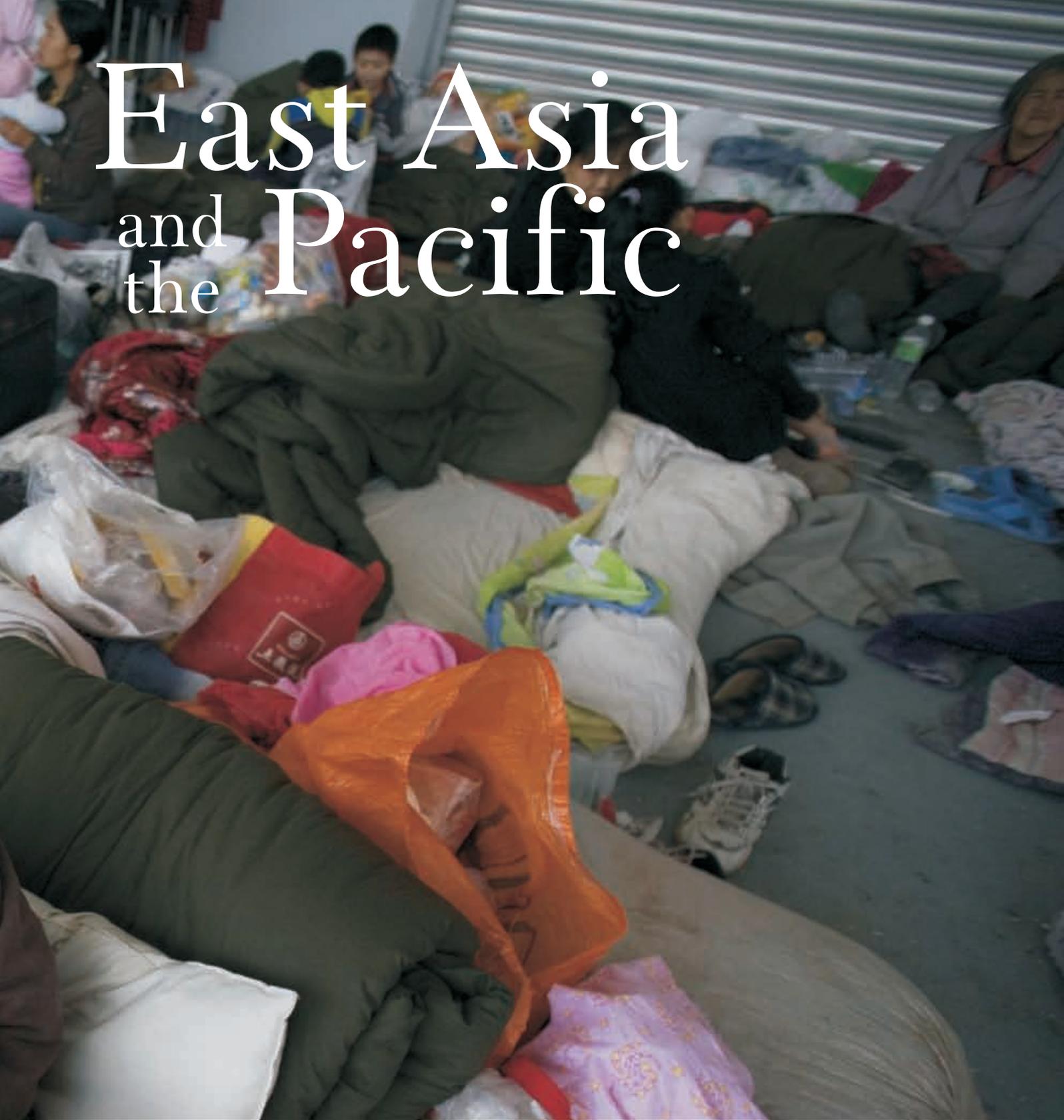




Liu Chunnan, 22, with her 10-day old baby in a camp for people whose homes were destroyed in the Sichuan earthquake, China

