

Chapter 3

## Durable solutions and new displacement

### Introduction

Finding durable solutions for refugees is part of UNHCR’s core mandate. Solutions can take three different forms: (i) voluntary repatriation to the home country; (ii) the identification of appropriate permanent integration mechanisms in the country of asylum; or (iii) resettlement in another country. Voluntary repatriation is the durable solution which has historically benefited the largest number of refugees. Resettlement is a key protection tool and a significant burden and responsibility-sharing mechanism. Local integration is a complex and gradual process and comprises distinct but interrelated legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. It is therefore difficult to quantify in numerical terms. The analysis of data on local integration is thus limited to integration through the naturalization of refugees by the host country.

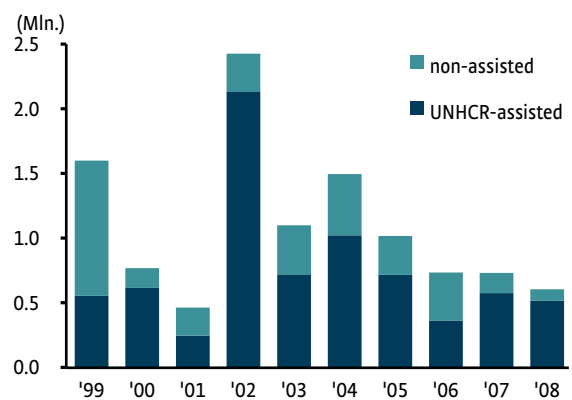
Progress in achieving durable solutions is partly offset by new outflows of refugees. Each year, thousands of refugees flee their home country and are recognized either on an individual basis or through group determination. This chapter looks at both: durable solutions which were found and new displacement which occurred during 2008.

### Durable solutions

#### Voluntary repatriation: second lowest level in 15 years<sup>37</sup>

Based on consolidated reports from countries of asylum (departures) and origin (arrivals), it is estimated that close to 604,000 refugees repatriated voluntarily during 2008, 17 per cent less than in 2007 (731,000). Repatriation figures have continuously decreased since 2004, with 2008 figures being the second-lowest of the past 15 years. Only in 2001 was a smaller number of returns reported (462,000). This is an indication that the large-scale repatriation movements observed in the past have decelerated. Globally, an estimated 11 million refugees have returned home over the past 10 years; 7.5 million, or 68 per cent, of them returned with UNHCR assistance.

Fig III.1 Refugee returns, 1999-2008



The main countries of return in 2008 included Afghanistan (278,500), Burundi (95,400), Sudan (90,100), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (54,000), Iraq (25,600), and Angola (13,100). The largest number of refugee departures was reported by Pakistan (274,200), followed by the United Republic of Tanzania (110,800), and Uganda (66,800).

37 It should be noted that for statistical purposes, only refugees who have actually returned during the calendar year under examination are included. In practice, however, operations may assist returnees to reintegrate into their country for longer periods of time, sometimes exceeding the calendar year in which they returned.

## Box 5

**Can one forecast the number of refugee returns?**

Anticipating the number of refugees who will return to their country of origin during the next year is critical for proper planning and programming. Analysing historical statistical trends can help in estimating the number of refugee returns for the coming year.

The table below shows the relative share of returns compared to the total number of refugees for a given year. For the last decade, this proportion ranged between 4 and 15 per cent with a statistical outlier of 20 per cent in 2001. Because of this outlier, the median is the preferred summary measure (as opposed to the mean) which in this case indicates that between 1999 and 2008, 9 per cent of the refugee population repatriated voluntarily during the following calendar year. In other words, for a given year, roughly one out of ten refugees repatriated voluntarily.

Year	Refugees at end-year *	Refugee returns during following year *	% returns in refugee population
1998	11.5	1.6	14%
1999	11.7	0.8	7%
2000	12.1	0.5	4%
2001	12.1	2.4	20%
2002	10.6	1.1	10%
2003	9.6	1.4	15%
2004	9.6	1.1	12%
2005	8.7	0.7	8%
2006	9.9	0.7	7%
2007	11.4	0.6	5%
<b>Median</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>9%</b>

\* Figures in millions

Afghanistan continued to be the main country of return with 278,500 registered returns during the year. More than 5 million Afghan refugees – or one fifth of Afghanistan’s population – have returned since 2002. The large majority has gone back to their areas of origin, but recent returnees face increasing difficulties. Thousands of returnees have been unable to return to their villages due to insecurity and a lack of land, shelter, basic services or job opportunities. These challenges have been compounded by a food crisis and severe drought.

