

Asia and the Pacific

A young boy attending class in Pin Gou Njan Adolescent Club in Nayapara settlement (also called Camp 26), Teknaf, Bangladesh.

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WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Inclusive protection and assistance to empower and build resilience and self-reliance of people of concern, while easing pressure on host communities

Asia and the Pacific is a region on the move, characterized by large-scale displacement and also mixed flows of both refugees and migrants. As a priority, UNHCR will support States to build and strengthen national asylum systems and capacity; enhance refugees' access to education, livelihoods and local services; and prevent, identify and reduce statelessness. The inclusion of people of concern and their host communities in national and UN development programmes will also be pursued. UNHCR will promote protection-sensitive migration management, as well as access to territory.

Through a people-centred approach, UNHCR will enhance outreach to host communities to strengthen coexistence and promote tolerance towards people of concern. It will also engage refugees and returnees to foster empowerment and participation in decision-making processes.

Agility in the face of protection and socioeconomic risks amplified by COVID-19

As States adjust public health and safety measures in their response to COVID-19, UNHCR must be agile, proactive and supportive of national efforts, while ensuring access to territory for individuals in need of international protection remains a priority.

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Consequences of COVID-19 on planning, preparedness and response

While having significant health, protection and socioeconomic consequences for people of concern and their host communities across Asia, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided impetus for governments and development actors to reconsider the inclusivity of their programmes and policies. COVID-19 has underscored the importance of universal, non-discriminatory access to prevention, testing and treatment—regardless of nationality or legal status. From the outset, UNHCR has worked with governments and partners to promote the inclusion of people of concern in national responses or to align UNHCR's programmes with government responses.

UNHCR's cash assistance programme in Pakistan mirrors the Government's Ehsaas emergency cash programme. UNHCR has significantly scaled up cash assistance in the region to cover the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations, with an increase of 100% between 2019 and 2020 up to \$28 million, including \$11.9 million for the COVID-19 response.

The realization of durable solutions has also been severely affected by the pandemic. The region's large-scale facilitated voluntary repatriation programmes from India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Thailand (to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Myanmar, respectively) were largely put on hold through mid-2020, with total refugee returns dropping from over 10,300 in 2019 to just 584 in the first half of 2020.

MAJOR SITUATIONS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC IN 2021



AFGHANISTAN

With the crisis in Afghanistan entering its fifth decade, Afghans are the second largest refugee population under UNHCR's mandate globally. Pakistan remains the world's second largest refugee-hosting country and the Islamic Republic of Iran ranks eighth, with the two countries hosting 87% of Afghan refugees. UNHCR will work to support the inclusive policies of the two host countries, notably efforts to improve access to quality education, health care, skills training and self-reliance initiatives for both Afghans and their host communities. In addition, UNHCR will facilitate voluntary repatriation as the preferred (regional) durable solution for Afghan refugees, while continuing to promote and facilitate access to complementary pathways and increase resettlement quotas from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Inside Afghanistan, the security situation remains volatile, with an estimated 2.6 million people internally displaced by conflict at the end of 2019.

In 2021, UNHCR will work with traditional and emerging partners to expand reintegration opportunities for returnees and local communities through humanitarian and development investments in priority areas of return and reintegration. In addition, UNHCR will facilitate the work of the support platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and its core group in order to inspire investment and complementary action, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2.4 million
REFUGEES FROM AFGHANISTAN

15,700
ASYLUM-SEEKERS

3.8 million
IDPs

310,000
RETURNEES (REFUGEES AND IDPs)

53,800
OTHERS OF CONCERN



MYANMAR

UNHCR will work with the Government of Bangladesh and partners in Cox's Bazar to meet the needs of some 860,000 Rohingya refugees. Priorities include expanding access to education and skills development opportunities; prevention of and response to gender-based violence through community-based education and protection, legal aid and mental health support; and maintaining a critical health and nutrition response.

