

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Australia	Cambodia	China	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Indonesia	Japan	Mongolia	Malaysia
New Zealand	Papua New Guinea	Philippines	Republic of Korea
Solomon Islands	Thailand	Viet Nam	East Timor
Lao People's Democratic Republic			

R ecent Developments

In East Timor, the humanitarian emergency following the pro-independence ballot in August 1999 has now subsided. Significant progress has been made in various areas, the most significant being the greater empowerment of the Timorese. Within the recently created National Council and Government Cabinet, half of the members are east Timorese. This should allow Timorese to assume a greater share of governmental responsibilities. These developments are expected to enhance repatriation and reconciliation efforts. The challenge of rebuilding physical infrastructure as well as the social fabric of the society, however, remains immense.

In Indonesia, developments in West Timor have been disappointing. Although over 168,000 refugees had returned to East Timor by mid-August, some 120,000 still remain in camps in West Timor, despite intensive repatriation efforts. The remaining refugees are the target of misinformation, harassment and intimidation by militias opposed to independence and return. Security threats to refugees and humanitarian workers intensified, compelling UNHCR to close its field office in Betun in mid-July, indefinitely postponing a much awaited refugee registration exercise. UNHCR has therefore requested the Government of Indonesia to fulfil its obligations set out in the MOU of 14 October 1999, as well as in the recently concluded security agreement between the local authorities and UNHCR in West Timor. UNHCR has set a deadline of October 2000 for full implementation. These obligations include maintaining law and order in and around refugee camps in West Timor and the separation of refugees from non-refugees. In the event these obligations are not met, UNHCR would be compelled to reassess both

the level of its presence and its activities in West Timor.

In the Solomon Islands, long-standing tensions between the Malaitan and Guadalcanal peoples led to low-level armed conflict in the first half of 1999. Up to 30,000 persons have been displaced. The situation deteriorated in early June when Malaitan extremists, aided by factions of Solomon Islands National Reconnaissance and Surveillance Force Police, seized the Prime Minister's Office, requested his resignation and took control of the State. Following a political breakthrough, the warring factions are currently engaged in cease-fire negotiations. While there has been no reported influx of refugees to neighbouring islands, UNHCR continues to monitor the situation closely.

In Fiji, a group of 50 armed indigenous Fijians took over the national Parliament complex in May, taking the Prime Minister and most cabinet members hostage. They demanded the resignation of the Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, a stronger role for indigenous Fijians and greater protection of indigenous land rights. Although the crisis did not lead to significant population displacement, there was a modest exodus of Indo-Fijians, most fleeing a potential escalation of conflict or seeking to join relatives. UNHCR is monitoring the impact of the recent release of the hostages and the creation of a new government.

In the Philippines, international attention has focused on developments in Southern Mindanao, where political instability has prevailed for over 25 years. Two separate incidents involving the kidnapping of locals (mostly school children) and of foreign tourists from a holiday island in Malaysia by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), have intensified armed con-

flict between the Government and the MILF and led to an increase in the number of IDPs to over 300,000. These IDPs have been evacuated to temporary shelters set up by the Government.

The unprecedented North-South Korea summit held between 13-15 June could pave the way for increased exchanges and co-operation within the peninsula and increase stability in the sub-region. UNHCR is monitoring development on the peninsula closely.

Strategic Objectives: Progress and Constraints

UNHCR's principal objectives within the region during the year 2000 are to ensure that: the fundamental protection principles of non-refoulement and asylum are respected; the quality of asylum is improved; and States adopt a more consistent, concerted approach to refugee issues. To this end, a range of advocacy, promotion, and capacity building initiatives were launched. Additional objectives are to persuade governments to accede to international instruments on refugees and statelessness, and continue to support regional consultative mechanisms dealing with refugee and mi-

gration issues. UNHCR also continued to advocate for the introduction and alignment of refugee legislation and status determination procedures throughout the region.

In view of the above, UNHCR has consistently promoted new accessions to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees as well as the statelessness conventions, translating these instruments into local languages, when necessary. In particular, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, UNHCR completed the translation of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the UNHCR Statue and the Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for the Determination of Refugee Status, which were then forwarded to the Government. In Mongolia, a translation of the Convention is in progress.

