

Asia and the Pacific

South-West Asia

Central Asia

South Asia

East Asia and the Pacific



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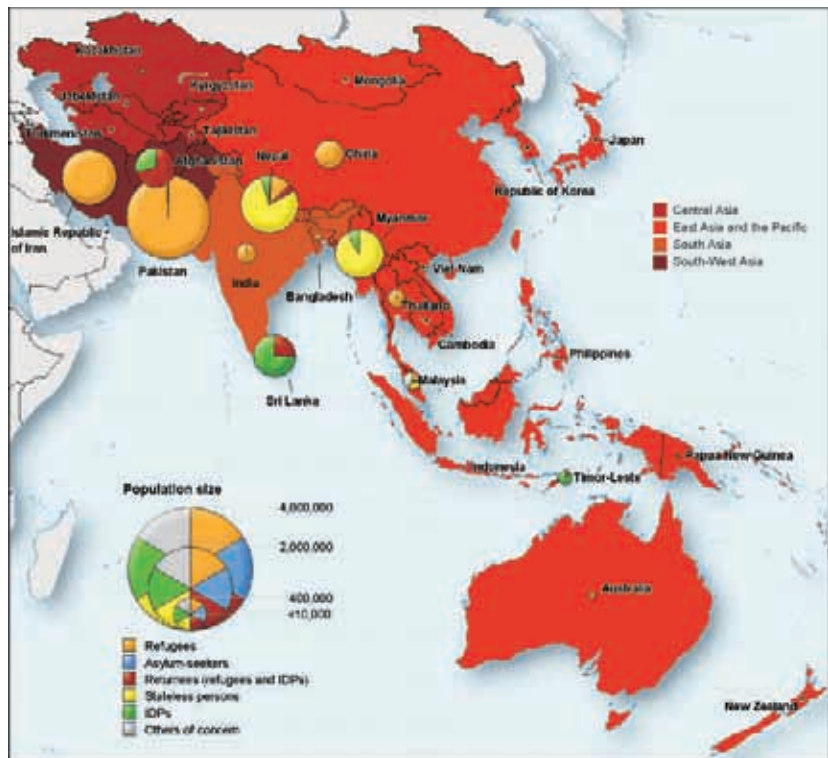
Working environment

Huge disparities in wealth across the region and the denial of fundamental rights in some countries have driven broad population movements in Asia. As these flows consist of both victims of forced displacement and economic migrants, a primary challenge for UNHCR is to ensure that the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers are respected. The Office works to reconcile protection needs with States' legitimate concerns about illegal immigration and national security.

South-West Asia grew more unstable in 2008, with security in Pakistan's western border regions deteriorating and Afghanistan witnessing the highest number of security incidents since the fall of the Taliban. In Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, which recently endured floods and has experienced much conflict-related internal displacement, humanitarian agencies and the authorities have made a coordinated appeal for funds to help the affected.

In Central Asia, the protection environment is becoming more restricted, especially for Afghan and Uzbek asylum-seekers and refugees. In Sri Lanka, the shifting of military activities to the North has seen the area experience new displacement as well as restrictions on humanitarian access. But new hopes for peace and stability were raised in Nepal, where the successful conclusion of elections marked the start of the transition to a new, non-monarchical political system.

While there have been major achievements in providing durable solutions for refugees across much of Asia, the lack of sufficient opportunities for local integration and sustainable livelihoods hampers the search for solutions in several instances. In Thailand, the asylum space has become narrower; there has been an increase in the repatriation of Lao Hmong—to whom UNHCR has no access—while some asylum-seekers from Myanmar have been forcefully made to return, without any assessment of their protection needs.



The 2008 Olympic Games saw China impose new security restrictions on asylum-seekers and refugees. This required UNHCR to accelerate the implementation of durable solutions and make appropriate local arrangements for asylum-seekers outside Beijing. Also for security reasons, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran declared certain areas of the country off-limits to foreigners. The “no-go” areas include Sistan and Baluchistan province, where a large number of Afghan refugees live.

Despite the difficult conditions prevailing in Afghanistan, some 250,000 Afghans had returned home by September 2008, driven at least partially by rising living costs in countries of asylum. Indeed, the increase in food and fuel prices across the region has hurt UNHCR programmes as well as refugee livelihoods. The Government of Pakistan's decision to review its 2007-2009 repatriation plan in light of the turmoil in Afghanistan has offered a respite to many Afghan refugees without immediate prospects for safe and secure return.

Natural disasters remained another factor in the region; UNHCR supported government and UN relief efforts by providing emergency shelter in the wake of both Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake which struck China's Sichuan Province.

