

Asia and the Pacific

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Asia and the Pacific region hosted approximately 3.5 million refugees, 2.7 million IDPs and 1.6 million stateless people, the largest concentration of stateless people under UNHCR's mandate worldwide. Most displaced people were refugees from Afghanistan and Myanmar. While more than 2.5 million Afghan refugees reside in more than 70 countries around the world, nearly 95 per cent of all documented Afghan refugees are generously hosted in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan.

Increasing insecurity in Afghanistan during 2016 saw the number of internally displaced rise to 1.2 million people. Despite that, fewer Afghans made the perilous journey to Europe. Of the 362,000 people who risked their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, 10 per cent were Afghans, mostly young men and unaccompanied children, significantly fewer than in 2015, when 21 per cent of arrivals by sea were Afghans.

A refugee from Myanmar and his son, voluntarily returned from Thailand to Myanmar.

Inside Myanmar, deteriorating security in some parts of the country resulted in increasing levels of internal displacement, as well as displacement across the border. At the end of 2016, there were some 375,000 people displaced inside Myanmar and an estimated 340,000 Myanmar refugees in the region.

The largest movement of refugees in South-East Asia took place in the wake of attacks on border posts in the northern Rakhine State of Myanmar in October 2016, after which some 74,000 refugees crossed from Myanmar to Bangladesh. There were, however, no large-scale maritime movements of refugees across the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea since mid-2015, when the dangers of that journey became apparent and law enforcement efforts largely dismantled previous smuggling networks.

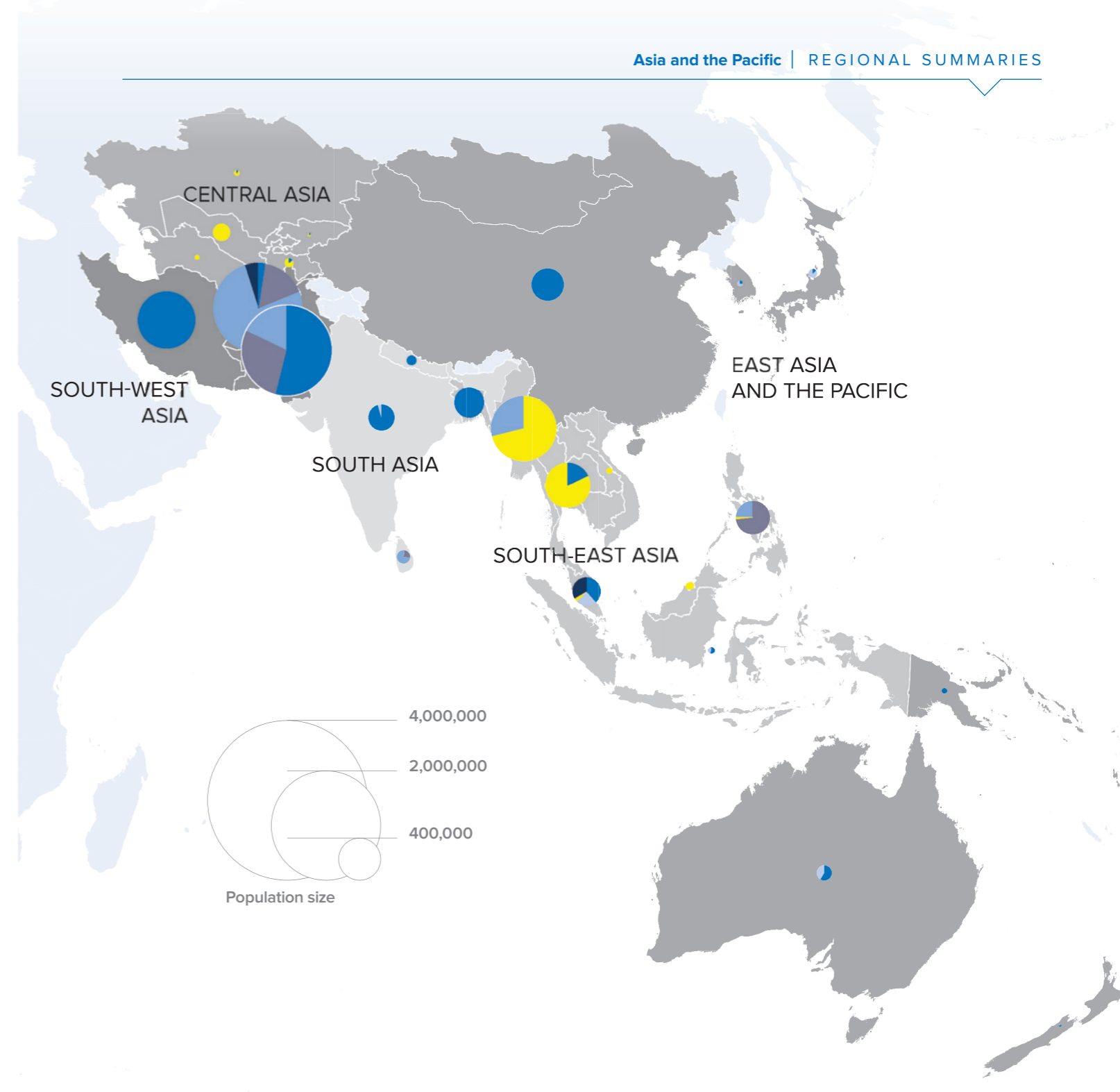
Many Asian States' leaders participated in the September 2016 United Nations General Assembly Summit on Refugees and Migrants, endorsing the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, including its annex on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (see *Glossary*). Most leaders from the region also attended the subsequent Leaders' Summit on Refugees, pledging to strengthen refugee protection and seek solutions to their plight.

