

Young refugees in Saloum, Egypt, who will be resettled, looking forward to a future in Sweden.





# Finding Durable Solutions

**F**INDING DURABLE SOLUTIONS for millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) will represent a key challenge for UNHCR in 2012–2013. It will involve seeking opportunities to resolve complex and protracted displacement situations that require a comprehensive approach encompassing voluntary repatriation, local integration and, where appropriate, resettlement.

In Africa, UNHCR is seeking closure to the situation of Angolan, Congolese (from the Republic of the Congo), Rwandan and Liberian refugees, through efforts to find solutions ultimately permitting the cessation of their refugee status. In Asia, UNHCR will endeavour to improve the legal status of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and improve their access to livelihoods.

New resettlement opportunities will be sought for groups of concern in protracted situations, thus expanding asylum space. In the Americas, UNHCR will continue to apply a comprehensive regional strategy to address the displacement situation in Colombia. This will benefit both refugees and IDPs,

through opportunities for local integration and improved quality of protection. The approval in 2010 of Colombia's Law on Victims and Land Restitution in Colombia has already greatly improved such prospects, but land restitution remains a challenge in areas where armed conflict persists.

UNHCR will also work to ensure that durable solutions to displacement form part of broader development and peacebuilding agendas. In Europe, efforts will continue to end the refugee and IDP situations created by the conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s. For this purpose, UNHCR will work with the European Union and the Governments of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in a global initiative to end situations of forced displacement, and ensure that the various communities coexist peacefully.

While some 200,000 IDPs were able to return to their places of origin in 2010, the upward spiral of global IDP figures since 2005 is expected to continue in the next few years. UNHCR will continue to seek to integrate its work with that of humanitarian and development agencies in order to facilitate durable solutions.

## VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND RETURN

UNHCR WILL CONTINUE to seek to ensure that the repatriation and return of refugees and IDPs take place on a fully voluntary basis. In 2012-2013, UNHCR estimates that about 900,000 refugees will decide to return to their countries of origin.

It is anticipated that the four biggest repatriation operations in 2012 will involve returns to Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi and South Sudan. UNHCR will continue to promote voluntary repatriation to Angola, Liberia and Rwanda, in view of the invocation of the cessation clauses for Angolan and Liberian refugees, as well as those Rwandans who fall under the scope of cessation.

With the gradual stabilization of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, and expectations of improvements to the protection situation in North Africa, including in Libya, it is anticipated that refugees will start returning to these countries. UNHCR will provide assistance during voluntary repatriation to ensure that it is sustainable and takes place in safety and dignity.

As part of periodic efforts to re-examine policy guidance and strengthen the planning and implementation of voluntary repatriation activities, UNHCR will issue an updated edition of the *Voluntary Repatriation Handbook* in 2012. The publication will guide field operations as they organize voluntary repatriation programmes, and complement the updated edition of the *Reintegration Handbook* (see below).

## REINTEGRATION

IN 2012-2013, UNHCR will increase its reintegration programmes for refugees who have returned to Afghanistan, Iraq, the DRC, South Sudan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, and other countries. In Afghanistan, UNHCR will work closely with partners and beneficiaries to design and implement pilot reintegration projects aimed at helping returning refugees achieve full reintegration, by improving economic, legal and social conditions needed to sustain their livelihoods.

To facilitate reintegration in Iraq, UNHCR and its partners will assist individuals and families in registering newborns, obtaining marriage certificates, and recovering lost documentation. In Sri Lanka, community-based Quick Impact Projects will underpin UNHCR's activities in 2012. These projects aim to secure returns through improved livelihoods and self-reliance and reduced protection risks.

National governments and the international community increasingly acknowledge the complex challenges of return and reintegration, as well as the negative implications of unsuccessful returns. UNHCR will therefore continue to develop its links with key national entities, UN agencies, the Peacebuilding Support Office and development actors.

UNHCR will also implement projects aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence, supporting long-term peacebuilding at the community level, and encouraging reconciliation. Peaceful coexistence is vital not only for the reintegration of returnees, but also for building social cohesion and peace between host communities and displaced people. The programmes will cover IDPs and refugees in urban or rural settings and in collective or dispersed settlements, both during their displacement and when solutions are being implemented.

