

# Providing international protection

UNHCR's primary goal is to help States meet their international obligations to protect refugees and other persons of concern. To this end, the Office works in partnership with States, other UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. However, in 2007 political and economic turbulence, as well as national security concerns in many parts of the world, presented new threats to the institution of asylum. To meet them, UNHCR had to develop innovative strategies, especially to find permanent solutions for refugees.

This chapter provides an overview of the major challenges to protection that UNHCR tackled in 2007. Three of UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives are of particular relevance and form the basis of this chapter.

## Global Strategic Objective 1: Ensure international standards of protection are met for all persons of concern to UNHCR, taking into account their age, gender, or personal background.

### Improving protection against *refoulement*

UNHCR works closely with States on the development of national asylum legislation to ensure protection principles are respected and incorporated into legal systems, with special emphasis on the interpretation by States of provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. UNHCR advises States on how best to meet legitimate national security concerns without restricting access to asylum procedures to those who are genuinely in need of international protection.

In 2007, UNHCR made submissions to the supreme courts of Spain and the United States and to the Government of the Netherlands on the interpretation of various aspects of the 1951 Convention. In support, the Office drew on current developments in human rights law related to the principle of *non-refoulement*. UNHCR emphasized that exceptions to the principle need to be restricted.

Furthermore, UNHCR provided States with updated information to enhance the quality of refugee status determination (RSD). This included position papers on international protection needs; eligibility guidelines and return advisories – including on the protection needs of asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and Nepal; and advisories on asylum in Ukraine in the context of the return of asylum-seekers. The information also covered international protection in the context of fumigations; advisory opinions on the extra-territorial application of *non-refoulement* obligations under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 protocol; and eligibility and return guidelines for Iraqi asylum-seekers.

### Improving physical security and reducing incidents of violence, particularly by preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence

UNHCR continued to confront the problems of sexual and gender-based violence among people of concern in 2007. This section focuses on UNHCR's performance in establishing standard operating procedures and raising the awareness of UNHCR and NGO staff and beneficiaries to address the problem.

UNHCR has noted improvements in establishing standard operating procedures to deal with sexual and gender-based violence in its field operations. In 2007, some 83 per cent of camps and 65 per cent of urban locations had developed such procedures, as opposed to 77 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively, in 2006. However, more detailed analysis is required to determine whether this increase translates into better support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

There were improvements in training standards as well. While in 2006 some 14 per cent of camps reported that they had met the relevant standards in training refugees and asylum-seekers on issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, the rate increased in 2007 to 22 per cent.

UNHCR has set itself the target of training at least 10 per cent of its staff and those of its implementing partners in measures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. In 2006, of 94 camps for



UNHCR/H. Caix

West Darfur. IDP camp. Women who venture outside the camp to collect wood or water risk being attacked, assaulted or raped. UNHCR provides training addressing the roles of men and women, attitudes and beliefs about those roles and on how to support victims of rape.

which data were available, 76 per cent met the target. In 2007, 79 per cent of the 84 camps for which data were available met the target. Overall, there was a small improvement in performance in training for UNHCR and NGO staff despite the fact that there were a reduced number of camps reporting.

## Nutrition and Food Security

In 2007, UNHCR provided significant amounts of additional funding to operations to improve nutrition and food security, especially in Bangladesh, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal and Sudan. Although there was improvement in acute malnutrition in some operations, especially in countries targeted with additional food, nutrition and related assistance, the international standard of five per cent GAM (z-score) for stable situations has not yet been achieved. Provision of complementary foods, improved infant and young child feeding practices, better management of acute malnutrition, technical capacity-strengthening, provision of non-food items such as energy-saving stoves and targeting of vulnerable refugees in feeding programmes all contributed to reported improvements in the level of acute malnutrition.

