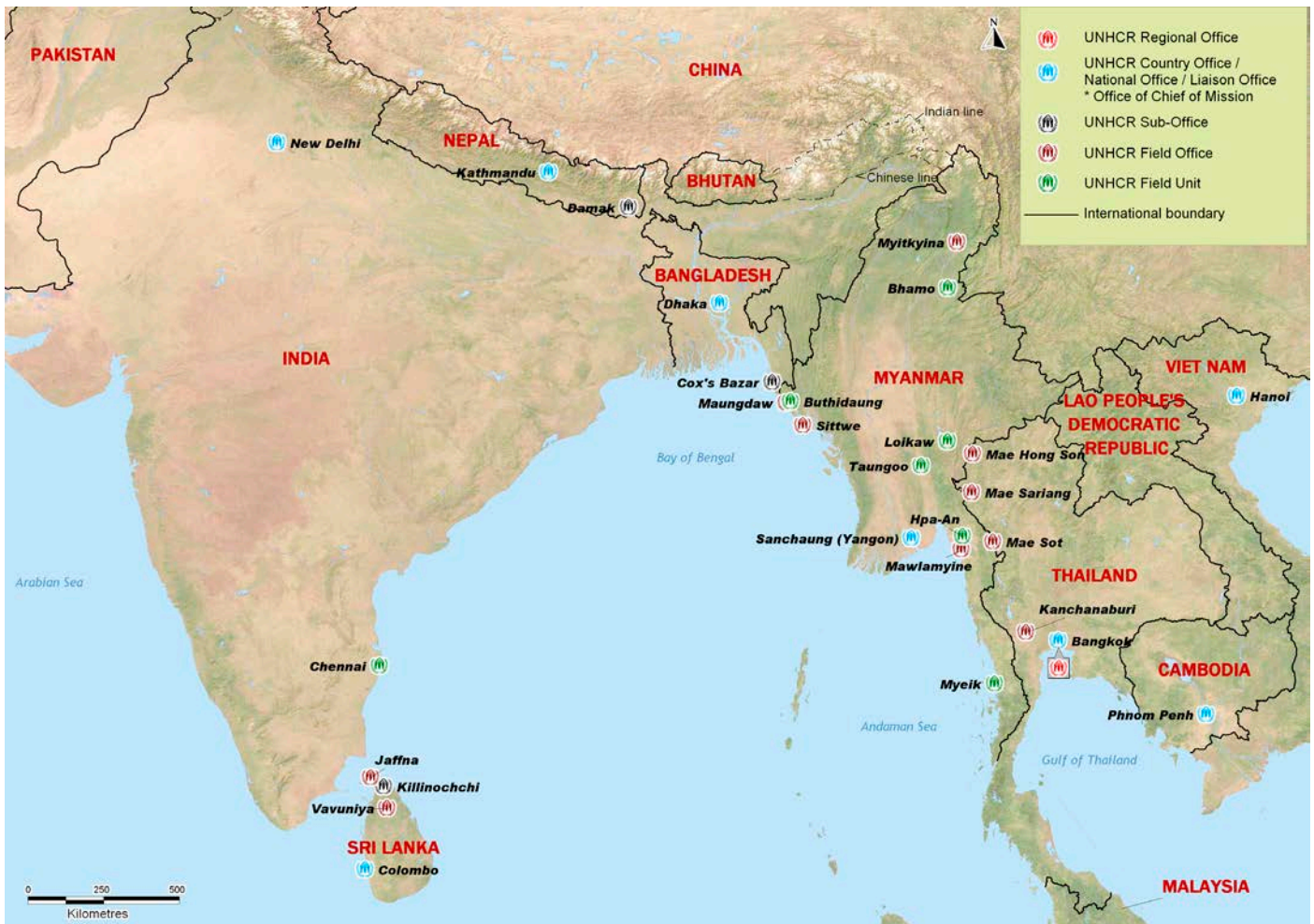
Refugee girls at the opening ceremony of the 16 Days of Activism against SGBV, Beldangi camp, eastern Nepal

