



Angolan refugees, some of whom had been living in exile in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for up to 40 years, journey back to their homeland by train from Kinshasa. Over the course of 2014, 126,800 refugees returned to their country of origin worldwide. This figure was the lowest level of refugee returns since 1983.



Durable Solutions and New Displacement

Protection and durable solutions for refugees have been inseparable core mandates of UNHCR since its creation in 1951. Finding durable solutions for refugees is equally important as providing them with necessary protection, as backed by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Convention encourages signatory states to find permanent solutions for refugees, a mandate affirmed and supported by other regional instruments.

As in previous years, UNHCR continued to pursue its mandate of finding durable solutions for refugees in 2014. Three traditional types of durable solutions are being pursued – voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration. Importantly, any combination of these can be simultaneously pursued in any country, as pursuing one solution does not prevent the pursuance of others.

Each year, thousands of refugees find a durable solution by repatriating to their home country, integrating locally into a host society, or obtaining permanent settlement in a third country. In addition to providing protection, seeking and finding solutions for refugees is a core activity for UNHCR, together with the governments concerned. For this reason, the agency's Executive Committee has re-emphasized that 'the seeking of solutions is a mandatory function' of the Office.

The factors that determine the implementation of these solutions can differ from one region

to another and sometimes from country to country. Unfortunately, these factors are often outside UNHCR's operational activities and have increasingly contributed to challenges in finding durable solutions for refugees. For instance, continuous armed conflict, war, persecution, and political instability have each had a direct impact on the number of refugee returns in recent years. In some cases, these factors have also had an impact on UNHCR's local integration and resettlement activities.

Governments, UNHCR, refugees, and other key stakeholders contribute to finding durable solutions. For instance, UNHCR records show that refugees often facilitate their search for durable solutions by enhancing their skills through education, capacity-building, training, and work experience, among others. On the basis of such activities, refugees can engage in sustainable livelihoods that can ultimately reduce their dependence on humanitarian assistance and support. It is important to underline that refugees can be beneficial to their host countries based on their skills, expertise, and work experience, thus strengthening the overall economic development of their host countries.

The first part of this chapter analyses progress toward achieving durable solutions for refugees during 2014. As local integration can take many shapes, it is often difficult to quantify in numerical terms. Thus, this chapter's section on that issue looks into alternative forms of local integration

that go beyond the naturalization of refugees.

Progress toward achieving durable solutions is partly offset by new outflows of refugees. Each year, thousands of refugees flee their home country and are recognized either on an individual or

prima facie basis. The main focus of this chapter is on *prima facie* refugee outflows, while asylum applications and refugee status determination are reviewed in detail in Chapter IV.

Return of refugees

Available evidence indicates that voluntary refugee returns constitute the largest durable solution in statistical terms. The total number of refugee returns each year tends to be higher than that of both resettlement and local integration combined. Refugees can choose to return voluntarily, but not until the protection climate is considered acceptable in their country of origin to allow them to return in safety and dignity.

The key factor determining the voluntary return of refugees is based on free and informed decision. Proximity has been seen as a key factor in influencing refugee returns, with large numbers of refugees often returning when the country of asylum is closer to their country of origin. Generally, voluntary returns are relatively low for refugees residing in asylum countries considered to be industrialized and far away from their country of origin.

The voluntary repatriation of refugees involves many processes that can last for a significant period of time. These typically include registration,

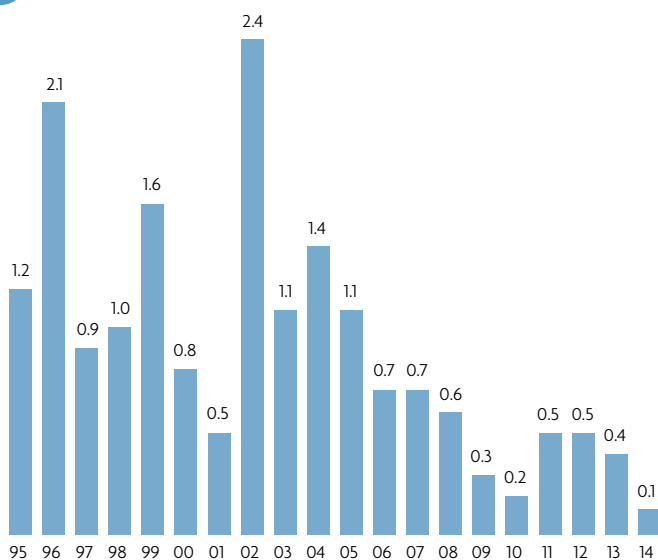
screening, transportation arrangements, negotiating repatriation agreements, and offering repatriation packages. During this process, particular attention is often paid to refugees with specific needs, including the aged, individuals with disabilities, pregnant women, and children.