In Myanmar, UNHCR will continue working with the Government, UNDP and other partners to improve conditions in northern Rakhine State, while also advocating renewed efforts to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Under a tripartite memorandum of understanding with the Government, UNHCR and UNDP have conducted needs assessments in 130 locations and 75 quick impact projects are underway. In 2021, UNHCR and UNDP will seek to expand these programmes to further enhance livelihoods, education and social cohesion. Throughout Rakhine State, where there are over 200,000 IDPs, UNHCR will advocate that the Government's strategy to close IDP camps be implemented in line with international human rights standards, so displaced people are able to return to their places of origin. UNHCR will also expand education and livelihood opportunities for over 265,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from Myanmar hosted in India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

1.1 million
REFUGEES FROM MYANMAR

35,400
ASYLUM-SEEKERS

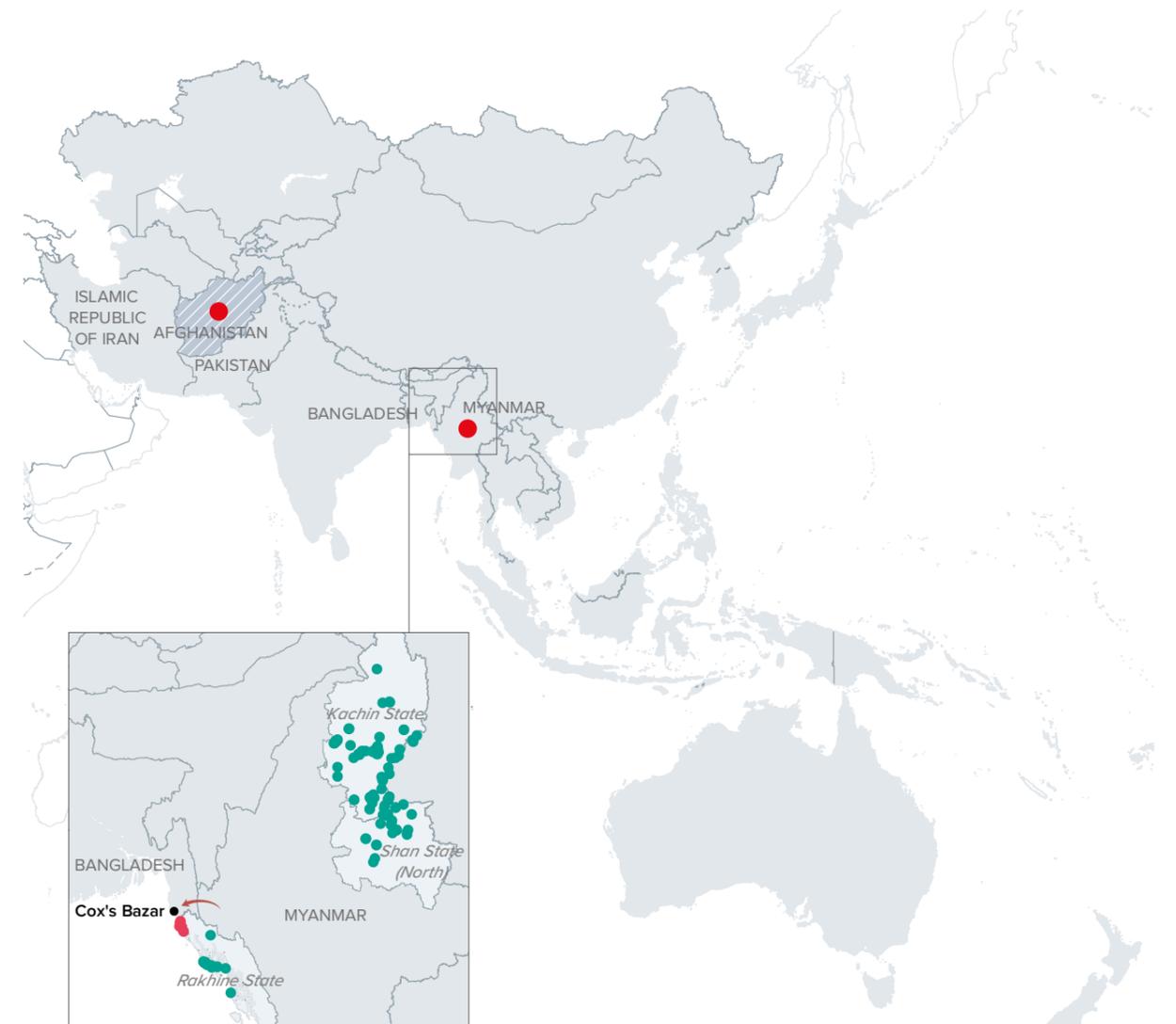
313,000
IDPs

1.6 million
STATELESS PERSONS*

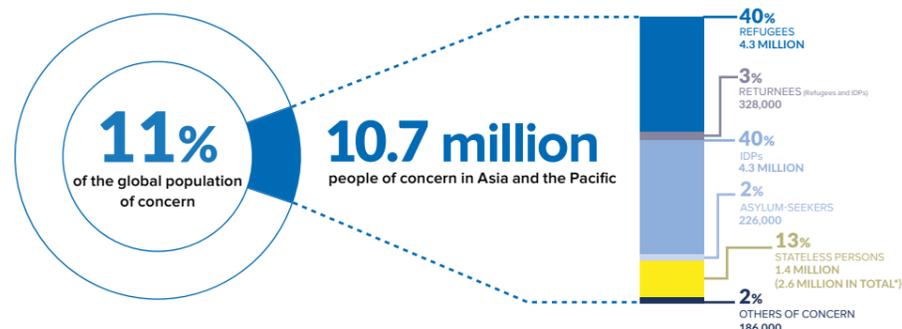
11,400
RETURNEES (REFUGEES AND IDPs)

2,100
OTHERS OF CONCERN

Responding to a broad set of displacement and statelessness situations in 2021, and in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNHCR will strive to realize more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing in support of protection and solutions for the 9.2 million people of concern in Asia and the Pacific as of September 2020, as well as for host communities. Recognizing that voluntary return remains the preferred solution for most, progress toward greater inclusion and self-reliance while they are displaced will enable refugees to contribute to their host communities and better prepare them for eventual return.



2021 PLANNING FIGURES FOR PEOPLE OF CONCERN in Asia and the Pacific



* The total stateless figure includes 1.2 million stateless persons of Rohingya ethnicity who are also counted as refugees, asylum-seekers or others of concern in the region.

- Situation
- CRRF country
- IDP initiative country
- L2 Level of emergency
- Refugee camp
- IDP camp
- Rohingya refugee outflow

.../...

Where broad restrictions on movement hinder access to people of concern, UNHCR will continue innovative service delivery, including through the use of remote technology and refugee community volunteers. With COVID-19 hampering children's education globally, the reliance on the internet and electronic devices for remote learning has disproportionately disadvantaged displaced and stateless children. Redressing disparities and seeking to include refugees in all pandemic-related responses will thus be crucial. With many people at heightened risk due to lack of legal employment and dependence on daily wage labour, UNHCR will scale up cash assistance, aligned with national social protection systems where possible.

