

CHAPTER III

DURABLE SOLUTIONS AND NEW DISPLACEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Despite the considerable progress achieved in recent years to reduce the number of refugees globally, millions still remain in need of durable solutions. It is UNHCR's role to both protect and assist refugees as well as to find permanent solutions for them. These solutions can take three different forms: (i) voluntarily repatriation to the home country; (ii) resettlement to another country or; (iii) finding appropriate permanent integration mechanisms in the host country. Efforts and progress towards achieving durable solutions and, therefore, to reduce the number of refugees are however partly hampered by new outflows of refugees. Each year, thousands of refugees flee their home country and are recognized either on an individual basis or through group determination (*prima facie*). This chapter looks at both developments: durable solutions found and new displacement occurred during 2005. It contains three parts.

The first part analyses progress towards achieving durable solutions for refugees during 2005. Among the three durable solutions, voluntary repatriation is generally the preferred option benefiting the largest number of refugees. Resettlement of refugees is a key protection tool and a significant burden and responsibility sharing mechanism. UNHCR is currently pursuing its efforts to expand the use of resettlement, *inter alia*, by further diversifying the nationalities of refugees being resettled and the number of countries receiving resettled refugees. Local integration, the third durable solution, is a legal, socio-economic and political process by which refugees progressively become part of the host society. With local integration of refugees generally being difficult to quantify in numerical terms, the analysis is limited to the local integration through naturalization, whereby the full range of protection is extended to refugees by the host country.

The second part of this chapter deals with new arrivals, focusing primarily on mass or *prima facie* refugee outflows, while the third part addresses major changes to the refugee population in 2005 that are not explained by durable solutions or new arrivals.

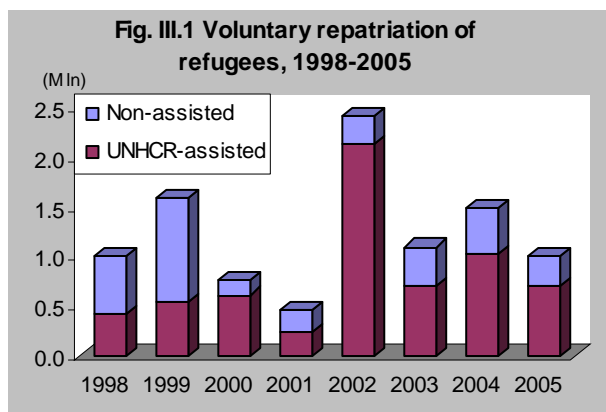
DURABLE SOLUTIONS

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

Voluntary repatriation statistics are generally based on consolidated information from both the country of asylum and the country of origin. Based on the available information, it is estimated that some 1.1 million refugees repatriated voluntarily to their country of origin during 2005, a 27 per cent decrease compared to 2004 (1.5 million), and virtually the same number as in 2003. In all, there were a total of 15 voluntary repatriation movements involving more than 1,000 refugees during 2005. The main countries of origin to which refugees returned during the year included Afghanistan (752,100), Liberia (70,300), Burundi (68,200), Iraq (56,200), and Angola (53,800).

Similar to previous years, the majority of voluntary repatriation departures of refugees were reported by Pakistan (461,000) and the Islamic Rep. of Iran (345,000). In addition, a significant number of refugees departed from the United Rep. of Tanzania (82,000), the Dem. Rep. of the Congo (47,000), and Côte d'Ivoire (33,000).

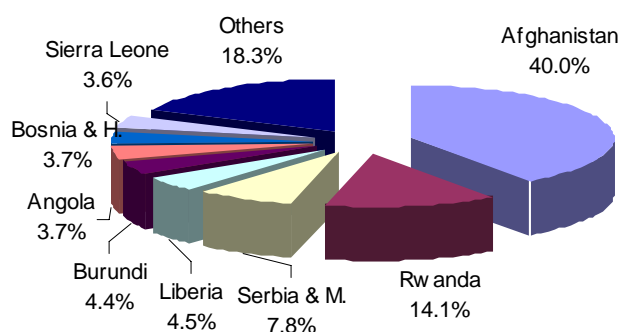
For statistical purposes, only refugees who have repatriated during the calendar year are included in the population of concern to UNHCR. In practice, however, operations may assist returnees for shorter or longer periods. The latter is for instance the case for Angola where, since the signing of the peace accord in 2002, more than 364,000 Angolan refugees have returned home, many of them benefiting from UNHCR reintegration activities.