Micronutrient deficiencies, particularly anaemia, prevail in many operations. In refugee operations where

assessments have been conducted, levels of anaemia among children and women were above the WHO standard (20 per cent) reflecting a mild public health problem. In most operations, anaemia prevalence averages 80 per cent, or a serious public health problem requiring joint action.

## Reducing the prevalence and impact of HIV and AIDS

In 2007, UNHCR programmes continued to focus on the provision of comprehensive HIV and AIDS services. More than 88 per cent of the UNHCR refugee operations now have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate information, education and communications material. The Office developed new materials on HIV prevention, stigma and discrimination in Arabic for use in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, prevention programmes focused on high-risk groups such as sex workers and their clients.

UNHCR campaigned for the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons in national HIV plans and policies. In Southern Africa, West Africa and Asia, refugees now have the same access as local populations to anti-retroviral treatments. Globally, 80 per cent of refugees have such access. Significant progress was made in the prevention of HIV

transmission after rape through the provision of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to rape victims. In Africa, almost 75 per cent of rape survivors had access to PEP when reported within 72 hours at the appropriate health facility. Prevention of mother-to-child transmission services were offered to 63 per cent of refugees, with 45 per cent of them receiving counselling from UNHCR partners. Statistics from five countries in Africa showed that mother-to-child transmission of HIV was prevented in 94 per cent of HIV positive deliveries, equivalent to the prevention of 131 new infant HIV infections.

## Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy

By the end of 2007, UNHCR had incorporated age, gender and diversity considerations into all country programmes. Over the last four years, 109 country operations have been trained in participatory assessment methods. Training was typically followed by a workshop to analyze the findings from an age, gender and diversity perspective. These findings have been integrated into country operations plans. In 2007, UNHCR conducted 55 workshops which trained a total of 1300 UNHCR and partner staff. New staff in the Jordan and Liberia operations were given refresher training in age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM). Security considerations obliged the Pakistan programme to postpone the training until 2008.

All offices (excluding those primarily involved in advocacy) are required to undertake participatory assessments as part of the annual operations planning process. By the end of 2007, training in assessment methodologies had been conducted in all countries except one. Statistics from 128 camps show that almost two-thirds undertook participatory assessments at least once in 2007. Data available from 66 locations in urban settings indicates that two-thirds conducted at least one participatory assessment in 2007, while in the 50 returnee areas reporting, 80 per cent met this standard.

For the 2008-2009 planning cycle, in relation to the rollout of the AGDM, UNHCR reviewed 50 country operations plans and found that those which had conducted participatory assessments used the findings to target activities for the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence and child protection. Nonetheless, overall age, gender and diversity analysis and the multi-functional

team approach remain weak. To address this, the Office provided coaching for multi-functional teams, and in December 2007 piloted an intensive two-week AGDM course for staff working in community activities. Continued leadership and commitment by representatives remain critical in filling this gap.

The viability of the age, gender and diversity accountability framework was evaluated in April 2007. The findings indicated that it enabled managers to focus on age, gender and diversity priorities and take stock annually to see what worked, identify constraints and reveal areas where change was required. The evaluation led to the creation of a different framework for operations focused primarily on advocacy efforts.

UNHCR had broad consultations in 2007 with staff and partners to develop a three-year AGDM action plan. The discussions showed that UNHCR's strategy had helped to refocus attention on people of concern; increased



Chad. A Peul refugee and her grandson in Amboko camp, in the south of the country. They arrived from the Central African Republic following attacks by bandits.

UNHCR/H. Caux

## Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy in Morocco

In Morocco, UNHCR's age, gender and diversity mainstreaming process showed how refugees could contribute to addressing their concerns. It also demonstrated that UNHCR could assist refugees to accomplish goals set through community-based approaches. The office in Morocco reviewed refugee proposals on how to improve living conditions and implemented those which were feasible, and met the needs of the persons concerned. UNHCR Rabat also liaised with UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNDP to identify areas in which they might contribute.

