

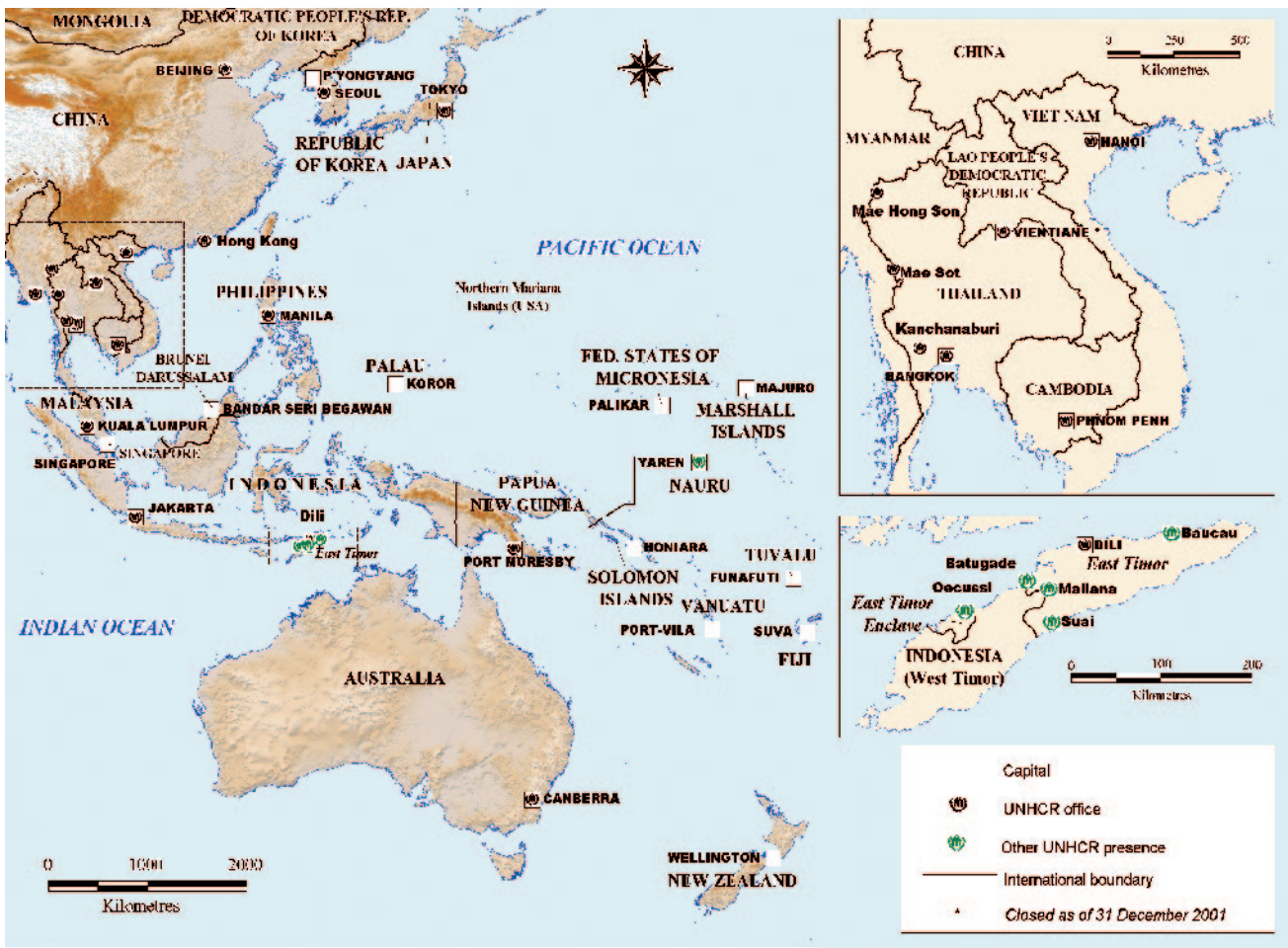
East Asia and the Pacific

Australia
Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
China
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
East Timor
Fiji
Indonesia
Japan
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia
Mongolia
Nauru
New Zealand
Papua New Guinea
The Philippines
Republic of Korea
Singapore
Solomon Islands
Thailand
Viet Nam

