

CHAPTER II

POPULATION LEVELS AND TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter II reviews the trends and changes in 2006 in the global populations for which UNHCR has a responsibility. These include refugees, returnees, stateless and internally displaced persons (IDPs), collectively referred to as “persons of concern” or “total population of concern”. Limited to populations for which UNHCR has a mandate (i.e. excluding Palestinians under UNRWA mandate), this chapter thus does not purport to depict a comprehensive picture of global forced displacement. Likewise, the conflict-generated internally displaced persons covered in the Yearbook are limited to those benefiting directly or indirectly from UNHCR’s protection and assistance activities (see *Box 1*).

This chapter explains the overall changes in 2006 in comparison to 2005 and previous years. It shows that, with a total of 32.9 million, there has been a significant increase in the total population of persons of concern to UNHCR in 2006 as compared with 2005. The principal reasons for this apparent spike, as indeed the other key changes, are outlined in detail in the respective parts of this chapter.

Attention is drawn to the fact that there have been changes in the way in which UNHCR statistics have been reported in 2006 which have had an impact on the overall figures. First, as UNHCR has enhanced its involvement with internally displaced persons following the institutionalization of the “Cluster Approach”, the scope of its data collection with respect to IDP operations has expanded steadily throughout the year. Secondly, as signalled already in the 2005 Statistical Yearbook, the active refugee population in some developed countries, most notably the United States of America, has been reviewed in light of newly available data, and calculated according to adjusted parameters, resulting in significantly increased figures. Table II.c on page 34 summarizes the main changes in 2006 which are a combination of population movements and statistical adjustments.

Box 1. The “cluster approach”

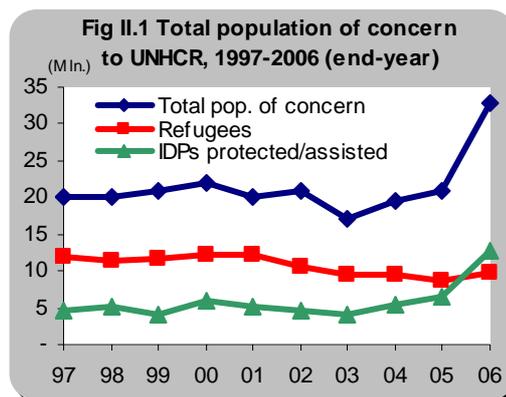
Recognizing that no single UN agency had the mandate and resources to protect and assist internally displaced persons globally alone, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) developed a “collaborative approach” which called for agencies to pool resources and response capacity. In 2005, a Humanitarian Response Review commissioned by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator found that critical gaps in humanitarian response remained. To ensure a more predictable and efficient response, the IASC Principals endorsed the “Cluster Approach” in December 2005. Under this arrangement, UNHCR would assume leadership responsibility and accountability for three of nine “clusters”, namely protection, emergency shelter, and camp coordination and camp management.

OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL TRENDS

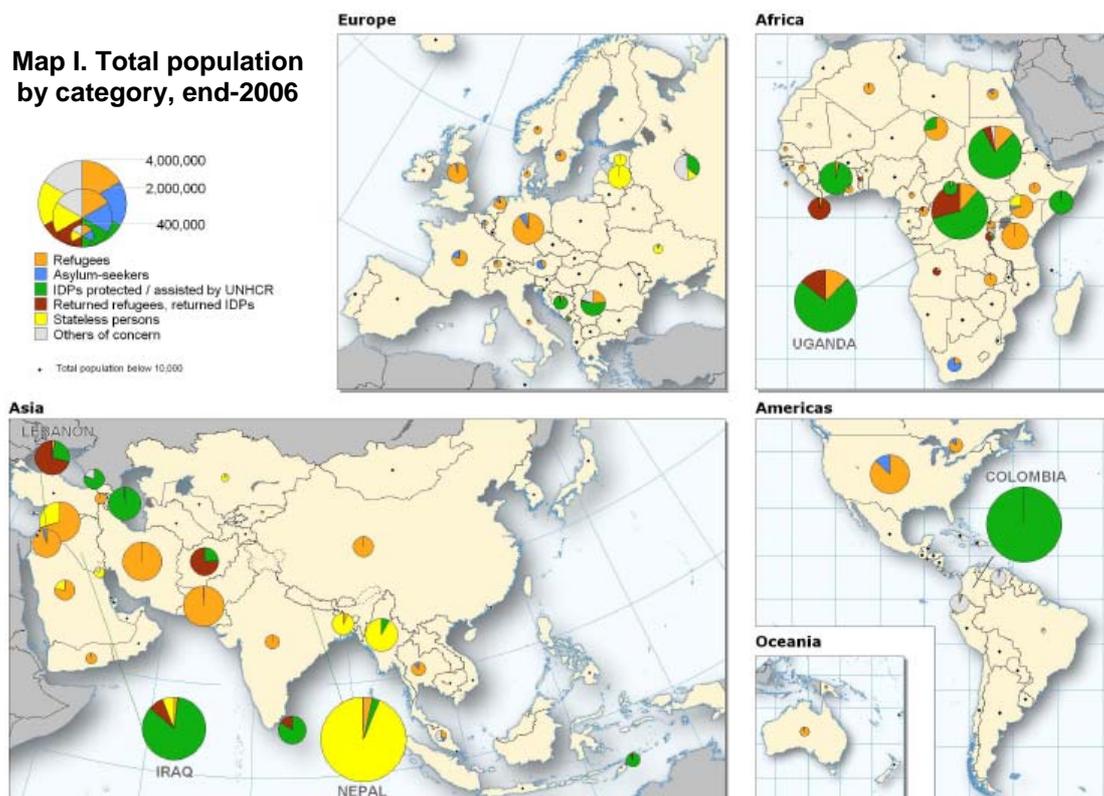
At the end of 2005, the global figure of persons of concern stood at 21 million. By the close of 2006, it had increased by 54 per cent to 32.9 million. This includes 9.9 million refugees; 744,000 asylum-seekers; 734,000 refugees who had repatriated during 2006; 12.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) protected/assisted by UNHCR; 1.9 million IDPs who had returned to their place of origin during 2006; some 5.8 million stateless persons; and some 1 million Others of concern to whom the Office extends protection and/or assistance. As elaborated further below, the single

