



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



UNHCR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2022-2026



Afghan refugee girl flies a kite on World Refugee Day in Torbat e-Jam settlement, Iran
© UNHCR/MOHAMMADREZA NAZERI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the High Commissioner set out five Strategic Directions to chart a five-year path forward for UNHCR. These Strategic Directions committed us to:



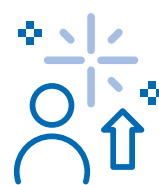
PROTECT



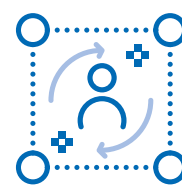
RESPOND



INCLUDE



EMPOWER



SOLVE

- 1. Protect**, secure, and defend the rights of people of concern to UNHCR – refugees and asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced people, and stateless persons (hereafter referred to as forcibly displaced and stateless people);
- 2. Respond** rapidly and effectively in emergencies and beyond;
- Promote **inclusion** and self-reliance;
- 4. Empower** the people we serve to determine and build their futures; and
- Pursue **solutions** to address the consequences of displacement and problems of statelessness.

During those five years, the challenges of forced displacement and statelessness have grown in scope, scale and complexity. The operational context has become harder to navigate, the protection space has diminished, and more people are at risk of displacement. Inequalities have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, new and intractable conflicts, and the climate crisis. These are shocks to the global system but their impact has been greatest on forcibly displaced and stateless persons, who are among the world's most disadvantaged. These challenges will continue to compound pressures on the most marginalized and drive more complex displacements, including mixed movements of refugees, internally displaced people and migrants.

Protecting, assisting, and upholding the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced and stateless people is a collective endeavour and a mutual responsibility. This is affirmed by the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) and the commitments made at the [2019 Global Refugee Forum](#). Time and time again, solidarity and international cooperation have proven essential to resolving the most formidable challenges. The global problems facing humanity do not respect borders, nationality or a person's legal status, and thus we risk failure if we insist on an overly narrow definition of responsibility for dealing with them. These are human problems that require collective responses.

Against this backdrop, UNHCR's mandate has never been more vital, and our Strategic Directions apply no less than they did five years ago. The Strategic Directions are therefore renewed for a further five years, for the period 2022-2026. They will continue to guide our efforts to achieve a collective and sustainable impact for forcibly displaced and stateless people, and the States and communities that host them.

The Strategic Directions are not merely a high-level declaration of intent. They serve as the DNA that runs through our global, regional and

country strategies and drives our practical efforts on the ground. This progression – the flow of strategy into action – is built into our new approach for planning, implementation, budgeting, monitoring and reporting, called COMPASS, which was launched in 2021. It ensures clear linkages between the Strategic Directions and UNHCR's new Global Results Framework and, ultimately, all our plans. To optimize our effectiveness and responsiveness to affected communities, our ongoing institutional transformation, led by the High Commissioner, will be completed between 2022-2026.

Furthermore, after analysing where progress has been made and where it has been slow or uneven, we have identified eight areas for additional, accelerated and targeted action.

1

Safeguard international protection, including in the context of mixed movements.

2

Strengthen accountability to the people we serve, especially women and children.

3

Reinforce efforts to strengthen gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response.

4

Expand on, pursue and adapt options for resettlement and complementary pathways.

5

Mainstream development engagement in our responses from the outset, especially by building coalitions with development partners.

6

Grow our engagement on responses and solutions for internally displaced people.

7

Redouble efforts on statelessness so that the objectives of the #IBelong campaign are best pursued.

8

Proactively act to mitigate the effects of the climate change crisis on displacement and in line with our protection mandate.

We will implement the Strategic Directions in collaboration with a broad circle of stakeholders – forcibly displaced and stateless people themselves, governments, UN bodies, international, regional and local organizations, civil society, financial institutions, the private sector,

faith-based groups, academia and the media. We will work towards the objectives of the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and [Our Common Agenda](#).