UNHCR / S. BHATTARAL





# | Overview |

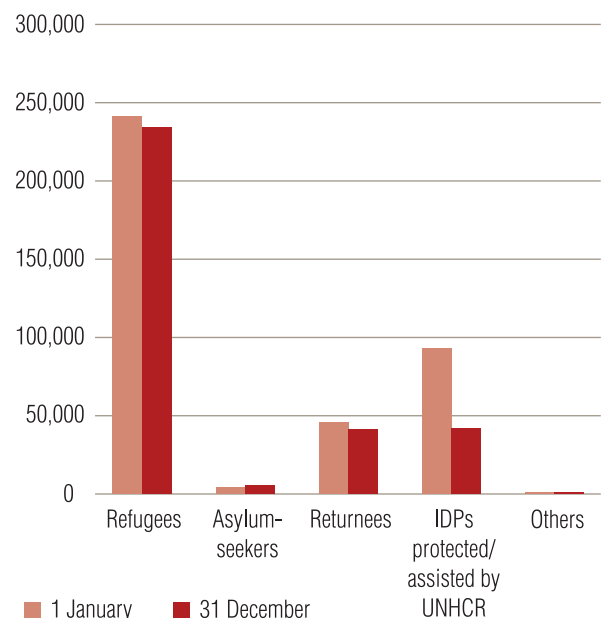


## Highlights

- The Government of India continued to issue long-term visas and work permits to eligible refugees – increasing their ability to pursue sustainable livelihoods. Meanwhile, UNHCR reviewed its livelihoods programme, with a view to promoting refugee self-reliance and reducing assistance dependency.
- India experienced an unexpected increase in asylum-seekers, mainly Rohingya people from Myanmar, and Afghans. In cooperation with local partners, UNHCR enhanced its efforts to address the needs of a growing number of refugees, especially those living outside the capital, New Delhi, who often faced more challenges in accessing basic services, such as health and education.
- In Nepal, the Government and eight resettlement countries continued to offer strong support to the resettlement programme for refugees from Bhutan. In 2013, almost 10,800 refugees benefitted from the programme. Since its start in 2007, more than 86,000 refugees have started new lives in third countries.

- To strengthen the community’s engagement in protecting children at risk in the refugee camps of eastern Nepal, child protection working groups

People of concern to UNHCR in South Asia | 2013



were set up and a mentor programme established for vulnerable children. The regular attendance of a government official at the Best Interest Determination (BID) panel helped resolve complicated cases on child custody and/or care issues.

- In Sri Lanka, almost 1,500 people registered as asylum-seekers with UNHCR – a 640 per cent increase from 2012, when only 200 people registered. This rise resulted in a year-end total of 1,607 asylum-seekers and

145 refugees in the country, compared to 375 and 136 respectively at the end of 2012.

- Also in Sri Lanka, UNHCR supported the return and reintegration of more than 28,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) and 718 Sri Lankan refugees. Returnees benefitted from cash grants, community-based projects as well as monitoring and capacity development support provided to the local authorities.

## | Results in 2013 |

### Working environment

Although India, Nepal and Sri Lanka are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, they continued to offer asylum to refugees. A considerable number of refugees remained in protracted situations, with a growing number living in urban settings. UNHCR continued to work closely with the governments, NGOs and other stakeholders, to provide protection and targeted assistance to people of concern.

India continued to host some 197,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. They included 170,000 people from Tibet and Sri Lanka who were directly assisted by the Government of India, and 27,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries who were registered with UNHCR. They all continued to enjoy access to basic government services, notably in health and education. The Government also allowed UNHCR mandate refugees to apply for long-term visas and work permits.

Nepal has generously hosted a large number of refugees from Bhutan for decades, while providing asylum to refugees from other countries in non-camp settings. Elections for its Constituent Assembly were held successfully in November 2013. While progress in areas requiring a government policy decision was at times delayed, the changing political environment did not negatively impact on protection, assistance or resettlement activities for refugees from Bhutan.

