

focus

ADRA ASIA



Refugees

VOL 1 | NO 1
JUN-AUG 2021

A CALL TO RADICAL
COLLABORATION
PAGE 3

FROM REFUGEE
RETURNEE TO
ENTREPRENEUR
PAGE 4

REFUGEE
REPATRIATION
IN SRI LANKA
PAGE 12



ADRA

CONTENTS



DIRECTOR FOCUS



STORY FOCUS



STAFF FOCUS



REGIONAL FOCUS



COUNTRY FOCUS



TECHNICAL FOCUS

Refugees

This quarter's theme focuses on Refugees in honour of World Refugee Day which falls annually on June 20. Learn how ADRA in Asia is supporting Refugees displaced by conflict through distributing immediate needs of food, water and shelter, promoting WASH activities in camps as well as the safe return of refugees through the repatriation process.



ADRA

Editorial

EDITOR/DESIGNER
Emma McCrow

SUPERVISING EDITOR
Mark Webster

CONTRIBUTORS
Shenal Hettiarachchi
Florentia Amarasinghe
Prabhook Bandaratilleke
Trisha Mahajan
Emily Grose
Syed Abu Saleh
Ralfie Marinka

GET CONNECTED



PUBLISHER
ADRA Asia Regional Office

ADRA ASIA focus

VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 1
June - August 2021

ADRA Asia Focus, launched in 2021, is the official quarterly magazine of the ADRA Asia Regional Office that provides programmatic and administrative support to 17 country offices in Asia.

A CALL TO RADICAL COLLABORATION

I have a clear memory of the end of 2015 and early 2016 when the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched. Even from my peripheral location in Australia, there was a sense of potential for change, but also a sense of skepticism in some parts of civil society. On the whole I think most people in our field would have argued that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had contributed to positive global outcomes despite limitations and that there was hope the SDGs would do the same.

One thing that the SDGs in all of their ambition and complexity (17 goals and 169 targets in just 15 years) made clear is that global change cannot be achieved by individual organisations acting in isolation even if they are doing good work. Halla Tomasdottir, CEO and Chief Change Catalyst of The B Team describes it like this on the solvers podcast...

We want to live in a planet that has shared prosperity and is healthy, we don't think we can separate these crises we're facing from climate to inequality and trust. Private sector, governments and civil society have to sit together at the table more often. Part of the problem is that we have so many different movements almost fighting against each other saying what it should be like...

Until recently the private sector focused solely on making a profit (much of it still does). Sometimes that profit trickled into our civil society space in the form of philanthropy (corporate or individual) or less directly through tax revenues that turned into government grants. Governments worried about governing. Business worried about making money. Civil society worried about everything else from environmental degradation to poverty and inequality. That has changed.

Mark Webster

Regional Director
ADRA Asia Regional Office

The boundaries I've described in simplified form are shifting and blending. As traditional sources of funding for civil society become less reliable, we look for options on diversifying and developing sustainable income sources that make us less reliant on grant funding. As public sentiment shifts toward prioritising ethical and social considerations, businesses, big and small, are paying more attention to climate change, poverty and social justice. New generations of entrepreneurs are planning careers in making money and the world a better place. Impact investment is gaining momentum as traditional philanthropy is falling away.

What does this mean for us in ADRA? Here in Asia we're exploring new partnerships. ADRA Japan and ADRA Myanmar have developed a multi-year partnership for education with AEON - Asia's largest retailer. This is one example. I think it's time to open our minds and explore new opportunities, collaborations and ways of achieving our purpose. Here are four good places to start:

The Skoll Foundation: Investing and connecting social entrepreneurs and innovators to advance equitable solutions to the world's pressing problems.

IIX: Transforming the financial system for women, the environment and underserved communities to give value and voice in the global market.

AVPN: Encompassing philanthropy and venture philanthropy to impact investing, CSR and sustainable investment.

The B Team: Redefining what accountability and success mean for business.





FROM REFUGEE RETURNEE TO ENTREPRENEUR

The civil war that prevailed in Sri Lanka for 3 consecutive decades took lives of countless people and forced many to leave the country and seek refuge elsewhere. During this time, thousands of the families in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka fled to South India. While most people who left between 2007 and 2008 have returned, many who left between the early 1990's and 2000's are still living in India.

50 year old Thirupugaselvam Sarasvathi and her family were displaced due to the war and had to flee to South India back in 1990. They subsequently returned to Sri Lanka in 1993 intending to resettle. Sarasvathi is a mother of two, a daughter and a son. Her daughter is married and lives separately. Sarasvathi currently lives with her spouse, Velu, and her son in Asikulam, a remote village in the heart of the Vavuniya district. According to her, she had another son who disappeared during the war. To this day, they are unsure of his whereabouts.