largest increase has occurred among the internally displaced persons. The global refugee population itself has however also increased, for the first time since 2002. The 2006 figures for stateless persons also show a marked increase compared to the statistics for 2005.

By the close of 2006, there were an estimated 9.9 million refugees globally constituting roughly one third (30%) of UNHCR's population of concern. For the first time since 2002, a declining trend in the global figures was reversed. Refugees continued to be the persons of concern with whom UNHCR was systematically engaged in extending the core and full range of its protection and assistance activities. At the same time, UNHCR was also increasingly extending its services in respect of protection, assistance and solutions for the benefit of IDPs under the cluster approach. As of the end of 2006, a total of 12.8 million IDPs were receiving humanitarian assistance under both the cluster approach and other arrangements in which UNHCR was either the lead agency or a partner. While these IDPs are thus a shared responsibility, they are also included in the global figure of persons of concern to UNHCR (see also Figure II.2 below).



Map I. Total population by category, end-2006



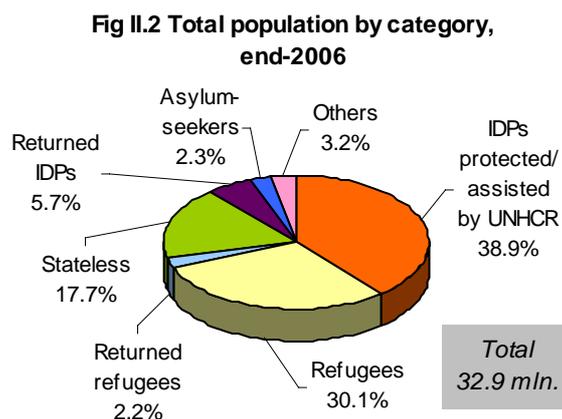
At 5.8 million, the number of stateless persons¹ had more than doubled in 2006 compared with 2.4 million in 2005. This increase is primarily the result of better data availability, in particular in the case of Nepal where the estimate of stateless persons in the country was revised from 400,000 to 3.4 million. The figure of 5.8 million stateless persons, however, does not capture the full scale or magnitude of the

¹ Refugees and asylum-seekers who are at the same time also stateless persons are not included in this figure. They are reflected in the figures relating to the refugee and asylum-seeker groups concerned.

phenomenon of statelessness for the reporting period. A significant number of stateless people have not been systematically identified and the statistical data on statelessness is not yet available in many cases.

BY REGION AND COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

With almost 15 million out of the total of 32.9 million, Asia² continues to host the largest population of concern to the Office at the end of 2006. In other words, almost every second person of concern to UNHCR resides in Asia. Africa is the second largest host to UNHCR's population of concern with 9.8 million or 30 per cent of the 32.9 million, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (3.5 million or 11%), Europe (3.4 million or 10%), North America (1.1 million or 3%), and Oceania (86,000 or 0.3%). All areas, with the exception of Europe, recorded a moderate or strong increase over the past two years reflecting, among other reasons the deteriorating situations in Colombia, Iraq, and Sudan, the inclusion of more than three million stateless persons in Nepal and statistical adjustments for the United States of America.



With over 3.6 million persons of concern, Nepal was the country hosting the largest population of concern to UNHCR at the end of 2006, the vast majority of which is composed of stateless persons (3.4 million)³. Colombia is the second largest host country with some 3 million persons of concern, almost all being internally displaced persons, followed by Iraq and Uganda (2.2 million each), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.8 million), and Sudan (1.6 million). The five major hosting countries together accounted for almost 4 out of 10 persons of concern (39%) at the end of 2006. It should be noted that UNHCR's expanded involvement in IDP situations as part of its responsibility under the Cluster Approach is fully reflected among these major hosting countries, considering that, with the exception of Nepal, internally displaced persons form the largest single population category in each case.

