



# Durable Solution

**U**NHCR made considerable progress in finding durable solutions for displaced people in 2008. The High Commissioner's Initiative on Protracted Refugee Situations directed much-needed attention to the issue and highlighted the need for more international effort to improve conditions for both refugees and host communities. Working in partnership with governments and other actors,

UNHCR strove to improve the well-being of displaced populations, create conditions conducive to their return and persuade States to put the needs of the displaced among their development priorities.

#### **PROMOTING CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO RETURN AND REINTEGRATION**

During 2008, well over 603,000 refugees returned to their countries of

origin voluntarily—at least 517,000 (86 per cent) of them with UNHCR's assistance. Angola and Liberia completed major repatriation operations, although some small-scale repatriation is still taking place in the latter. Voluntary repatriation continued to Southern Sudan and Afghanistan, which received some 90,000 and 280,000 returning refugees, respectively.

The voluntary repatriation of



**Accompanied by a UNHCR protection officer, an Iraqi refugee leaves Damascus, Syria for resettlement in Canada.**

Mauritanian refugees who had been in exile in Senegal for up to 18 years returned home in 2008.

Repatriation becomes a truly durable solution only when it is accompanied by a reintegration process that helps both returnees and local communities attain all their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Reintegration interventions therefore involve a broad range of activities.

In 2008, the Office issued a new policy framework and implementation strategy: *UNHCR's Role in Support of the Return and Reintegration of Displaced Populations*. The framework highlights the value of reintegration assistance in the early stages of recovery. It also emphasizes support for livelihoods, local reconciliation and access to national protection mechanisms. To operationalize the policy, efforts are underway to mainstream the reintegration analysis and planning into UNHCR's main planning tools such as the Global Needs Assessment and *Focus*.

Most UNHCR reintegration activities target refugee and IDP returnees as well as local populations. In Southern Sudan and Burundi, for instance, reintegration projects enhanced the capacity of local communities to absorb the growing numbers of returnees. UNHCR and its partners monitored return areas, provided legal assistance, rehabilitated community infrastructure (such as schools, clinics, water sources and roads) and promoted livelihoods projects.

With the completion of major repatriation operations in Liberia, UNHCR scaled down its work in the country and refocused its priorities on protection, the rule of law and peace education. Health and general education activities were phased out in coordination with other agencies.

**LIVELIHOODS: THE RESOURCES (ASSETS, SKILLS OR EQUIPMENT) AND THE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TO EARN A LIVING.**

**SELF-RELIANCE: THE ABILITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL, A HOUSEHOLD OR A COMMUNITY TO MEET ESSENTIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING PROTECTION, FOOD, WATER, SHELTER, PERSONAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND EDUCATION) IN A SUSTAINABLE MANNER AND WITH DIGNITY.**

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refugees from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) also continued. However, in the United Republic of Tanzania, return of those Burundians who arrived in 1972 was suspended to enable the Government of Burundi to address issues primarily related to the access to land and livelihoods. The review of applications has resumed and is expected to be completed in 2009. In a significant breakthrough, 7,036

## ● Liberian Community Development

*Peace, human rights and civic participation*

**U**nder the auspices of the UN Peacebuilding Fund, UNHCR works with its partners to implement the Community Empowerment (CE): Peace, Human Rights and Civic Participation Programme, a non-formal grass-roots peace education and training programme.

The CE Programme addresses the challenges of inadequate leadership, misuse of power and gender inequality through intensive, eight-day peace education and community-empowerment workshops. Government officials, staff of national NGOs and members of local communities participate in the workshops, then apply the skills and knowledge acquired to their work.

The CE workshops are based on an established curriculum which follows the key structures of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Peace Education Programme. The programme has helped promote conflict resolution and fair decision-making among refugees in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in Africa.

Some 25 teams of trained facilitators from local communities conduct two workshops per month over the 18-month project period. The workshops are conducted in communities with a high potential for conflict, as determined through Government and UN assessments, in addition to returnee monitoring.

The programme provides skills in conflict resolution, mediation and human rights. These can be applied in both inter- and intra-community affairs. They also have a positive effect on communities' interaction with development actors from the private and public sectors. □

**U**NHCR systematically advocates for the inclusion of reintegration needs in national recovery and development plans. In this context, it helped the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to develop a Refugee Returnee and IDP Sector Strategy, launched in November 2008 at the International Conference on Returnee Reintegration in Kabul. In Burundi, the Office collaborated with the Government, UN agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to establish an "integrated rural village" programme to address issues pertaining to landless returnees and other vulnerable groups.