Back in 1990, Sarasvathi, her mother and father, her then unmarried daughter and her now missing son, had to flee to the Rameshwaram Mandapam Camp in Tamil Nadu, while her husband had to stay back in Sri Lanka due to several unavoidable circumstances. They fled to India in a boat which Sarasvathi narrates as one of the worst experiences of her life. For almost four years they lived in a small barrack type, temporary housing facility offered by the Indian Government. Even though she received a meager stipend from the Indian Government, she had to work her way through to make ends meet.

They returned to Sri Lanka in 1993 amidst the war with the assistance of UNHCR. Upon returning she reunited with her

husband and lived in numerous places before they finally settled in Asipuram, where they built a small house for themselves. It was during this time that her son disappeared. To this day, she suffers from the persistent grief of losing her son.

Velu is the breadwinner of the family. He used to work as a mason, but due to his poor health condition he was unable to continue work. Upon identifying their family through the Divisional Secretariat of Vavuniya, ADRA Sri Lanka lent them a helping hand to start their own business. ADRA provided them concrete moulds to start a concrete block-making enterprise through the third phase of the Local Economic and Social Strengthening (LESS) project.

Ever since they started the business their lives have become relatively better. According to Sarasvathi, they earn a reasonable income that helps them cover their household expenditure and their son's educational expenses.

I am very thankful for ADRA's assistance. We faced numerous hardships before. ADRA intervened exactly when we needed help. Our lives have become so much better thanks to them

She and Velu are determined and hope to eventually expand their business. They have also been able to save some money to purchase more equipment needed...



...for the business.

We are progressing. We purchased a concrete block-making machine by utilizing some of the money we saved and by obtaining a loan from the Samurdhi (a local rural bank). We hope to expand our business even more and do better. My next goal is to renovate our house

The LESS project is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs and is implemented by ADRA Sri Lanka in Vavuniya, Killinochchi, and

Mannar districts. Through the project, ADRA Sri Lanka has partnered with ADRA India on a cross-border effort to create durable social and economic solutions to communities that show an outmigration culture.

The project contributes towards smooth reintegration and repatriation of refugee returnees whilst strengthening Refugee Reintegration Networks (RRNs), local government institutions, and other key stakeholders involved in the repatriation and reintegration process. Furthermore, the project provides livelihood support to refugee returnees and creates awareness regarding regular and irregular migration among them.



Shenal Hettiarachchi
ADRA Sri Lanka

STAFF FOCUS

WHEN DID YOU FIRST JOIN ADRA AND WHY?

I joined ADRA in 2007. The reason I joined is because I wanted to serve more broadly to the best of my abilities. When I first joined ADRA, I became a project accountant for a small enterprise development project in Jakarta and a part of the emergency response team for ADRA Indonesia.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR POSITION?

Being a member of the emergency response team allowed me to meet face-to-face with survivors and share their suffering. That feeling of compassion comes when we see them directly and being present during times of difficulty. Helping and serving them brings joy to me.

As a communication staff, sharing stories and experiences in the field can inspire and motivate others to be involved in this ministry.

WHAT DOES THE WORK OF ADRA MEAN TO YOU?

ADRA's work is a noble work as the extension of God's hand to serve those in need.

Ralfie Ch Maringka

**Communication, Emergency
Response Team**
ADRA Indonesia



CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT ONE OF YOUR MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES WORKING IN ADRA?

At the time, my friend and I had finished distributing aid to victims of an earthquake in a small village. The survivors had already set up their tents in the area of their destroyed homes. We had completed the post-disaster monitoring and were walking back to our post where we were stay during the response. The thing I remember most on our way back was seeing people standing along the road waving their hands and showing their gratitude for the assistance. Some of them approached us and shook our hands. Their sincere smiles with thanksgiving gave us a new spirit in our tiredness to serve more.



REGIONAL FOCUS

4.4

MILLION
REFUGEES IN
ASIA & PACIFIC

279

THOUSAND
REFUGEES
SUPPORTED

\$3.2

MILLION
USD REGIONAL
BUDGET

This quarter's theme is focused on Refugees in Asia. ADRA has supported Refugees in 4 of the 17 countries under the Asia Regional Office in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Bangladesh to provide emergency assistance, livelihood and financial support, WASH, and supporting a safe and voluntary repatriation process. Across these 4 countries, ADRA has been supporting **270,800** refugees with a total regional project budget of **USD\$3,231,345**.

