

An ethnic Pashtun woman who returned from Pakistan to Sholgara district, Aghanistan.





# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

## | OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- Some 278,000 registered Afghans were assisted by UNHCR to return to their country in 2008. At the Kabul Conference on Return and Reintegration, co-hosted by the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR in November, the international community endorsed the mainstreaming of returnee reintegration needs in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Increased development investment in the areas of high return will address sectoral gaps.
- In Sri Lanka, where UNHCR led the collective humanitarian response in 2008, the shifting of the conflict to the north of the country led to more fighting and displacement. The situation became particularly dire towards the end of the year, with an estimated 150,000 civilians trapped in a small geographical area with little access to humanitarian aid and extremely limited possibilities to move to safer locations.
- UNHCR responded to the displacement caused by hostilities in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP), which hosted more than 139,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Office registered these individuals and helped meet their basic needs. The number of IDPs is increasing due to the continuing hostilities.
- Resettlement continued to provide an important solution for refugees in Malaysia and Thailand, which saw close to 6,000 and 17,000 individuals, respectively, departing for third countries in 2008. More than 40,000 refugees have been resettled from Thailand since 2004.
- In Central Asia, at the end of 2008, the Government of Kazakhstan submitted draft national refugee legislation to Parliament for consideration, following intensive lobbying by UNHCR.
- In a significant development in one of the region's most protracted refugee situations, large-scale resettlement for camp-based refugees began in 2008, with the support of the Government of Nepal and a core group of countries, and by the end of the year more than 8,000 persons had departed for third countries.

## | Working environment |

Large disparities in income and living standards fuelled the movement of people in the Asian region. Ensuring access to protection for those in need in the midst of these movements was a key priority for UNHCR. Unfortunately, States' concerns about national security and the primacy given to bilateral cooperation over refugee protection have had a negative impact on asylum and protection, with few exceptions.

In Central Asia, the introduction of a number of laws and policies restricting freedom of association and religious expression raised concerns. Cross-border and national-security issues continued to take precedence over obligations to international and national laws.

The South-West Asia region, more specifically Afghanistan and Pakistan, was affected by deteriorating security and political instability, leading to displacement and population movements. These conditions also constrained protection monitoring and assistance operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan at a time when humanitarian needs were increasing.

The global financial situation also had a major impact on refugees and asylum-seekers, both in terms of their ability to compete in the informal employment sector and in terms of rising prices for basic commodities and rents. This was of particular concern for refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas whose livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms were not sufficiently known.

Worsening national economic situations also led to the targeting of foreigners, with detention increasingly used as a deterrent against refugees and asylum-seekers. Against this background, it was vital to work with States to address their legitimate security concerns while ensuring that appropriate mechanisms were in place to allow access to territory, registration and status determination for those of concern.

With ongoing and worsening conflicts in countries across the region, UNHCR is concerned about possible reductions in humanitarian space and access to populations of concern. Working in such an environment will require innovative partnership approaches and staffing strategies.

## | Achievements and impact |

UNHCR continued to focus on resolving, or at least ameliorating, living conditions in protracted refugee situations. The Office sought durable and interim solutions in a number of situations, including for Afghans and camp-based refugees in Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand.

Ensuring protection for people who need it in the midst of mixed migratory movements, as well as promoting discussions with States and other stakeholders on asylum and migration, remained key priorities for UNHCR offices in the region.

With so few signatories to international refugee and statelessness instruments in the region, UNHCR offices pursued broad advocacy and partnership approaches to ensure protection for people of concern and prevent *refoulement*. Increasingly, offices included communities hosting refugees in their assistance and outreach activities to ensure more equitable standards and cohesion.

Finding durable solutions for IDPs, particularly in conflict situations like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, required increased attention, resources and innovative approaches where access to these populations was difficult.

- *Ensure international standards of protection are met for all people of concern to UNHCR, taking into account their age, gender or personal background*

In Bangladesh, living conditions for 28,300 refugees from Myanmar's northern Rakhine State in the two remaining camps were improved through water supply and sanitation projects and better access to primary and secondary health care. The construction of new shelters for refugees in Kutupalong Camp was completed, while a similar project was begun in Nayapara Camp. Furthermore, all refugees over the age of five received individual identity cards. There was a significant reduction in sexual and gender-based violence in the camps. The involvement of UNICEF and progressive introduction of the national curriculum in the schools have resulted in an increase in school attendance.

The authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran completed the Amayesh III re-registration exercise for Afghans. This resulted in the registration of over 935,500 Afghans, ensuring their continued protection. In a significant related development, the issuance of work permits began for registered Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Unfortunately, the Amayesh III registration exercise excluded the 80,000 previously registered Afghans in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, one of the areas declared off limits to foreigners. UNHCR remains concerned about the future of this group.

UNHCR's field presence and protection work, including extensive advocacy and monitoring, helped to ensure the rights of IDPs in Sri Lanka, including the voluntary nature of returns to the east of the country. Other protection-related activities, including legal assistance and awareness training for national

entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on sexual and gender-based violence, enhanced the overall protection environment for IDPs in the country.

• *Advocate for and support governments in the development and maintenance of an international protection regime, including its implementation at the national level*

A significant development was the Government of Pakistan's commitment to review the Three-Year Plan, which foresaw all registered Afghans returning in 2009 prior to the expiry of their Proof of Registration (POR) cards. The Government indicated that it was considering a longer-term strategy for the management of Afghans in Pakistan and the extension of the POR card until 2012, which would provide much greater predictability of stay for this population.

There were some positive developments in the Central Asian States with regard to national systems to protect asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons. In Turkmenistan, an inter-ministerial working group was convened to review the refugee and citizenship laws, and the Government agreed to take over the responsibility for refugee status determination (RSD) from UNHCR. The Government of Kyrgyzstan completed the process of providing citizenship to the remaining Tajik refugees in the country and supported a survey to assess the situation of statelessness.

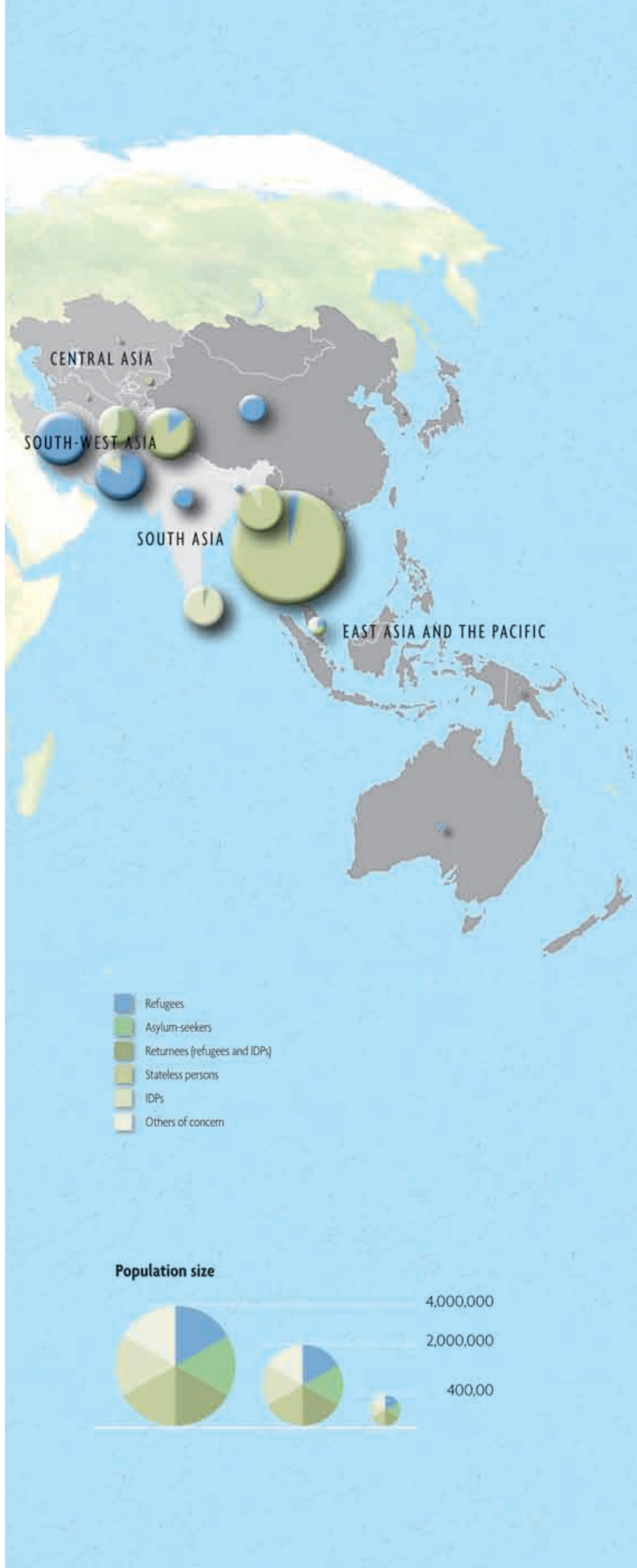
In the Republic of Korea, the joint UNHCR-Government of Korea RSD Improvement and Sustainability Project (KRISP) issued its first report, which identified gaps in the RSD system. Important changes to the legislation also allowed asylum-seekers to benefit from the right to work as of mid-2009.

