

# Providing International Protection

UNHCR is, at its core, a protection organization. Its effectiveness is measured by its success in achieving its primary goal of providing international protection – that is, safeguarding the rights of refugees and others of concern and assisting them to cope with the many difficulties and dangers that they face. In 2006 UNHCR worked with States, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies and refugees to strengthen the international protection regime. This included helping States reinforce their national protection mechanisms and ensuring that all refugees and others of concern, regardless of age, gender or background, were given the protection they needed. The environment in which these activities were undertaken often created additional challenges. Concerns about national security, irregular migration, and rising xenophobia threatened to undermine protection. Yet, by working with its partners, UNHCR made progress.

This chapter highlights some of the work undertaken by UNHCR to provide international protection to those in need. Three of UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives for 2006 were of particular relevance and form the basis of this chapter.

## Global Strategic Objective (GSO) No. 1: Advocate for, and support governments in, the creation and maintenance of an international protection regime.

### Preserving asylum space

The cornerstones of the international protection regime are the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Promoting accession to these instruments, as well as compliance with them, remained a key protection activity in 2006. At the end of the year, 147 States were parties either to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, with the newly independent Republic of Montenegro joining the list of States parties to both instruments. UNHCR worked with States that expressed an interest in possible ratification or accession to these instruments, for example, certain countries in the Middle East, providing them with information and legal and technical support. The Office also worked with other governments, such as those of Timor-Leste and Papua

New Guinea, so that they would consider lifting their reservations to the treaties.

To facilitate a consistent application of the 1951 Convention, UNHCR provided guidance to States on a number of core legal issues. Throughout the year, the Office provided guidelines, position papers and legal briefs on such issues as the eligibility for asylum of victims of trafficking, the scope of States' *non-refoulement* obligations, and the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from countries affected by armed conflict, such as Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Iraq.

In two cases in the United Kingdom, the House of Lords viewed UNHCR's protection guidelines positively. Indeed, it drew upon them in determining the existence of a particular social group (in the context of one claim based on fear of female genital mutilation and another based on membership of a family) and in determining the reasonableness of an internal flight or relocation alternative.

The protection afforded under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol begins, however, with effective access to territory and/or asylum procedures. Concerns about both national security and irregular migration have led to restrictive practices by some States with regard to physical access to their territories and to safeguards in asylum proceedings. UNHCR worked with States to determine how best to meet these legitimate concerns without compromising refugee protection principles.

### Enhancing protection capacity in host countries

Many countries, including those hosting significant numbers of refugees, have limited legal and/or administrative capacities to protect refugees in accordance with international standards. This poses significant challenges to both state and non-state actors. UNHCR worked throughout the year to boost the protection capacity of these host countries.

The Office also provided legal and technical support to governments seeking to establish refugee protection systems. For example, it provided inputs on draft refugee legislation in a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The refugee definition in the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees was included in

legislation that was passed in Bolivia and in draft legislation in Chile and Nicaragua. In the absence of refugee legislation, UNHCR helped States to develop administrative measures that fill the void until laws are passed.

The Office also worked closely with its partners to increase the capacity of refugee status adjudicators who are tasked with determining who should be afforded refugee protection in the host State. To this end, UNHCR supported the International Association of Refugee Law Judges, which established a regional chapter in Africa in 2006 and held its world conference in Mexico in November.

UNHCR's Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP) has been an important vehicle for improving State and community protection capacities. In 2006, it was implemented in Benin, Burkina Faso, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Thailand. National consultations with all concerned parties led to decisions on which gaps needed to be addressed as a priority, as well as to an agreement on multi-year plans of action.

Subsequently, UNHCR, government officials, international and national partners and refugees all played a part in the development of specific projects. The projects covered legislative and administrative capacity building; improved protection mechanisms (including those for the prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender-based violence); better health and education services; and opportunities for refugees to become self-reliant in preparation for return. The projects have also been presented to potential funding agencies to solicit support for their implementation (see box on SPCP activities in Thailand).