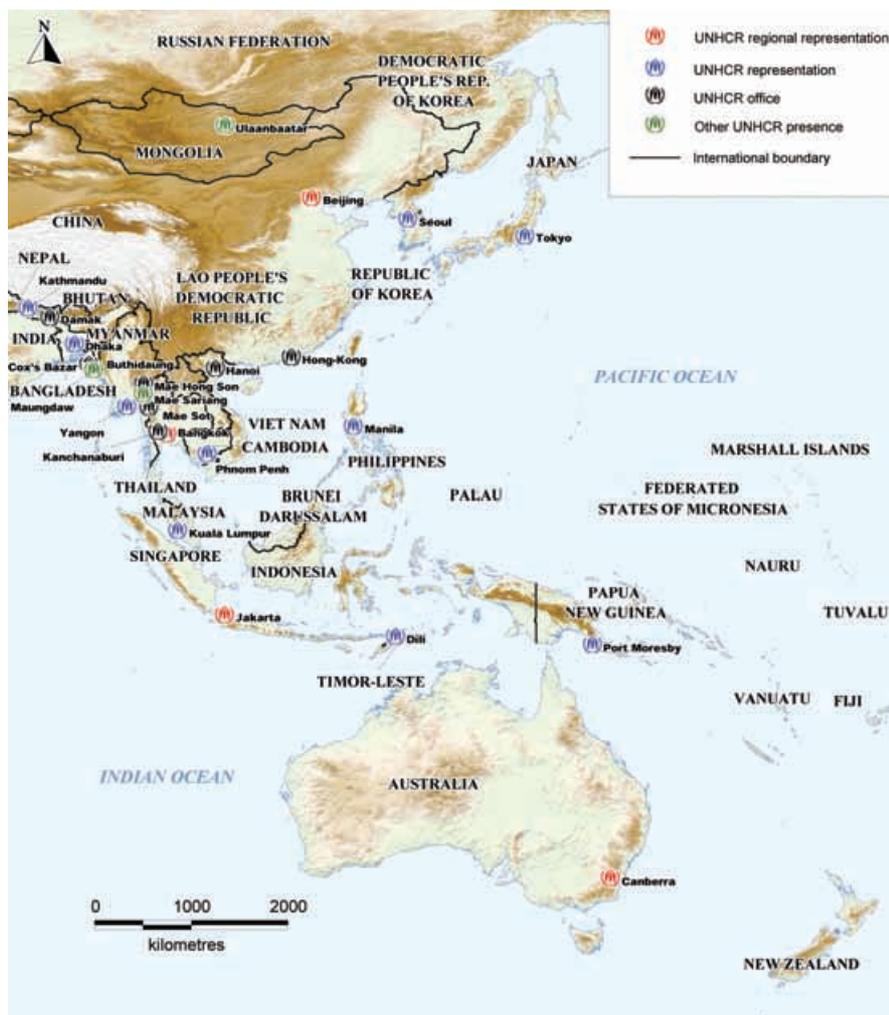
Australia  
Cambodia  
China  
Democratic People's Republic of Korea  
Indonesia  
Japan  
Lao People's Democratic Republic  
Malaysia  
Mongolia  
Myanmar  
New Zealand  
Papua New Guinea  
Philippines  
Republic of Korea  
Singapore  
South Pacific  
Thailand  
Timor-Leste  
Viet Nam

A photograph showing a crowded, temporary shelter. People are sitting on the floor amidst their belongings, including bags, clothing, and bedding. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an indoor setting with limited natural light. The overall atmosphere is one of a makeshift living space.

# East Asia and the Pacific

## | OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- UNHCR focused on the search for durable solutions in 2008. In Malaysia, the Office submitted a landmark 9,000 resettlement submissions during the year, and saw 6,000 refugees departing for third countries. Approximately 17,000 persons of concern were registered by UNHCR in 2008, bringing the total number of those registered in Malaysia over 45,400.
- More than 17,000 Myanmar refugees were resettled from Thailand in 2008. More than 40,000 people have departed for resettlement from Thailand since January 2004.
- UNHCR resettled 46 cases (involving 114 refugees) from the People's Republic of China thanks to the generous and prompt response of resettlement countries.
- In the Hong Kong SAR China, an intensive review of refugee status determination (RSD) procedures and increased staffing and support for RSD and registration helped the Office to close 1,553 cases (1,579 individuals). This reduced the backlog of pending asylum applications significantly by the end of the year.



the national authorities and by strengthening ties with civil society. In Thailand, the large-scale resettlement process currently underway reduced the number of registered refugees in the border camps to some 111,100 by the end of 2008, down from some 124,000 in the previous year.