CONTEXT



Zakaria Zaki inside a house destroyed in the conflict in Sana'a, Yemen.
© UNHCR/SHOHDI ALSOFI

CHALLENGES OLD AND NEW: COVID-19, CONFLICT AND CLIMATE

Recent decades have seen a great global divergence. While living conditions have improved for many people,¹ life has become more precarious for the most vulnerable, including forcibly displaced and stateless people. Three challenges in particular are now placing vulnerable communities under unprecedented pressure and generating even greater uncertainty.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has replaced the world we knew before 2020 with a new reality, with added threats to health, lives and livelihoods and even starker inequalities. The socioeconomic disadvantage of forcibly displaced people, already deep before 2020, has deteriorated markedly.² 86 per cent of forcibly displaced people are in low-income countries, where health systems are often hindered by vaccine inequity and governments have struggled with the economic impact of the pandemic. By the time governments ease the restrictive measures they imposed to slow the spread of disease, refugees and displaced people have generally been hit harder and face a slower path to recovery.³

Nearly all employed refugees – an estimated 99 per cent – work in the informal sector. They were among the first to experience the socioeconomic and protection impacts of the pandemic. Many lost their jobs, were evicted from their homes, became more food insecure, and experienced a serious deterioration in their situation. Forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls are also experiencing deepening gender inequality, with diminished educational and livelihood opportunities, increased care responsibilities, and mounting risks of gender-based violence, abuse

and exploitation.⁴ Closures of schools and universities have disproportionately affected forcibly displaced children, youth and adult learners, who were already at a disadvantage. Many forcibly displaced children, particularly girls, have been unable to return to school, reversing earlier progress in enrolments⁵ and worsening child protection risks. These effects will continue to reverberate in the medium and longer term.

Second, **political upheaval and conflict** show few signs of abatement and have triggered new displacement and limited opportunities to return home. There were hopes that the pandemic would give way to ceasefires and create opportunities for peace. However, most conflicts across the globe continue unresolved, with growing signs of political repression and new waves of tension and violence.⁶ Even if the temperature of some conflicts has cooled, a failure to achieve a definitive and sustainable peace means that millions continue to endure forced displacement. Leaving these populations stranded for years or decades is senseless, inhumane and costly. Furthermore, divisive political discourse is on the rise, giving space and voice to discrimination, racism and xenophobia, and creating an environment where the principle of non-refoulement can be politicized.

1 Max Roser, “[The short history of global living conditions and why it matters that we know it](#)”, Our World in Data, 2020
2 Joint Data Center, “[Answering the call: Forcibly displaced during the pandemic](#)”, 05 August 2021
3 Ibid. See also, Tara Vishwanath et al, “[Highly vulnerable yet largely invisible: Forcibly displaced in the COVID-19-induced recession](#)”, Joint Data Center – World Bank Group and UNHCR, November 2020
4 UNHCR, “[COVID-19 pandemic worsening gender inequalities for refugee women and girls](#)”, March 2021
5 UNHCR, “[Coming together for refugee education](#)”, 03 September 2020
6 “[A year of COVID-19: The pandemic’s impact on global conflict and demonstration trends](#)”, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), April 2021

These unchecked and harmful narratives often focus on refugees, stateless and displaced people, and migrants – testing the values of international solidarity and creating new pressures on policymakers looking to preserve the right to asylum and protection.

The third key challenge is **climate change**, a human crisis which disproportionately affects people in vulnerable situations, and fewer are more vulnerable than the forcibly displaced and stateless. Climate change is already putting ecological diversity and wildlife in danger, destroying lives and livelihoods, and jeopardizing international peace and security. The changing climate is also increasing competition for resources and fueling social and economic tensions, triggering conflict and displacement. In 2019, roughly 95 per cent of displacements due to

disasters were triggered by weather events, particularly storms and floods. Some 90 per cent of refugees under UNHCR’s mandate and 70 per cent of people displaced internally due to conflict come from countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.⁷ These countries also host over 40 per cent of refugees, despite being home to only 20 per cent of the world’s population.

Without collective action, these three interconnected threats – climate change, conflict, and COVID-19 – will continue to compound pressures on the most marginalized communities and risk further and more complex displacements.