Major Developments

In February 2001, protests by ethnic Montagnards over land claims and religious freedom in Viet Nam's central highlands led to an influx of several groups into north-east Cambodia. In April a group of 38 Montagnard asylum-seekers were resettled in the United States of America. In May, other Montagnards crossed into Cambodia's Mondulakiri and Ratanakiri Provinces. Although Cambodia is a signatory to the 1951 Convention, deportations of several groups were reported. UNHCR liaised closely with relevant governments and in particular lobbied for unhindered access to the central highlands in Viet Nam to ascertain conditions for safe return and to monitor the return process. By December 2001, more than 950 Montagnards had sought protection in Cambodia.

In late August, some 430 asylum-seekers were rescued at sea from an Indonesian fishing vessel by the Norwegian freighter, M.V. Tampa, and subsequently transferred, firstly to an Australian military vessel, and then to the central Pacific island of Nauru. This led to the adoption and implementa-



tion by the Australian authorities of the “Pacific Solution”, whereby asylum-seekers heading for Australia were to be taken elsewhere in the region. Due to the unique circumstances of this humanitarian crisis, and following a request from the Government of Nauru, UNHCR agreed to send a team to assist with refugee status determination and resettlement processing on the island. UNHCR declined a subsequent request from the Government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) to assist with additional asylum-seekers intercepted and transferred to Manus Island (PNG) by the Australian Government.

In East Timor, over 18,000 refugees repatriated during the course of the year (bringing the total voluntary repatriated numbers to almost 193,000). In fact, this was a modest and slightly disappointing figure: the vast majority of returnees had been warmly received, and the national elections in August were universally judged to have been a success. However the rate of returns did pick up promisingly during the last four months of the

year. With up to 70,000 East Timorese remaining in Indonesia at the end of 2001, and returns expected to pick up further in the period preceding East Timor’s independence in May 2002, UNHCR postponed its phase-down. The distribution of 35,000 shelter units was completed in August.

Challenges and Concerns

The year witnessed a general narrowing of access to asylum procedures across the region. The M.V. Tampa incident and the Australian sponsored “Pacific Solution” were examples of the increasingly restrictive asylum environment. The 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States added to the security concerns of a number of countries, with many States in the region feeling justified in further tightening procedures and delaying resettlement processing.

In Indonesia, continuing political uncertainty hampered any substantial progress towards accession



Thailand: Non-food items are stockpiled in the event that emergency supplies are needed. Refugees from Myanmar in Ratchaburi helping with storing the items. UNHCR / K. Singhaseni

to the refugee instruments. The interception of large numbers of asylum-seekers, mainly from the Middle East, on their way to Australia, increased Government reluctance to consider accession.

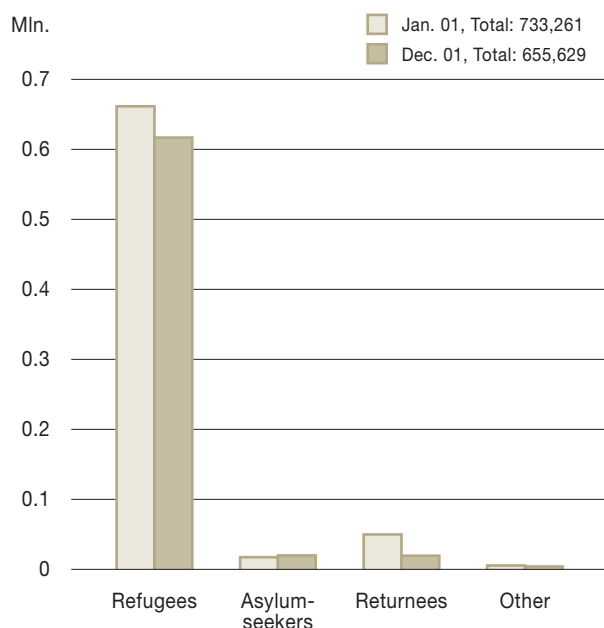
UNHCR expressed concern over the limited sentences handed down to those convicted of the murders

