



# East Asia and the Pacific

## Operational highlights

Australia

Cambodia

China

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Indonesia

Japan

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Malaysia

Mongolia

Myanmar

New Zealand

Papua New Guinea

Philippines

Republic of Korea

Singapore

South Pacific

Thailand

Timor-Leste

Viet Nam

- UNHCR made a strong effort to find durable solutions through resettlement for refugees in Thailand, Malaysia and the Hong Kong SAR, China. Applications for the resettlement of over 3,500 refugees from Malaysia were submitted to concerned governments, while some 1,300 refugees were accepted and subsequently departed. For Thailand the figures were 19,900 submissions and over 4,700 departures during the year.
- The Office met the most acute shelter and protection needs of some 30,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, in the first months of the socio-political crisis in the country. All other IDPs (a total of 150,000 in the district) enjoyed UNHCR's broader protection support in line with guidelines adopted by the Protection Working Group in Dili.
- In Myanmar, UNHCR signed a letter of understanding with its government counterpart that allowed it to protect and assist displaced people in the south-east of the country. In Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, UNHCR worked to improve the status of all residents by supporting systematic registration, including the provision of birth certificates and other personal documents, as a first step towards legal status.
- The Government of Hong Kong SAR agreed to take responsibility for assisting asylum-seekers with special needs.
- In Cambodia, UNHCR continued to engage with the authorities to establish a national asylum system. In Viet Nam, the Government's new policies on land and religious freedom addressed some of the concerns of ethnic minorities.



There has been a gradual narrowing of the humanitarian space and protection environment for refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia.

In Timor-Leste, the displacement of some 150,000 people in the capital, Dili, and in surrounding districts following violence that erupted as a result of political unrest, triggered UNHCR's participation in an inter-agency emergency response. Solutions to the root causes of the civil and political strife in the country largely depend on the outcome of April 2007 presidential elections and a parliamentary poll later in the year.

Although the acceptance by the Government of Myanmar of two missions to the country by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs was considered a positive sign, restrictions on humanitarian agencies and control over their operations continued. Meanwhile, security deteriorated considerably in the eastern part of the country as a result of clashes between rebels and the military between January and June 2006.

The election in December of a new governor consolidated the peace process in Indonesia's province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. This allowed the Aceh Monitoring Mission to complete its mandate of supporting the peace process and allowed reconstruction of the tsunami-hit province to move forward.

## Working environment

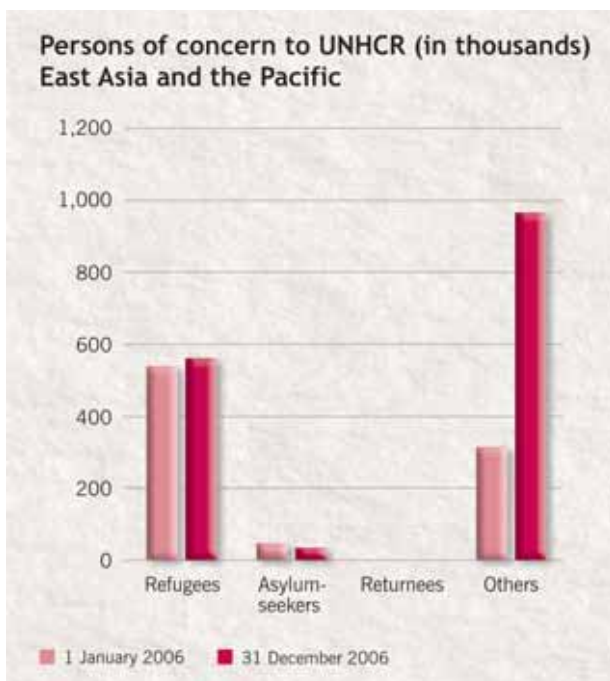
For Thailand, 2006 was characterized by political instability arising from a military coup and change in government. Nonetheless, while presenting the new Government's strategies to the UN Country Team, the interim Prime Minister said the issue of refugees was among the top three concerns of the Government.

## Achievements and impact

In Thailand, UNHCR embarked on a massive resettlement programme. At the same time, it worked with partners to try and reduce the dependence on international assistance of those who could not be resettled.