With funding from UNDP and support from a local community centre, the Office developed a

programme of skills training, language classes and cultural events for refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR Morocco's experience showed the importance of refugees receiving feedback and seeing demonstrable results to ensure they contribute their skills and talents to appropriate activities. In addition, creative inter-agency efforts can help fund activities requiring additional resources. Between 2004 and 2007, some 1,300 multi-functional team members participated in AGDM workshops, and 97 facilitators were trained. As a result, the quality of participatory assessments has improved considerably.

understanding of the unique needs of diverse groups; demonstrated that equal access does not mean that everyone is enjoying the services offered by the organization; and justified maintaining services in the face of budget cuts. Six key areas were highlighted for follow-up action: attitudes, leadership and accountability, coordination and partnership, targeted action to remedy identified gaps, integration of the AGDM framework into all activities, building the organizational capacity of staff and partners; and standards of assistance.

### Ensuring civil, social and economic rights are secured, and opportunities for self-reliance maximized, with particular attention to the rights of women and children

UNHCR's Gender Equality Policy is currently in the final stage of internal review. The policy updates UNHCR's existing Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on their Protection (2002) and follows the two-pronged approach of gender mainstreaming – through the AGDM strategy and targeted actions for women. More precisely, the policy emphasizes the importance of women's social and political participation; economic and livelihood strategies; identification of women and girls at risk; the fight against sexual and gender-based violence; and engagement with boys and men to promote gender equality.

Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was integral to UNHCR activities in 2007. The key principles of the Resolution were incorporated in various manuals and guidelines, including the *Manual on Leadership Training for young Refugee Women*, the Heightened Risk Identification Tool and the *UNHCR Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls* (finalized in December 2007). UNHCR also

provided inputs to the UN system-wide action plan for 2008-2009.

To support UNHCR's commitment to have 50 per cent of all refugee committees made up of women, training modules on women's leadership were distributed to staff. Data from more than 80 refugee camps showed that between 2005 and 2007 the number of women involved in decision-making bodies had increased. This was especially the case in Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda and Tanzania. In general, however, while women represent half of the camp populations, their participation in camp management committees remains low. Indeed, the equal participation of women in refugee camp committees has been achieved only in 38 per cent of refugee camps.

To determine how women's participation in camp management can be made more meaningful, a pilot project on leadership skills for refugee women is being implemented by an NGO partner in Cape Town, South Africa.

UNHCR's commitment to provide sanitary materials to all women and girls of concern remained a high priority. The lack of sanitary supplies has serious implications for women's dignity, security, health and access to education and is therefore considered a critical element in their protection. Data from 43 camps in 2006 and 77 camps in 2007 show an increase in the number of camps reporting that they reached the target of providing sanitary materials to all who needed it, from one-third in 2006 to half in 2007. A project to produce sanitary supplies using local materials aimed to address the cultural sensitivities of women and girls in Uganda, and to generate employment for displaced women and girls and the host community has also been initiated.

To ensure the implementation of Executive Committee Conclusion No. 105 (LVII) on Women and Girls at Risk (2006), the Office developed the Heightened Risk

Identification Tool, or HRIT. This improved the identification of refugees at risk by linking individual and community-based participatory assessment methods, thereby enabling the rapid identification of solutions in their regard.

In March 2007, UNHCR piloted the tool in Bangladesh through a series of community-based consultations and individual interviews with Rohingya refugees. Based on the outcome of the pilot, the HRIT was refined and can now be used in a variety of operational contexts, including: prior to and as follow-up to RSD; in conjunction with a participatory assessment exercise; as a stand-alone methodology involving community-based consultations and individual assessments; to survey a sample of a refugee population to estimate the level of risk within the community; as an interview format for case workers; and as a checklist for roving officers to use in refugee camps or in urban settings.

