

# Sri Lanka

## Main Objectives

- Promote and protect the rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees, with a special emphasis on freedom of movement, liberty and security, and property rights.
- Address urgent needs for humanitarian protection and essential supplies engendered by spontaneous returns.
- Continue to stabilise internal displacement and prepare solutions for IDPs.
- Create conditions which allow for safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees.
- Strengthen the national capacity of government and NGOs through training and direct engagement in assistance to IDPs, in order to develop their capacity to respond effectively to changing needs.

## Working Environment

### Recent Developments

The cease-fire agreement signed in February 2002 between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) brought the 20-year conflict closer to an end. The commitment of both parties to the peace process was demonstrated by a number of confidence-building measures undertaken by the Government and the LTTE, especially the opening of key access roads in the North connecting Jaffna and Vavuniya, which promoted freedom of movement. The first round of peace talks between the Government and the LTTE, which took place in



Bangkok in September 2002, ended on a positive note, amid growing public optimism about the chances of a permanent cease-fire and peaceful political settlement to the conflict.

The conflict had produced some 800,000 IDPs, in addition to 84,000 Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu in southern India. Since the signing of the cease-fire agreement in February 2002, there has

been an uninterrupted and increasing flow of IDPs returning spontaneously to their places of origin in former conflict areas. By August 2002, some 183,000 persons had already returned, in addition to 1,000 refugees who had also spontaneously returned from India. Spontaneous return is expected to continue throughout 2003.

### Planning Figures

Population	Jan. 2003	Dec. 2003
Refugees	70	80
Returnees (Refugees and IDPs)	200,000	340,000
Asylum-Seekers	50	60
Others of Concern (IDPs)	600,000	300,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>800,120</b>	<b>640,140</b>

**Total Requirements: USD 14,967,940**



Children filling jerry cans with water in a returnee village. UNHCR / M. Kobayashi

## Constraints

As Sri Lanka stands on the threshold of peace, several challenges still remain. In order to achieve lasting peace, the aspirations of the diverse religious and ethnic groups in Sri Lanka need to be balanced. The internationally monitored MOU between the Government and the LTTE is the prelude to a return to normalcy: it established the parameters for a permanent cease-fire and it marked agreement on a number of issues. There are concerns, however, that in 2003 increasing numbers of IDPs will return to areas which are not yet ready to receive them. If this occurs, the presence of landmines and the lack of basic infrastructure will soon jeopardise the process, and impede the re-establishment of former communities. Until the situation improves, UNHCR will therefore continue to advise against large-scale return.

## Strategy

### Protection and Solutions

The positive changes seen in 2002 have opened the prospect of durable solutions. It is anticipated that in 2003 spontaneous return to pre-conflict

areas of residence will continue at the existing rate. Relocation, on the other hand, will continue to be the preferred durable solution for a segment of the IDPs population who will choose to move to a new area where reintegration assistance will be needed. There is optimism that the peace process will stay on track, but a resumption of hostilities cannot be ruled out, if the peace talks break down. For planning purposes, UNHCR has therefore had to take a hard look at the latter scenario.

It has been a struggle for the authorities to identify solutions for IDPs, especially those who remain in the Government welfare centres. Where possible, UNHCR will continue to complement the Government's efforts in assisting those in welfare centres and seek to promote solutions.

It is expected that the majority of the 84,000 Sri Lankan refugees who remain in southern India, of whom 64,000 are in camps in Tamil Nadu, will eventually opt for voluntary repatriation. In fact, over 1,000 refugees have already returned on their own during 2002, and over 600 have expressed an interest in going back. UNHCR will continue to work closely with the Sri Lankan and Indian Governments to facilitate the repatriation of "priority cases" as soon as it has been ascertained

that their return will be safe. This approach will continue until conditions on the ground become conducive to large-scale repatriation.

In the interim, UNHCR will continue to monitor the return of rejected asylum-seekers from abroad, addressing the issue of the reception of returnees at Colombo airport to prevent any arbitrary detentions.

The establishment in early 2002 of the Ministry for Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees, which serves as UNHCR's counterpart, clearly highlighted the importance the Government places on IDP and refugee issues. This enabled UNHCR to better co-ordinate with the Government on policy related issues as well as capacity-building, and thereby expand the impact of its protection and solutions work beyond the areas where it maintains a field presence.

## Assistance

UNHCR will lead a multi-sectoral relief operation comprising the distribution of non-food items, emergency shelter assistance and minor infrastructure repairs. In addition, water and sanitation facilities, access roads and health and social services need to be improved. UNHCR will also be providing support to income generation activities.

UNHCR's micro-project programme will be scaled down in 2003 but will remain in place as a means of responding to spontaneous returns and to facilitate the reintegration of returnees. The micro-projects methodology, selection criteria and approval mechanism will remain unchanged. Such projects will generally accompany relief programmes, focussing only on priority return areas and areas to which significant numbers have spontaneously returned.

In 2003, activities and projects implemented in the return areas should be seen as steps toward achieving protection objectives. Through its presence and its material support, UNHCR will monitor the general well-being of returnees.