In Indonesia, UNHCR is discussing the details of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees with the Government, following the Government's announcement of its intention to accede to the international refugee instruments. Promotion activities on accession are also being carried out in Mongolia, and the Pacific islands of Tonga and Vanuatu. Accession to the statelessness convention is under



discussion in New Zealand.

The Asia-Pacific Consultations (APC), now in their fourth year, have become a self-sustaining process and a forum for the discussion of refugee and migration-related issues in the region. Given the diversity of the region, the APC decision to convene sub-regional and experts groups meetings has proven particularly effective. Sub-regional meetings for Mekong countries and the Pacific were held to discuss returnee reintegration and smuggling/trafficking of persons. Similar meetings as well as the annual plenary session are scheduled for later this year.

UNHCR continued to ensure that governments in the region are prepared to respond to sudden population movements and to stabilise populations at risk of displacement. To this end, UNHCR carried out intensive monitoring and assessed developments in Indonesia (Aceh, the Moluccas, Papua and West Kalimantan), the Philippines, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. In Indonesia, a training programme was set up to enhance the Government's capacity to respond to the needs of IDPs and refugees in the country. A regional workshop, five emergency training courses and a train-the-trainers session are scheduled to take place in the second half of 2000. In Japan, the Regional Emergency Training Centre for International Humanitarian Response was established. The Centre's mission is to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity in the Asia-Pacific region through information exchange, training activities and distance-learning programmes. The Centre was officially inaugurated in August. The Government of Japan has announced its commitment to support the Centre's activities and other donors in Asia have also expressed their interest for the project.

Activities until 30 June

For a description of UNHCR's operations in **Cambodia, East Timor** and **Thailand**, see separate chapters.

In **Australia**, the Government recently

adopted restrictive legislation relating to the reception and treatment of asylum-seekers who arrive illegally in the country. Australia signed a regional co-operation agreement with Indonesia, which provides for the interception, detention and screening of third-country nationals transiting through Indonesia en route to Australia. Approximately 500 asylum-seekers have since been intercepted and are in the process of being interviewed by UNHCR. UNHCR continues to monitor the implementation of Australia's obligations under the international refugee instruments. UNHCR established "Australia for UNHCR" which will conduct private sector fund-raising activities on behalf of UNHCR. UNHCR continued to be involved in training and policy development on resettlement.

UNHCR actively sought durable solutions for some 295,000 Vietnamese refugees in **China** in the form of naturalisation of the large majority and repatriation of a limited number who may still wish to return. UNHCR provided technical advice in the selection and monitoring of loan projects under the Revolving Fund Scheme for the benefit of the refugees' economic self-reliance. UNHCR will continue to support the enactment and implementation of the national refugee law currently under review by the State Council and concerned Ministries, through legal advice and promotion of refugee law, along with public awareness activities.

On 17 July, the last Vietnamese refugee centre within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese refugees (CPA) was officially closed, after the remaining 1,400 residents were given the right of abode in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) under the widened local settlement scheme. The closure of the centre ended the last chapter of the CPA in South East Asia. UNHCR will maintain a presence in Hong Kong SAR during 2000 to facilitate advocacy and refugee status determination in respect of asylum-seekers.

The principal activities of UNHCR's office in Tokyo remained protection, public informa-

tion and fundraising in both **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea**. UNHCR provided advisory support towards the development of national refugee legislation and refugee status determination procedures in both countries. Initial steps were taken towards the creation of a national committee, which will undertake promotional and private sector fundraising activities in Japan on behalf of UNHCR.

In **Indonesia**, the numbers of urban asylum-seekers and refugees have increased significantly. During the first half of the year, 97 asylum-seekers approached UNHCR to apply for refugee status and assistance. In the meantime, UNHCR conducted eligibility assessments and provided assistance to 503 interdicted people from the Middle East, mainly Iraqis.

