



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

India

SUPPORTING REFUGEES IN INDIA

What We
Achieved
in 2021

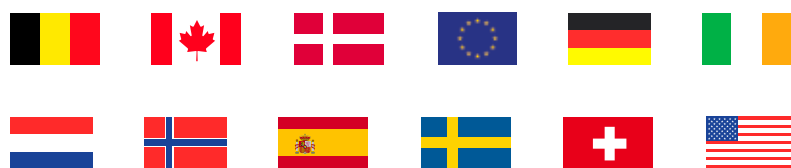


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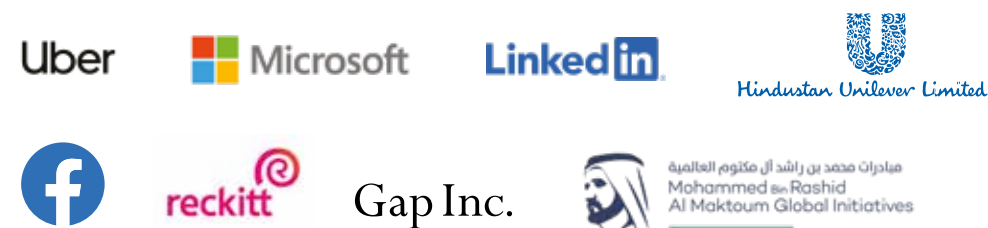
Supporting the humanitarian response in India UNHCR is grateful for contributions by:



UNHCR coordinates the protection and assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers in collaboration with the Government of India, United Nations and formal partnership agreements with 9 national NGOs:



UNHCR India would like to express gratitude to private sector partners who have contributed to the assistance of refugees and asylum-seekers in India:



Investing in the resilience of refugees and host communities



Foreword

by UNHCR Chief of Mission for India and Maldives,
Mr. Oscar Mundia

With 2021 marking the 70th Anniversary of the Refugee Convention, and the COVID-19 pandemic in its second year, coordination in addressing the different challenges of the refugee response in India has become even more important. By building on previous progress and seizing emerging opportunities, UNHCR marked several achievements this year due to strong coordination with partners and the steadfast generosity of the Government of India as a host country. UNHCR is proud to work with 10 NGO partners, government entities, civil society, the private sector, donors, the UN Resident Coordinator, and other UN agencies while ensuring that humanitarian response and development actions are aligned in the continued search for sustainable solutions.

India continues to be a generous host to refugees and asylum seekers since time immemorial and many refugee communities have thrived in the country. In this regard, I wish to express my gratitude to India and its people, who have consistently demonstrated a genuine interest in the refugee crisis in all its facets and implications. Today, India continues to host about 212,874 refugees and asylum-seekers including Sri Lankan refugees. We are encouraged by the inclusion of refugees in essential services, such as the current national COVID-19 vaccination drive and access to health care at par with citizens during this challenging time. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude and acknowledge the support for refugee families and children provided by the Ministry of

External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, NITI Aayog, Law Enforcement Authorities, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

We are grateful to our sister UN agencies, in particular the UN Resident Coordinator, UNESCO, UN Women, WHO, UN Volunteers, UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, and UNFPA for ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of sustainable development goals through their inclusive response. Our implementing partner NGOs and civil society remained at the forefront of our response, ensuring that assistance reached those in need. When the private sector came forward to support marginalized communities, including refugees and their host communities, we saw a whole-of-society approach in action. In this regard, we are grateful to Uber, Microsoft, LinkedIn, Hindustan Unilever, Facebook, Reckitt Benckiser, GAP Inc., and Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives. This is a true display of the Global Compact of Refugees.

Despite the COVID-19 travel restrictions, about 105 refugees were resettled from India to third countries in 2021. More than 303 individuals departed on complementary pathways, including educational opportunities, family reunification, or humanitarian corridor. Resettlement and complementary pathways reduce the pressure on India as a host country. UNHCR continues its efforts to expand available opportunities for the refugee population

that needs resettlement every year. A total of 96 refugees have returned to Sri Lanka in 2021.

With COVID-19 still impacting access to education for at least half of 2021, UNHCR continued to support refugees in implementing different programmes and modalities for remote learning. In coordination with partners, UNHCR procured educational tablets and digital devices to accelerate learning for 8,948 refugee children. Further to primary and secondary education, UNHCR continued to support refugee access to tertiary education through the DAFI scholarship programme, which this year offered scholarships to 43 new students.

In 2021, UNHCR continued to rely on and strengthen its community-based approach to protection, actively engaging refugees in decisions impacting their lives and strengthening their links with the Indian host communities. Community support committees played a key role in this community-based approach and the smooth and peaceful coexistence between refugees and their host communities. UNHCR's Communication with Communities strategy, which includes social media, SMS texts, focus group discussions, the 24/7 helpline and the Help website, was critical in gauging key concerns among refugees and raising awareness on important issues, such as the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, the UN Verified campaign and the 16 Days of Activism.

Following the adapting of services and modalities to a hybrid approach, UNHCR has been able to offer refugees both in-person and remote services throughout 2021. By early December, UNHCR had processed and renewed documentation for more than 5,873 new individual asylum applications, twice the number processed last year, while the backlog created due to the halt in services in 2020 was nearly cleared. In addition to registration services, UNHCR worked to ensure increased access for refugees to other protection services. The UNHCR Helpline, a key tool for two-way

communication with refugees, was redesigned to respond more effectively to refugee and asylum seekers' calls. The distribution of mobile phones to some refugee women leaders ensured that refugee women and children would still be able to seek guidance on protection issues.

UNHCR India spent over USD 14.2 million to cover the humanitarian needs of vulnerable individuals in 2021. This support was provided to vulnerable refugees and host communities in different forms, through monthly basic needs, cash assistance, COVID-19 emergency assistance, food, and other core relief items.

The second wave of COVID-19 had an impact on all of us, leaving us with painful memories of suffering and struggle. However, it will also be remembered for the spirit of solidarity and resilience displayed by refugee and host communities. Refugees and fellow Indians worked together to support each other; from transporting patients to hospitals to performing last rites, feeding vulnerable families, and coordinating life-saving assistance for oxygen cylinders, beds, medication, and vaccine access. Such acts of kindness and solidarity keep us believing in humanity and the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam."