However, new arrivals of people from Myanmar in Thailand and their informal settling in refugee camps resulted in an unregistered population of some 30,000 to 40,000. To address this concern, the Office and the Government agreed at the end of 2008 to take steps to ensure the screening of the unregistered population.

UNHCR's continued cooperation with the authorities to prepare for Indonesia's accession to the international refugee instruments helped to promote asylum issues. The Office's enhanced capacity in Indonesia contributed to more efficient protection and helped develop the capacity of national stakeholders.

In the People's Republic of China, the Government revived discussions on the development of national refugee legislation during the second half of the year.

In the Hong Kong SAR China, the Government and UNHCR finalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on enhanced cooperation. Under the MoU, signed in January 2009, training of immigration officers on screening procedures will be enhanced.

In December 2008, the Government of Japan announced its decision to pilot a three-year resettlement programme for 90 refugees from Myanmar, starting in 2010. Japan is the first country in the Asian continent to adopt a resettlement programme.

In the Republic of Korea, UNHCR and the Korea Immigration Service signed an Exchange of Letters aimed at enhancing the quality and sustainability of RSD in the country. UNHCR appointed the well-known Korean animated character Robot Taekwon V as its first Goodwill Envoy in the country, raising the Agency's profile and enhancing fund-raising efforts.

In Cambodia, following the Government's decision to assume responsibility for RSD, a Refugee Office was established under the Ministry of the Interior in October 2008. There was significant progress in the search for solutions for Montagnard refugees in Cambodia following implementation of the MoU signed by UNHCR, Cambodia and Viet Nam in January 2005. At the end of 2008, only 236 Montagnards remained in the UNHCR-assisted sites awaiting a durable solution.

In Viet Nam, UNHCR was able to travel to the Central Highlands to observe the situation of Montagnards who had returned from Cambodia. Further strides were made in the prevention and reduction of statelessness as the

## Working environment

Within the overall context of continuing irregular migratory movements in the East Asia and the Pacific region, States' concerns about national security and the priority given to bilateral cooperation over refugee protection had a negative impact on asylum and protection, with few positive exceptions.

The situation of the Muslim residents of northern Rakhine State in Myanmar continued to be very difficult, resulting in large outflows of people from the region at the end of 2008. The situation came to the forefront of international attention with boatloads of asylum-seekers heading principally for Malaysia, but also landing in Thailand and Indonesia. The scale of the problem prompted UNHCR to advocate strongly with Governments in the region for the need to adopt a regional approach.

In Australia, the new Government reaffirmed its support for multilateral processes, particularly the UN system, and made several positive changes in asylum policy and practice.

The vulnerability of some States in the Pacific to the effects of climate change led to increasing interest in the links between climate change and forced displacement.

## Achievements and impact

There was steady progress in resettlement activities in Malaysia and Thailand. In Malaysia, UNHCR was able to enhance awareness of refugee issues through dialogue with

naturalization process for some 9,500 former Cambodian refugees began to take effect in September 2008. By the end of 2008 significant parts of the planned process, including a census, information campaign, training for local officials and filling of applications, had been completed.

## | Constraints |

Legitimate government concerns related to national security and the curbing of irregular migration had an impact on the protection of people of concern to UNHCR in the region. The Office had difficulty in ensuring the *non-refoulement* of asylum-seekers and refugees, allowing entry and access to asylum, and making certain that individuals in need of protection could avail of their basic rights, including to education, health and documentation.

The coping mechanisms of urban refugees have been severely strained over the past year. This situation is expected to worsen in light of the global economic crisis.

Another major problem was the increasing use of immigration detention facilities to hold asylum-seekers and refugees, including children and vulnerable groups, making it difficult for UNHCR to obtain access to those detained.

## | Operations |

UNHCR's operations in **Thailand** and **Myanmar** are covered in separate country chapters.

