

Chapter 2

Population levels and trends

Introduction

This chapter reviews and analyses the trends and changes in 2008 in the global populations for which UNHCR has a responsibility. These include refugees, returnees, the stateless and IDPs, collectively referred to as “persons of concern”. While a brief overview of global conflict-induced displacement in 2008 is provided, the detailed analysis in this chapter is limited to populations for whom UNHCR has a mandate. For example, Palestinian refugees who fall under the mandate of UNRWA are not included in the analysis. Likewise, this chapter only covers IDPs generated by conflict and who benefited directly or indirectly from UNHCR’s protection and assistance activities.

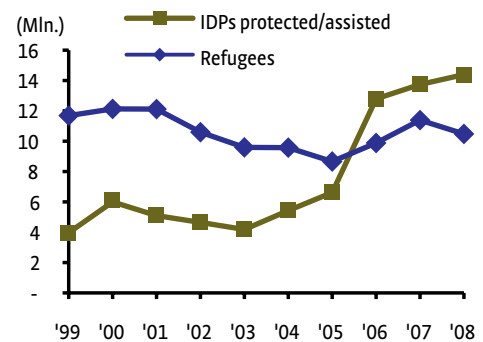
Based on the data of almost five decades, this chapter also provides an insight into those countries which have been the main source of refugees during this period.

Overview of global trends

By the end of 2008, the total population under UNHCR’s responsibility stood at 34.5 million individuals. This figure reflects new displacement, durable solutions found, improved availability of data, and revised estimates, as well as legal and demographic changes. The analysis in the Yearbook is limited to the individual population groups.

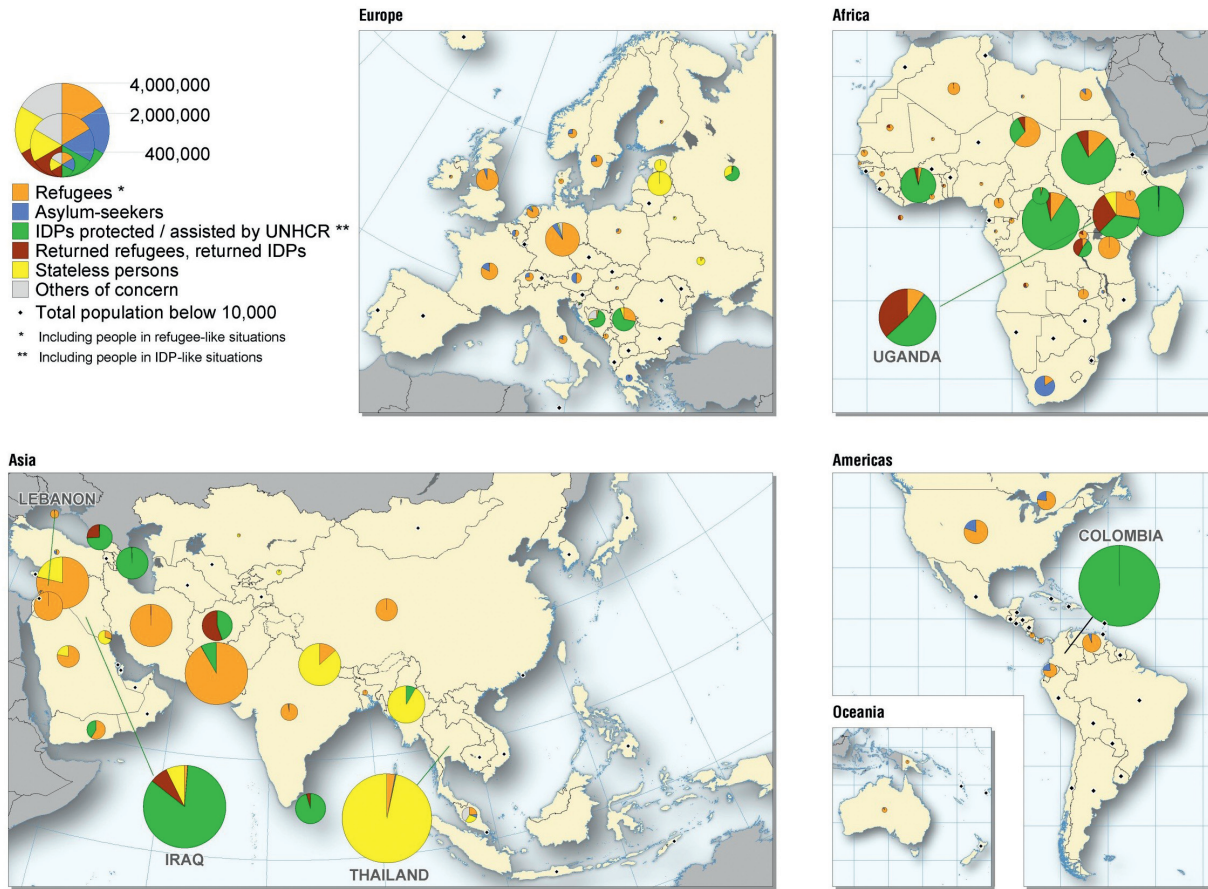
Available information suggests there were 42 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2008.¹⁹ This figure includes 15.2 million refugees of whom 10.5 million fall under UNHCR’s mandate and some 4.7 million Palestinian refugees under the responsibility of UNRWA. The total number of refugees and IDPs under UNHCR’s care remained roughly 25 million, almost unchanged compared to 2007. Together, these populations accounted for three quarters of all people of concern to UNHCR. The total number of people displaced within their country as a result of armed conflict is estimated at 26 million²⁰, of whom just over half are protected or assisted by UNHCR. The number of people whose asylum applications had not yet been adjudicated by the end of the reporting period was estimated at 826,000.