An updated edition of UNHCR's *Reintegration Handbook* will be issued, offering guidance on the planning and implementation of reintegration activities, as well as evaluating their effectiveness. The Handbook will reflect a number of contextual and policy changes which have taken place since 2004, when it was originally published. They include the UN and humanitarian reform processes, pooled funding and the importance of new frameworks for institutional development and peacebuilding. Other salient issues to be covered will include IDP returns, urban reintegration and responsible disengagement by UNHCR.

## LOCAL INTEGRATION

IN 2012-2013, UNHCR will continue to advocate for greater opportunities for local integration, particularly in protracted refugee situations. It will raise awareness among refugee-hosting countries and communities of the many positive aspects of local integration, and search for lasting solutions for the internally displaced.

In Europe, UNHCR will continue to use the *Agenda for the Integration of Refugees in Central Europe*, presented in February 2010, as a framework to work towards the legal, economic and socio-cultural integration of refugees. It will notably seek to ensure that existing local integration programmes are incorporated into development plans, while focusing on the needs of specific groups of beneficiaries. In The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for example, UNHCR will advocate on behalf of people of concern with the relevant State institutions to obtain access to social housing and more possibilities for self-reliance.

In Latin America, UNHCR will give priority to activities such as income-generating projects and microcredit schemes in urban areas, where 70 per cent of displaced people on the continent live. In Ecuador, integration activities will consist of improvements to water, sanitation, education, income generation and microcredit programmes, implemented in coordination with local authorities and NGOs.

In Africa, UNHCR will continue its partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on a number of local integration initiatives. In light of the cessation of status for Liberian refugees, more attention will be given in 2012 to the legal aspects of local integration for those who remain in countries of asylum. In eastern Sudan, livelihood efforts as well as other measures to integrate Eritrean refugees locally will continue.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNCHR will support the integration of newly-naturalized refugees, mostly Burundians who first arrived in the country several decades ago. Tanzania

is one of the pilot countries of the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI), led by UNHCR and UNDP, to support the relocation and integration of these former refugees through the rehabilitation of basic services and other necessary measures.

In contexts where local integration is not formally permitted, UNHCR will cooperate with UN and bilateral donor agencies, such as the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, to implement community-based programmes. These are designed to enhance refugees' self-reliance, promote coexistence between refugee and host communities, and contribute to sustainable development. The inter-agency Refugee-Affected and Hosting Areas programme in Pakistan, and the Community-Based Development Programme in Nepal, are two such schemes which UNHCR will support in 2012-2013.

As regards IDPs, UNHCR and the wider international community are giving a higher profile to local integration as an alternative solution, when obstacles to return persist. In situations of continued violence or stalled peace processes, where return does not appear possible in the foreseeable future, UNHCR will cooperate with the international community and responsible governments to adopt a flexible approach that will allow IDPs to have full access to services and to benefit from housing and income-generating activities in their locations of displacement.

## RESETTLEMENT

CONSIDERABLE MOMENTUM has been achieved in the past few years in strengthening resettlement as an important protection tool, a durable solution and a manifestation of international responsibility-sharing. It has provided solutions for more than 300,000 refugees in the last five years, and in a number of operations it has served to expand the asylum space for other refugees.

UNHCR has also made tangible progress in prioritizing the

resettlement of particularly vulnerable refugees, such as women and girls at risk. In 2010, for example, women at risk represented 9 per cent of overall resettlement submissions, the highest percentage of the last five years.

However, a number of challenges persist, on which UNHCR will continue to work with resettlement countries and other partners. They notably include:

- Vastly inadequate capacity, with the need to resettle some 781,300 people in the coming years against the availability of only 80,000 resettlement places per year;
- Difficulties faced by resettlement countries in managing their resettlement procedures;
- Insufficient flexibility in responding to emergency situations;
- Additional security clearances for some refugee populations, which result in lengthy processing times and an increased sense of insecurity for the applicants; and
- Obstacles that prevent access by resettlement countries to refugee populations for the purpose of processing applications.