Strategic objectives

- **Ensure protection for all people of concern**

UNHCR will advocate for the rights of people of concern and work with regional institutions and civil society to uphold international protection standards. It will also enhance protection support at the national and regional levels through capacity building and promotional activities. Greater regionalization in the countries falling under the regional offices in Bangkok and Almaty will promote the harmonization of protection responses, as well as the sharing of good practices. Sub-regional activities to help States address mixed flows of asylum-seekers and migrants are planned for 2009.

To help registered Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, UNHCR will continue to work closely with the Governments of both countries to maintain the refugees current protected status, which provides greater predictability of stay. In Central Asia, UNHCR offices will concentrate on strengthening protection regimes and preventing the *refoulement* of refugees and asylum-seekers. To this end, the Office is helping to build the capacity of governmental bodies and NGOs, while simultaneously ensuring the engagement of other international organizations.

UNHCR offices will continue to map the phenomenon of statelessness and address its causes, as well as promote the rights and well-being of stateless populations. As for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan, following the visit of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons to the country, an IDP profiling exercise was undertaken to support responses for different groups and negotiation of solutions. With implementation of the cluster approach in Afghanistan in 2008, UNHCR is leading the protection cluster with the UN Assistance Mission and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

- **Affirm and develop an international protection regime**

In spite of setbacks in the overall protection environment in some parts of Asia, UNHCR offices across the region continue to help governments to develop asylum legislation and prepare to accede to the international refugee and statelessness instruments. In Indonesia, awareness-raising and training events are helping the country prepare for its accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. In Mongolia, the Government has confirmed its intention to accede to the Refugee Convention.

UNHCR is assisting the People's Republic of China to prepare and implement national refugee legislation that

complies with international refugee law. The Office is also working with the Government of Cambodia to develop national asylum procedures. A positive development in Kazakhstan is the Government's reaffirmation that it will adopt national refugee legislation.

The decision by the new Government of Australia to end the so-called Pacific Solution for asylum-seekers has led to positive developments, such as the closure of off-shore facilities on Nauru and Papua New Guinea, as well as the replacement of temporary protection visas for refugees with permanent residence visas.

Planned sub-regional activities in 2009 will focus on the implementation of the 10-Point Plan of Action to address mixed migration in Asia. The Office will look into protection sensitive entry systems, reception conditions, profiling, referral processes and procedures. UNHCR is also launching a capacity-building strategy in the Pacific that offers "tailor-made" protection frameworks and practical advice to participating States.

- **Realize the social and economic well-being of people of concern**

UNHCR works with governments and partners to improve basic conditions and pursue sustainable livelihood and self-reliance opportunities in refugee camps. In Bangladesh, improvements in the administration of justice in the camps have reduced arbitrary arrests and the risks for women and girls of abuse, exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence. In the Kutupalong camp, where there have been notable improvements in the health and education sectors, the construction of semi-permanent structures has helped to redress what had been one of the worst shelter situations for refugees in Asia. Improved housing in the Nayapara camp is expected to be completed by the end of 2009.

In Thailand, while progress has been made in filling protection gaps in the border camps for Myanmar refugees, there have been no improvements in refugees' access to employment and self-reliance opportunities outside the camps. In Myanmar's Northern Rakhine State, UNHCR's activities focus on improving access to basic services for returnees and people without citizenship, while enabling women and girls to participate in decisions affecting their lives. In the south-east of Myanmar, UNHCR implements quick-impact projects to restore basic services.

The situation of asylum-seekers and refugees in urban areas in the region remains worrying, with detention a common practice and lack of access to lawful employment leaving many people vulnerable to exploitation and extreme poverty. Where legal refugee frameworks are lacking, alternative migration mechanisms, such as temporary work permits, have been provided only in a few instances. UNHCR will train

refugees in skills that could help them improve their livelihoods, and support people with specific needs.

To help the Government of Pakistan to host 1.8 million Afghan refugees, UNHCR will advocate for development assistance funding for refugee hosting areas as part of the UN's Delivering as One programme. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR will focus on strengthening coordination with the Government and greater access for refugees to education, health and livelihoods.

- **Attain durable solutions**

Asia remains the region with UNHCR's largest repatriation programme (Afghans from Pakistan) and accounts for more than 50 per cent of UNHCR's global resettlement submissions and departures. Promoting and attaining durable solutions and resolving protracted refugee situations remain at the centre of the regional strategy. For refugees in countries such as Malaysia and Thailand, large-scale resettlement has often been the only available solution. In Nepal, the start of large-scale resettlement, in cooperation with the Government and the support of a core group of third countries, has offered the chance of a better future for people in the refugee camps, some of whom have lived there for more than 17 years.

UNHCR will continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation, while ensuring respect for principles of voluntariness, for both Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan and refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. To increase refugees' self-reliance, particularly in urban areas, the Office will expand

partnerships, encourage respect for the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, and promote better conditions of stay.