In the absence of national refugee legislation and related mechanisms in **Malaysia**, UNHCR performed core protection functions for more than 45,400 registered people of concern, including approximately 17,000 newly registered. RSD and resettlement procedures resulted in almost 12,000 RSD decisions, as well as a substantial number of submissions for resettlement. However, UNHCR's advocacy for alternative solutions with regard to refugees from Myanmar's northern Rakhine State did not produce the desired results.

In **Indonesia**, UNHCR boosted its capacity-building activities to help the Government prepare for accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The Office also increased its protection capacity to deal with the steadily increasing number of new arrivals in the country. Durable solutions through resettlement were found for 82 individuals, mostly from Iraq and Afghanistan, while a smaller number of refugees were helped to repatriate.

In **Timor-Leste**, UNHCR's operations focused on capacity-building for the national authorities.

In the **Philippines**, the Office continued to advise on various aspects of asylum policy and practice and to pursue durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, resettlement and naturalization. Three refugees were granted citizenship and about 50 individuals are at different stages in the process of finding durable solutions.

In **Singapore**, where UNHCR does not have a presence, a small number of individual cases were resettled on an emergency basis.

In **Cambodia**, a total of 814 people were under UNHCR protection in 2008. This number consisted of 678 Montagnards and 136 urban asylum-seekers and refugees. Within the framework of the 2005 MoU signed by UNHCR, Cambodia and Viet Nam, steps were taken to resolve the situation of the Montagnards. With an increase in returns to Viet Nam and the resettlement of 82 individuals in 2008,

UNHCR was able to close one of the refugee sites in the country in November. At the end of the year only 236 Montagnards remained at the two remaining sites.

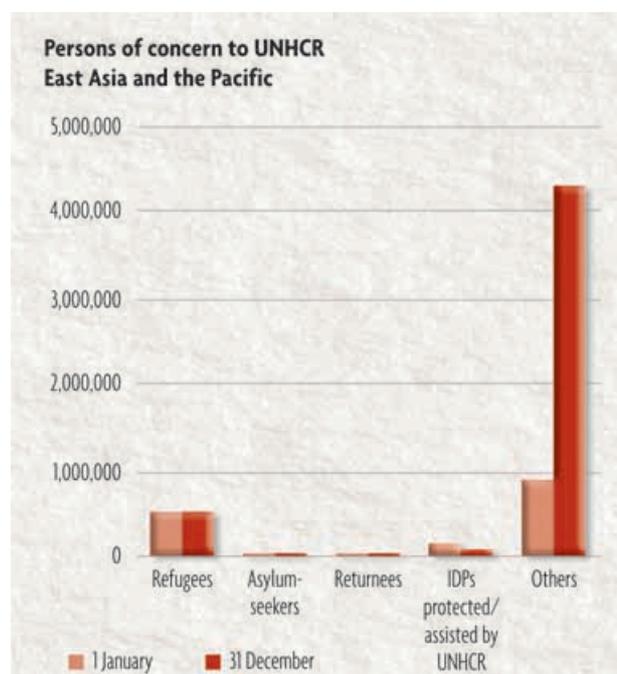
In **Viet Nam**, a total of 315 Montagnards returned to the Central Highlands provinces in 2008. UNHCR made two monitoring visits to assess the situation of the returnees. To facilitate their reintegration, the Office implemented nine micro-projects in the education sector in collaboration with the Government. Furthermore, to help the Government facilitate the local integration through naturalization of former Cambodian refugees who had been de facto stateless, UNHCR implemented five micro-projects in the vocational training and education sectors.

**Australia's** resettlement programme continued in 2008 and provided durable solutions for approximately 6,000 UNHCR-referred refugees. UNHCR welcomed the new Government's decision to close the reception centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, and to abolish the temporary protection visa regime.

The Government of **New Zealand** maintained its resettlement intake at 750 places under its 2008-2009 refugee quota.

Based on a 10-Point Plan, UNHCR began implementing a Strategy for Protection Capacity Building in the Pacific Region by establishing communications with key partners and stakeholders and setting the scope, direction and priorities of work. A subregional workshop on the Implementation of Refugee Legislation and a workshop on Climate Change, Human Rights and Human Displacement were used to present the strategy.

