

Japan

November 2020

1,732* refugees and humanitarian status holders** as of December 2019.

10,375 new asylum applications lodged with the authorities in 2019. **81,543*** total asylum applications lodged since 1982.

3rd largest government donor and **4th** largest global private donation contributor to UNHCR in 2020.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees & Humanitarian Status Holders** (by country of origin*)

Country	Total
Myanmar	around 1,000
Others	around 732
Total	1,732

Population of Concern***

A total of around **31,600** refugees, humanitarian status holders**, asylum seekers, stateless people***

* This is the total of those who are protected in Japan between 2010 and 2019 based on the official statistics by Ministry of Justice (http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyukan_nyukan42.html), press release by MoJ (http://www.moj.go.jp/press_index.html), and resettlement between 2010 and 2019 based on the official announcement by MoFA (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press4_007888.html). The number of Myanmar is estimated from the numbers referred to in the aforementioned sources.

** Humanitarian Status is a complementary form of protection.

*** This estimate includes the number of those who were recognized/protected in Japan from 2010 to 2019 (1,732), estimated number of pending asylum cases as of the end of 2019 (around 29,000) and the number of stateless persons based on the official statistics by MoJ (687 as of June 2019). The figure does not include the legacy caseload of some 11,000 Indochinese refugees who arrived in Japan in the 1980/90s and continue to be protected as refugees but have largely integrated successfully.

FUNDING

2020 Fundraising (as of Nov 2020)

Government: **USD 122.8 Million**
 Private: **USD 34.9 Million**

2019 Fundraising Results

Government: **USD 126.5 Million**
 Private****: **USD 36.5 Million**

**** This amount includes contributions from UNIQLO and Japan for UNHCR (J4U). Except for UNIQLO, private sector fundraising in Japan is carried out by 'Japan for UNHCR'.

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

9 National Staff
 3 International Staff

Offices:

1 Branch Office in Tokyo

CONTACTS

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LINKS:

UNHCR Representation in Japan: <https://www.unhcr.org/jp/>;
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Japan Association of UNHCR: <https://www.japanforunhcr.org>

UNHCR Global Focus – Asia and the Pacific:
reporting.unhcr.org/node/29

Working with Partners

- UNHCR Tokyo attaches great importance to working with partners and enjoys the cooperation and support of a range of government entities, civil society organizations, academia, media and private companies.

Main Activities

Protection

- **Priorities:** Japan is a State party to the 1951 Refugee Convention. While Japan's asylum system has further developed and improved over recent years, UNHCR continues to provide policy and technical support to the Government and other stakeholders, and advocates for 1) the establishment of a comprehensive asylum system, ideally with a stand-alone refugee law, and further strengthening of asylum institutions; 2) improved conditions for refugees' integration, and 3) a better alignment of Japan's resettlement programme with global needs and UNHCR's selection criteria. In addition, UNHCR also advocates for enhanced identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness and protection of stateless persons, in particular for the establishment of a statelessness determination procedure and Japan's accession to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions.

- **Asylum System:** The number of asylum applications lodged in 2019 was 10,375, remaining at the similar level of 2018, after a record hike in 2017 (19,629 applications). Ministry of Justice (MoJ)'s anti-abuse measures launched in January 2018 appear to have resulted in the recent reduction of asylum applications, although the length of the procedures for non-accelerated cases continued to be an issue. For 2019, 44 refugees were recognized, and 37 others were allowed to remain in Japan with humanitarian status.

In December 2018, the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA) was amended expanding the channels to admit up to 345,150 foreign workers in 5 years, although only 5,950 workers have been admitted as of June 2020. In April 2019, the Immigration Bureau (previously a subordinate bureau of MoJ) was upgraded into the Immigration Services Agency (ISA), a semi-independent body with enhanced authorities and additional mandate on integration of foreigners. MoJ issued its new immigration policy paper to cover a 2-year period from April 2019 ("Basic Plan"), emphasizing further cooperation with UNHCR and the need to enhance the quality of RSD.