Although less than half of Asian countries in the region have acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (see *Glossary*), there has been a long-standing tradition of hospitality towards displaced people across the region. With large numbers of people of concern moving to urban or semi-urban areas, for employment and for better access to basic services, UNHCR continued working with States and other partners to enhance protection and assistance to those living outside of camps.

MAJOR SITUATIONS

Afghan refugees in South-West Asia

UNHCR continued to engage with concerned governments to implement the "Regional plan on building resilience and solutions for Afghan refugees in South-West Asia," which reiterated the principles endorsed by governments in 2012 in the overarching regional framework of the "Solutions strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries" (SSAR). Some 979,400 and 1.3 million Afghan refugees are hosted in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan respectively, and an estimated three million undocumented Afghans in both hosting countries together.



- Refugees
- Asylum-seekers
- Returnees (refugees and IDPs)
- Stateless persons
- Internally displaced people (IDPs)
- Others of concern

Violent conflict in 2016 saw the highest number of civilian casualties recorded in a year since 2009 when such documentation was started by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan. The violence triggered the displacement of 650,000 people inside the country, a 72 per cent increase compared with 2015, many of whom were vulnerable and forced to settle in areas with access to basic services. In the second half of 2016, there was also a sudden surge in the number of Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan. Some 383,900 Afghan registered refugees returned, marking a 10-year high. Post-return monitoring showed the reasons for this massive increase in numbers included harassment and pressure by authorities and host communities; economic hardship; introduction of enhanced border management controls at Torkham border; heightened anxiety over the validity of Pakistan Government-issued proof of registration cards; the enhanced implementation of Pakistan's "National action plan" against terrorism, which affected both Pakistani and Afghan nationals; and the Afghan Government's call to Afghan refugees in Pakistan to return home, a call which included the government's commitment to provide land and shelter upon arrival. Most of the returning Afghans came from Pakistan, with only 2,200 Afghan refugees returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a further 690,000 undocumented Afghans having returned from the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan.

Recognizing that support for development in Afghanistan facilitates sustainable reintegration, donors engaged to promote political and economic stability, as well as the building of State capacities and development in Afghanistan. Some \$15.2 billion were pledged by donors for the next four years during a conference on Afghanistan held in Brussels in October 2016. Translating commitments into action is absolutely vital to ensure the Government of Afghanistan has the support and resources required to assist its population, including uprooted people.

