

# INDIA

31-March-2021

UNHCR, together with sister UN agencies and civil society organization, **observed International Women Day on 8 March**. On this day, UNHCR recognized the resilience and leadership of women refugees in India. (See picture below)

**713 refugees and asylum seekers** (230 males, 483 females) were facilitated and supported to **access government medical facilities** in March.

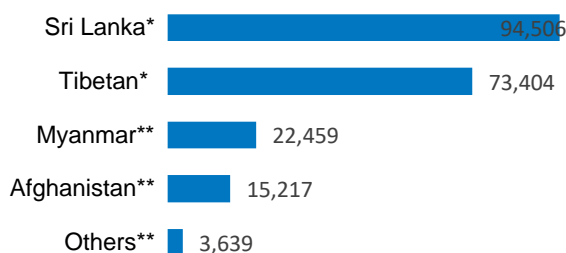
**10 Refugee led youth clubs** organized sessions on prevention of substance abuse targeting 422 individuals.

Alongside the Government of India, partner organization, and UN sister agencies, UNHCR is working towards **the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the national vaccination program to ensure no one is left behind in the COVID-19 response**.

**533 individuals** were registered by UNHCR India in February 2021

## POPULATION OF CONCERN (208,065)

### Origin<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Country or Territory of Origin

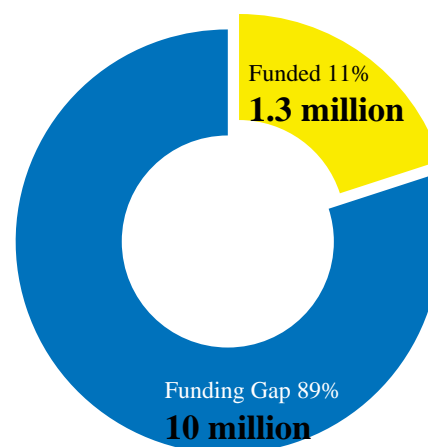
\*Refugees registered and assisted by the Government of India. Statistics with regard to Sri Lankan refugees and Tibetan are taken from MHA Annual Report 2019-2020 <https://www.mha.gov.in/document/annual-reports/annual-report-ministry-of-home-affairs-2019-2020>

\*\* Refugee and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR India (as of 31 Mar 2021)

## FUNDING (AS OF 30 MARCH 2021)

**USD 11.3 million**

UNHCR India financial requirement for 2021



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

28 National Staff  
6 International Staff  
32 Affiliate Workforce (29 National 3 International)

### Offices:

1 Country Office in New Delhi  
1 Field Office in Chennai



*"I always encourage and motivate other women in the community to be strong and courageous. Only then, will their children also be courageous," says Suraya Akbari, a community leader working within the Afghan refugee population living in India. ©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung*

## Working with Partners

UNHCR coordinates protection and assistance for refugees and asylum seekers in collaboration with:

- **Government of India:** Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs.
- **UN:** UNHCR is a member of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and contributes to India-United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) for 2018-2022.
- **Formal partnership agreements with eight national NGOs:** Bosco Organisation for Social Concern and Operation (BOSCO), Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC), Bal Raksha Bharat (Save the Children), Fair Trade Forum India (FTF-I), Development and Justice Initiative (DAJI), Gandhi National Memorial Society (GNMS), ActionAid (AA), and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).

## Main Activities

### Registration and Refugee Status Determination

- As of March 2021, 41,315 refugees and asylum-seekers are registered with UNHCR India. Most refugees came from Myanmar (54%) and Afghanistan (37%). In March 2021, 533 individuals were registered with UNHCR India. UNHCR has resumed the issuance of hard copies of UNHCR documents to asylum seekers and refugees to replace the electronic ones introduced due to COVID-19.
- UNHCR India uses biometrics to enrol, identify and manage the identities of persons of concern by capturing all fingerprints and irises of an individual. 81% of the active eligible refugee and asylum-seeking population are enrolled in Biometric.

### Child Protection and Education

- Refugee students may have a gap in their studies, suffered trauma and separation from families, and have knowledge gaps due to differences in national curricula. UNHCR supports around **990 (17%) registered refugee and asylum seeker children aged 5-17 with bridge, remedial, and language courses**. UNHCR supports **209 (9.3%) registered refugee students aged 12-17 for secondary schooling** using distance education learning opportunities provided by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).
- The child protection concerns for refugees in India include child labour, child marriage, and school drop-out. UNHCR's local partner, Save the Children, was able to **prevent one-child marriage** in Hyderabad. Further, Action Aid and local authorities **supported two refugee children victims of neglect and abuse in Nuh (Haryana)**.
- UNHCR local partners support **community-based child protection groups to raise awareness on child protection** and identify and ensure referral of children at risk and child victims. In March, Action Aid mobilized 31 children in Nuh, and BOSCO mobilized 306 children to conduct awareness generation sessions on child protection.
- UNHCR India relies on a generous donation from stakeholders to continue and scale child protection education programme. Funds are required to **provide digital devices to promote uninterrupted education** and bridge education to help children integrate better into the formal education system.

### Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

- UNHCR has set up community-based groups to find ways to address SGBV risks, confront stigma, and create within communities' support for survivors to increase their protection. **In March, 411 refugees participated in awareness sessions conducted in Delhi and Hyderabad**. The topics included: identification and referral, prevention and response to domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence, and domestic laws on women and children. The sessions were conducted in partnership with local authorities and NGOs such as BHAROSA (a centre for women and children)-An initiative of Hyderabad city police, Save the Children, BOSCO, and Action Aid.
- **11 GBV incidents were reported, managed, and referred for specialized services** by UNHCR partners. Survivors received basic counselling from NGO/ local authorities and other health, legal, police, and livelihood assistance.

### Community Engagement

- The network of community centres and mobile teams with its outreach, volunteers, and services is a fundamental tool for reaching out to urban-based refugees registered with UNHCR India. **103 refugees and asylum seekers received protection interventions provided UNHCR outreach services. 467 emails** from refugees and asylum seeker were received and handled by UNHCR. **30 meetings were organized with over 120 participants** from different nationalities living in different parts of India. **895 calls were handled by the UNHCR helpline**, with basic needs (assistance) being the top reason for calls.
- With the **pandemic taking a toll on socio-economic conditions for both refugees and host communities, funding is urgently needed** to provide life-sustaining assistance, including shelter, food, access to safe drinking water, education, and health services

### Water, Health and Sanitation

- UNHCR, with support from Government, works with local NGOs to provide healthcare services to refugees. **713 refugees and asylum seekers (230 males, 483 female)** were supported to access secondary and tertiary health care. **Two refugees' territory medical claims were approved and supported. 158 refugees (56 males, 102 females) were provided with essential medicine and medical supplies** in Delhi. **48 refugees (7 males, 4 female) were provided with assistive devices in Delhi. 148 refugees benefited from a health camp** organized in Hyderabad.
- In tandem with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (GOI), UNHCR works with local partners to provide information on public health to those under UNHCR's mandate **to raise awareness on common illnesses and communicable diseases, including COVID-19 appropriate behaviour**. Four such sessions were conducted each in Hyderabad, Mathura, Aligarh, and Jaipur, reaching out to 121 refugees and asylum seekers.
- Health needs are at an all-time high with the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, urgent funds are required to support refugees and asylum seekers' health care and spread awareness on issues pertaining to health.



*Isho Haji (center), a Somali refugee, received a life-saving injection for her health complications from NGO partners in Delhi, India.  
 (©UNHCR/ Donna Audrady)*

### Cash-Based Interventions and Non-Food items

- UNHCR continues its coordination with local partners implementing cash-based interventions for refugees to ensure appropriate and efficient programming. However, in line with the grand bargain commitment to double the use of cash as a proportion of its assistance by 2020, UNHCR India was unable to scale up cash-based assistance due to the lack of financial inclusion of refugees in basic financial services. **UNHCR continues its advocacy with**

***the government to directly facilitate refugees' access to basic financial services to receive cash-based assistance in their bank accounts.***

### Self-reliance

- UNHCR supports refugees to become self-reliant through training and small grants. UNHCR partners with Save the Children, BOSCO, Fair Trade Forum to promote self-reliance for refugees. **25 refugees participated in on-the-job training. UNHCR partners work with employers to support refugees, and 42 benefited from this initiative.** Refugee women groups in India produce crochet earrings, crochet neckpieces, crochet laces, masks with round crochet lace, and candles that can be purchased by contacting UNHCR India. UNHCR is thankful to **RICE Co. (Hong Kong) and Tokyo Olympics** for their orders of refugees made product from India.
- The livelihood programme has helped supplement incomes alongside providing new avenues of material support for refugees and asylum seekers. To continue providing such opportunities and train more refugees and asylum seekers to be self-reliant, UNHCR India must receive sustained funding.