Finally, training continued to be a central activity for UNHCR in strengthening local protection capacity. In Cyprus, UNHCR trained police academy cadets; in Turkey, border guards were trained. In the Caribbean, Bahamian and Jamaican immigration officials were trained in international refugee protection, and were made aware of the migration-asylum nexus and mixed migratory flows. At Headquarters, UNHCR trained country-of-origin specialists from Central and Eastern Europe and Africa.

## Improve policy and operational response to situations of mixed flows of asylum-seekers and migrants

Large-scale mixed population movements across borders in an irregular manner, by land or sea, continue to pose enormous challenges to the international community. People smuggling and trafficking add to the complexities of such movements.

Improving policy and operational responses to situations of mixed flows of asylum-seekers and migrants was one of UNHCR's primary protection objectives for 2006. The Office participated in the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in September 2006 at UN Headquarters in New York, with the aim of ensuring that the migration and development debate took due account of forced migration and refugee protection issues.

UNHCR also chaired the newly established Global Migration Group (GMG) which provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among inter-governmental organizations working in the field of migration. An early outcome of the GMG's work was a

## Strengthening Protection Capacity in Thailand

In 2006, UNHCR worked with the Government of Thailand, NGOs, international partners and refugees on a comprehensive strategy to strengthen protection and improve the prospects for solutions for the many thousands of refugees in the country. Drawing on the methodology of the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, the Office identified gaps and developed projects to remedy them.

The projects are wide-ranging, and relate to strengthening camp administration, documentation, security, education, health services and self-reliance. They

have been developed with the help of refugees and NGOs, as well as international partners such as the ILO (on issues related to self-reliance) and the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (on civil society capacity building).

Immediate benefits have included the provision of identity cards for 80,000 camp-based Myanmar refugees. Other projects are expected to benefit refugee women and children in the nine camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. These include improving the response to sexual and gender-based violence; putting in

place child protection mechanisms; providing better health, psychological counselling and education services; and empowering women through agricultural activities.

The project in Thailand is also working to increase refugees' self-reliance. This is a significant move, as it follows a new, more open attitude on the part of the Government. The project draws on the technical expertise of the ILO, with assistance from UNHCR's Peacebuilding and Livelihood Section and the cooperation of NGOs and refugees.



UNHCR/K. McKinsey

At Mareero, near Bossasso, Puntland, people who have paid USD 30 to 40 to smugglers wait for the night to fall so they can board the boat that they hope will take them across the Gulf of Aden to Yemen.

paper providing details of the research and data collection activities undertaken by member agencies.

In a July 2006 paper entitled UNHCR, *Refugee Protection and International Migration*, the Office explains the various points of intersection between refugee protection and international migration. UNHCR also launched a ten-point plan of action to address mixed flows. This seeks to ensure that measures to curb irregular migration do not prevent refugees from gaining access to international protection. The plan seeks to guide States towards a collaborative and comprehensive approach in response to such movements. A revised version of the plan was issued in January 2007 (see box).

States in the Mediterranean and Gulf of Aden regions have been receiving large numbers of irregular arrivals. In some situations, countries of transit and destination have reacted to the increased migration pressures through interceptions and expulsions, risking the *refoulement* of refugees and asylum-seekers. With regard to maritime migration, UNHCR worked with governments to find solutions which would allow rescued people to disembark from boats, have their protection needs identified by State authorities, and have their cases processed according to international standards.

UNHCR supported the strengthening of European Mediterranean countries' capacity to receive and identify asylum-seekers properly. In North Africa, UNHCR reinforced its presence and advocacy to gain the support of governments to widen the asylum space.

As a follow-up to the meeting of experts in Athens in 2005 on interception and rescue at sea in the Mediterranean, UNHCR organized a meeting of State representatives in May 2006 in Madrid, Spain, to explore responses to problems arising out of rescue at sea and interception operations. The meeting resulted in a better understanding among States of the protection dimensions of mixed movements. Follow-up meetings have been held at the national level, for example in Italy.

UNHCR also published, jointly with the International Maritime Organization, a leaflet on rescue at sea, which provides guidance on relevant legal provisions and on practical procedures to ensure the prompt disembarkation of survivors. It also addresses measures to be taken to meet the needs of those rescued, especially refugees and asylum-seekers. The leaflet has been distributed to shipmasters, government officials and other concerned actors.