- **Develop dynamic partnerships**

UNHCR will work with its partners to address gaps in assistance for refugees. In addition to raising awareness about asylum issues—for instance in Central Asia—UNHCR offices are promoting a more active advocacy role for civil society in refugee matters. New partnerships with local NGOs in many countries aim to expand outreach to refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas. UNHCR will continue to work closely with representatives of the donor and resettlement communities across Asia to ensure timely sharing of information and assistance; a steering group in Bangladesh and a core group of resettlement countries in Nepal have shown that such partnerships can help to move a protracted situation towards solutions.

In Australia, New Zealand, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Hong Kong SAR (China), Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia, private sector fundraising is already underway or being considered for the future. UNHCR continues to promote the inclusion of refugee matters in the agenda of UN Country Teams, particularly by lobbying with agencies working in early recovery and development to support the provision of services to refugee-hosting communities and reintegration programmes. UNHCR also advocates for the inclusion of refugee and asylum issues within broader regional agendas, such as that of



UNHCR helps internally displaced Sri Lankans through income-generating activities, such as tea picking.

the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Central Asia.

- **Guarantee age, gender and diversity perspectives in operations**

An analysis of the implementation of the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming framework across the region has shown that UNHCR offices are strongly committed to it. Participatory assessments have been carried out on a regular basis and multi-functional teams are in place in most countries. However, participatory assessments in urban areas remain a challenge to which more attention will be needed in 2009. The meaningful representation of women in decision-making structures is constrained in many countries by socio-cultural obstacles.

There is also a need to ensure that standard operating procedures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence are implemented and regularly updated. In Thailand, gaps in security and safety for refugees in the camps, protection of children and women, health and psychological support, education and livelihood conditions will be addressed in 2009.

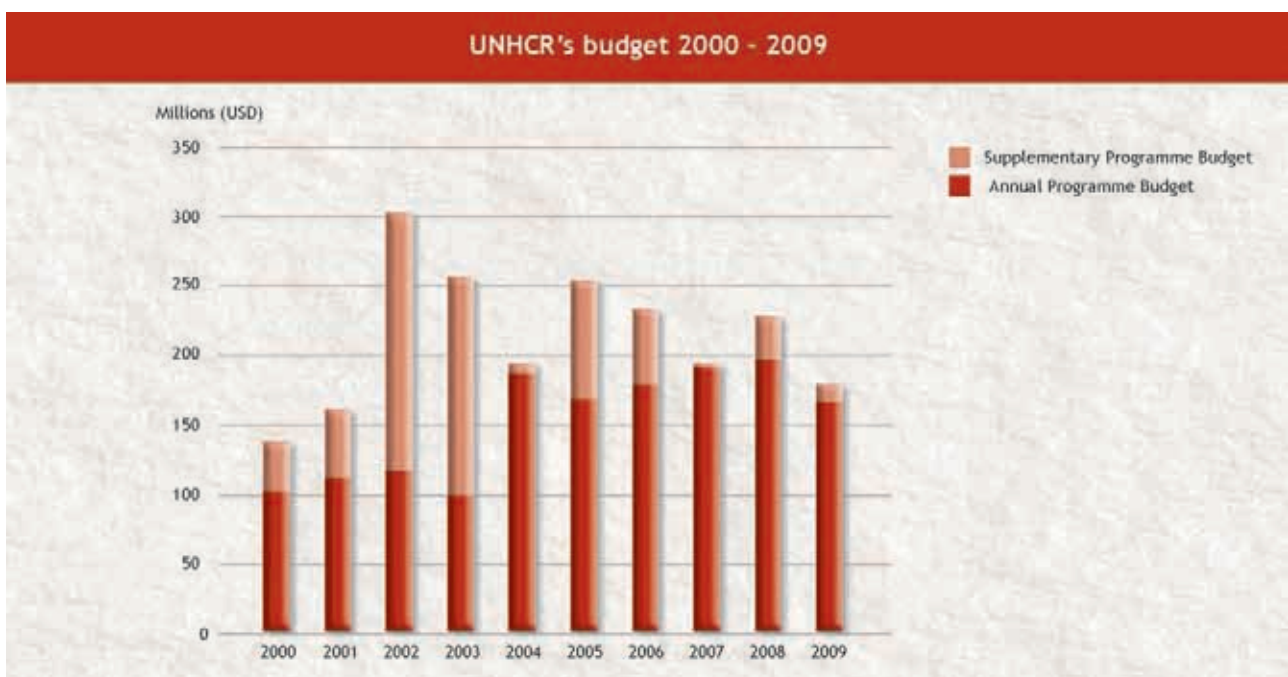
The use of a community mobilization approach in Bangladesh, targeting both refugees in camps and surrounding communities, will reduce the risk of creating dependent and non-cohesive communities. In Pakistan, UNHCR interventions will focus on a comprehensive approach to the management of the Afghan situation. UNHCR will identify those at risk and create a profile of the capacities of the refugee population to assist the search for appropriate options. Activities with the Government and partners in the Islamic Republic of Iran will be enhanced to strengthen the skills training to registered refugees and to promote their livelihood capacities.