During the past 20 years, some 18.2 million refugees returned to their country of origin, 10.8 million with UNHCR's assistance (60%). During this period, the largest number of returnees was recorded in 2002, when 2.4 million refugees were able to return home. In general, the past decade has witnessed a significantly lower number of refugee returns (5.2 million) than the preceding decade (13.0 million). This implies that many more refugees remain in exile and in a protracted situation.

During 2014, 126,800 refugees returned to their country of origin, virtually all of them with UNHCR assistance.⁴⁷ This is the lowest number recorded since 1983, when 103,000 refugees returned. The 2014 figure is also significantly below the level observed one year earlier (414,600). Clearly, war and the general political insecurity witnessed around the world in recent years have contributed to the prevailing trends.

Refugees from 37 countries were reported to have returned home in 2014. The countries that reported the largest numbers included the Democratic Republic of the Congo (25,200), Mali (21,000), Afghanistan (17,800), Angola (14,300), Sudan (13,100), Côte d'Ivoire (12,400), Iraq (10,900), and Rwanda (5,800). These eight countries combined accounted for 95 per cent of total refugee returns during the year.

Fig. 3.1 Refugee returns | 1995-2014 (in millions)



⁴⁷ Based on consolidated reports from countries of asylum (departure) and origin (return).

The number of countries that reported the departure of at least one refugee to his or her country dropped from 93 in 2013 to 90 in 2014. Countries of asylum with significant numbers of refugee departures included the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (19,000), Chad (13,100), Pakistan (13,000), Liberia (12,200), the Republic of Congo (10,300), Burkina Faso (7,700), and the Central African Republic (7,200).

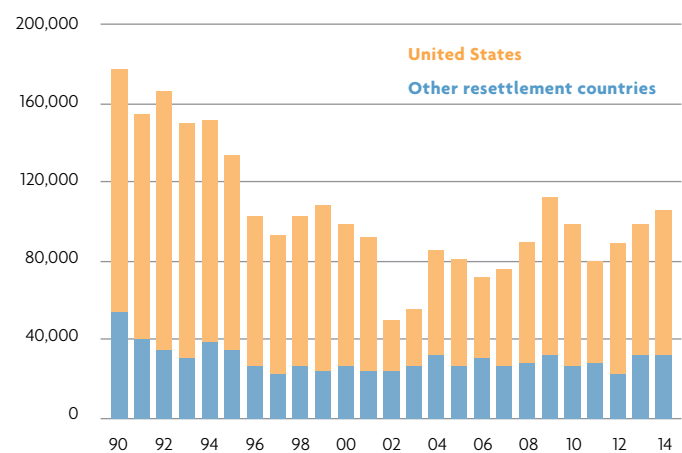
Resettlement of refugees

The Statute establishing UNHCR mandates the Office to pursue resettlement as one of the core durable solutions, as affirmed by multiple UN General Assembly resolutions. Resettlement is pursued within the framework of UNHCR’s international protection mandate as enshrined in its Statute. As a result, the interests and protection of refugees are the guiding principles for transferring refugees from an asylum country to another State. It is imperative to note that States admitting refugees for resettlement must have the mechanisms needed to ensure the rights and protection of resettled refugees. UNHCR ensures that refugees are resettled in dignity and in safety in countries admitting them.

The number of countries admitting refugees for resettlement has remained relatively stagnant in recent years. Likewise, the number of available resettlement places has not grown significantly. These trends are in contrast to the number of resettlement claims, which continues to rise from year to year. UNHCR has not relaxed its efforts to advocate for more countries to offer resettlement places and for countries to increase their resettlement quotas.

UNHCR continues to assist refugees throughout the various processes of resettlement. In 2014, UNHCR offices in 80 countries presented more than 103,800 refugees to States for resettlement consideration.⁴⁸ The main beneficiaries were refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic (21,200), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (18,800), Myanmar (15,200), Iraq (11,800), and Somalia (9,400). Women and girls at risk represented more than 12 per cent of total submissions, surpassing for a fourth consecutive year the 10 per cent target

Fig. 3.2 Resettlement arrivals of refugees | 1990-2014



set to implement Executive Committee Conclusion No. 105 (2006).⁴⁹ Over four-fifths of submissions were made under three submission categories: legal and/or physical protection needs (33%), lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions (26%), and survivors of violence and/or torture (22%).

