

# 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  
New Zealand  
Papua New Guinea  
The Philippines  
Republic of Korea  
Singapore  
Solomon Islands  
Thailand  
Viet Nam

## Recent Developments

The latter half of 2001 brought a new challenge to UNHCR in terms of international protection on the high seas. In late August, the Office dispatched a team to the Republic of Nauru to determine the refugee status of a group of asylum-seekers rescued at sea by the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa and subsequently transferred there by the Australian authorities, amid much publicity. The team was dispatched in response to a formal request for assistance by the Government of Nauru. Although this was an extraordinary measure devised, to deal with a complex humanitarian situation, it is anticipated that UNHCR may be required to facilitate the resolution of similar situations in 2002.

There was a significant policy shift by the Indonesian Government, which now regards voluntary repatriation as the best solution for the remaining East Timorese refugees in Indonesia, with local integration a secondary option. Although the consolidation of a number of UNHCR offices in East Timor will continue as planned, the increased numbers of returnees in the third quarter of 2001 justify the maintenance of border offices into 2002.

In February 2001, protests by ethnic minorities (Montagnards) in the Central Highlands of Viet Nam led to an influx of several groups into north-eastern Cambodia. Additional crossings into Cambodia continue to occur in MondulKiri and RatanaKiri Provinces. Although Cambodia has acceded to the 1951 Convention, it is reported to have deported several groups from various areas in the two provinces. By October 2001, 715 Vietnamese Montagnards had sought sanctuary in Cambodia. The UNHCR office in Thailand, which covers Cambodia, initiated a tripartite meeting in Viet Nam to resolve the situation. Viet Nam has yet to allow UNHCR access to the Vietnamese Central Highlands.

## Strategic Objectives

UNHCR's principle objectives for 2002 will continue to be that the fundamental protection principles of *non-refoulement* and asylum are respected, that the quality of asylum is improved and that states adopt a more consistent approach to refugee issues. Despite the increased challenges to finding solutions for asylum-seekers in the region, UNHCR will continue to encourage Governments not only to accede to international conventions on refugees and statelessness but also to act on the basic principles enshrined in these instruments. Further strategic objectives will be to achieve durable solutions for recognised refugees, provide sustainable reintegration in returnee areas, strengthen emergency preparedness and response capabilities in the region and



facilitate regional and sub-regional dialogue between governments on refugee and migratory issues. The Asia Pacific Consultations for Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants will be an important forum serving the latter purpose.

## Operations

The UNHCR office in **Australia**, which covers **New Zealand**, **Papua New Guinea**, **Nauru** and the **South Pacific** countries will continue to focus on resettlement, public information activities, and the provision of protection-related advice. Support will be provided to the UNHCR team in Nauru providing refugee status determination and resettlement processing services to the asylum-seekers who were transferred from the Tampa to an Australian Navy vessel, HMAS Manooora, and then disembarked from the Manooora in late 2001. The main activities to be undertaken in the region in 2002 will be a variety of public awareness programmes. UNHCR will continue to support the national committee, Australia for UNHCR, in its public information and private sector fund-raising activities. Following a global review of UNHCR's operations, UNHCR closed its office in Auckland in late 2001. Coverage of New Zealand will take place through missions from the office in Canberra.

Following an influx of over 700 Vietnamese Montagnards seeking asylum in north-eastern **Cambodia**, the focus of the office will be to provide protection and assistance to the Vietnamese minorities who have sought asylum in the country. UNHCR will seek durable solutions for this group, in particular through the continued negotiation of safe voluntary return for those Montagnards to the Central Highlands of Viet Nam. Until the general situation favours such a return, the Office will advise the Government of Cambodia to adhere to the principle of asylum, in accordance with its obligations under the 1951 Convention. In addition, UNHCR will continue to assist the Government in developing a comprehensive framework for the protection of all asylum-seekers and refugees in the country. UNHCR will continue to monitor the well-being of returnees and the sustainability of reintegration projects established between 1997 and 2000.

In **China**, UNHCR will continue to pursue durable solutions for 292,000 Vietnamese refugees, principally through naturalisation for the vast majority and repatriation of a limited number who may wish to return. It is envisaged that the framework for the management and monitoring of the Revolving Fund Based Scheme, targeting employment opportunities for some 30,000 low-income Vietnamese refugees, will constitute



East Timor: East Timorese arriving in Dili. *UNHCR/M. Kobayashi.*

the basis for UNHCR's continuing operational partnership with the Government in 2002 and beyond. UNHCR will also continue efforts to improve protection of and assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in mainland China as well as in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, where the number of asylum-seekers of various origins other than Indo-Chinese, increased significantly during 2001. To this end, the Office will actively pursue the establishment and implementation of national legislation and procedures which comply with international protection standards.

