



# HELPING SRI LANKAN REFUGEES COME HOME



April 2013

UNHCR'S Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation

IF YOU ARE A SRI LANKAN REFUGEE WHO WANTS TO RETURN HOME,

## UNHCR CAN HELP YOU!

Every year, UNHCR helps hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers to voluntarily return to their home countries around the world. If you are thinking about returning to Sri Lanka, UNHCR can provide you with information and counseling to help you decide whether and when to return. If you decide to return, UNHCR can help you with international travel, exit and entry requirements, documentation, reintegration grants and post-return monitoring.

### IF YOU ARE **THINKING** ABOUT RETURNING TO SRI LANKA

- **Contact your family members and friends** where you intend returning to in Sri Lanka by telephone, letter or email and ask what the current conditions are in that area.
- **Speak to UNHCR officials** in the country where you are a refugee or an asylum-seeker. UNHCR staff will give you information to help you make an informed decision about whether and when to return. (See addresses of UNHCR offices at the end of this brochure.)

### ONCE YOU DECIDE TO RETURN, BUT **BEFORE YOU DEPART** FROM YOUR COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

- **You should register the birth** of any children who were born outside Sri Lanka with the Sri Lankan Consular Office in your country of asylum.
- Collect **all your** family and individual identity documents and **guard them carefully**. Make sure you **take them with you to Sri Lanka** in the UNHCR bag provided.  
These documents include:  
*Passports, Birth Certificates, Birth Registrations, Sri Lankan National Identity Cards, Land documents, educational Diplomas and Certificates from primary & secondary schools, vocational and university courses and medical documents.*
- UNHCR staff in the country of asylum will help you to **fill out a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF)**. You must **keep this form safely** in the UNHCR bag provided until you arrive in Sri Lanka. Only give this form to a UNHCR staff member when you arrive.
- **Fill in the Bank of Ceylon account application form** and keep it safely in the UNHCR bag.
- UNHCR staff will also give you any other information that you may need to return safely.

### If UNHCR is facilitating your voluntary return to Sri Lanka:

- UNHCR Sri Lanka staff will meet and greet you at the airport in Colombo to make sure you have arrived safely.
- UNHCR staff will assist you to complete immigration, security and customs formalities at the airport.
- UNHCR will open a bank account for you and transfer the UNHCR reintegration grant into it.
  - LKR 12,000 per adult
  - LKR 9,000 per child (under 18 years).
- UNHCR will provide you with a cash transport grant of LKR 4,000 to help you get back to your home in a safe and dignified manner.
- When you reach your town or village contact the closest UNHCR office to receive a kit of basic household items and register for protection monitoring.

## WHEN YOU RETURN TO SRI LANKA

### AT THE AIRPORT:

- ✓ Look for a UNHCR staff member wearing a blue UNHCR vest or shirt waiting before the immigration counters.
- ✓ UNHCR staff will accompany you through the arrival formalities before taking you to the UNHCR office in the airport.

### AT THE UNHCR OFFICE IN THE AIRPORT:

- ✓ A bank account with the Bank of Ceylon will be opened in your name and the reintegration grant will be deposited in your new account.
- ✓ You will receive your transportation grant in cash to help you get from airport to your home.
- ✓ UNHCR staff will provide you with counseling and information regarding your return.
- ✓ The Voluntary Repatriation Form will be checked by UNHCR staff.
- ✓ Keep the signed Voluntary Repatriation Form safely with you at all times.

### IN THE DISTRICT OF RETURN:

- ✓ **Register with the Grama Niladhari office** of the Sri Lankan Government in your village. Take with you a copy of the VRF and your emergency travel document.
- ✓ **Meet UNHCR Staff in your District of return**
  - ✓ Take your Voluntary Repatriation Form with you.
  - ✓ Provide your contact details to UNHCR.
  - ✓ Inform UNHCR of any special needs or worries you or your family members may have.
  - ✓ Collect a kit of basic household items.
  - ✓ Attend the Mine Risk Education session.
  - ✓ Contact your DS Officer to ensure you are included in the WFP food distribution list.
  - ✓ Talk to your local public health office about health screening.
  - ✓ Inform UNHCR staff and the local authorities if you change your address.

