

This chapter provides a summary of the general environment in which UNHCR is operating in Asia and the Pacific, and the organization's planned responses in 2015. Mention is made of major challenges including those related to protection at sea, which will continue to have a significant impact on UNHCR's work in 2015 and beyond.

Details of operations plans and budgets for 2015 are provided in the subregional and country chapters which are published in the digital version of the Global Appeal 2015 Update at www.unhcr.org. This Global Appeal will soon be complemented by further information on the redesigned Global Focus website which is being launched at the end of the year.

| WORKING ENVIRONMENT |

- The Asia and the Pacific region is home to 7.7 million people of concern to UNHCR: they include 3.5 million refugees, 1.9 million internally displaced people (IDPs), and 1.4 million stateless people. The majority of the refugees originate from Afghanistan and Myanmar. Over two thirds live outside camps, mainly in urban environments where they often find inadequate protection, leading to onward irregular movement by sea. Most countries and territories in Asia and the Pacific continue to uphold their long tradition of hospitality to refugees and displaced people, although only 20 of them have acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol.

- The Afghan refugee populations constitute the largest protracted situation in the world. Up to 96 per cent of all Afghan refugees are living in the neighbouring Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, which have generously

hosted them for over three decades. The 2012 Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), and its country-specific portfolios of projects elaborated in close cooperation with the three concerned States and with the strong support of UNHCR's partners, constitutes a framework for promoting sustainable solutions, ensuring a favourable protection environment, and providing support to host communities.

- The Myanmar situation also remains a key operation. People from different ethnic groups have been fleeing for several decades to seek protection from ethnic conflict and violence. Currently an estimated 500,000 refugees from Myanmar are in neighbouring countries in the region. This includes Karen and Karenni in Thailand, Chins in Malaysia, Rohingyas in Bangladesh and large urban populations in cities across the region.

A Rohingya refugee from Myanmar in Bangladesh.

ASIA AND THE



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- There are over 400,000 IDPs in Myanmar, more than half of the population of Kachin and Rakhine States. This includes over 140,000 people displaced during inter-communal violence two years ago, many of whom have undetermined citizenship status.
- Around 63 per cent of the 3.5 million refugees in the Asia-Pacific region live outside of camps. Many of them are more vulnerable than those in camps and their protection needs are often inadequately addressed. Although not confined to the boundaries of a camp, the freedom of movement of these urban refugees is often limited. Many lack documentation and risk detention and deportation. Detention practices and other forms of restrictive asylum policies continue to spread, limiting refugees' access to basic services and socio-economic rights. Lack of status and documentation prevents them from legally accessing the labour market and they become victims of exploitation, with women and adolescent girls particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.
- A rise in irregular maritime movements in South-East Asia has resulted in major challenges in ensuring protection at sea. Many refugees are risking their lives to cross the sea in search of safety and protection, increasingly with their families, including small children. UNHCR figures show a significant spike in the estimated number of people departing irregularly by sea from the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area in the Bay of Bengal. Many have survived abuse during the journey and arrive in the region suffering malnutrition. There are also reports of deaths. The increasing numbers also place a heavy burden on national asylum systems and mandate refugee status determination (RSD).
- The 2010 Regional Cooperation Framework proposed by UNHCR and welcomed by States in the Asia-Pacific region provides practical arrangements for responding to and effectively managing refugee and irregular movements in the region. The Framework assists participating States to develop predictable responses and to pool support for dealing with these mixed movements.

| STRATEGY |

○ *Safeguarding protection and asylum space*

Advocating for protection-sensitive migration management systems in the context of growing irregular maritime movements will remain a priority for UNHCR. In the 12 months ending June 2014, UNHCR estimates that some 53,000 people departed irregularly by sea from the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area in the bay of Bengal, a 61 per cent increase compared with the previous 12 months.

