



Girls learning English recite the alphabet in an outdoor class at Ifo Camp in Dadaab, Kenya.

Finding Durable Solutions

COMPREHENSIVE DURABLE SOLUTIONS STRATEGIES

UNHCR FACES MANY challenges in seeking to fulfil its core mandate to protect refugees. On the one hand, levels of displacement keep rising as conflict and other factors compel large numbers of people to flee their homes; on the other, growing xenophobia in many countries is restricting the protection space available for refugees. In his annual address to UNHCR's Executive Committee in October 2011, the High Commissioner called for concerted action to counter these trends, especially in protracted refugee situations.

To build the necessary international support, UNHCR worked closely in 2011 with governments, humanitarian agencies, development partners and regional bodies. It argued that the three traditional durable

solutions – voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement – should be used in an integrated and complementary manner to maximize the chances of solving refugee problems. Such solutions should be initiated from the onset of displacement and have a strong focus on self-reliance and the expansion of refugee mobility.

In Africa, the application of the “ceased circumstances” cessation clauses for Angolan, Liberian and Rwandan (pre-1999) refugees, announced in 2011, has been designed in each case as part of a comprehensive solutions strategy. These strategies will be implemented together with partner States and organizations, with the aim of expanding opportunities for local integration or voluntary repatriation for refugees who have remained in exile for decades. They will focus in particular on helping Angolan refugees who have lived in exile since the 1970s; Liberian refugees displaced

since 1989; and Rwandans who fled their country before 1999 as well as descendants of the latter group.

In Asia, the search for alternative status for some members of the Afghan refugee population continued during the year, with significant progress in both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. In Central Asia, UNHCR has drawn up a regional durable solutions strategy to intensify the search for solutions for long-staying urban refugees in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

In Europe, in an intergovernmental process supported by UNHCR, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia signed a Joint Declaration aimed at finding rapid solutions for the 74,000 refugees from the 1991-1995 conflict who remain scattered in the region. A regional programme has set out concrete steps to address the obstacles that remain, including an accelerated process for providing civil documentation.

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION

THE NUMBER OF DISPLACED PEOPLE returning home voluntarily has fallen steadily since 2004. This trend was reversed in 2011, with a total of 532,000 refugees returning to their country of origin.

UNHCR sought to ensure that, in addition to being voluntary, returns were safe and dignified, and that men and women received individual counselling prior to return. Once home, all refugees were helped to reintegrate into their societies in order to ensure full enjoyment of their political, social and economic rights.

Approximately 68,200 Afghans returned to their country voluntarily with UNHCR assistance in 2011. Of these, 49,200 returned from Pakistan and 18,900 from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Reintegration programmes provided returnees with cash grants

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) saw approximately 13,900 refugees return to Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, and smaller numbers to the Central African Republic, the Congo and Uganda. Meanwhile, more than 21,000 DRC Congolese returned home from neighbouring countries. In Uganda, a Tripartite Commission involving the Governments of Uganda, the DRC and UNHCR met in July to discuss the voluntary repatriation of DRC Congolese.

As part of UNHCR's efforts to promote the sustainable reintegration of returnees, thousands of returnees benefitted from community-based peace-building and coexistence programmes in 2011.

LOCAL INTEGRATION

THE PURSUIT OF LOCAL INTEGRATION as a solution helped thousands of refugee men and women gain legal, socio-economic and cultural rights in 2011. UNHCR's self-reliance programmes provided them with additional support.

In Latin America, the Cities of Solidarity framework aided the local integration and self-reliance of refugees, mostly in urban areas. The framework allowed refugees to gain access to health care, education, employment and housing services, often on a par with those available to nationals.

In Pakistan, the Government's comprehensive Management and Repatriation Strategy for Afghan Refugees combined support for host communities with interim stay arrangements. Alternative protection-sensitive migration schemes are being pursued in other neighbouring countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Philippines continued to allow some refugees to acquire citizenship through naturalization. Some 34 per cent of the refugees who qualify are at various stages within this process.