According to government statistics, 26 countries admitted a total of 105,200 refugees in 2014. This is not only five more countries than in 2013, but it is also the highest level since 2009. The 2014 level represents 6,800 more refugees admitted than the previous year (98,400). The total number of resettled refugees (900,000) for the past decade is almost at par with the previous decade, 1995-2004 (923,000).

Among the 105,200 refugees admitted during the year, Iraqi refugees constituted the largest group (25,800). This was followed by those from Myanmar (17,900), Somalia (11,900), Bhutan (8,200), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (7,100), and the Syrian Arab Republic (6,400).

Under its resettlement programme, the United States of America continued to admit the largest number of refugees worldwide. It admitted 73,000 refugees during 2014, more than two-thirds (70%)

⁴⁸ For detailed information on UNHCR-assisted resettlement activities, see <http://unhcr.org/559ce97f9.html>.

⁴⁹ See <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e6e6dd6.html>.

of total resettlement admissions.⁵⁰ Other countries that admitted large numbers of refugees included Canada (12,300), Australia (11,600), Sweden (2,000), Norway (1,300), and Finland (1,100).⁵¹

More than 80 UNHCR offices around the world

were engaged in resettlement activities during the year. The largest number of UNHCR-assisted refugee departures left from Malaysia (11,000), Turkey (8,900), Nepal (8,500), Thailand (7,100), Lebanon (6,200), and Kenya (4,900).

Local integration

A statistical report requires quantitative data and measurements, but this is easier to obtain in some areas than in others. Unlike other solutions, by its very nature, local integration is more difficult to quantify for reasons related to difficulties with obtaining reliable data and the importance of qualitative aspects of integration. Reporting on repatriation essentially requires a headcount of individuals crossing a border to re-avail themselves of State protection – relatively clear-cut and objective data. Resettlement statistics are similarly straightforward, at least until it is necessary to measure the level of integration into receiving communities. Measuring the level of integration, whether of IDPs, refugees or asylum-seekers, is a greater challenge, given that integration, like re-integration, is a complex process involving multiple indicators, including qualitative ones and therefore more difficult to define.

Broadly speaking, local integration can be understood as the gradual inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, and stateless persons in their host country. This entails the progressive enjoyment of rights, increasing access to national services and social and cultural networks, and an absence of discrimination. Ideally, this process results in full local integration, which occurs when refugees and other persons of concern experience the following:

- They enjoy the same rights and access to national services and systems as nationals and non-refugee permanent residents (to the

furthest extent, being recognized as a national with all derivative rights).

- They are not discriminated against on the basis of their legal status or country of origin.
- And they enjoy peaceful co-existence with the local population and participate in the social and cultural life of the wider host community.

However, these elements are largely descriptive and qualitative. Clearly, many key aspects of integration are context-specific and to a certain extent subjective. In almost every situation, though, full local integration is enjoyed when persons of concern enjoy inclusion across legal, economic, social, cultural, and political spheres.

To concretize the definition of integration, it is helpful to consider four broad dimensions of integration:

- **Legal:** A permanent or renewable legal residency status entailing a range of rights and entitlements by the host State that are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by its nationals and, in some cases, the acquisition of nationality in the country of asylum.
- **Economic:** Enjoyment of economic rights and services, including the right to work, access to income-generating opportunities, access to financial services, and access to social security benefits (to the extent that they exist) such as welfare and unemployment insurance, commensurate with that of nationals and of non-refugee permanent residents.
- **Social and cultural:** Access to national and local services (to the extent that they exist) including health care, education, public housing, etc., through the same pathways and to the same level as nationals and non-refugee permanent residents. An environment that enables refugees to live among or alongside the host

⁵⁰ During US fiscal year 2014, some 70,000 were resettled to the United States of America.

⁵¹ According to the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 280 refugees were resettled to Germany in 2014. An additional 7,403 persons arrived under a special Humanitarian Admission Programme (HAP) for Syrian refugees. The German Government does not consider the HAP to be a resettlement programme. Another 6,120 persons arrived under admission programmes established by the German Federal States.



The Farid family from the Syrian Arab Republic was resettled in Torsby, Sweden. The oldest son Mahmoud has been going to the local school, where he learned Swedish and made many friends. He is well integrated and enjoys playing hockey at the rink outside his classroom.

population, without discrimination or exploitation, and to contribute actively to the social life of their country of asylum.

- **Civil and political:** Access to justice (courts and other complaints mechanisms, including lack of discrimination in judicial procedures) and enjoyment of civil and political rights, including the right of association, the right to join political parties, freedom of speech, etc. to the same degree as nationals or non-refugee permanent residents. Also, to the furthest extent possible depending on legal status, enjoying the right to vote.

