

FOREWORD

BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



This second edition of UNHCR's Global Report presents an overview of programmes funded through the 1999 Global Appeal. It also highlights the solutions my Office designed and implemented throughout 1999 to meet the challenges of providing protection and assistance to refugees and other people in situations of forced displacement. I hope this serves as a valuable resource, not only as a comprehensive review of UNHCR's activities for the year, but also as an indicator of future needs and potential trouble spots.

In launching the 1999 Global Appeal, I expressed hope for a fresh international spirit of co-operation to tackle refugee crises. By the end of 1999, the outbreak of numerous emergencies in different regions had served as a stark reminder that such international co-operation remains as vital as ever if we are to address today's refugee problems effectively.

While the international response to humanitarian demands during 1999 was remarkable in some ways, it was also sadly selective. For example, millions of dollars were given to care for the hundreds of thousands of refugees forced from their homes in Kosovo. In addition to its military role, NATO provided support for humanitarian agencies, which was essential, given the size and speed of the refugee outflow. Private donations were raised in some countries through mass media campaigns and fund-raising events. The corporate sector contributed its creative expertise through specialised programmes, as well as financial support. In varying degrees, the international community also responded to the needs of those forced to flee in other emergency situations such as East Timor and the North Caucasus.

However, equally urgent and significant human displacement in other regions elicited little international attention or funding. Tens of thousands of new refugees fled from Burundi to Tanzania, and from the Republic of the Congo to Gabon, but these crises received little donor or media interest. And protracted emergencies in countries such as Sudan, Angola, and Afghanistan, which sadly lingered at the cost of great human suffering, were almost forgotten in 1999.

Moreover, my Office remains gravely concerned that countries emerging from conflict continue to be plagued by poverty, ethnic tensions, and violations of human rights. They face a great risk of renewed conflict or fresh displacement. Rwanda, Liberia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are examples of "forgotten peace", where the gap still yawns wide between humanitarian and reconstruction activities. In countries ravaged by war, physical and economic reconstruction cannot alone hasten the transition to peace. The past year has shown us that the international community must also make concerted efforts to reinforce governments and provide for the equitable protection of minorities. Priorities should include rebuilding and buttressing the law-enforcement capacity of the police and the judiciary. In addition, it is crucial to create conditions for the peaceful coexistence of divided communities in ways that are accepted rather than enforced.

I would like to mention other noteworthy issues that affected the work of my Office in 1999. UNHCR forged new partnerships with the corporate sector that I hope will provide an impetus for mobilising further contributions

from private sources. Humanitarian activities were given support by military contingents last year: this will continue to be essential in certain areas, although the military's role must be more clearly defined. The response to the Kosovo crisis also sharply illustrated the pitfalls of direct assistance. Governments often distributed humanitarian resources either directly or bilaterally through local authorities or NGOs, thereby diminishing the ability of multi-lateral humanitarian agencies to operate. This experience has underlined the abiding importance of channelling resources through multilateral agencies, not only to ensure effective co-ordination at local level, but also to smooth out disparities in assistance provided to different areas world-wide.

In 1999, UNHCR also began a comprehensive international partnership with UNDP and the World Bank – the so-called Brookings process – to provide both humanitarian and development assistance to countries emerging from conflict. This led to the launching this year of a pilot programme centred in Sierra Leone, a country with almost half a million of its people living as refugees abroad. I hope this programme will ensure a seamless transition between these two critical phases of international co-operation, that can be expanded to other situations.

My Office also strengthened its dialogue with the donor community, resulting in greater transparency and understanding of our activities. Two initiatives should be highlighted. Intense informal consultations during 1999 led to several positive changes, including the establishment of a unified budget under which UNHCR has begun operating in the year 2000. In addition, my Office commissioned an independent evaluation of its response to and emergency preparedness for the Kosovo refugee crisis. The objectives of this evaluation were to suggest ways to improve UNHCR's performance, and increase our understanding of the challenges of working in a highly charged political environment. As a result, my Office is taking decisive steps to strengthen its emergency response capabilities and inter-agency collaboration, in close consultation with its Executive Committee.

I hope that the revitalised international humanitarian spirit that emerged in 1999 and is reflected in the 1999 Global Report grows into a more united and shared cause. If we are to improve conditions and provide future solutions for over 22 million refugees and other displaced people on our planet, we must heighten the world's sense of responsibility. Only by working together can the international community ensure that none of the world's homeless are forgotten, and that they all find a lasting home.