Solutions for people of concern from Myanmar

In Myanmar, significant internal displacement was triggered following an escalation in armed conflict in the States of Kachin and northern Shan, as well as reported widespread human rights violations against the Rohingya in northern Rakhine State. In October 2016, following a violent attack on border guard posts, an estimated 74,000 people crossed from northern Rakhine State into Bangladesh because of subsequent violence. At the end of 2016, there were an estimated 490,000 refugees from Myanmar in the neighbouring countries. Without a ceasefire, the situation of displaced people remains precarious. In 2016, UNHCR continued its strong advocacy with the Government of Myanmar to preserving humanitarian space and addressing protection issues related to

displaced people. UNHCR also encouraged the Government of Bangladesh to keep its border open to people seeking safety from violence and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

Irregular mixed movements in South-East Asia

In South-East Asia, UNHCR focused on addressing the root causes forcing people to risk their lives on dangerous boat journeys and further afield. As part of the Bali Process, Asian leaders from 41 countries adopted the "Bali Declaration on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime" in March 2016. The Declaration, which was largely the result of the regional response to the 2015 Bay of Bengal crisis, highlighted the importance of comprehensive, long-term solutions. Commitments were made on predictable disembarkation, reception conditions, temporary protection, local stay arrangements, and legal pathways for asylum-seekers and refugees. The Declaration encompassed some of the elements of a regional compact on refugees and migration, including the call for stronger regional cooperation, increased partnerships, and responsibility sharing. In addition, States in South-East Asia agreed to set up a task force on planning and preparedness to respond to large movements of migrants and refugees in November 2016.

UNHCR continued to support the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process, which operates under the oversight and direction of the Bali Process co-chairs—the Governments of Australia and Indonesia—in cooperation with IOM.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

Safeguarding access to protection and asylum

In the spirit of the Bali Process and New York Declaration, UNHCR committed to working with States and other stakeholders supporting joint approaches to reception, registration, and determining international protection needs and establishing mechanisms, including regional schemes, to achieve solutions for people of concern to UNHCR.

In South-East Asia, the Government of Thailand adopted a cabinet resolution establishing a national screening mechanism to distinguish refugees from economic migrants, and UNHCR worked with authorities to implement the necessary procedures related to this resolution. In India, UNHCR advocated access for refugees to a "long-term visa" which, among other things, allows them access to employment, and higher education, and open bank accounts.

In South-West Asia, UNHCR worked with the Government of Pakistan to address reported cases of unlawful arrests and detention of refugees. The Office advocated for the extension of the validity of refugees' proof of registration cards until the end of 2017, and welcomed the Federal Cabinet of Pakistan's adoption of a national policy relating to the management of refugees and Afghan nationals. Furthermore, through the refugee affected and hosting areas initiative, inter-linked interventions were implemented in education, skills training and livelihoods, to empower youth. UNHCR also promoted the inclusion and access of Afghan refugees in national and public services.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, great strides were made to improve refugees' access to health care, as UNHCR supported the national authorities in implementing the second phase of the country's universal public health insurance scheme to include registered refugees. The Iranian Government also implemented the presidential decree adopted in 2016, allowing undocumented Afghan children to enrol in local schools. As a result, some 48,000 undocumented Afghan children enrolled during the year.

Seeking durable solutions for protracted refugee situations

In line with the "Regional plan on building resilience and solutions for Afghan refugees in South-West Asia" and the SSAR framework, the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan participated in tripartite and quadripartite meetings with UNHCR to coordinate efforts at securing durable solutions for Afghan refugees. In mid-2016, the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan increased to some 370,000. While the increased cash grant supported returnees during the initial return period, UNHCR also strongly advocated for overall reintegration needs and access to basic services to be addressed in Afghanistan's national development plans. In particular, the Office played a proactive role to ensure that their needs were included in the plans of the newly established interministerial Displacement and Return Executive Committee.

With respect to Myanmar, a pilot voluntary return exercise was carried out with the support of the Governments of Myanmar and Thailand. UNHCR facilitated the return of 71 Myanmar refugees to South East Myanmar. These first returns will pave the way for a process of voluntary repatriation

that could eventually resolve one of Asia's most protracted refugee situations.