In 2022, recovery and resilience will continue to be our top priority, and it will be delightful to see more refugees than ever before contributing to their host communities.

In light of this, I am pleased to share this document which provides an overview of some of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) accomplishments in India, which are invariably the accomplishments of India and its people and everyone who was part of the refugee response in the country. ■

A Year in Review | 2021 Factsheet

It's time to invest in refugees and the communities hosting them.

Humanitarian Snapshot



44,917 persons of concern were registered with UNHCR India as of 31 December 2021.

31,501 refugees

13,416 asylum-seekers



301 GBV sensitization/trainings and campaigns were conducted including the **16 Days of Activism**.

11,361 refugees and asylum-seekers covered



1,355 individuals received cash-based assistance.

150 extremely vulnerable refugees received cash support for treatment in public hospitals.

5,873 persons individually registered by UNHCR India in 2021



38,449 families and **13,021** individuals were provided food supplies.



50,197 refugees and asylum seekers benefited from Government of India's COVID vaccination drive as of February 2022.



581 individuals were provided medical support.

2,500 individuals were given access to health care including medical tests and treatment.



32,635 families and **9,492** individuals received non-food items.



745 refugees received financial and professional assistance.



201 vulnerable refugees received vocational training.



6,565 children received learning kits.



25,996 emails were received and responded to.



18 NGO-RUN REFUGEE SUPPORT CENTRES (supported by UNHCR)



8 LOCATIONS in Delhi, Hyderabad, Jammu, Mewat, Jaipur, Punjab, Pune, Bangalore



2,481 REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS were provided free legal assistance



UNHCR India staff PARAMJEET KAUR arranges the renewed refugee cards for refugees. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR had resorted to providing digital documents. Starting April 2021, it began to provide physical cards again. ©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsanmung

Documentation and Registration

UNHCR issued certificates to asylum seekers and refugee cards **to recognize refugees** enabling them to **establish their identity** and certify their refugee status.

- As of the end of December 2021, a total of 44,917 individuals were registered with UNHCR India. This includes 31,501 refugees and 13,416 asylum-seekers. In 2021, UNHCR registered 5,873 new individual asylum application, representing an increase of 154% compared to 2020. This increase is because of the situation in Myanmar and Afghanistan.
- In India, to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 disrupting access to procedures, UNHCR adjusted its registration and RSD procedures and set up remote procedures.

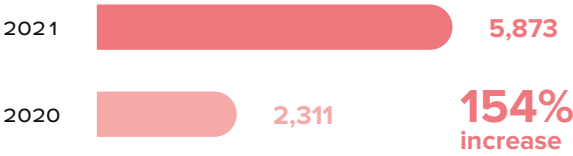


44,917
persons of concern
were registered with UNHCR India
as of 31 December 2021

31,501
refugees

13,416
asylum-seekers

5,873 persons were individually registered by UNHCR India in 2021



Individual New Asylum Applicants

The UNHCR card establishes the identity of the refugees and provides them protection while living in India as well as facilitate their access to services and programmes. It also helps local authorities and partners in providing protection, humanitarian support, and life-saving assistance.



Front

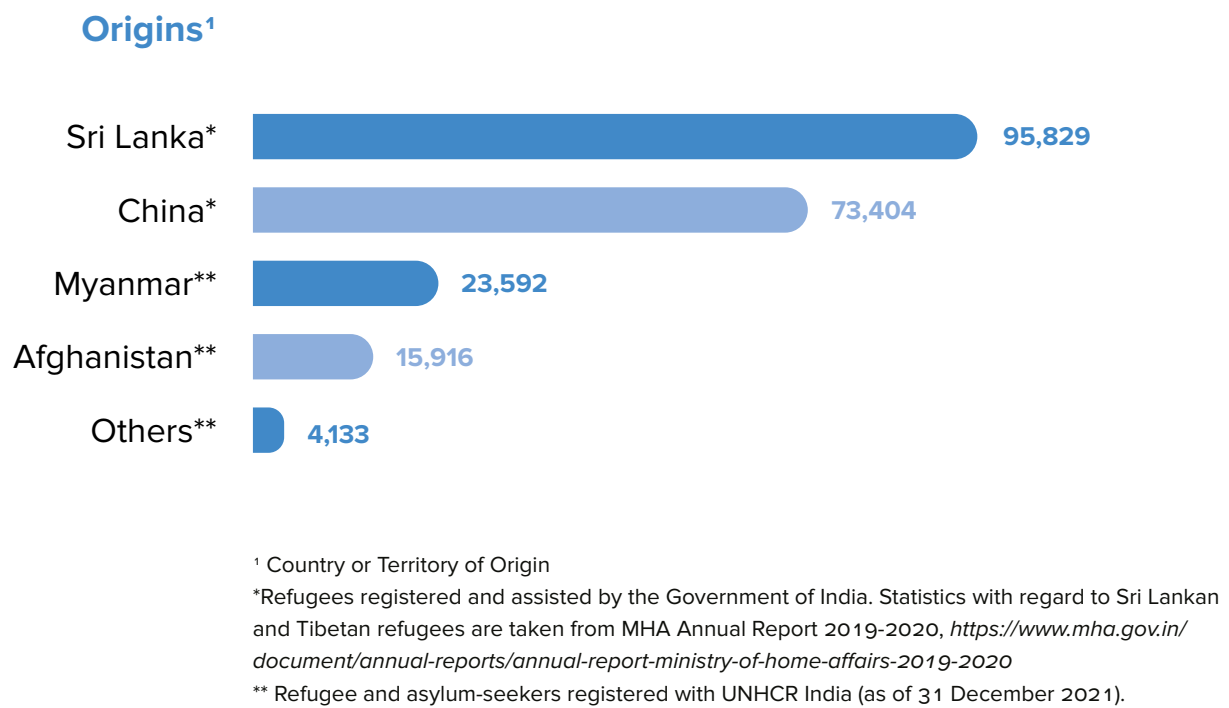


Back



An Afghan refugee receives his renewed UNHCR refugee card in Delhi. ©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung

Persons of Concern as of 31 December 2021



Health

- UNHCR and its NGO partners helped refugees and asylum seekers access health care in eleven locations.
- In collaboration with local authorities and NGOs, UNHCR responded to the COVID-19 emergency by providing refugees with soap, PPE kits, washing facilities, and food assistance.



