

A man tends to his kitchen-garden watched by his daughter, in a refugee allocated plot just outside Amboko refugee camp.



Finding Durable Solutions

The search for durable solutions to the plight of refugees and other displaced people lies at the heart of UNHCR's work. Echoing this, in December 2008 the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges called for international solidarity to resolve seemingly intractable problems in a number of protracted refugee situations. For its part, UNHCR has worked with governments and other actors to improve the well-being of displaced people, create conditions conducive to their return, and persuade States to put the needs of the displaced among their development priorities.

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIES TO RESOLVE PROTRACTED SITUATIONS

At the end of 2009, some 5.5 million refugees in 25 countries had been living in exile for five years or more. This was a decrease of 200,000 from some 5.7 million in 2008. Many of these long-term refugees live in shantytowns 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. UNHCR has worked with the governments of both asylum and resettlement countries

to find more opportunities for durable solutions. It has also sought improvements in the daily lives of refugees and their host communities.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees who had been in the country since 1972 was completed in October 2009. Of the remaining 163,000 long-staying Burundian refugees from the "Old Settlements" who had applied for Tanzanian citizenship, 155,000 had been naturalized by the end of the year. Most of the Burundian refugees who fled their country in 1993 were also voluntarily repatriated, leaving some 36,000 Burundians remaining in one camp in Tanzania. Since 2008, UNHCR has helped some 53,500 of these long-staying refugees to return to home. While actively promoting the return of the Burundians remaining in Tanzania, UNHCR has begun assessing the feasibility of applying the cessation clause to this group. Similarly, UNHCR and the Government of Rwanda are looking into resuming the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of the more than 60,000 Rwandan refugees in the region.

There were positive developments in the search for durable solutions in many refugee-hosting countries in Asia as

well in 2009. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, for instance, the re-registration of more than 1 million Afghan refugees was completed during the year.

UNHCR and the relevant Government ministries collaborated to help the registered Afghan refugees gain better access to public services such as health and education.

In Pakistan, an inter-agency Refugee-Affected and Hosting Area (RAHA) initiative was launched in May 2009. This five-year, USD 145 million development programme will benefit up to 2.5 million Pakistanis and Afghan refugees. A RAHA programme cell was established in the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, and a joint UN programme support unit was set up within UNHCR. Other countries in the region saw similar initiatives. For instance, programmes to promote coexistence between refugees and local communities were being implemented in Bangladesh and Nepal.

In the Balkans, UNHCR and the Governments of Serbia and Croatia worked closely together in the search for durable solutions for refugees in south-western Europe. A regional conference will explore these opportunities further in 2010.



● Encouraging Self-Reliance

UNHCR is continuing its efforts to protect the livelihoods of people of concern in the 84 countries in which it currently operates, and across a range of settings such as camps, rural settlements and urban centres. Livelihoods programmes are promoted from the onset of an emergency through the displacement period and into the implementation phase of a durable solution. Project activities in 2009 included:

- Facilitating access to savings and loan mechanisms to stabilize household cash-flows and kick-start investments.
- Training packages to strengthen life skills, entrepreneurship and workmanship as well as to develop skills in areas such as construction and maintenance, equipment installation, electrical and vehicle repairs, animal husbandry, health and education delivery, child-care and other community services.

- Vocational training and technical education, including in information technology and communications, through formal or non-formal courses.
- Sustainable use of natural resources in kitchen-gardening, agriculture, animal husbandry, fish-farming, beekeeping, timber or forest-produce harvesting, brick-making and stone or sand quarrying.
- Labour-based projects such as cash- or food-for-work programmes in infrastructure construction and community contracting in reintegration or camp settings.
- Grant assistance (in cash or in kind) in emergency situations to help preserve household assets.
- Career guidance and employment support.

■ Livelihoods strategies for protracted and urban situations

Specialists from UNHCR and partner staff supported operations in the development of multi-year livelihoods strategies. This initiative included projects to:

- Conduct detailed assessments of livelihoods among refugees and host communities in order to glean baseline data for a multi-year response plan.
- Define the interventions required to reinforce livelihoods options for displaced and local communities.

Since 2008, these approaches have been applied in Armenia, Bangladesh, Burundi, Egypt, India, Jordan, Malaysia, Senegal, eastern Sudan, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

■ Increased capacity

Two regional workshops on livelihoods were conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and Panama to help UNHCR and partner staff to design and implement comprehensive livelihoods strategies. An e-network of UNHCR staff was launched in 2009 to disseminate knowledge and good practices relating to self-reliance and livelihoods.