Innovative solutions for different populations, based on their diverse profiles and needs, in both protracted situations and emergencies

Using support platforms and solidarity approaches such as the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), UNHCR will broaden the base of stakeholders working towards solutions. The Office will continue to advocate investments and engage with all partners and stakeholders to create conditions conducive to voluntary and sustainable return. In parallel, advocacy for humanitarian-development-peace interventions to address root causes of displacement will be prioritized. Additional emphasis will be placed on expanding opportunities for third-country solutions, increasing both the number of States providing and spaces made available for resettlement, as well as complementary pathways such as family reunification, education and labour mobility. UNHCR will advocate legislative reform and universal birth and civil registration to reduce and prevent statelessness in the region.

Cluster leadership and partnerships will be strengthened to ensure protection and solutions for the internally displaced across the region.

Diversified partnerships for multi-stakeholder approaches, with a focus on operational synergies, joint strategy development, advocacy and resource mobilization

Partnerships and collaboration constitute a cross-cutting priority, linking protection, assistance and solutions. In addition to engaging refugees, returnees and host communities to foster their empowerment and participation in decision-making, UNHCR will develop diversified partnerships in support of an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach, in the spirit of more equitable responsibility-sharing and comprehensive solutions in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. UNHCR will also pursue strategic engagement with regional organizations, processes and platforms, as well as with development actors and international financial institutions. This will be a particular priority for UNHCR within the support platform for the SSAR, in close collaboration with the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, the core group of the support platform, and other stakeholders. UNHCR will continue to explore venues for engagement with the private sector, including to identify innovative approaches to delivering humanitarian assistance and solutions for refugees.

