

CHAPTER II

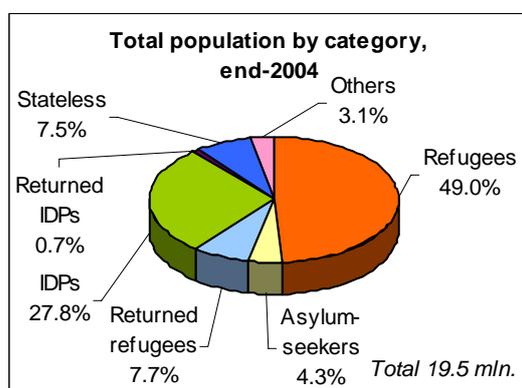
POPULATION LEVELS AND TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

One of the main goals of the Statistical Yearbook is to analyse the annual changes in the size, origin and location of UNHCR's population of concern. This chapter is therefore central for a better understanding of developments in 2004 as it presents, for the total and each category of the populations, the size as well as increases and decreases in comparison to 2003 and previous years. For the first time, information on the origin of the total population of concern is available, providing a comprehensive picture of the origin-destination flows of people under UNHCR's mandate. A large majority of UNHCR's population of concern primarily seeks asylum within its region of origin. This is also reflected in this chapter which explores the net refugee movements across regions. Information on cross-regional flows helps to increase the understanding of the patterns and trends in global displacement and the contribution of each region with regard to protection and assistance activities. As such, a separate box looks at UNHCR assistance activities across regions. This chapter however does not make specific reference to mixed migration flows. Despite the humanitarian challenge and prominent media coverage posed by this phenomenon, most migrants do not claim asylum and are thus not included in UNHCR statistics.

POPULATION OF CONCERN: SIZE AND CHANGES

By the end of 2004, the total population of concern to UNHCR reached 19.5 million¹ representing an increase of 2.5 million persons (+15%) compared to 2003. This includes 9.6 million refugees; 838,000 asylum-seekers, 1.5 million refugees who had repatriated during 2004; 5.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs); 146,000 IDPs who had returned to their place of origin during 2004, some 1.5 million stateless persons, and 597,000 *Others of concern* to whom the Office extends protection and/or assistance (see Table I.1).



During 2004, the global number of refugees decreased by 26,000 persons (-0.3%) while the asylum-seeker population dropped by 16 per cent. During the same period, the number of IDPs under UNHCR mandate increased by about one third (30%) and the number of refugees who returned during the year by 37 per cent. Estimates on stateless persons, previously included in the category *Others of concern* to UNHCR, have been provided separately for the first time and as such cannot be

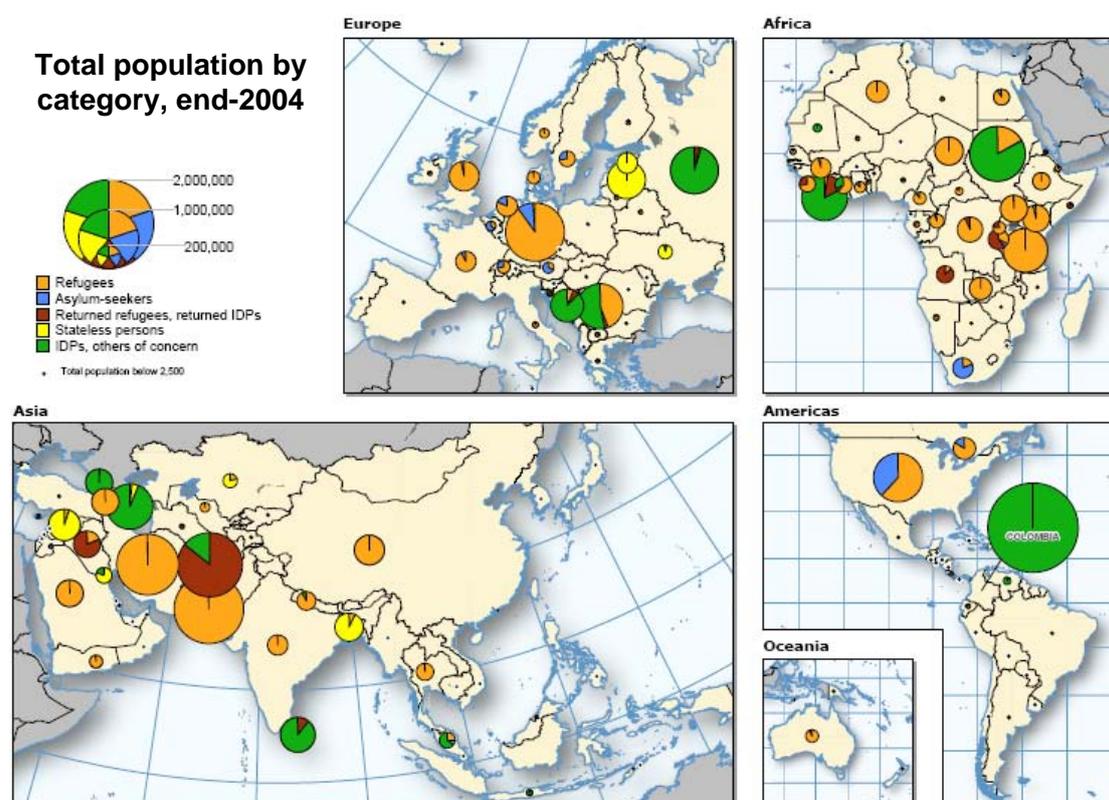
compared to previous years (see Table I.1a). The total population of concern to