## Education

UNHCR worked to increase the number of children attending primary school. The Office's Standards and Indicators Report for 2007, covering refugee camp settings in 30 countries, indicated that the overall enrolment rate for the primary level (6 - 11 years) was 74 per cent, of whom 70 per cent were girls. The data

for secondary education (12 - 17 years) showed an overall enrolment rate of 34 per cent, of whom only a quarter comprised girls. The drop-out rate for girls increased by grade. More than 20 per cent of those between 15 and 24 years had access to non-formal education.

The case of Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya was a remarkable example of achievements in the area of primary education in 2007. Efforts to increase girls' enrolment and retention in school resulted in a 51 per cent increase in the number of girls who passed the final examinations at primary level. Among the factors that contributed to this increase were the establishment of decentralized examination centres, enhanced community participation in education, an increase in the number of trained female teachers and the provision of solar lamps to help female students study at night. Also helping were the provision of more text books and other learning and teaching materials, the introduction of class tutoring for final year schoolgirls, the sensitization of parents and teachers to gender equality, and national and international scholarships.

To address the high number of adolescents out of school emphasis has been put on promotion of post-primary education, identified as one of the major gaps in education. Additional funding supported vocational



UNHCR/V. Tam

Refugee children in Goldhap Camp, Nepal.

training programmes in a number of countries. With funds raised under the **ninemillion.org** campaign, UNHCR implemented education and sports programmes in Azerbaijan, Chad, Liberia, Thailand and Uganda.

Other priorities in 2007 included capacity building and support for country offices as they planned and implemented education programmes. These activities included the development of tailored education strategies, technical support missions and the organization of workshops to review the impediments to progress in the education sector and develop appropriate responses.

UNHCR participatory assessments highlighted the problems of exploitation and abuse in the school environment. This phenomenon affected the enrolment of girls, and particularly their transition to the secondary level. To redress this situation, UNHCR worked with sister UN agencies and NGOs to launch a Safe Learning Environment Initiative. The Office reinforced its partnership with the International Rescue

Committee to lead this project. Members of an inter-agency working group developed a joint action plan and visited field missions in three pilot countries (Malawi, Namibia and Rwanda) to conduct assessments and provide technical and financial support.

### Increasing and improving the level and quality of registration of persons of concern

UNHCR has invested in new procedures and tools to improve registration, documentation and population data management. In 2004, the Office launched *proGres*, its registration database application. This software helps to implement the standards established by ExCom Conclusion No. 91 on the Registration of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers. By the end of 2007, UNHCR was using *proGres* in 57 country operations and 122 offices.



Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan after 23 years in exile receive HIV training at a UNHCR transit centre outside the city of Jalalabad.

## The Strengthening Protection Capacity Project

The Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP) aims to improve State and community capacities to protect refugees and others of concern to UNHCR. The SPCP analyses gaps in protection and their consequences, consults with key stakeholders on how to remedy the situation, and develops action plans to improve protection in the immediate and longer term.

In 2006 the SPCP received close to USD 2.5 million in contributions to support its work in Kenya, Tanzania and Thailand. This funding supported a variety of capacity-building initiatives. They included projects to improve legislative and administrative capacities (in legal drafting, registration, RSD, documentation and training); prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence; provide access to basic services in health and education; and expand opportunities for self-reliance and durable solutions.

The SPCP also extended its focus to other countries and geographic regions. In Africa, an SPCP initiative was launched in Zambia, where key developments included the publication of a gaps analysis, the start of a comprehensive registration exercise, efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence, and national consultations to reach the agreement of all stakeholders on key areas for intervention. An SPCP initiative was also developed for Burundi.

In Europe, SPCP initiatives were launched in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In both Azerbaijan and Georgia they aim to improve protection for refugees and IDPs. Efforts in Georgia were expanded to include a focus on stateless populations. In Latin America, an initiative in Bolivia aimed to improve access to asylum procedures and bring them in line with

international standards. In the Middle East, project submissions were made and funding approved for Egypt and Yemen.

By the end of 2007, the SPCP had received an additional USD 3.6 million for its field-based support. This enabled field operations to implement projects in needed areas and to build confidence in the efficacy of the overall methodology.