INDIA

ADRA India is supporting Sri Lankan refugees who remain in country through advocacy and protection as well as creating awareness on the prevention of COVID-19 and providing dry rations to vulnerable households.



SRI LANKA

In Sri Lanka, ADRA is supporting repatriated refugees who have returned from India through livelihood support and stabilizing local economies. ADRA Sri Lanka is also working with ADRA India in the voluntary repatriation process of other refugees interested in returning and providing them with livelihood skills training.



BANGLADESH



In Bangladesh, ADRA supported Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar by providing shelter, non food items, protection of children's rights and other vulnerable groups, and vocational training opportunities.

MYANMAR



In Myanmar, ADRA is supporting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the northern Kachin, Chin and Shan States as well as in the south-eastern Kayin State with WASH, unconditional cash transfers and emergency assistance. Approximately 1.1 million Refugees from Myanmar are found along the border areas with Thailand, India and Bangladesh, most notably the Rohingya in the world's largest Refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, otherwise known as Kutupalong.

THAILAND



ADRA supports Myanmar refugees from camps along the Thai-Myanmar border to provide education opportunities for children and improved health environments, advocate and support stateless persons to obtain legal documents, promote health protection from COVID-19 as well as supporting the voluntary and safe repatriation process of refugees to Myanmar.



INDIA

ADRA India has been providing support to Sri Lankan refugees who remain in country since the civil war more than 12 years ago through 2 project interventions.

The LESS project, funded by the Australian Government (DFAT), is supporting 40,518 refugees in 35 camps across Tamil Nadu State through the continued operation of DIC and helplines for information dissemination, stakeholders are sensitized on issues faced by refugees, responding to and providing protection and livelihood support, and sharing real-time information on socio-economic and the political situation in Sri Lanka from reliable sources.

ADRA India is also supporting 4,195 refugees during this COVID-19 pandemic through the COVID-19 response project funded by ADRA Austria in the Thiruvallur, Trichy and Chennai Districts of Tamil Nadu to create awareness on personal hygiene, providing dry rations of food to vulnerable households, providing hygiene kit support and cooked food to migrant workers.

SRI LANKA

The decades long Sri Lankan civil war that broke in 1983 and ending in 2009, created approximately 1.5 million refugees seeking asylum in countries around the world, 84,000 of which ended up in India. To this day, thousands remain in India while others have returned.

ADRA Sri Lanka has been supporting the safe and voluntary repatriation process of these refugees through the LESS project funded by the Australian Government (DFAT) and in partnership with ADRA India.

Through the LESS project, 5,000 refugee returnees are supported through strengthened Refugee Reintegration Networks, economic growth is supported through the Community Economic Development Forums (CEDF), family and local community economic systems are empowered, low income families and those with financial challenges receive livelihood support, Drop In Centres (DIC) and toll-free helplines are expanded to support information dissemination, community owned structures such as Protection Working Groups in Camps and Coordination Committees in Non-Camps are capacitated and livelihood skills training is provided to voluntary returnees.



THAILAND

In Thailand, ADRA has long supported Myanmar refugees in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border..

In recent years, ADRA Thailand has been supporting 126,001 refugees across 5 project interventions. These projects are funded by donors including; UNHCR, Thai Health Foundation, Stiftung Kinderzukunft, DFAT, Save the Children International, the Embassy of Canada and in partnerships with ADRA Canada and ADRA Switzerland.

Refugees in districts across Chiang Rai Province and in refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border, have been provided with legal assistance for stateless persons to receive legal documents such as birth registration, nationality and permanent residency in Thailand, improving health conditions for children vulnerable to human trafficking, ensuring children's rights to education and protection services, support of transition and reintegration, educational environments improved through school renovations and stipend support to teachers. 9 refugee camps are also supported in the prevention of COVID-19 through the distribution of IEC materials and hygiene kits to raise awareness.

BANGLADESH

In 2017, approximately 742,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar over the border to Bangladesh forming today what is the largest refugee camp in the world, Cox's Bazar. Previously 1.4 million Rohingya, an ethnic Muslim minority, lived in Myanmar's south-western Rakhine State.

In response, ADRA implemented 2 project interventions to support 104,086 refugees.

The CEARR project funded by the Canadian Government (IHA) and in partnership with ADRA Canada, increased access to emergency shelters for newly arrived refugees, distributed Non Food Items (NFIs), supported WASH and RMNCH practices, increased access to child friendly spaces for young boys and girls and increased participation of women and girls in protection activities.