7 UNHCR, “[Displaced on the frontlines of the climate emergency](#)”, 2021

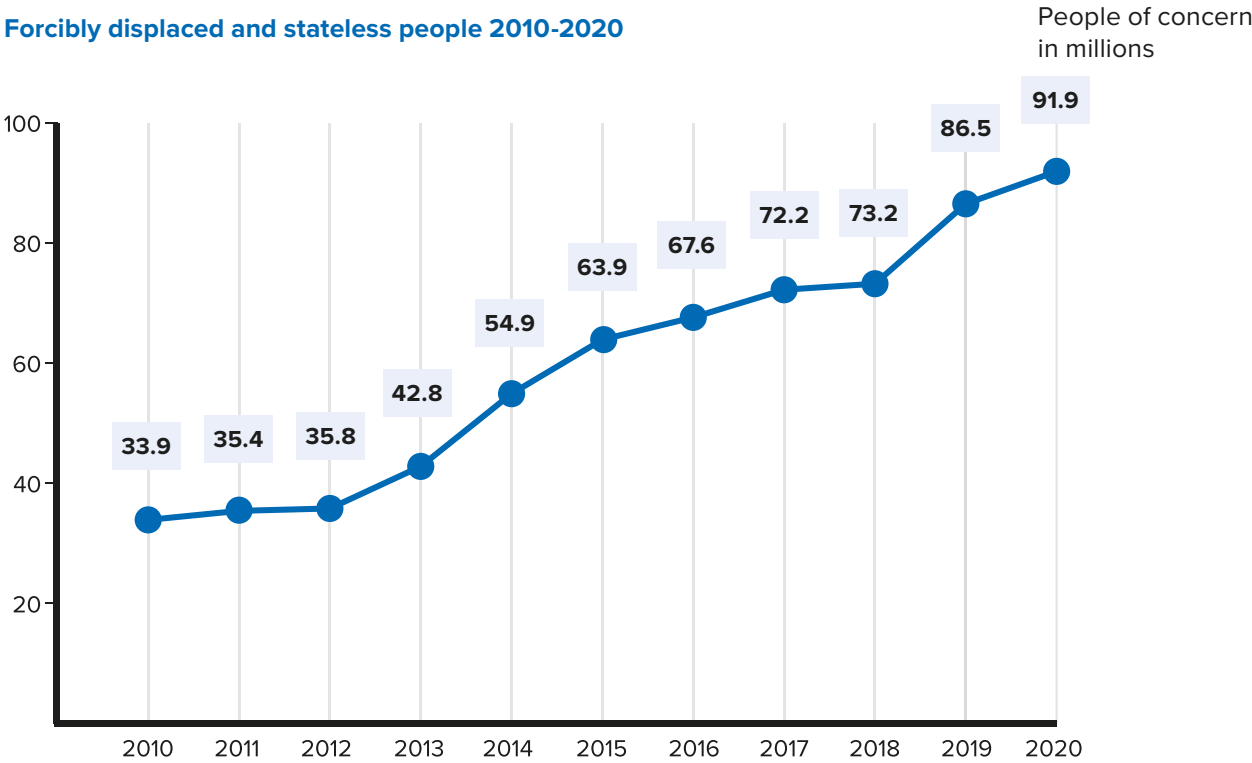


Refugee volunteers wage fight against bush fires near Mbera camp, Mauritania.
© UNHCR/COLIN DELFOSSE

UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF DISPLACEMENT

In each year of the past decade, forced displacement around the world reached unprecedented levels, doubling from 41 million in 2010 to 82.4 million in 2020. This means that more than 1 per cent of the world’s population – one person in 95 – was forcibly displaced at the end of 2020, compared to 1 in 159 people a decade earlier. Children constituted about 42 per cent of those displaced. By the end of 2020, the number of forcibly displaced and stateless people reached 92 million.

Forcibly displaced and stateless people 2010-2020



The vast majority – 86 per cent – live in developing countries, with 27 per cent of the total living in Least Developed Countries. More than two thirds (68 per cent) originated from just five countries. Since 2017, displacement has risen nearly everywhere we work.

Globally, forcibly displaced and stateless people continue to be affected by new emergencies, as well as protracted ones which become more acute. Current estimates show that a person in a situation of protracted forced displacement remains so for around 26 years. In 2021 alone, UNHCR issued 40 new emergency declarations⁸ in five regions – Asia and the Pacific, the Americas,

