

## STRENGTHENING PROTECTION CAPACITIES IN HOST COUNTRIES

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Strengthening protection capacities in host countries has been a recurring and cross-cutting theme throughout the Global Consultations process. The subject is complex and needs to be considered separately since it underpins the success of endeavours to improve protection in the areas under discussion in the context of the Global Consultations: i) protection of refugees in mass influx situations; ii) reception arrangements;<sup>1</sup> iii) fair and expeditious asylum procedures,<sup>2</sup> including the return of those not in need of international protection;<sup>3</sup> and iv) the realization of durable solutions.

2. In the context of UNHCR's international protection mandate, efforts are geared to enhancing the capabilities of States to meet international legal obligations in the refugee protection area. They also contribute to strengthening the rule of law by creating national protection structures. Another important component of these efforts is the fostering of international cooperation to ensure a fair sharing of the burden and responsibility of receiving and hosting refugees.

3. The complexity of the endeavour to strengthen protection capacities stems not least from the fact that, while the goals of these efforts may be similar from country to country, their actual content will inevitably differ, depending on factors such as the developmental situation of the country, the limits of its own resources, the degree of legal sophistication of its asylum system, and the extent of its experience in handling refugee situations.

4. The purpose of this note is to offer a preliminary analysis of the issues and challenges inherent in activities to strengthen protection capacities, with a view to stimulating discussion on how, including through collaborative efforts, such capacities can best be reinforced.<sup>4</sup> Annex I to this paper lists a number of core strategies and activities being pursued by UNHCR and other protection partners; Annex II provides concrete examples of "best practices" by individual States, UNHCR, refugees, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other actors. The note also puts forward some general considerations which might be endorsed, together with a number of follow-up activities. While the focus of this paper is on individual asylum systems, much can equally apply in mass influx situations.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Reception of Asylum-seekers, including Standards of Treatment, in the Context of Individual Asylum Systems*, (EC/GC/01/17).

<sup>2</sup> See *Asylum Processes (Fair and Efficient Asylum Procedures)*, (EC/GC/01/12).

<sup>3</sup> See Conclusions of the Regional Meeting in Budapest from 6 to 7 June 2001, (EC/GC/01/14), and *Refugee Protection and Migration Control: Perspectives from UNHCR and IOM*, (EC/GC/01/11).

<sup>4</sup> See also evaluation reports of relevance: *A Review of Capacity-Building in Central and Eastern Europe* (1996); *Evaluation of UNHCR Training Activities for Implementing Partners and Government Counterparts* (2000); *Evaluation of UNHCR's Role in Strengthening National NGOs* (2001): ([unhcr.org/evaluate/reports.htm](http://unhcr.org/evaluate/reports.htm)).

## II. UNDERSTANDING OF STRENGTHENING PROTECTION CAPACITIES

5. The strengthening of protection capacities requires both an approach and a set of activities. In its broadest sense it concerns the reinforcement of human, institutional or community performance, the strengthening of skills and knowledge, as well as the promotion of positive attitudes, on a sustainable basis. It is based on networking with partners at various levels, is highly participatory by nature and intimately linked to a nationally driven reform process. It involves the provision of technical support, including training, of advisory services, of specialized expertise, and of financial and material assistance.<sup>5</sup>

6. Activities are geared variously towards strengthening national authorities, laws and policies to enable proper handling of refugee and asylum issues, the reception and care of refugees, the promotion of self-reliance of refugees and the realization of durable solutions. They are designed to complement host country initiatives, bringing in regional and international partners in a spirit of solidarity and participatory burden-sharing. Domestic public support and political leadership are two additional, fundamental support bases for such activities.

## III. THE ROLE OF STATES

7. States have primary responsibility for providing protection to refugees. As with international protection generally, capacity-building initiatives most often benefit from the participation and cooperation of a range of actors in a burden- and responsibility-sharing context. At the Regional Meeting of the Global Consultations held in Cairo in July 2001, participants specifically identified insufficient international support for local capacity-building as resulting in disproportionate burdens being shouldered by States in the region, many of which are grappling with other economic and social problems.<sup>6</sup>