In 2016, some 850 Sri Lankan refugees returned from India, a 50 per cent increase on 2015. In India, UNHCR disseminated information on voluntary return through refugee communities and provided logistical support and return assistance. In Sri Lanka, the Office assisted returnees upon arrival, providing cash grants as well as core relief items (CRIs). Protection monitoring in areas of return, following registration, served as a tool for advocacy and referral to other services, including legal advice on housing, land and property issues, and documentation.

In Nepal, a major milestone was reached in terms of large-scale resettlement. Over 107,000 refugees from Bhutan were resettled out of camps to third countries. UNHCR continued advocating durable solutions for around 10,000 refugees who remained in camps.

Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea welcomed a number of refugees, including Myanmar refugees, for resettlement during the year. Australia announced a bilateral agreement with the United States of America to consider the resettlement of

refugees currently residing in regional processing centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea for resettlement in the United States of America. In view of the urgent humanitarian needs of these populations, UNHCR agreed to support the process under certain conditions.

Ensuring protection and durable solutions for IDPs

The Government of Afghanistan established an interministerial coordination body, the Displacement and Return Executive Committee, to strengthen essential services and develop reintegration prospects for displaced and returning populations, including for host communities. UNHCR contributed proactively to the elaboration of the comprehensive reintegration plan and has committed to support its implementation, particularly in the area of protection. In 2016, UNHCR carried out 55 community-based projects in 93 locations in Afghanistan, to the benefit of some 58,750 IDPs, host communities and returnees. The Office also supported around 24,000 households, mainly IDPs, during the winter period with cash assistance and CRIs.

In Nepal, over 107,000 refugees from Bhutan were resettled.

More than 8,800 stateless people were granted Thai nationality, bringing the total to 27,000 people since 2012.

Since the Government of Pakistan began large-scale return operations in March 2015, more than 1.3 million IDPs have returned to their areas of origin. The Government plans to facilitate the return of the remaining 450,000 IDPs by mid-2017 with UNHCR support.

While humanitarian access remained challenging in Myanmar, UNHCR worked with partners and the Government to protect and assist IDPs in Kachin and Rakhine States as part of its inter-agency response. It advocated regular humanitarian access to all affected populations in the areas of conflict.

Positive developments were made in Sri Lanka in addressing the rights and needs of IDPs, returnees and other people of concern, through the adoption of the “National policy on durable solutions for conflict-affected displacement” in August 2016. Consequently, UNHCR reoriented its IDP operation and continued to advocate for the Government and development partners to play a greater role in ensuring the sustainable return of Sri Lankan refugees and the reintegration of IDPs.

Reducing and preventing statelessness and protecting stateless people

Throughout 2016, progress was made in the region to prevent and reduce statelessness, with the support of UNHCR and civil society actors. In Myanmar, UNHCR continued to advocate resolving citizenship issues through an inclusive citizenship verification process accepted by all communities, and the amendment of citizenship laws to ensure they are in line with international standards guaranteeing the right to a nationality.

The Government of Thailand, in support of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness, announced a series of policy measures to further prevent and reduce statelessness. In December 2016, the Thai Cabinet also approved a resolution providing guidance and additional measures to address problems relating to the legal status of stateless persons and the issue of statelessness. These measures aimed to support previously established ones by expanding eligibility criteria for nationality and clarifying application processes, as well as focusing on resolving

statelessness amongst children and students. UNHCR, in partnership with other actors, supported these efforts by assisting stateless individuals to apply for nationality. Since 2012, more than 27,000 stateless people were granted Thai nationality, including 8,814 in 2016.