Fig II.1 Refugees and IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR, 1999-2008 (end year)



19 The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that there are an additional 25 million people who have been displaced due to natural disasters. See *Forced Migration Review* #20, <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR20/FMR2021.pdf>

20 Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).



Map 1 Total population by category, end-2008

By the end of 2008, there were an estimated 10.5 million refugees under UNHCR’s responsibility, including some 1.4 million people in refugee-like situations.²¹ The number of IDPs protected and/or assisted by UNHCR was the highest on record. A total of 14.4 million IDPs, including 90,000 people in IDP-like situations, were receiving humanitarian assistance under arrangements in which UNHCR was either a lead agency or a key partner.

More than 1.3 million IDPs were able to return home during the year. In addition, some 604,000 refugees repatriated voluntarily during 2008, the lowest level since 2001. During 2008, UNHCR identified some 6.6 million stateless persons in 58 countries but estimated the total number of stateless persons worldwide at almost double that number, or some 12 million people.²²

Refugees

By region and country of asylum

In 2008, the number of refugees under UNHCR’s mandate dropped for the first time since 2006. There are two main reasons for this decrease. First, many refugees found a durable solution during the year, in particu-

21 Ninety-five per cent of the 1.4 million people in a refugee-like situation are located in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador and Pakistan.

22 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.

lar through voluntary repatriation and resettlement. Second, estimates for the Colombian and Iraqi refugee populations in Ecuador and the Syrian Arab Republic respectively were revised downwards (-32%). This resulted in a decrease of almost one million refugees compared to the year earlier (11.4 million).

By the end of 2008, developing countries hosted 8.4 million refugees, 80 per cent of the global refugee population. The 49 Least Developed Countries provided asylum to 18 per cent of the refugee population under UNHCR's mandate.

The available statistical evidence demonstrates that most refugees remain in their region of origin and flee to neighbouring countries. On average between 75 and 91 per cent of refugees remained within their regions of origin. UNHCR estimates that some 1.7 million refugees (16% out of the total of 10.5 million) live outside their region of origin.

Table II.1 shows that one third of all refugees were residing in countries covered by UNHCR's Asia and Pacific region, three quarters of whom were Afghans. The Middle East and North Africa region was host to about one fifth (22%) of all refugees (primarily from Iraq) while Africa (excluding North Africa) and Europe hosted respectively 20 and 15 per cent of the world's refugees. The Americas region had the smallest share of refugees (8%), with Colombians constituting the largest group.

