

# EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



2014 - 2015  
**GLOBAL APPEAL**

- ..... Australia
- ..... China
- ..... Japan
- ..... Mongolia
- ..... New Zealand
- ..... Pacific Island States
- ..... Papua New Guinea
- ..... Republic of Korea



Refugees from Myanmar  
arriving in Tokyo, Japan,  
under the first resettlement  
programme in Asia  
(September 2010)

UNHCR / S. MIYAZAWA



# Overview



## Working environment

The East Asia and the Pacific subregion continues to face the challenges of mixed flows of migrants and asylum-seekers from Asia, the Middle East and Africa. In Australia, the Government has responded to a rising number of irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs) by adopting strict new asylum legislation and policies, including the transfer of IMAs to Nauru and Papua New Guinea for processing. These developments have created a complex and challenging protection environment for refugees and asylum-seekers in the country.

Australia and other Pacific States are likely to continue to pursue measures aimed at deterring irregular boat movements. UNHCR will work to ensure that people of concern still benefit from adequate protection and assistance, in line with international humanitarian principles. In 2014-2015, the Office is calling for an increase in resettlement intakes, and will increase advocacy efforts to help the Australian public to gain a more balanced and informed understanding of asylum and refugee issues, hopefully leading to more support for people of concern.

In New Zealand as well, the focus on refugee issues will be substantially influenced by trends in mixed maritime movements. Although the Government reduced the UNHCR-sponsored component of its annual resettlement quota in 2013, its efforts to improve support for resettled refugees are likely to have positive effects in the longer term.

As parties to the bilateral IMA-transfer arrangements with Australia, Nauru and Papua New Guinea will face considerable challenges in providing an adequate level of support for transferees. They require support to strengthen their legislative frameworks, refugee status determination (RSD) systems and reception arrangements. West Papuan refugees remain in need of durable solutions, with naturalization being the most viable option.

The Pacific Island States, which receive a relatively small number of asylum-seekers compared to other parts of the region, are expected to continue to strengthen their asylum and refugee protection capacities.

In China, growing mixed migratory flows to urban areas have had an impact on the reception conditions for asylum-seekers. The increase in the number of refugees and asylum-seekers has

highlighted the need for the Government to enact national asylum legislation in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention. The July 2013 adoption of the Exit-Entry Administration Law has been followed by a growing interest of the Chinese authorities in asylum systems in other countries.

In Hong Kong SAR, China, a groundbreaking judgment of the Court of Final Appeal has prompted the authorities to pledge to assess refugee claims independently before executing deportation orders. The Government subsequently announced that it would introduce a “unified screening mechanism” to assess claims for protection against *refoulement*.

UNHCR continues to advocate for the Government of Mongolia’s accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

In Japan, the year 2012 saw the highest number of asylum applications to date (2,545), with progress made in the handling of asylum cases. For instance, alternatives to detention are being arranged for asylum-seekers. The Government has also reiterated its commitment to continue offering resettlement places after the current pilot phase of the resettlement programme ends in 2014.

The Republic of Korea enacted a comprehensive Refugee Law in July 2013. A dedicated Refugee Division was created by the Ministry of Justice within the Korea Immigration Service. RSD capacity has been strengthened and is gradually being extended to provinces and municipalities outside Seoul. The Government has increased its financial support for UNHCR, and the private sector in the Republic of Korea has doubled its contributions from the previous year.

## Strategies

- UNHCR will continue to monitor and advocate for a stronger protection environment for all asylum-seekers arriving in Australia and New Zealand, particularly those transferred to other countries in the Pacific. Protection initiatives will focus on access to fair and effective RSD, reduced use of detention in favour of community-based arrangements, the special needs of vulnerable individuals, and the provision of safe, humane and sustainable solutions for all refugees.
- In both Australia and New Zealand, UNHCR will advocate for more resettlement places and support grassroots- and community-based civil society projects geared to the development of more tolerant and balanced public perceptions of asylum and refugee issues.
- UNHCR will continue to assist the Pacific Island States to build their legal systems and capacities to respond to the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in their territories.
- In China, UNHCR will conduct RSD, seek durable solutions, and advocate with the Government to assure protection for all people of concern.
- In Hong Kong SAR, China, UNHCR will provide technical support to the Government and seek durable solutions for people of concern, strengthen public support for refugees and raise funds from the public and private sectors.
- In Mongolia, UNHCR will offer training and other capacity-building assistance to government authorities to help them prepare for the country's accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- In Japan, public strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), non-governmental organizations and the Parliamentary League for UNHCR will work to improve asylum practices and garner popular political and financial support for the Office.
- UNHCR will help to strengthen the Republic of Korea's refugee protection capacity and advocate with the Government for increased political and financial support.

## Challenges

Responding to asylum-seekers arriving irregularly by boat remains a topic of heated debate in Australia and, increasingly, in other countries in the Pacific. In this environment, ensuring that humanitarian responses are not affected by the focus on border protection and deterrence remains a challenge.

Although China is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, refugees and asylum-seekers have no legal status and are entirely dependent on UNHCR for registration, RSD and life-sustaining assistance. As a result, operational resources are stretched. Limited access to some regions inhibits UNHCR's monitoring and advocacy capacity.