Harmonized and strengthened data collection and analyses to drive evidence-based protection and solutions strategies

In line with UNHCR's 2020-2022 data strategy for Asia and the Pacific and the organization-wide data transformation

strategy, providing quality information and data on operational activities in a reliable, predictable and innovative way will be a key priority. This will require a harmonized regional approach to facilitate data consolidation, comparability, and analysis,

with a view to supporting evidence-based decision-making. In addition to supporting prioritized data activities at country level, UNHCR will identify and facilitate innovative solutions to existing data processes and engage with regional data partners.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Implications of underfunding

In 2020, underfunding for the Afghanistan situation led to a range of activities being curtailed. In Afghanistan, due to conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, many government and community safety networks have either broken down or are no longer accessible. Insufficient funding in 2020 restricted UNHCR's ability to provide assistance to women at risk, survivors of gender-based violence, individuals with medical or legal needs and children. This heightens the susceptibility of vulnerable individuals to abuse and exploitation, and may place them at risk of irreversible and lasting harm. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR was able to cover universal public health insurance fees for only one third of the 300,000 most vulnerable Afghan refugees, leaving others at risk of resorting to negative coping mechanisms to make ends meet. In Pakistan, UNHCR planned to carry out a joint verification and re-issuance of proof of registration cards exercise with the Government, but was unable to do so in full due to lack of funding.

In Bangladesh, underfunding limited the expansion of transitional shelters, support to persons at heightened risk, and site improvement and development activities across the camps in Cox's Bazar, including water, sanitation and hygiene.

Looking to 2021, and regarding the Afghanistan situation, in Afghanistan itself UNHCR will focus on investments in the

priority areas of return and reintegration. The Office will also prioritize core protection activities and delivering basic assistance to people of concern, including core relief items, shelter, protection monitoring and specialized support to persons at heightened risk and IDPs. In Pakistan, the joint UNHCR-Government verification and re-issuance of proof of registration cards, which expired in 2015, for 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees will be a priority. This exercise is essential for ensuring continued protection of registered refugees through new smart identity cards, similar to those issued to nationals, which will help prevent detention and refoulement and enable access to essential services. The exercise will also enable better targeting of assistance and solutions in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, bringing efficiencies of scale and value for money. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR will prioritize support to the Government's inclusive policies, notably in health care (through the universal public health insurance programme) and education. However, as in 2020, these activities may be severely curtailed in their scale due to underfunding.

For the Myanmar situation, in Bangladesh, UNHCR will prioritize expanding educational and skills development opportunities; prevention of and response to gender-based violence through community-based education and protection, legal aid and mental health support; and maintaining a critical health and nutrition response.

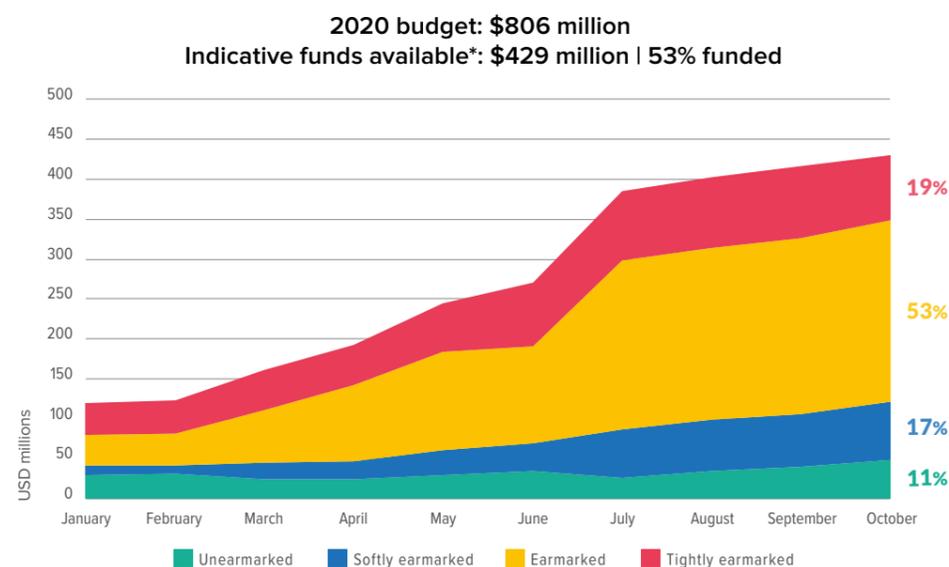
However, underfunding might impact UNHCR’s ability to ensure uninterrupted support to primary health-care centres, and to meet water and sanitation needs in the camps and host communities. Shelter assistance and the distribution of liquid petroleum gas to members of the host community might also be curtailed, which would impact reforestation efforts and work to maintain forest cover. It would also expose women and girls to increased risk of gender-based violence if they are obliged to leave camps in search of firewood.