As a part of our COVID emergency response, in solidarity with the Government and the people of India, UNHCR and its partners are delivering PPE kits to support the country's continued COVID-19 prevention efforts. Only together will we be able to overcome this pandemic, in India and around the world. ©UNHCR/Wahidullah Faizi



Since the outbreak of COVID-19, many refugee volunteers have come to the frontlines to serve their own and host communities, like 25-year-old **MARWA**, a practicing nurse, and her mother, Florence Qadri.



"Often, we would get calls at 1 AM or 2 AM if a patient's oxygen levels or fever deteriorated. We would rush to provide medical guidance and consultation," Florence, Marwa's mother said. The mother and daughter team also provided in-house treatment for both Afghan and Indian patients suffering from coronavirus until Florence and her family tested positive. While they have recovered they want to do more in providing healthcare to the most vulnerable. ©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung

Public Information

UNHCR worked to **foster solidarity between refugees and host communities** by educating the public and mobilising support through **a variety of public education and awareness-raising activities..**

These include contests, exhibitions, and special World Refugee Day events . UNHCR produced films, short videos and photo stories depicting the life of refugees and host communities. Through model United Nations, we supported more than 20 schools on generating understanding on refugees issues.

UNHCR works in close cooperation with Government, UN agencies, NGOs/ CSOs, media, professional associations, and academic institutions in India, as well as with private sector to help refugees and asylum seekers in India.

- UNHCR India has translated and disseminated the public risk communication messages issued by GOI in 9 languages spoken by refugee groups.
- Key campaigns that ran throughout the year were the **UN Verified campaign** and **16 Days of Activism** in partnership with UN agencies (UN Women, UNICEF, WHO). GBV awareness-raising sensitization/trainings, campaigns were conducted on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in operations lines, AGDM lines, including the 16 Days of Activism.



301 **GBV**
awareness-raising
sensitization/trainings,
campaigns were conducted

78 **life skills**
sessions covered **11,361**
refugee and asylum seekers



143,776
people reached through the **World Refugee Day livestream** sessions and posts on **UNHCR India Facebook**

51.2 K
audience engagement
with a **22.6% increase** from the previous week in June, 2021



Piloted in 2021, UNHCR mentored **eight visual storytellers** to challenge dominant cultural narratives around refugees and increase their ownership and authority in how they see the world. with a photo series titled *Belongingness and Home*.



©UNHCR/Sediqa Rezaie

Communication with Communities

UNHCR launched a **24x7 Helpline including a toll free number** to respond more effectively to refugees and asylum seekers' calls, for easier access to UNHCR services.

Remote outreach services counselled asylum seekers and refugees on varied matters such as services available, mental health and rights and responsibilities. This is complemented with a help website and community engagements.

Refugee call centers fill the gap for information offering vital support to struggling refugees during COVID-19 lockdown. UNHCR India call center, with 10 refugee staff, who spoke English, Hindi, Dari, Pashto and Farsi languages, offered vital information to refugees and asylum seekers.

3496 calls were answered per month, on an average (01-09-2021 to 01-02-2022)

25,996 emails from persons of concern were received and responded to in 2021

116 community meetings held with **1327** refugee participants which includes community representatives and varied refugee groups



©UNHCR/Ritik Kumar Sinha



NOOR HAJIDA, 15, a refugee from Myanmar, who has a disability in her left foot, at her home. Hajida, a student of Class 5, takes about 30 minutes to walk to her school, despite the proximity, owing to her disability. With her widowed mother being sick and admitted to a hospital and dependent on her brothers, who live separately, to run the household, she says the monthly Subsistence Allowance from UNHCR is largely spent on buying essentials. ©UNHCR/Harsha Vadlamani

Cash and Persons with Special Needs

UNHCR increasingly uses Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs) as a preferred modality for delivering assistance, **offering greater dignity and choice to forcibly displaced and stateless persons** in line with UNHCR's core protection mandate.

The flexibility that CBIs offer makes them a more dignified form of assistance, giving them the ability to immediately prioritise and choose what they need.



FARIA ZANAT RUMESA, 10, refugee from Myanmar, who lost her left eye to cancer three years ago, at her home. Monthly medical expenses for Rumesa, who aspires to be a doctor, is partly met by the monthly Subsistence Allowance from UNHCR.



Fourteen year old, MOHIBULLAH, a refugee from Myanmar, who is blind in his left eye, outside his home. Mohibullah dropped out of school two years ago after he could not spot a vehicle coming in his direction owing to his poor eyesight and had an accident. The cost of his medicines every month is partly met through the monthly Subsistence Allowance from UNHCR.



SHABBIR AHMED, a 39-year old Rohingya, with his son HAMIDUL KARIM, 6, at their home. Karim, who has seven siblings, cannot communicate well and crawls as he is unable to stand up without support. The family spends the monthly subsistence allowance from UNHCR on buying nutritious meals for him.

©UNHCR/Harsha Vadlamani

150 extremely vulnerable refugees were provided cash support to undertake their treatment in government hospitals. 581 individuals were provided with medical support, around 2,500 individuals were facilitated access to health care including medical tests and treatment.

This included children at risk, persons living with disabilities, the elderly without effective family support, persons living with serious medical conditions, women at risk, multiple purpose cash grant to promote behavioural change (for instance, girl-child education, institutional delivery).



150 extremely vulnerable refugees were provided cash support for medical treatment

581 individuals were provided medical support



2,500 individuals were provided with access to health care including medical tests and treatment

2,471 households comprising 6,177 individuals most severely impacted by COVID were provided with one time cash assistance as their livelihoods were severely impacted and they were unable to meet their basic needs and pay their rent and were at high risk of eviction.

UNHCR and its partners continued to assist refugees and asylum seekers at heightened risk which included 253 refugees living with disabilities and 339 older refugees. Services offered include access to health including assistive devices and medicines, counselling support, food, core relief items and cash based interventions.