8. Refugees and asylum-seekers continue to arrive in countries with limited resources. Their presence can burden local infrastructure, environment and resources, on occasion testing the limits of capacity and hospitality severely. Refugees and asylum-seekers are now too often portrayed as a burden, a cause for social and economic instability, or a threat to national security. Creative new approaches are called for from the international community. Refugees can be seen as an opportunity rather than a problem. Their capacities can be recognized and they can be empowered to adapt to their new environment and work towards their own solutions. They can also benefit hosts as a source of labour and expertise, by expanding consumer markets for local goods and in some circumstances by justifying increased foreign aid. The anchoring of refugee issues into the development agenda reduces the gap between humanitarian assistance and development efforts and has to be one goal of new approaches. Factors impeding the effective integration of refugee and development policies and plans include lack of support in donor and host communities and weak coordination between refugee and development agencies. Greater attention now needs to be paid to overcoming these difficulties so as to maximize the potential of refugees for local communities, ensuring they become integral and contributory actors in the development of localities and regions.

9. There is indeed a need for the international community to encourage and support the efforts of host countries to realize the socio-economic potential refugees offer. Technical assistance programmes are important in this context. This can take many forms, including aid to host countries to register refugees and asylum-seekers, and the deployment of experienced refugee adjudicators where there are refugee status determination backlogs. The European Union's capacity-building activities in the areas of institution-building and transfer of knowledge offer instructive examples. They have included the Phare

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<sup>5</sup> See UNHCR, *A Practical Guide to Capacity-building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*, September 1999. See also UNDP, *Capacity Assessment and Development, Technical Advisory Paper No. 3* ([magnet.undp.org/docs/cap/main.htm](http://magnet.undp.org/docs/cap/main.htm)).

<sup>6</sup> See the *Conclusions* of the Regional Meeting in Cairo.

Horizontal Programme on Asylum, the Twinning Tool and initiatives undertaken in the context of the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration (see Annex II).

10. At the Regional Meeting in Cairo there was a call for regional responsibility-sharing mechanisms to be further explored within as well as outside the region, through regular sub-regional meetings which promote cooperation, cross-border partnerships, and the sharing of protection strategies, refugee-related statistical information, relevant legal experience and practical initiatives.

#### IV. THE ROLE OF UNHCR

11. Strengthening protection capacities is a function inherent in UNHCR's international protection mandate as illustrated in the Annexes to this note. In relation to well-established asylum systems, they are broadly directed at promoting public awareness and support, providing a solid basis for refugee protection in national legislation, policy and practice, as well as developing strong partnerships with a wide range of actors to ensure adequate provision of international protection. Countries with well-established institutions of their own can, in addition, become important partners for UNHCR in efforts to build and strengthen protection capacities where systems are still being set up.

12. In many countries of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, large parts of Asia, Africa and South America, asylum systems are still in the earlier stages of development. Some are fledgling, while others are being consolidated. Here strengthening protection capacities is a responsibility which embraces a range of activities, from initial institution-building to the development of capacity to enable refugees to become self-reliant, pending the identification of durable solutions. In situations where refugee status determination procedures are not sufficiently resourced, dealing with any backlog of unprocessed cases requires particular attention. In refugee situations where local integration is the only viable solution, the goal is to support host countries in providing this opportunity. For integration to become an integral component of a functioning asylum system and a viable element of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy, efforts need to be invested in promoting public awareness and tolerance, in parallel with active technical and financial assistance projects in host communities.

13. In some countries, where not even rudimentary asylum structures exist, the first challenge may well be to generate the political will and interest to accede to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. In such situations, the absence or insufficient development of civil society structures sensitive to refugee protection issues (including NGOs) is a particular constraint. These issues may well have a low priority on the political agenda, competing as they do with more immediate socio-economic pressures. In some countries the unfortunate perception prevails that effectively functioning asylum structures could constitute a "pull-factor" for asylum-seekers, even leading to the qualification of a country as a "safe country of asylum", which in turn may trigger readmission requests from countries within or outside the region. Strategies to strengthen protection capacities need to be sensitive to such concerns and be based on a solid burden-sharing rationale.

14. In short, building protection capacity can be a lengthy and complex process, particularly where initial capacity is weak. It is also a participatory process that needs to adapt flexibly to changing circumstances and different scenarios. Its success hinges on a number of factors, including the need for national ownership and for strengthened coalitions between a range of partners. For its part, UNHCR has built ties in this area with a wide variety of actors, among them host and donor governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), NGOs, religious groups, the legal profession, judges, parliamentarians, public opinion leaders and journalists. The military, peacekeeping forces and the corporate sector are also more and more included. Supporting North/South linkages between NGOs and academics, among others, has proved an important feature of partnership arrangements.