Together with UNHCR, the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines assisted people of Indonesian descent residing in Mindanao in the southern Philippines. Out of the registered population of 8,745, some 4,110 people of Indonesian descent were confirmed as Indonesian, Filipino or dual nationals in 2016. In Malaysia, UNHCR supported NGOs in providing legal assistance to stateless people for them to apply for nationality. More than 1,400 stateless people of the 12,350 registered with UNHCR’s partner had acquired Malaysian nationality, and more than 11,000 nationality applications submitted to the local authorities were awaiting a decision. In April 2017, the Prime Minister’s Office issued the Malaysian Indian Blueprint which includes a target to “resolve stateless and documentation issues” of people of Indian descent living in Malaysia within five years of implementation, with a priority on children and youth.

In Central Asia, at least 11,000 people acquired a nationality or had their nationality confirmed in 2016. Kazakhstan,

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also made legislative changes, with a view to preventing and reducing statelessness. The President of Uzbekistan signed a decree by which 179 stateless people became Uzbek nationals in December 2016, and Turkmenistan granted nationality to more than 1,380 stateless people in a single day.

CONSTRAINTS

Limited humanitarian access continued to impede UNHCR’s work in Afghanistan and Myanmar. The safety of humanitarian workers remained of grave concern, particularly for national staff who were especially exposed to attacks and the risk of collateral damage.

The lack of a legal framework to anchor protection and solutions for UNHCR’s people of concern continued to be a challenge in the region. Only 20 of the 45 countries and territories in the Asia and the Pacific region had acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Shrinking financial resources had several effects on operations, including UNHCR’s ability to carry out comprehensive protection and response, and to find solutions for different populations of concern.

More details on individual operations are available in the relevant subregional and country operations pages on the Global focus website (<http://reporting.unhcr.org>).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The original 2016 budget for Asia and the Pacific region amounted to \$534.3 million. The revised 2016 budget increased to \$671 million, mainly due to additional requirements to cover the cash grant for the increasing number of Afghan refugee returns from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

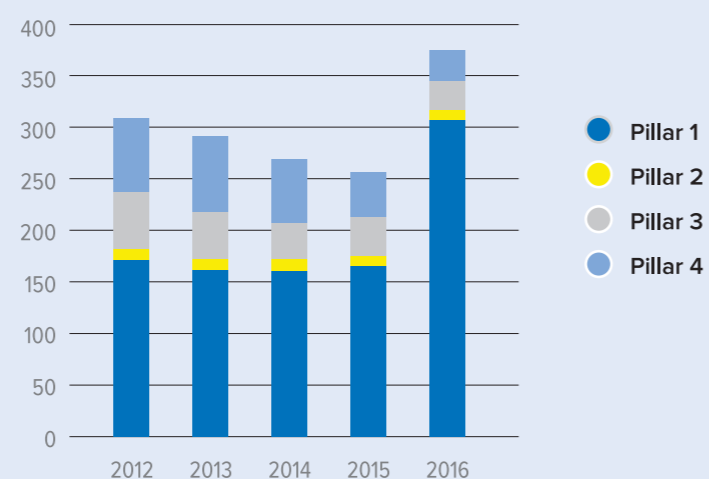
Earmarked contributions to Asia and the Pacific came to \$293 million, including 7 per cent programme support costs, which left 56 per cent of the region's needs unmet. UNHCR used an indicative amount of \$99.3 million in unearmarked funding in the region to cover gaps, equivalent to 32 per cent of all unearmarked funds used in the field.

Expenditure in Asia and the Pacific increased in 2016, amounting to \$375.7 million, or 9.5 per cent of programmed activities as compared to 7.8 per cent in 2015, with 77 per cent of expenditure in South-West Asia. The operations with largest expenditures were Afghanistan (\$197.8 million) and Pakistan (\$54.7 million), responding to needs associated with the Afghanistan situation. The remaining 23 per cent of the budget went to small and medium-sized operations, including Myanmar and countries receiving refugees from Myanmar. The budget for smaller operations (excluding Myanmar and countries receiving refugees from Myanmar) had shrunk by 34 per cent since 2012. The region's funding shortfall

limited UNHCR's ability to carry out its life-saving work in the region as well as a decrease in human resources which seriously impacted on UNHCR's presence and its ability to implement activities. The lack of funding available made itself particularly felt in the following areas:

- In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR was able to support only 117,530 vulnerable refugees to access the national health insurance scheme, while many other refugees faced financial challenges to pay the premium. Inadequate access to health insurance prevented a number of adults from receiving health care, often leading to serious protections problems within the family such as a recourse to child labour.
- In Pakistan, an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 out-of-school refugee children could not access education. In many cases, girls had to interrupt their education as UNHCR was no longer able to provide classes beyond grade 6 in the settlements, and some parents objected for cultural reasons to their daughters attending public schools, thus increasing the risks of early marriage and pregnancies of teenage girls.
- In Malaysia, UNHCR and partner agencies were unable to provide basic support to 37 per cent of the identified vulnerable people.
- In Myanmar, with over 86,000 IDPs in need of shelter repair, UNHCR was not able to cover all needs.

EXPENDITURE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | 2012-2016



BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | USD

OPERATION		PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	TOTAL
		Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects	
SOUTH-WEST ASIA						
Afghanistan	Budget	187,894,489	0	42,006,524	29,332,852	259,233,865
	Expenditure	174,624,654	0	12,483,649	10,713,604	197,821,907
Islamic Republic of Iran	Budget	76,765,380	0	0	0	76,765,380
	Expenditure	36,211,779	0	0	0	36,211,779
Pakistan	Budget	68,048,813	234,630	50,342,629	18,726,284	137,352,356
	Expenditure	31,686,528	150,996	16,564,281	6,323,956	54,725,760
SUBTOTAL	Budget	332,708,683	234,630	92,349,153	48,059,136	473,351,601
	Expenditure	242,522,961	150,996	29,047,930	17,037,560	288,759,447
CENTRAL ASIA						
Kazakhstan Regional Office	Budget	5,383,628	2,102,199	0	0	7,485,827
	Expenditure	2,032,022	1,305,208	0	0	3,337,229
Kyrgyzstan	Budget	1,856,638	1,019,634	0	0	2,876,272
	Expenditure	1,085,223	606,983	0	-	1,692,206
Tajikistan	Budget	2,462,432	1,604,709	0	0	4,067,141
	Expenditure	881,801	861,582	0	0	1,743,383
Turkmenistan	Budget	146,256	102,957	0	0	249,214
	Expenditure	80,008	54,164	0	0	134,172
SUBTOTAL	Budget	9,848,954	4,829,499	0	0	14,678,453
	Expenditure	4,079,055	2,827,936	0	0	6,906,991
SOUTH ASIA						
India	Budget	14,987,333	74,513	0	0	15,061,846
	Expenditure	5,435,335	64,652	0	0	5,499,987
Nepal	Budget	9,011,837	679,488	0	0	9,691,325
	Expenditure	6,190,747	406,266	0	0	6,597,013
Sri Lanka	Budget	5,548,079	45,784	0	789,056	6,382,919
	Expenditure	2,799,039	37,183	0	575,771	3,411,994
SUBTOTAL	Budget	29,547,250	799,784	0	789,056	31,136,090
	Expenditure	14,425,122	508,101	0	575,771	15,508,993





