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Mbororo refugees from the Central African Republic wait to be registered by UNHCR mobile teams in Djalingo, Cameroon.

Introduction

Disentangling the complexity of UNHCR data is critical to understanding the observed trends. The main purpose of this chapter is to present the basic concepts behind the data in the 2009 Statistical Yearbook, including definitions, classifications, estimation methods and other aspects influencing data quality. Most of the statistics reported in this Yearbook have been collected through UNHCR's Annual Statistical Reports¹⁷, and generally reflect the definition and data collection methods of governments except from those countries where only UNHCR registration systems are used.

UNHCR collaborates with governments and other humanitarian partners in its efforts to provide a comprehensive picture of the number of persons of concern (namely refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, returnees and others) to the organization and their protection needs. This task is complex due to factors influencing the availability, timeliness, quality and comparability of the statistics. First, there are challenges related to the demographic and legal definitions used in gathering and analysing figures. For instance, a number of countries grant complementary or subsidiary forms of protection which are difficult to compare in terms of status and protection provided. Similarly, people fleeing conflict from the same location may be recognized as refugees by some countries but not by others. Another reason relates to the overall coverage of available statistics. For instance, some refugees may not register due to a lack of awareness of the need to register or a perception that the risks of registration outweigh its benefits. For example, individuals in mixed migration flows might be in need of international protection but choose not to apply for asylum for fear of being deported with other migrant groups. Alternatively, records in some countries may overestimate the actual numbers due to registration errors or a lack of updated figures. Finally, a range of data collection methods and sources are used by different countries and for different categories of persons of concern, making the provision of reliable and fully comparable statistics a difficult task.

Definitions and scope

UNHCR identifies seven population categories, collectively referred to as "persons of concern". This includes: (a) refugees; (b) asylum-seekers; (c) internally displaced persons (IDPs); (d) refugees who have returned home (returnees); (e) IDPs who

have returned home; (f) stateless persons; and (g) other people who do not fall under any of the above categories but to whom the Office extends protection. In 2007, two additional sub-categories were introduced: (1) people in refugee-like situations (included under refugees); and (2) people in IDP-like situations (included under IDPs).

Refugees are individuals recognized under the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* and its 1967 Protocol; individuals recognized under the 1969 *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*; those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; individuals granted complementary forms of protection¹⁸; and those enjoying "temporary protection"¹⁹. The refugee category also includes people in a refugee-like situation.²⁰

Asylum-seekers ('pending cases') are individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined. Those covered in the Yearbook refer to claimants whose individual applications were pending at the end of 2009, irrespective of when they may have been lodged.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are people or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid, the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border.²¹

UNHCR is involved in situations of internal displacement in a number of countries and the populations reported in the UNHCR statistics only include conflict-generated IDPs, or persons in an IDP-like situation²², to whom the Office extends

18 Complementary protection refers to protection provided under national or regional law in countries which do not grant 1951 Convention refugee status to people who are in need of international protection against serious, but indiscriminate risks.

19 Temporary protection refers to arrangements developed by States to offer protection of a temporary nature to people arriving from situations of conflict or generalized violence without the necessity for formal or individual status determination. This usually applies to situations of large-scale influx.

20 The term is descriptive in nature and includes groups of people who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.

21 See: *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Addendum to the Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Francis M. Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission (on Human Rights) Resolution 1997/39*, United Nations, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add2 (1998).

22 The term is descriptive in nature and includes groups of people who are inside their country of nationality or habitual residence and who face protection risks similar to IDPs but who, for practical or other reasons, could not be reported as such.

17 The Annual Statistical Report is the official data collection form completed by all UNHCR country offices.

protection or assistance. UNHCR's IDP statistics are not necessarily representative of the entire IDP population in a given country, but rather limited to those who are protected and/or assisted by the Office. Moreover, within the cluster approach²³ UNHCR provides support to both IDPs and other affected persons, however, the latter category is not included in the statistics. Hence, the UNHCR statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture of global internal displacement nor of those the Office extends assistance to in such situations.²⁴

Returned refugees (returnees) refer to refugees who have returned voluntarily to their country of origin or habitual residence. For the purposes of this Yearbook, only refugees who returned between January and December 2009 are included. Yet in reality, UNHCR may assist returnees for longer periods of time, beyond the year in which they returned.

Returned IDPs refer to those IDPs who were beneficiaries of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities and who returned to their areas of origin or habitual residence between January and December 2009. However, UNHCR may assist IDP returnees for longer periods of time, beyond the year in which they returned.