In Malaysia, following agreement by the United States Government, UNHCR made a group resettlement submission on behalf of some 4,000 ethnic Chins from Myanmar. It is expected that they will be resettled in 2007. Furthermore, refugees and others of concern in Malaysia were allowed to use government hospitals on a 50 per cent cost basis. With the end of the crisis in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam in Indonesia, UNHCR began informing the 20,000 Acehnese in Malaysia that their temporary protection status would not be renewed.

After signing a letter of understanding with its government counterpart in Myanmar, UNHCR strengthened its operation in the south-east of the country along the border with Thailand. No voluntary repatriation took place in 2006 to northern Rakhine State, and UNHCR focused its operation on providing a legal status to all residents pending the resolution of



their citizenship status. UNHCR was able to convince the Ministry of Immigration to accelerate, through a campaign to be launched in early 2007, the issuance of personal documents to more than 200,000 eligible stateless people over ten years of age.

In the course of 2006, UNHCR consolidated its access to returnees in the central highlands of Viet Nam. Concerning the stateless population and, in particular the former Cambodian refugees, the Prime Minister issued a new directive in December 2006 to begin the process of naturalization of these people with UNHCR's technical and financial assistance.

There were promising indications that durable solutions would be found for at least half of the approximately 240 long-staying Iraqi and Afghan nationals living in legal uncertainty in Indonesia.

## Constraints

In Thailand, despite a positive and functional working relationship with the authorities, the absence of clear policies with regard to refugees often prevented UNHCR from exercising its protection mandate and implementing a consistent strategy to promote refugees' rights.

Two of the principal challenges faced by UNHCR were the lack of security in Timor-Leste and the growth in the number of asylum-seekers in Malaysia and Indonesia. Both placed an additional burden on available resources. The Office's restricted access to detention facilities in Malaysia limited monitoring and protection interventions.

While the Hong Kong SAR continues to attract mixed flows of regular and irregular migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, there are no domestic mechanisms to fully apply the 1951 Refugee Convention, of which China is a signatory. In Japan, the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming assessment confirmed concerns about the poor reception conditions for asylum-seekers.

Near the end of the year, UNHCR and the international community were alarmed by a hardening of attitudes in Thailand towards refugees and asylum-seekers, notably those from the Lao People's Democratic Republic. A number of Laotians of Hmong ethnicity were deported without UNHCR being given access to them despite repeated requests. Another 152 recognized refugees are still in detention awaiting a durable solution

## Operations

*UNHCR's operations in Thailand are covered in a separate country chapter.*

The Regional Office in **Australia** also covered New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. It

promoted improvements to refugee legislation, provided advice and advocacy on protection and helped consolidate existing resettlement programmes. In this framework, the Office gave submissions to parliamentary committees and commented on draft legislation; reviewed 103 asylum applications and provided recommendations on them; submitted 40 emergency resettlement submissions to Australia and New Zealand; and worked closely with the Government of Fiji to conduct refugee status determination.

In **Cambodia**, a total of 542 people, including 448 Montagnards from Viet Nam, were placed under UNHCR protection. The implementation of the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding signed by UNHCR, Cambodia and Viet Nam produced significant results, having all Montagnards accommodated in three sites and being provided with adequate assistance. A hundred Montagnards were resettled, while 37 returned voluntarily to Viet Nam.

In **China**, UNHCR offered to assist the Government to prepare draft refugee regulations to establish a national asylum system. As refugees and asylum-seekers are not allowed to work, they are fully dependent on UNHCR's assistance. Due to high school admission fees for non-residents, UNHCR was only able to support primary education for three out of 29 refugee children in the Chinese public school system. Other children received informal primary education within the refugee community. Building upon the High Commissioner's visit in March 2006, UNHCR continued to seek greater access to refugees and others of concern.

