

COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

**Countries:
Australia, New Zealand,
and the South Pacific**

Planning Year: 2002

Executive Summary

(a) Context and Beneficiary Populations

The Regional Office in Canberra has responsibility for UNHCR activities in fifteen countries. The 2002 Country Operations Plan details anticipated UNHCR protection, resettlement, training and public information activities in Australia and New Zealand in addition to South Pacific nations.

UNHCR faces no particular staff security issues in the countries it covers, with additional security measures in place for defined areas of the country. All UN missions must have security clearance from the Designated Official (UNDP) in Port Moresby.

In Australia and New Zealand, security of refugees and asylum seekers are a Government responsibility. Isolated incidents of discrimination and violence occur and are dealt with through established judicial and complaints procedures.

The fact that Australia and New Zealand are each resettlement countries with close political and economic ties has prompted UNHCR to organise joint Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement every year since 1996 (except 2000).

Australia:

Australia is a State Party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Australia is an active member of UNHCR's Executive Committee and has been a valuable supporter of UNHCR activities, particularly in the Asia/Pacific region.

In 2001 Australia's core contribution to UNHCR was A\$14.3 million (US\$7,500,000), an A\$ 400,000 increase over its core contribution in 2000. Funding has been maintained at real (Australian) terms in 1999 and 2000. Its core and non-core contributions to UNHCR in these two years placed it as the 12th largest government donor to UNHCR.

Australia remains one of the top 4 resettlement countries in the world accepting approximately 12,000 refugees or others in humanitarian need each year. Four thousand places are nominally allocated to on-shore asylum-seekers (i.e., applicants in Australia), 4,000 are allocated to refugees resettled on the recommendation of UNHCR, with the remaining 4,000 places going to others who, while not meeting Convention criteria, are in humanitarian need and have connections with Australia.

As noted, Australia has traditionally been generous to asylum-seekers and refugees. The number of asylum-seekers arriving by boat to Australia, while relatively small compared to global movements, rose sharply in 2000. This increase has resulted in a rise of public and political attention to immigration issues. As a result, Government policies toward refugees as well as asylum seekers have been reviewed and revised. Legislative changes, some of which challenge traditional protection guidelines, have been introduced and implemented. Foremost amongst these is the implementation of new legislation that determines the quality of asylum offered depending on the manner of arrival in Australia of the asylum seeker concerned. Further, the maintenance of a mandatory detention regime for all unauthorised arrivals, including asylum seekers, remains a significant concern to UNHCR.

UNHCR's role in respect of international protection in Australia continues to be advisory in nature, employing mechanisms such as training, dissemination, and promotion of refugee law, highlighting UNHCR's resettlement needs and priorities, and public information activities to enhance the ability and commitment of Australia to meet its international obligations.

UNHCR is the only UN agency with a presence in Australia. The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), the UNICEF National Committee and RO Canberra will strengthen their co-operation especially in public relations. Because UNIC, UNICEF National Committee and Australia for UNHCR are located in Sydney, the UNHCR Office in Canberra anticipates an increasingly close relationship. Significant supporters of UNHCR's activities include the UNHCR National Association and Australia for UNHCR.

New Zealand:

New Zealand is a State Party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. New Zealand is furthermore an observer of UNHCR's Executive Committee, pending acceptance of an application for membership of UNHCR's Executive Committee lodged in November 2000. New Zealand, like Australia, has been a valuable supporter of UNHCR activities globally, particularly in the Asia/Pacific region.

In 2001 New Zealand's core contribution to UNHCR was NZ\$1.8 million (US\$790,000) a 30 % increase over its core contribution in 2000 (NZ\$1.35 million). New Zealand, despite its small population, has consistently rated amongst the top 25 donors of UNHCR.

Along with Australia, New Zealand remains a resettlement country, accepting approximately 750 refugees each year. Six hundred places are allocated for protection cases, 75 for women at risk and 75 for medical cases. New Zealand has by and large been very positive in its approach to asylum seekers and refugees, including developing alternatives to the detention of asylum seekers, in line with UNHCR's Guidelines on Detention.

Through its ongoing permanent presence in New Zealand, UNHCR is able to maintain constructive working relations with the relevant New Zealand parties both within and outside Government through regular and close consultation, and to continue to foster and enhance the positive climate towards UNHCR, refugees and asylum seekers.

UNHCR's role in New Zealand continues to be advisory in nature, employing mechanisms such as dissemination, promotion of refugee law and training, promotion of UNHCR's resettlement needs and priorities, as well as undertaking public information activities to enhance the ability and commitment of New Zealand to meet its international obligations, and to continue to be a positive ally to UNHCR and refugees world-wide. Due to New Zealand's limited presence in the field, the UNHCR Office in Canberra acts as the focal point for the submission of resettlement submission cases to New Zealand.

UNHCR is the only UN agency with an established office in New Zealand. UNHCR maintains contact with national UN affiliated bodies, such as the National Commission for UNESCO, the UNICEF National Committee and the UN Association of New Zealand.

The South Pacific Nations:

In addition to Papua New Guinea, the remainder of the South Pacific region covered by the UNHCR Office in Canberra include the Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Samoa (formerly Western Samoa), and the Solomon Islands. Five of these countries--Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu--are States Party to both the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees(1951) and the 1967 Protocol.

