

**A Congolese woman and her daughter** walk into the Mungunga refugee camp outside Goma, DRC carrying their belongings.



# Providing International Protection

**U**NHCR's international protection function has evolved greatly from being a surrogate for consular and diplomatic protection to ensuring the basic rights of persons of concern to UNHCR. While the main responsibility for safeguarding the rights of refugees and others of concern lies with States, UNHCR's statutory role is to assist governments to take the necessary measures, starting with asylum and ending with the realization of durable solutions.

International protection encompasses a range of concrete activities, covering both policy issues and operational concerns, and is carried out in cooperation with States and other partners, with the goal of enhancing respect for the rights of people of concern and resolving their problems.

People of concern to UNHCR are increasingly living in urban environments. Almost half of the world's 10.5 million refugees now reside in cities and towns, compared to one-third who live in refugee camps. Recognizing the need to address the issue of urban refugees in a more comprehensive manner, UNHCR released its new urban refugee policy, which takes into account its experience in urban contexts, and draws upon the many effective practices already formulated by UNHCR and its partners. The High Commissioner's Dialogue, held in December 2009, also focused on the need to address protection concerns of refugees living in urban environments.

UNHCR continues to work on developing appropriate responses to emerging protection challenges, while at the same time finding solutions for those people who have languished in refugee situations for extended periods of time. UNHCR aims to ensure

States in the interpretation and implementation of the principle, as well as to monitor States' practices. UNHCR assisted States to develop national asylum legislation and institutional mechanisms to ensure that the principle of *non-refoulement* was respected and

## RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF URBAN REFUGEES IN A MORE COMPREHENSIVE MANNER, UNHCR RELEASED ITS NEW URBAN REFUGEE POLICY

sustained engagement through concrete and creative field activities.

In an effort to secure durable solutions within a framework of international cooperation, in 2009 UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted a Conclusion on "Protracted refugee situations".

### SECURING ACCESS TO ASYLUM AND PROTECTION AGAINST REFOULEMENT

UNHCR continues to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks and to build and maintain effective protection systems for all populations of concern.

*Non-refoulement* remains the cardinal protection principle in international refugee law, enshrined in a number of legal instruments and part of customary international law. States' respect for this principle remains a major concern for UNHCR.

In 2009, UNHCR continued to provide legal and policy guidance to

incorporated into legal systems. The Office intervened frequently on behalf of asylum-seekers and refugees threatened with deportation, including those held in detention, to ensure the principle was upheld and that access to asylum was granted. The Office continued to train border police, immigration officials and NGO partners in numerous countries on their *non-refoulement* obligations; to ensure access to territory for people of concern; and to establish criteria and mechanisms to determine how non-nationals should be treated, in particular the identification, within broader migratory movements, of refugees who require international protection. In Europe, by 2009, a number of border monitoring agreements had been concluded between UNHCR, national border guards and NGOs in various countries.

## PROTECTING THE DISPLACED AGAINST VIOLENCE, ABUSE, INTIMIDATION AND EXPLOITATION

Working to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence is a key priority for UNHCR. In this regard, the Office advocated strongly for the adoption of UN Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 1888, which designate sexual violence in conflict as a global security concern. UNHCR and its partners have contributed to multilateral processes to counter the use of rape as a weapon of war, and all of UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes include elements to address sexual and gender-based violence.

*"The prevention of sexual violence must remain one of our highest priorities...Sexual violence is a brutal form of physical and psychological warfare rooted in the gender inequality extant not only in zones of conflict but in our everyday personal lives. The persistence of such forms of violence undermines peace and security and shatters community and family ties. It demands a personal as well as a collective response."*

*High Commissioner António Guterres, during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign, November 2009.*

Despite the increasing global focus on sexual and gender-based violence, addressing it remains a daunting task. The impunity that perpetrators enjoy in many areas of conflict contributes to its persistence; so does the weakness of legal frameworks in many countries. Nonetheless in 2009, 96 per cent of the reported victims of sexual and gender-based violence in 75 refugee camps received support. UNHCR and its

partners provide survivors of sexual and gender-based violence with medical, psycho-social, legal or security assistance.

In 2009, UNHCR finalized a three-year strategy to address sexual and gender-based violence among displaced persons, focusing on the following key thematic areas:

- (i) Many UNHCR programmes, such as those in the East and Horn of Africa, have sought to involve men and boys in the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. A regional workshop held in Kenya in 2009 discussed good practice in this field, as well as efforts to halt the spread of HIV and AIDS. In Geneva, UNHCR hosted the White Ribbon Campaign – Switzerland in November 2009 during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence to raise awareness of the role that men and boys must play in this task.
- (ii) To enhance the collection and analysis of data, UNHCR collaborated with UNFPA and the IRC on the development of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), a set of standardized tools to improve safe data collection, analysis and information sharing in this area. The tools were refined in 2009 and tested in the Field. Furthermore, a training kit was developed and technical support missions undertaken to Kenya and Thailand. UNHCR is working with the United States' Centres for Disease Control on a survey of populations of concern to address another critical gap in the fight against sexual violence: the large numbers of unreported cases. It is hoped that the survey will present a more accurate picture of the problem in displacement situations.
- (iii) In many UNHCR operations, a considerable proportion of reported sexual assaults occur outside refugee camps and IDP settlements, when women go to collect firewood and other staples. In June 2009, UNHCR and the Women's Refugee Commission hosted a workshop for NGOs and UN agencies in Geneva on the findings of the IASC task force on Safe Access to Alternative Fuel and Firewood. Tools devised by the task force were disseminated to all field operations and the Women's Refugee Commission followed up with workshops in Kenya and Uganda.

Since 2006, UNHCR has promoted the development and use of standard procedures in all field operations, including in regard to access to clinical services for victims, and the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence. By the end of the year, some 92 per cent of camps and 72 per cent of urban locations had established the required procedures.

UNHCR continued to participate in the UN Action against Sexual Violence campaign and inter-agency forums such as the GBV Area of Responsibility initiative under the global protection cluster. As a member of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, as well as the Executive Committee on Peace and Security Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, UNHCR took the lead in drafting a *Guidance Note on Establishing Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms for Sexual Abuse and Exploitation*. The guidance will be applied in the Field in 2010.

## STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF REFUGEES WITHIN BROADER MIGRATION MOVEMENTS

Assisting States and other partners to develop protection-sensitive migration policies was another key priority for UNHCR in 2009. In this regard, the 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, developed in 2006, has been used increasingly as a strategic tool by all stakeholders.

*The 10-Point Plan In Action*, provisionally released by UNHCR in June 2009, is a compilation of nearly 150 practical examples from 55 countries that showcase ways to achieve the Plan's objectives. Among them are migration strategies that balance States' legitimate sovereignty and security concerns against the rights of those involved in mixed movements who are in need of international protection. Many of the examples highlight cooperation between State and non-State actors.

In 2009 UNHCR, together with partner agencies, hosted a regional conference and two roundtables on the protection challenges arising from migration, including how to improve the identification and protection in the immediate post-arrival phase of people with specific needs, such as trafficked persons, asylum-seekers, children and women at risk. The expert roundtable on "Return of non-refugees and alternative

migration options”, convened jointly with IOM and ILO in December 2009 in Geneva, strengthened strategic partnership in this area.

UNHCR continued its efforts to protect refugees at sea. Cooperation with different actors in the Gulf of Aden was strengthened to ensure the rescue and safe disembarkation of refugees and migrants in distress at sea.

The Office continued to raise awareness of the need for some victims of human trafficking to have access to refugee protection, and has compiled legal reference materials on the issue. Protection systems for trafficked persons in many States contain gaps when it comes to the identification of such persons and procedures to determine their international protection needs.

UNHCR and IOM worked to improve cooperation in the area of human trafficking. Joint Framework Standard Operating Procedures on the identification and protection of trafficked persons were finalized and distributed to staff of both organizations. The first joint regional workshop for IOM and UNHCR staff from the Middle East and East Africa was held in Addis Ababa in May 2009.

#### MAINTAINING THE CIVILIAN CHARACTER OF REFUGEE AND IDP SETTLEMENTS

In 2009, the international community continued to witness insecurity in some refugee camps and areas hosting internally displaced persons. As a humanitarian agency, UNHCR has emphasized that the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum is critical to the safety and security of refugees and constitutes an important international protection standard. The militarization of areas where people of concern live can create or aggravate tension between States, and can result in serious threats to regional peace and security. In addition, the militarization of refugee camps, armed attacks on refugee or IDP settlements and other forms of insecurity in refugee areas are likely to undermine public and political support for the institution of asylum and the principles of refugee protection.

In situations where refugee camps or settlements have been, or are likely to be, infiltrated by armed groups, UNHCR continues to use its operational guidelines for dealing with such situations.

## Affirming and developing an international protection regime

#### PROMOTING COMPLIANCE WITH THE 1951 REFUGEE CONVENTION AND GAINING THE COMMITMENT OF STATES TO ADHERE TO INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION STANDARDS

National and international judicial bodies play an important role in developing a consistent interpretation and application of relevant international protection standards. UNHCR has been engaging increasingly with the judiciary in various countries and regional jurisdictions, including through the International Association of Refugee Law Judges as well as in interventions before courts. Further, on a number of occasions, the European Court of Human Rights invited UNHCR to provide its views in relation to individual applications lodged in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Of equal importance is the development of national capacity to apply legislation correctly at all stages of refugee status determination, integration or other durable solutions. In a number of countries, for example in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, UNHCR continued to engage with governments to strengthen their emerging asylum systems.