■ Revitalization of micro-finance in humanitarian operations

Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Trust, and the High Commissioner met to discuss how they could collaborate to make microfinance more accessible for refugees, IDPs and others of concern to UNHCR. A Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2009 aims to provide people of concern with financial services so they can live productive lives and contribute to the social and economic life of their countries of asylum.

The ILO participated in regional livelihoods workshops and conducted a training session on micro-finance in order to revitalize cooperation on the subject. UNHCR also initiated a comprehensive review of existing materials on micro-finance in humanitarian operations and invited ILO to participate.

■ Women Leading for Livelihoods

The Women Leading for Livelihoods (WLL) initiative supports the economic independence and self-reliance of refugee women around the world through a range of projects. These cover computer literacy and language classes, vocational training, innovative farming and marketing techniques, training in life skills, basic finance, group savings and loans schemes, access to business centres and coaching, and child-care.

Thanks to donations from individuals and foundations in the private sector, in 2009 more than 3,000 women benefited from WLL projects in Bangladesh, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), India and Kenya. The projects targeted women and girls through computer classes, micro-loan and training schemes for small businesses, and courses designed to help participants find apprenticeships or paid work.

■ Community Technology Access

Community-based assessments routinely show a growing desire for computer literacy, access to computer facilities and internet connectivity. UNHCR seeks to address these needs through the Community Technology Access (CTA) programme. This aims to improve both educational and livelihood opportunities for refugees and host populations while maximizing their role in the delivery of ITC services for their communities. The programme includes training to manage ITC facilities and maintain and repair equipment.

In 2009, UNHCR received the backing of Microsoft and PricewaterhouseCoopers to launch the CTA programme in Bangladesh and Rwanda. The CTA centres host classes for schoolchildren, young people and adults. They provide internet access and training in setting up business centres. Employment services and career counselling are also provided. Instruction is delivered by specialized implementing partners and vocational and technical training institutes.

In the remote Kiziba camp in Rwanda, which hosts more than 18,000 refugees from the DRC, 44 solar-powered computers with internet access serve a variety of beneficiaries. A train-the-trainers IT learning programme was organized, and classes were attended by members of the camp-based refugee committees and out-of-school youths, among others. More than 1,100 refugees, a majority of them women and girls, have participated in regular IT classes since October 2009. Rwanda's 2009 education reforms have seen the inclusion of mandatory IT classes for all students in the national curriculum.

In Bangladesh, two CTA centres were opened in the remote Kutupalong and Nayapara camps, which together host some 28,000 refugees from Myanmar. Each centre has 15 solar-powered computers. Some 300 students, a majority of them women and girls, have participated in IT classes, with a success rate of 90 per cent. Both male and female students were trained to train others.

The CTA programme has also contributed to a reduction in gender-based discrimination. For instance, the 31 adolescent girls using the CTA centre serve as vital role models for other teenage girls in the camp who face significant pressure to leave school and marry upon reaching puberty. Girls such as Toslima, one of the CTA students, are showing there is an alternative to early marriage and a life confined to the four walls of a small hut. "We want peace and we want education for our children," says Toslima's father, one of a growing number of parents in the camp who support continuing education for their daughters.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL INTEGRATION AS A DURABLE SOLUTION

The prospect of local integration brings hope to refugees who cannot return to their home countries or who have developed strong social and economic networks in countries of asylum.

In Europe, since 2007 the Governments of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have been offering two-year local integration programmes that provide a broad range of services. These range from language and education programmes, employment services and help with housing, to cultural awareness campaigns and legal assistance.

In West Africa, in 2009 local integration programmes for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees improved their self-reliance through agriculture and livelihoods and vocational training. In Ghana, UNHCR, UNIDO and the National Vocational Training Institute provided training courses for refugees. UNHCR also organized a regional workshop on local integration and livelihoods.

Since the completion of a large-scale repatriation programme for Angolan refugees in 2008, UNHCR and the governments of asylum countries have begun looking into alternative arrangements for the remaining Angolans. In Namibia, the Government and UNHCR co-chaired an inter-agency consultative meeting on the local integration of Angolan refugees. Many Angolans have been successfully integrated into host communities in Botswana, the DRC, Mozambique and Zambia.

PROMOTING CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

In 2009, the return and reintegration of displaced persons was hindered by the fragile security situation in several places of origin and displacement, such as Afghanistan, the DRC, Iraq, Pakistan and Somalia. Assisted repatriation to Afghanistan decreased to 54,000 returnees in 2009 from more than 278,000 in 2008. Worsening security in the North Kivu region of the DRC created new displacement.