Tab II.1: Refugee population by UNHCR regions, 2008

UNHCR regions	Start-2008			End-2008			Change (total)	
	Refugees	People in refugee-like situations	Total refugees	Refugees	People in refugee-like situations	Total refugees	Absolute	%
- Central Africa and Great Lakes	1,086,200	15,000	1,101,200	978,200	27,800	1,006,000	-95,200	-8.6%
- East and Horn of Africa	815,200	-	815,200	763,900	-	763,900	-51,300	-6.3%
- Southern Africa	181,000	-	181,000	161,100	-	161,100	-19,900	-11.0%
- West Africa	174,700	-	174,700	175,300	-	175,300	600	0.3%
Total Africa*	2,257,100	15,000	2,272,100	2,078,500	27,800	2,106,300	-165,800	-7.3%
Americas	499,400	487,600	987,000	500,000	303,500	803,500	-183,500	-18.6%
Asia and Pacific	2,674,200	1,151,000	3,825,200	2,577,800	1,018,300	3,596,100	-229,100	-6.0%
Europe	1,580,700	5,500	1,586,200	1,627,200	5,700	1,632,900	46,700	2.9%
Middle East and North Africa	2,654,000	67,600	2,721,600	2,278,200	72,800	2,351,000	-370,600	-13.6%
Total	9,665,400	1,726,700	11,392,100	9,061,700	1,428,100	10,489,800	-902,300	-7.9%

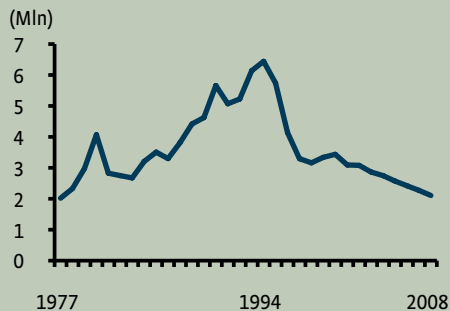
* Excluding North Africa.

The decrease in the number of refugees was observed in almost all major regions, but mostly in the Americas (-19%) and the Middle East and North Africa (-14%). Both decreases, however, were primarily the result of revised estimates rather than population movements. In the Americas, the number of Colombians in Ecuador assessed to be in a refugee-like situation was adjusted from 250,000 to 82,300 following a comprehensive survey carried out by the Government and UNHCR. This survey was undertaken to determine the magnitude

Box 2

Number of refugees in sub-Saharan Africa declining

Even though still one out of five refugees originates from sub-Saharan Africa, the recent trends have been promising. At the end of 1994, the refugee population in sub-Saharan Africa stood at 6.4 million, the highest value on record. Since then it has declined almost gradually reaching 2.1 million by the end of 2008, the lowest level since 1977.



With more than three million refugees having returned to their country of origin during the past decade and 263,000 having departed the continent under resettlement schemes, UNHCR's efforts in securing durable solutions for refugees from sub-Saharan Africa have yielded positive results. Simultaneously, the number of people fleeing en masse (prima facie refugees) during the past decade (2.4 million) was the lowest of the past three decades.

and the profile of the Colombian population in Ecuador and assess the main protection gaps.²³ In the Middle East and North Africa region, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic revised its estimate of Iraqi refugees from 1.5 to 1.1 million based on the presumption that a number of Iraqis have left the country either to return to Iraq or move onward to other countries.

In Africa (excluding North Africa), the number of refugees continued to decline for the eighth consecutive year. By the end of 2008, there were 2.1 million refugees compared to more than 3.4 million in 2000. The refugee population decreased by 7 per cent between the start and end of 2008, primarily due to successful voluntary repatriation operations to Burundi (95,400), South Sudan (90,100), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (54,000) and Angola (13,100). Unfortunately, renewed armed conflict and human rights violations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Sudan also led to refugee outflows of almost 210,000 people, primarily to Kenya (65,000 new arrivals), Uganda (49,500), Cameroon (25,700), and Chad (17,900).