In **Indonesia** and **Singapore**, despite the absence of relevant national mechanisms UNHCR was able to work with the Governments to ensure that more than 600 persons of concern enjoyed protection through access to asylum procedures and basic assistance. A total of 414 newly arrived asylum-seekers benefited from refugee status determination and other services in Indonesia. The search for humanitarian solutions for the 240 Iraqis and Afghans who have been stranded in Indonesia for more than five years saw the prospect of durable solutions for at least 50 per cent of them. Efforts to promote the greater involvement of the Indonesian authorities in refugee management and to convince them to accede to international refugee instruments have been positively received. The Office has helped build the disaster management capacity of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), pushing disaster management high on the agendas of the Association.

Protection activities in **Japan** continued to be based on ad hoc interventions, legal advice, capacity-building, advocacy and training. Significant progress was made in training 400 immigration staff on protection issues, including the need to balance immigration control measures with refugee protection concerns. In the absence of effective State-sponsored assistance

programmes, asylum-seekers continued to rely heavily on NGOs for legal and social assistance. The implementation of the revised Immigration Act did not live up to UNHCR's expectations, as detention remained a strong feature of the reception system.

The reporting year in **Malaysia** witnessed durable solutions possibilities for some 4,000 Chin refugees from Myanmar through resettlement in 2007. The cases of more than 3,500 refugees were submitted for resettlement in 2006, about 42 per cent more than in 2005. Some 9,000 asylum-seekers were registered by UNHCR, many through outreach visits to refugee communities. Greater cooperation with key authorities, particularly the police, through individual contacts and training of senior officers eased access to detainees and gained the release of 2,200 persons of concern from detention. However, UNHCR started to experience problems in this respect later in the year. In more than 500 cases charges were dropped and the people released from the custody of the courts due to UNHCR's legal representation. Extremely vulnerable individuals benefited from special attention, assistance and appropriate referrals, including to hospitals for urgent treatment. A community-based schooling project benefited almost 350 refugee children. Furthermore, UNHCR gave material and financial assistance to 20 women's groups to support income-generating activities.

The **Regional Protection Hub** in Kuala Lumpur made important advances in placing protection on the agenda of regional institutions and civil society; contributed to the inter-governmental Asia-Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants; and helped harmonize refugee status determination, protection standards and procedures across the region.

While its accession to the 1951 Convention and its Protocol is still under discussion and there are gaps in the relevant legislation, the Government of **Mongolia** has been broadening the humanitarian space for refugees and others of concern to UNHCR. In the absence of an effective procedure to identify refugees, UNHCR undertook refugee status determination and cooperated with the Mongolian authorities to identify solutions for refugees, mostly through resettlement.

No refugees opted to repatriate to **Myanmar** from Bangladesh in 2006. The lack of clear legal status for the 236,000 former refugees who returned in previous years, as well as for the vast majority of northern Rakhine State residents, has remained the main concern of UNHCR. The Office has tried to fill the more serious protection gaps arising from this situation. Some 8,000 women and adolescent girls benefited from the activities provided by community centres. Another 121 individuals with special needs received assistance, and vocational training was given to approximately 1,200 people.

Over 4,300 members of the Muslim community graduated from Myanmar-language courses to support their integration in local communities. Some 5,000 children have been helped to attend state primary schools. The legal status of the entire Muslim population in the area is likely to improve in light of the agreement with the Government on the individual-documentation project.

UNHCR led a major effort in data management, with primary emphasis on the northern Rakhine State. This included a village tract survey in 191 villages and a household survey covering 785 sample households. UNHCR's quick-impact projects proved of immediate value to those communities that benefited from the construction or rehabilitation of 14 primary schools, ten rural health centres, 49 water wells and three rural bridges.

In **Papua New Guinea**, essential protection and the basic health, food, transportation and shelter needs of 2,700 refugees from the Indonesian province of West Papua living in East Awin were covered by UNHCR. The Office also supported 11 non-Melanesian urban refugees. In terms of durable solutions, the focus is on gathering inter-agency support for local integration through community empowerment and self-reliance activities.

Advocacy by UNHCR, along with complementary efforts by various partners, widened the generally favourable treatment accorded to refugees in the **Philippines**. More than 70 per cent of the refugees have become self-reliant and 50 per cent were in the process of acquiring citizenship.