6,177 individuals

2,471 households severely impacted by COVID were provided one time cash assistance

SERVICES OFFERED TO

253 refugees living with disabilities

339 older refugees living with disabilities

Vaccination



A nurse at a government designated vaccination center administers COVID-19 vaccines. ©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung

Demonstrating equity and inclusiveness, **India included refugees and asylum-seekers in its national vaccination programme.**

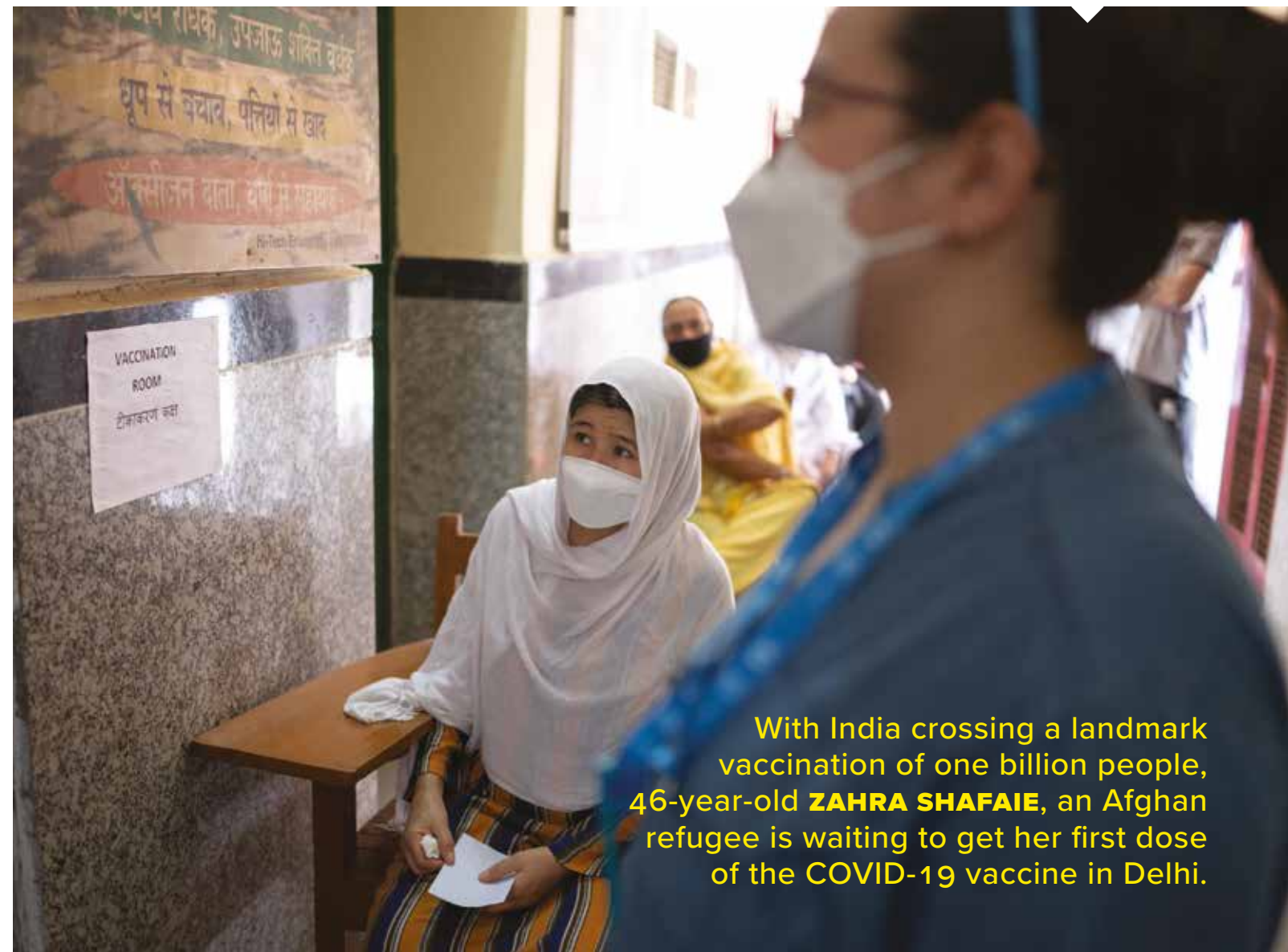
Ending the pandemic and saving lives depends on everyone everywhere receiving vaccines, including the most marginalized groups, refugees and remote populations.



50,197

refugees and asylum seekers

have benefitted from the Government of India's COVID-19 vaccination drive as of 8 February 2022.



With India crossing a landmark vaccination of one billion people, 46-year-old **ZAHRA SHAFIE**, an Afghan refugee is waiting to get her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in Delhi.



Having survived violence in her country, she fled to India with her three children. As their sole provider she now has to face the pandemic.

She is the only person vaccinated in her family and will be receiving her second shot on 20 September 2021.

"I want everyone to do their part in protecting ourselves, our family, neighbours, and friends. I'm very happy that the COVID-19 vaccine will prevent me from severe disease and hospitalization."



Prioritizing vulnerable communities, the **Government of India** has been ensuring a safe and smooth vaccination drive for both refugees and asylum-seekers as well as host communities.

A government school which was transformed into a vaccination center in Delhi.



©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsimiang

“I want my children to get equal opportunities to pursue their dreams.”



ZAHRA SHAFAlE goes through verification by the Delhi police before getting the shot.



“Thanks to the access of vaccines, we may have a way of ending the coronavirus pandemic and rebuild our lives,” said Shafaie.

Zahra was among those to get the COVID-19 vaccine as a part of the vulnerable group in the age of 45 and above.

“During the past year, I received a lot of sad news on the death of my near and dear ones,” she said. “But, when I heard the news about the vaccines, I was assured we would all be safer soon.”

She remains hopeful for the future.



As one of the bread earners in her family, MALEKA works tirelessly at her station. She is an Afghan refugee living in India. During the lockdown, like many other refugee women, Baseera supported her family through her skills.



Through the creation of demand and sales generated by MADE51, artisan work becomes a sustainable source of income for refugees and host communities.

Afghan refugees in India such SHABNAM AMIRI come together to create something new from the waste of the fast fashion industry, like beautiful dolls and other items that they create from scraps of leftover fabric.

Self Reliance

As we supported the health response of the COVID-19 crisis, **our support focused on helping refugees transition to recovery through a combination of livelihood responses.**

We helped 745 refugees with different Livelihood interventions such as Micro Grants, Job Placements, Trainings (both Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Development Program) and Market Linkages.