# UNHCR's Ten-Point Plan of Action for Addressing Mixed Migratory Movements

In July 2006, the High Commissioner introduced UNHCR's Ten-Point Plan of Action for Addressing Mixed Migratory Movements at the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, held in Rabat, Morocco. Migratory flows across the Mediterranean to Europe, and increasingly also from West Africa, include many who undertake the voyage for economic reasons, seeking jobs, new skills or a better life. Some, however, travel for protection-related reasons, fleeing persecution in their home country. The journey is often dangerous, with unseaworthy boats overloaded with people often sinking during the crossing.

For UNHCR, a primary challenge has been to see that refugee protection safeguards are maintained when States respond to mixed migratory movements. The Ten-Point Plan was developed to assist States and other interested parties. It adapts UNHCR's protection activities to the specific challenges and opportunities of mixed migration. It also places them in a framework that ensures a comprehensive, collaborative and transnational approach.

The Ten-Point Plan sets out ten key areas in addressing mixed migratory flows in which UNHCR has a potential role to play. These include:

1. Identifying the key actors concerned in addressing mixed

movements and ensuring their cooperation in a coordinated manner.

2. Collecting data about the characteristics of mixed movements and analyzing it to ensure the development of a coherent and comprehensive strategy.

3. Establishing State entry systems that ensure that asylum-seekers and refugees are able to access refugee protection procedures and are not subject to *refoulement*.

4. Creating appropriate reception arrangements to ensure that basic human needs are met and that new arrivals are registered and provided with temporary documents.

5. Establishing the necessary mechanisms to profile arrivals (e.g., who they are, why they left their country and what their destination is) and refer their cases accordingly.

6. Establishing differentiated processes and procedures to handle the different types of cases that are presented, including accelerated asylum procedures for those whose refugee claims appear straightforward.

7. Identifying appropriate solutions for those individuals

found to be refugees, including local integration, resettlement, or other legal migration opportunities.

8. Addressing the secondary movements of refugees and asylum-seekers who have moved on from countries where they had already found adequate protection.

9. For those found not to be refugees, ensuring either their expeditious and humane return to their country of origin or, as appropriate, providing access to alternative migration options.

10. Developing an information strategy to alert people of the dangers of irregular movement and the difficulties they may face upon arrival, as well as to any alternatives to irregular migration which might be available.

UNHCR has begun implementation of the Ten-Point Plan with relevant partners in southern Europe and North Africa. Other regions where its implementation is being planned or discussed include Central and Eastern Europe, the Gulf of Aden and the Caribbean. The success of these efforts will depend on the ability of all interested parties to work together to address this phenomenon.

## Increasing respect and tolerance for asylum-seekers and refugees

Mounting xenophobia and a general climate of public hostility towards refugees and asylum-seekers, in some cases leading to acts of aggression, continued to challenge UNHCR's efforts to mobilize public support for refugee protection. This trend was most obvious in industrialized countries, but could also be seen in a growing number of developing countries.

UNHCR offices worldwide worked hard to combat this rising tide of intolerance through a range of public awareness activities designed to foster a more friendly

and welcoming environment for refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons under the care of the Office.

As part of its public advocacy role, UNHCR spoke out against *refoulement* and restrictive policies in several countries, and welcomed positive steps in others.

Through well-publicized statements and media relations work, UNHCR brought attention to the impact of forced displacement on the indigenous people of Colombia, the dramatic situation of Palestinian refugees in Iraq and the risks faced by people attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Aden, to mention but a few examples.

Educational tools, including teachers' guides and interactive internet games in various languages, were developed and used in several countries. In June, UNHCR launched [ninemillion.org](http://ninemillion.org), an internet-based campaign to raise awareness and funds for education and sport programmes for refugee youth.

Other activities included competitions for student journalists and media awards for the best reporting on refugee and asylum issues. In many countries, UNHCR also trained journalists and provided guidelines and manuals on the coverage of asylum and refugee issues to contribute to more balanced and accurate reporting.

## Global Strategic Objective 2: Ensure international standards of protection for girls, boys, women and men of concern to UNHCR are met.