Challenges

Growing insecurity, ongoing conflicts and the reduction of humanitarian access will be obstacles to the effective delivery of protection and assistance to populations of concern, most notably in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Rising prices for food and other commodities could also give rise to population movements, and create tensions between refugees and hosting communities as rents increase and resources become scarcer. Limited access to livelihoods remains a challenge in the region. The detention of people of concern and UNHCR's ability to access them remain key concerns and will be central to advocacy activities across the region. UNHCR offices will also continue to monitor the impact of resettlement on arrival patterns, as well as issues of onward or secondary movement.

Financial information

The Annual Programme Budget in Asia and the Pacific has remained relatively stable in the past five years. A small increase resulted from higher needs for returnee grants in the framework of the Afghanistan repatriation programme. The Office has also established several supplementary programmes in response to natural disasters, such as earthquakes in Pakistan and the Indian Ocean (tsunami) in 2005 and the cyclone in Myanmar and earthquake in China in 2008. For 2009, the total budget for the Asia and the Pacific region is USD 182 million. This includes a new Supplementary Programme in Sri Lanka, covering IDP-related activities, which were formerly included in the annual programme.



Budget (USD)						
Countries	2008			2009		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Afghanistan	49,871,900	0	49,871,900	54,347,491	0	54,347,491
Islamic Republic of Iran	12,376,669	1,300,000	13,676,669	13,273,109	790,000	14,063,109
Pakistan	18,374,173	15,526,561	33,900,734	19,934,940	658,320	20,593,260
Regional activities ¹	120,000	0	120,000	110,000	0	110,000
Subtotal South-West Asia	80,742,742	16,826,561	97,569,303	87,665,540	1,448,320	89,113,860
Kazakhstan	2,121,033	0	2,121,033	2,469,058	0	2,469,058
Kyrgyzstan	1,361,170	0	1,361,170	1,261,716	0	1,261,716
Tajikistan	766,984	0	766,984	585,575	0	585,575
Turkmenistan	520,033	0	520,033	496,052	0	496,052
Uzbekistan	100,000	0	100,000	155,000	0	155,000
Subtotal Central Asia	4,869,220	0	4,869,220	4,967,401	0	4,967,401
Bangladesh	5,097,910	164,010	5,261,920	5,109,390	0	5,109,390
India	3,756,783	0	3,756,783	5,202,074	0	5,202,074
Nepal	8,816,251	253,000	9,069,251	9,564,100	0	9,564,100
Sri Lanka	10,789,341	616,200	11,405,541	4,932,696	11,655,829	16,588,525
Regional activities ²	0	0	0	100,000	0	100,000
Subtotal South Asia	28,460,285	1,033,210	29,493,495	24,908,260	11,655,829	36,564,089
Australia and New Zealand	1,177,900	0	1,177,900	1,399,592	0	1,399,592
Cambodia	968,563	0	968,563	1,045,404	0	1,045,404
China	4,771,097	4,672,897	9,443,994	5,200,762	0	5,200,762
Indonesia	2,203,963	0	2,203,963	2,570,816	0	2,570,816
Japan	2,958,835	0	2,958,835	3,473,399	0	3,473,399
Malaysia	5,820,082	0	5,820,082	5,688,940	0	5,688,940
Mongolia	115,948	0	115,948	139,247	0	139,247
Myanmar	6,175,264	8,109,869	14,285,133	6,400,554	0	6,400,554
Papua New Guinea	1,008,398	0	1,008,398	965,414	0	965,414
Philippines	201,261	0	201,261	222,621	0	222,621
Republic of Korea	1,001,976	0	1,001,976	1,192,829	0	1,192,829
Thailand	11,580,394	49,850	11,630,244	17,930,920	0	17,930,920
Timor-Leste	275,978	0	275,978	295,744	0	295,744
Viet Nam	343,062	0	343,062	474,107	0	474,107
Regional activities ²	1,089,841	0	1,089,841	400,000	0	400,000
Subtotal East Asia & the Pacific	39,692,562	12,832,616	52,525,178	47,400,349	0	47,400,349
Total	153,764,809	30,692,387	184,457,196	164,941,550	13,104,149	178,045,699

¹ Includes repatriation of Afghans from non-neighbouring countries.

² Includes protection activities, dissemination of refugee law, transport and repatriation activities.

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.