In addition to the country-specific initiatives, the SPCP also contributed to Office-wide initiatives in operational development and design: it participated in the revision of the *Protection Gaps: Framework of Analysis* for refugee situations, contributed to development of the Results Based Management Framework adopted by the Office in 2007 and the redesign of the UNHCR Annual Protection Report. The SPCP Framework was also translated into Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish for wider use by UNHCR field offices and partners.

Lessons learned from the use of the protection-gaps framework contributed to the development of a parallel tool for IDP situations, *Protection of Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action*. This is now being field-tested by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Protection Cluster Working Group. Finally, recognition of the value of the SPCP methodology led to a decision at the end of the year to promote its wider use, including as part of the Global Needs Assessment initiative currently being carried out by UNHCR. This initiative aims to illustrate unmet needs, their protection consequences, projects necessary to remedy them and the funding needed to do so. This detailed analysis and presentation will assist in efforts to enhance advocacy, improve protection planning and expand funding to meet unmet needs.

More than 1,400 staff members have been trained to use the new registration standards, tools and procedures, and approximately 2.86 million refugees and asylum-seekers have active records in *proGres*. The *proGres* software continues to be developed to cater to the evolving needs of field operations. More features will be added to *proGres* during 2008.

The *proGres* application facilitates the day-to-day management of refugee and asylum-seeker registration data. All offices with *proGres* now produce attestations and protection letters directly from the database, and 12 offices print plastic ID cards using *proGres* data. The application has been shared with and is being used by three governments and three implementing partners.

In 2007, registration officers based at Headquarters and in the Field conducted more than 59 missions to help 32 country offices.

The profiling of IDPs gained momentum in 2007. UNHCR is working closely with partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Protection Cluster Working Group. The inter-agency *Guidance on Profiling of Internally Displaced Persons* was produced by OCHA and the Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, with technical and substantive support from UNHCR. The manual was endorsed conditionally by the IASC and issued at its request. In the Field, UNHCR provided profiling support to humanitarian country teams in the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia and Sri Lanka.

## Global Strategic Objective 2: Advocate for and support governments in the development and maintenance of an international protection regime, including its implementation at the national level.

### Preserving asylum space

UNHCR's focus is to be a reliable partner and leading authority on legal matters in the area of forced displacement by providing governments, international organizations and the legal community with guidance on protection issues and policies. The Office performed its core function of ensuring proper interpretation of the Refugee Convention and other legal instruments through policy guidance on a wide variety of issues. These cover the extra-territorial application of *non-refoulement* obligations, the common EU asylum system, HIV and AIDS, trafficking, the humanitarian character of asylum, the protection of women and girls, voluntary repatriation, DNA testing to establish family links, and housing, land and property issues.

UNHCR assisted governments in preparing and reviewing national legislation. For instance, it advised Armenia, Chile and the Netherlands on provisions relating to exclusion, expulsion and *non-refoulement*. UNHCR also prepared and submitted a number of *amicus curiae* briefs before national and regional courts on refugee-related legal issues concerning the family as a particular social group, admission to the country of asylum, exceptions to the principle of *non-refoulement* and detention. The Office's guidelines on international protection are increasingly cited by national courts.

UNHCR's Executive Committee is a key forum for advocacy and communication with States, and the Office has been substantively engaged with its Members. In 2007 UNHCR undertook the preparation of the Conclusion on Children at Risk, and looked at ways to make ExCom Conclusions more inclusive and relevant to field operations.

UNHCR maintains a human rights liaison function that works on mainstreaming and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms to protect people of concern. In 2007, work in this area included advocacy on their behalf within the various human rights mechanisms and training staff to use human rights instruments for the protection of people of concern. UNHCR also contributed to the Office of the High Commissioner for

Human Rights' reports for the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review.