Box 3

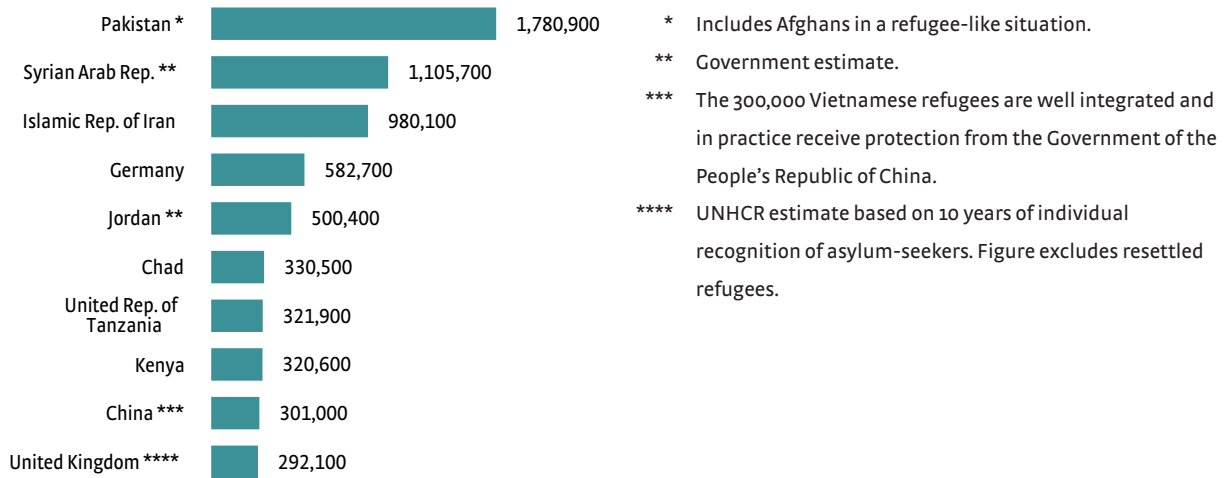
Protracted refugee situations

UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as one in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more in a given asylum country. Based on this definition, it is estimated that some 5.7 million were in a protracted situation by the end of 2008. These refugees were living in 22 different countries accounting for 29 protracted situations in total.

For more information on the different ways used to calculate protracted refugee situations, see 2007 Statistical Yearbook, pp. 41-44, UNHCR, Geneva.

In the Asia and Pacific region, the total number of refugees and people in a refugee-like situation was estimated at 3.6 million at the end of 2008. This is a decrease of 6 per cent during the year mainly due to the voluntary repatriation of more than 274,000 Afghans from Pakistan. In Europe the refugee population increased slightly (+3%). This rise can partly be attributed to the figures from Montenegro in which 16,000 people from Kosovo (Serbia), previously reported as IDPs, were reclassified as refugees.

Fig II.2 Major refugee hosting countries, end-2008



The five major refugee hosting countries in 2008 (Figure II.2) were the same as those in 2007. Together, these countries accounted for almost half (47%) of all refugees under the UNHCR mandate. Pakistan was again the country with the largest number of refugees (1.8 million), virtually all from Afghanistan.²⁴ This is a decrease of a quarter of a million people over 2007 as a result of the continuing repatriation of Afghans. According to the revised Government estimates, the Syrian Arab Republic was host to 1.1 million Iraqi refugees, making it the second largest refugee hosting country at year end. The Islamic Republic of Iran hosted 980,000 refugees, almost all Afghans, while Germany and Jordan²⁵ reported some 583,000 and 500,000 refugees, respectively. In all three countries, estimates remained fairly stable with changes not exceeding the two per cent from the previous year. Chad was the sixth largest hosting country at the end of 2008 with more than 330,000 refugees. The figure increased by 35,000 during the year (+12%), mainly as a result of new arrivals from the Central African Republic and Sudan. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the refugee population dropped to 322,000 (-26%) due to the voluntary repatriation of 95,000 Burundian and 15,600 Congolese refugees. Figures in the United Republic of Tanzania have more than halved since 2002 when the country was host to close to 700,000 refugees. On the other hand, Kenya witnessed an increase during 2008 with the arrival of 65,000 Somali refugees. The country's refugee population stood at more than 320,000 by the end of the year (+21%).