Due largely to the parliamentary elections held in June 2008, the anticipated accession of Mongolia to the 1951 Refugee Convention did not materialize in 2008.

The decision by the new Government in Australia to end the so-called Pacific Solution by closing the reception centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, as well as to abolish the temporary protection visa regime, was welcomed by UNHCR.

• *Redoubling the search for durable solutions*

The strategic use of resettlement from India saw some 1,100 urban refugees depart for third countries during the year. However, the office in New Delhi was assessing the possibility that resettlement was playing a role in the increase in the number of asylum-seekers. The local integration of Afghan refugees of Hindu and Sikh origin proceeded more slowly than



anticipated, with less than half of the approximately 7,700 who were eligible for this solution having expressed an interest in it.

With support from UNHCR, the Government of Japan announced in December 2008 that it would launch a pilot resettlement programme for 90 refugees from Myanmar in Thailand, beginning in 2010. Japan is the first country in Asia to officially adopt a resettlement programme.

In Viet Nam, UNHCR helped the Government implement its plan to naturalize some 9,500 former Cambodian refugees. Significant parts of the process were completed by the end of 2008, including a census, information campaign and training for local officials.

In Papua New Guinea, UNHCR worked to improve the self-reliance and local settlement prospects of refugees from the Indonesian province of West Papua living in East Awin. The Office procured heavy road-building equipment to improve access to the settlements in East Awin. The road repair was part of the Government's development plans for the province and will greatly enhance the refugees' access to markets and other opportunities for income generation.

UNHCR's shelter programme in Afghanistan benefited more than 11,400 families, or approximately 80,000 persons, in 2008. The programme helped foster sustainable return by supporting returnees staying with host families. Among its beneficiaries were many female-headed households. However, some 28,000 Afghan refugees returned, only to experience further displacement in Afghanistan in 2008.

● *Establish effective partnerships and frameworks for action responding to the challenge of protecting and finding solutions for persons internally displaced due to conflict; protecting refugees in broader migration movements; and bridging the gap between relief and development*

With the support of UNHCR, the Government of Sri Lanka held a National Consultation on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons in September 2008. The aim was to develop a national policy on durable solutions for IDPs who have been in a state of protracted displacement. In 2008 some 20,800 IDPs found durable solutions by returning with UNHCR assistance to their homes in the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Trincomalee, bringing the total number of returned IDPs to some 180,000.

At the request of the provincial authorities in Pakistan's NWFP, UNHCR and its partners registered and provided humanitarian assistance to some 139,000 conflict-affected IDPs

living in or outside camps. In collaboration with concerned governmental and humanitarian actors, and in partnership with an international NGO, a common protection monitoring mechanism was developed. However, lack of access to camps set up spontaneously remained a concern.

In Afghanistan, an estimated 232,000 IDPs were identified in a national profiling exercise, completed in December 2008. This will support the development of a national strategy for IDPs in 2009.

● *Strengthen UNHCR's external relations through improved public information, public awareness, media relations and fund raising*

In the Republic of Korea, numerous public information and awareness initiatives in cooperation with partners, resulted in positive mentions of UNHCR in the media, and greater brand recognition. UNHCR appointed the well-known Korean animated character Robot Taekwon V as its first Goodwill Envoy in the country, raising the Office's profile and enhancing fund-raising efforts.

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

In 2008, private sector fund raising in Asia surpassed expectations and continued to build a constituency in support of refugee programmes. While the target for Asia in 2008 was set at USD 7.8 million, USD 10.8 million was raised.

UNHCR has been supporting the creation of a regional network of NGOs in southeast Asia to enhance advocacy for the protection and assistance of refugees and asylum-seekers. After a preliminary meeting during the 2008 Annual Consultations with NGOs, the first meeting of the Asia-Pacific Consultations on Refugee Rights took place in November in Kuala Lumpur.

● *Strengthen UNHCR as an effective, fully engaged, responsive and respected humanitarian agency worthy of public, political and financial support*

In Asia, UNHCR pursued a strategic and phased approach to regionalization. The Regional Office for Central Asia in Almaty and, as of 2009, the Office of the Regional Coordinator for southeast Asia in Bangkok, will have received additional human and financial resources to carry out their regional coordination and support roles.