UNHCR’s repatriation operation for Burundian refugees living in the United Republic of Tanzania, which began in 2002, reached the 300,000 mark in March 2008. As a consequence, the refugee population in the camps in the north-western part of the country fell below 200,000 people for the first time in 15 years. In total, more than 477,000 Burundian refugees, including those returning spontaneously, were able to go home between 2002 and 2008, 96 per cent of them returning from the United Republic of Tanzania.

## Resettlement

Resettlement is a vital protection tool and an international responsibility-sharing mechanism, but also can be a key element in comprehensive solution strategies. It aims to provide protection to refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental human rights are at risk in their country of asylum.

Resettlement benefits a small number of refugees; in 2008, less than 1 per cent of the world’s refugees directly benefited from resettlement. During the past 10 years, some 807,000 refugees were resettled, compared to 11 million refugees who were able to repatriate. Thus, for every refugee who has been resettled since 1999, about 14 have repatriated. In recent years resettlement has also been vital in alleviating some protracted refugee situations around the world, creating protection space and opening up solutions that may have remained otherwise inaccessible.



Afghan boys and girls who have returned from Pakistan are attending classes in Qalinbafan. UNHCR/ E. Hockstein

The 2008 Yearbook uses two sources for resettlement statistics. UNHCR records from countries of asylum indicate the number of refugees who have been resettled under its auspices. Official statistics from resettlement countries are also used to analyse the total inflow of resettled refugees, whether or not they were facilitated by UNHCR.

#### **A Resettlement under UNHCR auspices**

Individuals supported for resettlement by UNHCR are (i) recognized as refugees under the Office's mandate; and (ii) deemed eligible according to UNHCR's resettlement guidelines and criteria.<sup>38</sup> These criteria relate to specific protection needs, such as when the physical or legal security of a refugee is at stake (e.g. women-at-risk or individuals faced with *refoulement*) or when specialized services (e.g. psychosocial or medical) are required that are not available in the country of asylum. UNHCR also supports the resettlement of refugees in order to reunite refugee families.

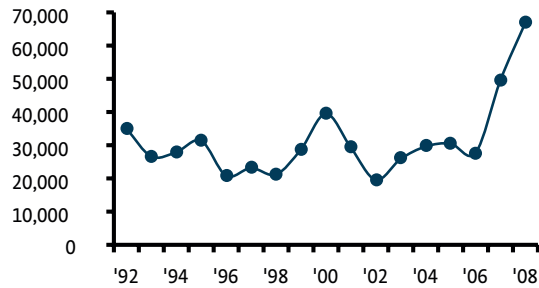
In 2008, UNHCR submitted more than 121,000 individual refugees for resettlement consideration by States, the highest number of the past 15 years and 22 per cent above the 2007 level (99,000). Continued use of group resettlement methodology in Ethiopia, Malaysia, Nepal, and Thailand as well as the streamlined procedures used for Iraqi refugees in the Middle East operations are among the contributing factors to this achievement. While increasing the number of refugees having access to resettlement, UNHCR has ensured the quality of case submissions through on-going staff training, provision of policy guidance, development of a new Resettlement Learning Programme and refinement of the pre- and post-selection mission questionnaires.

38 See *Resettlement Handbook*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2004 at <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a2ccba76.html>

During the year, 67,000 individuals departed for resettlement with UNHCR assistance, 17,000 more than the year before.<sup>39</sup> This is the highest number since the early 1990s. By nationality, the main beneficiaries of the UNHCR-facilitated resettlement programmes in 2008 were refugees from Myanmar (23,200), Iraq (17,800), Bhutan (8,100), Somalia (3,500), Burundi (3,100), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1,800).

Some 85 UNHCR country offices were engaged in facilitating resettlement during 2008. The largest number of refugees who were resettled with UNHCR assistance departed from Thailand (16,800), Nepal (8,200), the Syrian Arab Republic (7,200), Jordan (6,700), Malaysia (5,900), and Kenya (4,000). Together, these six operations together accounted for 7 out of every 10 resettlement departures assisted by the organization in 2008.