BY ORIGIN

Over the past years, Asia has not only been the host of the largest population of concern to UNHCR but also by far the main source. At the end of 2006, some 11.1 million persons originating from Asia were considered by UNHCR as being in need of international protection. Africa was the second most important source region with 10.1 million persons, followed by persons originating from Latin America and the Caribbean (3.7 million), and Europe (1.6 million).

Origin	Start-year	End-year	Share of total (end-year)	Change during 2006 (%)
Stateless	3,192,000	5,819,000	18%	82%
Colombia	2,540,000	3,562,000	11%	40%
Iraq	1,765,000	3,519,000	11%	99%
Afghanistan	3,192,000	2,751,000	8%	-14%
Sudan	1,568,000	2,125,000	6%	36%
DRC	526,000	2,040,000	6%	288%
Uganda	39,000	1,914,000	6%	4808%
Somalia	840,000	890,000	3%	6%
Azerbaijan	816,000	816,000	2%	0%
Lebanon	20,000	766,000	2%	3730%

² See annex table 22 for a list of countries included under the regional classifications.

³ This figure is expected to decrease significantly in 2007 due to a campaign to issue citizenship certificates pursuant to the Nepalese Citizenship Act of 2006.

These figures exclude the 5.8 million stateless persons who are not considered as a source region per se.

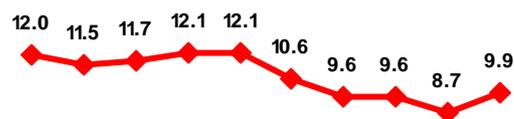
Excluding stateless persons, at the end of 2006, Colombians constituted the largest nationality among UNHCR's total population of concern with some 3.6 million, followed by Iraqis with some 3.5 million. After having been the largest group for many years, Afghans dropped to third position with some 2.8 million persons considered as of concern to UNHCR by the end of 2006. Other important countries of origin included persons originating from Sudan (2.1 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2 million), Uganda (1.9 million), and Somalia (890,000). The top-five nationalities alone accounted for 14 million or just less than half (43%) of all populations considered as of concern to UNHCR at the end of 2006.

Refugees

BY REGION AND COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

From 2002 to 2005, refugee numbers declined steadily on a global basis. However, at the end of 2006, the figure stood at 9.9 million⁴, the highest in four years. As

Fig II.3 Refugee trends, 1997-2006
(end-year, in millions)



compared with the figure of 8.7 million at the beginning of the year, there was a net increase of some 1.2 million refugees, or 14 per cent. This increase came from two main sources. First, the inclusion of an estimated 1.2 million Iraqis, mainly in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Secondly, changes in the methodology referred to earlier for

computing the active refugee population, in the United States of America in particular, also led to an increase⁵.

As for reductions, the largest occurred in Western and Southern Africa (by 31% and 18% respectively), primarily due to the successful voluntary repatriation operations to Liberia and Angola respectively. In Europe, the consolidation of refugee statistics in Germany which started in 2005 continued and resulted in a net reduction of almost 100,000 refugees. The naturalization and subsequent provision of citizenship to 37,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in Serbia also contributed to the overall decrease.

UNHCR regions	Start-2006	End-2006	Annual change	
			Absolute	%
- Central Africa and Great Lakes	1,193,700	1,119,400	-74,300	-6.2%
- East and Horn of Africa	772,000	852,300	80,300	10.4%
- Southern Africa	228,600	187,800	-40,800	-17.8%
- West Africa	377,200	261,800	-115,400	-30.6%
Total Africa*	2,571,500	2,421,300	-150,200	-5.8%
CASWANAME**	2,716,500	3,811,800	1,095,300	40.3%
Americas	564,300	1,035,900	471,600	83.6%
Asia and Pacific	825,600	875,100	49,500	6.0%
Europe	1,975,300	1,733,700	-241,600	-12.2%
Total	8,653,200	9,877,800	1,224,600	14.2%

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

⁴ As mentioned earlier, the 4.4 million Palestinian refugees falling under the responsibility of UNRWA are not included in UNHCR statistics.

⁵ A number of developed countries lack a systematic refugee register, meaning that refugee numbers in those countries are only estimated in order to obtain global refugee estimates. Refugees landing in those countries for resettlement as well as refugees recognized through an individual refugee status determination procedure have been included in these estimates. A 10-year cut-off period was used as the average time required to acquire the citizenship in Europe and 5 years in the case of North America and Oceania. In the case of the United States of America, newly available naturalization data suggest that in fact, refugees take closer to 10 years, rather than only 5, before acquiring citizenship. The refugee number in the USA has therefore been estimated based on the 10-year cut-off period. This has resulted in an increase of 464,000 refugees in the national figure, for a total of 844,000.