## V. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

15. The activities, initiatives and best practices set out in this note and its Annexes are presented to the Global Consultations forum to assist States and other international actors in giving content to regional and national strategies to strengthen protection capacities. It is recommended that their formulation and implementation should be guided by the following overall considerations:

- Strengthening capacities is a core activity in the area of protection, and is an important tool of international cooperation in efforts to share the burden and responsibility borne in particular by host countries. Implementation of protection obligations cannot, however, be made conditional on burden-sharing.
- Activities in support of strengthening protection capacity should be incorporated into the mainstream planning of relevant national institutions, including development institutions. National ownership should be prioritized and the focus should be on skills development and system-building initiatives, so that protection structures are sustainable and eventually become financially and operationally independent.
- Strengthening protection capacities must be a flexible concept with the content of activities able to adjust to changing circumstances and differently structured asylum systems in variable stages of development. Equally, it needs to be gender-sensitive.
- It should be conducted within a partnership framework involving host and donor governments, humanitarian assistance and development agencies, together with refugees themselves.

16. By way of follow-up to this paper, the following activities, might be pursued:

a) Development by UNHCR of a manual on strengthening protection capacities containing tools, techniques and approaches which could be adapted to different situations.

b) The design by States and UNHCR, in cooperation with other relevant partners, of strategies to strengthen protection capacities where they do not yet exist. Regional or sub-regional workshops could be organized to define such strategies and partnership arrangements. UNHCR could facilitate the pairing of needs with concrete offers of support and expertise by States, IGOs, NGOs, private companies and other actors.

c) Promotional and educational-based initiatives by all actors concerned, designed to foster a positive and respectful attitude towards refugees, and signalling the opportunities which their presence presents. Initiatives could include: i) dissemination of existing UNHCR public awareness/educational material; ii) targeted public information campaigns to promote tolerance and to counter xenophobic tendencies; and iii) confidence-building measures among local and refugee communities.

d) Further exploration of opportunities for resource mobilization with the private sector, including in the context of the Global Compact Initiative launched by the UN Secretary General.<sup>7</sup> In addition to UNHCR funding, effective use could be made of funds for developing capacities and structures which may be available to prospective new member States from certain regional groupings. In recognition of the fact that displacement is not just a humanitarian issue, but has links with development as well, donors might consider how best to allocate a percentage of development funds to programmes benefiting both refugees and the local populations that host them.

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<sup>7</sup> See: [unglobalcompact.org](http://unglobalcompact.org).

## CORE COMPONENTS OF STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION CAPACITIES

The various components of strategies to strengthen protection capacities are analysed below with examples of specific activities to enable the development of a structured and systematic approach.

### a) Creating or adapting adequate national legal frameworks

Efforts in this area enable all stakeholders to rely on a predictable legal framework, which not only ensures refugees' access to their rights but also responds effectively to the different interests at stake.

Activities in this area may include:

- promoting accession to international refugee instruments and other relevant human rights instruments;
- promoting and supporting the amendment of existing national laws and/or the creation of new national laws in a manner which ensures compliance with international refugee law and standards, including the drafting of administrative instructions and operational guidelines;
- providing material and technical legal support for the adaptation of the State's legal, administrative or judicial structures, including assistance in drafting/reviewing draft legislation or undertaking comparative studies;
- supporting the timely implementation of legislation, inter alia, by providing targeted and specialized training and advisory services (technical assistance).

### b) Facilitating the establishment of national protection structures

Apart from material and technical assistance measures, activities in this area are primarily focused on both the transfer and harnessing of existing skills and know-how to a variety of governmental and other institutions at both the central and local levels. In some situations, this may extend to addressing underlying structural problems (such as coverage of recurrent costs or shortage of qualified personnel) on which sustainability ultimately depends. Activities in this area may include:

- providing material, legal and technical support to the institutions implementing asylum procedures, including by envisaging an appropriate advisory or other role for UNHCR in the process;
- promoting gender- and age-sensitive structures;
- assisting authorities to register all asylum-seekers and refugees and to issue identity documentation;
- facilitating access to information on countries of origin, international legal instruments, jurisprudence on refugee issues, regional/international expert studies, periodicals or other initiatives in the refugee area;
- promoting the creation of specific focal points on refugee-related issues in relevant ministries and offices;
- providing broad or sectoral training, including, for example, on-the-job training or exchange programmes to government partners (including border officials), refugee bodies/senates and the judiciary, aimed at strengthening their implementation of protection and assistance functions;
- promoting the establishment of a refugee/human rights component in the training curricula of senior police officials, immigration and decision-making officials, including judges;
- facilitating participation in study visits and conferences to enhance the exposure of senior civil servants to the international dimension of refugee protection;
- supporting the reform of key administrative departments and encouraging the development of coordination mechanisms between relevant ministerial departments which may complement one another in addressing protection issues;
- fostering planning processes involving national actors, including identification of applicable standards, "gap" analyses, formulation of multi-year strategies and budgets;
- generating or enhancing operational partnerships between relevant local authorities and central authorities;
- development of legal and social counselling networks;

- developing a culture of partnership to enhance effective coordination between and among relevant ministerial departments, UNHCR, other intergovernmental organizations and relevant NGOs.

c) Fostering the growth of “protection networks” in civil society<sup>8</sup>

Promoting broad support for refugee protection in civil society is crucial to foster cooperation in the protection and assistance areas, to forge partnership arrangements and to ensure the sustainability of national protection structures. Activities in this area may include:

- training and awareness-raising on international protection and humanitarian assistance issues;
- supporting coordination and networking among civil society actors, in which context international NGOs play an important role in working collaboratively with national NGOs to enhance capacity to respond to protection needs;
- helping NGOs to develop diversified funding strategies and broader-based community support;
- facilitating government–NGO interaction (support for NGO legislation, meetings between government authorities and NGOs, etc);
- providing small grants to NGOs for the purposes of NGO development, training and support;
- provision of office space and equipment to NGOs and others.

d) Enhancing capacity to achieve self-reliance and to realize durable solutions

States, civil society, communities and refugees themselves are key partners in the achievement of self-reliance and the search for durable solutions. While the establishment of an enabling legal and operational framework for the realization of durable solutions is key in many refugee situations, refugees themselves have important capacities. Activities to increase the capacities can empower refugees to adapt to their new environment and ultimately become self-reliant. Such activities should be designed and delivered within a gender-sensitive framework. As experience shows, empowered and self-reliant refugees are better prepared to work towards finding durable solutions. Activities in this area may include:

- building self-reliance among refugees through recognition of existing skills and qualifications and by providing technical skills development, rights-awareness training and community-development activities;
- promoting and supporting the establishment of a solutions-oriented self-reliance policy (including co-funding of language programmes, school enrolment, labour orientation, community development activities, etc);
- building and/or strengthening multi-faceted partnerships among governments, donors, refugees, communities, NGOs and volunteers;
- assisting governments to create a framework for economic, social and legal integration of refugees, including through family reunification and eventually granting of citizenship;
- promoting resettlement opportunities;<sup>9</sup>
- supporting voluntary repatriation arrangements, including by training in voluntary repatriation standards and procedures for government authorities, NGOs and other operational partners, as well as by establishing counselling structures to provide refugees with the necessary information to allow them to make free and informed choices.

e) Public support to create a receptive and positive climate

Improving public awareness and understanding of who refugees are and why they flee is essential to create a receptive climate for refugees and asylum seekers. It also contributes to strengthening protection capacities in host countries. Activities therefore need to be identified which promote a culture of refugee protection, solidarity and tolerance in each host society. They may include:

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<sup>8</sup> Including individuals, NGOs, academics, professional associations, unions, ethnic or religious associations/groups, or other informal community groups, contributing to the common public good

<sup>9</sup> See *New Directions for Resettlement Policy and Practice*, EC/51/SC/INF.2.

- outreach to the media, at both local and national levels;
- promotion of balanced and informed reporting in the media;
- working with schools and universities to incorporate refugee issues in curricula;
- placing public service announcements on refugee themes on TV, radio and in print;
- organizing special events around refugee themes or particular dates (such as World Refugee Day and Women's Day) to involve the general public and bring refugees and the community together;
- partnering with community, religious groups or other interested organizations (including the corporate sector) to raise awareness of refugee issues among their constituencies.

## INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION CAPACITIES

The following is a selection of interesting initiatives and best practices by individual States and international organizations, including UNHCR, refugees, NGOs and other actors. It is hoped that they may provide inspiration for similar action and contribute towards a better understanding of efforts to strengthen protection capacities in host countries. They have been grouped according to the core capacity-building components listed in Annex I.

### a) Creating or adapting adequate national legal frameworks

- **Promotion by UNHCR of accession to international refugee instruments**

Increased efforts are being undertaken by UNHCR in 2001 to promote universal accession to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. UNHCR has produced two booklets providing guidance to States in this process.

- **Promotion of national refugee legislation**

Examples of UNHCR's activities undertaken in the area of promotion of national refugee legislation are reflected in the Note on International Protection,<sup>10</sup> presented to the fifty-second session of ExCom.

- **Phare Horizontal Programme on Asylum**

In Europe, the two-year Phare<sup>11</sup> Horizontal Programme on Asylum (1999–2000)<sup>12</sup> represented a novel approach to strengthening asylum, involving a partnership between seven European Union member States, the European Commission, ten Central European and Baltic States, and UNHCR. The programme supported the development of asylum systems to ensure compatibility with international and regional refugee law standards, completion of a country-by-country "gap" analysis, the establishment of a National Action Plan detailing legislative revisions, changes of practice, required institutional improvements, as well as donor support necessary to set these changes in motion. A similar initiative is now envisaged by the EU in South Eastern Europe under CARDS,<sup>13</sup> within the broader context of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

### b) Facilitating the establishment of national protection structures

- **UNHCR's refugee status determination project ("RSD project") – around the globe**

The RSD project aims at reducing backlogs, enhancing capacity to deal with new cases, and setting procedural standards by the development of an RSD toolkit. An important objective is to improve the quality and consistency of refugee status determination carried out by UNHCR offices and to develop processes and tools to prevent fresh backlogs arising. The project also aims at assisting Governments to undertake RSD, and places particular emphasis on training eligibility committees, providing background information and decision-making.

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<sup>10</sup> See *Note on International Protection*, A/AC.96/930.

<sup>11</sup> Phare originally stands for Poland and Hungary Assistance for Reconstruction of Economy.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Support Programme on the Application of the EU *Acquis* on Asylum and related Standards and Practices in the Associated Countries of Central Europe and the Baltics.

<sup>13</sup> EU programme for Assistance, Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization in South Eastern Europe and Europe, aiming at post-conflict recovery, reform, political and economic stability.

- **Twinning Tool – EU and Candidate Countries in Central Europe**  
A practical instrument used by the EU for countries in Central Europe (candidates for EU membership), and now by the Stability Pact for South Eastern European countries: civil servants from national administrations of Western Europe make themselves available to assist administrations in the Candidate Countries to build up expertise in different areas. In addition, there have been training programmes for expert education.
- **EU: High Level Working Group (HLWG) on Asylum and Migration (set up in 1998)**  
Based on comprehensive action plans addressing migration and asylum issues, EU States are in dialogue with various countries of origin and/or transit. UNHCR has contributed to the development of several Action Plans as part of the HLWG process. EU Member States have in varying degrees been able to assist with the implementation of the Action Plans. In addition, the EU established a dialogue with other interested third countries to forge further partnerships in implementing the various Action Plans.
- **Exchange programmes and knowledge transfer – Western and Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)**  
Government officials and NGO staff dealing with refugee issues in Eastern Europe and the CIS undertake placements with their counterparts in Western Europe or within the CIS. Areas include refugee status determination, country of origin research and social counselling.
- **Refugee law and human rights courses – United Republic of Tanzania, Kyrgyzstan, Italy, France, Costa Rica, Eastern and Central Europe**  
Through established programmes as well as new initiatives, and with the support of UNHCR, NGOs and private foundations or institutes, refugee law and human rights courses have been implemented. For example: i) in Tanzania, the East African School of Refugee and Humanitarian Affairs started an inter-disciplinary refugee studies programme; ii) in Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR, in collaboration with others, established human rights summer schools open to law students and young professionals from the five Central Asian Republics; iii) in San Remo and Strasbourg, UNHCR, in collaboration respectively with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law and the Human Rights Institute conducts refugee law courses targeting senior government officials dealing with refugees, academics, refugee law judges and NGO representatives; iv) in Costa Rica, UNHCR assisted the Judicial School to set up a training programme on refugee law for judges; v) in Eastern and Central Europe, the Council of Europe, often in cooperation with UNHCR, organizes training, workshops and seminars on various subjects for government officials of the member states.
- **Promotion by UNHCR of refugee law – around the globe**  
Research and learning in refugee law is being promoted in various forms, including through the i) donation of refugee law texts to universities in Ghana, Guinea (Conakry) and Nepal; ii) creation of a refugee law and documentation Research Centre at the Branch Office, Conakry; iii) inclusion of refugee law in law school curricula; iv) Organization of African Unity (OAU)/UNHCR Compendium of all OAU instruments and texts on refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa; v) launch of a website of refugee literature in Spanish.
- **Regional partnerships**  
Examples include the 2000 cooperation agreement between UNHCR and the League of Arab States; the collaboration of UNHCR with the organs of the Inter-American Human Rights System on promotion, training and capacity building, as well as research and joint studies.