In 2021 MADE 51—UNHCR’s global initiative for promoting artisan refugees, deepened the support to the operation. Through the four Local Social Enterprises (LSEs) of MADE 51 (*Silaiwali, Archisha, Conserve India and LAL 10*), 70 refugees (60 Afghan and 10 Rohingya women) were associated with the global initiative.



745 refugees

received financial and professional assistance

270 refugees were supported with opportunities in **Delhi, NCR, Nuh, UP and Telengana**

201 refugees were supported with **Skill development trainings.**

585 individuals were provided **Entrepreneurship Development Training.**

394 refugees were supported with **Micro Grants** enabling them to start small businesses.

650 refugees were provided guidance on **Labour Market opportunities** across all locations.

40.52%

of livelihood program participants were **women**



221

women refugee self-reliance opportunities supported by UNHCR through COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)

UNHCR partnered with **UN Women, WHO** and **UNICEF** under the MPTF.

A Story of Solidarity: From Supporting Local Artisans in Bamiyan, Afghanistan to 'Modern & Classic Handicrafts' in Delhi

by **Sidiqa Rezaie and Mursal Mohammadi**

GULJAN AMIRI SHAYAN is an Afghan who sought asylum in India in 2015. She used to work as an HR Admin officer at a hospital in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, and was supporting local Bamiyani women in converting their traditional embroidery art into a source of income.



Guljan had worked for about three years at *Silaiwali*, playing a key role in the development of the *Silaiwali* organization.

Now, Guljan and ten other women have made their own enterprise 'Modern & Classic HandiCrafts'. "They helped me build this place. Without their support, I couldn't have done anything. The products, the machines, and even the tables aren't mine," Guljan adds.

Due to security concerns, Guljan had to leave behind everything she worked for all her life and get out of the country. In her new home, Guljan had to start from scratch and build a new life. She had a 6-month-old baby to take care of and was not able to go to work. However, that didn't stop Guljan from thriving.

Guljan, along with a small group of women, started making handicrafts at their homes. After getting the 'refugee' status, they were able to receive assistance from UNHCR to attend training sessions and participate in different exhibitions.

In November 2018, Guljan was one of the first refugee women to join *Silaiwali*, a social enterprise working with refugees. Aside from her job as a manager at *Silaiwali*, Guljan helped many refugees to get work and training. Within six months, they went from 6 women to 36.

Guljan and the others just want to earn and support their families. Fatima Sherzai is a single mother and the only breadwinner at home. She received training and machines from UNHCR, but that was not enough for her to build a sustainable life for her five daughters.

Shaima Faqiri, who works as a tailor, is an asylum seeker. She hopes to get refugee status and help her children to go to school. Sima Haidari is a 33-year-old refugee who was trained by Guljan in tailoring and crochet. She says that the situation in Afghanistan is doubling their worries.

"We want to introduce this enterprise and ask UNHCR and other organisations to support us. If we have more equipment and machines, we can take more orders and become self-reliant."

Partnerships and Funding

UNHCR has worked since 1981 for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in India.

In support of the efforts by the Government of India, UNHCR works with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs, NITI Aayog, United Nations Country Team, and its 9 NGO partners based across 15 states of India.

UNHCR India also partners with private sector organizations and stakeholders to enhance assistance to the forcibly displaced.

- We are grateful to Uber India for providing refugees, asylum-seekers, and UNHCR partner

staff with free rides for 4 months for emergency travel to hospitals, distribution of items and community outreach.

- UNHCR India is proud to have partnered with The Gap Inc. in providing refugees, asylum-seekers and front liners personal protective equipment during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We are thankful to LinkedIn for their support in mentoring refugee youth as part of their Community InDay.



A refugee community health worker uses the free rides provided by Uber to facilitate referrals and hospital visits for the most vulnerable. ©UNHCR/Wahidullah Faizi

"It was an honour for us to join forces with our valued partner, the UNHCR, for addressing the logistical challenges in providing emergency lifesaving assistance to refugees and asylum seekers during trying times. I am glad that Uber could play a small role in the delivery of emergency support to hundreds and thousands of vulnerable people."

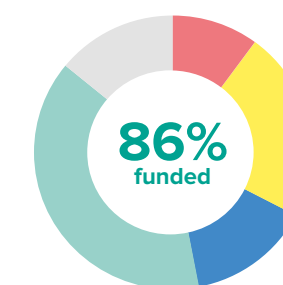
—PRABHJEET SINGH, President, Uber India and South Asia



Funding

as of 29 December 2021

UNHCR India's financial requirement for 2021 was \$14.2 million which included requirements for the operation's regular programme and the COVID-19 emergency



- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked
- Unearmarked
- Funding gap (indicative)

Source <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/1420>

Capacity Building

UNHCR invested in **developing, strengthening, and utilising national capacities**, as well as **collaborating with local responders**, to ensure that **solutions are localised and that the process is owned**.

- UNHCR in partnership with *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan* organised training and awareness-raising on international protection and humanitarian assistance for over 100 CSO/NGOs.
- UNHCR in partnership with UNIC organised training for journalists on refugee protection with the participation of 30 journalists.
- UNHCR partnered with UNESCO and SMART where about 47 community radio personnel from 18 states of India participated over a 3-day workshop. 6 community radios broadcasted programmes to promote peaceful co-existence and reached of about 1.8 million people.

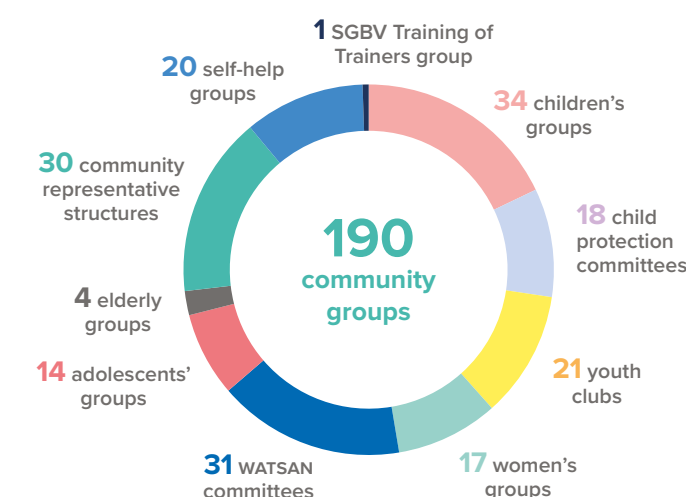


The Journalist Training Workshop, November 2021, New Delhi ©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung

Community Based Protection

The community groups play a critical role in **identifying and responding to protection and assistance needs of refugees** including those with specific needs.