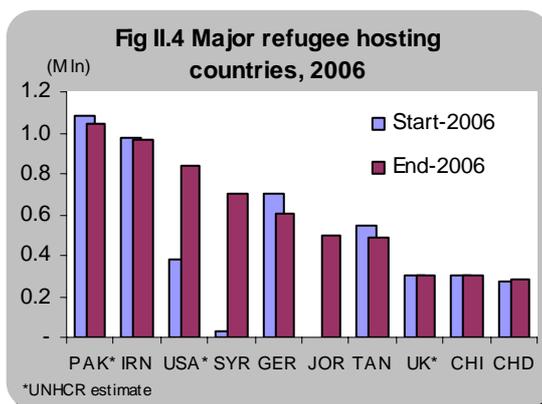
As explained already, the Americas region as a whole registered almost a doubling of its global refugee figures mainly due to the different estimation parameters explained earlier. In the CASWANAME⁶ region, the Iraq situation also resulted in a sharp increase. In Africa, however, only the East and Horn of Africa region witnessed an increase (some 10%), due primarily to a new influx of Chadian refugees into the Sudan (20,000) and a revised estimate of Eritrean refugees in that same country (by some 40,000).

As of the end of 2006, roughly 4 out of 10 refugees were hosted by countries falling within UNHCR's "CASWANAME" region. Africa on the other hand hosted a quarter of all refugees, followed by Europe (18%), the Americas (10%), and Asia and the Pacific (9%).

Box 2. UNHCR assistance to refugees

About half (45%) of all refugees benefit from UNHCR assistance programmes, with the vast majority of them being located in developing countries where UNHCR is operationally active, i.e. in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The number of refugees directly assisted by or through UNHCR, however, decreased by 146,000 persons (-3%) to 4.5 million refugees by the end of the year. It should be noted that UNHCR assistance can take a variety of forms, among other, shelter and food, refugee status determination, legal advice and assistance packages.

By the end of 2006, 61 per cent of the estimated 7.2 million refugees hosted by developing countries had access to assistance provided by or through UNHCR. The level of international assistance, however, varies greatly from one country to another, reflecting the different opportunities provided to refugees by the host country for local integration and self-reliance. Major refugee asylum countries where less than 75 per cent of the refugee population were assisted by the end of 2006 include Sudan (69%), the United Republic of Tanzania (59%), Zambia (54%), India (7%), Armenia (5%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (3%), Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic (close to 0% each).



Pakistan⁷ continued to be the asylum country with the single largest number of refugees, followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. By the end of the year, both countries together hosted more than 2 million refugees or one out of five (20%) of the world's refugees. While some 387,000 Afghans returned to their country during the period under review, their official total number in both countries decreased only by 4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively, owing to the fact that the vast majority of the returnees had not been part of the UNHCR registered refugee population. Bearing in mind the change in the methodology explained already for computing the active refugee population,

the United States of America was estimated to have some 844,000 refugees. The Syrian Arab Republic had 702,000 refugees, almost all Iraqis, and Germany⁸ 605,000, the figure having dropped by almost 100,000 due to an improved registration system that yielded more accurate statistics. Along with the Syrian Arab

⁶ This acronym refers to one of the geographical designations according to which UNHCR's global operational management is structured. It includes Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

⁷ UNHCR figures for Pakistan only include Afghans living in camps who are assisted by UNHCR. There are an additional 1.3 million Afghans living outside the camps, some of whom may be refugees. They do not receive UNHCR material assistance, but may benefit from the Organization's programmes for voluntary repatriation. As of the time of publication of this report, the number of Afghan citizens in Pakistan was under review as a result of a comprehensive registration exercise implemented between October 2006 and February 2007.

⁸ With introduction of the 2005 Immigration Act, the Central Aliens Register now encompasses new residence categories and simultaneously refines previous ones, allowing for a better differentiation of the figures. The 2006 refugee estimate for Germany thus cannot be compared to previous ones, and should be considered as provisional.

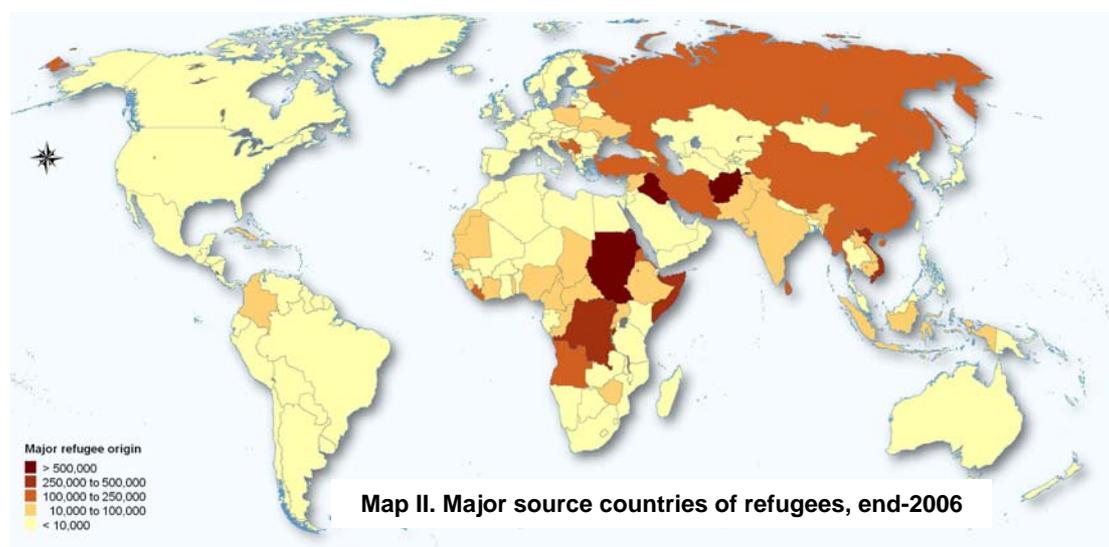
Republic, Jordan also moved into the top 10 asylum countries, hosting an estimated 500,000 Iraqi refugees (see *Figure II.4*). Among this group of major hosting countries, in the United Republic of Tanzania, the refugee population dropped from 549,000 to 485,000 (-14%) due to the voluntary repatriation of 43,000 Burundian and 24,000 Congolese refugees respectively.