- **Access to the judiciary for refugee victims of abuse – Kenya**

A mobile court, supported by UNHCR, was established in Dadaab, Kenya, to ensure the prosecution of perpetrators of violence against refugees, including sexual violence against refugee women and children, and to provide easier access to witnesses.
  - **Separated children: promotion of a common policy and commitment to best practices – EU**

The Separated Children in Europe Programme, a joint UNHCR/Save the Children Alliance initiative, was established to respond to the increasing number of separated refugee children arriving in Europe. Under the programme, a number of country assessments have been completed, a Statement of Good Practices produced, and a pan-European NGO network established. A common policy and commitment to best practices at the national and European levels is thus being promoted.
  - **Increase of capacity to protect and care for refugee children – around the globe**

In collaboration with the Save the Children Alliance and, since 1999, with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR has developed and is implementing the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) project. ARC’s primary goal is to increase the capacity of UNHCR, governments and NGO field staff to protect and care for refugee children at all stages. ARC is a compendium of guidelines, critical issues, case studies and participatory training materials for field workers and policy programmers.
- c) Fostering the growth of “protection networks” in civil society
- **“Reach Out” – around the globe**

Recommendations which emerged from a series of “Reach Out” consultations with national NGOs in a number of regions include the establishment of improved information-sharing, UNHCR assistance in developing national NGO legislation and more protection training for NGO staff. Through a joint initiative of several humanitarian agencies, a three-year protection training programme for staff of operational partners has been launched, using as its *basis A Protection Field Guide for NGOs* published in 1999. Other recommendations in various stages of implementation include the development of a *Best Practices Handbook*, publication of a regional quarterly newsletter about refugee protection issues in the Middle East and the initiation/enhancement of collaborative efforts between North/South NGOs.
  - **Building NGOs – CIS/Central Europe**

As a follow-up to the 1996 CIS conference, capacity building for NGOs has centred around four major activities: i) thematic working groups led by NGO partners; ii) workshops on capacity-building for NGOs and UNHCR field offices; iii) regional conferences on NGO legislation organized by UNHCR in cooperation with the Council of Europe, the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, and the Open Society Institute; and iv) a small grants fund for NGOs in the CIS countries. In addition, a *UNHCR Catalogue of NGO Capacity-Building Resources for the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States* was issued in 2000 as a tool for networking and possible collaboration among NGOs. This is an example of a very comprehensive NGO-strengthening process which could usefully inform capacity-building strategies elsewhere. In Central Europe and the Baltic States, NGO networks benefit from twinning arrangements with NGOs in the West.
  - **Honorary liaison persons – Caribbean**

A low cost civil society protection network was established by UNHCR in the Caribbean, composed of prominent community leaders affiliated to organizations concerned with issues such as human rights, migration and social welfare. These leaders are designated as “honorary liaison” persons who monitor the arrival of asylum-seekers, help refugees access legal assistance and basic services, and facilitate UNHCR’s contacts with national authorities.