Dividing integration into separate dimensions is not helpful only in identifying what to measure.

It also makes it clear that successful and sustained integration is a comprehensive concept that goes well beyond the acquisition of a document confirming a new legal status – even naturalization. The key elements of integration could also be used as those of a protection and solutions strategy to improve the quality of life of refugees, even in contexts where permanent local integration is not immediately available or the desired result. This line of thinking underscores that progress in each area is important in its own right – not only as part of a larger whole.

DURING THE PAST 20 YEARS, SOME 18.2 MILLION REFUGEES RETURNED TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 10.8 MILLION WITH UNHCR'S ASSISTANCE (60%).

THE PAST DECADE HAS WITNESSED A SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER NUMBER OF REFUGEE RETURNS (5.2 MILLION) THAN THE PRECEDING DECADE (13.0 MILLION).

THIS IMPLIES THAT MANY MORE REFUGEES REMAIN IN EXILE AND IN A PROTRACTED SITUATION.

Integration in 2014

Some elements of integration are easier to measure than others – for instance, the number of countries that publish statistics on naturalized refugees. In 2014, 27 countries did so, five fewer than the previous year. As a result, measuring local integration through official statistics remains a challenge, as data on the naturalization of refugees are often unreported. Similarly, the availability of data on naturalization is limited by the fact that countries often do not distinguish between naturalized refu-

gees and non-refugees in their national statistical systems. Overall, in 2014, 27 countries reported the granting of citizenship to some 32,100 refugees, notably in Canada (27,200) and France (2,400).

In addition, during 2014, UNHCR measured visible progress in the area of legal integration. Some examples include the following:

- In the United Republic of Tanzania, the President authorized the relevant authorities to begin issuing naturalization certificates to over

162,000 former Burundian refugees. By the end of 2014, naturalization had been facilitated for 12,159 Burundians, and by September 2015 more than 90 per cent had received their naturalization certificates.

- In India, UNHCR dedicated significant effort to advocating with the Ministry of Home Affairs for the simplification of naturalization procedures for certain refugees from Afghanistan. In November 2014, a breakthrough was achieved in the issuance of a directive simplifying the passport-renunciation process required to obtain Indian citizenship. The measurable progress in 2014 was modest, with only 53 persons obtaining citizenship, 1.3 per cent of the total number that had applied for naturalization. Nevertheless, this represents a nearly fivefold increase compared to previous years – and offers proof of a viable pathway. More importantly, the issuance of the new directive is expected to expedite the naturalization process in 2015.

Progress was also made in socio-economic areas of integration, which are typically more difficult to measure. These include the following:

- In Brazil, learning the local language has been identified as an important obstacle to local integration. To address this, UNHCR partnered with OP Cursinho Mafalda to develop free

language-learning materials to be shared with new partners and persons of concern.

- In Panama, advocacy efforts led the Superintendencia de Bancos de Panama to issue a general resolution addressed to the banking sector, according to which the refugee identification card is acknowledged as valid ID. The resolution also set out a 2015 work plan between UNHCR, the National Office for the Attention of Refugees and other partners to map current access of refugees to financial institutions with the view of identifying and addressing remaining obstacles.
- In Namibia, although the legal framework does not allow for the formal local integration of refugees, the Government took steps to include refugees in State health services and educational institutions.

These represent significant achievements with substantial impact on the enjoyment of socio-economic rights by persons of concern to UNHCR, regardless of whether formal local integration is foreseen as the long-term solution in these areas. However, systemic change and social impact is difficult to quantify and therefore difficult to measure with existing indicators, suggesting that there may be a need to measure and monitor integration in a different manner.

Measuring Integration in the Future

A number of recent initiatives for measuring integration suggest that UNHCR is not the only actor working toward a more standard way of approaching this issue. States, NGOs, and international organizations are taking different approaches globally. Some, such as the EU Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX),⁵² focus on monitoring the legal and administrative framework and policies applicable in the country of integration. Others use census data to measure integration, basing their calculation on the difference in census data between the local population and refugees and immigrants. Still other initiatives focus on measuring experienced integration, obtaining information from refugees through surveys. Some methodologies, such as that being developed by the Joint IDP Profiling Service,⁵³ combine these and other approaches and will be producing

a library and guidance to help in the selection of locally appropriate indicators.

There is no single formula for measuring integration. However, as UNHCR is making progress toward defining integration, it is also making progress toward identifying a uniform approach to measuring this issue.