## Constraints

With ongoing and worsening conflicts in countries across the region, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, issues of humanitarian access and shrinking humanitarian space were of great

concern. Where all parties to a conflict did not accept UNHCR's—or the United Nations'—impartiality, neutrality and independence, particular care had to be taken to balance the imperative of providing humanitarian assistance to beneficiaries with the need to ensure staff safety. ■

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

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
<b>South-West Asia</b>						
Afghanistan	75,686,250	0	<b>75,686,250</b>	74,514,400	0	<b>74,514,400</b>
Islamic Republic of Iran	15,051,830	1,300,000	<b>16,351,830</b>	14,857,756	705,461	<b>15,563,217</b>
Pakistan	21,993,276	15,526,561	<b>37,519,837</b>	20,644,536	10,011,574	<b>30,656,110</b>
Regional activities <sup>1</sup>	1,490,225	0	<b>1,490,225</b>	1,331,976	0	<b>1,331,976</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>114,221,581</b>	<b>16,826,561</b>	<b>131,048,142</b>	<b>111,348,668</b>	<b>10,717,036</b>	<b>122,065,704</b>
<b>Central Asia</b>						
Kazakhstan	2,060,005	0	<b>2,060,005</b>	2,030,445	0	<b>2,030,445</b>
Kyrgyzstan	1,716,157	0	<b>1,716,157</b>	1,715,598	0	<b>1,715,598</b>
Tajikistan	945,484	0	<b>945,484</b>	904,776	0	<b>904,776</b>
Turkmenistan	973,875	0	<b>973,875</b>	899,108	0	<b>899,108</b>
Uzbekistan	163,000	0	<b>163,000</b>	135,818	0	<b>135,818</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5,858,522</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,858,522</b>	<b>5,685,745</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,685,745</b>
<b>South Asia</b>						
Bangladesh	6,876,034	294,010	<b>7,170,044</b>	6,657,077	205,698	<b>6,862,775</b>
India	4,502,645	0	<b>4,502,645</b>	4,204,109	0	<b>4,204,109</b>
Nepal	11,542,864	253,000	<b>11,795,864</b>	10,849,696	108,523	<b>10,958,219</b>
Sri Lanka	20,853,512	616,200	<b>21,469,712</b>	19,600,639	523,080	<b>20,123,719</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>43,775,055</b>	<b>1,163,210</b>	<b>44,938,265</b>	<b>41,311,521</b>	<b>837,302</b>	<b>42,148,823</b>
<b>East Asia and the Pacific</b>						
Australia and New Zealand	1,274,967	0	<b>1,274,967</b>	1,093,351	0	<b>1,093,351</b>
Cambodia	1,310,568	0	<b>1,310,568</b>	1,222,363	0	<b>1,222,363</b>
China	4,552,330	4,672,897	<b>9,225,227</b>	4,405,316	3,366,000	<b>7,771,316</b>
Indonesia	2,907,107	0	<b>2,907,107</b>	2,478,974	0	<b>2,478,974</b>
Japan	2,985,008	0	<b>2,985,008</b>	2,895,259	0	<b>2,895,259</b>
Malaysia	5,936,649	0	<b>5,936,649</b>	5,652,258	0	<b>5,652,258</b>
Mongolia	336,758	0	<b>336,758</b>	168,904	0	<b>168,904</b>
Myanmar	7,081,841	8,199,869	<b>15,281,710</b>	7,011,563	6,730,291	<b>13,741,854</b>
Papua New Guinea	920,448	0	<b>920,448</b>	913,305	0	<b>913,305</b>
Philippines	280,181	0	<b>280,181</b>	212,523	0	<b>212,523</b>
Republic of Korea	887,676	0	<b>887,676</b>	748,703	0	<b>748,703</b>
Thailand	14,241,292	49,850	<b>14,291,142</b>	13,882,256	49,146	<b>13,931,402</b>
Timor Leste	237,478	0	<b>237,478</b>	214,108	0	<b>214,108</b>
Viet Nam	906,346	0	<b>906,346</b>	855,002	0	<b>855,002</b>
Regional activities <sup>2</sup>	98,586	0	<b>98,586</b>	48,406	0	<b>48,406</b>
<b>Subtotal</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>
<b>Total</b>	<b>207,812,392</b>	<b>30,912,387</b>	<b>238,724,779</b>	<b>200,148,227</b>	<b>21,699,774</b>	<b>221,848,001</b>

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

<sup>1</sup> Includes capacity development programme for cross-border Afghan refugees students and repatriation of Afghans from various countries.