- Refugees come with talents and want to contribute to India. 48 community service providers (from the refugee community) worked with the UNHCR implementing partner to help refugees, first responders to the crisis, with translations services, information about health information and providing vital support to access local health facilities. Individuals with specific needs are prioritised for their registration, RSD and other assistance.
- 190 community groups were capacitated through various community engagements on GBV, Child Protection, legal awareness, COVID protocols and PSS. Representative structures were supported to enhance community-based protection.



YASAMIN, an Afghan medical community service provider reaches out to refugees and asylum seekers living in Delhi by providing valuable health and COVID-19 related information.
©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung

UNHCR has set up a 24x7 call centre with dedicated phone lines including a Toll-free number to enable refugees and asylum seekers to access general information or speak with the office. This is complemented with a help website and community engagements.

87 child protection
community-based structures
are functional

These outreach volunteer networks are structured and trained to conduct their activities in accordance with UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Policy and human rights principles. Close partnership and direct two-way communication between UNHCR and the communities, through the outreach volunteers, empowers those involved in the programme to play a central role as analysts, implementers and evaluators of their own protection. Outreach volunteers assist their own people in their own language.

29 refugee representatives
from **12 nationalities** helped UNHCR
organise winterization assistance in India
through its NGO partners

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH MECHANISM

- Outreach Volunteers
- Mass Information Materials
- E-mail Accounts (UNHCR)
- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram)
- Helplines (UNHCR)
- In-person Inquiries
- Community Meetings

As news channels around the world beamed striking images and footage of the chaos in Afghanistan surrounding the Taliban takeover of Kabul, many Afghan refugees felt their dwindling hopes of going home evaporate. For **ASADULLAH HUSSAINI** and **ABDUL WALI**, Afghan refugees in India, it has been a tumultuous time with a lot of complicated emotions and shifting futures.

Hussaini and his family – five brothers, one sister and mother – left Kabul and came to India in 2017. Since his arrival, the 23-year-old has been determined to help the refugees and asylum seekers around him. He began working with BOSCO, UNHCR’s NGO partner in Delhi, in 2018. BOSCO works to support and train refugees, marginalised communities and underprivileged youth and women in Delhi. Hussaini assists them with community mobilisation, awareness campaigns and educational sessions for refugees.

Hussaini was quite surprised at the diversity of Delhi and its extreme weather. “I have enjoyed living in Delhi and interacting with the people here. It’s not like Delhi belongs only to Indians,” he said,

“You can see Somalis, Iranians, Syrians and Arabic people, among others.”

Festivals may be Hussaini’s favourite aspect of living in India, and he talks about the overabundance of celebrations in Delhi. “I love celebrating Diwali and Holi and the one where Raavan is burned – I forgot the name!” he laughs.



For 25-year-old Abdul Wali, India wasn’t his first experience as an asylum seeker; he was born in Pakistan, where both his parents were registered



ABDULLAH HUSSAINI volunteers to deliver life-saving food assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers through UNHCR’s NGO partner BOSCO in Delhi. ©UNHCR/Walid Karimi

as refugees and the government offered them protection and recognition.

“My life in India has not been what I expected – there were many hurdles and disappointments – but struggles that I have gone through as a refugee have taught me a lot about life,” Wali reflects, with clarity and poise. “I couldn’t get enrolled in schools or colleges when I came in 2012 because some wouldn’t recognize the UNHCR refugee card.”

The local Afghan refugee community is usually helpful in guiding newly arrived asylum-seekers. They helped Wali and his family in finding the locations of the UNHCR and its partner offices. “The other refugees in our building assisted us with the UNHCR registration process and in finding the BOSCO centre for classes,” he said.

UNHCR and their partners have been valuable for refugees in India, facilitating support letters for banks and helping with Long Term Visa applications, ration distribution and education. Wali works as a computer facilitator at BOSCO, taking classes for refugees, and is the only working person in his family.

“Once COVID-19 struck India, we started coming up with new initiatives to help asylum seekers, like ration and grocery distribution, medicines, blankets and thermometers,” Hussaini listed with pride. “We delivered all of these directly to their homes.”

The pandemic, of course, changed everything. Like teachers and students all over the country, and the world, Wali was faced with a move to online classes.

“For me personally, I had great difficulty navigating working from home,” said Wali. There are two rooms and four of us living here, and so it was very difficult for me to conduct classes,” said Wali. The issue of smartphones and the lack of a stable internet connection meant that a lot of his students could not attend his classes. “Now, most of them have adjusted to online classes but there are still a lot of issues,” he added.

Yet, through it all, the hope and resilience that has come to characterise their communities – and refugees worldwide – shines through.

Education

A cornerstone of UNHCR's education response has been its **commitment to embed responses within national frameworks** and work alongside other actors to ensure a harmonized response.

UNHCR has been working with parents and caregivers to enable them to better support their children in learning at home.

19 learning centres in 6 states provide accelerated learning support to refugee students. Educators/teachers have also set up WhatsApp groups to provide support on language learning.

 **19**
learning centres
in 6 states

 **78**
life skills sessions
were conducted

3,621
refugees and asylum
seekers attended

43 students
received a scholarship from the
**Albert Einstein German
Academic Refugee Initiative
(DAFI)** to enrol in or continue their
university studies.

6,565 refugee children were
given learning kits.

2,420 students were enrolled in
lower secondary and high
school through NGO partners.


MASKS AND SANITIZERS
WITH STANDS
3 schools


HANDWASHING
STATIONS
5 schools

Specific response during COVID-19

549 tabs/ digital devices
were distributed

630 children supported with
early childhood education

2,420 students were facilitated
for school/NIOS

1,980 children supported
with bridge/tuitions



"We are six sisters and had to share our parents' phones for online classes. We used to miss our classes frequently since the timings clashed but now with a tablet also in the house, we are able to be more regular for our classes", says GIN DEIH VUNG, a Chin refugee from Myanmar. UNHCR is focusing on closing the gender digital divide by providing young girls with access to devices, connectivity and skills. ©UNHCR/Kap Sian Sang

Women and Girls

UNHCR worked together with Governments, other UN agencies, local and international NGOs and persons of concern to prevent and respond to SGBV.