In June 2020, the Sub-Committee on Detention and Deportation (SCDD) under the 7th Immigration Policy Discussion Panel, a Justice Minister's advisory body published its final report, to which UNHCR contributed as an observer. Based on this report, amendments to ICRRA are under consideration as well as changes to operational procedures and the next Basic Plan. In addition to capacity building of RSD personnel, UNHCR regularly exchanges views with MoJ/ISA and supports their efforts to enhance the asylum system and practice.

- **Reception Conditions:** UNHCR continues to fund counselling (legal/social) projects carried out by Japan Association for Refugees (JAR) and International Social Services Japan (ISSJ).
- **Resettlement / Complementary Pathways:** With the arrival of the 10th cohort of 20 individuals (6 families) in September 2019 through Japan's resettlement programme, the total number of refugees admitted by Japan has come to 194 refugees since its inception in 2010. UNHCR welcomes the expansion of the quota and the criteria of resettlement admission announced in June 2019 and is committed to support its implementation. JICA continues to implement the Japanese Initiative for the future of Syrian Refugees (JISR), a scholarship programme for 100 Syrian refugee students and their family members (for 5 years). Fifty more Syrians are assisted under the Ministry of Education's regular scholarship programme for foreign students.
- **Integration:** The Refugee Higher Education Programme (RHEP), a scholarship programme for refugees in Japan facilitated by UNHCR and 'Japan for UNHCR' was joined by two new university partners in 2020 and now offers up to 18 refugees per academic year the opportunity to undergo an undergraduate/graduate education at one of its 13 partner universities. In collaboration with JELA (Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association), UNHCR initiated a pilot programme of the Refugee Vocational Education Programme (RVEP), a scholarship programme targeting refugees to offer vocational training with good job prospects on graduation. Under the COVID-19 situation, online support was provided by JICA to the first group of JISR students graduating this autumn. Online language training was also provided to the 3rd cohort of Syrian students.

Fundraising Activities

- **Government Fundraising:** As of 30 November, Japan's contribution to UNHCR operations worldwide in 2020 has reached some USD 122.8 million, responding to the needs particularly in Africa, the Middle East and North Africa region, Rohingya situation and COVID-19 situations. In 2019, the total contribution received from Japan was USD 126.5 million including core contribution, supplementary contribution and emergency grant aid. UNHCR continues to work closely with the Government, particularly on the humanitarian/development nexus as well as the Global Compact on Refugees. In 2019, at the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7), UNHCR organized a side event highlighting and promoting responsibility sharing and humanitarian – development nexus, jointly with the African Union, JICA and UNOSAA. Japan also regularly sends Junior Professional Officers (JPO) to UNHCR operations. UNHCR's retention of Japanese JPOs stands at more than 75 per cent.
- **Private-Sector Fundraising Activities and Partnerships:** UNHCR works in close collaboration with the Japan Association for UNHCR (J4U), the national association in support of UNHCR. Outreach activities such as face-to-face fundraising campaigns, online and direct mailing are conducted to raise awareness and generate interest on global refugee issues in Japan and to seek financial support from private individuals and corporate donors. UNHCR continues enjoying a strategic multi-year global partnership with Fast Retailing, better known for its UNIQLO brand. Since 2007, 30 million pieces of new and recycled clothing have been delivered to refugees and displaced persons in 48