Asylum and refugee law training are important if the capacity of governments is to be enhanced. In Europe, UNHCR provided input to numerous national and EU training materials, and participated in border guard training and capacity building. In Morocco, for example, the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the judiciary, law enforcement agencies and UNHCR, conducted a successful programme for the promotion of refugee law.

In 2009, UNHCR organized five refugee law courses in English, French and Spanish in cooperation with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo in Italy. The 200 participants, mainly senior government officials and NGO representatives, came from 50 different countries. The courses helped strengthen national protection

frameworks for people of concern to UNHCR.

In many countries UNHCR has been able to submit its views and provide assistance in the drafting of legislation. UNHCR worked with 15 governments in various parts of the world to improve national legislation and policy on asylum and nationality issues.

Providing input to international bodies and active participation in international fora remained an important tool for developing standards and disseminating refugee law. UNHCR provided guidance to the International Law Commission on the expulsion of refugees and stateless persons in relation to lawful and unlawful presence. The Office also contributed to the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions on Co-operation in Criminal Matters on the relationship between asylum procedures and extradition.

UNHCR continued its efforts to integrate human rights into all areas of work, in line with the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. The two-pronged approach focused on: (i) promoting the integration of people of concern and relevant issues into the evolving human rights legal framework as well as into the work of the human rights mechanisms; and (ii) assisting staff to use human rights standards effectively as the basis for planning, policy, guidance and advocacy, and the human rights mechanisms as protection tools, including in individual cases. Recommendations on measures to ensure that refugees and IDPs have equal access to rights, and the stateless to a nationality, were included in numerous outcome documents from the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review.

## UNDERTAKING REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION UNDER UNHCR'S MANDATE

In 2009, UNHCR conducted RSD in more than 50 countries, receiving 114,000 applications. In most countries, RSD provided the basis for subsequent protection interventions, such as the prevention of *refoulement*, the provision of assistance and the implementation of durable solutions. Almost 95 per cent of UNHCR's RSD work was concentrated in 15 countries: Cameroon, China (Hong Kong SAR), Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey and Yemen.

UNHCR aims to improve the quality, integrity, efficiency and fairness of RSD procedures and decision making worldwide. UNHCR pursues this goal through a range of activities, including the provision of advice and other operational support to mandate RSD operations, including those involved in the handover of RSD responsibilities to governments. These support activities focused on the top 15 country operations identified above.

Through the RSD deployment scheme, UNHCR delivers expert RSD support to UNHCR field offices. In 2009, 23 RSD consultants and UN Volunteers were deployed to 11 mandate RSD operations. They helped to process cases, reduce backlogs, strengthen and harmonize procedures, and deliver specialized training. Ensuring appropriate staffing levels in mandate RSD operations remains a significant challenge to the effective delivery of protection in these operations.

In 2009, UNHCR extended its partnerships with the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB)

and the *Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides* (OFPRA). Since 2006, experts from the IRB and OFPRA have been deployed to eight mandate operations to provide expert advice and assist in case-processing. UNHCR is exploring similar agreements with other national bodies. UNHCR also continued to cooperate with the International Association of Refugee Law Judges. This voluntary association of judges from around the world helps UNHCR to promote knowledge of refugee law and the situation of refugees.

In 2009, the RSD Community of Practice was launched, providing an online platform for RSD staff worldwide to discuss procedural and substantive issues. Three RSD Learning Programmes were organized in 2009, targeting 90 UNHCR RSD staff. UNHCR also provided training to government authorities.

## ENHANCING THE PROVISION OF PROTECTION INFORMATION

In 2009, UNHCR continued to disseminate timely and reliable protection information to ensure high-quality status determination. To this end, it issued eligibility guidelines to assess the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Serbia (Kosovo) and Sri Lanka. The Office conducted research on specific queries concerning conditions in countries of origin and published several country briefing folders. Background documents on countries of origin were drafted in collaboration with external research entities, such as the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Documentation and Research and the UK-based Country of Origin Research and Information.

UNHCR's *Refworld* continued to serve as the main repository of protection information, and was significantly improved by the inclusion of updated thematic and country-related positions, as well as relevant up-to-date national and regional case law and legislations.

In 2009 the RSD Learning Programme component on country research and information was delivered in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Two country research programmes for UNHCR staff were organized in Thailand and Turkey. Additionally, two *Refworld* training sessions were conducted for government counterparts, the judiciary, legal researchers and the European Court of Human Rights. Training materials were updated and disseminated during the year.

Moreover, January 2009 saw the signing of a three-year Memorandum of Understanding establishing a cooperative relationship with the Government of the Netherlands, including an agreement on the use of *Refworld* by the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Services.

