

Sri Lanka

Working environment

The context

The security situation in Sri Lanka deteriorated steadily in 2006. Sustained ground and air combat on separate fronts led to a rapid decline in the safety and security of many civilians across the north and the east of the country. In the east, continued clashes between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have aggravated earlier displacement. In the north, the sudden escalation in fighting in August uprooted large groups of people and cut vital supply routes. Political efforts to further the peace process have stalled, and it is widely believed that the humanitarian situation will worsen.

By September 2006, the upsurge in violence had resulted in the displacement of more than 207,000 people. In addition to those internally displaced, some 15,000 Sri Lankan refugees have arrived on the shores of southern India. At the beginning of 2006 and prior to these recent events, there were already some 312,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Sri Lanka's 1983-2002 civil war.

The security of civilians, particularly of displaced people, has become of grave concern. The internally displaced are increasingly open to attack as the conflict encroaches on areas previously deemed safe, and the deteriorating security has also put aid workers in a vulnerable position. The violence has disrupted the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of people, hindering their access to food, employment, health facilities and education.

The needs

A comprehensive needs assessment survey of welfare centre residents revealed that in some areas the majority of IDPs preferred relocation or local integration. However, the survey, conducted with the Government, could not cover all districts because of security constraints.

Subsequently, UNHCR and UNDP organized a pilot survey of 200 potential return, relocation and local

integration villages across the north and east of the country to assess housing and infrastructure needs, services and overall conditions. UNHCR has used these profiles to guide its own interventions and seek the assistance of others. One outcome, reached in collaboration with the Government and the World Bank, is a four-year programme to build 6,500 houses in Puttalam in 2007. More welfare centre surveys and profiling of villages will be carried out in 2007.

Having fled with little more than what they were able to carry, IDPs who have moved into public buildings urgently need emergency shelter materials and basic household items. Those staying with host families need assistance to enable them to contribute to basic needs. The magnitude of the displacement has overwhelmed local responses. The strain has been great on host families and on communal buildings such as schools where the displaced take shelter. Indeed, pressure has mounted to reopen schools in order to minimize disruption to education.



While it is unclear how the situation in the north and east will unfold in 2007, an emergency response will continue to be required for a considerable period.

Total requirements: USD 7,331,779

Main objectives

UNHCR's goal is to meet the protection and assistance needs of Sri Lanka's IDPs, while paying particular attention to the needs of women, children and the elderly. To that end it will:

- Respond to new displacement by providing basic protection, shelter materials and non-food relief items and work with partners to ensure adequate assistance items.
- Monitor the security and welfare of IDPs and provide them with legal assistance, assist them to obtain civil documentation, take measures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and help the Government with IDP registration and advocacy.
- Implement confidence-building and stabilization measures to support host communities through quick-impact projects, reducing conflict between communities and prepare the ground for return.
- Seek durable solutions through local integration, return and relocation projects.

Strategy and activities

UNHCR's strategy for Sri Lanka includes two components. On one side is long-term protection, coupled with the search for durable solutions; on the other, effective responses to new displacement emergencies through protection and assistance.

Protection and durable solutions

In the Field, UNHCR and its partners will continue to monitor the general welfare and security situation of all

Key targets for 2007

- Unhindered access to all areas of displacement under the control of the Government or the LTTE.
- All IDPs have access to national protection at the same level as for citizens who are not displaced.
- All IDPs have access to UNHCR and its partners to raise protection issues in confidence.
- All IDPs have access to emergency shelter and basic household items.
- Transportation of relief items and shelter materials within ten days of displacement and/or return.
- 900 houses are constructed for returnees and those relocating or integrating locally.
- Host communities are supported through the implementation of quick-impact projects
- Improved relations between communities and armed forces, brought about through awareness programmes and human rights training for the armed forces and police.
- Increased the national awareness of sexual and gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS through advocacy campaigns and training.
- All asylum-seekers are interviewed and their refugee status determined within one month of registration.
- 120 recognized refugees resettled.

IDPs. Special attention will be given to the needs of the most vulnerable by ensuring gender- and age-sensitive protection and assistance. This will include raising awareness of and responding to sexual and gender-based violence, training and information programmes on HIV/AIDS, community mobilization and the provision of sanitary materials, hygiene kits and culturally appropriate clothing.

UNHCR will support the Government in registering newly displaced people, de-registering returnees or onward movers, and maintaining accurate statistics. In

Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2007		Dec 2007	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Various	130	130	120	120
Asylum-seekers	Pakistan	100	100	80	80
Returnees (refugees)		400	400	–	–
IDPs		465,000	465,000	465,000	465,000
Returnees (IDPs)		100,000	100,000	50,000	50,000
Total		565,630	565,630	515,200	515,200



People fleeing fighting in Jaffna province try to take as many possessions as they can with them. *UNHCR / J. Park*

addition, it will update displacement figures and assessments of village infrastructure as conditions permit.

UNHCR will provide additional financial support to conflict-affected communities, both host and IDP alike, through the implementation of some 50 quick-impact projects with a community-based approach that successfully assisted 28 areas in 2006. The implementation arrangement with an NGO consortium will continue in 2007 to ensure that grassroots projects in IDP and host communities are technically sound and sustainable.

