

# SOUTH ASIA

Bangladesh  
Bhutan

India  
Maldives

Myanmar  
Nepal

Sri Lanka

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

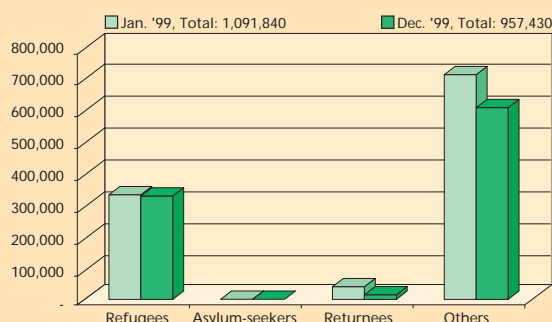
Countries in the South Asia region continued to host more than 700,000 persons of concern to UNHCR, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. Limited progress was made in 1999 towards solutions for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, Muslim refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh, and people displaced as a result of the armed hostilities in Sri Lanka. There was a continuous outflow of Sri Lankan refugees to southern India throughout the year. Nevertheless, there were some positive developments that could pave the way towards durable solutions for those persons of concern to UNHCR. Towards the end of 1999, bilateral talks were held between Nepal and Bhutan on the return of refugees. The Government of Bangladesh agreed to allow self-help activities for refugees in the country. The reintegration of returnees in Myanmar's Northern Rakhine State proceeded at a steady pace.

Discussions to find solutions for the long-standing Bhutanese refugee situation were delayed by parliamentary elections in Nepal. However, ministerial-level talks between Bhutan and Nepal were held in Kathmandu in September 1999, and the two Governments agreed to a joint verification of the refugee population in the camps.

In Sri Lanka, an escalation of hostilities between the Sri Lankan authorities and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam led to renewed population displacements (110,000 people) in northern Sri Lanka. The conflict also caused renewed flight from the Vanni region to India amounting to about 400 people per month. India now hosts more than 66,000 refugees from Sri Lanka.

Administrative delays in the issuance of residential permits hampered self-reliance initiatives for the urban refugees in India and made it difficult for them to engage in productive activities.

### Persons of Concern to UNHCR



## CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Following UNHCR interventions, the repatriation of Muslim refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar resumed in November 1998. However, procedural difficulties (obtaining clearance for those scheduled to return) prevented the repatriation of all but 1,128 applicants leaving about 22,000 refugees in the camps in Bangladesh.

### PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

The Regional Consultations on Refugee and Migratory Movements in South Asia, supported by UNHCR, made considerable progress. At its fifth annual meeting in Kathmandu in November 1998, the South Asia Eminent Persons Group finalised model national legislation on refugees and asylum-seekers. A variety of country-specific activities were undertaken in 1999 to disseminate the model law and promote its adoption by States in South Asia.

In Myanmar, steady progress was made in reintegrating returnees from Bangladesh and improving the situation of the local population in Northern Rakhine State. UNHCR actively facilitated the establishment of a five-year United Nations Integrated Development Plan in Northern Rakhine State which will provide for a greater role for developmental agencies, thus per-

mitting UNHCR to phase down its assistance activities by the end of 2000. Some progress was made in the dialogue with the authorities on public policy and governance issues affecting the Muslim population, but little progress was made on granting them citizenship.

In Sri Lanka, UNHCR continued to promote solutions for displaced persons through return to areas of origin, particularly in the Jaffna Peninsula, and by settlement in new communities. Twelve refugees were resettled to third countries.

## OPERATIONS

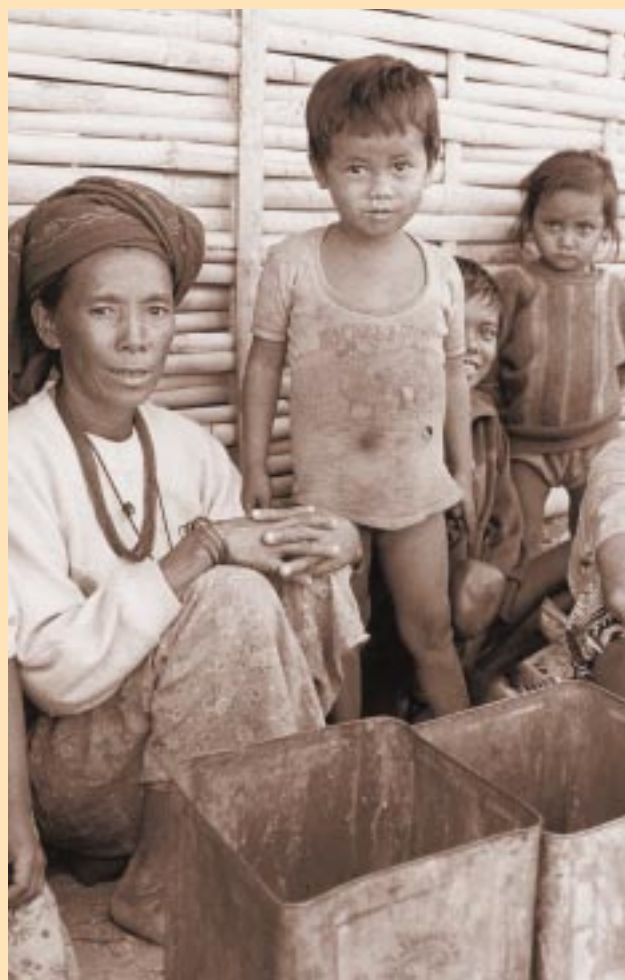
UNHCR continued to care for the 97,000 Bhutanese refugees in **Nepal**, emphasising management of camp activities by the refugees themselves. UNHCR supplied 3,365 metric tons of fresh vegetables and condiments to supplement the basic food ration provided by WFP. Vulnerable refugees including pregnant and nursing mothers and the chronically ill were supplied with dietary supplements. Basic health services were delivered in the camps by 377 refugee health workers and 1,744 community health workers. More than 1,300 additional family shelters were constructed in 1999 to alleviate overcrowding in the camps. Some 36,000 refugee children attended primary schools run with the assistance of 890 refugee teachers. UNHCR provided infrastructural support for the local population hosting the refugees, and continued with environmental assistance to the area. Over 200,000 seedlings were planted in 53 hectares of degraded forest, 43 hectares of new plantations were fenced off, and an additional 83 hectares of forest was maintained. Two riverbank protection projects were completed, covering 1.5 kilometres. For the benefit of the local population, one health post, a maternity ward, an orthopaedic operating theatre, and nine new school blocks were constructed.