Stateless persons are individuals not considered as citizens of any State under national law. UNHCR statistics include *de jure* stateless persons, but also *de facto* stateless persons, as well as persons with undetermined nationality. UNHCR has been given a global mandate by the United Nations General Assembly to contribute to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons. The Office also has specific functions under Article 11 of the *1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* to receive claims from persons who may benefit from the safeguards contained in that Convention and to assist them and the States concerned to resolve those claims. UNHCR's Executive Committee has requested the Office to report regularly on the magnitude of the phenomenon.

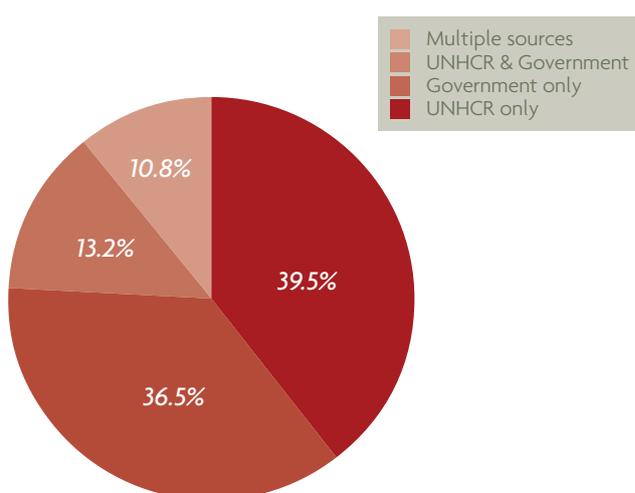
Other groups or people of concern refer to individuals who do not necessarily fall directly into any of the groups above but to whom UNHCR has extended its protection

and/or assistance services, based on humanitarian or other special grounds.

Sources for refugee data

Governmental agencies and UNHCR offices are the main data providers, either separately or jointly. NGOs are also key providers of refugee and IDP data in a number of countries. These three sources account for more than 90 per cent of UNHCR's statistics. Surveys, estimation, registration processes or censuses are the main methods used to determine figures. Although one source may provide all the data within a country, commonly more than one source is used to obtain data on refugees.

Fig. I.1 Sources for refugee data, 2009

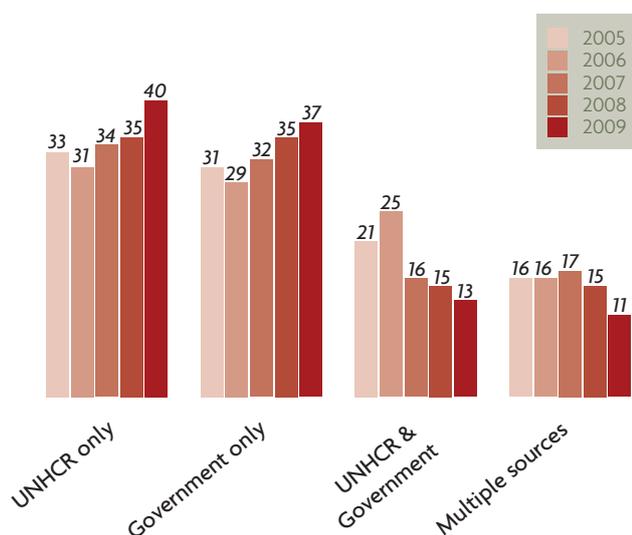


In 2009, information on data sources was provided by 167 countries and territories. Joint government and UNHCR statistics are quoted as the single source or one of the main sources in over 150 countries. The host government was the sole data provider of refugee statistics in 61 countries (37%). Although this represents a small increase compared to 2008 (2%), the continued trend of increasing the government provision of statistics reflects UNHCR's efforts to transfer data collection and reporting responsibility for refugee data to States. For instance, in 2004, only 41 countries reported the government as the sole data provider of refugee statistics.

Nevertheless, in a number of countries the capacity to provide refugee statistics is limited and responsibility often lies with UNHCR. At end 2009, the Office was reported as the single source of refugee statistics in 66 countries (39%), four per cent more than the previous year. UNHCR's relative share as the only source of data has increased for the fourth

²³ In December 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed the cluster approach for handling situations of internal displacement. Under this arrangement, UNHCR assumes leadership responsibility and accountability for three of the nine "clusters", namely: protection; emergency shelter; and camp coordination and camp management.

²⁴ For global IDP estimates, consult the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) at www.internal-displacement.org.

Fig. I.2 Trends in sources for refugee data (%)

consecutive year. The increases in either government or UNHCR as sole provider of statistics (together accounting for 77 per cent as compared to 60 per cent in 2006) is in contrast to the decrease in the percentage of refugee statistics produced jointly. At end 2009, in only 22 countries (13%) the collection and provision of statistics was reportedly a combined undertaking of the government and UNHCR. In contrast, in 2006 one out of four countries (25%) reported a joint responsibility for refugee statistics.

