



East Asia and the Pacific

Australia
Cambodia
China
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Indonesia
Japan
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia
Mongolia
Myanmar
New Zealand
Papua New Guinea
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Viet Nam

Recent developments

On 15 August 2005, the Government of Indonesia and the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to confirm their commitment to a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the conflict in the Province of **Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam**. It is hoped that the implementation of this agreement will enable those Acehnese currently outside of the country to repatriate in safety and dignity, particularly from Malaysia, where some 20,000 Acehnese are presently registered with UNHCR. The Office stands ready to assist all parties concerned within its responsibilities and expertise.

Also in Indonesia, UNHCR participated in the multi-agency emergency response to the earthquake and subsequent tsunami in the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2004, in the Province of **Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam**. UNHCR withdrew from Aceh upon completion of the emergency phase in March 2005, but returned to the area in June 2005 at the invitation of the Indonesian Government. The main efforts will be concentrated on supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction in the Province of **Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam** and in Nias Island, North Sumatra, where immediate assistance was provided for some 20,000 persons



affected by the 28 March 2005 earthquake. UNHCR's renewed involvement is based on a comprehensive inter-agency and community-based programme, including the construction of houses, municipality and community buildings and related infrastructure. A pilot project for the construction of 1,022 shelters has started in Krueng Sabee, Aceh Jaya.

Some 6,500 Hmongs from the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) living in Pechabun Province in Thailand were evicted from their temporary shelter in August 2005. Some of them may have only recently arrived from Laos. UNHCR has offered its assistance to the Royal Thai Government in the review of their claims for asylum. UNHCR hopes to gain access to this group in order to identify those who may be in need of protection.

UNHCR continues to work on the Myanmar-Thailand border, although a major government reshuffle in Myanmar, beginning in October 2004, has had an impact on humanitarian assistance in general. Conditions in Myanmar are not conducive to organized voluntary repatriation. UNHCR plans to develop an integrated protection and assistance framework in 2006 in close consultation with the local population as well as local authorities. At the same time, in Thailand, UNHCR will increasingly focus on alternative solutions such as resettlement. In the Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar, UNHCR will focus its efforts on providing adequate protection to the returnees, most of whom are stateless and lack clear legal status.

UNHCR was granted access to the central highlands of Viet Nam in order to monitor the welfare of the *Montagnards* who returned as a consequence of the MoU signed in January 2005. UNHCR plans to implement micro-projects to assist in the integration of these returnees in 2006.

Strategic objectives

As recommended in the *Agenda for Protection*, UNHCR will intensify various promotional and training efforts to support accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol and the 1954 Statelessness Convention, in order to contribute to further strengthening the protection environment in the region. Promotional and awareness-raising activities will focus on increasing understanding of refugee problems among governments and the general public and creating a positive attitude towards asylum-seekers and refugees.



New Zealand: Refugee children from different countries play at the newly opened Early Childhood Development Centre, run by a partner in Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. *UNHCR / I. Earp-Jones*

UNHCR will also focus on the pursuit of durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers and will reinforce emergency preparedness. The Office is maintaining its commitment to support the Asia-Pacific Consultations. It also intends to strengthen its ties with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in order to advance the debate on preserving the integrity of asylum in the context of secondary movements, mixed flows of people and the legitimate concern of States in the region to manage migration and combat human smuggling and trafficking. The Office will ensure follow-up to the Bali Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Trans-National Crime.

In partnership with Japan's International Cooperation Agency, the Tokyo-based "eCentre" continues to represent a significant regional asset as it provides regular training on emergency preparedness and response to NGOs and relief workers in Japan and the Asia-Pacific region.

Implementation of UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming project is expected to

start in Thailand, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Myanmar at the end of 2005, and will be extended to Australia, Cambodia and China, including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), and Japan.

UNHCR maintains its commitment to improve mechanisms to identify victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) at an early stage during the refugee status determination (RSD) process. This was particularly successful in Malaysia, where the reporting of SGBV incidents has improved. It is expected that this best practice will be extended to other countries in the region. To this end, standard operating procedures on how to handle and prioritize SGBV cases will be developed in countries conducting major RSD activities.

UNHCR will continue to engage NGOs in dialogue on prevention and response in order to identify gaps and better address the needs of SGBV survivors. There has been some significant progress in securing justice for SGBV survivors and efforts will be made through legal training to boost the implementation of national judiciary systems in SGBV cases.

Operations

The programme in **Thailand** is described in a separate chapter.