¹ This does not include an estimated 4.3 million Palestinian refugees who fall under the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as per end-June 2005.

UNHCR, however, is not totally reflected in these figures as an important part of the stateless populations have not been systematically identified, or statistical data is unavailable despite renewed efforts on the part of UNHCR.

BY REGION AND COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

Since the improved data availability of all statistical categories of UNHCR's total population of concern (TPOC) in 1997, the UN major area of Asia has been hosting the largest population of concern to the Office. By the end of 2004, with 7.2 million, Asia hosted more than one third (37%), followed by Africa with 4.9 million (25% i.e. one out of four), Europe (4.4 million or 23%), Latin America and the Caribbean (2.1 million or 11%), North America (853,000 or 4%) and Oceania (83,000 or 0.4%). With the exception of North America which recorded a 13 per cent fall in its population of concern during 2004, all UN major areas experienced an increase ranging from four per cent in Europe to 57 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. The huge increase in Latin America and the Caribbean, however, primarily reflects the revised Government IDP figure in Colombia (which increased from 1.2 to 2.0 million).



As result of the revision in the IDP figure, Colombia continues to host the largest total population of concern to UNHCR at end-2004 (2.0 million), followed by Pakistan (1.3 million, UNHCR estimate), Afghanistan (1.1 million), the Islamic Rep. of Iran (1.0 million), Germany (973,000), and Sudan (846,000) (see Table I.1).

BY ORIGIN

For the first time, UNHCR has the possibility to provide estimates on the origin of the total population of concern to the Office. Out of the 19.5 million under UNHCR mandate, Afghans constituted the largest population with some 3.3 million persons at the end of 2004, accounting for 19 per cent of the total population of concern. Colombians were the second largest displaced population at end-2004 (2.1 million or

11 per cent of the total), followed by stateless persons (1.5 million or eight per cent; including refugees and non-refugees). Other major origins include Sudan (1.4 million), Liberia (932,000) and Azerbaijan (833,000). The origin breakdown of some 528,000 persons, however, is unknown.

Main origin of population of concern to UNHCR, 2004			
Origin	Start-year	End-year	Share of total (end-year)
Afghanistan	3,175,000	3,660,000	19%
Colombia	1,332,000	2,095,000	11%
Stateless	224,000	1,473,000	8%
Sudan	613,000	1,405,000	7%
Liberia	912,000	932,000	5%
Azerbaijan	833,000	833,000	4%
Russian Fed.	796,000	668,000	3%
Serbia and M.	665,000	597,000	3%
Burundi	624,000	585,000	3%
Bosnia and H.	684,000	560,000	3%

Over the past years, Asia has not only been the main host of UNHCR's total population of concern but also the main source. At the end of 2004, some 7.7 million persons originating from Asia were considered by UNHCR as in need of international protection. Africa was the second most important source region with 5.3 million persons, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (2.3 million) and Europe (2.2 million). While not considered as a source region per se, with an estimate of 1.5 million stateless persons reported at end-2004, this group constitutes the fifth largest population among the population of concern.