UNHCR also works with development actors to support returnees and rehabilitate the areas to which they have repatriated. The Office has begun discussions with the World Bank on collaboration in selected post-conflict countries. In 2008, the Japan International Cooperation Agency supported UNHCR's urban rehabilitation activities in Liberia and Southern Sudan, while the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) provided scholarships to 20 refugees returning to Mauritania.

### IMPLEMENTING COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIES TO RESOLVE PROTRACTED SITUATIONS

SOME 6 MILLION PEOPLE who were living in exile at the close of 2008 had done so for five years or longer, with some 2 million having joined the group in the last two years. Many of these long-term refugees live in shanty towns or in urban areas and get by with little assistance. They often have no access to education and employment, and are frequently denied freedom of movement.

The High Commissioner's Initiative on Protracted Refugee Situations, launched in early 2008, and his Dialogue on Protection Challenges, held in December 2008, emphasized the need for international solidarity in the search for solutions to protracted situations. Five such situations—those of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh, Eritrean refugees in eastern Sudan, Croatian and Bosnian refugees in Serbia and the 1972 Burundian refugees in Tanzania—highlighted the complex

nature of the problems caused by long-term displacement.

Protracted refugee situations frequently reflect a combination of problems: unresolved conflict or political struggle, violations of human rights, and inadequate opportunities for human and national development. The second meeting of the Dialogue on Protection Challenges underscored major gaps in refugee protection and assistance in the areas of education, self-reliance and land and property rights. The dialogue also reiterated the importance of international support, regional initiatives and inter-agency approaches in resolving these challenges.

The complex nature of protracted situations often calls for alleviation strategies that combine different durable solutions. In the case of Afghan refugees that has meant the use of resettlement and voluntary repatriation, while the 1972 Burundian refugees in Tanzania and Croats in Serbia have benefitted from voluntary repatriation and local integration.

When there are no durable solutions in sight, the next best option is to improve life in asylum. Efforts to protect and improve the livelihoods of refugees and asylum-seekers are ongoing in 84 out of 116 countries where populations of concern are assisted by UNHCR. The Office increased its capacity to enhance refugee self-reliance by acquiring further expertise in livelihoods programming. Specialized staff supported field operations in developing comprehensive livelihoods strategies for self-reliance, conducting livelihoods assessments and designing quality livelihood programme packages in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya, Malaysia, eastern Sudan, Yemen and Zimbabwe. An expert roster has also been created to respond to specific requests from field operations resulting in quality and timely assessments, as well as programme guidance.

In 2008, UNHCR put particular emphasis on increasing livelihoods interventions for long-term refugee populations and refugees living in urban areas. It also implemented targeted self-reliance strategies for these groups. Furthermore, it began assessing responses to the increasing numbers of urban refugees in Egypt, Malaysia and Yemen.

To reinforce these efforts, UNHCR collaborated with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in conducting livelihoods assessments in Bangladesh and Egypt. The Office also worked closely with the Japan International Cooperation Agency to support refugee-hosting areas in Kenya.

Within the framework of the Delivering as One reform process, the UN Country Teams in Pakistan and Tanzania supported the Refugee-Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) initiative and the Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy. UNHCR also supported the incorporation of a local integration programme into Serbia's National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

#### STRENGTHENING LOCAL INTEGRATION AS A DURABLE SOLUTION

THE PROSPECT OF LOCAL integration brings hope to many refugees who cannot return to their home countries. An increasing number of countries offer local integration opportunities for refugees.

In Europe, local integration is becoming a standard policy among many host governments. In 2008, the Government of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia approved an Integration Strategy for Refugees and Foreigners in Macedonia to help integrate refugees from Kosovo, most of whom are Roma.

UNHCR worked with the Governments of the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to agree on local integration priorities. The Office also followed up on the recommendations of a previous study, completed in December 2007, on the local integration of refugees in these countries. By the end of 2008, more than 200,000 people had been naturalized in Serbia despite processing delays caused by the large number of applications. National and local governments in Serbia, together with UNHCR, worked to ensure the socio-economic integration of refugees by developing a social housing scheme for 13 of the most vulnerable families including 43 individuals.

Following the completion of major voluntary repatriation operations, West African countries took new steps

## ● Integrating returnee needs in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)

*Over 5.4 million Afghans have returned to their homeland since 2002, representing a 20 per cent increase in Afghanistan's estimated population.*

**S**uch a significant increase has placed pressure on the country's absorption capacity. Moreover, some 2.6 million registered Afghans still remain in neighbouring Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The scale and complexity of the challenges ahead require long-term engagement, which can not be addressed by humanitarian agencies alone.

