

Restoring



by António Guterres
UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES

An Uzbek woman sits in the remains of her home, destroyed during the recent conflict in Kyrgyzstan.

IN DECEMBER OF THIS YEAR, UNHCR will turn 60. More significantly, next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, the 50th anniversary of the 1961 *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* and the 150th anniversary of the birth of Fridtjof Nansen, the League of Nations' first High Commissioner for Refugees, after whom UNHCR's highest award is named.

With the approach of these anniversaries, we have been reflecting on the state of the world's more than 43 million forcibly displaced people - over 15 million of whom are refugees. Traditional drivers of displacement, such as conflict and human rights abuse, are combining with extreme poverty, climate change, population growth,



Hope, Rebuilding Lives

urbanization and resource insecurity to generate new trends and consistently high levels of involuntary displacement.

Meeting the protection needs of these people in the next decade presents a challenge, not just for UNHCR but for all three pillars of the international humanitarian community: the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations. We will need a sound, common understanding of the evolving dynamics of displacement, coordinated examination and development of the response mechanisms and a firm commitment to implementation.

GROWING INTRACTABILITY OF CRISES

OF THE THREE MAIN CHALLENGES UNHCR faces in responding to forced displacement in the second decade of the 21st century, the first I would characterize as the growing intractability of crises. Major conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo show no signs of being resolved while conflicts that had appeared to have ended, such as in Southern Sudan, present new challenges.

As a result, many people displaced by these conflicts are unable to go home. Last year was the worst in two decades for voluntary return by refugees, with just over 250,000 individuals repatriating. This represents approximately one quarter of the average number of annual returns over the last decade.

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SHRINKING HUMANITARIAN SPACE

THE SECOND MAJOR CHALLENGE UNHCR faces today is the shrinking of humanitarian space. Two major UN peacekeeping missions have been asked by countries where they are located to scale down and leave even while insurgent groups, small arms and banditry proliferate.

As the former Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes told the Security Council in July, every armed conflict in the world today involves the participation of one or more non-state armed groups. Attacks on aid personnel by both non-state and state actors remain at elevated levels. Humanitarian organizations are denied access to affected populations or in some cases expelled. Assistance programmes are diverted or manipulated.

Strict adherence to the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality is vitally important for us to do our work, and for the safety of our staff. Ensuring the humanitarian and non-political character of the organization and preserving humanitarian space will thus remain a priority.

ASYLUM SPACE

THE THIRD MAJOR CHALLENGE confronting us is the erosion of asylum space, particularly, though not exclusively, in the developed world. While some would have us believe that the North is being inundated by asylum-seekers from the South, the total number of new asylum claims in European Union countries in 2009 was 246,000. By comparison, South Africa alone received 220,000. Indeed, four-fifths of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for people seeking protection to have access to the territory of countries where they can obtain that protection. The spate of instances of *refoulement* at the end of 2009 has spread in 2010. The non-return of people to frontiers where they fear for their lives or freedom is a core principle of international law, whether or not the countries concerned are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention. It is deeply disconcerting to see such returns being undertaken to obviously dangerous places, in some instances motivated by perceived domestic political or economic imperatives.

There has also been a perceptible rise in racist and xenophobic acts in many places. While I firmly believe that multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious societies are not just desirable, but inevitable, in the meantime, robust efforts are needed to counter the increase in xenophobic sentiment,

particularly at the intersection of the so-called Muslim and western worlds. UNHCR issued a strategy note on *Combating Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* in December last year to guide efforts to promote more favourable public attitudes to asylum-seekers and refugees.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES

THE CHALLENGES WE ARE FACING today are not entirely new. Through the annual Dialogue on Protection Challenges instituted three years ago, UNHCR has benefited from the insights of governments, NGOs and other partners in framing its practical responses to three consequences of the evolving displacement environment, namely, urban refugees, protracted refugee situations and individuals with protection needs in mixed migratory movements.

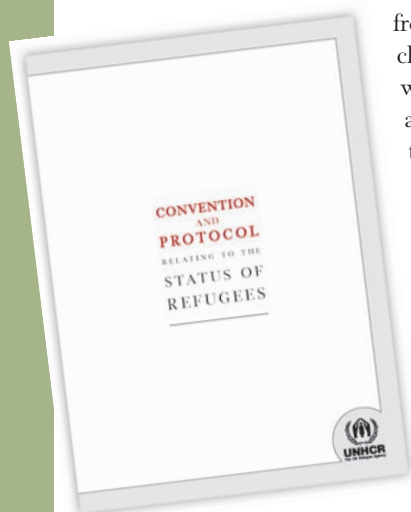


Invisible in the City—The lives of urban refugees: Worldwide photo exhibit attached to the High Commissioner's 2009 Dialogue on Protection Challenges.

More refugees now live in cities than in camps. We released a new urban refugee policy in September last year and are actively pursuing new partnerships, particularly with municipal authorities, and outreach to respond more effectively to urban refugees' needs.

