



**Refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran head home to Afghanistan.**

# Finding Durable Solutions

**F**INDING DURABLE SOLUTIONS for millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide must remain at the forefront of international concerns, even as multiple new emergency displacement challenges demand immediate attention.

UNHCR's mandate includes helping refugees to return home safely (voluntary repatriation), or to settle in a new country, either through local integration in the country where they have found asylum or through resettlement in a new country. Often, a combination of these three solutions is necessary to help find lasting solutions for different individuals or groups of refugees.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS STRATEGIES**

IN 2013, UNHCR WILL CONTINUE to pursue durable solutions in a complementary manner. This means

finding a balance between voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Wherever appropriate, additional options, such as mobility-linked initiatives, temporary migration places and alternative legal stays, will also be explored, thereby broadening the scope for potential solutions in different situations.

Solutions are best planned from the outset of displacement, through a series of preparatory activities. UNHCR will continue to work on strengthening refugee livelihoods and self-reliance; enhancing community-based and participatory approaches; reinforcing constructive coexistence with host communities; creating conditions conducive to return; and advocating for refugee participation in development efforts.

In **Africa**, a regional comprehensive solutions strategy for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is underway, for the benefit of almost half a million refugees in

the Great Lakes and Central Africa region. This strategy foresees the use of resettlement to open up local integration opportunities, particularly by improving prospects for livelihoods and better access to basic services. It also envisages improvements in the sharing of information to support voluntary repatriation. Early signs of support from donors, in the form of resettlement places and funding for self-sufficiency projects, will be a prerequisite.

In light of the implementation of the comprehensive solutions strategy for Rwandan refugees, following the application of the cessation clauses for this population, UNHCR will boost the promotion of voluntary repatriation and reintegration in Africa. It will also pursue opportunities for local integration or alternative status in countries of asylum. Those individuals unable to return to their country of origin for protection-related reasons will continue to receive assistance.

In the **Asia-Pacific region**, a strategy for the Afghan situation has been developed following intensive consultations between the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, as well as UNHCR and other partners. Central to the strategy is the need to create favourable conditions for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration in areas of high return. Through community-based investments, notably the promotion of livelihood activities, the Office will facilitate the reintegration of people of concern. More support will be given to refugee-hosting communities in countries of asylum, and possibilities for alternative stay arrangements and resettlement will be explored. The support, solidarity and engagement of the international community are vital if the Afghan comprehensive solutions strategy for 2013 and beyond is to be successful.

Recent developments inside Myanmar have created additional opportunities for enhanced engagement by UNHCR. A regional solutions strategy for refugees from Myanmar is under consideration. Such a comprehensive regional solutions strategy would involve not only the country of origin but also neighbouring countries of asylum. Alternative stay arrangements, a re-crafted resettlement approach, exploration of possibilities for return and a plan to address the reintegration needs of returnees with other partners, should all form elements of the comprehensive solutions strategy.

For Central Asia, UNHCR has drafted a regional solutions strategy that will boost the search for solutions for the long-staying, largely urban refugees in the region.

In **Europe**, an intergovernmental process that has long been supported by UNHCR led to the signing by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia of a Joint Declaration on Ending Displacement and Ensuring Durable Solutions for Vulnerable Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. The accord aims to expedite the implementation of solutions for the 74,000 refugees from the 1991-1995 Balkans conflict still in exile. A regional programme sets out concrete steps to address remaining obstacles in 2013, including accelerated procedures for the issuance of civil documentation allowing refugees and returnees to enjoy their rights effectively.

In the **Americas**, a comprehensive solutions strategy for Colombian refugees is under development. It is expected that this will boost resettlement. UNHCR remains engaged in supporting the Colombian Government's efforts to increase opportunities for return.

## VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND RETURN

IN 2013 UNHCR WILL CONTINUE TO work to ensure that refugees and IDPs can choose to return home voluntarily in safety and dignity and, on return, enjoy full rights as citizens.