In the **People's Republic of China**, long-awaited regulations to establish a national asylum system had not been finalized by the end of 2008. The number of urban refugee cases decreased to 26 cases (55 individuals) because of UNHCR's successful resettlement programme. The tight security measures in place prior to and during the Olympics games probably resulted in the lower number of asylum applications noted by UNHCR in 2008. All refugees were temporarily relocated to areas outside Beijing prior to the Olympic Games, but were allowed to return once the games were over. While UNHCR objected to a few cases of



*refoulement* of refugees and asylum-seekers in the early part of the year, following discussions with the authorities no more *refoulement* took place in 2008.

In **Japan**, following extensive consultations with UNHCR, the Government announced in December 2008 that it would launch a pilot resettlement programme. Asylum applications increased multifold: from 384 in 2005 to an estimated 1,600 by the end of 2008. At the same time, Immigration authorities processed an unprecedentedly high number of asylum claims (1,269), recognized 57 individuals as Convention refugees and granted humanitarian status to 360 individuals (including appeal instance). The Japanese Ministry of Justice's practices with regard to the reception of asylum-seekers continued to improve and asylum-seekers continued to be released from detention following UNHCR's interventions.

The total contribution of the Government of Japan to UNHCR reached USD 110.3 million, exceeding USD 100 million for the first time since 2002. Through proactive external relations and public information strategies the Office was able to increase awareness of and support for its activities on behalf of refugees in Japan and worldwide.

The anticipated accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention by **Mongolia** was deferred, mainly because of the delay caused by the Parliamentary elections in June 2008.

In **Papua New Guinea**, UNHCR continued to protect and assist 2,700 refugees from the Indonesian province of West Papua living in East Awin. The Office invested in boosting refugees' self-reliance and local settlement opportunities by procuring heavy equipment to repair the road leading to the settlements in East Awin. The work is part of the Government's development plans for the province.

In the **Republic of Korea**, the first report of joint Government-UNHCR quality-monitoring project, the Korea RSD Improvement and Sustainability Project, or KRISP, facilitated the clear identification of areas needing improvement in the national RSD system. Changes were made to legislation so that asylum-seekers would have the right to work from mid-2009. At the same time, difficulties with access to the asylum procedure and in the identification and treatment of stateless people came to light. The total number of cases pending RSD with the authorities grew from 1,140 at the end of 2007 to some 1,290 at the end of 2008.

### Financial information

Funding was adequate for essential activities in the majority of countries in 2008, but not all priority needs could be met. Over the period 2003-2006, expenditures on annual programmes for the East Asian subregion remained fairly constant with an increase in 2007 and 2008 to approximately USD 40 million. The rise was mainly due to new and additional resettlement and protection-capacity activities in Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia, as well as integration and statelessness activities in Viet Nam and health and nutrition activities in the subregion. The downward trend in expenditures in Indonesia was due to the termination of UNHCR's tsunami response operation. Local fund raising by country offices in the Hong Kong SAR, China, the Republic of Korea and Japan filled some gaps, while the considerable increase in resettlement activities in Malaysia and Thailand drew strong donor support.

#### Budget and expenditure in East Asia and the Pacific (USD)

East Asia and the Pacific	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Australia and New Zealand	1,274,967	0	1,274,967	1,093,351	0	1,093,351
Cambodia	1,310,568	0	1,310,568	1,222,363	0	1,222,363
China	4,552,330	4,672,897	9,225,227	4,405,316	3,366,000	7,771,316
Indonesia	2,907,107	0	2,907,107	2,478,974	0	2,478,974
Japan	2,985,008	0	2,985,008	2,895,259	0	2,895,259
Malaysia	5,936,649	0	5,936,649	5,652,258	0	5,652,258
Mongolia	336,758	0	336,758	168,904	0	168,904
Myanmar	7,081,841	8,199,869	15,281,710	7,011,563	6,730,291	13,741,854
Papua New Guinea	920,448	0	920,448	913,305	0	913,305
Philippines	280,181	0	280,181	212,523	0	212,523
Republic of Korea	887,676	0	887,676	748,703	0	748,703
Singapore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thailand	14,241,292	49,850	14,291,142	13,882,256	49,146	13,931,402
Timor Leste	237,478	0	237,478	214,108	0	214,108
Viet Nam	906,346	0	906,346	855,002	0	855,002
Regional activities <sup>1</sup>	98,586	0	98,586	48,406	0	48,406
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,957,235</b>	<b>12,922,616</b>	<b>56,879,851</b>	<b>41,802,293</b>	<b>10,145,437</b>	<b>51,947,730</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes protection activities, dissemination of refugee law, transport and repatriation activities for Indochinese refugees.