The past four years saw an almost unprecedented level of voluntary repatriation, mainly due to the return of more than 4.2 million Afghans, primarily from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Globally, more than six million refugees were able to return home during 2002-2005, of which 4.6 million with UNHCR assistance.

During the decade 1996-2005, an estimated 12.9 million refugees found a durable solution by repatriating to their home country, primarily to Afghanistan (5.2 million), Rwanda (1.8 million), Serbia and Montenegro (1.0 million), Liberia (576,000), and Burundi (564,000) (see Table B.6).

Fig. III.2 Refugee returns by origin, 1996-2005
(Total = 12.9 million)



In any operation, the promotion of return comes only after minimum conditions are met and when refugees can return in safety and dignity. But even when peace and security are restored in a country, voluntary return presents enormous challenges, not the least in terms of sustainability.

Sometimes, the infrastructure is not in place for returning refugees to rebuild their lives. They might thus decide to return to the refugee camp in the country of asylum they have been living in, in some cases for years. As a result, refugees might move between their country of origin and country of asylum multiple times and thus get counted several times in UNHCR statistics which tend to capture the movement and not the individual per se. As such, voluntary repatriation statistics might in some cases be larger than the actual number of individual sustainable returns.

Adding to the complexity of counting refugee returnees, voluntary repatriation departures are often underreported, because many refugees return on their own initiative, without informing the authorities of the host country or requesting UNHCR for assistance. In contrast, the number of returnees in the country of origin may be overestimated, because nationals who stay behind may also register for returnee assistance. As mentioned earlier, in order to present the picture as accurate as possible, the voluntary repatriation figures provided in the 2005 Yearbook result from

a consolidation process of estimates from both the country of asylum and the country of origin.

RESETTLEMENT

Resettlement constitutes a durable solution for refugees who can neither repatriate to their country of origin nor remain in the first country of asylum. Sometimes, because refugees' life and liberty are at risk in their first country of asylum, resettlement serves as a protection tool, as durable solution and as responsibility and burden sharing mechanism.

In accordance with its mandate, UNHCR's role in resettlement ranges from identifying resettlement needs to screening and selecting potential resettlement cases and arranging transportation in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or NGOs. UNHCR uses a number of criteria to identify potential resettlement candidates. These include (a) legal and physical protection needs, (b) lack of local integration prospects, (c) family reunification, (d) and specific needs categories such as women-at-risk and refugees with disabilities or serious medical conditions.

Despite the fact that the quantitative contribution of resettlement to finding durable solutions is limited, it nevertheless plays an important role in the sharing of refugee burden by the industrialized countries, most notably Australia, Canada and the United States. During the decade 1996-2005, some 268,200 refugees were resettled from asylum countries under UNHCR auspices, compared to 12.9 million refugees who were able to repatriate. Thus, for every refugee who has been resettled since 1996, about 50 have repatriated.

In Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, resettlement is part of the national immigration programme. In these countries, resettlement candidates are either refugees selected by UNHCR as part of an agreed quota, or persons selected directly by the immigration authorities on the basis of national criteria. Sometimes, these countries admit persons for resettlement who do not qualify for Convention refugee status, but for whom there may be other compelling reasons for resettlement. UNHCR has agreed resettlement quotas with other, mostly European, countries. In line with the Agenda for Protection¹, UNHCR has advocated in recent years for States, in particular in Latin America, to establish regular resettlement programmes, and as a result, Argentina became a new resettlement country in June 2005.

Resettlement statistics presented in the 2005 Yearbook are based on two sources. First, UNHCR records from asylum countries indicate the number of refugees who have departed under UNHCR auspices. Second, government statistics from receiving countries are used to analyse the total inflow of resettled refugees, whether or not facilitated by UNHCR.

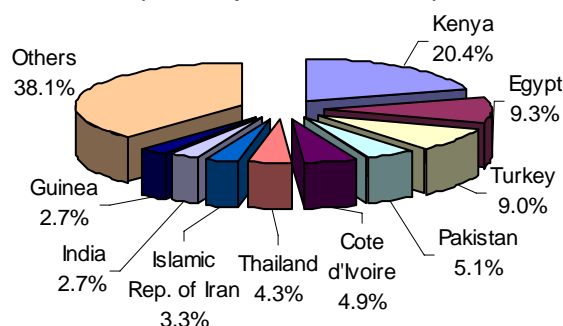
(a) Resettlement under UNHCR auspices

In 2005, some 30,500 refugees were resettled from their first asylum countries with UNHCR assistance, virtually the same level as during 2004 (29,600). The main beneficiaries of UNHCR-facilitated resettlement during the year were refugees from Somalia (5,900), Liberia (4,700), Sudan (3,200), Afghanistan (3,200), and Myanmar (2,900).