In the **Republic of Korea**, there has been some progress in the implementation of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and improvement in the treatment of refugees. With respect to the refugee status determination system, the staff of the Refugee Unit at the Seoul Immigration Office, where most claims are received, was doubled from three to six officers. An expanded UNHCR presence in Seoul was able to engage regularly with the Refugee Unit in training and information exchanges. Still, significant constraints remain, such as a growing backlog of undecided claims.



Mae Ra Ma Luang refugee camp in Thailand straddles a river flanked by steep hillsides – bridges are needed to cross from one side of the camp to the other.

In **Timor-Leste**, UNHCR continued to provide assistance to recognized refugees, as the country's reservations to the international instruments limit its obligations to provide social welfare. The Office helped upgrade the national capacity to deal with refugee issues by training officials, advising the Government and disseminating protection information, including accession packages on the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. However, the focus of UNHCR efforts shifted dramatically in May and June as a result of the massive internal displacement arising from the political crisis. *(Please refer to separate box for details.)*

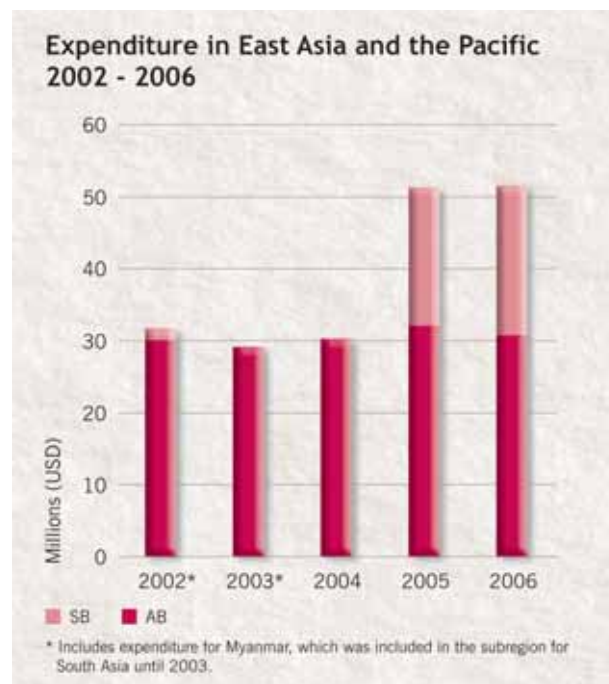
In **Viet Nam**, UNHCR undertook monitoring missions in the Central Highlands, with eight visits in 2006, besides conducting training sessions and workshops on the implementation of micro-projects. This built confidence among communities and increased the monitoring capacity of the Office. UNHCR also managed to place the issue of statelessness on the government agenda, leading to the Prime Minister's decision to begin the naturalization process for some 9,500 stateless persons in 2007.

## Financial Information

Funding was adequate for most essential activities in the majority of countries in 2006, but in some cases not all the priority needs could be met. For example, UNHCR had to delay the implementation of the proposed local integration strategy in Papua New Guinea, and insufficient funding affected the education of refugee children in China. Local fund raising by country offices filled some gaps in the Hong Kong SAR and to a limited extent in Malaysia. Additional

contributions received during the course of 2006 allowed the Office to implement extra-budgetary activities in Thailand, thus strengthening the impact of operations.

Over the period 2002-2006, the overall annual programmes for the East Asian subregion remained fairly constant at approximately USD 30 million. UNHCR launched supplementary programmes in Timor-Leste: in 2002 to end the repatriation of some 225,000 East Timorese from West Timor and in 2006 to address the renewed outbreak of conflict and massive internal displacement. Another large supplementary programme was launched for the Tsunami response in Indonesia in 2005 and continued in 2006.



## Emergency response to internal displacement in Timor-Leste

Political unrest and violence displaced some 150,000 people in Timor-Leste in 2006. Churches, the UN compound, the airport, schools and other facilities in the capital, Dili, and surrounding communities were turned into shelters for those who had fled their homes. As the violence intensified in April and May 2006, the Government of Timor-Leste called for international support. Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Portugal responded by sending military and police personnel. The international forces helped control the violence and looting, but the security situation remained precarious and spurred an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the number of camps housing them.