In ensuring the protection needs of all persons of concern to UNHCR, it is necessary from the outset to assess the particular protection risks that different members of the population face. Throughout 2006, UNHCR institutionalized such assessments in its own operations, promoting a rights- and community-based approach. The Office has helped States and partners do the same.

## Improving physical security and reducing incidents of violence, in particular preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence

In many countries, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and others of concern continue to face serious threats to their security, whether due to armed attacks, military infiltration or domestic violence.

In response to requests for guidance on how to deal with armed elements and combatants, UNHCR issued operational guidelines on the maintenance of the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum in September 2006. These guidelines answered questions on how to identify combatants and disarm armed elements, how to undertake refugee status determination for former combatants, and the special considerations that apply to women and children.

The issues raised in these guidelines were most evident in 2006 in Chad and eastern Darfur, where armed attacks and forced recruitment of refugees inside camps threatened to undermine the camps' civilian and humanitarian character. UNHCR pushed for implementation of its memorandum of understanding with the Chadian authorities to improve security in and around the camps. UNHCR also collaborated with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations on various initiatives.

Strengthening mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence remained another of

## Raising the alarm over growing displacement in Iraq

The increasingly worrisome plight of millions of displaced Iraqis, as well as Palestinians and other refugees inside Iraq, began making world headlines in the autumn of 2006. At the same time, there was a major shift in the scale and focus of UNHCR's work in Iraq and surrounding countries.

In 2003 and 2004, more than 300,000 Iraqi exiles returned to their homeland, hoping to rebuild their lives in an increasingly safe and stable environment. Beginning in 2005, however, UNHCR witnessed a dramatic reversal in that trend and began stating publicly its growing concern over the deteriorating security situation in Iraq.

From a high of 200,000 Iraqi returnees in 2004, fewer than 500

went home in 2006. By the autumn of 2006, UNHCR was reporting that tens of thousands of Iraqis were once again fleeing their homes monthly, and neighbouring States – particularly Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic – were struggling to cope with the large numbers. These reports caught much of the media by surprise and drew widespread attention.

By the end of the year, UNHCR and its partners estimated that out of a total population of 26 million, close to 2 million Iraqis were internally displaced, with up to 1.8 million others in nearby countries or further afield. Many had fled before 2003, but an estimated half a million Iraqis were newly displaced in 2006 alone – most of them after the Samara bombings in February of that year. Up to

50,000 people continued to flee every month in the largest population movement in the Middle East since Palestinians were displaced following the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

Estimates of Iraqis displaced in neighbouring States included some one million in the Syrian Arab Republic and up to 750,000 in Jordan, with tens of thousands more in Egypt, Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

Raising the alarm, UNHCR and its partners stepped up their own programmes in the region and urged the international community to do much more to address the humanitarian needs in Iraq and to help share the enormous burden being borne by nearby countries.

UNHCR's top priorities. In many countries, efforts were made to sensitize refugee and local community leaders and other relevant actors to the problem. Women's groups and drop-in centres were formed and victims were supported and encouraged to report acts of violence against them. UNHCR also stepped up its efforts to strengthen the capacity of governments to address sexual and gender-based violence by conducting awareness-raising and training programmes for national institutions. In Uganda, UNHCR was instrumental in the preparation of the national strategy on sexual and gender-based violence, which aimed to deal with the problem through institutional reform.

One of UNHCR's performance targets for 2006 was the establishment of standard operating procedures to address sexual and gender-based violence in all of its field operations. At the end of 2005, such procedures were in place in 45 per cent of its camps and 42 per cent of its urban operations. To increase this percentage, in 2006 UNHCR provided instructions and a standard template to all of its field offices to help them develop country-specific standard operating procedures.

Establishing standard operating procedures at the country level has been particularly challenging in IDP operations, where the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and NGOs are not yet clearly defined. The development and use of standard operating procedures are now included in training on how to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

## Mainstreaming age, gender and diversity considerations in UNHCR operations

In 2006, UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy was introduced in 41 country operations in Africa, Europe and Asia, bringing the global figure of country offices applying it to 97. A total of 25 workshops were conducted, with 641 participants (285 men, 536 women) from governments, NGOs, UN agencies and UNHCR. Each country formed a multi-functional team composed of staff from the protection, programme, community services and other relevant sectors of UNHCR, as well as national and international NGO partners and government counterparts.