#### Voluntary contributions to East Asia and the Pacific (USD)

Earmarking	Donor	Annual Budget	Supplementary Budget	Total
Australia	Australia	105,566		105,566
	<b>Australia Subtotal</b>	<b>105,566</b>		<b>105,566</b>

Earmarking	Donor	Annual Budget	Supplementary Budget	Total
China	CERF		1,869,159	1,869,159
	Australia for UNHCR		6,276	6,276
	Private donors in Canada		232,500	232,500
	Private donors in China		53,592	53,592
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO (Germany)</i>		72,187	72,187
	Private Donors in Greece		71,079	71,079
	Private Donors in Italy		65,100	65,100
	Japan Association for UNHCR		207,046	207,046
	Private Donors in Luxembourg		181	181
	<i>España con ACNUR</i>		5,124	5,124
	HQ Online Donations		14,816	14,816
<b>China Subtotal</b>			<b>2,597,060</b>	<b>2,597,060</b>
Indonesia	Australia	642,122		642,122
<b>Indonesia Subtotal</b>		<b>642,122</b>		<b>642,122</b>
Japan	Japan	131,158		131,158
	Japan Association for UNHCR	189,455		189,455
<b>Japan Subtotal</b>		<b>320,613</b>		<b>320,613</b>
Malaysia	Private donors in Malaysia	905		905
	United States of America	672,224		672,224
<b>Malaysia Subtotal</b>		<b>673,129</b>		<b>673,129</b>
Myanmar	Australia	438,596	432,558	871,155
	Austria		362,150	362,150
	Canada		550,839	550,839
	CERF	717,388	1,539,120	2,256,508
	European Commission	2,478,134		2,478,134
	Germany		464,277	464,277
	Japan	1,400,000	1,614,313	3,014,313
	Australia for UNHCR		538,674	538,674
	Private donors in Austria		1,218	1,218
	Private donors in Canada		66,327	66,327
	Private donors in China		12,865	12,865
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO (Germany)</i>	155,294	289,058	444,352
	Private Donors in Greece	39,808	71,079	110,887
	Private donors in Italy		223,691	223,691
	Japan Association for UNHCR		811,699	811,699
	<i>España con ACNUR</i>		53,103	53,103
	HQ Online Donations		1,908	1,908
	UNHCR Staff		27,900	27,900
	Private donors in the United Kingdom		1,541	1,541
	USA for UNHCR		236,087	236,087
	Republic of Korea		93,000	93,000
	Spain		216,952	216,952
	United States of America	625,000	93,000	718,000
<b>Myanmar Subtotal</b>		<b>5,854,220</b>	<b>7,701,359</b>	<b>13,555,580</b>
Papua New Guinea	Australia for UNHCR	8,612		8,612
<b>Papua New Guinea Subtotal</b>		<b>8,612</b>		<b>8,612</b>
Thailand	Australia	1,403,033		1,403,033
	European Commission	325,356		325,356
	Japan	1,000,000		1,000,000
	Luxembourg	364,431		364,431
	Australia for UNHCR	74,650		74,650
	Japan Association for UNHCR	173,794		173,794
	Private donors in Thailand	167,684		167,684
	Switzerland	501,505		501,505
	Joint UN Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS)	167,267		167,267
	United States of America	1,336,773		1,336,773
	<b>Thailand Subtotal</b>		<b>5,514,492</b>	
Timor Leste	Australia for UNHCR	451		451
<b>Timor Leste Subtotal</b>		<b>451</b>		<b>451</b>
Viet Nam Subtotal	European Commission	562,784		562,784
<b>Viet Nam Subtotal</b>		<b>562,784</b>		<b>562,784</b>
East Asia and Pacific Subregion	United States of America	9,122,000		9,122,000
<b>East Asia And Pacific Subtotal</b>		<b>9,122,000</b>		<b>9,122,000</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>22,803,989</b>	<b>10,298,420</b>	<b>33,102,409</b>

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.