countries. More than USD 12 million in cash has been contributed to support livelihood programme in Asia, emergency responses and logistics of in-kind donations. In 2019, Fast Retailing donated USD 1.5 million in cash, of which USD 1 million was supported for the emergency in the Horn of Africa (South Sudan) and Sahel (Mali) UNHCR operations. In addition, 121 refugees are currently employed in UNIQLO stores globally. Online communication/marketing campaign was organised around World Refugee Day in 2020 by involving 17 UNIQLO markets, which raised USD 93,000. The 4th renewal of the global partnership was recently agreed until August 2023. Discussions are underway on how to strengthen refugee support activities, including local partnerships at global, regional and country levels. Fuji Megane, another important partner, continues to support refugees, IDPs and UNHCR through its annual ‘Vision Mission’ which celebrated its 37th anniversary in 2019. In 2019, Fuji Megane visited Azerbaijan for the 15th time with the assistance of UNHCR. In 2020, their annual mission was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic but donated 20 intra-ocular lenses contributed by HOYA and 1,500 pairs of eyeglasses to UNHCR Azerbaijan. Since June 2013, Fuji Megane has been donating USD 1 million to UNHCR over a 10-year period. An additional 10-year donation of USD 2 million started in 2018. In 2019, Fuji Megane donated 3,486 eyeglasses for refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan, 1,500 eyeglasses for refugees and IDPs in Iraq and 1,500 eyeglasses for the Rohingya refugees and local host communities in Bangladesh. In total, Fuji Megane donated 169,446 eyeglasses to refugees, IDPs and host communities in various countries since 1983.

Advocacy Activities

- **Partnerships:** In line with UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2017-2021 and Strategic Directions for the Asia-Pacific Region 2019-2021, BOT has engaged with a broad range of actors in Japan in order to extend and strengthen partnerships in ways that makes the most effective use of available Japan’s humanitarian resources and expertise for an effective response to forced displacement worldwide and operationalization of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR).
- UNHCR Japan continued to strengthen its partnership with NGO partners, in particular with the **Japan Forum for UNHCR-NGOs** (“J-FUN”), as well as with **Japan Platform** (“JPF” a consortium of NGOs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Japan Federation of Economic Organizations, coordinating funding and emergency operations), and the **Japan NGO Centre for International Cooperation** (“JANIC” a network NGO covering more than 200 humanitarian and development NGOs). UNHCR Japan, in collaboration with UNHCR’s **eCentre** (Regional Centre for Emergency Preparedness) in Bangkok and with funding from the Japanese government, actively supports **Japan NGO Initiative for Safety and Security** (JaNISS) to help Japanese NGOs operating on the international humanitarian and development arenas develop their security and safety procedures for field operations. Government and NGO staff as well as JICA regularly benefit from trainings offered by the eCentre for capacity building on humanitarian action and security in the field.
- UNHCR and **Japan International Cooperation Agency** (JICA) have been engaged in strategic collaboration in the areas of recovery and peacebuilding in the post-conflict

countries to facilitate the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons, and socio-economic assistance to refugees and host communities.

- UNHCR has established and facilitated the **UN and NGO Partnership Discussion Group** (“UNPaD”) involving major humanitarian UN agencies in Tokyo (UNICEF, WFP, IOM and OCHA) and Japanese humanitarian NGOs to discuss and formulate a proposal focusing on collaborative operational partnership involving aid agencies and the donor government.
- UNHCR has worked closely with civil society groups and academia to formulate and revise the National Action Plan to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security), and ensured forced displacement context is reflected in the government’s document. UNHCR has also engaged with civil society working group on PSEA/SH (prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse / sexual harassment).
- Building on the momentum of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the 1st and 2nd **Multi-Stakeholder Consultations (MSC)** Study sessions were held online with more than 100 participants in each session from different sectors of the society including Government, civil society, educational and research institutions, private sector, media, faith-based organizations, and refugee communities. The theme of the first session was GRF and COVID-19, with the initial goal of creating a forum for information sharing by actors active in a variety of fields, focusing on new issues which arose due to COVID-19. The theme of the second session focused on the roles of higher education in refugee protection.
- UNHCR works closely with the **Parliamentary League for UNHCR**, which extends strong support to refugee issues both in and outside of Japan.
- **Awareness-Raising Activities:** UNHCR Japan promotes awareness related to refugee issues and solicits public support for UNHCR’s activities around the globe and within Japan. Media outreach, digital and print publications, web updates and social media posts on Facebook and Twitter are key tools in this regard. In 2019, the 14th Refugee Film Festival (RFF) was held by Japan for UNHCR (J4U) supported by UNHCR under its new name “Will2Live (W2L) Cinema”. Seven movies were shown in Tokyo and Nagoya, with 19 screenings in close cooperation with JICA and other partners, generating 2,800 audience. Apart from the main refugee film screenings, universities and private corporate partners across Japan participate in the W2L by organizing individual film shows for their students/employees. Since its inception, UNHCR’s refugee film festival has attracted over 74,000 individuals in Japan. Due to the COVID-19 situation, J4U/UNHCR decided not to hold a physical cinema event in 2020, and to provide the online package of the movies instead. This virtual event is named “W2L Online Theatre with Fund-raising” and continue by the end of the year.
- UNHCR started campaigning toward the Global Refugee Forum #EveryoneCounts and engaged Goodwill Ambassador **MIYAVI** to call for action. Video clips were produced for the Japanese /global audience, for PSP Thailand and for the global GWA.
- UNHCR and J4U initiated a student-based project as part of its **youth engagement efforts**. 21 student organisations across Japan working on refugee issues joined the project and released an inspiring video clip to raise awareness toward refugees. Various