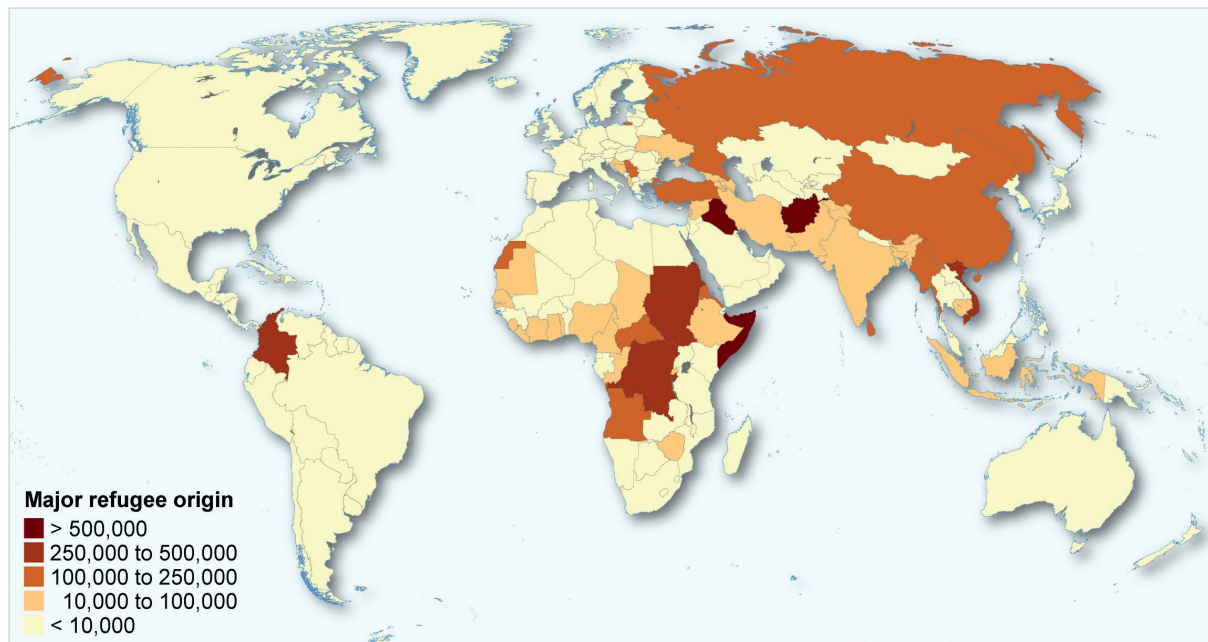
24 Refugee figures for Pakistan include individually recognized Afghan refugees (2,000), registered Afghans in refugee villages who are assisted by UNHCR (764,900), and registered Afghans outside refugee villages who are living in a "refugee-like" situation (1,015,200). Individuals in all categories have been issued a Proof of Registration Card by the Government of Pakistan. Following the completion of the registration exercise in 2007, those living outside refugee villages are now in the "refugee-like" category. They do not receive direct UNHCR material assistance but they benefit from advocacy and reintegration support if they return to Afghanistan.

25 Number of Iraqis in Jordan estimated by the Government.

By origin

Afghanistan has been the leading country of origin of refugees for the past three decades with up to 6.4 million of its citizens having sought international protection during peak years. As of the end of 2008, there were still more than 2.8 million Afghan refugees, meaning one out of four refugees globally was from Afghanistan. Although Afghan refugees were to be found in 69 asylum countries worldwide, 96 per cent were located in either Pakistan or the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iraqis were the second largest group, with 1.9 million having sought refuge mainly in neighbouring countries.

Somali and Sudanese refugees constitute the third and fourth largest refugee groups under UNHCR's responsibility with 561,000 and 419,000 people, respectively. The trends, however, are moving in opposite directions for these two groups. While the number of Somali refugees has gone up by 23 per cent due to the deteriorating political situation in the country, the number of Sudanese refugees has dropped by 20 per cent because of successful repatriation operations to Southern Sudan. Other main sources of refugees were from Colombia (374,000)²⁶ and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (368,000) (see Map 2). Afghan and Iraqi refugees account for almost half (45%) of all refugees under UNHCR's responsibility. These six major refugee populations account for six out of ten refugees worldwide.



Map 2 Major source countries of refugees, end-2008

Capacities and contributions of host countries

By comparing the refugee population with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (PPP)²⁷ per capita²⁸ of a country, a measure can be obtained of the relative impact of hosting refugees. If the number of refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita is high, the relative contribution and effort made by countries compared to the national

26 This figure includes refugees as well people in a refugee-like situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador and other countries in the region.

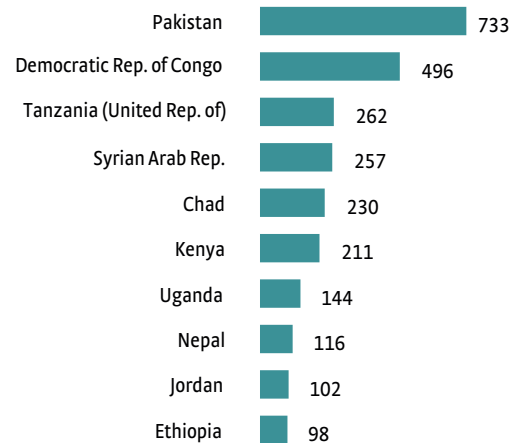
27 Source for Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity): International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2009 (accessed 30 April 2009).