BY ORIGIN

Afghanistan continued to be the leading country of origin of refugees, excluding the 4.4 million Palestinians who fall under the mandate of UNRWA. As of the end of 2006, there were 2.1 million Afghan refugees in more than 70 different asylum countries, or 21 per cent of the global refugee population. Iraqis were the second largest group, with 1.5 million having sought refuge mainly in neighbouring countries (1.2 million in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic alone). Iraqi refugee numbers had thus more than quintupled in the course of 2006. Sudan, with 686,000 of its nationals outside the country, was next. The three other main source countries were Somalia (460,000 representing an increase of 18 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi (about 400,000 each) (see *Map II*)

As a result of statistical corrections, revisions or verification exercises in Germany (for Turkish refugees), the United States of America (for Bosnian refugees), and Sudan (for Eritrean refugees), the global figures for those refugees increased significantly, respectively by 33 per cent, 82 per cent and 30 per cent. The global number of refugees from Myanmar also increased by 23 per cent, following the grant of refugee status to 8,600 in Malaysia and 15,800 in Thailand. There was an increase in the global figure of refugees from Somalia, due mainly to new arrivals in Yemen and Kenya.

2006 also witnessed significant decreases for some of the major refugee populations in the world, most notably those originating from Azerbaijan⁹ (-46%), Liberia (-31%), Burundi (-10%), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (-7%), the latter three due to voluntary repatriation. Significant decreases were also reported for refugees originating from Croatia (by 25,000) and Togo (by 24,000), either as a result of voluntary repatriation or revised refugee estimates following registration exercises.



⁹ A census conducted in Armenia, among Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, established that the majority of those refugees had either naturalized in Armenia or left the country.

NET REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

Most refugees flee to neighbouring countries. Although generally few refugees seek asylum outside their region of origin, some regions tend to receive more refugees than they “generate”, whereas other regions generate more than they receive.

A comparison between the number of refugees originating from a region and the number of refugees hosted by the same region indicates whether a region is a net recipient or a net source of refugees. Globally, it is estimated that close to 800,000 refugees reside outside their continent. The data indicates that the number of refugees originating from countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, irrespective of whether they have found asylum within or beyond the region of asylum, is higher than the total number of refugees residing in these regions. This suggests that those regions are “net producers” of refugees since their “net refugee balance” is negative. In contrast, the number of refugees hosted by North America, Europe and to a lesser extent Oceania is significantly higher than the number of refugees originating from these regions. In other words, these two regions (excluding Oceania) receive many more refugees than they send to other regions.

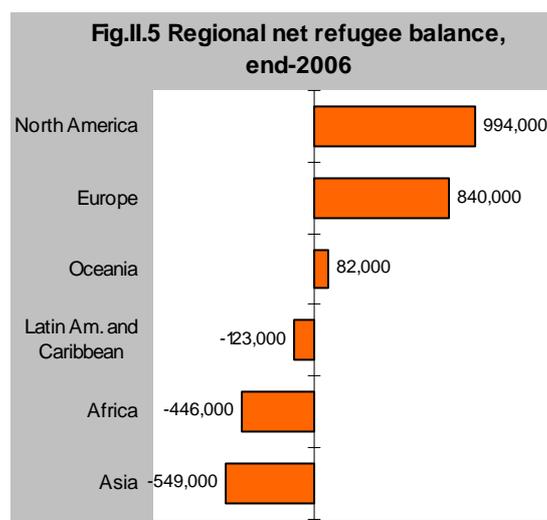
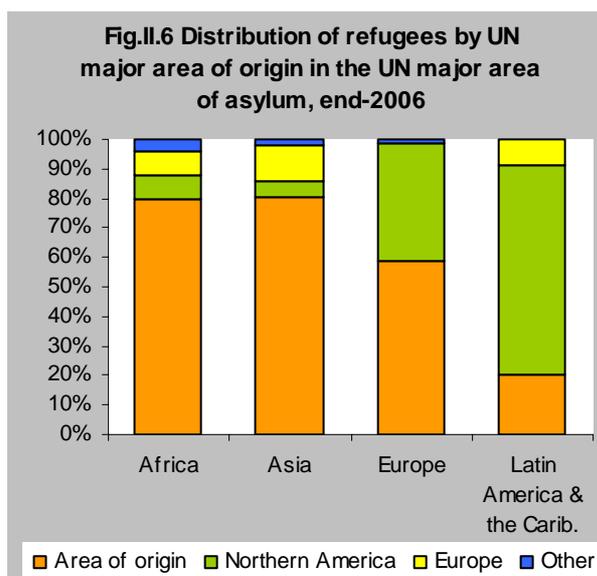