GBV prevention and response services included case management, psychosocial support, material assistance and referral to specialised services.

Capacity development continued through remote modalities. UNHCR worked with refugee community service providers to strengthen their capacity to support GBV survivors.

 **11,361**
refugees including women,
men and boys trained in GBV
awareness sessions

 **7,653** women and
girls received dignity kits
(including sanitary napkins)

Provision of Legal Aid

UNHCR worked with a diverse range of partners to **provide legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers** as many are unable to access such services due to the associated costs, language barriers and other administrative and procedural difficulties.



2,481
refugees and
asylum-seekers
received free legal aid



37
refugees and
asylum-seekers
released from
immigration detention



465
refugees and
asylum seekers
received free legal
counselling from
skilled advisors



K. SARULNATHAN, a Sri Lankan refugee, visits the park with his family in Tiruchirappalli before returning home voluntarily. He and his wife, EUTHANASIA MELANY, are excited to return home and provide a future for their children. ©UNHCR/Sri Kolari

Solutions

UNHCR continues to play a leading role in collaborating with authorities and other partners, **to promote, facilitate, and coordinate voluntary repatriation.**

UNHCR and partners provide assistance to refugees who have decided to voluntarily return to their country of origin, so that they may do so in safety and dignity.




S. SATHIYARAJ, and his father, **K. Sathanantham**, pack their bicycle to ship to Sri Lanka.

While most refugees prefer to return to their countries of origin, conditions for safe and dignified return remained challenging in 2021.

A total of 91 individuals returned home in 2021, with some of these returns being self-organised, and others constituting facilitated voluntary repatriation by UNHCR.

 **91** individuals returned home in 2021

 **84** Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees were locally integrated through naturalization.

 **50** refugees assisted with voluntary repatriation programme

 **303** refugees and asylum seekers departed on complementary pathways

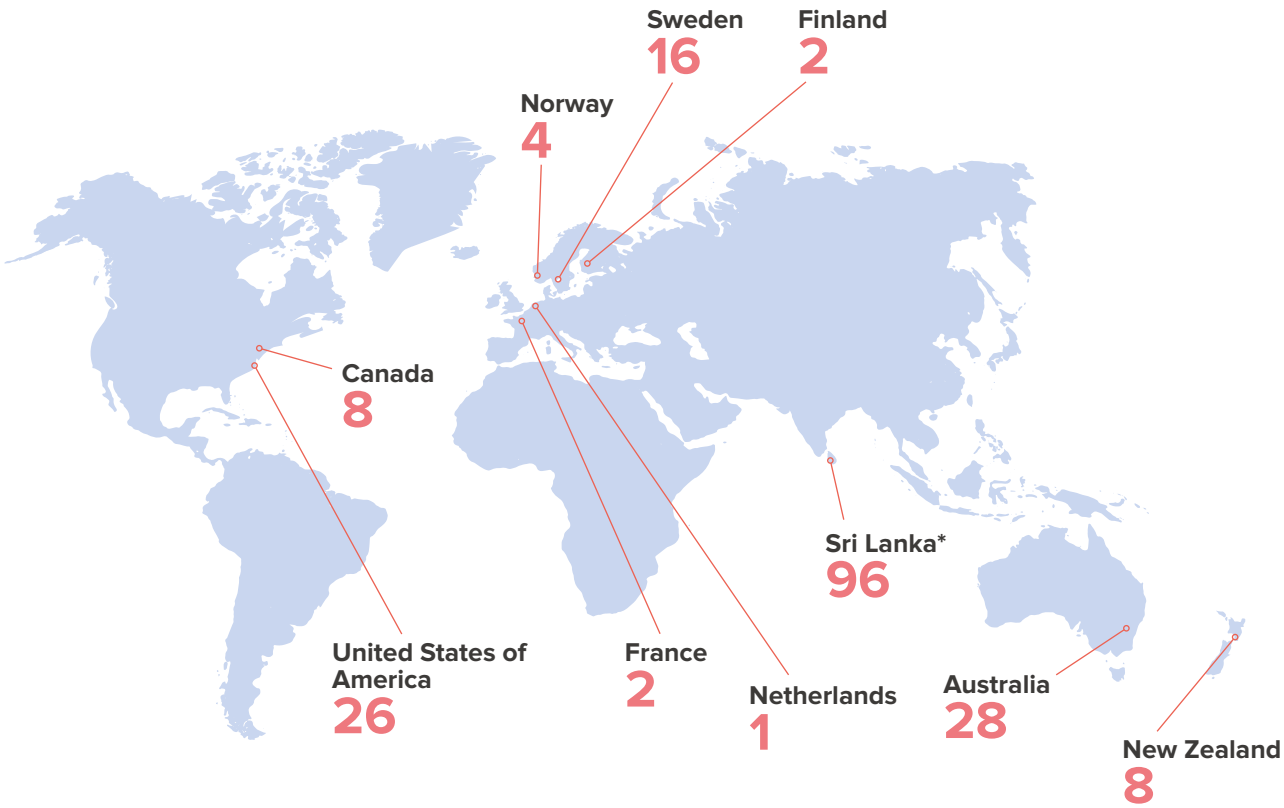


 **96** Sri Lankan refugees returned voluntarily with the assistance of UNHCR

S. SATHIYARAJ, and his 72-year-old father, K. SATHANANTHAM, are excited to go back to their village in Sri Lanka. It's been a long time since Sathanantham has seen his old friends and family. He thinks they will be able to start a new life. The father and son duo already plan to start a business together. ©UNHCR/Sri Kolari

Solutions

 **105**
refugees
departed on
resettlements



*Indicates number of refugees who returned voluntarily with the assistance of UNHCR