Multiple sources, including in some instances NGOs or UNHCR and States in addition to others, were reported in 18 countries (11%). Forty countries reported receiving data from more than one source.

Data collection methods

To provide a comprehensive picture of persons of concern to the Office, the statistics reported in this Yearbook were obtained using a range of data collection methods, including registration, surveys, censuses, and estimations. Each method has strengths and limitations.

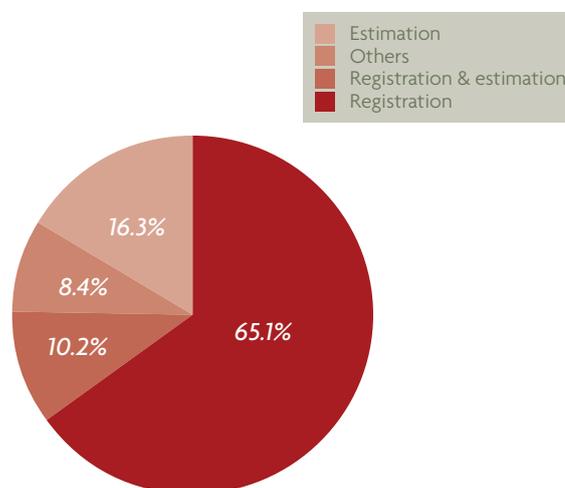
Refugees are best protected when registered. During **registration**, information on name, sex, date of birth, country of origin, relationship within household, marital status, place of displacement and specific needs is collected and updated. Periodic registration exercises often lead to a revision of population estimates. Refugee statistics are generally based on individual registration records kept by the host government, as the registration of refugees is a government responsibility. Where the government is unable to register

persons of concern, UNHCR may assist or undertake registration activities. UNHCR's registration software *proGres* is being used in 75 countries, and is also being used by governments in five countries.

Registration was the method of data collection most frequently used. By the end of 2009, registration was the only method used in 108 out of the 166 countries and territories (65%) that reported on data collection methods. Although registration is the most reliable source of refugee data, it overlooks any refugees that are not able or not willing to be registered. For this reason, in 26 other countries (14%) registration was combined with estimation or other methods to obtain overall refugee figures.

Estimation was the second main data collection method used by UNHCR and its partners. UNHCR estimates the size of the refugee population in industrialized countries based on official data on the number of asylum-seekers recognized over a 10-year period. Estimation as the sole source is used in 27 countries (16%), most of which are industrialized. This method is combined with registration and other methods in 16 other countries (10%).²⁵

As many industrialized countries did not provide detailed information on the number of refugees residing on their territory, UNHCR estimated the refugee population in 24 countries using the number of asylum-seekers recognized as reported by the countries during the previous 10 years. Ten years is assumed to be the average time necessary for a

Fig. I.3 Basis of refugee data, 2009

²⁵ Because of a significant number of countries having access to *proGres*, estimation is rarely used in non-industrialized countries.

refugee to acquire the nationality of his/her host country. Below is an example of this estimation process.

Example: Sweden

- Asylum-seekers granted Convention refugee status, 2000-2009: 8,734
- Asylum-seekers granted a complementary form of protection and/or allowed to remain in the country for humanitarian reasons, 2000-2009: 72,270
- UNHCR estimate of the refugee population in Sweden, end of 2009: 81,004

Estimation methods are primarily used to gather IDP statistics. Considering the operational and legal difficulties in registering IDPs on an individual basis²⁶, most humanitarian agencies rely on IDP profiling (see Box 1 and Chapter VI, Section B for more information). **Profiling** can yield a more comprehensive picture of certain displaced or affected populations, including where they are located and where they are from. Profiling can help in overcoming difficulties in distinguishing IDPs from host communities, and in compiling essential information for protection, programming and advocacy purposes.

Surveys and **censuses** are excellent data sources to support planning but do not allow regular follow-up on individuals. Although a census may include information on individuals, it provides only a “snapshot” which gets quickly outdated. The “Others” category in Figure 1.3 (page 15) includes mainly surveys and censuses, either alone or in combination with registration and estimation. Some 14 countries (8%) obtained refugee figures through surveys, censuses and/or combined methods.

In some countries, more than two methods are used, making data comparability difficult. UNHCR ensures that statistics from all these sources are triangulated to increase reliability and data quality, requiring regular interaction with the stakeholders collecting and compiling statistics.

Key characteristics presented in the 2009 Yearbook

Although the focus of this Yearbook is on the size and trends of UNHCR’s population of concern, the document also provides insights on a number of other characteristics, including recognition rates of asylum applications (individually determined vs. *prima facie* on a group basis), trends in solutions, sex and age

Box 1. Comparative advantage of IDP profiling

Based on IDP profiling exercises of the last few years conducted by different actors, lessons can be drawn about the advantages of using profiling survey methodologies.