Figure II.6 illustrates the relationship between the areas of origin and of asylum for the four largest areas of refugee origin and their main destinations. The graph confirms the perception that most refugees tend to move across relatively short distances, primarily seeking asylum in their region of origin. By the end of 2006, 79 per cent of refugees originating from Africa (3.2 million) found asylum on the same continent (2.6 million), while for Asia the corresponding figure was 80 per cent (4.4 million out of a total of 5.5 million Asian refugees). Refugees originating from Latin America and the Caribbean predominantly find asylum on the American continent (94%), with the majority seeking asylum in the United States of America and Canada (71%). Whereas more than half (59%) of all European refugees sought refuge in Europe itself, some 40 per cent were granted international protection in North America. The relatively high number of European refugees residing in North America is primarily the result of the changed way of estimating the refugee population in the United States of America (see footnote 19).



ASYLUM-SEEKERS

A person is a refugee from the moment he/she fulfils the criteria set out in the refugee definition. The formal recognition of a person, for instance through individual refugee status determination, does not establish refugee status, but confirms it. The asylum-seekers counted in the total population of concern to UNHCR are persons whose applications for asylum or refugee status are pending a final decision. Those covered in this chapter refer particularly to claimants whose applications were pending as of the end of 2006, irrespective of when they may have been lodged (the so-called "backlog" of undecided or "pending cases"). The number of undecided or 'pending' cases is considered as an important indicator of the efficiency of asylum procedures in determining refugee status. An increase in pending cases indicates that new applications outweigh the number of asylum decisions, which is likely to extend the waiting period for asylum-seekers. Despite improved reporting over the past few years, the global number of undecided cases presented in the Statistical Yearbook is underestimated as some countries, particularly in the industrialized world, are not able to report these figures.

The number of asylum claims which have not yet been adjudicated, both at the first instance and on appeal, has decreased gradually over the past few years, reaching an estimated 744,000 of pending cases by the end of 2006, the lowest level in at least a decade. In fact, the global number of asylum-seekers waiting for a decision has gone down by one third (-32%) since 2002 coinciding with the general decrease in new asylum applications submitted primarily in Europe and North America.

Despite continuing to be underreported, at the end of 2006, the largest number of undecided cases at the first instance and on appeal was reported by South Africa (131,000), the United States of America (124,000), Germany (53,000), and Austria (42,000). Many countries were able to reduce the number of undecided cases during 2006, including the United States of America (-47,000), Germany (-19,000), and Belgium (-3,000). The strong reduction of backlog cases in the United States of America is primarily because of the closure for administrative reasons of cases from El Salvador (-16,000) and Guatemala (-11,000) during 2006. Significant increases in the backlog were reported by Sweden (+8,000), Egypt (+5,300), and Greece (+4,600).

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

In addition to refugees and asylum-seekers, the population of concern to UNHCR also includes two types of internally displaced persons: those who are internally displaced at the end of the reporting year and those who have returned to their place of habitual residence during the period under review. In general, internal movements are less subject to government control and therefore more difficult to monitor than movements across international borders.

Enumerating the number of IDPs poses a major challenge due to a combination of factors, including the lack of appropriate data collection tools, guidelines and methodologies to estimate their numbers. The lack of physical access to IDPs because of insecurity is often another reason why reliable IDP estimates are difficult to obtain. As IDPs have not left their country, they sometimes show reticence to register officially and efforts to identify them as such may expose them to further protection risks.

As already mentioned on page 20, in an effort to improve the accuracy and reliability

of IDP statistics, UNHCR, OCHA and the Norwegian Refugee Council have jointly developed a tool for profiling IDP populations. This forthcoming Guidance Note proposes different methodologies and provides advice on choosing the most suitable enumeration method for a given country context. With this tool currently in the test phase, it is expected that it will substantially improve the quality of IDP statistics in the future.

UNHCR does not have a global mandate to protect or assist all IDPs. Therefore, the Statistical Yearbook does not provide a comprehensive picture of the global scope of internal displacement.¹⁰ In fact, IDPs included in UNHCR statistics refer to those benefiting either directly or indirectly from UNHCR's protection and assistance activities, ranging from individual or community-based humanitarian assistance to capacity building to enhance authorities' capacity for providing protection and other responses. As explained earlier, UNHCR is becoming increasingly involved with internally displaced persons as part of a shared responsibility reflecting the broader engagement by the United Nations and other agencies through the Cluster Approach (see Box 1 on page 23). The Office has also continued its programmes for IDPs to whom it was already providing protection and assistance prior to the Cluster Approach.