Globally, the commemorations of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention offered new opportunities to promote local integration. Many countries participating at the intergovernmental meeting in

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and shelter assistance. UNHCR also engaged with a wide network of development actors, government counterparts, UN agencies, donors and beneficiaries to implement pilot reintegration projects designed to serve as models for Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation.

Sri Lanka saw the voluntary return of more than 2,300 refugees, including 1,700 who were assisted by UNHCR, mostly from India. In February 2011 the last group of Montagnards in Cambodia returned to Viet Nam.

Ivorian refugees began to return to Côte d'Ivoire spontaneously following the arrest of the former president of the country in April 2011. More than 21,000 people had repatriated with UNHCR's assistance by the end of the year. Some of the returnees faced security problems, but UNHCR worked with the Ivorian authorities to address concerns as they arose.

Geneva in December 2011 showed their willingness to consider various forms of local integration ranging from naturalization to an alternative legal status that offered refugee-protection guarantees.

Refugees awaiting durable solutions can often make positive contributions to their host societies, if given the chance to become self-reliant. To this end, UNHCR analysed legal frameworks in several regions to identify opportunities for refugee mobility. Advocacy efforts sought to secure freedom of movement, authorization to work and access to education for refugees within existing host-country policies.

PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS

IN 2011, UNHCR TOOK MORE development-oriented approaches to address the plight of those caught up in protracted refugee situations, including in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nepal, Pakistan, Eastern Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. This included strengthening partnerships with UNDP, the World Bank and the private sector.

In Nepal, UNHCR focused its activities on areas hosting refugees from Bhutan. The joint needs assessment carried out under the leadership of the Government of Nepal, and with the participation of other UN agencies, was approved during stakeholder meetings which included representatives of host communities.

In the search for solutions to the protracted Afghan refugee situation, the Government of Pakistan's Management and Repatriation Strategy for Afghan Refugees will facilitate voluntary repatriation, support host communities, and explore migration-management and alternative stay arrangements. UNHCR and UNDP are also working in the country with

other development partners to expand the 2009 Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme. UNHCR conducted a large profiling exercise to help identify specific needs within the Afghan population. As a first step, UNHCR helped the Pakistani authorities to extend and replace more than 1.7 million identity cards and to issue over 769,000 birth certificates.

UNHCR also strengthened its working partnerships with government ministries and others to improve the delivery of services to refugees, while promoting the coexistence and integration of people of concern and host communities. For example, the health insurance scheme for refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran covers registered Afghan and Iraqi refugees. It complements UNHCR's existing programmes, which support free primary health care for refugees.

In Eastern Sudan, UNHCR promoted local integration while advocating for constructive measures to prevent and respond to secondary movements. Work will be pursued in partnership with UNDP and the World Bank to implement the Transitional Solutions Initiative, with the aim of progressively eliminating dependence on external aid for the refugees in this protracted situation.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR has made it a priority to assist the Government to implement its still unfulfilled undertaking to naturalize more than 162,000 Burundian refugees who had been living in the "Old Settlements" since 1972. Key activities include the provision of grants to individuals to assist with initial relocation, support in identifying settlement land, and initiatives to facilitate a positive reception for new citizens. UNHCR also plays a catalytic role with partners to mobilize resources for longer-term needs.

RESETTLEMENT

IN TANDEM WITH OTHER INTERVENTIONS, resettlement played a vital role in protection, the search for durable solutions and the promotion of international responsibility sharing.

In April 2011, UNHCR launched the Global Resettlement Solidarity Initiative, which called on States to add more resettlement places to their existing quotas for refugees from Libya currently living at the borders of Egypt and Tunisia. Resettlement countries responded positively to the initiative: 13 countries generously pledged 1,700 places for non-Libyan refugees, not including the open number of cases which the United States of America has offered to consider. Almost a third of these places were in addition to annual resettlement programmes or represented an *ad hoc* contribution, helping to preserve the places allocated to other emergency situations requiring urgent resettlement.

