

Republic of Korea

September 2020

December 1992

Acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol

February 2001

Recognized its first refugee

July 2013

Enforced the Refugee Act of Korea

December 2015

Launched a pilot resettlement program for refugees

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees & Humanitarian Status Holders

As of 31 May, a total of 3,356 persons have been recognized as refugees or granted humanitarian status by the government of the Republic of Korea.

The majority of the persons holding humanitarian status are from Syria and Yemen.

Source: Ministry of Justice (MoJ), *Monthly Statistics*, published on 21 August 2020, available on MOJ website

FUNDING

2019 Fundraising results

Government: **USD 25,850,008**
Private: **USD 47,369,647**

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 21 National Staff
- 2 International Staff
- 36 affiliated staff (incl. fundraisers, interns)

Offices:

- 1 Office in Seoul



Working with Partners

- The role of UNHCR in the Republic of Korea is to engage with the government, judiciary, legislative, the National Human Rights Commission, NGOs and civil society to improve the domestic asylum system and treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees, and to ensure respect for their rights, including the principle of non-refoulement.

Main Activities

Support to Korea's national asylum system

- The Republic of Korea acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol in 1992 and began registering asylum-seekers in 1994. The numbers of new applications have slowly increased over the years with a total of 15,452 persons applying for asylum in 2019.
- A comprehensive Refugee Law, Presidential Decree and Regulations came into force on 1 July 2013. It is the first stand-alone refugee law in the Republic of Korea and represents a significant enhancement of refugee protection. UNHCR monitors the implementation of the Act in line with the 1951 Convention and provides technical assistance.
- UNHCR advises and supports the Ministry of Justice and Immigration Offices, which handle asylum applications in the Republic of Korea, to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with international standards.
- UNHCR establishes and maintains partnerships with a range of NGOs to improve support and services to asylum-seekers and refugees in areas such as accommodation, employment, education and health services.
- UNHCR provides technical assistance to the Government of the Republic of Korea on resettlement. The Office also advises government, non-government and private partners on solutions in the context of responsibility sharing and in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees.
- UNHCR is advocating with the Government of the Republic of Korea to establish statelessness determination procedures and to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, while at the same time to prevent statelessness by ensuring birth registration of children born to asylum-seekers and refugees.

Fundraising and advocacy activities

- UNHCR raises awareness and understanding on forced displacement issues with the general public. UNHCR attempts to make these issues more personal to Koreans by linking their own history of internal displacement during the Korean War to the plight of refugees. UNHCR also makes continuous effort to raise the public awareness about refugees and other persons of concern who have sought asylum in Korea and are in need of protection and support of the Korean government and its people.
- UNHCR Korea appointed renowned South Korean actor Jung Woo-sung as its first celebrity supporter in May 2014, who was officially named as the agency's National Goodwill Ambassador in 2015. Jung has supported the works of UNHCR and helped raise the public-awareness of the plight of refugees around the world through numerous field visits and participation in advocacy campaigns and events. He went on field missions with UNHCR to Nepal in November 2014, South Sudan in May 2015, Lebanon in March 2016, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in June 2017, Bangladesh in December 2017, South Korea's Jeju Island in June 2018, Djibouti and Malaysia in November 2018 and Bangladesh in 2019. He is committed to supporting the works of UNHCR through a long-term relationship and is a valuable asset to UNHCR Korea.
- In 2019, the Government of Korea's financial contribution to UNHCR reached USD 25,850,008, representing a 2 per cent increase from 2018. The unearmarked core contribution amounted to 12 per cent of this, amounting to USD 3,260,000 and the remaining 88 per cent, totaling USD 22,594,395 was earmarked geographically for major humanitarian emergencies, the Junior Professional Officer Program, as well as the 2019 portions of multi-year support for the Sustainable Return and Reintegration of Afghan Refugees and Internally Displaced People. The 2019 contribution also includes KOICA's multi-year contribution to the thematic education project in Uganda, Ethiopia and Bangladesh (2017-19: USD 5 million), and Girls Education for Peace Project in South Sudan (2018-20: USD 5 million). RoK entered UNHCR's "20 million club" of donors since 2016, and has maintained its membership ever since.
- UNHCR's efforts to mobilize financial support from the private sector continued in 2019, raising over USD 47.3 million as of end-2019. UNHCR Korea launched its first private sector fund-raising activities in mid-2009 and Korea became one of the Top 10 private funding sources for the Agency since 2013. And over 250,000 individual donors supported UNHCR's global operations in 2019 alone.

CONTACTS

Heinn Shin, Snr. Communications Associate shinh@unhcr.org
Yeh-Jin Suh, Snr. External Relations Assistant suh@unhcr.org