UNHCR staff continued to talk with populations of concern to gather accurate information on their protection risks and the underlying causes. This process raised UNHCR's capacity to work with communities to develop solutions to address identified protection gaps. A 2006 review of UNHCR country operation plans from those countries participating in the 2005 launch of the strategy indicated that while the majority of offices had incorporated age, gender and diversity considerations in

their operation plans, the formulation of objectives from such a perspective needed strengthening. There was more progress in this regard in 2006.

The impact of UNHCR's participatory assessments could be seen in various countries. In Morocco, a self-reliance programme that paid special attention to women, boys and girls, older people and those with serious disabilities was developed in partnership with two national NGOs. As a result, refugees now participate in self-reliance projects. Refugee women started cooperatives and also managed a safe house for unaccompanied children. Moreover, the number of female representatives in the refugee committees increased considerably.

In India, discussions with refugee women from different ethnic backgrounds revealed a high incidence of violence against them. A women's protection clinic was set up to enable the women to discuss their problems and find legal solutions. The clinic now enjoys some external funding, which has enabled it to expand its reach beyond unaccompanied children, survivors of violence and single mothers and target all refugee women.

At Headquarters, the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy was incorporated in a number of manuals and policies, including the *Handbook for Emergencies*, programming instructions (making participatory assessment standard practice in UNHCR operations), standards and indicators, the results-based management software and UNHCR learning programmes. An accountability framework was also established with senior management. It was tested during the second half of 2006 with representatives from some 20 countries and key senior managers at Headquarters under the leadership of the High Commissioner and the oversight of the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

One of the major challenges that UNHCR offices encountered in 2006 was to manage the expectations of the refugees and others of concern who participated in the assessment exercises. Remedies for some of the identified needs and gaps required more resources than were available. As one UNHCR office reported: "Participatory assessment brings us face to face with the enormous needs of refugees, while we know how little we have in our budget to assist [them]. Still this might remind ourselves of the difficulties of refugees' lives, which can energize us to serve refugees more compassionately and energetically."

Some offices did, however, manage to address identified needs at little or no financial cost. In Malaysia, the UNHCR office informed pregnant women on how they could access the Government of Malaysia's maternal health clinics at nominal rates. Similarly, the office was able to bring the Malaysian Family Planning Association into some communities to provide reproductive health

education. Participatory assessments allowed the Office to identify where its limited assistance budget would be most useful.

Another challenge is ensuring that participatory assessments are not only more inclusive but also respect the capacities of refugees. Focus group discussions with refugees with disabilities, while already limited, mainly took place with adult men with obvious physical disabilities, leaving out those with hearing impediments and mental problems, as well as women and children with disabilities. While the assessments provided more visibility to the needs of older persons, the attention was focused on their incapacities, rather than on their strengths and the important role they play in their communities. Attention to adolescents was another area in which gaps were found.

An important development over recent years has been the implementation of a community-based psychosocial approach in operations in partnership with the Disaster Development Centre of the University of Northumbria. In 2006, the programme was introduced in Malawi and Pakistan to further research the mechanisms of affected populations to overcome trauma and how these coping mechanisms were affected by cultural and traditional beliefs. Selected staff from UNHCR and partner organizations, as well as refugees and others of concern, were taught skills to assess and evaluate the impact of trauma and to initiate activities to address associated social problems arising during the different stages of displacement and settlement. As a result of this partnership a comprehensive psychosocial guide, built upon field practices and adaptable to various types of operations, was finalized.

Following the recommendations of the independent evaluation of the community services functions, three regional workshops bringing together staff from UNHCR, NGOs and governments were organized. Participants who already had facilitation skills were later able to organize training for their partners, refugees and others of concern in their operations. Their capacity to support age, gender and mainstreaming in programming was boosted and they are now better equipped to advocate for and promote the use of a community-based approach in their operations.

## Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

Work on the protection of refugee women followed a two-pronged approach in 2006: gender mainstreaming, and targeted actions to empower women to participate meaningfully in community decision making. Throughout the year UNHCR participated in a number of inter-agency forums, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, and reported on the United Nations System-Wide Action

Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Resolution 1325 calls for actions to address the impact of war on women. UNHCR's actions included the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, ensuring that women contribute to conflict resolution and are included in peace processes, decision making and economic empowerment. These activities increased UNHCR's visibility and accountability on gender-equality issues.

In October, UNHCR's Executive Committee adopted Conclusion No. 105 on Women and Girls at Risk. The Conclusion provides an operational framework and a tool for advocacy. In preparation of the Conclusion, a mission to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya was undertaken jointly by UNHCR and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children to review safe havens for women and girls in need of heightened protection and how the operation finds effective solutions.

The UNHCR *Handbook on the Protection of Displaced Women and Girls* was provisionally released at the end of 2006, and incorporated references to Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Executive Committee's Conclusion on Women and Girls at Risk.

## Addressing the specific needs of children

As part of the strategy to provide greater visibility to its five global priorities for children, UNHCR presented a report to the UNHCR's Executive Committee, which resulted in a decision recognizing that a systematic approach to the protection of refugee children is required in all operations. The report and the decision provided an important opportunity for UNHCR to review the major problem areas within child protection and outline the Office's priorities for the next few years, in particular effective protection systems.

Following comprehensive internal consultations and discussions with partners, in May 2006 the Office provisionally released the *UNHCR Guidelines on Formal Determination of the Best Interests of the Child*. The guidelines clarify when a formal best interests determination must take place, and state the procedures that must be followed and the criteria that must be considered in the process. The guidelines are intended to strengthen the ability of UNHCR field offices to undertake best interests determinations and decisions (see box).

UNHCR also collaborated with the UN Secretary-General's *Study on Violence against Children*, the report and recommendations of which were presented to the UN General Assembly in October. UNHCR participated in an inter-agency consultation on violence against refugee and other displaced children, which provided valuable inputs for the study.

# UNHCR Guidelines on Formal Determination of the Best Interests of the Child

To assist UNHCR staff in the protection of unaccompanied and separated children, in May 2006 UNHCR provisionally released the Guidelines on *Formal Determination of the Best Interests of the Child*.

A “best interests” determination is a formal process with specific procedural safeguards and documentation requirements. Individuals with different areas of expertise weigh and balance the relevant factors in a particular case to ensure that decisions having a fundamental impact on a child’s life are reached in the right manner, following a comprehensive assessment which respects the child’s rights.

The guidelines clarify that a formal best interests determination has to take place at an early stage of displacement in order to identify the most appropriate durable solutions for unaccompanied and separated refugee or internally

displaced children. The guidelines promote more focused attention on unaccompanied and separated children and will assist UNHCR in addressing a long-standing protection gap, particularly in situations in which family tracing is unsuccessful.

Since the provisional release of the guidelines, UNHCR has been closely monitoring their implementation in five selected field offices in Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Malaysia and Thailand. Through this process, the Office is identifying what additional support and training field staff need in order to institutionalize best interests determinations in UNHCR operations. Meanwhile, the guidelines have been translated into French, a sub-roster for best interests determination specialists has been created as part of UNHCR’s resettlement deployment scheme, and child protection deployments in coordination with Save the Children Norway and



UNHCR/IN. Behring-Chisholm

Sweden have been organized for critical operations.

## Increasing and improving the level and quality of registration of refugees and others of concern

UNHCR has made sustained efforts to improve registration, documentation and population data management in its operations by introducing revised processes, standards and tools. Key milestones in this regard were the issuance of a new version of UNHCR’s *Handbook for Registration*; the launch of *proGres*, UNHCR’s new registration database application; and the piloting of the Operations Data Management Learning Programme

By the end of 2006, the new registration system, Project Profile, had been launched in 51 different UNHCR country operations. A typical launch includes training, installation and the transfer of legacy data into *proGres*. Furthermore, each work unit (protection, community services, programme, etc.) is helped to adapt its procedures to meet the new registration standards and to integrate *proGres* into its daily work. The year 2006 saw the deployment of a biometric fingerprint “add-in” to *proGres* in four countries.

