

# Japan

June 2021

**1,390\*** refugees and humanitarian status holders\*\* as of December 2020.

**3,936** new asylum applications lodged with the authorities in 2019. **85,479\*** total asylum applications lodged since 1982.

**4<sup>th</sup>** largest government donor and **4<sup>th</sup>** largest global private donation contributor to UNHCR in 2021.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

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

Country	Total
Myanmar	around 610
Others	around 780
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,390</b>

Population of Concern\*\*\*

A total of around **25,800** refugees, humanitarian status holders\*\*, asylum seekers, stateless people\*\*\*

\* This is the total of those who are protected in Japan between 2011 and 2020 based on the official statistics by Ministry of Justice ([http://www.moj.go.jp/isa/publications/press/07\\_00003.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/isa/publications/press/07_00003.html)), press release by MoJ ([http://www.moj.go.jp/press\\_index.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/press_index.html)), and resettlement between 2011 and 2020 based on the official announcement by MoFA ([https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/release/press4\\_007888.html](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 2011 to 2020 (around 1,390), estimated number of pending asylum cases as of the end of 2020 (around 23,700) and the number of stateless persons based on the official statistics by MoJ (666 as of the end of June 2020). 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

### 2021 Fundraising (as of May 2021)

Government: **USD 125 Million**  
 Private: **USD 17 Million**

### 2020 Fundraising Results

Government: **USD 126.3 Million**  
 Private\*\*\*\*: **USD 40 Million**

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

## UNHCR PRESENCE

- **Branch Office in Tokyo (17):** 4 International Staff / 9 National Staff / 4 Affiliate Workforce
- **Private Sector Partnerships (3):** 2 International / 1 Affiliate Workforce
- **Global Communications + Tokyo 2020 (5):** 2 International / 3 Affiliate Workforce
- **JICA Secondment (1):** 1 International Staff

## CONTACTS

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## LINKS:

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 Japan Association for UNHCR:  
<https://www.japanforunhcr.org>  
 UNHCR Global Focus – Asia and the Pacific:  
<https://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 2020 was 3,936, a considerable drop from the 2018-19 level of around 10,400 applications, after a record hike in 2017 (19,629 applications). Ministry of Justice (MoJ)'s anti-abuse measures launched in January 2018 as well as COVID-19 pandemic 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 2020, 47 refugees were recognized, and 44 others were allowed to remain in Japan with humanitarian status.

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.

The Cabinet in February 2021 submitted the Bill to amend the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA) with its intensions to address long-term detention and other challenges, however decided not to pursue it in the ordinary Diet session in 2021. UNHCR, while welcoming aspects of the amendment that would strengthen rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, also raised concerns over aspects of the Bill that could negatively affect the procedure and conditions for asylum seekers in Japan. In addition to capacity building of RSD personnel, UNHCR regularly exchanges views with ISA and supports their efforts to enhance the asylum system and practice including in the follow-up to the abovementioned Bill.

- **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:** Due to pandemic related travel restrictions, the planned resettlement admission in 2020 did not take place despite the efforts made by the Government of Japan. Thus, the total number of refugees admitted by Japan remains at 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' offers up to 17 refugees per academic year the opportunity to undergo an undergraduate/graduate education at one of its 12 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. Since 2020, online support was provided by JICA to the group of JISR students graduating this autumn.

### **Fundraising Activities**

- **Government Fundraising:** As of 31 May, Japan's contribution to UNHCR operations worldwide in 2021 has reached some USD 125 million, responding to the needs particularly in Africa, the Middle East and North Africa region, Rohingya situation, Afghan situation including COVID-19 related response. In 2020, the total contribution received from Japan was USD 126.3 million including core contribution, supplementary contribution, and emergency grant aid. In February 2021, an annual high-level bilateral meeting between Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR was held, and various policy priorities in protection, COVID-19 response, climate change among others were discussed. UNHCR continues to work closely with the Government, particularly on the humanitarian/development nexus as well as the Global Compact on Refugees. 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, 35 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, emergency responses and logistics of in-kind donations. In 2020, Fast Retailing donated USD 1.5 million in cash, of which USD 900,000 was supported for the emergency in Syria, USD 500,000 for logistics of in-kind donations, and USD 100,000 for self-reliance programme centred to MADE51. 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 and reached a potential of 2 million impressions through various social medias. The 4th renewal of the global partnership was agreed until August 2023. In addition to the supports received in the previous agreements, the partnership aims to strengthen refugee support activities at country and regional levels ever. UNHCR benefitted the UNIQLO/GU's education programme which taught over 220,000 students in more than 2,200 schools about refugee related issues and UNHCR. Mr. Yanai, Chairperson, President and CEO of Fast Retailing has also been supporting refugees and other persons of concern mainly in Bangladesh.