By the end of May, President Xanana Gusmão asked UNHCR to help improve the IDPs' living conditions. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Dili also asked UNHCR to support the UN Country Team as part of the inter-agency emergency response.

UNHCR sent an emergency response team to Dili in June. After consultations with the Government, the UN Country Team and NGOs, the Office focused on protection and the provision of shelter and non-food items to some 30,000 IDPs. Special emphasis was placed on helping women, children and the older displaced people. UNHCR, with the Government, co-chaired the working

groups on protection and emergency-shelter, and was active in the groups for camp management and non-food-items.

Although the emergency response project was not foreseen under the Country Operations Plan for 2006, UNHCR's involvement was in line with the Bureau for Asia and Pacific's strategic objectives for the year. These included commitments to engage more directly and effectively in IDP situations in the region with a particular focus on reviewing existing and potential displacement.

## Achievements and impact

### Main objectives

UNHCR's objectives in Timor-Leste were to ensure coordinated protection for IDPs in Dili and surrounding districts, with emphasis on addressing issues of sexual and gender-based violence; promote the security of the displaced by working closely with international security forces; work with other UN agencies to improve conditions for IDPs pending their eventual return to their homes; and help the Government build its capacity to protect and assist its displaced citizens, and as that was done, scale down UNHCR's interventions.

From May to August, UNHCR focused on immediate relief for the displaced by providing them with tents and non-food items, ensuring appropriate camp management in partnership with other agencies, and implementing an effective protection strategy. UNHCR's accomplishments included:

- highlighting the role of international military and police forces in the physical protection of IDPs, and supporting activities to improve the security of IDP camps or settlements;
- improving conditions in existing IDP camps by providing tents, non-food items and other timely support;
- establishing new camps at the airport and national stadium to decongest overcrowded areas;
- strengthening camp management by other agencies, and establishing standard operating procedures for camp administration;
- establishing a protection working group, co-chaired with the Minister of Labour, thereby sharpening the focus on protection needs in the sites; and
- establishing shelter and non-food items working group, with guidelines for distribution and the accommodation of IDPs in tents.

UNHCR was involved in improving IDP camps in the capital Dili and its outskirts. Interventions were undertaken in close coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other agencies operating in and around the capital. UNHCR reduced its involvement in the distribution of emergency shelter and non-food items in July and August as needs were alleviated.



Timor-Leste: Many IDPs fled their homes and settled in a makeshift camp near the port in Dili.

UNHCR/N. Ng.

The main protection activities were planned after participatory assessments were done, and took into account the programmes of the Government and other UN agencies and NGOs. The strategy focused on providing physical protection, particularly by addressing insecurity in the camps and preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence.

Assistance-related protection issues were taken up with the NGO or other designated focal points in the camps, while IDP movements monitoring involved the national Ombudsman and other human rights actors.

From September to December, UNHCR focused on the protection needs of IDPs by:

- coordinating the protection activities of other agencies;
- strengthening the capacity of the Government to protect its citizens;
- helping with reconciliation, where needed and feasible, through dialogue and "co-existence" projects; and
- monitoring the protection needs in IDP camps.

UNHCR engaged either directly or indirectly (through the Government, the Ombudsman's office, other UN agencies, international and national NGOs and civil society actors, including the Church) in a constructive dialogue and reconciliation process within communities to give IDPs the confidence to return home. Indeed, UNHCR was instrumental in the development of the Government's "Programme Simu Malu", or mutual acceptance programme, which aimed to promote returns.

As planned, UNHCR concluded its emergency shelter operation by passing the chairmanship of the shelter working group to the national authorities and it handed over to the Government all tents and non-food items in stock. The Office's activities then shifted to capacity- building and fostering community reconciliation, with a corresponding shift of focus from IDP sites to communities of origin.

However, as Timor-Leste's displacement problem had not been solved by the end of the year, UNHCR continued to be involved in IDP protection and reconciliation as requested by the Government and the UN Country Team.