At a global level, change is reflected in the new Global Strategic Priority (GSP) indicator on local integration selected for 2016–2017. In past years, operations were requested to report as a GSP on the percentage of persons of concern attaining full local integration – in practice, normally those attaining legal integration in a given year. From 2016,

⁵² See <http://www.mipex.eu/>.

⁵³ See www.jips.org.



An extended family of Afghan asylum-seekers, newly arrived on Greece's Lesbos Island, wait on the beach for the police to register them. Ongoing conflict in places like Afghanistan, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, leaving millions of people in protracted displacement and increasingly difficult situations, is forcing many to take to the seas on dangerous journeys to seek asylum in Europe.

operations are requested to report on the 'extent to which social and economic integration is realized'.

Operations are required to base their reporting on an assessment of five different elements relating to the population of concern:

- Social and economic rights formally enjoyed (legal framework);
- Access to livelihoods and financial services (equal access to economic opportunities);
- Mainstreaming into national services (equal access to social services);
- Peaceful co-existence and positive interaction with local community (relations between population of concern and local community); and
- Experienced level of social and economic integration (subjectively experienced integration).

To strike a balance between complexity and feasibility, operations are requested to measure each

area through the use of one or two proxy indicators, with a given value attached to each answer. To ensure consistent and comparable reporting, the same proxy indicators are applied to all operations. The indicator may also be applied to IDP, stateless, and returnee populations, which, although facing different challenges related to their legal status, will often stand apart socially and/or economically from the populations among which they live.

The data informing the various elements may vary between operations, in recognition of their different contexts and data collection capacities. Possible data sources could include surveys conducted among communities, censuses, participatory assessments, legal and policy framework mapping, and socio-economic data collected through registration interviews, among others.

The choice of elements in UNHCR's monitoring

framework reflects an approach to integration that is context-specific, rights-based, and centred on the experience of persons of concern, and which also aims to identify obstacles for operations to address in the future. UNHCR recognizes that no framework or measurement tool will be able to address all concerns and that none can enable a fully detailed articulation of the achievements and obstacles in local integration each year. Measuring integration is not an exact science. However, with the new GSP indicator, UNHCR is making progress toward unpacking a concept that is increasingly viewed as central to the search for durable solutions.

INTEGRATION AND SOLUTIONS

The change in the GSP indicator reflects an organizational shift toward a more progressive approach to solutions. Legal integration, generally considered the final stage of local integration, typically happens either in one step or in several steps over a short period, making it difficult to measure progress toward this goal. Social and economic integration, on the other hand, is a gradual process, which allows for measuring changes over time.

Legal integration will of course continue to be pursued and monitored, in particular through indicators counting residence permits and numbers of persons naturalized. However, the change in the GSP indicator reflects that social and economic integration is considered an important

strategic priority for UNHCR in and of itself, as well as being central to the eventual achievement of definitive solutions. It mirrors a growing understanding – within and outside the agency – that the different elements of integration have multiple potential benefits, not necessarily related to attaining the durable solution of local integration.

Fundamentally, how a displaced person fares in the future – whether in a country or place of asylum, country of origin, or in a third country – depends on the assets maintained and developed while displaced. These assets, understood broadly as encompassing belongings, wealth, health, and skills, are not beneficial only to refugees and IDPs. They are also potentially beneficial to communities in areas of return or relocation or in countries of resettlement. These assets may also equip displaced populations to help address root causes of displacement in their countries and areas of origin.

In some contexts, progress in the integration of refugees may be an important step toward the durable solution of local integration. In other contexts, it may be an important step toward other solutions. Measuring the extent of economic, social, cultural, or legal integration can thus be considered a measurement of quality of life during asylum as well as progress toward the eventual attainment of durable solutions, whether or not the end goal has been identified.

■ New refugee displacement

The year 2014 saw a level of new displacement that had not been seen in many years. An estimated 2.9 million individuals were newly displaced during 2014, most notably from the Syrian Arab Republic. These 2.9 million new refugees joined the 2.5 million persons who had become refugees over the course of 2013. Some 1.55 million Syrian refugees were newly registered and granted temporary protection during the year, mainly in neighbouring countries.

In addition, hundreds of thousands more fled their countries across Africa, from South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and

Somalia. While 283,500 individuals fled outbreaks of violence in Pakistan and sought refuge in Afghanistan, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians likewise fled to the Russian Federation and other countries in Europe.

Of the total new refugee displacements during 2014, the largest numbers of newly registered refugees were reported by Turkey (1 million), Lebanon (355,400), Afghanistan (283,500), the Russian Federation (250,000), Ethiopia (235,800), and Cameroon (149,100). ■