UNHCR supported the Afghan Government to develop a Refugee, Returnee and IDP (RRI) Sector Strategy as part of the ANDS. The

Strategy was presented at the International Conference on Return and Reintegration in Kabul in November 2008, co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the High Commissioner.

**The RRI Strategy** will mainstream returnee needs into the key sectors outlined in the ANDS, such as health, education, livelihoods, land allocation, training, water and sanitation. It will also focus additional attention on provinces absorbing high numbers of returning refugees. □

towards the local integration of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees. This was done through a regional initiative under the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In Liberia, UNHCR facilitated the legal, social and economic integration of refugees unable or unwilling to return by issuing travel or identity documents. UNHCR also consolidated various refugee services such as health and education and implemented livelihoods projects.

At the end of 2008, the cessation clause came into effect for Sierra Leonean refugees. Some 43,000 Sierra Leoneans remain in exile, mainly in neighbouring countries, including the Gambia, Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the Government offered local integration opportunities to Somali refugees and the Burundians who had fled their country in 1972. UNHCR and the Governments of Tanzania and Burundi continued to work closely on comprehensive solutions. In 2008, Tanzania naturalized some 655 Somalis; it also accepted the processing of naturalization applications from more than 165,000 Burundian refugees.

In Latin America, local integration is implemented within the framework of the Mexico Plan of Action, which was endorsed by 20 countries in 2004. Many countries hosting Colombian refugees, such as Costa Rica, allow local integration. UNHCR will soon undertake a regional review of the achievements of the Action Plan.

#### ENHANCE RESETTLEMENT AS A PROTECTION TOOL, DURABLE SOLUTION AND RESPONSIBILITY- SHARING MECHANISM

BUILDING ON THE SIGNIFICANT expansion of its resettlement activities in 2007, UNHCR continued in 2008 to use resettlement as part of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy. It diversified resettlement programmes and worked to make them more predictable. The goal was to address refugees' needs with diligence, integrity, transparency and accountability.

UNHCR submitted more than 120,800 refugees for resettlement in 2008, a substantial increase over the 100,000 submissions in 2007. This record rise in submissions was due to the rapid expansion of resettlement operations in Nepal (23,521), as well as

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significant resettlement activity in Thailand (20,843) and the Syrian Arab Republic (13,965).

Refugees from Iraq were the largest group submitted for resettlement (33,512), followed by refugees from Myanmar (30,388) and Bhutan (23,516). These three groups accounted for three-quarters of all resettlement submissions.

The use of group resettlement measures in Ethiopia, Malaysia, Nepal and Thailand and the introduction of an abridged referral form for Iraqi refugees helped to raise the number of submissions. UNHCR also increased staff training, provided additional policy guidance, developed a new Resettlement Learning Programme and refined selection questionnaires to improve the quality and quantity of referrals.

The number of resettlement departures rose in 2008, with some 65,550 refugees leaving for 26 countries of resettlement, a 31 per cent increase over the approximately 50,000 departures in 2007.

Besides enhancing submission capacity, UNHCR pursued other efforts to address global needs for resettlement. As a result of the Office's efforts over the last two years, eight countries—the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Romania and Spain—have expressed their willingness to establish new resettlement programmes.

In close cooperation with resettlement States, UNHCR has developed a number of flexible and practical twinning arrangements between traditional and emerging resettlement countries. Such arrangements will help States to develop

reception and integration programmes. In this regard, UNHCR welcomes the European Commission's efforts to establish a common European Union resettlement scheme.

As resettlement needs exceed the current intake capacity (approximately 70,000 annually) of receiving States, it is crucial for UNHCR to improve the identification of those refugees most in need of this durable solution. To this end, UNHCR has strengthened its ability to use the Heightened Risk Identification Tool (HRIT) and the special needs data available in the registration system, *proGres*.

UNHCR worked to achieve the objective of having 10 per cent of overall submissions available for women and girls at risk, as called for in Executive Committee Conclusion 105. Of the 120,800 refugees submitted for

## ● Supporting self-reliance

*Protection challenges facing women and youth in displacement situations are specifically addressed through UNHCR's Women Leading for Livelihoods (WLL) programme*

**W**LL connects women leaders with refugee and displaced women worldwide to support skills development, encourage entrepreneurship and stimulate women's engagement and self-reliance.

Refugee women face a series of barriers to work: legal restrictions, physical and psychological trauma, lack of financial resources, child care issues, the wrong skills for the environment and much more. WLL aims to break down these barriers through funding programs such as computer literacy, language and vocational training, innovative farming and market access, micro-credit, small business centres and child care. Given the proper resources, women are capable of changing their lives and the lives of their children, families and communities.