### Location to meet UNHCR

District	Address and Contact number	Office Hours
<b>Jaffna</b>	UNHCR, 223, Temple Road, Nallur, Jaffna <i>Telephone: +94 (0)21 222 2005</i>	Every Thursdays 10.00 am to 3.00 pm
<b>Kilinochchi</b>	152, Vanniyasingham Lane, A9 Road, Anathapuram, Kilinochchi <i>Telephone: +94 (0)21 228 5402</i>	Every Mondays 9.00 am to 4.00 pm
<b>Mullaitivu</b>	Mullaitivu Kachcheri, Mullaitivu <i>Telephone: +94(0) 21 228 5402</i>	Every second and fourth Wednesday of the month 10.00 am to 12.00 pm
<b>Vavuniya</b>	District Social Services Office, 6th Lane, Vairavarkovil Road, Vairavapuliyankulam, Vavuniya <i>Telephone: +94 (0)24 222 6328</i>	Second and Fourth Tuesday of every month 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
<b>Mannar</b> <i>(Only until June 2013)</i>	District Social Service Officer, Department of Social Service, Mannar Kachcheri, Mannar. <i>Telephone: +94 (0) 24 222 6328</i>	Every Third Thursday of the month 9.00 am to 12.00 pm
<b>Trincomalee</b>	Department of Social Services (Eastern Province), Inner Harbour Road, Trincomalee <i>Telephone: +94 (0)26 222 2875</i>	Last Wednesday of every two months (starting January) from 9.00 am to 12:00 pm

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON RETURNING TO SRI LANKA

### LIVELIHOODS

- Earning a living or an income will be a priority for you. There are a number of opportunities in your area of return to restart your former livelihood activity or start a new income generating activity. There are some agencies in the North and East who can help you restart your livelihood or start up a small business.
- Ask your DS Officer or UNHCR staff which agencies are providing livelihood assistance in your area. You may approach them to request assistance.
- In the past, many refugee returnees have used the UNHCR reintegration grant to help start up a small business or buy farming or fishing equipment. You can also do this.
- The A9-road is open and there are no restrictions on transporting goods to and from the north. Prices of goods in the north and east, including essential food, are almost the same as in Colombo.
- Mine clearance is focussed mainly on residential areas, which means some farming land may still be mined. It is important to check with your DS or GN Officer, relatives, friends or neighbours in your village if your farming land is clear of mines.
- Previous restrictions on fishing have eased but have not been entirely lifted. In all districts, you must obtain passes to go out fishing. Check with your GN/DS on how to apply for a pass in your area.

#### Areas where fishing is restricted

District	Passes Required	Areas Restricted
Mannar	Yes	N/A
Trincomalee	Yes	Sampoor, Soodaikudah, Koonitheevu & Illakanthai
Jaffna	Yes	High Security Zones-Palali, KKS, Urani, Myliddy, Valali, Akkarai
Killinochchi/ Mullaitivu	Yes	Multi-day fishing allowed in deep sea, except the location Pepparapity Mullaitivu. Lagoon and inland fishing allowed with limited area access /time by the military

### EDUCATION

- Many schools that were damaged in the war have restarted across the north and east, but there is lack of resources like teachers, books and equipment.
- Many schools do not have an English-based curriculum.
- Parents **should bring all documents and certificates from schools** attended by their children outside Sri Lanka to get the Equivalent Education Certificate. This certificate will allow your children to attend any school in Sri Lanka.
- Once you return, you must show the certificates from schools attended in the country of asylum to the Ministry of Education (Isurupaya) in Colombo. Please contact your local DS regarding this and they will assist you in contacting relevant authorities.
- Ask UNHCR staff to refer you to the relevant authority or agency who will be able to assist you to convert your education certificates.

Table showing the number of schools in each district

District of return	Trincomalee	Mannar	Jaffna	Vavuniya	Kilinochchi	Mullaitivu
<b>Total Number of Schools</b>	58	33	413	193	94	95



- **Foreign university degree holders:** If you have graduated from a university listed in the Commonwealth University Yearbook (check [www.ugc.ac.lk](http://www.ugc.ac.lk)), your degree will be recognised in Sri Lanka by the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- Once you return to Sri Lanka, please visit the UGC (No. 30, Ward Place, Colombo 7) or contact Mr. S.A.S Perera, Senior Staff Assistant, UGC (+94 11 2695301) for more information.
- Foreign diplomas such as for vocational programmes or from institutes are not accepted by the University Grants Commission.

## HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY

- In January 2013, the Sri Lankan Government issued a circular called ‘Accelerated Programme on Solving Post Conflict State Lands Issues in the Northern and Eastern Provinces’. This circular sets out the guidelines to solving issues related to State Land in the Northern Province.
- If you have any problems related to State Land (no land document, lost land document or land is occupied by others) please visit your DS or GN to obtain more information and submit your claim. Forms are available free of charge. *(See attached document)*

## CIVIL DOCUMENTATION

- If you do not have, or have lost any civil documentation such as birth, marriage or death certificates, National Identity Cards contact your local DS Officer/ Local NGO OfERR who will be able to give you information and assist you to receive replacement documentation.
- UNHCR can also refer you to the relevant authority or agency to obtain assistance to get replacements.