In Myanmar itself, a tripartite memorandum of understanding between the Government, UNHCR and UNDP will support expansion of programmes on livelihoods, education and social cohesion. In India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, UNHCR will seek to

expand education, livelihood and solutions opportunities for over 265,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from Myanmar hosted by these countries. However, the level of funding in 2021 will impact UNHCR’s ability to carry out these crucial activities.

Operations such as those in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal and Thailand were among the most underfunded in 2020. These operations relied heavily on allocations of flexible funding—either unearmarked or softly earmarked funding. While this demonstrated the importance of such funding in allowing UNHCR to maintain activities, it also highlighted the extent to which UNHCR was forced to prioritize the most urgent needs, with support for self-reliance restricted to only the most vulnerable, and outreach activities and monitoring reduced.

2020 EARMARKING AND TIMELINESS OF FUNDING FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | As of 1 October 2020



* Indicative funds available include carry-over from prior years and an indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked funds based on the prioritized budget.

BUDGETS FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | USD

OPERATION	ALL PILLARS	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	TOTAL
	2020 Current budget (as of 30 June 2020)	2021 proposed budget*				
		Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects	
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC						
Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific ¹	11,449,470	10,358,563	-	-	-	10,358,563
Regional activities for Asia and the Pacific ¹	2,498,235	2,850,000	-	-	-	2,850,000
SUBTOTAL	13,947,705	13,208,563	-	-	-	13,208,563
CENTRAL ASIA						
Kazakhstan Multi-Country Office ²	3,084,045	2,133,727	725,765	-	-	2,859,492
Kyrgyzstan	1,170,000	587,081	112,919	-	-	700,000
Tajikistan	2,370,000	1,191,949	828,753	-	-	2,020,702
SUBTOTAL	6,624,045	3,912,757	1,667,437	-	-	5,580,194
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC						
Australia Multi-Country Office ³	3,385,477	3,357,377	109,134	-	-	3,466,511
China	4,440,027	3,750,000	150,000	-	-	3,900,000
Japan	3,577,288	3,417,403	59,705	-	-	3,477,108
Republic of Korea	2,044,347	2,802,770	99,840	-	-	2,902,610
SUBTOTAL	13,447,138	13,327,550	418,679	-	-	13,746,228
SOUTH ASIA						
India	13,331,893	9,346,216	185,625	-	-	9,531,841
Nepal	6,761,200	2,136,523	438,642	-	-	2,575,164
Sri Lanka	3,781,409	3,732,768	48,640	-	-	3,781,408
SUBTOTAL	23,874,501	15,215,506	672,906	-	-	15,888,413
SOUTH-EAST ASIA						
Bangladesh	318,821,586	288,940,721	-	-	-	288,940,721
Indonesia	9,722,063	6,955,979	392,476	-	-	7,348,455
Malaysia	22,131,840	24,263,334	873,101	-	-	25,136,435
Myanmar	52,226,529	5,359,420	27,319,202	-	12,661,737	45,340,359
Philippines	3,658,017	666,236	392,434	-	2,599,348	3,658,017
Thailand Multi-Country Office ⁴	19,066,446	18,842,823	1,373,395	-	-	20,216,218
SUBTOTAL	425,626,481	345,028,513	30,350,608	-	15,261,085	390,640,205
SOUTH-WEST ASIA						
Afghanistan	123,205,758	22,923,826	-	68,377,447	26,819,333	118,120,607
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	99,861,425	98,221,684	-	-	-	98,221,684
Pakistan	99,661,722	72,394,337	580,000	26,789,059	-	99,763,396
SUBTOTAL	322,728,905	193,539,847	580,000	95,166,506	26,819,333	316,105,687
TOTAL	806,248,775	584,232,736	33,689,630	95,166,506	42,080,418	755,169,290

¹ Regional Bureau and regional activities cover the whole Asia and Pacific region.
² Coordinates activities in Kazakhstan and also covers Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
³ Coordinates activities in Australia and covers New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands.
⁴ Coordinates activities in Thailand and also covers Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, and Viet Nam.
 * Note: budget appropriations are those approved by the UNHCR Executive Committee at its 71st session in October 2020. They are based on a budget cut-off date of 15 June 2020. Any subsequent revisions to budgets will be reflected as they are processed. Updated budget information is made available to Member States through regular updates on budgets and funding to the UNHCR Standing Committee. Information on the 2021 budgets will also be updated online on a monthly basis on Global Focus (<https://reporting.unhcr.org>).