¹ See <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3e637b194.pdf> for more information.

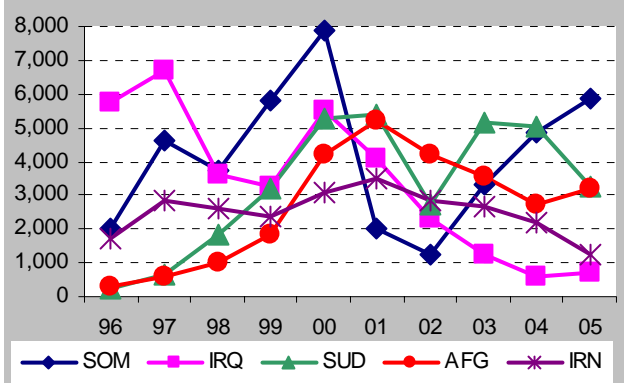
Some 83 UNHCR country offices were engaged in facilitating resettlement departures during 2005, fifteen more than in 2004. The largest number of refugees resettled with UNHCR assistance departed from Kenya (6,800), Thailand (2,500), Guinea (1,900), Ghana (1,800), and Egypt (1,300). During the period 2001-2005, one out of five refugees resettled by the Office was dealt with by UNHCR's resettlement hub in Nairobi.

Fig.III.3 UNHCR-assisted resettlement by country of departure, 2001-2005
(Total departures = 134,800)



The number of nationalities being resettled in the past few years has remained rather limited. In fact, during the period 1996-2005, there were 21 refugee nationalities involving more than 1,000 departures. Refugees from Somalia constituted the largest group resettled under UNHCR auspices (41,300), followed by refugees from Iraq (33,700), Sudan (32,700), Afghanistan (26,800), and the Islamic Rep. of Iran (25,100). These five refugee nationalities accounted for 60 per cent of all UNHCR-facilitated resettlement departures during the last 10 years (see *Table B.12*). Different resettlement trends reflect both the protection needs of refugees as well as specific preferences of resettlement countries.

Fig.III.4 Top-5 UNHCR-assisted resettlement departures by origin, 1996-2005



had been accepted by 17 countries as part of a resettlement programme (see *Table B.14*).

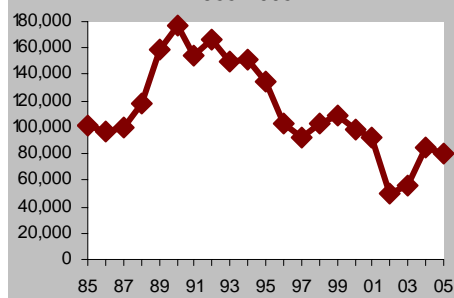
The main countries of origin whose citizens benefited from resettlement during 2005 included Somalia (11,100), Lao People's Democratic Republic (8,500), Sudan (6,900), Cuba (6,400), and the Russian Federation (6,100) (see *Table B.15*).

Following the events of 11 September 2001, the number of resettled refugees in industrialized countries plummeted due to specific screening procedures put in place by some countries, in particular the United States. The 2002-2003 levels (50,600 and 55,600 respectively) were thus the lowest

(b) Government arrivals

During 2005, 16 countries reported the admission of 81,000 resettled refugees, including the United States² (53,800, during US Fiscal Year), Australia (11,700), Canada (10,400), Sweden (1,300), and Finland (770). The 2005 level was slightly lower compared to the year before when 84,600 refugees

Fig.III.5 Resettlement arrivals in industrialized countries, 1985-2005



² Resettlement statistics for the United States also include family members for the purpose of family reunification.

number of resettlement arrivals since the early 1980s. The numbers however increased again during 2004 and 2005, albeit never reaching the all-time high levels of previous years.

As noted earlier, in the past few years new States in Central and Latin America emerged as resettlement countries offering a durable solution to refugees, primarily from Colombia. Among those resettlement countries, Brazil accepted 191 refugees during 2002-2005, including some 160 Colombians. Chile received 72 refugees during 2004-2005 (all Colombians), whereas Argentina accepted 34 Colombian refugees in 2005. In addition, Mexico accepted 46 resettled refugees during 2003-2005, the majority of them originating from the Dem. Rep. of the Congo (27).