## CITIZENSHIP DOCUMENTATION

- If you require citizenship documentation for you or your family members contact the local DS (Registrar’s Office) office. You could also contact the local OfERR office.

## LEGAL AID COMMISSION

- If you require legal advice, for example, relating to housing, land and property issues or other civil disputes please contact the Legal Aid Commission Office in your district.
- UNHCR staff are able to provide you with the contact information

## HEALTH

- In the North, health services have improved but are still limited, especially in rural areas.
- There are General Hospitals in the Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar and Trincomalee, Killinochchi and Mullaitivu town areas.
- Other districts of the Northern Province mostly have divisional level hospitals where you can also get treatment.
- The Vavuniya and Jaffna General Hospitals are the main hospitals for specialized treatment of patients coming from Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi Districts.

***UNHCR has more information on these and other topics for each district, please ask UNHCR staff during your voluntary repatriation counseling sessions.***

## GENERAL CONDITIONS OF NORTH & EAST



Chavakachcheri, Jaffna



Trincomalee Town



A9 Road



Trincomalee Bridge, China Bay



Restarting Livelihoods



Religious Festival, Jaffna



Road development



Reconstructed causeway, Mannar

District breakdown of Sri Lankan Refugee returns since 2012

District of Return	From 2010 to April 2013 (Individuals)
Jaffna	469
Killinochchi	139
Mannar	1404
Trincomalee	2271
Vavuniya	830
Other	205
<b>Total</b>	<b>5318</b>

District breakdown of IDP returns in Sri Lanka since 2009

District of Return	From April 2009 to December 2012 (Families)
Ampara	608
Batticaloa	1,068
Jaffna	25,514
Killinochchi	39,677
Mannar	23,618
Mullaitivu	35,367
Trincomalee	3,389
Vavuniya	12,549
Other	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>145,810</b>

## UNHCR OFFICES IN INDIA

### Chief of Mission Office - New Delhi

B-2/16, Vasant Vihar  
110057, New Delhi  
Tel: + 91 11 2469 4256, + 91 11 4353 0444  
Fax: + 91 11 4353 0460, + 91 11 4353 0461

### Chennai Field Office

No. 11, 17th Cross Street,  
Besant Nagar  
600090, Chennai  
Tel: + 91 44 2446 1734, + 91 44 2446 1735

## UNHCR OFFICES IN SRI LANKA

### Colombo Representation Office

97, Rosmead Place,  
Colombo 7  
Tel: 11-2683968  
Fax: 11-2683971  
E-Mail: LKACO@unhcr.org

### Jaffna Sub Office

223, Temple Road, Nallur, Jaffna  
Tel: 021-2222005  
Fax: 021-2222005  
E-Mail: LKAJA@unhcr.org

### Vavuniya Field Office

210/25, Temple Road,  
Kurumankadu, Vavuniya  
Tel: 024-2222550  
Fax: 024-2222024  
E-Mail: LKAVA@unhcr.org

### Kilinochchi Field Office

152 Vanniyasigam Lane,  
A9 Road,  
Annthapuram ,  
Kilinochchi  
Tel: 021-2285402/2285403  
/2285510/2285511  
E-Mail: LKAKI@unhcr.org

### Mannar Field Office (Only till 30 June 2013)

3rd Lane, Kulanthaijesu Puram,  
Thalvupadu Road,  
Mannar  
Tel: 023-2222380  
Fax: 023-2223134  
E-Mail: LKAMA@unhcr.org

For more information about us: [www.unhcr.lk](http://www.unhcr.lk) (UNHCR Sri Lanka)  
[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) (UNHCR Worldwide)

**FOR UNHCR OFFICES IN OTHER COUNTRIES:**

*-Check your telephone directory or by web search*

Join the UNHCR Sri Lanka community online:



Youtube



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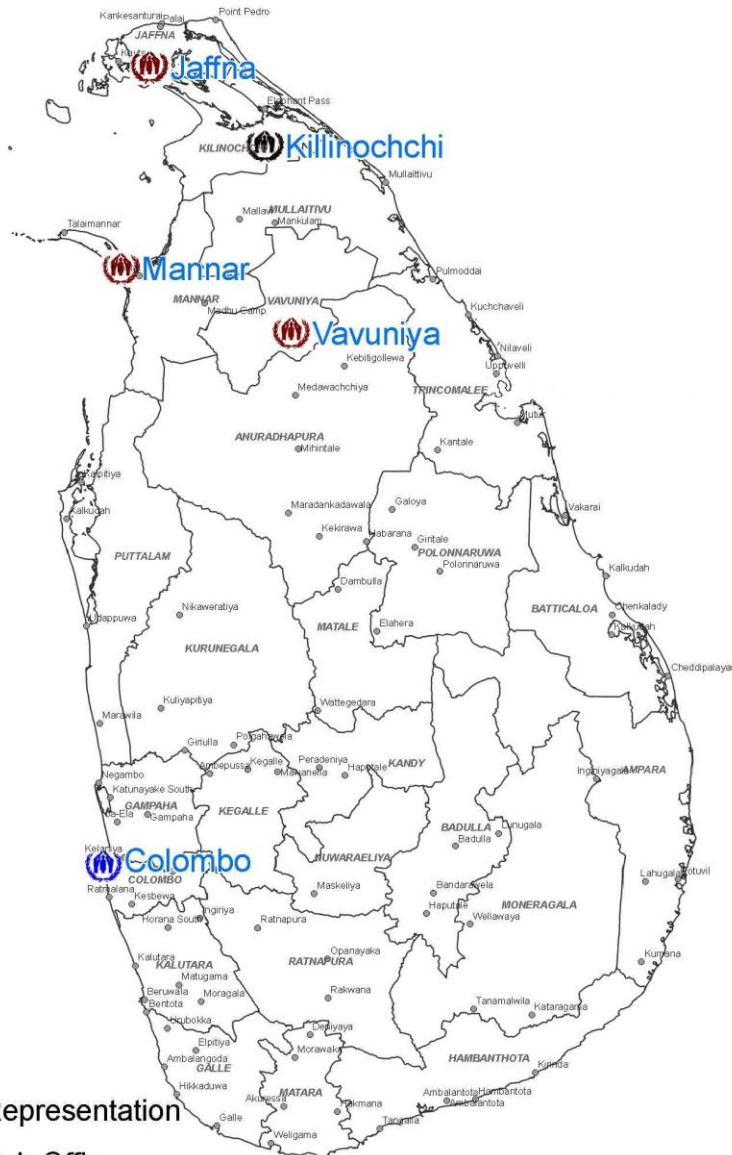


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**UNHCR Offices in Sri Lanka**



**LEGEND**

-  UNHCR Representation
-  UNHCR Sub Office
-  UNHCR Field Office



## A Look at Some Success Stories...



"We were very happy when we returned to our place of origin. In India we felt we were leading an isolated life without our relatives. Now we have our relatives and siblings close by" says refugee returnee, Rutley Fernando from Pesalai Mannar. Restarting life back in Sri Lanka was not easy for the Fernando family. Though back at home, they had to start life from scratch.

Three months after returning to Sri Lanka, Rutley was able to repair his/her damaged house with some money he/she had saved and the reintegration grant which he/she got from UNHCR. "My children were admitted to local school in 20 days", says Rutley, "and my husband was able to restart his traditional livelihood which is fishing". The Fernando family have applied to the Fisheries Society for permanent housing and hope that their application will be successful.

Samuel Sethukavalsingan, 33 is a daily labourer, living in Shanthapuram Kilinochchi. Samuel is happy to be a "refugee returnee from India" and has lots of hope for a bright future in his country of origin, Sri Lanka. He fled Sri Lanka in 1990 with his parents when he was just 10 years old and returned to his home in May 2012. UNHCR facilitated his return.

According to Samuel, life was very tough when he first arrived. He had lots of hopes returning to Sri Lanka and to lead a successful life. Since he was a trained skilled worker in India, who earned relatively well as a painter, he dreamt of a similar livelihood in Sri Lanka. However, such livelihood opportunities were very limited in Kilinochchi when he arrived and he was disappointed. Nevertheless Samuel secured himself regular daily labour jobs in the town area. Samuel is happy that he has been offered land by the Government and was also selected to benefit from a permanent house. Samuel added that many refugees in India are fearful of the security situation in Sri Lanka because of negative reports on the media and rumours, though Samuel feels it is a misconception.



Indirakumar and his family returned to Sri Lanka through the UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Programme in 2012. The family used the reintegration grant provided by UNHCR for the construction of a temporary shelter on the land they used to live on before they left Sri Lanka. Indirakumar's family also received six-month WFP dry rations after their return to the village. Indirakumar worked as a painter and a tailor while he was in India. After he returned to Vavuniya he found work as a tailor in a shop and is able to support his families' daily needs. The Indrakumars' have received further assistance from an NGO called Danish Refugee Council "The agency gave me a cow so I could to raise my level of income and to have improved food security", he said. Indrakumar and his family firmly believe they made the right decision to return to their own land and to restart life surrounded by friends and relatives in Sri Lanka and are grateful to be back home.

"We returned to our own place in Jaffna after twenty two years of refugee camp life in India ... We came with lot of hope to enjoy our life here....but to rebuild life takes much time and effort... .. Still we have the confidence and the will power to make it happen. With the assistance from UNHCR we were able to build a makeshift shelter"