A major new activity, initiated in 2006 and gaining rapid momentum in 2007, is the development of policies, standards and procedures for the profiling of IDPs. The Office has been carrying out this task in collaboration with other partners, such as UNFPA, IOM, OCHA, and the Norwegian Refugee Council.



UNHCR/D. Khan

Registration of Afghans in Balochistan.



UNHCR/L. De la Motte

More than 80 per cent of UNHCR's refugee operations have access to information, education and communication materials on HIV and AIDS.

The provision of reliable data is a prerequisite for the implementation of results-based management. Accordingly, in 2006 UNHCR created the new position of operational data manager. A new training programme begun in 2006 helped staff learn the essentials of statistics and data management. New information management tools will facilitate UNHCR's camp coordination role in both refugee and IDP situations.

## Preventing malnutrition

UNHCR considers improving the nutritional status of refugees, particularly women and children, a key priority and an essential part of protection. A paper on nutrition, discussed at the June 2006 meeting of UNHCR's Executive Committee, outlined plans to address malnutrition through an integrated multi-sectoral approach as well as partnerships with a range of actors, as all factors affecting nutrition have to be addressed simultaneously to have an effect.

In 2006, UNHCR reinforced its partnership with WFP (see *Working in partnership with others*); carried out regular assessments; monitored the nutritional levels of refugees and IDPs; and created an additional junior nutritionist post in Headquarters. A nutritionist from the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition was seconded to UNHCR to help field operations improve the quality of their nutrition surveys. UNHCR also continued to play an active role in the Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative launched by WFP and UNICEF. Resources were prioritized to address malnutrition in refugee operations, particularly in protracted situations.

Specific instructions to address malnutrition were included in the programming instructions for 2007. Moreover, in order to bridge the current gaps in resources, UNHCR and WFP prepared joint funding proposals which were submitted to several donors. Advocacy materials were also developed.

Nutrition progress reports indicated improvement in some camps, for instance in Chad, but that more needed to be done to sustain progress. Additional nutrition interventions were carried out in selected UNHCR operations such as Kenya, Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan, Nepal and Bangladesh (see relevant chapters) and will have to continue in 2007 if the nutritional status of the refugee populations in these countries is to reach acceptable standards.

## Reducing the prevalence and impact of HIV and AIDS

UNHCR's global strategic objective related to HIV and AIDS aims to ensure that at least 75 per cent of all camp-based refugees have access to HIV and AIDS information, education and communication materials – as well as to antiretroviral therapy where it is available to the surrounding host populations.

In 2006, UNHCR's programmes continued to have a strong focus on prevention and a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS. More than 80 per cent of UNHCR's refugee operations now have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate information, education and communication materials. Results from behavioural surveillance studies show that refugees' knowledge of HIV issues is high. UNHCR continued to collect data on risk, as well as on HIV prevalence, to make informed decisions to render its HIV and AIDS programming more effective. Refugee sites in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda were included in the ongoing national sentinel surveillance studies.

UNHCR's advocacy efforts with governments and UNAIDS and its co-sponsors managed to raise the inclusion of refugees in national HIV and AIDS strategic plans from 43 per cent in 2004 to 57 per cent in 2006. The UN General Assembly's Political Declaration on AIDS called for the inclusion of refugees, IDPs and other populations affected by conflict and humanitarian emergencies in anti-HIV and AIDS plans. Refugees have access to antiretroviral treatment equal to that of the surrounding national populations in all urban areas and refugee sites in Asia, Southern Africa and West Africa. Significant progress was made in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. Services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission are provided in 75 per cent of the refugee sites. Finally, rape survivors have access to post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent transmission of HIV in more than 50 per cent of refugee sites.

## Safeguarding the right to education

In 2006 UNHCR used age, gender and diversity evaluations and education assessments, which highlighted major challenges to safe and quality



UNHCR/Reiden

Safeguarding the right to education for refugee children is an essential element of protection.

education, to develop its education strategy for 2007-2009. The Office drafted the *Safety in School Guidelines* to build the capacity of staff and partners to address the lack of safe school environments and improve girls' access to education. A training manual has been completed for use by refugee teachers.