In Hong Kong SAR, China, the authorities remain reluctant to accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Despite the recent announcement of the Government's plan to institute a "unified screening mechanism" to assess claims for *non-refoulement* protection, no options have been considered for possible local integration for those allowed to remain on the territory.

Mongolia is not a signatory to any of the refugee instruments and has no domestic legislation governing asylum issues. The protection of people of concern is governed through the provisions of a government ordinance.

In the Republic of Korea, the authorities implementing the newly adopted asylum legislation will need sustained support through technical advice and training. UNHCR will work with the Government, the media and civil society to maintain a tolerant and balanced public perception of asylum and refugee issues and curb rising xenophobia.

## | Implementation |

### Operations

In **Australia** and **New Zealand**, the main focus of UNHCR's protection advocacy and monitoring will be on access to fair and efficient RSD procedures. UNHCR will also work with the authorities on policy and practice regarding detention and the implementation of Australia's bilateral arrangements with Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

In **China**, UNHCR will continue to carry out RSD under its mandate and to provide life-sustaining assistance to refugees pending the attainment of durable solutions. At the same time, it will seek greater engagement with relevant national actors to expand protection and humanitarian space.

The recent enactment of the Exit-Entry Administration Law has made it important for UNHCR to work closely with the Government on registration and the issuance of State documentation for refugees.

In **Hong Kong SAR, China**, UNHCR will continue to provide technical support to the relevant authorities and help in the identification of durable solutions, especially in light of the Government's recent announcement of its plan to introduce a "unified screening mechanism" to assess claims for protection from *refoulement*. It will also work to strengthen the public's awareness of refugee issues and support for the displaced, in addition to raising funds from the public and private sectors.

UNHCR will support **Japan** in its efforts to strengthen its national protection regime, including in the areas of community mobilization and local integration, while undertaking a wide range of awareness-raising activities in collaboration with the national association and partners. The strategic partnership with JICA and civil society organizations on emergency preparedness and response will be reinforced.

UNHCR will support the **Republic of Korea** in its efforts to introduce its refugee protection system. The Office will continue to seek funds from corporate donors in the country.

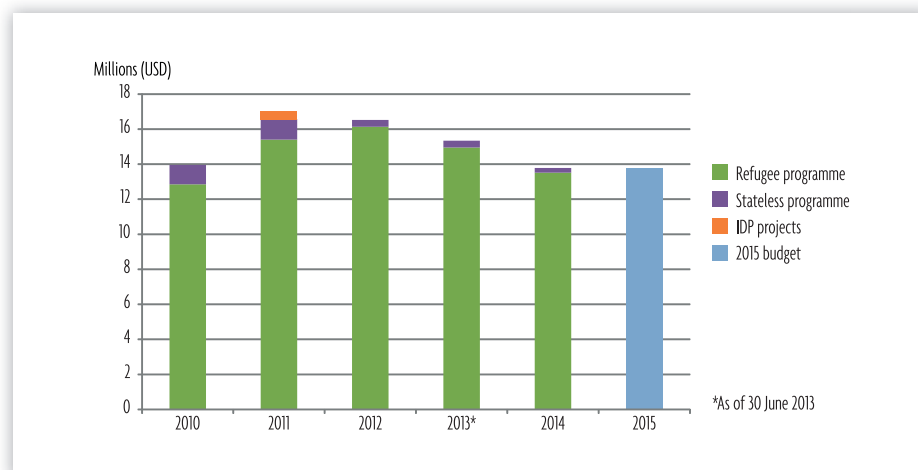
## | Financial information |

In 2014, the overall financial requirements for the East Asia and Pacific subregion have been set at USD 13.8 million.

The financial requirements have remained stable in Japan and the Republic of Korea.

In the Pacific, the Australia Regional Office continues to work with a modest budget, despite the acute protection challenges faced by UNHCR in the region and additional responsibilities for Papua New Guinea following the closure of the country office in December 2012.

### Budgets for East Asia and the Pacific | 2010–2015



In addition, since August 2012, the protection monitoring and advocacy workload has increased significantly following the signing of the IMA-transfer arrangements between Australia, Papua New Guinea and Nauru. Financial requirements in 2014, which are at a level similar to 2013, will have to cover expanding protection demands stemming from irregular maritime movements and asylum policy changes in Australia.

In China, where UNHCR delivers registration and RSD services as well as basic material assistance to recognized refugees, the rise in the number of asylum-seekers witnessed in 2013 has had an impact on operational and financial requirements for 2014.

## Budgets for East Asia and the Pacific | USD

Operation	2013 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2013)	2014			2015
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	TOTAL	
Australia Regional Office	2,859,685	2,630,314	0	2,630,314	2,630,314
China Regional Office	4,364,719	4,611,161	121,219	4,732,380	4,732,380
Japan	4,478,733	3,965,234	44,328	4,009,562	4,009,562
Republic of Korea	2,540,151	2,012,761	96,385	2,109,146	2,109,146
Regional activities	1,100,001	300,000	0	300,000	300,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,343,290</b>	<b>13,519,470</b>	<b>261,932</b>	<b>13,781,402</b>	<b>13,781,402</b>