In 2008, WLL supported six projects in Brazil, Georgia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Morocco and Serbia. Some 391 women and girls benefited directly from these targeted programmes. In Serbia,

for example, 200,000 internally displaced Roma people form a highly vulnerable minority group. Roma women in particular face significant risks due to their low education and high illiteracy levels. A WLL bakery project has provided them with skills, appliances, raw materials as well as courses on the use of bakery equipment and safety and protection in the workplace. The bakery vocational training centre is now run as a commercial enterprise and, without the need for additional donor support, provides sustainable revenues and employment for its owners and staff.

**With new private donations**, additional WLL projects in Bosnia, Costa Rica and Kenya are underway. Some 20 additional projects have been developed by field offices in close cooperation with implementing partners, and presented to potential private donors via networking events, regular fundraising activities and the WLL website: [www.unhcr.org/wll](http://www.unhcr.org/wll).

resettlement in 2008, women at risk represented 7 per cent of overall submissions, or 8,501, cases, up from 5,981, in 2007. However, the goal of 10 per cent submissions involving women and girls at risk was surpassed in 35 of the 80 operations where resettlement activities were undertaken in 2008.

A notable achievement in May 2008 was the establishment of the Evacuation Transit Centre (ETC) in Timisoara, Romania following a tri-partite agreement between UNHCR, the Government of Romania and the International Organization for Migration. The ETC is the first temporary relocation site in Europe for refugees awaiting resettlement in a third country. With the capacity to accommodate 200 refugees, the ETC addresses the need for immediate protection of refugees who face risks in the first country of asylum, such as the threat of *refoulement* or unstable, inhumane or dangerous conditions.

The close of 2008 saw 19 Eritrean refugees from Libya depart for Sweden through the ETC. A total of 116 refugees (19 Eritreans evacuated from Libya and 97 Sudanese evacuated from Iraq) were accommodated in the ETC pending final decisions by resettlement countries. A similar agreement to establish an Evacuation Transit Mechanism (ETM) in the Philippines has been finalized and is awaiting signature. UNHCR is exploring similar arrangements with other countries.

**T**O GUARD AGAINST fraud in its rapidly expanding resettlement programmes, UNHCR has implemented an Anti-Fraud Plan of Action. It has established an Expert Group on Resettlement Fraud and developed guidelines on addressing resettlement fraud by refugees. Furthermore, Regional and Country Offices in the top ten resettlement operations have been helped to implement anti-fraud procedures.

Resettlement partnerships with States and NGOs have been strengthened by the Annual Tripartite Consultations and Working Group on Resettlement. UNHCR continued its partnership with the International Catholic Migration Commission through a joint Resettlement Deployment Scheme, as well as a Junior Deployment Scheme.

Resettlement experts were generally deployed within two months of requests. In 2008, the scheme deployed 136 experts to 55 duty stations, compared to 96 deployments in 2007. The majority of deployments targeted operations in Africa, the Middle East and Nepal.

These achievements came in the second full working year of the enhanced Resettlement Service within UNHCR. As part of the Office's

#### TRANSITION FROM RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT WITH EFFECTIVE EXIT AND PHASE-DOWN STRATEGIES

UNHCR was an active participant in inter-agency planning processes in many refugee, IDP and reintegration operations in 2008, while working through the UN Development assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Delivering as One process. UNHCR offices also cooperated with national and development actors to improve refugee self-reliance, support refugee-hosting communities and enhance reintegration opportunities.

Working with development actors and national authorities is equally important in areas where UNHCR's operations are scaling down. The phasing out of an operation must be based on careful assessment,

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decentralization efforts, regional resettlement positions have been established in Bangkok and Pretoria. The Regional Resettlement Hub in Accra has been transferred to Dakar, while a resettlement position at Headquarters has been moved to Washington and given responsibility for the collection, analysis and distribution of statistical information on resettlement.

Resettlement is a labour-intensive activity, and an increase in staffing may be required to meet specific needs in a timely manner. In 2008, the resettlement section had 179 staff positions, of which 80 were funded by additional contributions.

consultation and planning with all relevant actors. This type of measured disengagement is underway in Lofa County in Liberia, the country's highest return area, where the UN has opened a combined office with the participation of many of its specialized agencies.

At the global level, UNHCR advocated for the needs of returnees and displaced persons through its participation in the Cluster Working Group for Early Recovery and Transition Working Group. The Office's involvement in global coordination is nonetheless not limited to advocacy; it also contributes to the development and implementation of policies on recovery and transition issues. ■