In Sri Lanka, the Government ensured adequate asylum space, which was particularly critical in light of the growing number of people seeking asylum there. UNHCR's cooperation with the Government was strengthened in 2013 through the introduction of monthly stakeholder meetings. Progress continued in re-establishing infrastructure and advancing mine clearance in the north, which enabled further returns of IDPs – though reintegration challenges remained.

### Achievements and impact

In India, UNHCR continued to register urban asylum-seekers and conduct refugee status determination (RSD). However, a sharp increase in asylum applications adversely affected the Office's processing

capacity, despite increased staffing. Following successful UNHCR advocacy, the Government waived overstay penalties and high visa fees, and more refugees were granted long-term visas. Following this, UNHCR reviewed and reoriented its programmes, shifting away from a social-protection to a self-reliance model.

More than 5,000 refugees benefitted from targeted language and skills training and support to pursue livelihoods, such as small business grants and job placements. Meanwhile, some 1,800 people received financial and counselling assistance. The number of reported sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) incidents continued to decrease due to the implementation of the SGBV strategy, which includes sensitization of authorities and prevention and awareness sessions with refugees. Capacity building and streamlined procedures to identify and respond to the needs of children at risk strengthened child protection overall.

Resettlement was used to address the country's unmet protection needs, with 531 refugees departing in 2013. In cooperation with the Government of India and the Government of Sri Lanka, 711 Sri Lankan refugees who opted for voluntary repatriation were assisted to return home. Legal aid was provided to Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees who remained at various stages of the naturalization process, though only 11 obtained Indian citizenship during the year owing to administrative delays.

In Nepal, the group resettlement programme for refugees from Bhutan, which started in 2007, reached a major milestone with more than 100,000 refugees referred and over 86,000 refugees resettled. During the year, almost 10,800 refugees began new lives in resettlement countries; only 30,000 remained in camps by year-end. Also, UNHCR and IOM opened a joint information centre, where refugees could access information on resettlement and communicate with resettled relatives and friends. This enabled them to make informed decisions about resettlement and their future.

Meanwhile, camp management committees held successful elections, with 49 per cent female representation. Community participation in child

protection was also strengthened, including through the implementation of a mentor programme aimed at increasing self-esteem and promoting positive behavioural changes for 80 children aged 10 to 16 years. Innovative activities, such as the establishment of camp-based self-help groups, strengthened efforts to address SGBV in the camps. UNHCR also implemented vocational skills training projects supporting both refugee and host communities.

The organization provided some 170 Tibetans, in transit to India, with protection and assistance during their short stay in Nepal. Meanwhile, basic assistance and protection was provided to a total of 564 urban asylum-seekers and refugees. About 40 refugees already accepted for resettlement were awaiting visa-fine waivers from the Government. UNHCR, working with national partners, supported some 41,500 Nepalese to acquire citizenship certificates, including through the Government's mobile distribution project.

In Sri Lanka, despite a significant increase in the number of asylum applications, registration of all new arrivals (1,489 individuals) was concluded quickly. This included a group of Rohingya from Myanmar, who were rescued at sea by the Sri Lankan Navy in February, and later placed under UNHCR care. The organization continued to conduct RSD and recognized 64 people as refugees; this brought the country's refugee population to 145 at year-end. Recognized refugees received financial assistance, medical reimbursement and/or education grants, and almost 30 were resettled to third countries. Also, the organization supported the voluntary repatriation of 718 refugees, mainly from India, by meeting them at the port of entry and providing relocation and transportation grants.

IDP and refugee returnees were supported through monitoring, the distribution of over 900 shelter grants and 6,100 non-food items packages. Furthermore, 71 community-based reintegration projects were implemented, benefitting more than 28,000 people. These projects included the rehabilitation of school facilities, supporting fishing societies, and livelihoods initiatives targeting vulnerable women. UNHCR also provided technical and material support to the local registrar offices, which assisted more than 21,000 returnees to obtain civil status documentation. To promote SGBV prevention and response, 22 training sessions were organized for government officials and police officers, while 26 awareness-raising activities were implemented for members of community-based organizations. Likewise, land, housing and property issues were addressed through legal aid, awareness-raising campaigns and training targeting 2,200 returnees and 1,452 land officers.