The largest repatriation operations in 2013 are expected to involve returns to Afghanistan, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Iraq and Rwanda. The gradual stabilization of the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire has led to the return of more than 100,000 refugees, and the authorities in Abidjan have now signed tripartite repatriation agreements with UNHCR and the Governments of Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Togo. In 2013, UNHCR will continue to promote return in safety and dignity; at the same time, it will assure protection for those refugees who choose not to return. The Office will also continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of South Sudanese from asylum countries.

In 2012, UNHCR and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania completed interviews with some 37,000 Burundian refugees in Mtabila Camp to determine who will continue to need international protection. Measures related to the closure of the camp and the return of those found not to be in need of protection were also discussed.

The voluntary return of some refugees from the DRC to safer areas within the country, including Equateur Province, is foreseen in 2013. However, instability in the Kivus is preventing safe and dignified voluntary repatriation to that part of the country.

UNHCR also stands ready to assist returns of Iraqi refugees from neighbouring countries.

#### REINTEGRATION

SUPPORT FOR THE REINTEGRATION OF refugee returnees in 2013 will be based on: (i) access to basic services, including water, infrastructure and livelihood opportunities; (ii) housing, land and property; and (iii) peaceful coexistence. These are areas where UNHCR encounters recurring obstacles to sustainable reintegration in country operations.

In order to maximize the sustainability and effectiveness of reintegration, UNHCR will strengthen partnerships with governments, development actors, civil society and the private sector in 2013. UNHCR will continue to coordinate activities with humanitarian and other stakeholders, including UNDP, ILO and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, to maximize the effectiveness of reintegration programmes. Capacity-building activities will complement other efforts towards sustainable reintegration by engaging local authorities in joint activities, training and material assistance. Systematic

monitoring and analysis as well as knowledge sharing will improve advocacy and assistance for the effective integration of returnees into development plans.

UNHCR intends to issue an updated edition of its *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* and its operational guide on coexistence and conflict analysis. Both are designed to enhance the capacity of UNHCR staff and partners to implement effective reintegration and coexistence projects.

In Afghanistan, UNHCR will work with partners to support the enhancement of community-based reintegration activities in high-return areas, building on lessons learned from pilot sustainable reintegration projects. The focus will be on improving return conditions, thereby increasing the ability of local communities to absorb returnees, and on providing incentives for more refugee returns. Operational support will focus on enhancing access to basic services (such as health, water and education), economic and livelihood opportunities, protection for vulnerable returnees, strengthening peaceful coexistence and boosting social cohesion. UNHCR will also strengthen complementarities between IDP integration strategies and the multi-year solutions strategy for Afghan refugees.

In Iraq, UNHCR will continue to address issues related to access to land, housing and water. Concerns surrounding restitution and property rights will be addressed through effective monitoring of the returnee population and strong coordination with development actors. Effective, comprehensive monitoring will ensure that the returnees' needs are identified and fulfilled not only by humanitarian agencies but are also

factored into the longer-term plans of development organizations.

In Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR will continue to implement a two-pronged approach to protection and community empowerment to ease the sustainable reintegration of some 172,000 people affected by conflict. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNHCR will collaborate with the Japan International Cooperation Agency on community development assistance.

## LOCAL INTEGRATION

IN 2013, LOCAL INTEGRATION WILL be pursued through a combination of interventions within existing regional and global frameworks, including the ECOWAS protocol relating to free movement. Advocacy, legal assistance and coordination will be complemented by interventions in three areas: (i) access to land, housing and basic services, including education and healthcare for refugees; (ii) enhancing self-reliance and livelihood opportunities; and (iii) promoting peaceful coexistence among refugees and between refugees and host communities.

In Colombia, UNHCR will strengthen coordination with UNDP and other partners at the national and local level to implement the TSI for IDPs. The Government's policies and relevant legislation will be supported through activities focusing on improving access to land, housing and basic services; strengthening local institutions and communities; and enhancing protection for over 54,000 IDPs and local community members. The goal of this strategy is to develop successful examples of solutions for IDPs in order to support the Government's development of a comprehensive solutions policy.