The UNHCR Regional Office in **Australia** also covers New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. The main activities in these countries will involve advice and advocacy on behalf of asylum-seekers on protection-related matters, particularly with regard to selected individual cases in need of protection, promotion of refugee law and provision of advisory and technical support to the authorities concerned. UNHCR will advocate for maintaining or enlarging the existing resettlement programmes in Australia and New Zealand and for applying the UNHCR protection criteria. The Office will offer technical support and training, and will continue to participate in regional forums such as the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference and the South Pacific Forum Secretariat. Through active dialogue and public awareness campaigns UNHCR will continue to urge authorities in the region to accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Protocol, and to conduct formal RSD. The Office will also encourage Fiji and the Solomon Islands to implement legislation incorporating elements of the Convention and appropriate procedures to admit asylum-seekers, and to conduct formal RSD.

In **Cambodia**, the MoU signed in January 2005, which has provided solutions for hundreds of *Montagnards*, will need to be adapted to deal with new arrivals. The Office will also assist the Government in gradually establishing the necessary legal framework for refugee protection and asylum, as well as a credible refugee status determination procedure, ensuring that gender and age issues are mainstreamed at every stage of activities. In the meantime, UNHCR will continue to conduct RSD and assist needy refugees, while strengthening the capacity of the Government and national NGOs to respond more effectively to protection and humanitarian needs of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons.

In **China**, UNHCR is seeking durable solutions for individual refugees principally through resettlement and, in the case of Vietnamese refugees in mainland China, through the granting of a formal

legal status which hopefully will lead to naturalization, in recognition of their successful integration over some 25 years. UNHCR continues to call for the issuance of appropriate national refugee regulations, and for increased access to North Korean asylum-seekers who may be in need of international protection. In Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), UNHCR will continue to undertake RSD, seek durable solutions and provide assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR will also urge local authorities to adopt refugee regulations, building on Hong Kong SAR's commitment to respect human rights and the rule of law. In Macao SAR, following the adoption of new asylum legislation in 2004, the Office will further support the local authorities as they develop their capacity to address asylum-related issues.

In **Indonesia**, the assistance programme in 2006 will be oriented primarily to provide for the basic needs of individual urban and/or semi-urban refugees, such as food, accommodation, education, medical and community services, as they suffer from economic hardship and lack access to employment opportunities. The Office will maintain the Temporary Protection Scheme for all Iraqi nationals as well as Afghan asylum-seekers whose claims have been rejected, while continuing to facilitate dialogue with the persons concerned, the Indonesian authorities, and traditional resettlement countries with regard to practical solutions for them. Further steps will be undertaken to find durable solutions for recognized refugees through resettlement activities. After completion of its involvement in the local settlement and repatriation activities in West Timor by the end of 2005, UNHCR will maintain its monitoring role in the area.

In **Japan**, UNHCR will continue to cooperate with the authorities towards further strengthening the asylum procedures following the amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 2004 and its entry into force in June 2005. The Office maintains close contact with the Ministry of Justice and monitors RSD procedures. Another area of cooperation is the identification of durable solutions for the last few mandate refugees. The Office will also continue to focus on monitoring and capacity-building activities aimed at promoting fair asylum procedures, adequate reception

arrangements for asylum-seekers, alternatives to detention, complementary forms of protection, as well as the creation of a resettlement intake programme. Further exchanges with key parliamentarians and other influential actors will also be crucial in achieving these goals.

In the **Republic of Korea**, UNHCR will continue to promote the strengthening of the implementation of the 1951 Refugee Convention by providing further support and inputs to the Government in the ongoing efforts to establish a national asylum system. The Office aims to address potential areas for overall improvement of asylum matters and refugee protection in close cooperation with concerned ministries, such as the ministries of Justice, Health and Social Welfare, Labour, and Education. Similarly, the Office will forge effective partnerships with national NGOs in order to raise public awareness on global refugee issues among civic groups and the public, and to establish a local safety network for groups with specific needs.

UNHCR welcomes positive developments in **Malaysia**, where the humanitarian provision available to various groups of concern to UNHCR has widened considerably in the course of 2005. Not only has documentation issued by UNHCR in effect been recognized by the authorities, but also efforts are under way to absorb temporarily some existing refugee populations into the labour market. The constructive engagement on the part of the authorities has also resulted in releases from detention centres, as well as better access to health-care facilities. UNHCR is hopeful that some of the remaining issues, such as access to education, will be resolved positively in the course of 2006. UNHCR will reinforce its efforts to provide community services and financial assistance for food, emergency shelter, urgent medical attention, transport, basic education, vocational training and legal assistance to refugees with specific needs, including women and children.