## Constraints

In India, UNHCR's presence is limited to New Delhi, making access to refugees and asylum-seekers elsewhere difficult. Many refugees outside the capital,

including those in detention, could not benefit from targeted assistance, despite their specific protection and assistance needs. While refugees enjoyed India's traditional hospitality, the absence of a national refugee protection system rendered their status uncertain. Given the increased number of asylum applications in 2013, the Office faced challenges in ensuring timely registration and RSD processing, despite increased staffing.

In Nepal, resettlement processing for refugees from Bhutan was resource-intensive as a result of greater numbers of complex cases and high levels of no-shows for resettlement interviews. Although durable solutions were identified for some urban refugees, they were not achieved in a timely manner due to pending decisions on visa-fine waivers by the Government.

In Sri Lanka, while UNHCR continued advocating for sustainable return and reintegration, gaps remained in addressing development needs of returnee communities. Many returnees faced challenges in accessing shelter, and livelihoods, which affected both the sustainability of, and individuals' decision to, return.

## Operations

In **India**, UNHCR continued to register and conduct RSD for urban refugees, mainly from Myanmar and Afghanistan, and provide them with social and legal assistance at New Delhi outreach centres. The Office facilitated refugees' access to national health and education services, and developed synergies with local civil society networks, to support people of concern.

At the same time, the organization – together with its partners – explored possibilities for supporting an increasing number of people of concern living outside New Delhi, where challenges in accessing basic services were greater, and protection risks potentially higher. An SGBV prevention and multi-sectoral response strategy was implemented, focusing on increasing women's education and employment opportunities. Child protection was promoted through data collection, and the capacity of child protection mechanisms, such as BID processes, bolstered. UNHCR also continued to facilitate the voluntary return of Sri Lankan refugees from India through information dissemination and the provision of documentation and transport assistance.

In **Sri Lanka**, the organization continued to promote durable solutions for IDPs and returnees while providing protection and assistance to urban refugees. In addition to conducting registration and RSD for asylum-seekers, UNHCR assisted urban refugees with a subsistence allowance and reimbursed medical expenses and education grants. It also promoted durable solutions for IDPs and returnees and met the immediate needs of returnees by facilitating voluntary return and providing shelter, as well as other relief items. Longer-term reintegration needs were addressed through: regular protection monitoring; advocacy; training and technical/material assistance



for local authorities; civil status documentation; and community-based reintegration projects.

In **Nepal**, UNHCR carried out protection and assistance activities for refugees in camps and urban settings. In the east of the country, the organization continued its group resettlement programme and provided protection and basic services in camps for refugees from Bhutan: standards in health, education, water and sanitation services were maintained. In these camps, SGBV prevention and awareness activities continued. The Office also made efforts to mainstream the needs of the elderly and those with disabilities into

assistance programmes. For instance, sign language training was organized to facilitate communication between refugees with hearing impairments and service providers. A profiling of elderly people without care helped clarify their situation. In the capital, Kathmandu, UNHCR continued to conduct registration and RSD for urban asylum-seekers. It also carried out a comprehensive protection assessment for urban refugees through home visits. Changing circumstances for a partner organization saw UNHCR take over the management of assistance activities for urban refugees. It also pursued advocacy efforts to ensure the safe transit of Tibetans from Nepal to India.

## | Financial information |

Of the total USD 38.8 million required for the subregion in 2013, available funding allowed for expenditure of USD 21.6 million. Significant gaps remained in UNHCR's response to the sharp rise in asylum-seekers and the growing number of urban refugees in all three countries. In particular, the funding gap hindered the organization's ability to register and conduct RSD for newly-arrived asylum-seekers quickly,

and to expand the coverage and level of assistance to those with specific needs. Unmet livelihood needs limited the potential to increase the self-reliance of refugees and returnees, both on an individual and community basis. Also, due to funding shortfalls, certain training, education and health activities had to be scaled back, often meeting only 50 to 70 per cent of identified needs.