Refugees

BY REGION AND COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

As a result primarily of continuous efforts to find durable solutions, the global refugee population has dropped for the fourth consecutive year. Over the period end-2000 to end-2004, the global refugee population has fallen by 2.6 million or 21 per cent. By the end of 2004, the global number of refugees reached an estimated 9.6 million persons.

The decline in the global number of refugees during 2004 was reflected in four out of the six UN major areas. The level, however, varied and ranged from four per cent in Africa and North America to six per cent in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. Asia and Oceania reported increases in the refugee population of seven and 10 per cent respectively. The increase in Asia, however, primarily reflects the revised estimate for the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan following a Government census of Afghans conducted in the country in early 2005.

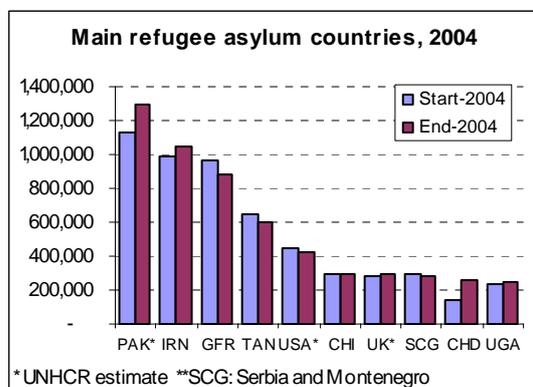
Refugee population by UNHCR Bureau, 2004			
UNHCR regions	Start-2004	End-2004	Change
- East and Horn of Africa	768,100	770,500	2,400
- Central Africa and the Great Lakes	1,257,900	1,267,700	9,800
- West Africa	531,200	465,100	-66,100
- Southern Africa	306,200	245,100	-61,100
Total Africa*	2,863,400	2,748,400	-115,000
CASWANAME**	2,827,300	3,065,500	238,200
The Americas	623,900	598,400	-25,500
Asia and Pacific	823,600	836,900	13,300
Europe	2,454,600	2,317,900	-136,700
Total	9,592,800	9,567,100	-25,700

* Excluding North Africa.
 ** Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and Middle East.

Among the UNHCR regions, Southern and West Africa recorded the largest reductions in the refugee population during 2004 with 20 and 12 per cent respectively, mainly because of the repatriation of Burundians from the United Republic of Tanzania and improved situations in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. Decreases were also reported in Europe (-6%) and the Americas (-4%)

whereas CASWANAME (+8%), Asia and Pacific (+2%), Central Africa and the Great Lakes (+1%), and East and Horn of Africa (+0.3%) reported increases.

The Bureaux of Africa and CASWANAME each hosted about 30 per cent of the global refugee population at the end of 2004. Europe hosted 24 per cent, followed by Asia and the Pacific (9%) and the Americas (6%).

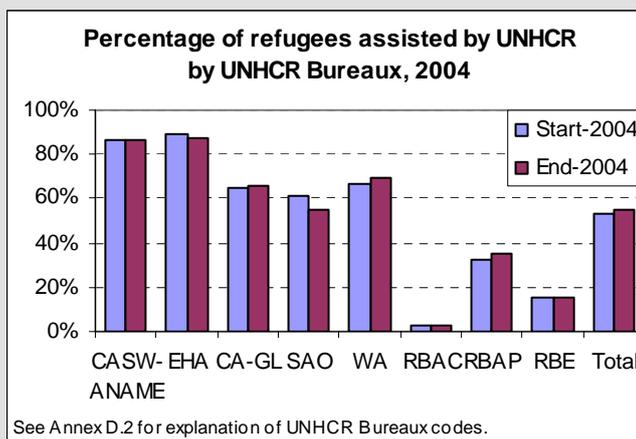


As result of a Government census of Afghans in Pakistan undertaken in early 2005 and a registration exercise of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran conducted in 2003, the refugee population in both countries increased by 167,000 and 61,000 respectively.² As such, both countries remained the main asylum countries for refugees in 2004, despite the repatriation of 997,000 Afghans from both countries. The two countries together accounted for one quarter (24%) of all refugees worldwide

under the Office's mandate. Germany remained as the third largest asylum country of 2004. The United Republic of Tanzania and the United States (UNHCR estimate) remained as the fourth and fifth largest asylum countries despite experiencing decreases of seven per cent each during 2004. Chad saw a major increase of 78 per cent in the number of refugees (mainly Sudanese) during 2004 making it the ninth largest asylum country in the world (18th at begin-2004).