### Strengthening UNHCR's operational protection capacity

Globally, UNHCR's protection interventions range from dealing with emergency refugee influxes, RSD and advocacy to the active quest for permanent solutions. In 2007, UNHCR carried out RSD under its mandate in some 80 countries. About 90 per cent of this decision-making was concentrated in some 15 operations (Cameroon, Egypt, Hong Kong SAR, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Turkey and Yemen). While complete statistics are not yet available for 2007, initial data indicate that UNHCR received and adjudicated approximately 12 per cent of the asylum applications submitted around the world.

**Staffing:** In 2007, UNHCR decentralized part of its RSD support function to the Field, by creating a third Regional Global RSD Officer post to cover the Middle East and North Africa. (Similar posts were created in 2006 in Africa and Asia). UNHCR also managed the RSD roster, which provided critical staff support to field operations in response to short-term or emergency needs (see *Global Programmes chapter: RSD Project*). Despite these accomplishments, however, ensuring adequate and stable protection staffing in the field remains a challenge. For example, of 160 staff undertaking RSD under UNHCR's mandate on a full-time basis, approximately half are employed under short-term contracts. Such a situation has a negative impact on the sustainability of RSD training and the quality of RSD decision-making.

**Training:** UNHCR continued partnership agreements in 2007 with two government agencies, the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) and the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless People (OFPRA), which enabled experienced government adjudicators to be deployed on a short-term basis to UNHCR field offices. Adjudicators from the IRB were deployed to Kenya and Ukraine, where they provided training, and one expert from the OFPRA was deployed to Cameroon to provide assistance in processing refugee claims.

**Support:** A key resource for all protection staff is information, be it related to the human rights situation in countries of origin, legal doctrine, UNHCR policy or procedural guidelines. A primary source for this information continued to be UNHCR's *Refworld*, an internet-based resource centre, which was re-designed to increase user-friendliness, accessibility, the variety of information/sources available and search facilities. The

new internet-based version was officially launched in June 2007.

UNHCR also took steps to meet the information needs of its field offices better, for example by compiling Country Briefing Folders on the largest refugee caseloads. Additional tools such as Core Sources for Country Information, a selected list of Country-Related Indices/Indicators and a compilation of map portals and websites provide quick access to country information.

### **Strengthening host country capacity to undertake RSD, provide quality asylum and offer durable solutions**

UNHCR continued to work with the International Association of Refugee Law Judges, and piloted the deployment of a judge to West Africa to build the capacity of RSD decision-makers in four countries. UNHCR also provided four months on-the-job training for a country-of-origin specialist from South Africa in an effort to support the development of the national asylum procedure.

## **Global Strategic Objective 4: Establish effective partnerships and frameworks for action to respond to the challenges of protecting and finding solutions for persons internally displaced due to conflict and abuses of human rights, protecting refugees in broader migration movements, and bridging the gap between relief and development.**

### **Improving policy and operational responses to ensure that refugees are protected within broader migration movements**

Mixed population movements across borders, often in an irregular manner and by land or sea pose enormous challenges to the international community. People smuggling and trafficking add to the complexities of such movements. UNHCR worked to raise awareness of the need for migration policies to include mechanisms to identify and make provision for those in need of international protection, as well as to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR benefit from opportunities provided by migration law and policies. The Office contributed to international efforts to combat and address the consequences of human trafficking, and to ensure that refugee, returnee

and IDP issues were adequately reflected in the migration discourse.

The 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration that UNHCR developed in 2006 was launched in several regions in 2007. In North Africa, UNHCR began implementing a two-year project based on the 10-Point Plan framework. This supports the development of national legislative and institutional frameworks in refugee and asylum matters, including efforts to enhance the capacity of relevant governmental and non-governmental structures through training and technical assistance. Self-reliance and community-based programmes were also implemented. Appropriate durable solutions are being identified, including voluntary repatriation where conditions permit, and resettlement in cases meeting established criteria. The solutions framework includes the safe and dignified return of rejected asylum-seekers to their countries of origin.