### Durable solutions

- UNHCR promotes resettlement as a protection tool for the most vulnerable cases. In March 2021, **12 individuals have departed for resettlement.** UNHCR facilitates voluntary repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin. In March 2021, **17 individuals benefited from complementary pathways admission to a third country.**
- 2 Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees were supported to fill the online applications forms for Indian citizenship. **7 Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees were granted Indian citizenship.**

### External Relations

- To commemorate Women's Day, **UNHCR partnered with Whipped bakery and refugee youth to create a "Box of Hope- a gift box curated by refugees"** in India. These boxes showcased the skills and resilience of refugees and were presented to government officials, embassies, and UN sister agencies. In addition, UNHCR produced a photo series of women refugees making a difference in their communities and globally released a video story reaching out to more than 316,710 audiences.
- UNHCR continues its engagement with **key Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 2030 Agenda processes** such as the UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.
- **UNHCR supported two Model United Nations organized by schools in India** to encourage students to debate topics such as the impact of COVID-19 on refugees, women's rights, social inclusion, and technology. To register your institution for the UNHCR Model UN Challenge, [click here](#).



Refugee youth from Afghanistan, Freshta and Inara, pen down handwritten notes for UNHCR key partners in Delhi to celebrate International Women's Day. (©UNHCR/ Daniel Ginsianmung)

## Women Refugee making a mark in their communities

Afghan refugee Alina Razaee is giving back to her community. Now in India, Alina has been admitted to Delhi University, one of the premier higher education institutions.

"Growing up, I was weak in language. I do not want other Afghan refugee children to go through the same educational hardship. That is why I spend my evenings teaching children in my community," said Rezaee. (©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung)



Suja Thiruselvam, 27, has set up a tailoring school in Chennai. Thiruselvam was forced to flee Sri Lanka at the age of 12 and sought asylum in India.

After pursuing education briefly, she dropped out of school due to financial difficulties. Thiruselvam immediately took up tailoring to support her family. By 2018, Suja started giving tailoring and Aari classes to both refugees and host communities. (©UNHCR/ Sri Kolari)

Janoi, 40, works as a community creche worker at the UNHCR India- NGO partner BOSCO in Delhi. As a Chin refugee living in India for the past 10 years, she has played a significant role in facilitating urgent community medical treatments, counselling, providing linkages to voluntary skill development, and translation services. "Women play a significant role in the family and community. We have to support one another to overcome our challenges together," she says. (©UNHCR/Daniel Ginsianmung)



## Funding

UNHCR is grateful for all contributions received in 2021 with special appreciation to the following donors who have directly contributed to the operation: the USA | Private Donors | UN COVID-19 MPTF. 89% of UNHCR needs are still unmet. We rely on the generous support of countries, organizations, and private donors to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the country.

We are also grateful to donors who provide unearmarked or softly-earmarked contributions to UNHCR, which help support India operation and enable us to respond in a timely and flexible manner. These donors include Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Private donors Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

## CONTACT

**Mr Kiri Atri**, Assistant External Relations Officer

[atri@unhcr.org](mailto:atri@unhcr.org), Tel: +91 9560461169

## High profile supporters

**Ms Anita Nair**

**Mr John Abraham**

## LINKS

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaUNHCR>

UNHCR India website: <https://www.unhcr.org/india.html>

## GLOSSARY

- **Asylum-seeker:** An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker.
- **Complementary pathways for admission to protection and solutions for refugees:** Safe and regulated avenues by which refugees may be admitted and stay in a country, and have their international protection needs met while they are also able to support themselves to potentially reach a sustainable and lasting solution. Complementary pathways are not meant to substitute the protection afforded to refugees under the international protection regime – they complement it and serve as an important expression of global solidarity, international cooperation, and more equitable responsibility sharing. These pathways may include family reunification, scholarship, and education programmes, as well as labour regional mobility schemes.
- **Durable solutions:** The means by which the situation of persons of concern to UNHCR can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved to enable them to live normal lives. In the refugee context, this generally involves voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration (including through naturalization) in the country of asylum, or resettlement to another country.
- **Refugees:** A person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for in international or regional refugee instruments, under UNHCR's mandate, and/or in national legislation.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD):** Legal and administrative procedures undertaken by States and/or UNHCR to determine whether an individual should be recognized as a refugee in accordance with national and international law.
- **Resettlement:** The transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought asylum to another State that has agreed to admit them. The refugees will usually be granted asylum or some other form of long-term resident rights and, in many cases, will have the opportunity to become naturalized citizens. For this reason, resettlement is a durable solution as well as a tool for the protection of refugees. It is also a practical example of international burden-and responsibility-sharing.
- **Voluntary repatriation:** Return to the country of origin based on the refugees' free and informed decision. Voluntary repatriation may be organized (when it takes place under the auspices of the concerned governments and/or UNHCR) or spontaneous (the refugees return by their own means with no involvement of UNHCR and governments).