UNHCR participated in various international forums on the collection and assessment of country-of-origin information. For instance, it contributed to the work of the Independent Advisory Group on Country of Origin (COI) Information in the United Kingdom and the Intergovernmental Consultation Working Group on COI, as well as to European Union projects, such as the European Asylum Curriculum (EAC), the EU COI Portal, and the working group on Common Guidelines for Fact-Finding Mission, under the label of the European Country Sponsorship.

# UNHCR's protection capacity and management

**U**NHCR strengthened strategic and operational protection management in 2009. It increased accountability in protection delivery and advocacy, expanded protection capacity through learning and training, improved human resource management procedures and expanded affiliate-staff arrangements. UNHCR also increased its involvement in protection in situations of internal displacement through its leadership role in the global protection cluster.

## PROTECTION MANAGEMENT

UNHCR has progressively mainstreamed protection in all areas of its work. All staff in country and regional operations, and at Headquarters, have their job responsibilities and activities linked to protection objectives and results. At the same time, staffing benchmarks have been developed to help offices plan protection staffing levels.

The global protection cluster led by UNHCR has been reoriented to strengthen field support, and internal procedures have been developed to aid cluster design and management. The strategic use of affiliate workforce staff under the Surge and ProCap projects has increased protection capacity in operations in a timely fashion. The dissemination of protection policies and advice from Headquarters ensured consistency in UNHCR's approach across regions on durable solutions, as well as on questions related to land, housing, property and documentation.

UNHCR organised or maintained 36 Surge roster deployments to 29 country operations in 2009, in order to strengthen protection capacity. Twenty-three of these deployments were to refugee and returnee operations, while the other 13 deployments were to situations of internal displacement, including three to the global protection cluster. Meanwhile, 16 deployments under the ProCap inter-agency standby arrangement assisted in IDP operations.

UNHCR's internal inspection function ensured management effectiveness and procedural compliance in protection operations. Protection officers participated in all inspection missions where the Inspector General's Office required protection expertise. UNHCR also strengthened protection in emergency operations by mainstreaming protection considerations into the agenda of the Workshop on Emergency Management.

## PROTECTION LEARNING

Learning, and the provision of timely and pertinent information to all staff and partners, remained at the forefront of UNHCR's priorities. Regional training capacities were reinforced in Costa Rica, Egypt, China (Hong Kong SAR), Senegal and Thailand. A new self-study module on interpretation was introduced, as was a training module for external use with partners in refugee and IDP protection.

UNHCR continued to develop cluster-related training programmes through the Learning Task Force (LTF) of the global protection cluster. A protection cluster coordination workshop organized in September 2009 in Indonesia was attended by 30 participants from 12 different organizations. The workshop focused on integrated protection strategies and cluster coordination skills. Its impact on protection cluster operations has been positive in terms of improved coordination and protection delivery.

The LTF also provided training support to specific cluster operations. For example, in March 2009 a Train-the-Trainers Workshop was organized with the protection cluster in the Central African Republic (CAR) for the country's armed forces. The workshop was part of the launch of human rights training in different regions of CAR. The workshop strengthened relations with national authorities engaged in IDP protection in addition to providing the basis for a national training plan.

# Realizing the social and economic well-being of people of concern

## HEALTH

In 2009, UNHCR sought to ensure that refugees and other people of concern had access to health services similar to those available to local populations.

UNHCR's health programmes combine preventive and curative primary health care by employing a public-health and community-development approach. Cases where medical conditions cannot be managed at the primary level are referred to the nearest appropriate facility for emergency or essential care. UNHCR's publication, *Principles and Guidance for Referral Health Care for Refugees and Other Persons of Concern*, seeks to ensure the efficiency of such referral systems.

The increasing number of refugees and displaced persons living in urban settings has had major consequences for UNHCR and its partners. Within the framework of its Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, issued in 2009, UNHCR has developed a three-pronged health strategy to address urban health. It advocates that public services, including health care, nutrition programmes and water and sanitation services be made available to refugees and others of concern at limited or no cost. It also aims to support urban refugees and others of concern by integrating them into existing public health services and augmenting the capacity of these systems. Finally, it assesses, monitors and evaluates the health and nutritional status of urban refugees and others of concern to ensure that they do not fall below acceptable standards.

In 2009, UNHCR continued to support the establishment of comprehensive reproductive health programmes by strengthening the links between reproductive health and HIV-related services. In partnership with UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, UNHCR has established multi-functional country teams to ensure coherent responses in this area and improve coordination in new crises.

UNHCR also promoted safe-motherhood services to avoid preventable maternal and neonatal deaths. Referral systems for emergency obstetric and neonatal care were strengthened. A new e-learning programme on the clinical management of rape will ensure that all medical staff are able to provide quality services to rape survivors.

To address HIV and AIDS in line with the Strategic Plan for HIV (2008-2012), UNHCR aims to ensure universal access to prevention, treatment and care for people of concern. The inclusion of young people in anti-HIV programmes has been strengthened. To improve access to HIV testing, UNHCR worked with WHO and UNAIDS to publish guidelines on *Provider-initiated HIV testing and counselling for refugees and IDPs in health facilities*. The Office continues to advocate for the access of people of concern to national HIV prevention and treatment programmes.