In **Mongolia**, UNHCR will closely monitor the well-being and protection of North Koreans. UNHCR welcomes the significant steps taken by the authorities towards accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and will continue to assist

the Government in establishing asylum mechanisms and domestic legislation expressive of the Convention. Meanwhile, UNHCR will help establish an interim asylum procedure. The Office expects to conclude a Country Agreement with the authorities in 2006.

In **Myanmar**, UNHCR's assistance activities in Northern Rakhine State will continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of the few refugees in Bangladesh who may wish to come back to Myanmar. The Office aims in particular to ensure the sustainable reintegration of returnees with special needs. UNHCR's operation will entail regular field monitoring, continuous dialogue on general protection issues and intervention on behalf of individual returnees with the local and central authorities. The *de facto* statelessness of the beneficiaries further compounds the challenges created by the remoteness of this border area, its geography, harsh weather conditions and the position of the Government of Myanmar. As part of its protection and advocacy-related interventions, UNHCR also offers various assistance activities for this population of concern. These include housing cash grants for new returnees as well as assistance for registration, Myanmar language training and support to savings and loan schemes for motivated groups of mostly women villagers (with the aim that, in time, they run the schemes by themselves). The operation on the Myanmar-Thailand border started in 2004 following an *ad hoc* agreement between the Myanmar Government and UNHCR. While activities on the Myanmar side of the border are carried out in 14 townships in Kayin State, Mon State and Tanintharyi Division, which are the major areas of origin of the refugees in Thailand, the situation is not yet deemed conducive to repatriation. The same areas are expected to eventually absorb the majority of those who choose to return from Thailand, as well as a possibly larger number of internally displaced people who live in border areas on the Myanmar side. Community-based projects will help improve local access and basic services for the remaining population, which in turn will start building capacity to cope with the impact of a future repatriation to such a remote border area. The majority of the projects are designed to provide access to clean water, health services at village level, and

the construction, repair or extension of primary schools.

In **Papua New Guinea**, the Office will continue to ensure that adequate protection is provided to refugees from the Indonesian province of Papua and from elsewhere, including registration with the national authorities and documentation of West Papuan refugees living in border camps. Targeted assistance will continue to be provided to the East Awin relocation site. UNHCR will gradually streamline its support to the Vanimo group of refugees, focusing more on their self-reliance and local integration while continuing legal and educational support.

In the **Philippines**, UNHCR will aim at broadening the level of discussion on refugee issues at the national level by reorienting the advocacy framework to wider and relevant processes on issues such as immigration, migration, human trafficking, gender, development, internal displacement and human rights. Capacity-building initiatives will be centred on best practices, full implementation of the Philippines' obligations under the Refugee Convention, institutionalization of refugee policy and legislation, and improvement of reception standards. The attainment of durable solutions for urban refugees will remain one of the main objectives (involving naturalization and permanent residence or repatriation).

A limited operational presence will be maintained in **Singapore** through an implementing partner agreement. The programme's focus will be on timely RSD and resettlement activities.

With a much reduced presence in **Timor-Leste**, UNHCR will continue to support the development and implementation of asylum law and regulations, the creation of standard operating procedures, and reception and processing facilities. Training activities will seek to build the capacity of the national authorities to carry out refugee reception and status determination functions in accordance with national and international standards.

In **Viet Nam**, the smooth implementation of the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding will entail UNHCR's continued access to the

Montagnard returnee areas in the central highlands of Viet Nam. In addition, UNHCR will coordinate with the host country and resettlement countries concerned to set up a mechanism to facilitate resettlement of refugees from Viet Nam. UNHCR will also seek to build the capacity of government officials by providing training on international standards applicable to refugees and on RSD procedures. UNHCR's interventions will also be designed to expedite the naturalization of 2,360 Cambodian refugees (already approved in principle by the Government). Finally, UNHCR will seek to agree with the Government on a mechanism to assess the number of stateless persons living in Viet Nam in order to develop a comprehensive strategy for the reduction of statelessness.

Region-wide HIV/AIDS activities covering South East Asia are described in the South Asia chapter.

Budget (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme Budget
Australia and New Zealand	1,121,818
Cambodia	1,391,801
China	4,212,665
Indonesia	2,659,546
Japan	3,352,845
Malaysia	3,268,264
Mongolia	111,846
Myanmar	4,845,122
Papua New Guinea	465,732
Philippines	219,395
Republic of Korea	861,340
Singapore	46,000
Thailand	7,665,945
Timor-Leste	308,888
Viet Nam	443,937
Regional activities ¹	230,000
Total	31,205,144

¹ Includes general protection activities, dissemination of refugee law, transport and repatriation-related activities and scholarships for refugee students in East Asia and the Pacific.