### Budget and expenditure in South Asia | USD

| Operation                |             | PILLAR 1<br>Refugee<br>programme | PILLAR 2<br>Stateless<br>programme | PILLAR 3<br>Reintegration<br>projects | PILLAR 4<br>IDP<br>projects | Total             |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>India</b>             | Budget      | 12,928,289                       | 78,823                             | 0                                     | 0                           | <b>13,007,112</b> |
|                          | Expenditure | 6,304,520                        | 74,324                             | 0                                     | 0                           | <b>6,378,845</b>  |
| <b>Nepal</b>             | Budget      | 9,917,355                        | 1,403,756                          | 4,258,080                             | 0                           | <b>15,579,191</b> |
|                          | Expenditure | 6,851,320                        | 627,987                            | 1,216,568                             | 0                           | <b>8,695,875</b>  |
| <b>Sri Lanka</b>         | Budget      | 7,689,640                        | 113,392                            | 0                                     | 2,450,570                   | <b>10,253,602</b> |
|                          | Expenditure | 5,491,418                        | 75,556                             | 0                                     | 950,553                     | <b>6,517,527</b>  |
| <b>Total budget</b>      |             | <b>30,535,285</b>                | <b>1,595,971</b>                   | <b>4,258,080</b>                      | <b>2,450,570</b>            | <b>38,839,905</b> |
| <b>Total expenditure</b> |             | <b>18,647,258</b>                | <b>777,867</b>                     | <b>1,216,568</b>                      | <b>950,553</b>              | <b>21,592,247</b> |

## Voluntary contributions to South Asia | USD

| Earmarking / Donor                       | PILLAR 1<br>Refugee<br>programme | PILLAR 3<br>Reintegration<br>projects | All<br>pillars   | Total            |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>SOUTH ASIA OVERALL</b>                |                                  |                                       |                  |                  |
| United States of America                 |                                  |                                       | 1,950,000        | <b>1,950,000</b> |
| <b>SOUTH ASIA OVERALL Total</b>          |                                  |                                       | <b>1,950,000</b> | <b>1,950,000</b> |
| <b>NEPAL</b>                             |                                  |                                       |                  |                  |
| Australia                                | 83,600                           |                                       |                  | <b>83,600</b>    |
| Canada                                   |                                  |                                       | 486,855          | <b>486,855</b>   |
| European Union                           | 1,333,333                        |                                       |                  | <b>1,333,333</b> |
| Private donors in Japan                  | 50,258                           |                                       |                  | <b>50,258</b>    |
| United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS | 15,000                           |                                       |                  | <b>15,000</b>    |
| <b>NEPAL Total</b>                       |                                  | <b>1,482,191</b>                      | <b>486,855</b>   | <b>1,969,046</b> |
| <b>SRI LANKA</b>                         |                                  |                                       |                  |                  |
| Canada                                   |                                  |                                       | 486,855          | <b>486,855</b>   |
| European Union                           |                                  | 646,831                               |                  | <b>646,831</b>   |
| Italy                                    | 67,935                           |                                       |                  | <b>67,935</b>    |
| Private donors in the United Kingdom     |                                  |                                       | 47               | <b>47</b>        |
| United Nations Population Fund           | 50,066                           |                                       |                  | <b>50,066</b>    |
| United States of America                 |                                  |                                       | 1,400,000        | <b>1,400,000</b> |
| <b>SRI LANKA Total</b>                   |                                  | <b>118,001</b>                        | <b>646,831</b>   | <b>1,886,901</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                             |                                  | <b>1,600,192</b>                      | <b>646,831</b>   | <b>4,323,756</b> |
|  |                                  |                                       | <b>4,323,756</b> | <b>6,570,779</b> |

Note: Includes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions to Pillars 3 and 4, supplementary budgets and the "New or additional activities – mandate-related" (NAM)