In addition, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Organization for Peace, Care and Relief in Libya spurred the design of a plan of action involving the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and other NGOs to address the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in the migration context. Furthermore, a legal committee to draft national legislation on asylum procedures was set up by the Ministry of Justice of Libya. This resulted in the first draft of a refugee law that is under discussion with UNHCR.

The collaborative approach to the Plan proved valuable in strengthening partnerships and operational cooperation between UNHCR and key actors in the migration field, including IOM. UNHCR also developed implementation strategies for Southern and Eastern Europe, the Gulf of Aden and for specific areas of Asia. A handbook of best practices which includes a variety of examples on aspects of the 10-Point Plan will be issued in 2008.

UNHCR participated in the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which brought together State and civil society representatives. To foster further co-operation and highlight the impact of migration on refugee and asylum-seeker protection, UNHCR participated in the July 2007 meeting of the Forum, contributing a paper on Forced Migration and Development. Through regular participation in the Global Migration Group, the Office has helped inter-agency cooperation in this critical and fast-evolving field.

The High Commissioner selected Refugee Protection and International Migration as the first topic of his Dialogue on Protection Challenges, a new forum for the informal exchange of views with States, UN agencies and civil society representatives. The Dialogue revealed that there are extensive gaps in the protection of people in mixed movements, especially irregular migrants who fall outside the international refugee protection framework, but who nevertheless have protection needs. States also



Throughout 2007, UNHCR continued to collaborate with partners within the UN system to fight against human smuggling and trafficking of desperate migrants and ensure that those in need of protection are not forced to return to their countries of origin.

acknowledged the relevance of issues covered in the 10-Point Plan and the need to adhere to protection-sensitive management of international migration.

The maritime interception of migrants, the rescue of refugees and migrants in distress at sea and challenges in ensuring their prompt disembarkation remained prominent concerns for many States – as well as private actors such as shipmasters. In 2007, UNHCR intervened in a number of rescue-at-sea and stowaway cases to facilitate disembarkation and find appropriate solutions. The protection problems arising from rescue-at-sea have been discussed at several inter-agency meetings over the past few years, and in 2007 UNHCR issued a Note on the conclusions of those meetings. In December 2007, UNHCR organized an inter-agency meeting which developed new recommendations to be incorporated into those conclusions. A related effort was the issuance of a joint UNHCR and International Maritime Organization leaflet on rescue-at-sea which was widely distributed in several languages.

UNHCR collaborated closely with partners in the UN system to fight human trafficking and address its consequences. The Office worked to identify individuals who require protection and to prevent forced return.

## Environmental management and protection

In displacement situations, excessive damage to the environment or competition with local populations over scarce resources can be a source of conflict, which in turn could influence a State's decision to provide

asylum. As damage to the environment and the depletion of natural resources can affect displaced people, UNHCR and its partners recognize the need to adhere to sound environmental management practices.

In 2007, UNHCR worked with host governments, UN agencies, NGOs and communities to improve the areas surrounding refugee, returnee and IDP camps and settlements by preventing or limiting environmental damage. The Office supported projects to bolster environmental protection in hosting areas. These covered awareness raising and environmental education; development and implementation of environmental action plans; energy conservation; reforestation and rehabilitation; and sustainable agricultural practices. Demonstration projects integrated different environmental themes. UNHCR staff and employees of implementing partners and government counterparts were trained in environmental management.

Throughout the year, a variety of environment activities supported refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities. In Bangladesh, Chad and Nepal, the use of solar cookers and energy-efficient stoves reduced the threat to women of attacks while collecting firewood. The new stoves also gave women more time to work on income generation activities. Conflict over the use of natural resources was reduced.

In Kenya, Sudan and Uganda the establishment of community woodlots, forests and agro-forestry farms improved the livelihoods of both refugees and host communities. At the global level, in 2007 UNHCR supported a major environmental effort to plant and care for more than 10 million trees in areas of human displacement.