In eastern Sudan, UNHCR will build on recent efforts to transform camps into self-sustainable settlements. It will continue to engage with TSI partners in the promotion of self-reliance through livelihoods interventions. Priority will be given to strengthening partnerships with

national authorities, supporting the upgrading of infrastructure and establishing management systems to ensure service sustainability.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the Government had undertaken to naturalize more than 162,000 Burundian refugees who had been living in the so-called Old Settlements since 1972. However, the Government has yet to authorize the related relocation and integration. Assisting this generous local integration programme remains a priority for UNHCR.

Within the framework of the cessation activities planned for Rwandans in 2013, UNHCR will continue local integration initiatives, including through permanent residence arrangements and naturalization. Local integration will be promoted through access to self-sufficiency and education.

## RESETTLEMENT

RESETTLEMENT CONTINUES TO PLAY a vital role in protecting individual refugees at risk, especially in response to emergency refugee situations. It also serves to reduce some of the burden on developing countries hosting large refugee populations. Moreover, in a number of situations, resettlement is being implemented within a comprehensive solutions framework. When used strategically, resettlement helps to leverage other protection and solutions outcomes for larger numbers of refugees who may not be able to benefit from it directly. UNHCR anticipates that refugees from Afghanistan, Colombia, the DRC, Myanmar, Iraq and Somalia will be among the populations with the greatest resettlement needs in 2013.

The number of countries implementing regular resettlement programmes rose to 27 in 2012 with the addition of Germany and Belgium. European Union (EU) Member States have agreed to a Joint Resettlement Programme which will increase the number of resettlement places in

## IN 2013, UNHCR WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN A COMPLEMENTARY MANNER BY FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION, LOCAL INTEGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT

the European Union as a whole. The Joint Programme should also bring additional coordination and benefits for the integration of refugees resettled in EU countries.

UNHCR has made the resettlement of vulnerable refugees, including women and girls at risk, a priority. In 2011, resettlement submissions for women and girls at risk, for the first time, exceeded the target of 10 per cent set in 2006 by the Executive Committee in its Conclusion No. 105 (LVII). This strategy will be pursued in 2013. However, there remain a number of challenges, notably:

- A persistent gap between global resettlement needs in 2013 (181,000) and places available (81,000);
- Difficulties in meeting submission targets due to the lack of access to refugees in some operations exposed to political upheaval and the tendency for large-scale resettlement exercises to wane once the majority of cases have been submitted;
- Lengthy delays in resettlement processing and decision making for large groups of refugees as a result of extensive security vetting procedures required by key resettlement countries;
- The limited availability of accommodation and reception facilities for refugees in some resettlement countries;
- A growing tendency to reject resettlement cases which do not match the more restrictive criteria of some States;

- The relatively high rejection rate of emergency and urgent resettlement cases by some States which give preference to cases with strong refugee claims rather than considering compelling resettlement needs.

In 2013, UNHCR will continue to support resettlement activities at the field level through deployment schemes. The aim is to deliver the requisite number of referrals, including for operations with refugees from the DRC, for whom an upward trend in resettlement is foreseen. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the expansion of resettlement opportunities and encourage more countries, particularly in Central Europe, to establish resettlement programmes.

UNHCR will reinforce the integrity and effectiveness of the resettlement process by training staff in fraud prevention. Partnerships with NGOs will be strengthened in order to enhance best interest determination capacity and improve the identification of cases for referral. The use of innovative methods (such as video-conferencing, pioneered by Australia and Canada during the Syrian crisis in 2012) to reach refugees for resettlement interviews will be encouraged, as will the expanded use of emergency transfer facilities. UNHCR will work with local counterparts to support integration studies and analysis, and to promote the development of benchmarks to measure integration outcomes. ■