Innovative practices, such as cash assistance programmes in the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan, delivered via the national automated teller machine network, and text messaging of short information bulletins to refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran are being identified for replication elsewhere. Seven urban pilot sites - Cairo, Desamparados (San José), Dushanbe, Kuala Lumpur, Moscow, Nairobi and St. Petersburg - are being closely monitored and a series of evaluations will shortly begin to help us align our efforts with the new urban policy.

With the fall in opportunities for voluntary repatriation, more and more refugees will be





November 2009, Regional Conference in Central America: This conference on mixed migration is part of a series in which Governments and partners analyse regional responses to cross-border movements.

put into or kept in protracted situations. This is already the reality for a majority of the world's refugees. UNHCR's Global Plan of Action on protracted situations recognizes the need to find solutions in a spirit of international collaboration, solidarity and burden-sharing.

Initiatives supporting refugee-affected and hosting areas are under way in Ethiopia, Uganda, Pakistan and Nepal, while strategies for self-reliance have been adopted in a range of protracted operations, from Armenia to Zimbabwe. For returnees, UNHCR together with its partners is supporting reintegration in many operations not only through protection monitoring but also with programmes providing cash grants, allocating farmland and distributing agricultural supplies, facilitating the establishment of cooperatives, supplying water and assuring access to food-for-work projects. A new education strategy for 2010-2012 emphasizes increased support to education as a means of strengthening protection.

Of the estimated 200 million migrants in the world today, only a small proportion have protection concerns. The complexity of factors leading people to move, however, blurs traditional distinctions between those forced to move and those choosing to do so. UNHCR recognizes the obligation of countries to manage their borders responsibly and define their migration policies, but this has to be done in a manner which fully respects international refugee law and human rights obligations. Border controls must be protection-minded and implemented in ways that do not block access to protection for persons who need it.

UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action has become an important strategic planning tool in responding to mixed migratory movements. A compilation of good practices was released in mid-year. Conferences were held in Central America in November 2009 and in the United Republic of Tanzania in September 2010 to analyse the viability of enhanced regional responses to cross-border movements. Tripartite

agreements involving UNHCR and partners in border monitoring have been put in place in a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In agreements on return for those found not to be in need of international protection, particularly those involving children, UNHCR has sought to ensure the inclusion of appropriate safeguards, such as Best Interest Determinations, family tracing, long-term care and post-return monitoring.

EFFICIENCY

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES we face requires us not only to understand and anticipate new trends but to maximize the efficacy of our response. In part, this means being efficient. Through an ambitious programme of reform,

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UNHCR has increased the scope of its annual activities in the last five years by more than half, to approximately USD 1.8 billion, with the same level of staffing worldwide and 30 per cent fewer staff in Geneva. We have decreased both staff and headquarters costs as a proportion of total expenditure, from 41.4 per cent to 27.4 per cent and from 13.9 per cent to 9.5 per cent respectively.



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We have pursued these reforms to generate more resources for the people we care for. Based largely on savings from structural reform, UNHCR has been able to intensify its efforts to address critical gaps in the areas of sexual and gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS, malaria, malnutrition, reproductive health and water and sanitation - for which a three-year plan covering 17 operations has been developed.

A few reforms remain to be completed, notably in the restructuring of IT services, resolving interface problems with key software tools *Focus* and *MSRP* in order to fully realize

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the potentialities of results-based management, and the development of new recruitment and contracts policies. Complementing a range of already implemented human resources policies, such as the creation of the Ethics Office and the introduction of the whistleblower policy, a new policy for staff assignments prepared by the Joint (staff and management) Advisory Committee was endorsed in mid-June 2010 to take effect in September 2010. Work on a new promotions policy and procedures is ongoing.

Some doubted the wisdom of UNHCR transitioning to a needs-based budget at the height of the worldwide financial and economic crisis. However, our ability to more accurately reflect the needs of the people we care for, taken together with the efficiencies achieved through reform, have resulted in unprecedented donor support and allowed us to devote more of our unearmarked contributions to underfunded crises.

SOLUTIONS

AT THE SAME TIME, we have retained a strong emphasis on achieving durable solutions. The low total number of voluntary returns by refugees in 2009 masks the significant achievement of 19,000 Mauritanian refugees returning to Senegal after two decades in exile, and some 17,000 Congolese refugees in Zambia returning to Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after a prolonged period abroad. Even more dramatically, it obscures the fact that last year, with a figure of 2.2 million, was the best year in a decade for the return of internally displaced people, with whom UNHCR enjoys an ever deepening engagement.

In terms of local integration, the United Republic of Tanzania granted citizenship to over 162,000 Burundians who fled their country as a result of the events of 1972. The United States conferred citizenship on more than 55,000 refugees in 2009. Under the free movement protocols of the Economic Community of West African States, several thousand former Sierra Leonean refugees in the Gambia have been helped by UNHCR to access secure work and residence entitlements – a model which is now being replicated in Senegal, Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

Resettlement remained a success story, both as a durable solution and in helping to preserve protection space in places such as the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan, and in unlocking other solutions, as it did in Nepal. A total of 24 countries now provide resettlement places. For refugees in urgent need of resettlement, but whose cases require time to be processed by a receiving country, the Evacuation Transit Facility established in Romania has been supplemented by an Evacuation Transit Mechanism in the Philippines and ad hoc arrangements in Slovakia. More than 128,000 refugees were submitted and over 84,000 departed to be resettled in 2009. Nevertheless, with the number of submissions having doubled in five years, the programme will not be sustainable if the number of resettlement places made available does not keep pace.