**Fig III.2 UNHCR-assisted resettlement departures of refugees, 1992-2008**



### **B Resettlement arrivals (with limited or no direct UNHCR involvement)**

A number of resettlement States (e.g. Australia, Canada and the United States of America) have humanitarian programmes and/or family reunion or sponsorship programmes which address the specific needs of refugees and people in refugee-like situations. These programmes generally have limited direct UNHCR involvement, but nevertheless a significant number of the people who benefit from these programmes are refugees or their family members. This accounts for the difference between the statistics for overall resettlement and persons resettled with UNHCR's assistance.

During 2008, a total of 88,800 refugees were admitted by 16 resettlement countries, including the United States of America (60,200),<sup>40</sup> Australia (11,000), Canada (10,800), Sweden (2,200), and Finland (750). Overall, this was 18 per cent above the total for 2007 (75,300) and the highest value since 2001 (92,100).

The 16 countries resettling refugees during 2008 accepted more than 90 different nationalities, with the largest groups being refugees from Myanmar (22,400), Iraq (19,900), the Islamic Republic of Iran (6,300), Bhutan (6,200), and Cuba (4,200).

The challenges faced by States and UNHCR to bridge the gaps in resettlement delivery are formidable: even more so in the current global economic crisis. UNHCR has been working closely with States to enlarge the pool of resettlement places to respond to these challenges. Since 2007, France, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, the Czech Republic and Uruguay have established or re-established resettlement programmes. Japan has also announced that it will embark on a pilot resettlement project in 2010.

### **Local integration**

The degree and nature of local integration are difficult to measure in quantitative terms, though this is the final and crucial step towards obtaining the full protection of the asylum country. In those cases where refugees acquire citizenship through naturalization, statistical data is often very limited, as the countries concerned generally do not distinguish between refugees and others who have been naturalized. Moreover,

39 The disparity between submissions and departures is partly explained by the time delay between a submission by UNHCR and the decision by a resettlement State to allow the refugee to travel. In many cases, a decision by a resettlement State is made several months after receiving a submission; hence the travel of refugees submitted for resettlement in 2008 might occur the following calendar year, particularly for those cases submitted in the last quarter of 2008.

40 Data for the United States of America refers to the US fiscal year (1 October – 30 September) and may include people resettled for the purpose of family reunification.

laws in some countries do not permit refugees to be naturalized. Therefore, the naturalization of refugees is both restricted and under-reported.

The limited data on the naturalization of refugees available to UNHCR show that during the past decade more than 1.2 million refugees were granted citizenship by their asylum country. The United States of America alone accounted for two thirds of them. Azerbaijan and Armenia also granted citizenship to a significant number of refugees during the same period (188,400 and 65,800 respectively). For 2008, UNHCR was informed of refugees being granted citizenship in the United States of America (83,600 during January to September only), Belgium (4,200), Ireland (1,000), Armenia (730), and the United Republic of Tanzania (490).

### Mass refugee movements

The analysis in this section is limited to individuals who have been recognized as refugees on a group or *prima facie* basis. Those who sought asylum on an individual basis, by requesting refugee status through an individual asylum claim, will be discussed in great detail in Chapter 4.<sup>41</sup>

Somalia remained one of the major source countries for new displacements during 2008, with almost 100,000 individuals fleeing the country primarily to Kenya (65,000), Yemen (30,500), and Djibouti (2,200). Although the total number of people who have fled Iraq during the year is not available, an additional 88,000 Iraqis were newly registered by UNHCR in Lebanon, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and other countries in the region in 2008. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic were other main sources of new refugee displacements in 2008, with 55,700 and 24,800 individuals respectively fleeing these countries. Excluding Iraqi refugees registered by UNHCR throughout the Middle East, a quarter of a million people were newly displaced during the year, 90 per cent of them originating from Africa.

The largest number of new arrivals of refugees was reported in Kenya (65,000), followed by Uganda (49,500), Yemen (30,500), and Cameroon (25,700).

---

41 Some 861,000 individual asylum claims were submitted worldwide in 2008. An estimated 217,000 people received a positive decision on their asylum claim in the course of the year.