The number of internally displaced persons receiving protection and assistance from UNHCR was 12.8 million at the end of 2006. In 2005, before the institutionalization of the Cluster Approach, UNHCR looked after 6.6 million. There are three main reasons for this substantial increase. First, hundreds of thousands of persons became newly displaced, notably in Colombia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste. Secondly, with the Cluster Approach being activated in some countries as of 1 January 2006, UNHCR has taken on lead roles for the clusters of protection, emergency shelter, and camp coordination and camp management. As a result, it expanded its activities in a number of countries, most notably the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. In all, UNHCR statistics now include IDP populations in 24 countries, as compared with 16 as of the end of 2005. Thirdly, in certain countries, IDP estimates were revised upwards in the course of the year due to newly available information, in particular in Colombia which thus saw the figure change from two to three million. In Côte d'Ivoire, the estimates increased from 38,000 to 709,000 as a result of a survey undertaken in the country providing a more accurate picture of the situation and UNHCR's expanded involvement as protection cluster lead.

¹⁰ For detailed statistics on global internal displacement, see the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) website of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) at www.internal-displacement.org.

With millions of displaced people, Colombia has one of the largest IDP populations in the world.¹¹ With more than 660,000 newly displaced during 2006 alone, the number of Iraqi internally displaced persons rose to more than 1.8 million by the end of the year. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, as part of its responsibility under the Cluster Approach, UNHCR continued to play a crucial role in protecting and assisting the internally displaced population, estimated at 1.1 million and 1.6 million respectively. There were however significant decreases during the course of the year, with an estimated 1.9 million IDPs having returned to their homes, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (490,000) and Uganda (300,000). In Sudan, the number of internally displaced persons benefiting from UNHCR's protection and assistance activities was estimated at around 1.3 million as of the end of the year.

At the peak of the armed conflict in Lebanon, some 750,000 of its citizens were estimated to have been displaced internally. Due to large-scale returns shortly afterwards, the number of these IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR had decreased to 200,000 by the end of the year. Close to 300,000 persons were reported to have been newly displaced in Sri Lanka, some of them multiple times, due to renewed fighting between the Government and the Tamil Tiger armed opposition. As result, the country's IDP population saw an increase from 325,000 to an estimated 469,000 persons. Timor-Leste, the Central African Republic and Chad also reported high numbers of newly displaced persons ranging between 93,000 and 150,000.

STATELESS PERSONS

UNHCR has been tasked by the United Nations General Assembly, through various resolutions, to contribute to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and ensure the protection of stateless persons. The Office has also been called upon to regularly inform the international community on the magnitude of the problem of statelessness.¹² The identification of stateless persons is thus fundamental to the discharge of the responsibility entrusted upon UNHCR. Statistics on the phenomenon of statelessness serve as a vital tool for indicating where States' efforts are required to reduce the number of stateless persons on their territory.

During 2006, some countries reported a reduction in the number of stateless persons, including Estonia, Latvia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Ukraine. As such, although significant numbers of persons remained stateless in these countries, the data shows their ongoing efforts to integrate stateless persons by granting, confirming or restoring their citizenship.

A UNHCR survey¹³ conducted in 2003 on the steps taken by States to reduce statelessness and meet the protection needs of stateless persons confirmed, however, that identification of, and agreement on, the phenomenon of statelessness are still quite problematic. UNHCR has thus continued to improve and expand its data collection capabilities. In October 2006, UNHCR's Executive Committee

¹¹ The difficulties associated with accuracy in IDP statistics in Colombia have been highlighted in a landmark judgment by the Constitutional Court of that country, which pointed to serious discrepancies between the real magnitude of the situation and the figures of the national registration system. In its Order of Compliance to the Landmark Judgment on Displacement, the Court cites the Director of the *Agencia Presidencial de Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional* as having acknowledged in public statements that IDP figures in Colombia are close to 3 million (Order of Compliance 218, dated 11 August 2006, related to the Landmark Judgment T-025).

¹² United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/152 of 9 February 1996 (A/RES/50/152).

¹³ Final Report concerning the Questionnaire on Statelessness pursuant to the Agenda for Protection (addressed to 191 States), UNHCR, March 2004.

encouraged States in possession of statistics on stateless persons or individuals with undetermined nationality to share them with UNHCR. UNHCR itself was called upon to continue working with concerned governments in identifying these persons in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, in particular UNICEF and UNFPA. In addition, UNHCR was asked to establish a more formal, systematic methodology for information gathering, updating and sharing of statistics on stateless persons. As these efforts bear fruit, the phenomenon of statelessness should become better known, and the global figure of stateless persons could well rise.

Initially, the Office identified 30 countries with reliable estimates of stateless persons, a total of 1.5 million as of the end of 2004. This number rose to 48 in 2005 and the estimated total of stateless persons to 2.4 million. For 2006, the number of countries with reliable estimates increased marginally to 49. However, the number of identified stateless populations more than doubled to 5.8 million. This is not necessarily due to new situations of statelessness but, rather, the result of improved data availability. In fact, the bulk of the increase can be attributed to the revision of Government figures in Nepal, which resulted in a rise in the reported number of stateless persons from 400,000 in 2005 to 3.4 million in 2006. The figures for stateless persons in Myanmar have also been revised from 236,500 to 669,500, the latter now including not only the previously reported Muslim returnees in northern Rakhine State, but the entire stateless population there as well.