GOING FORWARD

TWO PRIORITIES WILL GUIDE UNHCR's work going forward. The first is to enhance our capacity to identify and meet the protection needs of the forcibly displaced people we care for. A Strategy Note was developed in May 2010 setting out the achievements to date in the development of UNHCR's protection capacity, challenges facing the Office in protecting populations of concern and key strategies to address the challenges.

We will also be intensifying our efforts in staff recruitment, training and deployment, as well as in establishing strengthened protection partnerships. We will encourage and support States in their efforts to establish national refugee legislation, maintain protection-sensitive border controls, administer fair and effective asylum systems, and assure the civilian character of camps and areas inhabited by refugees and displaced people.

UNHCR's second key priority for 2010 and beyond is the reinforcement of our capacity to launch effective emergency operations, especially in situations where large numbers of people are compelled to flee to places which lack the resources to support them. A Note has been developed to guide UNHCR towards further

2009 Global Trends:
Presenting the reality of the figures.



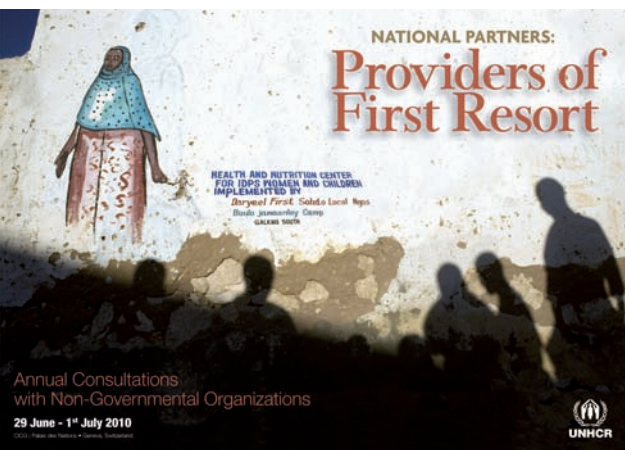
ENHANCING OUR CAPACITY TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO PROTECTION GAPS, THE SUBJECT OF THIS YEAR'S DIALOGUE, WILL REQUIRE STRONGER AND MORE INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS.

strengthening its supply chain management and stockpiling arrangements and investing in the procurement of new relief items.

This will include reinforcing training for emergency staff and exploring new ways of mobilizing colleagues with the necessary profiles for deployment in a timely manner – with the objective of being able to respond to displacement crises of up to 500,000 people within 72 hours. We are also cooperating with OCHA, UNICEF, WFP and WHO in the development of a new Humanitarian Early Warning System and, through the IASC, on a system-wide emergency preparedness strategy with emphasis on regional and national actors.

PARTNERSHIPS

ENHANCING OUR CAPACITY to respond effectively to protection gaps, the subject of this year's Dialogue, will require stronger and more innovative strategic partnerships. UNHCR will need to encourage all forms of partnership, but especially national ones, in light of the increasingly urban location of some displaced populations and constraints on access to others. It is often at the local level that problems are



National Partners—Providers of First Resort: The key theme of the 2010 UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs.

most acutely felt and where solutions must be found. Local partners are not merely implementers of UNHCR's programmes. They are full partners at the strategic level both at Headquarters and in the Field, and are frequently the best placed to design and develop programmes specifically adapted to the needs of the populations being cared for.

Our growing reliance on partners is reflected in the numbers. In 2009, implementing partners accounted for 35.9 per cent (or more than USD 632 million) of total UNHCR expenditure, up from 31.5 per cent (or just over USD 347 million) of a significantly lower overall expenditure in 2006. NGOs represent about three-quarters of the funds dedicated to implementing partners, with the proportion going to national NGOs up to 44 per cent (USD 209 million) in 2009.

COMMEMORATIONS

THE UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES of UNHCR, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1961 Statelessness Convention, which will culminate in a Ministerial-level meeting in Geneva in December 2011, are a chance to honour the achievements of the last 60 and 50 years respectively.

They are also, more importantly, an opportunity for us collectively to reaffirm the principles and values at the heart of the consensus around the protection of refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people. The Ministerial meeting will provide an opportunity for States and others to pledge concrete actions to resolve specific refugee issues and to help forge a new, agile and flexible protection dynamic capable of responding to the evolving trends in forced displacement. We will also seek through the commemorations to make marked progress on reducing statelessness.

The success of the commemorations depends heavily on state and civil society support. Through targeted communications, we will strive to increase public understanding and sympathy for forcibly displaced and stateless people, and to generate additional support for responding to their needs. It is only through close and ongoing partnership that we can make progress on our ultimate goal of finding solutions to forced displacement and statelessness.

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