By the end of 2009, UNHCR met its goal in terms of access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) and access to prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programmes. Approximately 87 per cent of refugees in need of ART had access to treatment programmes when available to host populations, while 75 per cent of pregnant women had access to PMTCT programmes. UNHCR expanded its multi-sectoral HIV responses in the areas of protection, health, community services, education and livelihood support.

UNHCR continued to be an active UNAIDS co-sponsor, contributing technical expertise and other forms of support to address HIV in humanitarian situations. The Office participated in the second independent evaluation of UNAIDS, the UNAIDS Outcome Framework and the UNAIDS Action Framework on Addressing Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV.

UNHCR has strengthened its partnership with a leading global malaria fund-raising network, the UN Foundation's *Nothing But Nets*

campaign, with the aim of providing people of concern in parts of Africa with lifesaving long-lasting insecticide bed nets (LLINs). The objective is to increase the use of LLINs among refugee communities at risk of malaria, with one net for every two persons. The use of the nets in conjunction with early diagnosis and access to effective treatment is essential if the prevalence of malaria is to be reduced and deaths averted.

Rapid diagnostic tests and access to artemisinin-based combination therapy, although improved, need more consistent supply to refugee settings. Most antenatal care programmes now provide pregnant mothers with malaria preventive treatment.

In 2009, the Epidemic Preparedness and Response, including Influenza H1N1 Pandemic Response projects were implemented in 22 countries. The projects raised outbreak awareness; improved water, sanitation and hygiene programmes; and rehabilitated basic health infrastructure. They also supported contingency planning; helped build isolation wards; assembled stockpiles of essential medicines; and provided laboratory tests. These interventions helped reduce infection and improve drug management.

The response to the Influenza H1N1 Pandemic required greater focus on surveillance, through UNHCR's Health Information System programme. Although individual H1N1 cases were recorded among refugees, no major H1N1 outbreak was observed in refugee communities in 2009.

## NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY

In 2009, there was no let-up in the downward trend in global food security and UNHCR continued to work closely with WFP to cover the food and nutrient needs of people of concern (see chapter on *Working in Partnership*).

UNHCR also participated in the elaboration of the UN Comprehensive Framework for Action on the food crisis and succeeded in having refugees and IDPs included in the Framework. The Office supported pilot projects for back-yard gardens in Ethiopia to

strengthen the nutritional and livelihood status of refugees.

In 2009, the project for anaemia control and prevention was implemented in seven of the countries showing the highest prevalence of anaemia (see regional overview chapters, notably for Africa and Asia and the Pacific).

Progress has been made towards implementing the Nutrition and Food Security Strategic Plan, especially in regard to infant and young child feeding, anaemia prevention and control, and in improving the quality of the programmes treating acute malnutrition.

UNHCR participated in the nutrition cluster at the global level and also led the revision of the Guidelines for Selective Feeding, which incorporate recent developments in the management of nutrition programmes.

#### WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

On the basis of various reviews and identified gaps, and in line with its Global Strategic Objectives for 2009, the Office undertook special initiatives in mid-2008 to enhance WASH services in selected operations to improve existing water supply and sanitation systems in 17 UNHCR operations. The initiative mainly focused on the improvement or rehabilitation and upgrading of existing water and sanitation facilities, provision of NFIs, enhancing technical capacity to monitor and improve quality of services and implementation of hygiene promotion activities. This effort yielded improvement in the health and well-being of refugees. For instance, in Uganda, approximately 28,000 individuals of concern to UNHCR benefited from a 15 per cent increase in the water supply. Similar achievements were reported in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, where new boreholes increased by 35 per cent the water supply for the approximately 300,000 refugees in the camps.

Monitoring and evaluation systems were implemented at country and regional levels to assess the level of service in the WASH sector. A scorecard system was developed in 2009 to determine which countries required more specific attention.

In addition to UNHCR's continuing participation in the WASH cluster, the Office also expanded its partnerships in the WASH sector, in particular with the

Swiss Development Cooperation Agency that agreed to provide a WASH regional coordinator for 2010 to be based in Nairobi.

#### GENDER EQUALITY AND PROTECTION OF WOMEN

In 2009, the Office organized a joint seminar with the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in order to explore ways to strengthen cooperation with the aim of increasing the capacity of women of concern to UNHCR to enjoy and exercise their rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

UNHCR's policy on urban refugees highlighted the need to reach out to refugees through community-based approaches. One example is the Outreach Volunteer Programme in the Syrian Arab Republic (see box).