of three UNHCR staff in Atambua in September 2000. An Exchange of Letters between the UN and the Government relating to security in West Timor could not be agreed upon before the end of the year. Despite an apparently increased commitment on the part of the Indonesian authorities, returnees continued to report cases of intimidation and harassment by pro-Jakarta elements.

Despite continued repatriation, only limited progress was made by the Government in identifying and developing local settlement sites outside of West Timor. Although donor countries responded positively to the November Joint Appeal – *Solutions for East Timorese Refugees*, the fact remained that few East

Timorese were interested in living outside of Timor. A number of East Timorese formerly in the employ of the Indonesian civil service also expressed a reluctance to repatriate until their pension and severance entitlements had been agreed upon. Several refugee leaders stated that they would delay their return until after East Timor's independence in May 2002, on the grounds that they would then be able to negotiate a more advantageous return.

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



Progress Toward Solutions

The e-Centre, which was established in Japan in 2000 to develop a network of emergency response mechanisms within the region, was very active. Training workshops were conducted in Australia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In view of the volatile political situation in Indonesia, a comprehensive contingency plan for the region was developed in co-operation with the Regional Office in Jakarta.

The Asia Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC), now in their sixth year, continued to provide a basis for regional debate on asylum and migration issues. Three sub-

regional meetings were held in Myanmar (April), Samoa (May) and Lao People's Democratic Republic (July) covering return and reintegration, capacity building, burden sharing and emergency preparedness. APC members found the joint APC/Inter-governmental Consultations (IGC) meeting which took place in April in Bangkok useful in bringing together some concerns and perspectives on the issues of irregular migration and population displacement. The Annual Plenary Meeting which took place in Manila in December, dwelt notably on the ramifications of irregular migration and how best to discourage it in the first place, including refugee issues of refugee protection.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in **East Timor** and **Thailand** are described in separate country chapters.

The rescue at sea of several hundred asylum-seekers by the Norwegian freighter the MV Tampa and their eventual transfer to Nauru focused international attention on **Australia's** "Pacific Solution". UNHCR continued to express concern to the Australian Government over the mandatory detention of asylum-seekers and the impact of recent legislation that restricts access to Australia's asylum system.

While **Cambodia** continued to receive a relatively limited number of urban asylum-seekers, over 1,000 members of ethnic minorities from Viet Nam's central highlands sought asylum in Cambodia's north-eastern provinces. In the absence of national legislation on refugee issues and a functioning asylum system, UNHCR assessed the claims and determined that all the cases qualified as UNHCR persons of concern. The office provided basic assistance to the groups at two different sites in Mondulhiri and Ratanakiri. A regular staff presence was deemed necessary to prevent deportations and ensure that Montagnards had access to asylum. UNHCR continued to carry out refugee status determination of claims from urban asylum-seekers, pending the adoption of relevant legislation.

In **China**, UNHCR continued to seek naturalisation for the 230,000 Vietnamese refugees who want to settle in the country, as well as voluntary repatriation for a limited number who wish to return. An

agreement on the management of a credit scheme offering opportunities for self-reliance to vulnerable refugees was signed by the Government and UNHCR in late 2001. UNHCR also continued to provide vocational and skills training to vulnerable Vietnamese refugees. UNHCR remains concerned about the situation of North Korean asylum-seekers in northeast China and continued to raise this issue with the Government and to seek access to them. A group of seven North Koreans who sought asylum in the UNHCR Regional Office in Beijing in June 2001 were however permitted on humanitarian grounds to leave China for a third country. 2001 witnessed a considerable increase in the number of non Indo-Chinese asylum-seekers in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, with 606 new arrivals representing an eight-fold increase over the total for the previous year. UNHCR continued to monitor the smooth local integration of the former residual caseload of 1,408 Vietnamese refugees, who were granted the opportunity of eventual permanent residency in Hong Kong, and the situation of 300 Vietnamese irregular movers who refused to return to their first country of asylum.