In the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, UNHCR provided reintegration assistance to 29,068 returnees living in 36 rural settlement areas. Particular attention was given to the group of 1,162 people who repatriated from Ban Napho camp in Thailand during the last quarter of 1999. Out of 36 rural settlements, seven are still unable to achieve self-sufficiency in the near future. UNHCR established a "Task Force for Durable Solutions for Lao Returnees" involving the Government and development agencies which have expressed an interest in including these settlements in their development projects, in order to facilitate the phase-out of UNHCR operations in the country.

The first official visit to **Mongolia** was conducted by UNHCR in May. On this occasion, a MOU was signed between UNHCR and the Government of Mongolia incorporating a plan of action, which outlines co-operation to promote of refugee law and build national capacity in refugee matters. The Government of Mongolia indicated a commitment to accede to the 1951 Convention.

In **New Zealand**, UNHCR is assisting the Government to implement its obligations under the Convention. This includes advocating for expeditious and fair refugee status determination without resorting to detention of asylum-

seekers.

In **Papua New Guinea**, 171 Papuans from East Awin Settlement Centre have repatriated to Papua (former Irian Jaya) in Indonesia under UNHCR's auspices. An additional 680 persons are expected to return to Papua during the course of the year.

In **Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore**, UNHCR continued providing protection and assistance and sought durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR also monitored potential population displacements and provided support to emergency preparedness and capacity building activities through training and seminars.

In **Viet Nam**, UNHCR carried out a number of monitoring visits to returnee areas, provided repatriation assistance to 21 CPA returnees and conducted advocacy activities through the provision of training to government officials. With the completion of the repatriation of Laotians, Cambodians and Vietnamese from Thailand and neighbouring countries, preparatory work is being undertaken for a lessons learned exercise involving the three countries and Thailand. A workshop on this issue is scheduled to take in the last quarter of 2000.

Outlook for July - December

UNHCR's overall objectives in the region remain unchanged. Funding restrictions during the first six months of the year might affect UNHCR's phase-out plan in Cambodia, where UNHCR is due to wind up its activities by the end of the year. The reintegration projects may not be completed before the end of December. UNHCR may need to make additional budgetary provisions in 2001 to cover the delayed phase-out.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget		Revised Budget		Total Funds Available*		Total Funds Obligated	
	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP	AB and TF	SP
Countries								
Australia & New Zealand	951'205	240'100	1'168'705	396'637	487'280	277'646	484'850	277'646
Cambodia	3'739'571	0	3'779'565	0	2'885'212	0	1'968'700	0
China	1'804'840	0	2'153'880	0	892'700	0	892'700	0
Indonesia (incl. East Timor)	698'277	#####	1'642'142	#####	596'900	#####	596'900	15'363'300
Japan	2'685'316	0	3'220'331	0	1'458'892	0	1'368'000	0
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	1'087'490	0	1'393'678	0	602'100	0	602'100	0
Malaysia	683'898	0	676'922	0	282'000	0	282'000	0
Papua New Guinea	44'500	0	200'100	0	174'600	0	174'600	0
Philippines	354'650	0	345'650	0	169'300	0	169'300	0
Singapore	60'700	0	60'700	0	30'000	0	30'000	0
Thailand	5'987'452	0	5'963'156	0	2'681'485	0	2'439'400	0
Viet Nam	130'856	0	159'463	0	79'900	0	79'900	0
Regional Projects **	253'100	0	328'100	0	703'727	0	128'700	0
Sub-total	18'481'855	15'683'198	21'092'392	36'907'429	11'044'097	22'036'232	9'217'150	15'640'946
Bureau at Headquarters	777'295	194'900	758'813	364'642	346'586	300'000	346'586	331'420
TOTAL	19'259'150	15'878'098	21'851'205	37'272'071	11'390'683	22'336'232	9'563'736	15'972'366

*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region and countries within the region, opening balance and adjustments.

**Covers assistance to snowstorm victims in Mongolia, general protection activities, dissemination of refugee law in East Asia, assistance to refugees in the South Pacific, Asia-Pacific consultations, repatriation of Indochinese refugees, and scholarships for refugee students.