Promoting livelihoods, particularly for women, brought positive results, especially in urban settings. If given access to proper resources, women can change their lives and those of their children, families and communities. Refugees increased their self-reliance by working both in the formal and informal sectors. In this regard, the Women Leading for Livelihoods (WLL) project proved to be a successful initiative. At the end of 2009, WLL projects were being implemented in India, where the focus was on self-reliance through vocational training, and in Costa Rica, where micro-finance projects aimed to ensure economic independence.

Participation of refugee and IDP women in peace processes remained an important activity for UNHCR, although in some areas, limited access did not allow for the implementation of such activities. Some positive examples are worth noting, such as in south Darfur (Sudan), where an international NGO partner actively involved women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution by including them in the Manawashi Peacebuilding Committee. This has contributed to improved relations between host populations and IDPs.

Although it is one of UNHCR's major objectives to ensure that camp management committees have 50 per cent female participation, and despite strong efforts in the Field in this regard,

the level of female participation did not reach this target. With refugee women facing difficulties in managing public positions due to their numerous household and other responsibilities, UNHCR is searching for practical ways to improve female participation.

In 2009 UNHCR began a comprehensive mapping exercise to assess the needs and gaps in regard to the provision of sanitary materials to all women of concern, with a view to delivering sanitary materials in a targeted and effective manner.

French and Spanish versions of the *Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls* were printed in 2009, and the Office produced CD-ROMs in Arabic, French and Spanish. UNHCR also produced four community-based films on economic self-reliance, education, gender equality and sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR participated in inter-agency forums related to gender equality and women's empowerment, for instance, by helping to develop an e-learning tool based on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's *Gender Handbook*. The Office supported the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap), which deploys gender experts to assist in mainstreaming gender considerations into all sectors of humanitarian response. UNHCR hosted a GenCap deployee in Namibia in 2009.

#### EDUCATION

UNHCR has long emphasized the importance of education as a protection tool. Field operations received technical guidance and support in this area, including through deployments, consultancies and UNVs. In line with the "Education for All" vision, UNHCR's new strategy for 2010-2012 focuses on boosting the Office's long-term capacity to support educational excellence as a means of ultimately strengthening protection. It will further guide country offices when developing their operation plans. Regional strategies are to be developed with support of additional workforce.

Operations in Chad, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic were assisted to increase enrolment rates, while support missions targeted education programmes in Algeria, Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Mauritania and eastern Sudan. Education Officers were seconded to six operations.





An Iraqi Outreach Volunteer visits an Iraqi widow living in Damascus

UNHCR

## ● Good Practice: Education and the Protection of Women in the Syrian Arab Republic

Since 2007, UNHCR has been coordinating the Outreach Volunteers programme to support Iraqi refugee women in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The programme requires volunteer refugee women to seek out other women in their communities and organize focus group discussions. Participants discuss issues of concern to them, typically in a home setting, in groups of five to ten. This information is later relayed to UNHCR to determine if further action is needed.

In 2009, a network of 80 Iraqi and non-Iraqi Outreach Volunteers and 12 Support Group Volunteers operated across Damascus, helping UNHCR gain access to vulnerable women and girls.

In Damascus UNHCR distributes school supplies, including uniforms, shoes and school materials, to Iraqi refugee children. Thirty thousand Iraqi

children have benefited from the programme, which helps reduce the financial burden on their parents.

In addition, UNHCR has established community centres in areas where large numbers of Iraqis have settled. These centres include education cells, with teachers from Iraq providing opportunities for non-formal education, such as remedial lessons and skills training, including literacy and language classes. The cells provided advice on appropriate education solutions for refugees whose children are not enrolled in school.

The Outreach Programme provided home-based schooling and identified children who were not enrolled in school. In 2006-2007, more than 33,000 Iraqi children and adolescents were enrolled in schools. By 2007-2008 this figure had gone up to more than 49,000.

Though considerable progress has been made, access to education is still not widely available to refugees. A comprehensive report compiled in 2008 to assess UNHCR's progress in education showed that enrolment rates in primary grades reached 69 per cent in camps and 64 per cent in urban areas. Girls' enrolment in primary education in camp settings reached 63 per cent, but was alarmingly low at the secondary level, at 27 per cent.

Nonetheless, 10 operations have increased the enrolment rate at primary level in camp settings, and 20 have done so in urban areas. At the secondary level, seven operations showed increased enrolment in camp settings, while 15 operations saw greater enrolment in urban settings.

Major efforts were made to enhance access for children and youth to post-primary education, sports and technology. The [ninemillion.org](http://ninemillion.org) campaign collected more than USD 1 million for these activities in 2009, benefitting some 200,000 children and young people in Algeria, Bangladesh, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda and Zambia.

Special attention was given to girls and out-of-school youths, significantly boosting their participation in community activities and helping them to stay in school. The [ninemillion.org](http://ninemillion.org) campaign also enhanced access to education in a safe learning environment for girls and children with specific needs. Some 80 per cent of the projects used sports as a protection tool, strengthening social ties and community networks by promoting peace, solidarity and justice. Moreover, vocational training and life skills programmes increased work opportunities and self-reliance (see also chapter on *Working in Partnership*).