- **Eminent Persons Group – South-east Asia**  
The Eminent Persons Group, established by UNHCR in Southeast Asia, is another model of how people with experience and interest in refugee and related issues can advance refugee protection, sensitize key sectors of civil society and lobby governments for a protection-oriented treatment of refugees, including the enactment of national refugee legislation. The group has, for instance, developed a national model law on refugees and asylum which is being promoted for adoption in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation countries.
  - **Civil Society Responds to the Needs of Refugee Women – Kenya**  
The Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) is a membership organization of women lawyers and law students. FIDA conducts legal awareness and awareness of rights programmes. The Kenyan branch of FIDA is working with refugee women in various camps in areas such as law enforcement, training and education for officials on how to handle violence against women and combat sex discrimination.
  - **Universities, NGOs, lawyers, students: provision of legal aid and representation and exchange programmes – USA, Central European and Baltic States, Cyprus, Costa Rica, South Africa**  
Various American non-profit agencies have programmes to screen asylum-seekers and find attorneys to represent them *pro bono*. Several universities in the United States have set up legal clinics specifically to assist asylum-seekers. Students, under supervision, prepare the cases. The latter set-up served as a model for legal clinics in Central European and Baltic States, as well as Cyprus. Apart from providing asylum-seekers and refugees with free legal representation, it strengthens cooperation between NGOs working in the field of asylum, ensures that refugee law will be increasingly integrated into the regular curricula of law faculties and that young practitioners will leave university with practical skills and legal knowledge on refugee and asylum issues. Current efforts are complemented by sister partnerships and other cooperation programmes with the aim of linking developing legal aid programmes and clinics with more developed programmes (e.g. student exchange between Harvard University and ELTE University Budapest). At the University of Costa Rica, law students are trained in refugee law, with an emphasis on refugee status determination, to strengthen both government and NGO capacity in RSD. In South Africa, refugee legal counsellors funded by UNHCR are working out of the Legal Aid Clinics of Cape Town and Johannesburg universities. The Refugee Rights project run by Lawyers for Human Rights in Pretoria and Durban is another example of the provision of legal counsel to asylum-seekers and refugees.
  - **Law judges improve refugee protection – around the globe**  
The International Association for Refugee Law Judges (IARLJ) and UNHCR have an agreement to promote understanding of refugee law and asylum principles worldwide and to encourage networking among national judges and quasi-judicial decision-makers. In cooperation with the Immigration Refugee Board of Canada, UNHCR and York University (Canada), IARLJ thus developed a training module for refugee law judges and quasi-judicial decision-makers. A series of international conferences and joint workshops for national judges in different parts of the world has been held. The network has also encouraged the sharing of information and promoted capacity-building among members of the judiciary worldwide through research initiatives, publications and training, as well as through the provision of technical and legal assistance to national decision-making bodies.
- d) Enhancing capacity to achieve self-reliance and realize durable solutions
- **Refugee Education Trust**  
As a lasting legacy of UNCHR's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the independent Refugee Education Trust was launched on 14 December 2000. The Trust gives refugees in developing countries opportunities for post-primary education. The focus is on providing quality education to the largest number of refugees where the needs are greatest.

- **Towards self-reliance – Kazakhstan/Egypt**

In Kazakhstan, UNHCR assisted refugee women to set up their own NGO to develop small-income generation projects, vocational training and address issues of violence against refugee women. At a recent meeting in Cairo, refugee women agreed to establish a refugee women's committee to act as a dialogue partner with UNHCR, respond to problems and promote coordination with different local authorities.

- **Empowering refugee communities**

In Algeria (Tindouf camps), refugee women have formed their own National Union and assumed sole responsibility for developing local administrative structures. Refugee women run campaigns informing other refugee women of their rights and encouraging their participation in the political arena. Another UNHCR initiative has been the production of a module on rights-awareness training aimed at empowering refugee women to assert their rights in host countries to enhance their legal status.

- **Refugees involved in camp management – Nepal**

Refugee camps in Eastern Nepal provide an example of refugee participation in camp management, thereby promoting self-reliance. Camp committees have been established and men and women are equally eligible to run for camp committee posts. Refugees are involved in almost all activities in the camp, including food distribution, school teaching and administration, income generating projects, provision of health care, the construction and maintenance of camp structures and the registration of births.

- **Strengthening self-reliance – Uganda**

In 1999, the Ugandan authorities and UNHCR implemented a long-term assistance strategy designed to help refugees become self-reliant. The programme places particular emphasis on developing skills in agricultural production, income-generation, community services, health and education, water resources and sanitation.

- **Combating violence against refugee women and girls – Kenya**

In 1999, the Ted Turner Project established the "Refugee Communities Against Sexual and Gender Violence" project in the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, Kenya. The project focuses on empowerment of refugee women and girls through skills development, training and income-generation, raising public awareness of the consequences of sexual violence for the victim and the community at large, improvement of security in and around camps, and promoting women's rights.