UNHCR is not yet in a position to provide definitive statistics on the number of stateless persons worldwide. The Statistical Yearbook however includes data on countries with reliable official statistics and those for which estimates of stateless populations exist. Annex table 15 also includes some countries (marked with an asterisk) which have significant stateless populations but where no reliable figures could be provided for 2006, including Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, and Thailand.

OTHER GROUPS OR PERSONS OF CONCERN

"Other groups or persons of concern" refer to groups or individuals who may actually fall into one or another of the categories of persons of concern reported on in this Yearbook, but whose membership thereof has not yet been formally or definitively determined, or agreed with the State concerned. Nevertheless, they would benefit from UNHCR's protection and assistance activities. Also included in this group are persons who may not fall directly within any of the categories of persons of concern, but to whom UNHCR extends its protection and/or assistance activities on humanitarian or other special grounds.

The number of persons in these groups increased from 960,000 at the beginning of 2006 to slightly more than one million, or some 9 per cent, by the end of the year. The increase arose primarily from the inclusion of some 61,000 persons in Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), most of whom are assisted by UNHCR; and a revised estimate of Colombians in the Brazilian-Colombian border region.¹⁴ Displaced Colombians in Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela constitute the single largest population among this category, with nearly half a million persons likely to be in need of international protection but who have not applied formally for asylum.

¹⁴ The figure of 17,000 is a preliminary estimate. A study will be carried out to define the magnitude and characteristics of this population.

Table II.c
Explanation of main changes in UNHCR's Total population of concern from end-2005 to end-2006

Source of main changes	Country	Population category	Change 2005-2006	Main reason for inclusion in UNHCR statistics
1. New displacement				
	Syria/Jordan/Lebanon	Refugees	+1.2 million	Inclusion of 1.2 million refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Rep. (end-2006)
	Iraq	IDPs	+660,000	New displacement during the year
	Lebanon ¹	IDPs and Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+550,000 (returned IDPs), +200,000 IDPs (end-year)	550,000 Returned IDPs who returned during 2006 after end of hostilities. Another 200,000 are still displaced within Lebanon by the end of the year.
	Sri Lanka	IDPs	+144,000	New displacement during the year
	Timor-Leste ¹	IDPs and Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+11,000 (returned IDPs); +155,000 IDPs (end-year)	New displacement during the year
2. Expanded mandate with regard to IDPs ("Cluster approach")				
	Côte d'Ivoire	IDPs	+671,000	Cluster approach. This figure includes all IDPs due to UNHCR's protection cluster-lead and has been derived from a UNFPA-led IDP survey.
	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	IDPs	+1.1 million	Cluster approach. This figure includes all IDPs as UNHCR co-leads the protection cluster even though the Office is not operationally involved with all IDPs.
	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+490,000	Cluster approach. This figure includes all returned IDPs irrespective of whether UNHCR is actively involved in reintegration activities or not.
	Nepal	IDPs	+100,000	Cluster approach. Newly reported figure.
	Uganda	IDPs	+1.6 million	Cluster approach. This figure includes all IDPs as UNHCR co-leads the protection cluster even though the Office is not operationally involved with all IDPs.
	Uganda	Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+300,000	Cluster approach. This figure includes all returned IDPs irrespective of whether UNHCR is actively involved in reintegration activities or not.
3. New methodology or change in source				
	Azerbaijan	IDPs	+108,000	New government estimates
	Colombia	IDPs	**	Official figures at the end of 2005 speak of 2 million IDPs. However, according to the Constitutional Court of Colombia, there are serious discrepancies between the real magnitude of the situation and the figures of the national registration system. In a latest Order of Compliance to the Landmark Judgment on Displacement, the Court cites the Director of the <i>Agencia Presidencial de Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional</i> who acknowledged in public statements that IDP figures in Colombia are close to 3 million (Order of Compliance 218, dated 11 August 2006, related to the Landmark Judgment T-025).
	Kenya	Stateless persons	+100,000	Newly included 100,000 Nubians in Kenya who are de facto stateless persons.
	Nepal	Stateless persons	+3 million	UNHCR adopted the Government estimate of an estimated 3.4 million stateless persons. Previously the figure of 400,000 was used as estimate.
	Sudan	IDPs	+485,000	Newly included IDPs in Khartoum (879,000) and Blue Nile State. Revised figure for Darfur (from 841,000 to 421,000)
	United States of America ¹	Refugees	+464,000	Refugee pop. estimated by UNHCR in the absence of a Government figure. Newly available data on naturalization of refugees indicates that the average waiting time for refugees to naturalize is at least 10 years. Previously it was estimated at 5 years. The UNHCR estimate for 2006 has been adjusted to reflect this change.

¹ Can also be included under the Cluster approach.