28 Source for national population: United Nations, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision", New York, 2009.

economy can be considered as high. Among the 25 countries with the highest number of refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita, all are developing countries, including 15 Least Developed Countries.

At the end of 2008, Pakistan was hosting the highest number of refugees compared to its national economy. As such, it hosted 733 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was second with 496 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita, followed by the United Republic of Tanzania (262), the Syrian Arab Republic (257), and Chad (230). The first developed country was Germany at 26th place with 16 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita.

Fig II.3 Number of refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita, 2008



The top ten countries based on GDP (PPP) per capita ranking hosted almost half (47%) of all refugees worldwide at the end of 2008. The burden of hosting almost half of the world’s refugees is thus shouldered by ten developing countries.

Asylum-seekers

Asylum-seekers are people who have requested international protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined. It is important to note that a person is a refugee from the moment he or she fulfils the criteria set out in the refugee definition. The formal recognition, for instance through individual refugee status determination, does not establish refugee status but confirms it.

The asylum-seekers included in the total population of concern to UNHCR are people whose applications for asylum or refugee status are pending a final decision. Those covered in this chapter refer to claimants whose



Map 3 IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR, end-2008

applications were pending as of the end of 2008, irrespective of when they may have been lodged (the so-called “backlog” of undecided or “pending cases”).²⁹

By the end of the year, globally some 826,000 individuals were still awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. This figure is 12 per cent higher than in 2007. It includes people at any level of the asylum procedure. 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, still do not report these figures.

At the end of 2008, the largest number of undecided cases at the first instance and on appeal was reported by South Africa (227,000). This figure includes 138,000 undecided cases at the first instance in 2008 and 89,000 cases pending decision at the end of 2007 (no update available). In the United States of America, the number of pending cases at the end of its fiscal year (30 September 2008) totalled 69,200. Other countries with high numbers of pending cases included Canada (54,200), Greece (38,100) and Austria (36,700).

Internally displaced persons

The number of people internally displaced by conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations was estimated at some 26 million at the end of 2008.³⁰ In recent years UNHCR has become increasingly involved with IDPs globally in keeping with the Office’s commitment to the cluster approach introduced in January 2006. The number of internally displaced persons, including people in IDP-like situations,³¹ who benefited from UNHCR’s protection and assistance activities stood at 14.4 million at the end of 2008, the highest figure on record. This constitutes an increase of more than 600,000 compared to the previous year (13.7 million) and more than double the figure before the activation of the cluster approach (6.6 million in 2005). UNHCR offices reported more than 1.1 million newly displaced people in 2008, while at least 1.4 million IDPs were able to return home during the same period.³² In all, UNHCR statistics include IDP populations in 23 countries.

With an estimated three million internally displaced persons, Colombia continues to have one of the largest IDP populations in the world. In Iraq, the number of IDPs rose from 2.4 million in 2007 to more than 2.6 million at the end of 2008. It is estimated that more than 1.4 million Iraqis became displaced within their country in the past three years alone. Renewed armed conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Somalia displaced hundreds of thousands of people. As a consequence, the number of IDPs in both countries increased to 1.5 and 1.3 million respectively, at the end of the year. Kenya also experienced internal displacement in early 2008 following the outbreak of post-election violence – although 346,000 IDPs were able to return home in the course of 2008, an estimated 404,000 remained displaced within the country at the end of the year. Similarly, armed conflict in Georgia forced some 135,000 people to flee their homes in 2008. By the end of the year, an estimated 330,000 were considered internally displaced in Georgia, including 88,000 people in an IDP-like situation as well as people displaced by conflict in the 1990s.

Some 603,000 IDPs in Uganda were able to return to their villages during the year, reducing the IDP population remaining in camps and transit sites to 853,000. Both IDPs and IDP returnees continue to benefit from

29 For details on the number of new asylum claims submitted as well as decisions taken, see Chapter 4.

30 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.

31 The IDP-like situations refer to Georgia (88,000) and the Russian Federation (2,000).

32 In the absence of reliable estimates on newly displaced and returned IDPs during 2008, this figure excludes movements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

UNHCR's protection and assistance activities under the cluster approach. In Sudan, the number of IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR was around 1.2 million by the end of the year.³³ Afghanistan, Pakistan³⁴, Sri Lanka, and Yemen were among those countries reporting either new situations of internal displacement or significant increases in the IDP population during 2008.