Resettlement



Complementary Pathways



Humanitarian
Visas



Humanitarian
Admissions



Sponsorship
Pathways



Employment
Opportunities



Family
Reunification



Education
Opportunities



Other
Opportunities

India | 2022

Budget by outcome and enabling areas

Outcome/Enabling area	Budget (USD)
Well-being and basic needs	3,671,462
Education	1,737,788
Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods	1,513,108
Community engagement and women’s empowerment	1,250,658
Safety and access to justice	1,134,384
Access to territory, registration and documentation	949,002
Healthy lives	873,254
Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration	817,906
Refugee status determination	510,092
Gender-based violence	501,803
Protection policy and law	370,496
Child protection	353,225
Resettlement and complementary pathways	270,000
Local integration and other local solutions	263,997
Total	14,217,175

Specific outcomes we hope for in 2022

- Commitment to get all child refugees into schooling, equipping them to learn and develop
- Opportunities for self-reliance for refugees
- Refugees, especially women, themselves involved in discussions affecting them
- A renewed focus on a shared responsibility for providing solutions to refugees in India
- Solidarity with India and its people hosting refugees
- Assurance to all people who flee war, conflict and persecution that they will be safe in our societies
- Commitment from development actors and private sectors
- Building on best practices based on practical experiences



Mr. Oscar Mundia hands over a football designed by 17-year-old Nadira at the joint UN MPTF event on 10 December, 2021. ©UN Women



We lost our dear colleague MS **VINITA MEHRA** in 2021. She will be remembered for the difference she made in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers, and her dedication to the organization and its mandate.

Here is the transcript of Vinita's interview in which she talks about her passion for refugees and some of the most memorable moments she has had while working with them.

What first drew you towards working for UNHCR?

My father was uprooted from his home. When I was a child, he talked about his experiences, his family's history, and his own legacy. After India's partition in 1947, he started working with a government agency in New Delhi for the rehabilitation of people, who like him had fled their homes. This had a profound effect on me.

In 1981, UNHCR began its refugee programmes in India. Ms. Marie Lobo visited our university during my final year of post-graduate social work. She served as a UNHCR counsellor in India, educating students about the organization's mandate for refugees. I was deeply moved by the work of the

agency and the enthusiasm and charisma displayed by Ms. Lobo during her speech. She later asked the university to provide the UNHCR with an intern. They were looking for someone who could write well. The agency had only recently opened its Delhi office, so please keep in mind this was before computers were commonplace. Learning and challenging myself to work for those with specific needs was a goal of mine as a young professional. I was encouraged by my university to visit UNHCR and offer support. In our introductory meeting, I asked for a joining date. Ms. Lobo looked at me and said, "Why don't you start working from today?" Hence, my journey with UNHCR began in 1982.

How would you characterize your work at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees?

Over the years, I've had a number of different roles with the organization in various capacities. In 1982, I became a volunteer in the counselling unit of the hospital. After taking a brief hiatus, I returned to the organization as a medical social worker at a hospital that served a large number of refugees. Starting in 1986, I worked as a part of the programme that facilitated the treatment, rehabilitation, and long-term solution of refugees with disabilities, many of whom had been wounded during the Afghan war. Between 1990 and 1999, I worked as an education officer in a variety of capacities.

I continued my work with people who have special needs as well as my involvement with community organizing. For the period 1999–2010, I was assigned to serve as a focal point for long-term solutions for refugees, particularly in the area of resettlement. In response to the increasing operational requirements of the UNHCR, this was done. The work I do now as a Protection Associate includes serving a focal point for community mobilization, peaceful coexistence, individuals with special needs, and supporting programmes that deal with health-related issues.

What has been your most rewarding experience while working with the UNHCR?

I have had the opportunity to work in a variety of areas at UNHCR, where each position represented a significant milestone and provided me with a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Almost immediately following the September 11th attacks, the international community turned its attention to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. This led to an expectation for many to return to the origin country, rather than focusing on their resettlement. I was a part of several initiatives that advocated with the embassies on the continued

resettlement needs of the protracted Afghan caseload in India, who were unlikely to find a safe and sustainable solution. These initiatives were very rewarding as I witnessed family reunifications. Several refugees found deserving opportunities to restart their lives with many RST selection missions coming to India.

What has been the most challenging experience you've had while working with the UNHCR?

COVID-19 has been the most challenging experience for me, because of my age. I have taken time catching up with technological changes and I have encountered numerous technological difficulties when engaging in remote conversations with persons of concern and colleagues.

How has COVID-19 impacted your professional life?

Working from home during COVID-19 was a challenge on one level, but it also provided me with an opportunity to become more familiar with new technologies more quickly than I would have otherwise. It has been a tremendously rewarding experience to learn new applications and troubleshooting techniques, as well as to observe how refugees have also gained knowledge in this way.

What do you hope to accomplish or what do you aspire to do in your current position?

I hope to maintain my enthusiasm for working with refugees, to learn new tools, and to proactively share my knowledge and skills, which I have gained through trial and error, with my younger colleagues in the years to come. I am convinced that I can make a positive contribution as a mentor, and I hope to co-learn with others.

From where have you gotten your strength and motivation to work for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) over the years?

There is never a dull moment at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Many people continue to inquire as to why I continue to take on new challenges in my professional life at this age. This is due to my willingness to step outside of my comfort zone on a consistent basis. It never ceases to amaze me how your dedication and meaningful engagement with people who have experienced a series of traumatic events in their lives can make a difference in the lives of others.

How has the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) changed its approach to refugees in India?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has gradually transitioned away from individual case management toward community-based intervention, particularly in urban areas. This indicates that the organisation is cognizant of the ways in which community-based approaches can maximise the resilience and potential of refugees in finding solutions to their own urgent needs. A large number of refugees have received advanced education, and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees works to integrate them into meaningful social and economic inclusion with host communities.

How has the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) changed as an organisation over the years?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has come a long way as an organisation. We have seen an increase in the number of direct connections made between protection and community service. A result-based

management approach has been implemented, and extremely effective tools, policy papers, and strategies have been developed to address the issues faced by persons of concern.

Personally, I consider the United Nations General Assembly's endorsement of the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018 to be a significant milestone because it represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform the way the world responds to refugee situations, benefiting both refugees and the host communities. It emphasises the need for governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders to work together, engage in meaningful dialogue, and coordinate in a meaningful way.

What is the most important piece of advice you would give to other UNHCR staff?

For us, it's not just about paperwork; it's about people's lives as well. As our mandate clearly states, my one piece of advice is to keep persons of concern at the heart of all our decisions.

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SUPPORTING REFUGEES IN INDIA

What We Achieved in 2021



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