The second project in partnership with ADRA New Zealand and ADRA Germany, built new shelters, restored drainage systems, repaired bamboo bridges and pathways, awareness on rights and safety for vulnerable groups, psychosocial support, new skill development curriculum designed to meet market needs, and vocational training and life skills provided to adolescents.



REFUGEE REPATRIATION IN SRI LANKA

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is defined as: “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”

Once the immediate needs of refugees who have arrived at a host country/location have been addressed, a longer-term solution needs to be looked at. The UNCHR promotes 3 core solutions for refugees that is accepted by the world at large when responding to refugee needs. The 3 solutions are:

Voluntary Repatriation - Voluntary repatriation may be one solution for refugees who have made the brave decision to return home.

Local Integration - Another alternative for those who are unable to return home is integration within the host community.

Resettlement - For those who cannot return, either because of continued conflict, wars or persecution, resettlement in another country is one alternative.

As per Jubilit, L L and Madureiral, A L (2016) there are 8 principles that give a general framework for these durable solutions to be based on:

- Perceiving durable solutions as protection
- Respecting the human rights principle of non-discrimination
- Commitment to not establishing limitations on human rights
- Balancing States’ interests and refugees’ needs

- Prioritising the best interests of refugees
- Involving refugees in seeking and implementing durable solutions
- Seeing durable solutions as part of a non-hierarchical toolbox
- Choosing the best solution for each case

Three decades of war left its mark on Sri Lanka which is much more clearly seen and felt in the Northern Province. The challenges that was faced by the province after the conclusion of the war in 2009 ranged from damaged and or non-existent infrastructure, constrains in reclaiming lands, lack of employment opportunities, deterioration of social services to lack of social cohesion, psychological trauma and more. The issues affecting refugee returnees and the communities they are more prone to settle in (Northern and Eastern Provinces) are multiple and complex, requiring an economic boost and strengthening of community social capital. When their needs and wants are being left unanswered for over a decade, these communities opt to relocate and some to attempt illegal migration.

According to the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) of Sri Lanka; Australia, U.K., France, Netherlands, and Canada see the highest numbers of irregular migrants from Sri Lanka. In fact, during the period of 2011-2012, 11% of all Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMA) from Sri Lanka happened in Australia. During the time of the war, India was one of the countries where many refugees sought asylum in. Since 1983 it is noted that approximately 130,000 sought refuge in host countries. At present 18,952 families (approximately 72,018) live in 106 refugee camps in Tamil Nadu with another 13,553 families (approximately 51,501 individuals) living as Non-camp refugees.

While repatriation back to their home countries is one of the most preferred options of refugees, there are many challenges that oppose the realization of this excluding the most obvious reasons such as continuing conflicts, persecution etc (the initial reason/ cause for people to flee their home countries).

All of the challenges listed below have been identified and validated through ADRA Sri Lanka and ADRA India’s experience in implementing a series of projects specifically targeting refugee returnees from India to Sri Lanka.

- Lack of legal documentations such Birth certificates, National Identification Card etc
- Processing Citizenship (this is an especially critical issue for children born in India to Sri Lankan parents who are in refugee camps)
- Processing other Civil documentation such as education qualifications
- Lack of information and misinformation – Lack of information about employment and economic situation of the home country was identified as a cause for refugee families to return to a home country that is not favorable towards their resettlement
- Political Situations where refugees prefer to return to a country whose government is favorable towards their plight
- Lack of a means of travel and transport (One of the findings of ADRA Sri Lanka and India was that the refugees in India who had accumulated belongings faced difficulties in bringing their belongings back to Sri Lanka when returning due to the limitations of baggage allowance by airlines. This is also linked to the situation (due to the spread of the COVID-19 Pandemic) at hand where more than 300 refugee families in India have

processed the required documentation and gone through the processes necessary for their return to Sri Lanka but their means of travelling back to Sri Lanka is currently not a viable option due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

At present, ADRA Sri Lanka (in partnership with ADRA India) works mainly with refugees through the durable solution of ‘Voluntary Repatriation’. ADRA Sri Lanka and India have been mainly working with Refugees in India and Refugee Returnees in Sri Lanka through a series of projects funded by the Australian Government. Through the project, ADRA has been able to support more than 600 individuals with acquiring and correctly processing the necessary documentation for repatriation leading to their successful return to Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, ADRA has been working on creating a conducive environment for the integration of these returnee families into the respective societies through various interventions varying from community campaigns and advocacy to improving the economic conditions of the communities to support them in increasing their quality of life.



Florentia Amarasinghe
ADRA Sri Lanka



The Crisis IS NOT OVER.

Please give generously to provide critical support and uplifting hope to those affected by COVID-19 in Asia and around the world



GIVE NOW