Resettled refugees normally have access to long-term residence status, a range of social, economic and legal rights and, eventually, to naturalization. Resettled refugees thus require little, if any, international protection. From a national statistical perspective, however, the arrival of resettled refugees constitutes an increase in the refugee population. However, once refugees have obtained the citizenship of the host country, they are no longer counted as refugees in UNHCR's statistics.

LOCAL INTEGRATION

Local integration, an important durable solution for refugees, has three inter-related dimensions. First, refugees are granted an increasingly wider range of rights and entitlements by the host country that are broadly comparable to those enjoyed by its citizens (*legal process*). Over time this process should lead to permanent residence rights and eventually to the acquisition of citizenship in the country of asylum. Second, refugees become progressively less reliant on State aid or humanitarian assistance, attaining a growing degree of self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods, thus contributing to the economic life of the host country (*economic process*). And third, local integration is a *social and economic process* of acclimatization by the refugees and accommodation by the local communities enabling refugees to live amongst or alongside the host population, without discrimination or exploitation and to contribute actively to the social and economic life of their country of asylum.

In some countries, refugees have the opportunity to integrate locally because the host country has provided them with access to land or the labour market, while in others they remain confined to camps or designated zones where they depend on assistance from the international community.

Over time, acquiring the citizenship of the country of asylum is the final and crucial step towards obtaining the full protection of the host country, as foreseen by Article 34 of the 1951 Convention. However, national laws do not always permit refugees to get naturalized. Moreover, statistical data on the provision of citizenship to refugees is available on a limited scale only, and is thus under-reported. The main reason for lack of statistical evidence is the fact that national statistics of many countries generally do not distinguish between refugees and non-refugees.

During 2005, UNHCR was informed about significant numbers of refugees being granted citizenship by the United States (58,900; during January-September 2005 only), Kyrgyzstan (3,400), Armenia (2,300), Belgium (2,300), Mexico (1,200), and Ireland (580). In total, data on naturalization was available for 20 asylum countries covering some 70,000 refugees.

Because of the importance of naturalization for local integration and the paucity of data in industrialized countries, UNHCR estimates the average waiting time for

refugees to naturalize for some of those countries. In industrialized countries with major immigration programmes, i.e. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States³, it is assumed that refugees have naturalized after five years, whereas refugees in Europe are estimated to have obtained the nationality of their host country after 10 years (see also Chapter I: *Estimating the refugee population in industrialized countries*).

NEW ARRIVALS

Refugees escaping war or armed conflict often move in large groups and flee because of the same reasons during the same time frame. By being part of the same group, these persons are often accorded refugee status as a group, i.e. on a *prima facie* basis. Conversely, a significant number of refugees seeks asylum on an individual basis. The eligibility of individual asylum-seekers for refugee status is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Because of the nature of displacement, *prima facie* status is often accorded by host neighbouring countries which receive the majority of those who flee. Individual status determination on the other hand is generally the norm in countries located further away from the country of mass outflow. With the exception of the Balkan crisis in the 1990s, in the past few years new situations of mass displacement occurred primarily in developing countries. It is thus countries in developing regions that in the first place accord *prima facie* status to refugees. Individual refugee status however is most commonly granted by industrialized countries.

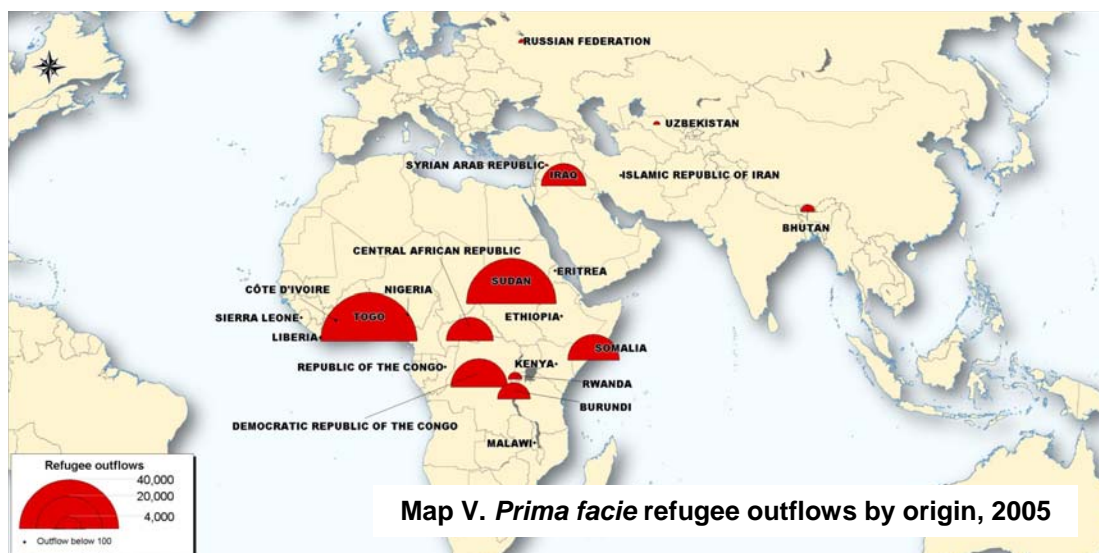
MASS REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