In **Indonesia**, some 2,500 asylum seekers approached the Regional Office in Jakarta during the year. This required the Office to increase its protection and refugee status determination staffing levels. As local settlement is not considered a viable durable solution in Indonesia, all recognised refugees were processed for resettlement. Unfortunately, due to the lack of resettlement places, a large number of asylum-seekers and refugees continued to attempt the perilous journey to Australia. In mid-October an overcrowded fishing boat sank off the coast of Java. Over 370 persons drowned, with only 45 survivors. In respect of refugees in West Timor, UNHCR welcomed the decision of the Government to prioritise voluntary repatriation ahead of local integration. Despite the apparent central government support, intimidation and misinformation on repatriation continued in the West Timor camps, albeit at a reduced level. During the course of the year, over 18,000 East Timorese returned from West Timor. Despite intense and time-consuming negotiations little progress was achieved in implementing local settlement initiatives or finalising the Pension Fund for former Indonesian Civil Servants. The Refugee Law and Human Rights Training for police in conflict-prone areas of

Indonesia recorded impressive results with almost 9,000 officers in six provinces being trained.

The Regional Emergency Centre On International Humanitarian Response in **Japan**, known as the e-Centre, was established in August 2000 with the objective of enhancing regional emergency preparedness and response. In 2001, nine training events were held in five different countries in the region. A total of 239 participants from government departments, NGOs and international organisations attended the workshops and 166 students followed distance education courses. As in previous years in **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea**, UNHCR supported the improvement of asylum standards and raised public and Government awareness of refugee issues and funding. In **Japan**, more asylum claims were recognised than in the previous year, and procedures for refugee status determination were accelerated. On the other hand, these promising developments have to be seen against a background of a strict policy on detention, introduced following the events of 11 September. In September, UNHCR established a presence in the Republic of Korea to provide advice on refugee protection and raise awareness of refugee issues.

The completion of sustainable reintegration efforts in the **Lao People's Democratic Republic** permitted UNHCR to hand the operation over to the Government. After the closure of the UNHCR office in Vientiane in December 2001, issues relating to UNHCR's mandate will be covered by the regional office in Bangkok.

In **Malaysia** tighter immigration controls led to large numbers of illegal immigrants being arrested, detained and deported in 2001. Little progress was achieved in enhancing the rights of refugee children to education or improving the legal status of groups of concern, including some 10,000 to 15,000 Muslims from Myanmar (Rohingyas). Following a request from the Government, UNHCR organised three Emergency Preparedness and Response Workshops

In **Mongolia**, under a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2000, UNHCR co-operated closely with the Government on a range of awareness and capacity-building activities aimed at promoting Mongolia's accession to the refugee instruments. These activities included workshops, seminars and

study tours for police officers, border guards, senior government officials and parliamentarians. Support for the translation and dissemination of relevant international instruments was also provided.

Following a request from the Government of **Nauru**, and due to the unique humanitarian crisis, UNHCR despatched a team to the island to assist with the refugee status determination and the resettlement processing of some 530 asylum-seekers from the M.V. Tampa, who had been transferred by the Australian navy vessel HMAS Manoola to Nauru.

New Zealand assisted in finding a durable solution for some 131 persons rescued by the M.V. Tampa by offering resettlement places. The UNHCR office in New Zealand was closed at the end of 2001. New Zealand is now covered from the regional office in Canberra.