With over 7,000 people of concern to UNHCR in detention facilities in South-East Asia and the Pacific, alternatives to the detention of asylum-seekers and the development of temporary stay arrangements are being pursued. UNHCR will also seek to harmonize approaches in asylum practices across the region, and continue to press for a broad consensus on rescue-at-sea measures, disembarkation arrangements and burden sharing, using regional migration processes such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

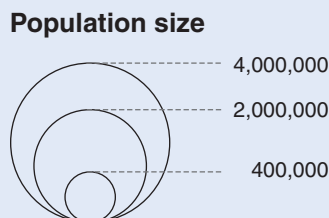
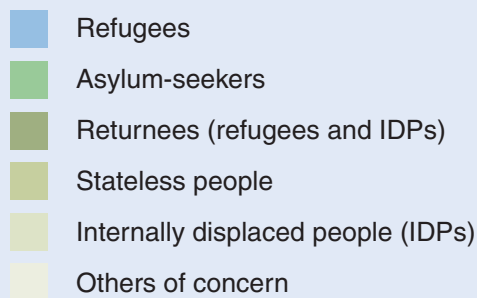
In the absence of relevant national asylum systems, UNHCR is conducting mandate RSD in 17 countries in Central Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia, while promoting the establishment of asylum procedures in these countries. Mixed flows of urban asylum-seekers and migrants are growing in Asia and the Pacific. The Office will endeavour to assist States in their responses, balancing their need for border and migration control with protection standards.

In Central Asia, UNHCR will support the Almaty Process on Refugee Protection and International Migration launched in 2012, which is gaining momentum with the nomination of national coordinators by participating States. It will also assist in developing national asylum systems and their gradual alignment with international standards.

○ *Pursuing solutions for protracted refugee situations*

The situation in South-West Asia will be substantially affected by the outcome of the political and security transition in Afghanistan, where challenges remain for the return and sustainable reintegration of Afghan returnees. In 2015, UNHCR will promote the implementation of the SSAR as the consensus-building platform to support the three concerned States with this process and to mobilize resources for the outcomes of the strategy.

One of the main objectives towards the successful implementation of the SSAR is to address the needs of Afghans returnees to ensure sustainable reintegration into their communities and support to rebuild their lives in their country of origin. Half of the refugees in the neighbouring countries are children and young people in need of education opportunities, and skills and livelihood training. Under the SSAR, one of the key priorities is to empower youth through access to education and vocational training, to help rebuild their lives, in either Pakistan or Afghanistan.



Inside Afghanistan, the priority will be to enhance the reintegration of returnees through strengthened partnerships and advocacy with government institutions and development actors. An effort to further incentivize voluntary repatriation will also be considered.

UNHCR will continue providing support to countries with long-standing refugee populations. Solutions are being sought for protracted camp situations in Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand. In south-eastern Myanmar, the monitoring of small-scale returns from Thailand will allow UNHCR to build a profile of potential return areas and needs within Myanmar, should returns begin on a larger scale. UNHCR will continue planning for return, including through consultations with refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Resettlement remains prominent as a durable solution in the region, and accounts for half of all resettlement departures worldwide. In Nepal, the resettlement programme that has already allowed the departure of over 92,500 refugees from Bhutan since 2007 will continue in 2015, while other durable solutions are sought, in consultation with concerned Governments.

In 2013, the group resettlement from Thailand and Nepal came to a close. In total, there were 32,700 departures from Asia. Malaysia, Nepal and Thailand remained the world's top three departure countries. Refugees departing for resettlement originated predominantly from Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Myanmar.

UNHCR will further strengthen its partnerships with government authorities and civil society to assist growing urban refugee populations, including through alternative stay arrangements, improved livelihoods through regular migration, and access to national services such as education and health.

○ *Ensuring protection and durable solutions for IDPs*

Military operations in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan in 2014 resulted in the displacement of over 500,000 people in Pakistan and a further 200,000 people crossed the border into Afghanistan. UNHCR works closely with the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan and Pakistan to help protect and assist those affected.

Moreover, there are over 700,000 registered IDPs in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as a result of the military operations. UNHCR is leading the protection, shelter and camp coordination and management (CCCM) clusters. The Office will also participate in the Return Task Force and advocate for the Government to adopt an IDP policy in conformity with international standards.

In Afghanistan, UNHCR will continue addressing the most pressing needs of 68,000 IDPs in urban areas, and support their return and reintegration alongside returned refugees. Data collection will be improved to help assess secondary displacements and spontaneous returns.

The number of displaced people in Myanmar remains high. UNHCR continues supporting the inter-agency response to internal displacement in Kachin and northern Shan States, where fresh displacement was seen due to renewed armed clashes in 2014. Most of the 140,000 IDPs in Rakhine State – many of them without citizenship – are in camps, having been displaced by inter-communal violence since June 2012. UNHCR will continue leading the combined cluster for shelter, CCCM and non-food items. The Office also provides community-based assistance in south-eastern Myanmar, where some 230,000 IDPs in a protracted displacement situation have integrated locally over the years.