Training materials were developed based on UNHCR *Safe Schools and Learning Environments Guidelines* to improve the protection of girls and boys of concern in schools. These guidelines promote safer learning environments and address violence in and around schools. Pilot programmes in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda trained UNHCR and partner staff to provide educational services, and the lessons learned were integrated into an e-learning package. This innovative tool provides individual

distance-learning resources and support, as well as a module for workshops for communities of concern and other partners. The revision of the *Education Field Guidelines* has also commenced with the development of the chapters on Distance Learning Programmes and on Education in Urban Areas.

The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) provides scholarships for qualified refugees to study at universities and colleges in host countries and, more recently, in their countries of return. In 2009, the DAFI Programme assisted more than 1,770 students in 34 countries with full or partial scholarships. The vast majority of those sponsored were in Africa. More than 40 per cent of DAFI students are female, and about 10 per cent are in post-graduate studies.

Education awareness-raising activities were strengthened at the global level. A study on education in urban settings covered the cities of Amman, Damascus, Kampala and Nairobi. UNHCR has also been involved in the drafting of the 2010 Annual Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education on the theme: *Education for Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrant Populations*.

Partnerships remained crucial to UNHCR education programme support and delivery. Cooperation with UNICEF and UNESCO has been reinforced through joint missions and support at field level. UNHCR actively participated in the INEE (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies) to further the INEE minimum standards as a common framework amongst stakeholders, as well as in the education cluster, notably to develop a needs-assessment tool.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

Mitigating the environmental impact of populations of concern is key to safeguarding asylum and facilitating good relations with host communities.

In line with its *Environmental Guidelines*, UNHCR and its partners worked in 2009 to consistently introduce, apply and support a range of specific environmental management projects, approaches and tools. These included the development of community environmental management plans in camps, such as in Chad, Ethiopia,

Kenya, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, as well as environmental impact assessments, notably in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Rwanda.

The use of alternative energy, environmentally-friendly shelter and green technologies was promoted, for instance through the installation of solar-powered street lights and solar cookers in Bangladesh, Chad and Nepal. UNHCR also organized environmental management training for over 100 staff from UNHCR, implementing partners and government counterparts in Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Uganda. Participants learned best practices in natural resource management in refugee and IDP situations. The training enabled participants to support their respective operations by identifying environmental issues, planning appropriate interventions and supervising the implementation of associated activities. In addition, it increased awareness of environmental issues within UNHCR and among its partners and enhanced the participation of refugees and IDPs in the management of their environment.

Environmental interventions have had several positive impacts. For instance, the installation of solar street lights in the camps helped promote education and community activities, as well as improve security, particularly for women and girls. The introduction of energy-efficient stoves and alternative fuel have reduced the use of firewood and polluting fuels such as kerosene, and contributed to reduce carbon emissions and pressure on local forests. More than 9 million trees have been planted in Africa and Asia, helping to prevent deforestation, protect biodiversity and safeguard the critical ecosystems on which displaced people and host communities depend for their livelihoods.

While considerable progress has been made in supporting and mainstreaming environmental management in UNHCR's operations, the capacity to address emerging environmental issues needs to be strengthened. UNHCR continued to enhance its collaboration with other agencies concerned with environmental management, particularly through the *Delivering as One* initiative and other UN coordination mechanisms.

## ● Lighting up camps with solar power in Bangladesh



UNHCR/SHIGEKI NAMBU

Until recently, taking a shower or going to the toilet at night was an exercise fraught with hazard for thousands of girls and women in Nyapara and Kutupalong refugee camps in Bangladesh. The two sites near Cox's Bazar in south-eastern Bangladesh are together home to some 28,000 refugees from Myanmar. Venturing in the dark alleys of the camps at night put many women and girls at risk of harassment or even rape.

### Solar street light in Nyapara refugee camp, Bangladesh

Today, with the installation of more than 100 solar-powered lights in the camps, the situation has improved significantly.

"The light is much better than before and I feel better about using the bathroom and toilet at night." Says 30-year-old Khaleda: Installed by UNHCR, the lights to illuminate the previously pitch-dark camp are monitored and maintained by the refugees themselves.

The first focus was on bath houses, latrines and water collection points, places where women are particularly vulnerable. Other public areas have now been lit to allow refugees to move more freely throughout the camp at night. Many students are taking the opportunity to visit private tutors' homes to continue their studies in the evening.

## Guaranteeing age, gender and diversity perspective in operations

### AGE, GENDER AND DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING

In 2009, an evaluation of UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy highlighted significant progress. It showed that participatory approaches had been implemented in UNHCR's planning process and that AGDM messages were incorporated into protection policies, guidelines, handbooks and training materials. More importantly, the policies have revitalized staff morale, enhanced protection and improved services for people of concern.