Following the completion of UNHCR's shelter programme in **East Timor** and the elections in August 2001, the prospects of repatriation were reassessed. Given the increased post-election interest in voluntary repatriation among the remaining refugees in West Timor, UNHCR decided not to phase down its presence immediately. To facilitate their return and reintegration,

additional staff were taken on to support the operation and maintain the provision of returnee kits (household goods, tools and seeds). Similar efforts will continue in 2002 to assist in the repatriation and reintegration of a residual caseload. However, UNHCR's objective remains to find solutions for the East Timorese refugees, which would allow the closure of all offices, except for Dili, by mid-2002. After East Timor accedes to statehood, the UNHCR office in Dili will concentrate its efforts on the promotion of East Timor's accession to international refugee and statelessness conventions and protocols and the development of national refugee legislation.

In West Timor, UNHCR welcomes the decision by the Government of **Indonesia** to make voluntary repatriation a priority. Although it does not plan to resume a permanent presence in West Timor, UNHCR will continue to liaise closely with local authorities and refugee communities to facilitate the latter's return where possible. It is expected that the Government's decision to suspend assistance to refugees as of 31 December 2001 will lead to an increase in returns in the first quarter of 2002. As in 2000 and 2001, UNHCR will continue to engage in the screening of asylum-seekers who have been intercepted while in transit to Australia. These persons are mainly from Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Resettlement of those eligible for refugee status will also be a priority. In the domain of advocacy and the promotion of refugee protection principles, UNHCR will continue to familiarise police and security forces with the fundamentals of refugee law and human rights.

In **Japan** and the **Republic of Korea**, UNHCR will continue to promote refugee law, public information and fund-raising activities to further improve the conditions of asylum in the two countries and support for UNHCR programmes. The Regional Training Centre for International Humanitarian Response (e-Centre) established in 2000, will continue to hold workshops to build regional capacity in emergency preparedness and will seek to establish partnerships to gradually devolve activities to organisations and institutions in Japan and in the region.

In **Malaysia**, the **Philippines** and **Singapore**, UNHCR will continue to focus on providing protection and assistance



Nauru: Accommodation for asylum-seekers at the Topside site.  
UNHCR/M. Bandharangshi.

aimed at achieving durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers, monitoring potential population displacements, providing support for emergency preparedness and capacity-building as well as undertaking promotion and advocacy activities through training and seminars. In Malaysia in particular, greater emphasis will be placed on public advocacy through networking with national institutions, civil society and NGOs. Activities will aim at promoting understanding of both refugee issues and protection principles. This is expected to generate both public and private sector support. A mechanism will be developed to increase UNHCR monitoring in selected areas outside Kuala Lumpur where most newly-arrived refugees and asylum-seekers are located.

In **Mongolia**, UNHCR will establish a presence in the country and will actively co-operate with the Government on awareness and capacity-building activities aimed at promoting Mongolia's accession to the 1951 Convention. The Office will also provide targeted assistance to refugees seeking asylum in Mongolia.

UNHCR will strengthen its collaboration with the Government authorities in **Papua New Guinea** to find a durable solution for the remaining 6,000 Irian Jayan (Indonesia) refugees. The Office will also advise the Government on meeting its obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Training in refugee status determination procedures will be provided. In addition, the Office will monitor developments in countries in the South Pacific including Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

In **Thailand**, UNHCR's major preoccupation will continue to be the 109,800 refugees from Myanmar at the Thai/Myanmar border. The Office's main objectives will be to ensure that the admission and reception of new arrivals take place in accordance with international standards. In this regard, the Office will seek unhindered access to asylum-seekers at the border and will also actively support the

establishment by the Thai Government of a fair and transparent procedure for determining the admission of new asylum-seekers. UNHCR will continue to search for a durable solution for this population, namely voluntary repatriation. With respect to urban refugees, UNHCR's objective will be to ensure that they are granted protection and that their fundamental rights are respected until a durable solution is found. UNHCR will also continue promoting accession to the 1951 Convention and the adoption of national legislation on asylum. To this end, UNHCR will make strenuous efforts to enhance awareness of UNHCR's mandate and refugee law

among Government officials and civil society, especially NGOs, the media and universities.

In **Viet Nam**, the plan to close the office by the end of 2001 has been postponed. The decision was taken in light of developments in the Central Highlands which caused over 700 Montagnards to flee into neighbouring Cambodia in 2001. Activities will focus on accessing areas of origin and establishing the modalities for the safe and voluntary return of the Montagnards to the Central Highlands. UNHCR will also continue providing support and technical advice to relevant government officials and institutions in the formulation of policy, legislation and procedures to deal with asylum-seekers and refugees.

BUDGET (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Australia and New Zealand	962,172
Cambodia	339,607
China	2,540,135
East Timor	1,077,189
Indonesia	3,638,213
Japan	3,112,777
Lao People's Democratic Republic	237,022
Malaysia	637,596
Mongolia	260,228
Papua New Guinea	278,433
Philippines	415,766
Republic of Korea	121,027
Singapore	57,800
Thailand	4,348,006
Viet Nam	20,000
Regional Activities <sup>1</sup>	203,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,249,171</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes general protection activities and dissemination of refugee law, assistance to refugees in the South Pacific, transport and repatriation activities of Indochinese and scholarships for refugee students in East Asia and the Pacific.