(i) Cost and time efficiency: In profiling, only a limited number of individuals or households need to be interviewed. This is crucial in many IDP operations where the population of concern is often widely spread out, posing logistical and security challenges.

The cost aspect is relevant due to the limited funds available to collect the information needed for advocacy, fund raising and monitoring.

(ii) Accuracy: Due to the smaller volume and scope of profiling surveys, the quality of enumeration and supervision is often higher than in other data collection processes. Sample representation should be customized to the situation to avoid interviewing an atypical group or location. If the group of IDPs is coherent, random sampling can be used, giving individuals and households an equal chance of being interviewed. If the group of IDPs is not coherent, the sample can be divided into sub-groups that would reflect the real distribution of the IDPs, thus allowing improved levels of generalization.

(iii) Adaptability: The process of profiling IDPs can change in different situations to account for such factors as demographics, phase and length of displacement, access and security, settlement type, logistical challenges, and resource availability. Even when such factors affect data quality, profiling often remains the most feasible process to get the necessary information in a variety of situations.

(iv) Coverage: IDP profiling surveys may be used to distinguish IDPs from non-IDPs, in particular where both may be sharing similar characteristics in terms of need and vulnerability. Some survey methods may be specifically designed to deal with the challenge of IDPs who are “invisible” (not accounted for and often living in remote and less accessible areas).

²⁶ See www.humanitarianreform.org

distribution, and type of settlement (camps, urban, rural). This document also sheds light on the profile of Somali refugees and asylum-seekers in the region and beyond, based on a case study. It also highlights how data collection methodologies (registration and IDP profiling surveys) provided evidence that enabled better planning of protection and assistance for IDPs in Yemen.

A detailed description and explanation of the above characteristics and others will be presented in the corresponding chapters.

Other data considerations

Historical data pertaining to the former USSR have been reported under the Russian Federation, while those concerning the former Czechoslovakia have been reported under the Czech Republic. Data concerning the former Yugoslavia

as well as Serbia and Montenegro have been reported under Serbia. In most Annex tables, the word “Democratic” has been abbreviated to “Dem.”, whereas the word “Republic” is often reflected as “Rep.”

Figures below 1,000 are generally rounded to the nearest 10; figures between 1,000 and 10,000 are rounded to the nearest 100; figures between 10,000 and 100,000 are rounded to the nearest 1,000; figures between 100,000 and 1 million are rounded to the nearest 10,000; and figures above 1 million are rounded to the nearest 100,000.

Unless specified otherwise, the 2009 Statistical Yearbook does not refer to events occurring after 31 December 2009.

Box 2. Registration of asylum-seekers in urban areas: the case of India

Providing asylum-seekers and refugees residing in urban areas with access to registration without delay is paramount. Registration provides protection against *refoulement* and enables access to basic rights, as well as allows for the identification of individuals with urgent and specific needs.

India has maintained its traditional hospitality towards refugees and asylum-seekers. However, the substantial increase in recent years in the arrival of people seeking protection posed major challenges. The rate of new arrivals in 2008 and in 2009 (4,206 and 8,714 persons respectively in these years) outpaced the UNHCR Office’s capacity to register them. By end March 2009, the Office faced a backlog of over 3,500 asylum-seekers waiting for registration. Even more problematic, the waiting period for registration grew to eight months.

The situation required an innovative approach. UNHCR India decided to outsource primary registration functions to an experienced and long-standing implementing partner, the Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC), under its close supervision. Under these arrangements, new arrivals are received at the UNHCR office where they are scheduled for a registration appointment with SLIC. The registration itself is conducted by the SLIC personnel at a different location under the supervision of a UNHCR Registration Manager. Standard Operating Procedures clearly describe the respective roles and responsibilities of UNHCR and of the partner. Primary registration services,

including data collection and recording of certain categories of specific needs are conducted by SLIC, while enhanced registration interviews and identification of sensitive specific needs is done by the on-site UNHCR Registration Manager at the partner premises. Other protection-related tasks and services are conducted by UNHCR staff at designated external sites or directly at the UNHCR premises.

The SLIC staff conduct registration using the UNHCR database *proGres*, and UNHCR staff can access and use the data for the remainder of the procedure. The outsourcing, in addition to efforts to streamline and modernize registration, as well as an increase in the number of staff conducting registration, resulted in a clear success.

With the new arrangements, the average waiting period for registration has been reduced from eight months to three weeks, while UNHCR still maintains the capacity to register urgent cases with shorter delays, even on the same day if required. Upon registration, asylum-seekers are issued Asylum-Seeker Certificates. These are an effective tool to providing protection and access to services pending the establishment of the person’s eligibility for refugee status.