In **Papua New Guinea**, UNHCR continued to provide modest support to over 300 persons of concern located close to the border with Indonesia. Assistance was provided through the Vanimo Diocese.

The **Philippines** made a number of positive steps during the year including the adoption of the Convention Travel Document and also revised work permit regulations, leaving the majority of recognised refugees eligible to apply for a work permit. Legislation was also introduced in Parliament seeking to grant permanent residency status to those screened-out Vietnamese nationals still residing in the Philippines.

In **Viet Nam**, UNHCR maintained a limited presence to strengthen the dialogue with government officials and find solutions for the Montagnards who sought asylum in Cambodia. UNHCR also conducted two workshops (on the 1951 Convention and statelessness) attended by more than 100 participants. The Government asked UNHCR to continue to provide advice on citizenship and related nationality issues in 2002.

Funding

Compared to other regions, UNHCR's operations in Asia, including East Asia and the Pacific, have

traditionally been well funded. Several donors continued to show a special interest in the refugee/returnee situations and UNHCR's role in the region. This is reflected in a high proportion of contributions earmarked at the sub-regional and country levels.

Voluntary Contributions – Restricted (USD)			
Donor	Earmarking ¹	Annual Programme Budget	
		Income	Contribution
Action Réfugiés (FRA)	East Timor	50	50
Australia	RSD in Nauru	307,608	307,608
	Thailand	203,770	203,770
	East Timor	22,804	22,804
Denmark	East Asia and Oceania	479,616	479,616
España con ACNUR (SPA)	Indonesia	81,586	0
European Commission	East Asia and Oceania	5,132,049	5,342,832
	Indonesia	33,098	0
	Thailand	720,288	720,288
	East Timor	3,684,254	3,746,023
Italy	East Timor	132,765	132,765
Japan	East Asia and Oceania	40,000	40,000
	East Timor	2,200,000	2,200,000
	Cambodia	200,000	200,000
	China	600,000	600,000
	Indonesia	1,000,000	1,000,000
	Lao People's Democratic Republic	130,000	130,000
	Malaysia	170,000	170,000
	Philippines	135,000	135,000
	Papua New Guinea	65,000	65,000
	Singapore	20,000	20,000
JTUC-RENGO (JPN)	Viet Nam	40,000	40,000
	Thailand	1,500,000	1,500,000
	Thailand	83,333	83,333
Netherlands	Indonesia	845,056	845,056
New Zealand	Australia	745	745
	East Timor	82,560	82,560
Parthenon Trust, UK	Thailand	100,000	100,000
Philippines	Cambodia	2,160	2,160
Private Donors Italy	East Timor	4,565	4,565
Sweden	East Asia and Oceania	1,875,000	1,875,000
United Kingdom	Thailand	1,150,000	1,150,000
United States of America	East Asia and Oceania	8,170,000	8,170,000
USA for UNHCR (USA)	Cambodia	20,000	20,000
TOTAL²		29,231,307	29,389,175

¹ For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

² Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unrestricted voluntary contributions, lightly restricted contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

Budget and Expenditure (USD)		
	Revised Budget	Expenditure
Country	Annual Programme Budget	
Australia and New Zealand	1,138,703	1,054,101
Cambodia	1,070,619	873,035
China	2,775,948	2,413,384
East Timor	10,479,624	9,695,488
Indonesia	7,470,049	6,987,812
Japan	3,511,326	2,816,946
Lao People's Democratic Republic	543,289	508,431
Malaysia	713,937	691,786
Papua New Guinea	485,970	452,926
Philippines	593,550	528,055
Republic of Korea	93,972	93,534
Singapore	50,970	46,367
Thailand	50,970	46,367
Viet Nam	172,079	117,544
Regional Projects ¹	251,201	119,000
Total	34,316,710	30,835,850

¹ Includes assistance to victims of natural disasters, general protection activities and dissemination of refugee law in Asia, assistance to refugees in the South Pacific, repatriation of Indochinese and scholarships for refugee students.