<sup>2</sup> Includes protection activities, dissemination of refugee law, transport and repatriation activities for Indo-Chinese refugees.

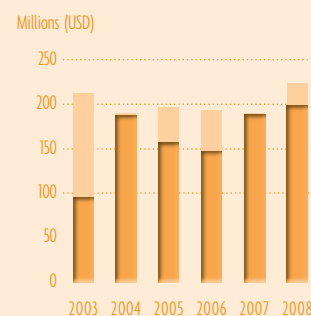
## Financial information

**Operations across the region** were adequately funded in 2008. Budgets were increased by more than 50 per cent, reaching USD 234.7 million during the year, reflecting evolving situations and additional resource requirements in the region. In addition, new supplementary budgets were established for the IDP situation in Pakistan, emergency assistance for cyclone victims in Myanmar and earthquake victims in China. Substantial additional resources were allocated to South-West Asia, particularly for the Afghan situation.

In South Asia, additional funds were made available for projects in Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand in the sectors of health, water and sanitation.

### Expenditure in Asia and the Pacific 2003-2008

■ Annual budget  
■ Supplementary budget



Note: Includes South-West Asia and Central Asia, which were part of the South-West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (CASWANAME) region through 2006.

Voluntary contributions to Asia and the Pacific (USD)			
Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Australia	12,826,989	432,558	13,259,548
Australia for UNHCR	125,980	544,950	670,930
Austria		362,150	362,150
Belgium	1,572,327		1,572,327
Canada*	3,994,308	1,450,259	5,444,566
Central Emergency Response Fund	6,245,230	5,358,927	11,604,157
China	401,906		401,906
Denmark	1,174,168		1,174,168
<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO</i> (Germany)	155,294	361,245	516,539
<i>España con ACNUR</i> (Spain)	1,077,824	58,227	1,136,051
European Commission	27,898,739		27,898,739
Foundation FC Barcelona (Spain)	70,000		70,000
France	892,528	135,569	1,028,097
Germany	9,078,227	464,277	9,542,504
HQ Online Donations		16,723	16,723
Italy	8,798,894	313,425	9,112,318
Japan*	25,090,748	5,415,134	30,505,882
Japan Association for UNHCR*	860,119	1,018,746	1,878,864
Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	167,267		167,267
Luxembourg	364,431		364,431
Netherlands	4,113,468	1,256,756	5,370,225
New Zealand	4,065		4,065
Norway	3,646,653		3,646,653
Private donors in Australia*	7,246		7,246
Private donors in Austria		1,218	1,218
Private donors in Canada	9,872	298,827	308,699
Private donors in China*	231,152	66,457	297,609
Private donors in Greece	39,808	142,158	181,966
Private donors in Iran	49,128		49,128
Private donors in Italy	2,577	288,791	291,368
Private donors in Japan	6,101		6,101
Private donors in Luxembourg		181	181
Private donors in Malaysia	905		905
Private donors in Sri Lanka	4,599		4,599
Private donors in Thailand	167,684		167,684
Private donors in the United Kingdom	2,010	1,541	3,551
Private donors in the Republic of Korea*	18,785		18,785
Republic of Korea		93,000	93,000
Spain	647,668	216,952	864,620
Statoil Iran	37,134		37,134
Sweden*	10,785,824	351,208	11,137,033
Switzerland	1,496,952		1,496,952
The Mexican Charity Bazar (Iran)	11,994		11,994
The Sunmoon Peace Football Foundation (Republic of Korea)	30,000		30,000
UN Trust Fund for Human Security	252,020		252,020

Donor	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
UNHCR Staff		27,900	27,900
UNICEF		265,737	265,737
United Kingdom	2,479,379		2,479,379
United States Of America	47,018,293	4,092,000	51,110,293
USA for UNHCR	89,514	236,087	325,601
<b>Total</b>	<b>171,898,679</b>	<b>23,271,004</b>	<b>195,169,682</b>

\* Donors contributed the following funds to the Asia and the Pacific region:

Earmarking	Donor	Annual budget	Total
Asia and the Pacific Region	Canada	2,044,990	2,044,990
	Japan	2,059,590	2,059,590
	Japan Association for UNHCR	8,684	8,684
	Private donors in Australia	7,246	7,246
	Private donors in China	231,152	231,152
	Private donors in the Republic of Korea	18,785	18,785
	Sweden	1,540,832	1,540,832
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,911,278</b>	<b>5,911,278</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.