During 2005, a total of 136,000 *prima facie* refugee arrivals were reported by 19 asylum countries, the lowest since 1976 when 113,700 persons fled their country in a mass outflow. As such, the 2005 level was also significantly lower compared to 2004 (-46%) and 2003 (-59%).

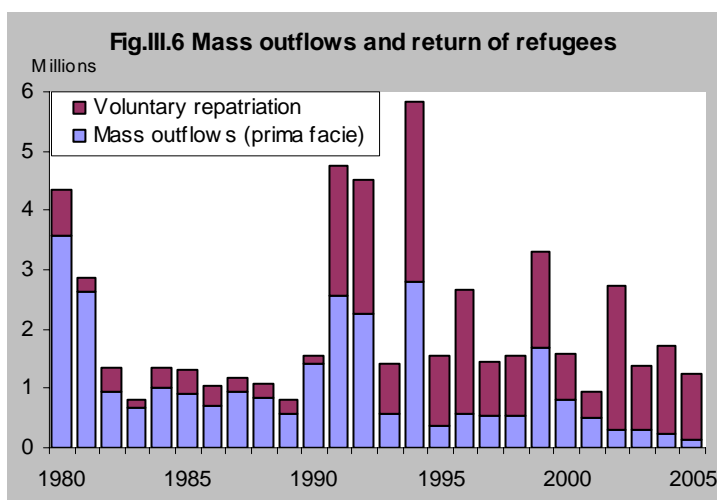
The reduction in refugee outflows is reflected in fewer asylum countries reporting new arrivals. In 2005, the largest new arrivals of refugees were reported by Chad (32,400), Benin (25,500), Uganda (24,000), Ghana (13,600), and Yemen (13,200). In total, 10 asylum countries reported the arrival of more than 1,000 *prima facie* refugees during 2005 (see Table B.2).

Togo was the main source of new refugee displacement in 2005 with 39,100 refugees fleeing the country. In addition to Togo, there were five more countries of origin which produced more than 10,000 *prima facie* refugees during the year: Sudan (34,500), the Dem. Rep. of the Congo (15,600), Somalia (13,600), the Central African Rep. (11,500), and Iraq (10,500) (see Map V.)

³ Newly available data on the naturalization of refugees in the United States indicates that the average waiting time for refugees to naturalize might be higher than the estimated five years.



Like in previous years, all mass refugee displacement occurred in Africa and Asia. Whereas Africa recorded the vast majority of the total global *prima facie* refugee arrivals during 2002-2003 (95%), the deteriorating situation in Iraq reflected negatively on Asia whose share rose from five per cent during 2002-2003 to 20 per cent in 2005.



In general, the recent years have witnessed the emergence of only few new mass refugee situations but very high level of refugee returns (see Fig.III.6). As noted in Chapter II, low levels of new international displacement in combination with sustained durable solutions are the main reasons for the recent decline in the global refugee population.