Box 1: UNHCR assistance to refugees

UNHCR assistance provided to its population of concern might include, among others, provision of legal and other advice, recognition of refugee status, registration, protection, provision of shelter, etc. UNHCR is not able to assist all its population of concern and many, mainly those in developed countries, do not require assistance from the Office. In fact, most beneficiaries of UNHCR protection and assistance activities are located in developing countries, primarily in CASWANAME (47%) and Africa (40%). During 2004, more than half (55%) of all refugees benefited from UNHCR assistance programmes (53% in 2003). The number of refugees directly assisted by UNHCR increased by 160,000 persons (+3%) to 5.3 million refugees by the end of the year. With exception of the increase in 2004, the number of UNHCR-assisted refugees has gone down since 2000. In relative terms,

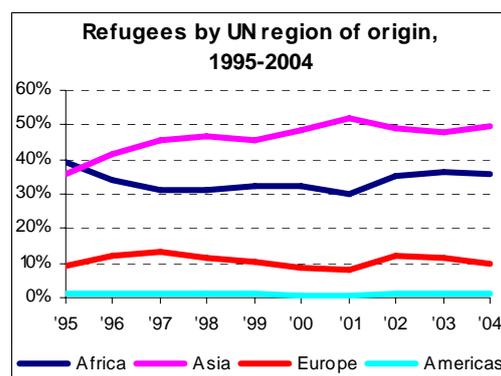


however, it has remained fairly stable ranging between 53 to 56 per cent in the last five years. The assistance rate tends to be much higher in developing countries with more than two thirds of refugees benefiting from UNHCR assistance in the countries covered by the Africa and CASWANAME Bureaux.

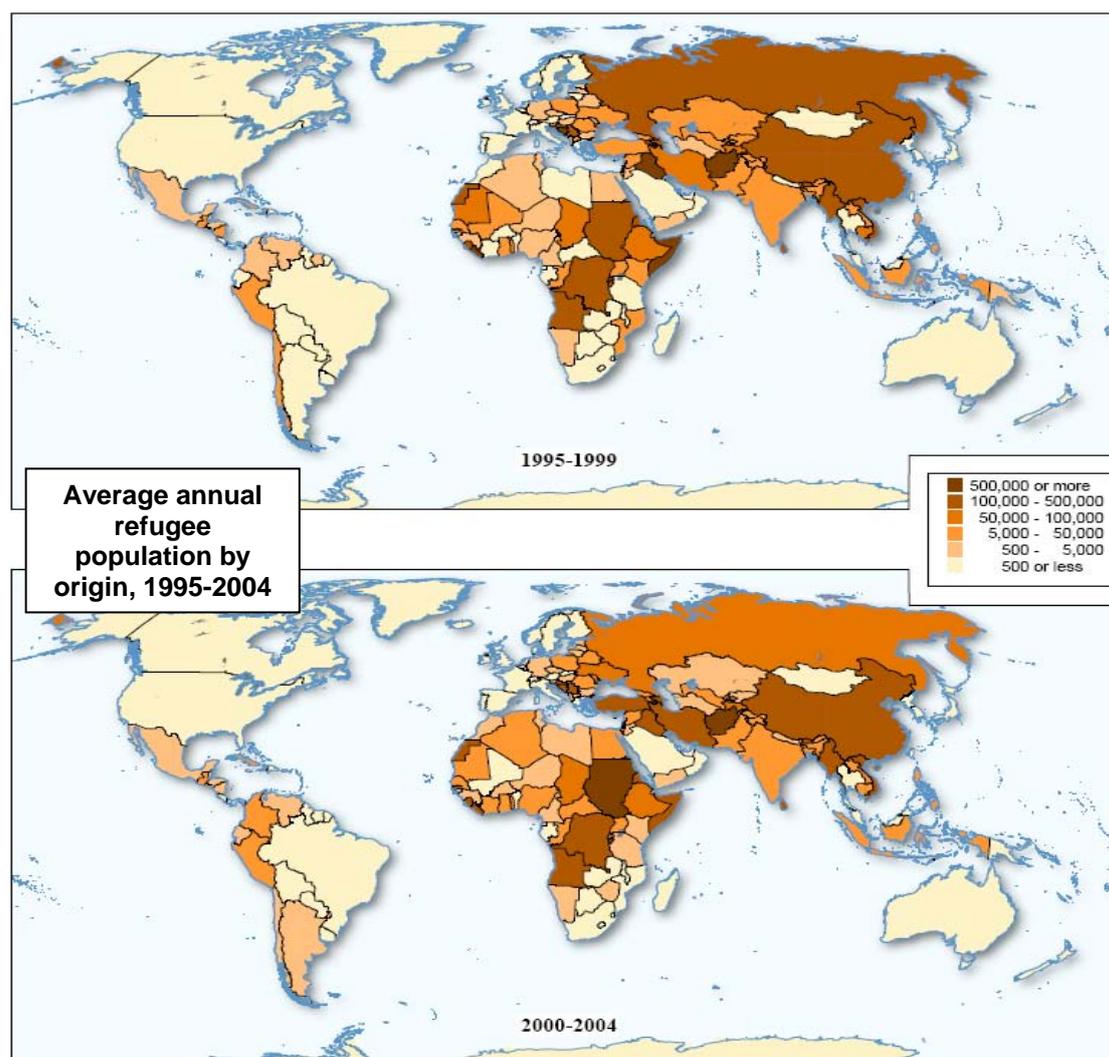
² UNHCR figures for Pakistan only include Afghans living in camps who are assisted by UNHCR. According to a 2005 Government census and subsequent voluntary repatriation during the year, there are an additional 1.9 million Afghans living outside camps, some of whom may be refugees. Those Afghans living outside camps receive no UNHCR assistance except access to UNHCR-facilitated voluntary repatriation.