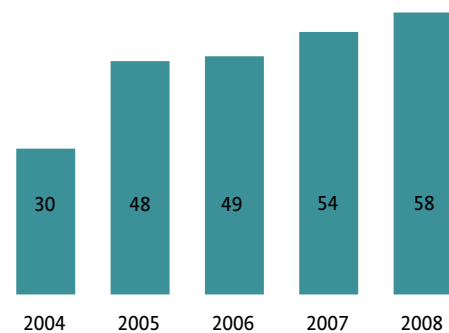
Stateless persons

The identification of stateless persons is the first step in addressing the problem and is fundamental to the discharge of the responsibility entrusted to UNHCR in regard to this population. This responsibility is not limited to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons, but also involves informing the international community of the magnitude of the problem. Measuring statelessness is complicated by the very nature of the phenomenon. Stateless people often live in a precarious situation on the margins of society, frequently lack identity documentation and are subject to discrimination. Only a few countries have procedures in place for the identification and documentation of stateless people, which facilitates gathering precise data.

This report includes data on countries for which reliable official statistics or estimates of stateless populations are available. Annex table 7 also includes some countries (marked with an asterisk) that have significant stateless populations but for which no reliable figures could be provided, including Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia and Zimbabwe.

The data on statelessness in 2008 show a continuation of the trend already observed in previous years of a gradual expansion in coverage and knowledge of stateless persons. By the end of 2008, statistics on statelessness were available for 58 countries, four more than in 2007. This compares to 30 countries in 2004, the first year UNHCR started collecting statistics on stateless populations in a more systematic way, and reflects the efforts of its offices around the globe and States alike to gather better data on such situations. These efforts were bolstered by an increased awareness of the statelessness phenomenon in a number of countries around the world.

Fig II.4 Number of countries reporting statistics on stateless persons



For 2008, the number of identified stateless populations more than doubled to almost 6.6 million. This is not necessarily due to new situations of statelessness but, rather, the result of improved data availability. The main reason for this increase was Thailand which reported significant stateless populations for the first time.³⁵

UNHCR is not yet in a position to provide comprehensive statistics on the number of stateless persons in all countries around the world. As a result, there is a discrepancy between reliable country-level data reported

33 According to IDMC estimates, the number of IDPs in Sudan is estimated at up to 4.9 million.

34 At the time of writing, the number of IDPs in Pakistan had approached the 2 million mark as compared to 156,000 at the end of 2008.

35 There are an estimated 3.5 million stateless persons in Thailand including primarily members of hill tribes and immigrants, and their descendants, from neighbouring countries. The New Civil Registration Act and the Nationality Act became effective on 24 August 2008. They allow, for the first time, birth registration and certification of all children born in Thailand regardless of the status of the parents. This will not only help prevent statelessness in the broadest sense but will also benefit children of refugees or asylum-seekers born in Thailand.

by UNHCR and the total estimated number of stateless worldwide, some 12 million people. The increase in data coverage means that there will also be a gradual narrowing of this gap.

Returnees (refugees and IDPs)³⁶

Voluntary repatriation (for refugees) and voluntary return (for IDPs) remains the durable solution sought by the largest number of refugees and IDPs whose strongest hope is to return home. An estimated 604,000 refugees and 1.4 million IDPs returned in 2008. For refugee returns, this number is markedly below the 731,000 refugees who returned home in 2007. For IDP returns, it was the second highest figure of the past 15 years. Only in 2007 was the figure higher (two million IDP returns).

UNHCR “promotes” (i.e., encourages) voluntary repatriation where peace and reconciliation are enduring. Under less ideal conditions, such as when the sustainability of the peace process is not certain but refugees are returning on their own, UNHCR may “facilitate” the return of those who, albeit being well-informed about the risks that such return would entail, are still determined to go back.

Other groups or people of concern

UNHCR also extends its protection or assistance activities to individuals whom it considers “of concern”, but who do not fall into any of the above population categories. These activities are based on humanitarian or other special grounds and might, for instance, include asylum-seekers who have been rejected by States, but who are deemed by UNHCR to be in need of international protection. The number of people in these groups more than doubled from 68,600 at the start of 2008 to almost 167,000 by the end of the year. The increase arose primarily from the inclusion of close to 80,000 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. These are mostly former refugees or internally displaced persons who have returned home prior to 2008 but are still not fully integrated and therefore continue to receive UNHCR assistance.