OPERATION		PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	TOTAL
		Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects	
SOUTH-EAST ASIA						
Bangladesh	Budget	13,604,026	63,921	0	0	13,667,947
	Expenditure	7,231,560	52,462	0	0	7,284,022
Indonesia	Budget	7,270,455	129,725	0	0	7,400,180
	Expenditure	4,365,008	43,319	0	0	4,408,327
Malaysia	Budget	18,710,810	973,049	0	0	19,683,859
	Expenditure	7,575,173	676,876	0	0	8,252,049
Myanmar	Budget	28,978,657	2,593,112	0	24,640,810	56,212,579
	Expenditure	3,755,168	2,237,218	0	11,136,263	17,128,649
Philippines	Budget	1,091,946	924,748	0	2,953,873	4,970,567
	Expenditure	596,684	691,879	0	814,046	2,102,610
Thailand	Budget	29,100,284	1,590,355	0	0	30,690,639
	Expenditure	12,221,306	969,200	0	0	13,190,507
Thailand Regional Office	Budget	6,073,439	1,042,388	0	0	7,115,827
	Expenditure	3,418,929	423,993	0	0	3,842,922
SUBTOTAL	Budget	104,829,617	7,317,299	0	27,594,683	139,741,598
	Expenditure	39,163,829	5,094,948	0	11,950,308	56,209,086
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC						
Australia Regional Office	Budget	1,980,000	0	0	0	1,980,000
	Expenditure	1,727,150	0	0	0	1,727,150
China Regional Office	Budget	4,581,576	184,710	0	0	4,766,286
	Expenditure	2,154,729	137,736	0	0	2,292,466
Japan	Budget	3,195,590	104,409	0	0	3,300,000
	Expenditure	2,729,270	54,699	0	0	2,783,969
Republic of Korea	Budget	1,529,932	170,068	0	0	1,700,000
	Expenditure	1,364,590	61,565	0	0	1,426,156
Regional activities	Budget	444,000	0	0	0	444,000
	Expenditure	77,014	0	0	0	77,014
SUBTOTAL	Budget	11,731,098	459,187	0	0	12,190,285
	Expenditure	8,052,754	254,000	0	0	8,306,754
TOTAL	Budget	488,665,601	13,640,399	92,349,153	76,442,875	671,098,027
	Expenditure	308,243,721	8,835,980	29,047,930	29,563,640	375,691,270

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | USD

DONOR	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	ALL PILLARS	TOTAL
	Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects		
Australia	3,368,960				124,548	3,493,508
Canada					5,617,978	5,617,978
Central Emergency Response Fund	2,619,652				2,674,997	5,294,649
China					17,942	17,942
Czechia	103,778					103,778
Denmark	5,640,826		4,789,258			10,430,084
European Union	18,049,251	121,178	861,292	1,782,276	545,300	21,359,297
Finland					3,027,235	3,027,235
France	300,000				200,000	500,000
Germany	9,848,479		7,142,141		3,255,645	20,246,265
Humanitarian Pooled Fund					1,276,866	1,276,866
Italy		61,764			221,683	1,098,901
Japan	11,572,905	474,809	430,108	2,284,104	1,416,335	16,178,260
Kazakhstan					114,916	114,916
Kyrgyzstan					71,154	71,154
Lithuania					33,632	33,632
Luxembourg					1,657,560	1,657,560
Malta					26,539	26,539
Norway	2,537,173		1,880,201	1,070,000	3,013,813	8,501,186
Private Donors in Canada	384				7,161	415
Private Donors in Germany			563,698			857,730
Private Donors in Indonesia	95,300					95,300
Private Donors in Iran	8,799					8,799
Private Donors in Italy	627				1,337	1,964
Private Donors in Japan	2,344,523				134,336	2,478,859
Private Donors in Myanmar					2,308	2,308
Private Donors in the Netherlands	2,784,773					2,784,773
Private Donors in Qatar	4,105,123					4,105,123
Private Donors in the Republic of Korea	5,965					5,965
Private Donors in Saudi Arabia	99,973					99,973
Private Donors in Singapore	16,333					16,333
Private Donors in Spain	1,589				19	1,607
Private Donors in Switzerland					97	97
Private Donors in Thailand	3,599,007					3,599,007
Private Donors in the United Arab Emirates	88,000					88,000
Private Donors in the United Kingdom	50,000					50,000
Private Donors in the United States of America	159				25	184
Republic of Korea	8,000,000		3,200,000	1,800,000		13,000,000
Russian Federation	100,000					100,000
Spain					1,497	1,497
Sweden					2,992,265	2,992,265
Switzerland	810,855				1,114,297	1,972,387
Turkey	700,000					700,000
Turkmenistan					47,045	47,045
United Nations Development Programme		72,270				72,270
United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS					139,100	139,100
United Kingdom					12,195,122	12,195,122
United States of America	28,825,266		5,331,000	3,531,000	108,000,000	145,687,266
TOTAL	105,677,698	730,021	24,197,697	19,354,698	142,972,868	292,932,983

Note: Contributions include 7 per cent support costs.