BY ORIGIN

The UN major area Asia has been the main source of refugees for almost a decade, generating about half of all refugees globally. Following a steady increase from 36 to 52 per cent during the first years, Asia's share stabilized at around 50 per cent in 2003-2004. Simultaneously, Africa's share as source region of refugees decreased from 39 to 30 per cent during the 1990s just to rise again to 36 per cent in 2003-2004.



Afghanistan continues to be by far the largest country of origin of refugees. By the end of 2004, 2.4 million Afghan refugees were reported by 78 asylum countries, constituting 25 per cent of the global refugee population. As a result of the Government census conducted in Pakistan and the registration exercise in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Afghan refugee population increased by 13 per cent, despite continued repatriation. From 2001 to 2004, the number of Afghan refugees worldwide has decreased by 37 per cent.

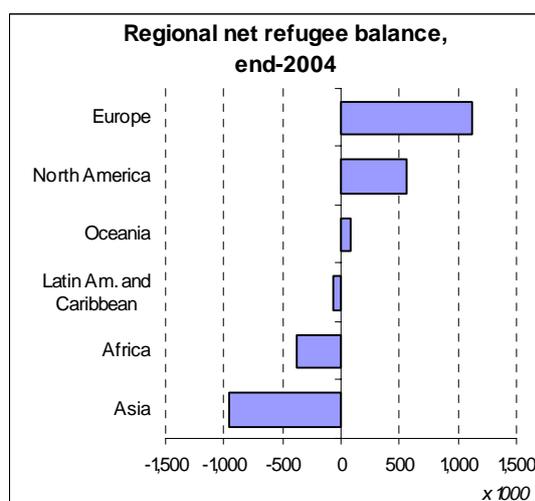


Other major refugee origins experiencing important decreases during 2004 were Burundi (-9%) and Iraq (-15%). The relatively strong fall in the Burundian refugee population reflects the repatriation of refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania (89,000). Other significant decreases in the refugee population, often as a result of durable solutions, were also recorded for refugees from Angola (-101,000), Bosnia and Herzegovina (-62,000), Serbia and Montenegro (-33,000), and Liberia (-18,000).