The repatriation of 66,000 Sri Lankan refugees in camps in **India** could not take place due to an escalation of hostilities in Sri Lanka. UNHCR prolonged its presence in the southern State of Tamil Nadu in order to liaise with the authorities on problems raised by individual refugees. Efforts to promote self-sufficiency for some 15,000 urban refugees, mainly from Afghanistan, were impeded by difficulties in the issuance and renewal of residence permits by the Indian authorities. UNHCR worked with the Government to resolve this problem. Meanwhile, grants were given to those affected to meet their basic needs. Vocational training was given

to about 300 refugees and educational assistance was provided for 4,000 refugee children. In 1999, 835 refugees were resettled in third countries, or approved for resettlement. UNHCR continued its efforts to increase knowledge of refugee law among leading academic institutions, professional bodies, and civil society throughout the country, and emphasised the need for a national law on refugees in the sub region.

## FUNDING

While the operation in Sri Lanka and the Bangladesh/Myanmar Special Programme were relatively well funded by year's end, late contributions had negative effects on implementation. Limited financial support during the first half of the year forced UNHCR to reconsider its programmes during the second quarter. Certain activities had to be cancelled or scaled down substantially. It was difficult to revitalise the programmes once funds were received in the second half of 1999, and to cope with earmarked contributions for the activities which were affected. Unpredictable and late funding had an adverse affect on the quality of programmes and illustrate the need to review the current funding arrangements.



## Voluntary Contributions - Earmarked (USD)

Donor	Earmarking*	General Programmes		Special Programmes/OTF	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	195,312	195,312
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	817,857	817,857
<b>DENMARK</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	1,217,862	1,217,862
<b>FRANCE</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	163,222	163,222
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	81,436	81,436
<b>GERMANY</b>					
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	400,000	400,000
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	300,000	300,000
	Nepal	0	0	211,821	211,821
<b>JAPAN</b>					
	Bangladesh	130,000	130,000	0	0
	Nepal	1,070,000	1,070,000	0	0
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	1,550,000	1,550,000
	Sri Lanka	10,000	10,000	0	0
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	4,580,000	4,050,000
<b>THE NETHERLANDS</b>					
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	237,332	237,332
<b>SWEDEN</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	710,220	710,220
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>					
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	324,675	324,675
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>					
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	800,000	800,000
<b>UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	1,500,000	1,500,000
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	1,360,000	1,360,000
	Nepal	220,050	220,050	0	0
	South Asia	5,379,950	5,379,950	0	0
<b>EUROPEAN COMMISSION</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	3,585,685	3,617,198
	Bangladesh	13,342	0	0	0
	Nepal	794,512	1,588,984	0	0
	Sri Lanka Op.	0	0	1,059,322	2,118,644
<b>PRIVATE DONORS SWITZERLAND</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	901	901
<b>PRIVATE DONORS JAPAN</b>					
	Rep./Reint. Myanmar Ref.	0	0	280	280
<b>STICHTING VLUCHTELING (NET)</b>					
	Nepal	73,123	73,123	0	0
<b>TOTAL **</b>		<b>7,690,977</b>	<b>8,472,107</b>	<b>19,095,925</b>	<b>19,656,760</b>

\* For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

\*\* Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unearmarked voluntary contributions, lightly earmarked contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

## Budget and Expenditure (USD)

Country	Working Budget*		Expenditure*	
	General Programmes	Special Programmes	General Programmes	Special Programmes
Bangladesh	772,255	2,391,677	760,546	2,477,508
India	2,395,045	310,282	2,305,429	313,017
Myanmar	0	9,617,195	0	8,513,580
Nepal	5,057,259	389,660	4,977,280	371,817
Sri Lanka	55,699	6,526,019	38,285	6,490,759
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,280,258</b>	<b>19,234,833</b>	<b>8,081,540</b>	<b>18,166,680</b>

\* Figures do not include costs at Headquarters.