The number of resettlement countries has increased over the last five years—from 14 in 2005 to 25 in 2010. UNHCR will redouble its efforts to support the emerging resettlement countries to facilitate integration, notably by twinning them with established resettlement countries in order to assist them in expanding and improving their resettlement and integration programmes. UNHCR will continue to advocate for an increase in global resettlement capacity, encouraging new resettlement

countries to start implementing programmes. It will also strengthen its advocacy to promote more resettlement places, particularly in EU Member States.

The pace of UNHCR's resettlement submissions in 2008-2009 and, to a lesser extent in 2010, has strained the capacity of resettlement countries to process cases, resulting in a backlog in some resettlement programmes. Reinforced security clearance procedures imposed by some countries have added to already lengthy processing times. UNHCR is working with resettlement countries to find ways to reduce these delays, adjusting the level of submissions where necessary.

In the context of the Libya crisis, a Global Resettlement Solidarity Initiative was launched in 2011 to encourage States to provide resettlement places for refugees who had been living in Libya. Eleven countries have pledged a total of some 1,000 places for non-Libyan refugees—not including an open number of places offered by the United States of America. Some States have processed departures through consular programmes and private sponsorships. Depending on the developments in Libya, the emergency resettlement effort may need to be continued in 2012, probably with requests for more resettlement places, combined with an accelerated processing capacity.

UNHCR expects that the resettlement needs for refugees from Afghanistan, Somalia, Myanmar and Iraq will remain high in the coming years. However, the profiles required by resettlement countries do not always match those of the refugee populations most in need of resettlement.

UNHCR will continue to promote the resettlement of diverse refugee population groups with pressing resettlement needs. It will also seek to ensure that protection vulnerabilities remain the primary resettlement selection criterion, rather than preferred profiles or the integration potential of refugee applicants.

Making strategic use of resettlement remains a key consideration in planning resettlement delivery. Its strategic benefits need to form part of a wider protection framework, which covers improved quality of protection, livelihoods and asylum, together with the long-term goal of finding other durable solutions. UNHCR hopes to maintain interest among different resettlement countries with the aim to unlock protracted refugee situations.

UNHCR will reinforce integrity and effectiveness in resettlement delivery through the regular training of staff, including in fraud prevention and control, compliance with standard operating procedures, as well as dissemination of the revised *Resettlement Handbook*.

In continued efforts to ensure effective and predictable resettlement processing, UNHCR will endeavour to maintain the capacity of a stable, solid core of staff and a well-managed affiliate workforce. It will also actively support the development of emerging policy issues such as resettlement of non-refugee stateless people in order to extend opportunities for durable solutions to these people of concern, without prejudice to ongoing refugee resettlement programmes. ■

## ● Addressing Protracted Refugee Situations

**A**ddressing protracted refugee situations remains a central policy for UNHCR. Some 7.2 million refugees worldwide have been in exile for more than five years. Among them are Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, Muslims from Myanmar's northern Rakhine State in Bangladesh, Bosnian and Croatian refugees in Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244), Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania and Eritrean refugees in eastern Sudan.

Evaluations of protracted situations in Serbia, Croatia and the United Republic of Tanzania in 2010 indicated that the High Commissioner's Special Initiative on Protracted Refugee Situations has had a positive impact. It has strengthened political resolve and encouraged new efforts to secure sustainable solutions, with UNHCR playing a catalytic role in engaging development partners.

Considerable challenges nonetheless remain. In 2012-2013, UNHCR will pursue concerted efforts to bring such situations to a close, in line with Executive Committee Conclusion No.109 (LXI), the High Commissioner's initiative, and the Global Plan of Action on Protracted Situations.

## ● Urban Refugee Situations

**F**inding solutions for refugees in urban settings is one of the most challenging tasks facing UNHCR and partners. The situation is rendered increasingly difficult by the wide dispersion of refugees in large cities, the protection and physical risks associated with large urban settings and the refugees' location—often in the poorest and most insecure parts of cities.

UNHCR urges host States and the international community to ensure that refugees in urban areas are able to exercise the rights to which they are entitled, and to live in acceptable conditions. The search for durable solutions is a crucial part of these efforts.

Operational guidelines are currently being produced to provide UNHCR and partner staff with the tools to assist them in designing and achieving solutions. They will include effective practices to address protection challenges, and ensure equal access for all people of concern to solutions, livelihoods and self-reliance initiatives.