colourful activities took place online around WRD, utilising Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and twitter.

- Media interest grew towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic/Paralympic Games and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR). Although the Games were postponed until the summer of 2021, UNHCR and J4U continue to work together on this opportunity to sensitize the general public in Japan about refugee issues. In March, J4U and UNHCR facilitated the participation at the Tokyo Marathon of the refugee athlete and former Olympian Yonas Kinde, who is a candidate for the EOR. Communications about Mr. Kinde’s visit to Japan received wide coverage (145 mentions in web portals, 72 in print outlets, 3 in TV stations and 2 in radios) proving the resonance of the “**sports and refugees**” topic.
- In addition to regular media briefings, interviews and sharing of press releases, UNHCR Japan conducted **press conferences** at the National Press Club on global displacement developments around UNHCR’s high-level visits and, jointly with J4U, at the launch of the Will2Live refugee film festival 2019. In a joint effort with J4U, UNHCR Japan also uses its broad media network to publicize critical emergency operations and UNHCR’s response. Some 30 lectures and presentations were given by UNHCR Tokyo staff at universities and schools across the country in 2019. In addition, UNIQLO/GU’s school outreach – with technical advice provided by UNHCR - engaged 400 schools, benefitting more than 40,000 students in 2019, which cumulates approximately 200,000 students outreached since 2013. The outreach events were held with the support and participation of students, teachers, parents and local communities, which contribute to raising awareness on refugees and UNHCR.
- In 2019, UNHCR’s national **Goodwill Ambassador** for Japan MIYAVI visited refugees in Kenya and Bangladesh and was invited by the Prime Minister’s Office to attend a banquet inviting Bangladesh Prime Minister Hasina, later to perform at TICAD 7’s welcome event hosted by Prime Minister Abe and Mayor of Yokohama City. Addressing the audience, MIYAVI spoke passionately about his role and his encounters with refugees and his inspiring visit to Kakuma refugee camp. In January 2020, MIYAVI visited Colombia to observe the Venezuelan Regional Response efforts. Based on these encounters, MIYAVI broadly promotes and publicizes UNHCR’s global refugee work for the plight of refugees to his concert audiences and on social media (over 1.7 million followers) and widely on mainstream media. MIYAVI’s Goodwill Ambassadorship was renewed for another 2-years until November 2021.
- To enhance partnership with municipalities, UNHCR Japan is promoting “**Cities #WithRefugees**”. Tokyo, Hiroshima, Bunkyo and Shibuya have signed up for this initiative.
- On 2020 **World Refugee Day**, 25 landmarks across Japan including the world’s tallest tower Skytree and Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building were lit in UN Blue, which gained more interest toward refugees and UNHCR’s activities from the Japanese public and received 100 media exposures: 61 in newspapers (50 in digital, 11 in print), 30 in other web portals and 5 in TV stations. MIYAVI participated in the W2L Music online event led by J4U, which gained more than 50,000 live views. WRD video messages from the HC, UNHCR Japan Representative and MIYAVI were produced calling for solidarity.