UNHCR also implements projects through its partners with the aim of reducing the vulnerability of returnees and increasing the options open to them. In 2003, UNHCR will support health and social services, targeting vulnerable women and

children in areas where government services are either inadequate or non-existent.

A key feature of UNHCR's operation in 2003 will be policy development and capacity-building for the Government and national NGOs. Policy research will be commissioned on issues related to durable solutions, including human and property rights. Training and workshops will be the primary means of capacity-building.

UNHCR will continue to maintain active partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies working with IDPs and returnees in the north and east including UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, etc.) the World Bank and ICRC. Implementation through non-governmental agencies is an important dimension of UNHCR's strategy, and an important means of maximising available resources among humanitarian actors.

## Desired Impact

The aim of UNHCR's involvement in Sri Lanka is to enhance IDPs access to national protection, while effectively responding to the protection and immediate material needs of continuous, spontaneous returns. Whilst seeking to mitigate the negative consequences of displacement, UNHCR will focus on promoting durable solutions for IDPs and refugees. UNHCR will also continue to enhance its field presence in order to monitor the human rights situation in priority return areas and thereby ensure that the rights of IDPs and refugees are protected.

## Organisation and Implementation

### Management Structure

The new UNHCR field structure comprises 17 international and 63 national staff, in addition to 22 UNVs, including staff seconded to UNHCR from other agencies. In 2003, the JPO programme will be increased to three posts.

Under the supervision of the Branch Office in Colombo, the field structure will include three Field Offices in Colombo, Vavuniya and Jaffna supervising and supporting a satellite presence in

Kilinochchi, Mallavi, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. The restructuring plan that took place in 2002 is the product of UNHCR's programme reorientation to ensure effective protection, assistance and monitoring of a continually changing post cease-fire environment.

## Co-ordination

Managing the transition and bridging the gap between returnees' immediate needs and the long-term reconstruction and development phases is the basis of the High Commissioner's 4Rs concept (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction). This initiative envisages joint planning and co-operation with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and possibly with the Asian Development Bank as a means to ensure smooth transition and hence making return a viable option. Given that both humanitarian and development actors are already present in Sri Lanka and are actively engaged in addressing growing needs, Sri Lanka therefore offers an opportunity to pilot this concept.

In June 2002, the Government of Sri Lanka adopted a National Framework for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (Triple R Framework), to provide a unified strategy for needs assessment, joint planning and implementation of Government assistance to the population, with the emphasis on IDPs. UNHCR plays a key role in supporting the Government's efforts to implement this strategy.

In this context, on 10 July 2002, the Commissioner General for the Triple R Framework launched two initiatives to respond to the immediate needs of spontaneous returns – a Government Quick Impact Project plan for the North and East, and a Government/UN Joint Strategy for Support to Returned IDPs. In the latter, UNHCR is tasked to lead the UN responsibility for protection, emergency shelter and non-food item sectors. UNHCR's programme strategies and implementation will be closely co-ordinated with the Government's new strategies and plans, as well as those of other UN agencies and key actors.

The World Bank has completed the first phase of the North East Irrigated Agriculture Project

(NEIAP). UNHCR remains a strategic partner in the project and will continue to facilitate project assistance and monitor implementation in the seven focus districts of the North East Province in the field of rehabilitation of irrigation schemes, agricultural assistance and other reconstruction activities. UNHCR has agreed to a similar partnership with the Asian Development Bank.

### Offices

#### Colombo

Vavuniya

Jaffna

Kilinochchi

Trincomalee

Batticaloa

Mallavi

Mannar

### Partners

#### Government Agencies

Ministry for Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees

Resettlement and Rehabilitation Authorities of the North

#### NGOs

OXFAM

CARE International

Rural Development Foundation

Sewa Lanka Foundation

*Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya*

CARE International in Sri Lanka

Campaign for Development and Solidarity

Legal Aid Foundation

Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (Trincomalee branch)

ZOA Refugee Care Netherlands

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

#### Others

UNVs

## Budget (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme	Supplementary Programme	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,798,440	621,586	2,420,026
Community Services	330,563	428,603	759,166
Domestic Needs	268,796	1,406,000	1,674,796
Education	268,060	0	268,060
Fisheries	33,315	0	33,315
Food	61,500	0	61,500
Forestry	17,396	0	17,396
Health	112,700	400,000	512,700
Income Generation	259,568	206,964	466,532
Legal Assistance	1,016,497	1,324,507	2,341,004
Operational Support (to Agencies)	1,086,795	1,296,000	2,382,795
Sanitation	95,000	46,274	141,274
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	118,510	1,324,385	1,442,895
Transport / Logistics	280,000	180,806	460,806
Water	120,000	520,000	640,000
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>5,867,140</b>	<b>7,755,125</b>	<b>13,622,265</b>
Programme Support	1,103,586	242,089	1,345,675
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,970,726</b>	<b>7,997,214</b>	<b>14,967,940</b>