Nevertheless, 251,500 refugees returned to their countries of origin voluntarily in 2009—at least 191,700 of them with UNHCR's assistance. This represents the lowest level of return since 1990. As for internally displaced persons (IDPs),

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UNHCR estimates that some 1.4 million returned to their places of origin.

The sustainability of return and reintegration is closely linked to security, political stability and socio-economic development in the countries of origin. UNHCR's reintegration efforts focus on integrating returnee needs into national development plans, contributing to peacebuilding processes and improving returnees' ability to avail of their rights.

In Iraq, for instance, UNHCR supports the Government-led Diyala initiative, launched in 2009. This is an inter-agency programme to help the Diyala governorate, the second-largest returnee-receiving region, to repair infrastructure and improve public services. The participating agencies included WFP, WHO, UNICEF, IOM and UN Habitat. In Afghanistan, UNHCR helped the Government to implement the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS). In this context, a sampling of the micro-finance programme of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MoRRD) and two NGOs illustrated that 70 per cent of the borrowers were returnees.

The monitoring and reviewing of UNHCR's reintegration activities clearly demonstrated the positive impact of these programmes. For example, a recent review suggested that community income-generation projects in Afghanistan not only created employment opportunities, but also expanded social protection for returnees at risk or with special needs as well as for IDPs. Pilot shelter projects have also proven successful in responding to the needs of urban returnees and extremely vulnerable returnees or IDPs.

In the same vein, UNHCR in Southern Sudan reviewed its reintegration projects in order to improve related programmes. In Mauritania, a two-year repatriation operation covering some 19,000 refugees has been completed. UNHCR began reintegration activities by assisting the

Mauritanian Government to provide basic services in areas such as housing, health, education, water and sanitation and income generation.

Recent return and reintegration situations present a diverse set of needs among persons of concern. For instance, displaced populations increasingly return to urban areas. They also have more varied backgrounds, not only in terms of ethnicity or religion, but also as regards social status and academic or professional credentials. This is true not only for returning or reintegrating refugees but also in the case of IDPs—as shown in the Central African Republic, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

In 2009, UNHCR attempted new approaches to such changing situations by redesigning shelter projects in urban areas and including cash grants in return packages in order to meet a variety of needs. The usual reintegration issues related to housing, land, property and the coexistence of multiple groups received continued attention in 2009.

ENHANCING RESETTLEMENT AS A STRATEGIC PROTECTION TOOL, DURABLE SOLUTION AND BURDEN- AND RESPONSIBILITY-SHARING MECHANISM

UNHCR continued its efforts to expand resettlement to an increasing number of vulnerable refugees and incorporate it into all protection and comprehensive solutions strategies. These efforts have included negotiated arrangements to improve the protection climate in the country of refuge, for instance by mitigating the risk of *refoulement*, as well as ensuring that appropriate documents are issued to asylum-seekers and refugees, and that UNHCR is given

access to refugees in detention. In some situations, resettlement has helped unlock other durable solutions.

UNHCR has also promoted the strategic use of resettlement, whereby its positive effects are felt beyond the group of those accepted by receiving countries. In this regard, the Working Group on Resettlement (WGR) met in October 2009 to discuss intensifying the strategic use of resettlement in several refugee situations. Furthermore, an extraordinary session of the WGR in December 2009 explored specific protection dividends and developed strategies such as mobilizing resettlement countries to co-ordinate their activities in a manner that links their respective resettlement and foreign aid development initiatives.

In 2009, UNHCR presented some 128,000 refugees for resettlement. This was the highest number in 16 years and slightly higher than the 121,000 in 2008. By nationality, the main beneficiaries of UNHCR-facilitated resettlement were refugees from Iraq (36,000), Myanmar (30,500) and Bhutan (22,100). In total, these three nationalities made up 70 per cent of all submissions.

Another notable achievement in 2009 was a significant increase in the number of departures, which stood at more than 86,200 to 24 countries of resettlement, 28 per cent more than the 65,900 departures in 2008. The largest number of refugees resettled with UNHCR's assistance departed from Nepal (17,500), followed by Thailand (17,000), the Syrian Arab Republic (10,400), Malaysia (7,500) and Turkey (6,000). Group resettlement programmes in Ethiopia, Malaysia, Nepal and Thailand, as well as the

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streamlining of procedures for Iraqi refugees in the MENA region, contributed to these achievements.