Box 4

Which country has experienced the largest number of refugee outflows?

Which countries are the main sources of refugee displacement? Which country has suffered most from war or armed conflict? Which country has generated the highest number of refugees? These are questions often raised by States, media or researchers. Although UNHCR cannot answer these questions, statistical records can – with certain limitations – provide an indication of the countries most affected.

In response to large numbers of arriving refugees, asylum countries may accord protection on a group or *prima facie* basis. The figures presented in this box are mostly based on refugees who have been granted protection on a *prima facie* basis since 1962.

Data limitations have to be borne in mind when interpreting these figures. UNHCR records the number of people arriving within a country of asylum during a given year. If a person is displaced several times during different years, he or she may be counted more than once in UNHCR statistics which could lead to an over-estimation of the number of individuals displaced from a particular country. This is particularly true for situations with a long history of refugee movements such as in the Horn of Africa. Also, although UNHCR has been collecting statistics on *prima facie* refugee recognitions for almost five decades, definitions

36 See Chapter 3 for more details on durable solutions.

Main countries of mass refugee displacement *	Total (in mln)	Main countries of asylum
Afghanistan	6.7	Islamic Rep. of Iran, Pakistan
Eritrea/Ethiopia	3.5	Djibouti, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia (for Eritreans)
Rwanda	3.3	Burundi, Democratic Rep. of Congo, United Rep. of Tanzania, Uganda
Iraq **	>1.8	Islamic Rep. of Iran, Jordan, Syrian Arab Rep.
Former Yugoslavia ***	>1.7	Albania, Bosnia and H., Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, TfyR Macedonia
Liberia	1.4	Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone
Sudan	1.4	Chad, Dem. Democratic Rep. of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda
DemOcratic Rep. of Congo	1.2	Angola, Burundi, Democratic Rep. of Congo, United Rep. of Tanzania, Uganda
Mozambique	1.1	Malawi, United Rep. of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Burundi	1.0	Dem. Democratic Rep. of Congo, United Rep. of Tanzania
Somalia	1.0	Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen
Angola	1.0	Dem. Rep. of Congo, Zambia

* Table is based on data recorded between 1962 and 2008.

** Recent Iraqi arrivals in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic are by and large not available.

*** Excludes arrivals in countries outside the immediate region of the former Yugoslavia.

and reporting formats have changed over time. For instance, until 1997, UNHCR's Annual Statistical Report did not distinguish between refugees who were granted refugee status on a *prima facie* basis and those granted refugee status on an individual basis. As a result, the pre-1997 figures for *prima facie* arrivals may be overestimated. In some cases, the annual number of refugee outflows from a country may not be available (the "flow" figure), while the number of refugees originating from this country at the end of the reference period may well be available (the "stock" figure). This will lead to an underestimate of the actual number of refugee arrivals from a particular country.

Out of the 12 situations with a cumulative total of at least one million refugee outflows, nine occurred in Africa. Out of a total of 33 million cumulative refugee outflows recorded in UNHCR statistics since 1962, about half of them originated from the African continent and one third from Asia.

According to UNHCR figures, some 6.7 million Afghans left the country since outbreak of armed conflict in 1980, the largest continuous refugee movement recorded by UNHCR. The level of displacement was particularly high during the first two years following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (3.7 million refugees). As records did not disaggregate statistics for Eritrea and Ethiopia until Eritrean independence, the two countries are aggregated in this analysis. Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees together (3.5 million) accounted for the second largest refugee movement with the highest outflows being recorded during 1978-1980 and 1984-1985. Refugee outflows from Rwanda, the third largest source country, were highest during 1994 (more than 2.3 million).

While UNHCR statistics show that at least 1.8 million Iraqis left their country since the late 1980s, this figure excludes arrivals of the past few years in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic; however, together these two countries hosted more than two million Iraqi refugees at peak times.

The countries of the former Yugoslavia together produced at least 1.7 million refugees during the 1990s. The actual numbers were much higher, as this figure excludes to a large extent individuals who were granted refugee status or temporary protection outside the Balkan region, in particular in countries of Western Europe. This was in addition to a large number of internally displaced persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo (Serbia). The exodus was particularly high during the 1999 Kosovo crisis when close to one million refugees fled to Albania and TfyR of Macedonia.