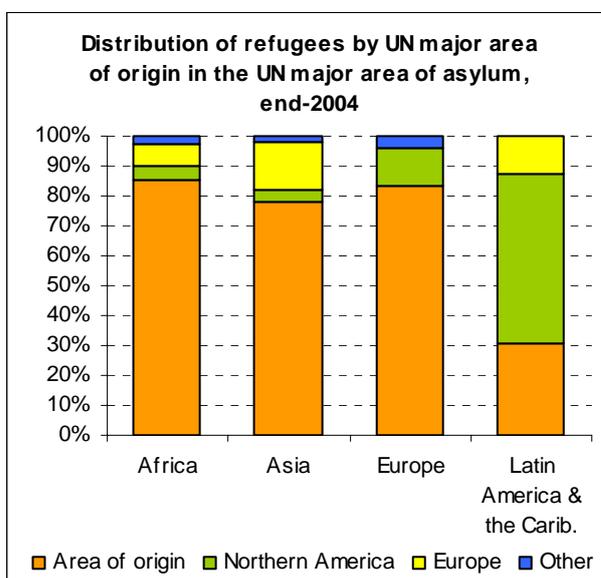
Due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan, the number of refugees originating from the country increased from 606,000 at the start of 2004 to 731,000 at the end of the year (+21%). Increases were also reported in the refugee populations originating from Indonesia (+72%), Colombia (+25%), the Russian Federation (+12%), Myanmar (+6%), and Eritrea (+6%).

NET REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

The concepts of “net refugee movements” or “net refugee balance” refer to the fact that some regions receive more refugees than they send to other regions. It is obtained by comparing the refugee population by region of asylum with the refugee population by region of origin. If a region hosts more refugees, regardless of their origin, than the number of refugees which are originating from it, regardless of their place of residence, then the regional balance is positive. In contrast, when the number of refugees originating from a region exceeds the number of refugees who have found asylum in that region, the region can be considered to have a negative balance.



Even with large within-region variations, developing regions are in general a net source of refugees, while the developed regions are net receivers. The differences are relatively modest, however. By the end of 2004, Europe hosted 1.1 million refugees more than the global number of refugees originating from Europe. North America recorded the second largest positive net refugee balance (562,000), followed by Oceania (75,000). Regions with a negative refugee balance are Asia (-953,000), Africa (-387,000), and Latin America and the Caribbean (-60,000).



By the end of 2004, 86 per cent of refugees originating from Africa (3.4 million) found asylum in the region (2.9 million) while for Asia the corresponding value amounted to 78 per cent (3.7 million out of a total of 4.8 million Asian refugees). Some 83 per cent of refugees originating from Europe are refugees within Europe whereas for refugees from

Latin America and the Caribbean the data show that almost nine out of 10 stayed in the Americas. The chart shows the relationship between UN major area of origin and asylum for the four largest areas of origin and the main destinations.

The analysis of net refugee movements confirms that most refugees move across relatively short distances, finding primarily asylum in their region of origin.

ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Within the context of the total population of concern to UNHCR, "asylum-seekers" refers to persons who have submitted an asylum application and whose claim has not yet been decided. The backlog of undecided or pending cases is an important indicator for the efficiency of country of asylum procedures. An increase in pending cases indicates that new applications outweigh the number of asylum decisions during the period, generally leading to an increase in the waiting period for asylum-seekers. Conversely, if more applications are decided than submitted, the backlog of undecided cases will be reduced. Despite improved reporting over the past few years, the global number of undecided cases is underestimated as some countries, particularly in the industrialized world are not able to report these figures.

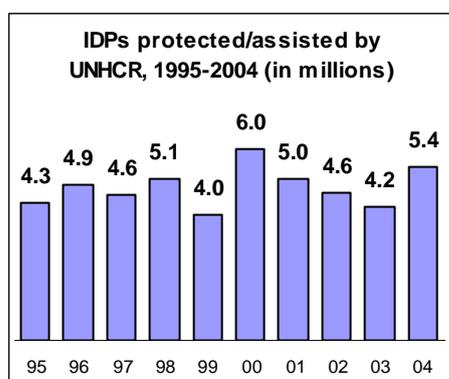
COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

By the end of 2004, some 838,000 asylum-seekers were waiting for a decision, sixteen per cent fewer than at the end of 2003 (997,000). In 14 countries, the backlog exceeded 10,000 at the end of 2004. The largest number of undecided cases at various stages of the asylum procedure was reported by the United States (264,000), South Africa (115,000), Germany (86,000), Austria (38,000), the Netherlands (28,000), and Sweden (28,000) (see *Table III. 1*).