The evaluation also underscored the areas where further improvement is required, including increased oversight by senior managers and the uneven degree of incorporation of participatory assessment results into programming.

UNHCR is currently developing a second Action Plan to guide the next phase of the AGDM implementation.

### REGISTRATION AND PROFILING

In 2009, UNHCR continued to expand its capacity to collect and analyse both individual and aggregate data about people of concern. At the year's end, the Office had demographic information, with age and gender breakdown, for 76 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as for 75 per cent of IDPs of direct concern to it. Information on stateless populations has also continued to improve.

Since 2004, UNHCR's registration software for refugees and asylum-seekers, *proGres*, has been introduced in more than 75 countries. Today it contains data on more than 5 million people, including 3 million active cases.

An assessment of an automated fingerprint identification system was completed in 2008. While biometrics has proven useful in enhancing programme integrity, additional safeguards are needed to protect personal data on people of concern. In consultation with key stakeholders, in 2009 UNHCR began developing a policy on the conditions under which biometrics may form a regular part of registration and related procedures. The policy will provide standards for the use of biometrics and outline biometric data protection principles.

Progress was also made on the profiling of IDPs. The Office does not advocate for the systematic registration of IDPs on an individual basis, but rather for an approach which combines general profiling with the collection of more detailed individual information for specific groups.

In 2009 the Office established a Joint Profiling Service, an inter-agency resource housed within UNHCR and supported and managed jointly with the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and UNFPA. The Joint Profiling Service supports the IDP-profiling work of all agencies and NGOs.

#### PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Refugee, IDP and stateless children are often deprived of their most basic rights, including the right not to face discrimination, the right to health and the right to education. This is most notably the case when children of concern to UNHCR lack access to child protection systems in the country of asylum.

In 2009, UNHCR worked to implement the 2007 Executive Committee Conclusion on children at risk, which calls for non-discriminatory access of children to child protection systems. In cooperation with its partners, the Office developed draft guidelines on child protection systems in emergencies. The guidelines seek to improve child protection programming, including through guidance on how to build or strengthen child protection systems in different operations. In 2009, the guidelines were tested in Ecuador, Ethiopia, Nepal and Yemen. They will be provisionally released in 2010, with testing to continue.

The implementation of UNHCR's 2008 *Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child* (BID) has improved the protection of unaccompanied and separated children. However, important gaps persist, including in the areas of identification, registration, documentation, family tracing, monitoring of care arrangements and appointment of guardians.

In order to address these gaps, UNHCR and its partners deployed two

BID experts for six months in Ethiopia and Rwanda. The experts were responsible for training UNHCR and partner staff in the two countries. Training materials on BID were also drafted and tested in a regional workshop in Jordan.

UNHCR participated in the inter-agency revision of the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) training and capacity-building modules in 2009. The new edition of the ARC Resource Pack was launched in December 2009 to coincide with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNHCR continued its partnership with Save the Children Norway and Sweden for the deployment of their standby roster members as community services and child protection officers. Under this partnership, four community services officers and seven child protection officers were deployed to support UNHCR operations in Ethiopia, Nepal, Sudan, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Yemen and Zambia.

#### PROTECTION OF OLDER PEOPLE AND THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

The protection of older people of concern and those living with disabilities remained a priority for UNHCR in 2009. The systematic recognition of the needs and capacities of older persons and persons with disabilities is crucial to ensure their protection. In this regard, a HelpAge International consultant seconded to UNHCR under the Protection Cluster Working Group provided technical support in conducting assessments of the needs of older people in Georgia and Myanmar.

UNHCR initiated programmes targeting older persons in several countries. For example, the programme in Jordan aimed to identify 100 older people to receive services; train 10 volunteers to assess their individual

needs; and train and support 20 male and female Iraqi volunteers to provide in-home care. The programme also provided referrals to medical services, including for rehabilitation; medication; psychosocial counselling and physical therapy; and the furnishing of needed medical equipment. Furthermore, it helped with necessary home modifications and provided opportunities for recreational activities to combat isolation and depression.

UNHCR actively involved persons of concern with disabilities in its field operations.

In Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, targeted activities ensured the inclusion and participation of those living with disabilities in protection and programme delivery in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In Kakuma camp in Kenya, livelihood activities were developed for persons with disabilities, such as a soap factory and an orthopedic workshop.

Despite these achievements, there is still a need to increase the knowledge and skills of UNHCR and its partners in working with people with disabilities and older persons so that they are better able to ensure access to protection, including to registration, legal assistance and asylum procedures. Services and specialized assistance for the disabled, including education and community-based rehabilitation projects with a focus on livelihoods, need to be mainstreamed into all UNHCR programmes.

UNHCR strengthened its partnerships with NGOs and UN agencies and continued to highlight the specific protection problems that persons with disabilities face and how these could be addressed collaboratively. ■