In the last three years, UNHCR has submitted more individuals for resettlement annually than the number of places made available by resettlement countries (some 80,000). This situation is unsustainable, and it is one of UNHCR's priorities for 2010-2011 to encourage resettlement countries to increase the number of places they offer by 10 per cent. In 2009, a modest 5 per cent increase in available places from those in 2008 was achieved. This was mainly due to efforts by Australia, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Luxembourg to respond to the resettlement needs of Iraqi refugees, and the establishment of resettlement programmes in the Czech Republic and Romania.

UNHCR strives to see that 10 per cent of its overall resettlement submissions are for women and girls at risk. In 2009, over 3,300 out of almost 38,000 refugee cases submitted for resettlement were for women at risk, representing 8.8 per cent of all submissions. However, that was an increase of 1 per cent over the approximately 3,000 submitted under this category in 2008. Furthermore, 34 of the 91 operations for which resettlement statistics are available for 2009 had more than 10 per cent of resettlement places assigned to women at risk. These results demonstrate improvements over the previous year. Country offices using group resettlement methodology also took new steps to reflect individual submission criteria in their refugee data. As part of its efforts to arrange for the urgent resettlement of people in perilous situations and provide protection against refoulement, UNHCR has established temporary evacuation transit facilities (ETF). Since the start of operations in 2008 of the Evacuation Transit Centre (ETC) in Timisoara, Romania, some 470 refugees have been evacuated to the centre, which can accommodate 200 refugees at a time. An agreement was signed with an implementing partner to provide services and assistance to the evacuated refugees.

When a group of some 100 Palestinian refugees from Iraq had to be evacuated in 2009, the Slovak Republic volunteered to establish a second transit

centre in Europe, and UNHCR entered into a tripartite agreement on the issue with the Slovak Republic and IOM. While the Slovak Republic generously contributed to the project by meeting essential care and maintenance costs, UNHCR concluded a local agreement with an implementing partner to provide services and assistance.

UNHCR also signed a tripartite agreement with the Government of the Philippines and IOM to establish an evacuation transit facility in Manila, initially with the capacity to care for 20 refugees. Since then 17 refugees have been evacuated to the Philippines. UNHCR, through its NGO partner, cooperates with the Government in facilitating services and assistance to the refugees. The Office also concluded an ad hoc bilateral agreement with Burkina Faso in mid-2009 for a small group of refugees in need of emergency evacuation.

Resettlement processing has been made more effective and predictable through regular training and policy guidance for resettlement staff and the integration of anti-fraud mechanisms in various operations. A pilot resettlement learning programme was launched and successfully implemented in 2009 to target operations in the East and Horn and Great Lakes region of Africa.

UNHCR continued to explore the greater involvement in resettlement of key stakeholders, such as NGOs, while developing partnerships to improve protection delivery more broadly. As part of UNHCR's global priority to implement its urban refugee policy, training to improve the identification of vulnerable refugees and those in need of resettlement in an urban context was conducted in Kenya. This saw the participation of 19 NGOs from 13 countries across Africa. The UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme continued to be instrumental in supporting global resettlement activities, with 130 deployments in 34 duty stations. The majority of the deployments targeted operations in Africa and the Middle East.

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

UNHCR alone cannot attain local integration, end the protracted exile of refugees and IDPs or ensure sustainable

reintegration. Truly durable solutions require both human and socio-economic development. UNHCR remains committed to working with other organizations to find development opportunities for people of concern.

In 2009, UNHCR became a member of the senior policy group on peacebuilding and helped in the drafting of the Secretary-General's report on the subject. UNHCR, OCHA and UNDP co-chaired the reintegration working group, which identified the roles of UN agencies during the first 24 months after a conflict.

TRULY DURABLE SOLUTIONS REQUIRE BOTH HUMAN AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Through its participation in the cluster working group for early recovery (CWGER) and UNDG Transition Working Group, UNHCR contributed to the development of inter-agency assessment and planning tools that harmonized early recovery assessment and post-conflict needs analysis. UNHCR implemented the Reintegration Information Management System on behalf of CWGER. It also worked through the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Delivering as One process to bring issues pertaining to refugees into the mainstream of the development agenda. Among the examples were inter-agency approaches to protracted refugee situations in Iraq, Pakistan and Tanzania.

In 2009, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) initiated an assessment of refugee-hosting communities in the Dadaab region of Kenya and Tanzania. The agency also supported reintegration in urban areas through community development projects in Afghanistan and Southern Sudan, and deployed UNVs to other UNHCR operations to assist in the areas of livelihoods and peacebuilding. ■