INDIVIDUAL RECOGNITION

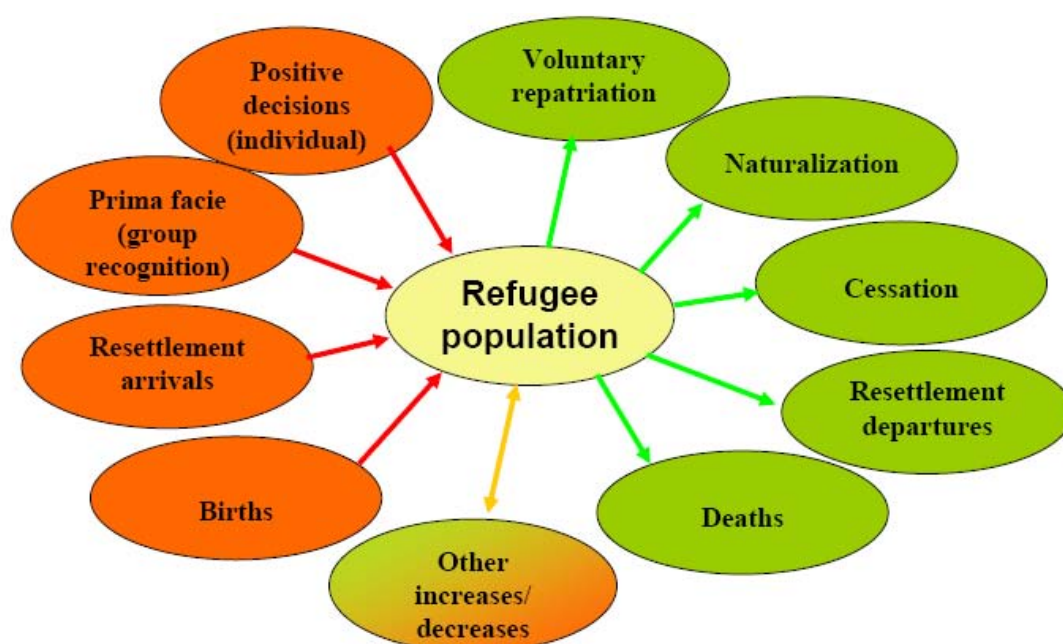
In 2005, an estimated 209,600 asylum-seekers were granted Convention refugee status or a complementary form of protection (e.g. humanitarian status, subsidiary protection), 12 per cent more than in 2004, when some 187,100 asylum-seekers were accepted. Countries⁴ recognizing the largest number of asylum-seekers on an individual basis in 2005 were Kenya (29,900), the United States (23,600), France (22,100), Thailand (15,300), and Canada (12,100) (see Table II.1). Main countries of origin producing each more than 10,000 asylum-seekers recognized on an individual basis include Eritrea, Myanmar, the Russian Federation, Somalia and Sudan. Trends in asylum and refugee status determination are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

⁴ This includes countries where UNHCR is responsible for refugee status determination.

OTHER SOURCES OF POPULATION CHANGES

Most changes in the refugee population are determined by a variety of complex factors. These changes can be caused by mass refugee movements (arrivals, voluntary repatriation) or be the result of legal or administrative changes in the refugee population (e.g. granting or ending of refugee status). In addition, the number of refugees is determined by natural factors (births and deaths) which for instance can have a significant impact on the size of a population in refugee camps in developing countries. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to some of the major changes to the refugee population that are not explained by either of the two.

Overall, either population dynamics or legal reasons are the main cause for a changing refugee population. The graph below captures the various factors impacting on the size of the refugee population in a country. Factors in green (voluntary repatriation of refugees, cessation of refugee status etc.) reflect the decrease in the number of refugees whereas the factors in orange highlight the ones adding to the size of the population (*prima facie* refugee arrivals, births etc.). “Other increases/decreases” refers to a variety of factors which cannot be explained by any of the above and very often relates to administrative changes. For instance, one important reason for a sudden change in the refugee population is registration. The presence of refugees is verified periodically to ensure that the administrative records are in line with the actual situation on the ground. As a result of registration, refugee statistics in camps can either increase (mainly because of births or new arrivals not previously registered) or drop (mainly because of deaths or non-registered departures). Generally, the quality and degree of refugee registration varies greatly and depends on protection and operational considerations.



Births and deaths, the two natural growth components influencing the size of the refugee population, are sometimes difficult to track correctly. Particularly in refugee camps, the birth of a refugee child will be recorded accurately in UNHCR statistics because an increase in the family size often leads to an increase in the delivery of assistance and benefits. The death of a refugee, however, tends to get under-reported because of fear of receiving less assistance or because of the lack of incentives for the family to report the death to the competent authorities, UNHCR or

the implementing partner.

Besides registration and natural factors affecting the size of a refugee population, voluntary repatriation statistics are also sometimes difficult to record accurately. UNHCR statistics provide one consolidated figure for each voluntary repatriation movement, based on information from both sides of the border (see for instance Table II.1). However, refugees sometimes return spontaneously without having been registered in their country of asylum previously which consequently leads to discrepancies in the number of refugee departures and arrivals, affecting in particular the credibility of the data reported by asylum countries. UNHCR statistics reflect the higher figure, usually reported by the country of return.