- **Responding to the educational needs of Afghan refugee girls to build future self-reliance – Pakistan**

UNHCR-funded schools have been established in Pakistan to cater for Afghan refugee children. The implementation of the Home Based Schools for Girls programme provides thousands of Afghan girls with access to education. Such programmes also allow female teachers among the refugees to utilize their literacy skills, as well as providing them with an important employment opportunity.

e) Public support to create a receptive and positive climate

- **Enhancing public understanding – EU**

Over the past two years, UNHCR has run a public awareness campaign of TV and print advertisements and posters in all 15 EU countries. The project, funded by the European Commission, aims at ensuring the smooth integration of recognized refugees. It also combats negative stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes towards these refugees. Other events include seminars in Austria and Germany (Bavaria) to familiarize journalists with refugee integration needs, mechanisms and the need for integration policies, as well as the establishment of a panel of refugee speakers in Ireland.

- **Combating xenophobia – Southern Africa**

Similar campaigns have been carried out in countries in Southern Africa, notably a “roll back xenophobia” campaign in South Africa. A positive impact has been observed in the media, with more accurate and objective reporting on the presence of foreigners in South Africa, and in health and educational institutions where attempts have been made to facilitate access by refugees and asylum-seekers. Furthermore, it was noted that community meetings at grass roots level to explain why refugees are in South Africa and underscore their plight and rights did produce changes in the attitude of participants. In the run-up to the World Conference on Racism and Xenophobia in September 2001, the campaign is planning an event centered on South Africa-specific concerns relating to xenophobia. It is hoped that this will have positive spin-offs in South Africa and provide added value to the work done by the “roll back xenophobia” campaign.

- **“Respect” campaign: contributions refugees bring to society – around the globe**

On 14 December 2000, UNHCR launched worldwide a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary public awareness campaign “Respect”: respect for refugees, respect for their contributions and respect for their rights. This campaign involved many public activities including TV and print advertisements about refugees’ lives; a Gallery of Prominent Refugees; and the concept of Refugee Voices through which refugee artists tell their stories (concerts and CDs).<sup>14</sup>

- **World Refuge Day (WRD) – around the globe**

20 June 2001 marked the first ever world Refugee Day aimed to promote a positive image of refugees and develop a tolerant attitude towards them, raise public awareness, reduce xenophobic tendencies and demonstrate respect for refugees. Events included broadcasts by public TV stations (e.g. advertisements about the “Respect” campaign), refugee photo exhibitions, concerts, refugee poetry, refugees’ flight and asylum stories, and visits with journalists to refugee sites. Other events will continue throughout the year (e.g. publication of a booklet for primary school children promoting tolerance, seminars on cross-cultural education for secondary school teachers, and preparation of a manual designed to mainstream these issues into general teaching).<sup>15</sup>

- **Educational campaigns – United States, Spain, Russian Federation**

UNHCR launched an education awareness project in the United States in 1999. Utilizing UNHCR’s educational materials (lesson plans, teaching kits, videos and games),<sup>16</sup> the project has encouraged teachers across the USA to teach their students about refugee issues. Similar initiatives were undertaken in Spain and are planned in the Russian Federation.

- **Mobilizing young people to respond to the needs of younger refugees – around the globe**

UNHCR produced two booklets, *Refugee Teenagers* and *Refugee Children* which raise awareness of the plight of young refugees. They are directed at young people and, in addition to providing information on the circumstances and needs of young refugees, suggest ways in which readers can help young refugees in their own country. Suggestions range from awareness-raising activities to practical ways of helping refugees to integrate into their new society.

- **Goodwill Ambassadors and other prominent individuals**

National or regional Goodwill Ambassadors and prominent individuals have contributed financially to UNHCR’s work and/or assisted in raising awareness of refugee issues. They have organized high-profile public events, generated support through interviews in the press and on television, and publicized refugee needs through field missions.

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<sup>14</sup> See [unhcr-50.org](http://unhcr-50.org).

<sup>15</sup> *idem*

<sup>16</sup> For further information, contact UNHCR’s Public Affairs Unit ([montecal@unhcr.org](mailto:montecal@unhcr.org)), or visit UNHCR’s public website