## Budget and expenditure (USD)

Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB <sup>1</sup>	Total	AB	SB	Total
Australia and New Zealand	1,036,042	0	1,036,042	977,757	0	977,757
Cambodia	1,328,674	0	1,328,674	1,125,209	0	1,125,209
China	3,768,703	0	3,768,703	3,533,990	0	3,533,990
Indonesia	2,897,346	18,616,938	21,514,284	2,299,855	16,245,122	18,544,977
Japan	4,100,718	0	4,100,718	2,709,333	0	2,709,333
Malaysia	3,953,127	0	3,953,127	3,153,246	0	3,153,246
Mongolia	70,157	0	70,157	68,743	0	68,743
Myanmar	5,069,737	0	5,069,737	4,203,326	0	4,203,326
Papua New Guinea	491,794	0	491,794	431,044	0	431,044
Philippines	216,241	0	216,241	200,911	0	200,911
Republic of Korea	790,770	0	790,770	700,744	0	700,744
Singapore	46,309	0	46,309	37,163	0	37,163
Thailand	12,300,874	0	12,300,874	10,559,707	0	10,559,707
Timor-Leste	197,782	4,571,000	4,768,782	196,996	4,570,224	4,767,220
Viet Nam	564,657	0	564,657	521,075	0	521,075
Regional activities <sup>2</sup>	15,000	0	15,000	10,486	0	10,486
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,847,932</b>	<b>23,187,938</b>	<b>60,035,870</b>	<b>30,729,585</b>	<b>20,815,346</b>	<b>51,544,931</b>

<sup>1</sup> Does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

<sup>2</sup> Includes protection, transport and repatriation activities and dissemination of refugee law in Asia.

## Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
<b>East Asia and the Pacific</b>			
	Norway	1,597,444	0
	Japan	2,000,000	0
	United States	7,563,950	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>11,161,394</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cambodia</b>			
	Japan	200,000	0
	Norway	798,722	0
	Philippines	1,819	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>1,000,542</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>China</b>			
	Private donors in Hong Kong SAR, China	14,931	0
	Norway	822,684	0
	United States	257,140	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>1,094,755</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Indonesia</b>			
	Norway	23,962	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>23,962</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Malaysia</b>			
	Norway	23,962	0
	Australia	110,000	0
	European Commission	33,658	0
	United States	474,764	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>642,384</b>	<b>0</b>

Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
<b>Mongolia</b>			
	Liechtenstein	38,760	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>38,760</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Myanmar</b>			
	Australia	314,961	0
	European Commission	973,564	0
	Japan	1,200,000	0
	Norway	23,962	0
	Switzerland	196,850	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>2,709,336</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Papua New Guinea</b>			
	Australia for UNHCR	7,519	0
	Private donors in Australia	1,633	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>9,151</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Republic of Korea</b>			
	Private donors in the Republic of Korea	5,506	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>5,506</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Thailand</b>			
	Australia	342,523	0
	Italy	811,122	0
	Japan	500,000	0
	Japan Association for UNHCR	46,548	0
	Luxembourg	329,381	0
	Norway	201,214	0
	Republic of Korea	9,800	0
	Switzerland	196,850	0
	TOTAL / CARPA (France)	2,345,600	0
	TOTAL (France)	283,826	0
	United Kingdom	271,195	0
	United States	1,290,499	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>6,628,558</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Timor-Leste</b>			
	Australia	0	287,101
	Australia for UNHCR	285	114,842
	CERF	0	1,241,949
	European Commission	0	1,884,422
	<i>Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian</i> (Portugal)	0	150,000
	Germany	0	64,267
	Ireland	0	100,503
	Japan	0	2,004,512
	Japan Association for UNHCR	0	3,647
	Norway	159,744	486,990
	Online donations (Headquarters)	0	7,894
	Private donors in Portugal	0	1,282
	USA for UNHCR	1,400	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>161,429</b>	<b>6,347,411</b>



Earmarking	Donor	AB	SB
<b>Viet Nam</b>			
	European Commission	21,204	0
	Norway	30,000	0
	United Kingdom	9,811	0
	United States	72,000	0
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>133,014</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>23,608,791</b>	<b>6,347,411</b>