In the Philippines, UNHCR together with the Government is co-leading the protection cluster for those displaced by internal conflict in Mindanao, and will support the Government in operationalizing its policy framework for IDPs, in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. In support of the peace process, the Office will also contribute towards preventing further displacement in the Mindanao region.

○ *Reducing and preventing statelessness*

The global 10-year Campaign to End Statelessness being launched this year by UNHCR is especially pertinent for the Asia-Pacific region, where more than 1.4 million people are stateless or at risk of statelessness.

The largest group is in Myanmar's Rakhine State, where an estimated 1.09 million people lack citizenship. UNHCR provides advice and capacity-building support to the Government to help address challenges related to citizenship. At the same time, UNHCR advocates for the respect of the fundamental rights of those people who are stateless.

A number of Governments in Central Asia, such as those of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, have taken positive steps by awarding citizenship to more than 60,000

people since 2005. UNHCR will support initiatives in other countries by advocating for the adoption of similar provisions or naturalization processes.

Other stateless populations, or people at risk of statelessness, are to be found in countries of Central Asia, in Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. In South-East Asia, two Seeds for Solutions projects are being implemented in Malaysia and the Philippines, with a focus on the prevention and reduction of statelessness. In 2014, a number of meetings and conferences aimed at the improvement of civil registration, including birth registration and vital statistics, together with partners such as ASEAN, will be continued in 2015.

○ *Maintaining operations in high-risk areas and ensuring staff safety*

Some of UNHCR's offices in the region are located in high-risk areas where a delicate balance has to be struck between protecting and assisting people of concern and ensuring the safety of its staff and partners. Afghanistan's volatile security environment has required UNHCR to set up remote delivery mechanisms with local partners. Such measures will continue. In Pakistan, UNHCR works closely with government counterparts and local partners to improve outreach in insecure areas.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

In 2014, by mid-year, the revised comprehensive budget for Asia and the Pacific stood at USD 587.1 million. Since then, new requirements for the population displacement in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan; the Afghanistan operation's emergency response; and continued emergency humanitarian needs in response to the impact of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, have further increased the 2014 budget to over USD 611 million (as of September 2014).

The 2015 ExCom-approved budget for Asia and the Pacific is set at USD 565.2 million. The financial requirements for the South-West Asia subregion represent some 61 per cent (USD 344.8 million) of the total budget for the region. The financial requirements for the Myanmar operation represent some 12 per cent (USD 68 million) and the remaining 27 per cent is shared by 18 medium-sized and small operations in other subregions.

| CHALLENGES |

In Afghanistan's political transition period, foreign investment in the country has been on hold and development projects are difficult to implement. People face severe difficulties in finding jobs or livelihood opportunities within an unstable economic, political and security environment. The return programmes have slowed down to a trickle and about 2.6 million Afghans still remain outside their country as registered refugees. In addition, in 2013, Afghans topped the list of nationalities claiming asylum globally.

UNHCR, together with concerned States and partners, continues to mobilize the international community to step up its engagement by providing more support to address the humanitarian needs and strengthen the search for long-term solutions for Afghan nationals.

UNHCR acknowledges recent steps taken by Myanmar authorities to grant citizenship to over 200 people and their children under a pilot project. However there are still large populations, both inside Myanmar as well as within the region, in need of longer-term solutions. The Office remains committed to supporting the Government in addressing citizenship issues in accordance with international standards.

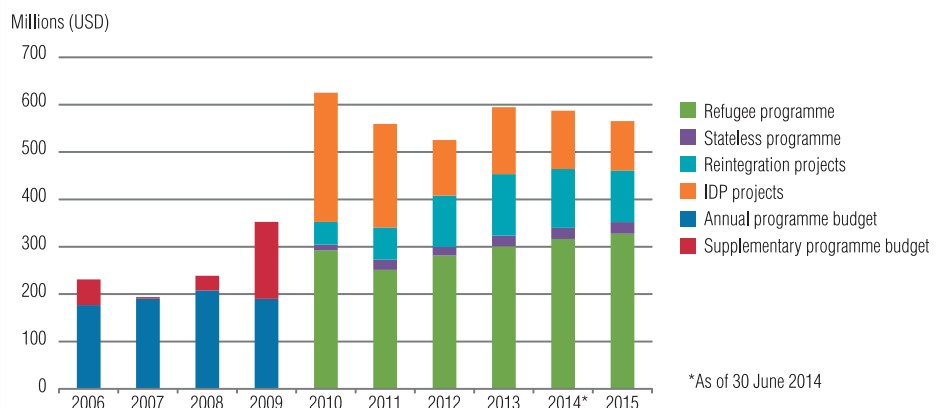
Refugees living in urban locations present unique protection challenges. The absence