A tool to help calculate enrolment rates and identify children not attending school was included in UNHCR's programming instructions for 2007. A standards and indicators report on education for 2005 was compiled to monitor progress on enrolment rates and gender parity. Based on this report the priority countries were reassessed for 2007.

UNHCR reinforced its role in the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Reconstruction (INEE) and co-hosted a training-of-trainers workshop on minimum standards for education in emergencies. With INEE, the Office advocated for the creation of an education cluster. Furthermore, joint missions were undertaken with the German aid agency *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* and the Japan International Cooperation Agency with a focus on reintegration. Areas for collaboration and complementary funding were identified to increase vocational training and teacher training in Southern Sudan.

In relation to post-primary education, UNHCR cooperated with the ILO to expand the Adolescents at Risk Project in West Africa. This concept was replicated in Chad and the Republic of the Congo to increase education opportunities for adolescent girls and boys. The terms of a memorandum of understanding on safe school environments was agreed upon with the International Rescue Committee.

## Global Strategic Objective 4(a): Strengthen UNHCR's operational protection capacity

Throughout the world, UNHCR is actively engaged in the direct provision of refugee protection, be it in the context of emergency operations, the determination of refugee status, the protection of refugee rights in host countries, or the resettlement of refugees in third countries.

In 2006, UNHCR received and adjudicated approximately 12 per cent of the applications for refugee status submitted around the world, with adjudications undertaken in about 80 countries. In 2005, it rendered decisions for some 89,000 people. About 95 per cent of these adjudications were concentrated in some 15 country operations: Cameroon, Egypt, Hong Kong SAR (China),

Jordan, Kenya, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey and Yemen.

Given the fundamental importance of its ability to provide protection in the field, UNHCR aimed to strengthen its operational capacities. While efforts to this end necessarily involve a variety of actors, including management and administration, at its core it means ensuring that UNHCR has the necessary resources on the ground to deliver protection to those in need. UNHCR's greatest resource in this regard is its staff, and significant investments were made in 2006 to ensure it had the numbers, training and support to do the job.

**Staffing:** In 2006, UNHCR increased the number of protection posts in the field. Certain protection support functions were also moved to the field, as shown in the creation of two regional refugee status determination officer posts in Kenya and Malaysia. UNHCR also maintained various protection rosters, such as the Refugee Status Determination Roster, the International Catholic Migration Commission Resettlement Roster and the Surge Protection Capacity Roster (administered jointly with the International Rescue Committee). The Office also maintained standby arrangements with Save the Children, the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council and other NGOs.

These deployment schemes and standby arrangements provided critical support in 2006 to field operations in response to short-term and emergency needs (see the *Global programmes* chapter in the attached CD-ROM for more information on these rosters). Despite these accomplishments, however, the challenge of ensuring adequate and stable protection staffing in the field remains. For example, of the 145 staff undertaking refugee status determination full-time, half are employed under short-term contracts. Such a situation has a negative impact on training and the quality of decision

making. Addressing this situation will be a priority in 2007.

**Training:** Increasing operational capacity means more than increasing staff numbers; it also means strengthening the skills and capacity of staff. In 2006, UNHCR continued to deliver protection training through a variety of long distance learning programmes, including the newly introduced Protection Induction Programme that is mandatory for all UNHCR staff and available to partners. Of equal importance were the Office's workshops on emergency management, three of which took place in 2006 (see the *Global programmes* chapter for more information on long distance learning programmes).

UNHCR also entered into partnerships in 2006 with two government agencies. An agreement with the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board enabled experienced government adjudicators to be deployed on a short-term basis to UNHCR field offices to provide expertise and train UNHCR staff. A collaboration with the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless People similarly assisted in the processing of refugee claims.

**Support:** UNHCR protection staff must have the tools and support they need to carry out their responsibilities. One key resource for all protection staff is information, be it related to country of origin, legal doctrine, UNHCR policy or procedural guidelines. A primary source for this information continued to be UNHCR's *Refworld* database, which was updated and significantly improved in 2006 and is expected to be launched on the internet in 2007. Furthermore, UNHCR took steps to better meet the specific information needs of UNHCR field offices, for example, through the planned creation of country-of-origin briefing folders for UNHCR's largest refugee populations.