Ethnic tension in the Solomon Islands resulted in mass internal displacement in mid-1999, with this displacement remaining as of the date of this COP. There have been no significant refugee arrivals in neighbouring countries from this displacement although security in the Solomon Islands remains fragile.

Traditional UNHCR activity in the South Pacific has been limited, except a two year programme in the Solomon Islands to assist Bougainville refugees. UNHCR intends to intensify its activities in the region through the training of immigration officials with the goal of promoting national refugee legislation in the signatory countries.

UNHCR has no office or staff in the South Pacific.

The UN has established a significant presence in Suva, Fiji to serve the South Pacific region. Under the UNDP Resident Representative as UN Resident Co-ordinator, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, ILO, UNAIDS, UNOCHA and WHO each maintain offices and personnel in Suva. The ICRC has recently moved its regional headquarters from Manila to Suva.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Name of Beneficiary Population / Theme: Australia and New Zealand humanitarian intake, financial contribution and regional influence are maintained or increased	
Goal: Ensure that the Government's commitment to refugee protection is maintained or increased.	
Principal Objectives	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government agencies that are involved with refugee matters respect and observe the fundamental rights of asylum seekers and refugees consistent with relevant international standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training, advice and information to government officials, such as immigration officials, legislators, etc. on refugee law and related international instruments. Increase contacts and advocacy with all levels of government interlocutors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government enacts and implements national legislation in a manner consistent with international standards relating to refugees and asylum seekers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review adherence to the standards for the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in accordance with relevant international standards. Enlist the support of influential groups, including non-governmental organisations, to impact on government action. Support and undertake promotion and training activities for non-governmental organisations and other sectors dealing with human rights and refugee matters and establish a network to share information on violation of refugee rights.
Goal: To ensure maintenance of the Governments' financial support for UNHCR.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government funding of UNHCR is maintained or increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key individuals and groups, develop and implement lobbying strategy to ensure maximum impact.
Goal: Resettlement programmes in New Zealand and Australia reflect UNHCR needs and priorities and resettlement programmes are maintained or increased.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resettlement policy and legislation reflects UNHCR resettlement criteria Composition of resettlement quotas reflects UNHCR needs. Size of resettlement programs for UNHCR referrals are maintained or increased. Raise awareness of UNHCR resettlement needs, policy and priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor Legislation and policy. Regularly advise and consult with Government and NGOs on UNHCR resettlement criteria and needs Liase with UNHCR Headquarters and field officers to identify current resettlement needs. Engage in training and promotion of UNHCR resettlement policy and needs. Provide casework support and advice to NGOs and refugee communities. Promote program for deployment of NGO and Government personnel to UNHCR to undertake resettlement activities. Organise regional resettlement meeting for NGOs and Government
Goal: To increase acceptance rate and minimise processing times for UNHCR resettlement submissions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNHCR resettlement submissions are processed expeditiously Emergency and vulnerable cases are treated as a priority Provide policy advice to UNHCR field offices on Australian and New Zealand policy and program requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote prioritisation of UNHCR referred cases and reduction of out processing requirements in legislation and policy Consult on improved management of cases and on out processing requirements Develop Emergency protocols between UNHCR and Governments Lobby Government on particular cases. (NZ) Both monitor quality of submissions and ensure cases are submitted expeditiously Provide policy advice to Headquarters
Goal: To ensure that the principles of PARinAC are implemented and that UNHCR has co-operative and mutually supportive relations with NGOs.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the co-operation with NGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings with NGOs. Increased communication between UNHCR and NGOs.
Goal: To raise awareness of refugee issues and generate support for refugees.	

Country Operations Plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public awareness of refugee issues. • Increase support for refugees. • Raise the public profile of the work and role of UNHCR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and give well-targeted lectures and presentations. • Respond effectively to public and media enquiries. • Cultivate useful media contacts. • Publish high quality Newsletter with wide distribution.
<p>Goal: The National Association maximises private sector fundraising opportunities.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Australia for UNHCR in the development of private sector fundraising activities in Australia. • Develop joint activities with Australia for UNHCR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify projects for private sector fundraising. • Assist Australia for UNHCR in developing links with the corporate sector, media, NGOs, Government etc. • Provide up-to-date information on UNHCR policies, practices and developments.
<p>Name of Beneficiary Population / Theme: Asylum seekers and refugees in the South Pacific.</p>	
<p>Goal: To promote Capacity Building of national Governments and NGO's in the South Pacific nations</p>	
Objectives	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote accession to and implementation of the Refugee Convention in the South Pacific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The South Pacific nation accedes or takes concrete steps toward accession to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and other relevant refugee instruments. • Provide information to government officials, legislators and opinion leaders in the South Pacific about international refugee law and the importance of accession and implementation. • Enlist the support of influential individuals, groups or organisations in the South Pacific to influence government action. • Sensitise the Government, legislators, opinion leaders, the general public and relevant civil society organisations on the respective importance of accession to both instruments and their relevance for states internally as well as in relation to neighbouring states.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure respect for fundamental refugee law is maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Pacific Governments establish administrative structures to implement refugee status determination process. • The legal procedures and criteria for determination of claims for refugee status are accessible to all asylum seekers in the South Pacific. • Conduct refugee and human rights law training for government officials, including border security, immigrants officers, the policy, military personnel, airline officials, customs, civil servants involved with refugee issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote awareness of refugee issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities are trained in the implementation of refugee status determination. • Training of NGOs and officials for refugee advocacy and refugee care.