ORIGIN

There were 17 asylum-seeker nationalities for which the backlog in asylum decisions exceeded 10,000 cases, three less than at the start of the year 2004. Almost one fifth of all undecided cases concerned asylum applications submitted by citizens from El Salvador (11%) and Guatemala (7%) in the United States. Among the top-15 nationalities still waiting for a decision at end-2004, 12 had experienced a decrease during the year while only nationals from Somalia (+39%), Ethiopia (+23%) and Sudan (+80%) recorded an increase in undecided asylum claims.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS



In addition to refugees and asylum-seekers, the population of concern to UNHCR also includes internally displaced persons, including those who have returned during the year. Generally, internal movements are less subject to government control and therefore intrinsically more difficult to monitor than movements across international borders.

As per end-2004, UNHCR does not have a global mandate to protect or assist all IDPs, consequently UNHCR statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture of the global scope of internal displacement. In addition,

another challenge the international community faces is the lack of appropriate data collection tools, guidelines and methodologies and, therefore, accurate and reliable data on IDPs in general. Several reasons are responsible for this factor, including lack of access to the population due to security reasons, short-term population movements and the perceived limited benefits of registration. In some situations, IDPs may be reluctant to register as this can further distinguish them from the local population.

At the end of 2004, UNHCR country offices reported some 5.4 million IDPs in 13 countries compared to 4.2 million IDPs in 12 countries one year earlier. The large increase reflects primarily the revised Government estimate in Colombia and the newly included IDP situation in Sudan (662,000 at end-2004). With the exception of these two countries, significant progress was made in improving a number of IDP situations, including in Sri Lanka (-34,000), the Russian Federation (-33,000), Liberia (-33,000), Afghanistan (-25,000), Georgia (-23,000), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (-18,000). In total, some 146,000 IDPs were able to return to their place of origin during 2004.

A number of IDP situations, however, appear to be of a protracted nature with few durable solutions being achieved during 2004. This includes the situations in Colombia (over 2 million),³ Azerbaijan (579,000), and Serbia and Montenegro (248,000).

STATELESS PERSONS

In addition to the above categories of persons, UNHCR has been tasked by the United Nations General Assembly through various resolutions to contribute to the reduction of statelessness and further protect stateless persons. In particular, UNHCR has been asked by the United Nations General Assembly to regularly inform the international community on the magnitude of the problem of statelessness.⁴

In March 2004, UNHCR published an analysis of the replies made by 74 States to a questionnaire⁵ on the steps taken by States to reduce statelessness and to meet the protection needs of stateless persons. One finding of the survey is that many States referred to the difficulty of identifying stateless persons. As of 2004, UNHCR is further reinforcing its collection of statistics relating to stateless persons. Although UNHCR is not in a position to provide reliable statistics on the total number of stateless persons, it has indicated countries with confirmed individuals and groups of stateless persons where the numbers are available (see Table I.1a). In contrast to previous years, stateless persons are not included in the category *Others of concern* to UNHCR anymore.

UNHCR is aware of 42 countries with stateless persons in this category by the end of 2004. For the 30 countries where data was available as per end-2004, the total number of stateless persons was estimated to be 1.5 million.

³ Government estimate. According to NGOs, the figure might be up to 3.3 million IDPs.

⁴ GA Resolution 50/152 of 9 February 1996 (A/RES/50/152).

⁵ Final Report concerning the Questionnaire on Statelessness pursuant to the Agenda for Protection (addressed to 191 States), March 2004.

OTHERS OF CONCERN

Finally, UNHCR extends protection and assistance to persons who it considers “of concern”, but who do not fall into any of the above categories.

In this category various groups are included which are deemed, for various reasons, of concern to UNHCR. They include local residents-at-risk in Serbia and Montenegro (Kosovo, 85,000), rejected Eritrean asylum-seekers in Sudan (37,400), Filipino Muslims in Malaysia (61,300), Afghans in a refugee-like-situation in the Russian Federation (100,000; UNHCR estimate), Colombians in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in need of protection (26,350), and Iraqis in Kuwait (13,000).