At the Government's request, UNHCR has developed guidelines on confidence-building and stabilization measures for IDPs in the north and east. The guidelines recommend steps to build trust among communities, on the one hand, and between communities and the civil administration, armed forces and law-enforcement agencies on the other. Short-term measures include the strengthening of community policing, quick-impact projects, legal aid centres, IDP advocacy groups, and training in human rights for the authorities and civil-military liaison committees. Longer-term interventions centre on laying the groundwork for voluntary and sustainable return, including compensation and restitution of property, and restoration of livelihoods through links with development actors.

Emergency response

For those displaced by recent events, UNHCR will address needs for protection, emergency shelter and non-food relief items. The organization will be ready to respond to any new displacement in 2007. It will also engage partners to help communities cope with displacement and reduce fear and mistrust among those who have suffered violence and hostility.

To implement its emergency-shelter policy, UNHCR will advocate a ladder of "options" (in order of preference): (i) accommodating people with host families; (ii) placing people in welfare centres with existing capacity and/or in vacant or decommissioned tsunami transitional shelter sites; (iii) giving them shelter in public premises (schools, churches, temples, etc.); and, as a last resort, (iv) in open sites under tents. Emergency shelter materials to enlarge premises will be provided across all options.

The Office will maintain a contingency stock of non-food relief items in order to respond rapidly to IDP needs, and anticipates the distribution of standard emergency kits to some 22,500 families in 2007.

Constraints

The security situation remains fluid. Obstacles that existed prior to the new displacement in 2006 (security concerns barring return; poverty; inadequate investment in the repair of infrastructure; the presence of landmines; and the impact of the December 2004 tsunami) still prevent those displaced by recent events from returning home.

Ethnic violence has become part of the current environment and has already led to the polarization of communities in some areas. More violence, displacement and distrust are likely to fracture communities to a point where reconciliation will require a very substantive effort from all sides.

While hostilities continue, responding to the needs of both the newly and long-term displaced people is hampered by concerns for staff security and restrictions on access (including the disruption of supply routes). These problems threaten basic operations in certain areas. Another factor is the importance for humanitarian agencies to maintain a public perception of neutrality in spite of adverse media campaigns.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence

Number of offices	7
Total staff	87
International	12
National	55
UNVs	18
JPOs	2

Coordination

The UNHCR Office in Sri Lanka will continue to cooperate with the Government and local authorities to provide assistance to IDPs. Coordination with WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, OCHA, ICRC and various NGOs takes place in a formal setting through the IDP Working Group. In the short to medium term, UNHCR will be responsible for protection, emergency shelter, including site management, and non-food relief items. District coordination committees that include Government and NGO counterparts will distribute shelter and relief items and will liaise with the Colombo-based Inter-Agency Shelter Coordination Cell.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government: National Centre for Victims of Crime, Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Ministry of Nation Building and Development.

NGOs: *Arbiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland*, Campaign for Development and Solidarity, Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions, Centre for Policy Alternatives, Danish Refugee Council, Easter Rehabilitation Organization, Foundation for Co-Existence, Human Rights Commission, Jaffna Social Action Centre, Muslim Aid, Non-violent Peace Force Sri Lanka, Norwegian Refugee Council, Peace and Community Action, Rural Development Foundation, The Refugee Rehabilitation Organization, The United Methodist Committee on Relief, Women in Need.

Others: Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (Mannar, Trincomalee and Vavuniya).

Operational partners

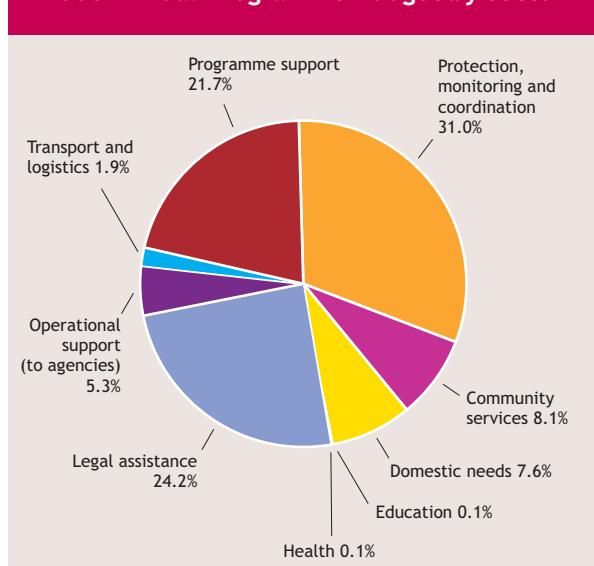
Government: District Government Agents, North-east Provincial Council, Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Ministry of Nation Building and Planning, Ministry of Resettlement, President's Office.

Others: National Human Rights Commission, UNDP, UNOPS, UNV, World Bank.

Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget	
	2006	2007
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,737,229	2,330,145
Community services	712,831	1,169,613
Domestic needs	673,927	598,019
Education	12,475	24,594
Health	9,980	14,757
Legal assistance	2,132,888	970,512
Operational support (to agencies)	463,666	350,116
Transport and logistics	165,235	208,390
Total operations	6,908,230	5,666,145
Programme support	1,919,760	1,665,634
Total	8,827,990	7,331,779

2006 Annual Programme Budget by sector



2007 Annual Programme Budget by sector