While this initiative reaffirmed the solid commitments of resettlement partners, it also revealed the limitations of utilizing resettlement as an emergency response mechanism in large-scale displacements. This is due to the inflexibility of the current global resettlement scheme, with its rigid quota allocations, lengthy processing times, restrictive profile requirements and limited emergency resettlement capacity. These constraints have compelled UNHCR to find new solutions, such as the establishment of a pool of emergency resettlement places that could be activated during massive outflows and the enhanced use of the emergency transit facilities.

UNHCR welcomed resettlement-related pledges by 25 countries on the occasion of the 2011 intergovernmental meeting. In addition to general pledges, traditional as well as new and emerging resettlement countries made concrete assurances on a wide range of issues.

For instance, there were agreements on enhancing integration programmes; fostering twinning arrangements between traditional and new resettlement countries in order to share good practices; expediting resettlement processes; and contributing to the flexible pool of places as part of the emergency response. With the adhesion of Germany, the number of countries committed to implementing resettlement programmes has risen to 26.

Shrinking humanitarian space had an impact on UNHCR-facilitated resettlement activities. There was a significant slowdown in resettlement processing, not least due to the deteriorating security conditions in some countries of asylum. To overcome problems of access, UNHCR and resettlement countries explored innovative interview methods, such as video-conferencing.

In 2011, UNHCR presented more than 90,000 refugees for resettlement consideration, a 15 per cent drop from 2010. Some 11 per cent of these submissions were for women and girls at risk, marking the achievement of the 10 per cent target of Executive Committee Conclusion No. 105 for the first time.

Some 61,000 refugees departed for resettlement in 2011. The top three countries of asylum from which refugees departed for resettlement remained the same as in 2010: Nepal (18,150), Thailand (9,600) and Malaysia (8,400). By nationality, the main beneficiaries were refugees from Bhutan, Myanmar and Iraq. UNHCR is concerned about the sharp drop of some 16 per cent in overall departures since 2010, a year that saw 73,000 departures. The falling numbers are attributable to tighter security screening, lack of access to major processing countries and limited reception capacity in resettlement countries.

In the current global economic and political climate, obtaining any significant increase in resettlement places is a challenge; consequently, UNHCR and its resettlement partners strive to ensure that the available places are fully utilized. UNHCR presents its projected global resettlement needs each year at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) held in Geneva. Through the ATCR process, priorities for resettlement are regularly reviewed to assess progress in achieving wider strategic benefits and in garnering more resettlement places.

The successful resettlement of refugees relies on cooperation and evolving partnerships among UNHCR, States, NGOs, civil society and community-based organizations. A *UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement* was developed in 2011 to assist UNHCR and NGOs to strengthen partnerships in operational activities, community outreach, information sharing and advocacy as well as reception and integration. The UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme continued to be the primary means of supporting resettlement submissions. More than 140 deployments in 49 duty stations (including 19 for the emergency in North Africa) were made in the course of 2011.

UNHCR also intensified its efforts to support emerging resettlement countries that have inadequate resources and expertise, with the aim of assuring continuity in their intakes and enhancing the integration of resettled refugees. UNHCR promoted supportive partnerships, including twinning arrangements between these countries and advanced resettlement States.

A new version of the *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, initiated in 2010 with support from the Canadian Consultant Management Initiative, was issued at the ATCR in July 2011.

It reflects significant developments in resettlement policy and practice, including new methodologies and tools introduced since the last edition in 2004, which are designed to contribute to improving global coherence, and the quality and efficiency of resettlement. The Resettlement Learning Programme has also been updated to reflect the new contents of the handbook.

Efforts to strengthen the integrity of resettlement processing led to the development of an e-learning module on managing an effective resettlement operation. Following an anti-fraud audit conducted by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, UNHCR has drawn up a plan to implement its recommendations on fraud prevention in the resettlement process.

UNHCR worked with the University of Geneva to develop a social platform for resettled refugees: the *Worldwide Community for Resettled Refugees*. The platform is an online repository of stories, profiles, photos and individuals' notes on why they became refugees, how resettlement changed their lives and what integration challenges they have faced. ■