Fuji Megane, another important partner, continues to support refugees, IDPs and UNHCR through its annual "Vision Mission." In 2019, Fuji Megane visited Azerbaijan for the 15th time with the assistance of UNHCR. In 2020 and 2021, their annual missions were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic but in-kind donations including 40 intra-ocular lenses and 5,000 pairs of eyeglasses were sent 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 174,446 eyeglasses to refugees, IDPs and host communities in various countries since 1983.

Through "Sony Global Relief Fund for COVID-19", UNHCR received generous and timely contribution from Sony Corporation to strengthen COVID-19 readiness and response. Toyota Tsusho has also supported UNHCR through both financial and in-kind contributions to prevent the COVID-19 epidemic in African countries.

### 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> **Multi-Stakeholder Consultations (MSC)** Study sessions were held in 2020 and 2021 online with more than 100 participants in each session from different sectors of the society including government officials, 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, and the third session was on the role of refugee employment pathways in Refugee protection and Empowerment.
- 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 “Will2Live (W2L) Cinema”, a successor to the former Refugee Film Festival (RFF), was held by the Japan Association for UNHCR (J4U) with UNHCR’s support. 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.

- Various colourful activities led by a student-based organisation are happening in the lead up to WRD and T2020 in 2021. UNHCR and J4U support the initiative as part of its **youth engagement efforts**. 21 student organisations across Japan working on refugee issues joined the initiative and released an inspiring video clip to raise awareness toward refugees.
- Media interest grew towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic/Paralympic Games and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team (EOR) and Refugee Paralympic Team. 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. From January through June, UNHCR participated in several events targeting the public/youth on the topic of **“sports and refugees.”** This included an event at Sophia University, a collaboration with Dentsu which featured an IOC Refugee Athlete scholarship-holder, and a panel discussion with the IPC Global President, refugee athletes, and a well-known sports commentator at the SDGs Global Festival of Action. In addition, several national media outlets including Buzzfeed Japan and Mainichi produced features on the refugee athletes with other traditional media covering the announcement of the Refugee Olympic Team and the hopefuls for the Paralympic Refugee Team. Further collaborations with municipalities, corporate partners, and youth are planned.
- Regular media briefings, interviews and sharing of press releases were made however under the pandemic, no physical press conferences were held. In spite of the situation, UNHCR Japan continues to use its broad media network to publicize critical emergency operations and UNHCR’s response as trusted source of information on humanitarian issues. Some 12 lectures and presentations were given by UNHCR Tokyo staff at universities and schools mainly online in 2020.
- In January 2020, UNHCR’s Goodwill Ambassador MIYAVI visited Colombia to observe the Venezuelan Regional Response efforts. Even under the COVID-19, based on his past encounters with refugees, MIYAVI broadly promotes and publicizes UNHCR’s global refugee work for the plight of refugees to his concert audiences and on social media (over 2 million followers) and widely on mainstream media. MIYAVI supported the office’s efforts in promoting Refuge Higher Education Programme and SDGs during the Global SDGs Festival of Action in March.
- To enhance partnership with municipalities, UNHCR Japan is promoting **“Cities #WithRefugees”**. Tokyo, Hiroshima, Bunkyo and Shibuya have signed up for this initiative.
- **On World Refugee Day 2021**, more than 20 landmarks across Japan, including heritage monuments and other public sites, will be lit up blue in a show of solidarity with refugees across the world. UNHCR Japan will be asking people in Japan to “post something blue” on their social media channels to celebrate the courage and resilience of all people forced to flee, as well as showcasing stories about how refugees and stateless people contribute to Japanese communities. Other events and digital activations, including collaborations

with Bunkyo municipality, Pride House Tokyo, and with Japanese youth, will also take place. MIYAVI will participate in an online music event Will2Live led by J4U, which gained more than 50,000 live views in 2020.