of national asylum frameworks and the complexity of mixed migratory movements, along with restrictive national policies, create many challenges for the fair treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR will need to further strengthen its capacity to support concerned Governments with RSD and resettlement processing. In parallel, there is a need to develop a region-specific urban protection strategy to promote the rights of people of concern living in urban areas.

Irregular movements by sea of mixed populations that include people of concern to UNHCR have been prevalent in Asia for many years, but those through South-East Asia, largely originating from the Bay of Bengal, have increased at a particularly rapid rate since 2012.

UNHCR will be working with States to agree on a harmonized and shared response to receiving people arriving on territorial shores that assures their humanitarian and protection needs in a safe and predictable way. Countries in the region are encouraged to step up efforts to meet their responsibilities to provide protection and seek solutions for the refugee populations on their respective territories, either through providing temporary protection, where appropriate, or by regularizing refugees' legal status and according them the right to work. ■

BUDGET FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | 2006-2015



BUDGETS FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | USD

Operation	2014	2015				Total
	Revised budget (as of 30 June 2014)	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	
SOUTH-WEST ASIA						
Afghanistan	143,165,796	50,838,574	0	56,925,099	26,880,214	134,643,886
Iran, Islamic Republic of	68,669,442	73,001,782	0	0	0	73,001,782
Pakistan	147,489,285	58,834,599	304,241	49,613,617	28,382,173	137,134,630
Subtotal	359,324,523	182,674,955	304,241	106,538,716	55,262,387	344,780,298
CENTRAL ASIA						
Kazakhstan Regional Office ¹	7,428,386	4,742,400	2,526,919	0	0	7,269,319
Kyrgyzstan	6,298,968	1,857,413	747,425	0	1,657,546	4,262,384
Tajikistan	2,093,364	2,180,013	263,265	0	0	2,443,279
Turkmenistan	859,383	272,335	422,289	0	0	694,624
Subtotal	16,680,100	9,052,161	3,959,898	0	1,657,546	14,669,605
SOUTH ASIA						
India	13,638,075	14,492,301	101,898	0	0	14,594,199
Nepal	15,440,453	9,596,550	1,794,026	2,523,477	0	13,914,052
Sri Lanka	9,128,705	6,890,265	119,799	0	652,398	7,662,461
Subtotal	38,207,233	30,979,116	2,015,723	2,523,477	652,398	36,170,713
SOUTH-EAST ASIA						
Bangladesh	12,385,988	14,425,575	8,731	0	0	14,434,305
Indonesia	8,146,793	6,910,233	89,942	0	0	7,000,175
Malaysia	20,161,428	16,410,089	830,521	0	0	17,240,610
Myanmar	68,108,703	10,746,411	13,848,084	0	43,178,231	67,772,726
Philippines	9,677,822	1,059,787	952,090	0	3,465,894	5,477,770
Thailand	32,803,303	36,035,542	1,197,917	0	0	37,233,459
Thailand Regional Office ²	7,389,703	7,019,359	797,647	0	0	7,817,006
Viet Nam ³	437,203	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	159,110,944	92,606,996	17,724,931	0	46,644,125	156,976,052
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC						
Australia Regional Office ⁴	2,631,314	1,976,523	0	0	0	1,976,523
China	4,734,380	3,951,597	188,448	0	0	4,140,045
Japan	4,010,561	3,748,439	68,584	0	0	3,817,023
Republic of Korea	2,110,146	1,993,552	168,714	0	0	2,162,266
Regional activities	300,000	534,101	0	0	0	534,101
Subtotal	13,786,402	12,204,212	425,746	0	0	12,629,958
Total	587,109,203	327,517,440	24,430,539	109,062,193	104,216,455	565,226,627

¹ Includes activities in Uzbekistan² Includes activities in Cambodia, Mongolia and Viet Nam (from 2015)³ As from 2015 Viet Nam is reported under Thailand Regional Office⁴ Includes activities in New Zealand, the Pacific Island countries and Papua New Guinea