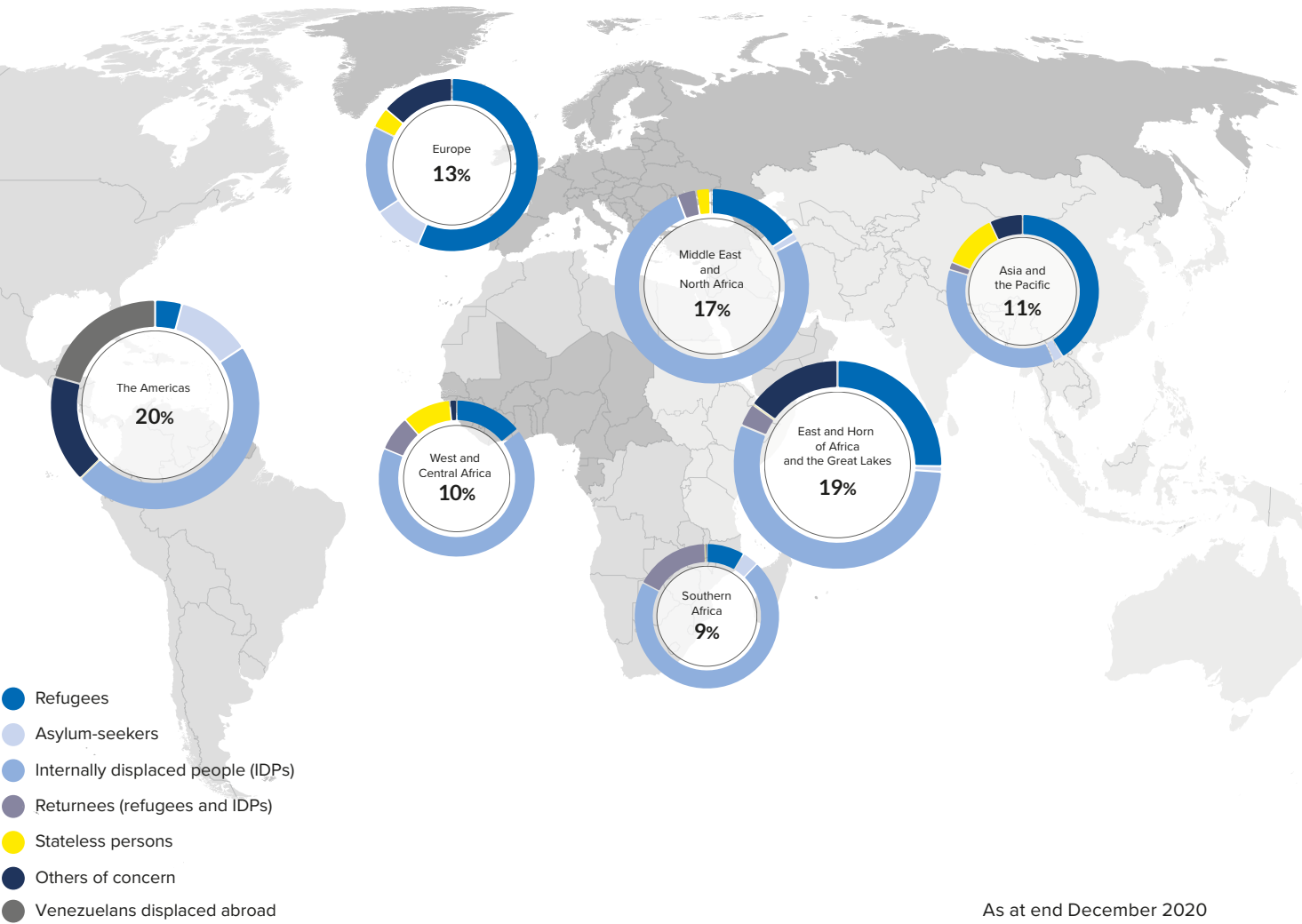
8 This refers to all new emergency declarations issued in a given year, including different emergency situations in one country as well as upgrades in level for the same country.

Western and Central Africa, Southern Africa, and East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes regions. As of December 2021, UNHCR risk analysis indicates that 33 operations are at a high risk of new or escalating multi-hazard emergencies in the next year. This growth in complex humanitarian emergencies is expected to continue.

Furthermore, the nature of displacement is shifting. While most people who cross their national borders seek international protection in neighbouring countries, some move further afield, often making dangerous journeys. More and more, asylum-seekers move alongside migrants in mixed

movements, and both groups face exploitation and risks from trafficking networks, criminal gangs and armed actors. Many suffer prolonged family separation, kidnapping, detention, and physical and sexual abuse, with children, adolescents and youth who are unaccompanied or separated from their families in particular danger. Increasingly, displaced populations move to urban areas and live under precarious conditions for many years without real prospects for finding solutions to their situation and for building a future. These shifts require more long-term engagement and comprehensive responses that include humanitarian action, sustainable peace and investment in development.

Forcibly displaced and stateless people across seven regions



UNHCR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2022-2026

In the past five years, our Strategic Directions helped guide us on a course of progress, enabling us to look hard at what we do and to push through reforms and improvements in the performance of our mandate. We laid the foundations for further progress, and although much remains to be done, we are on the right path. The five Strategic Directions remain:



PROTECT



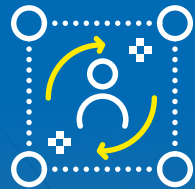
RESPOND



INCLUDE



EMPOWER



SOLVE



Internally displaced Iraqi family flee fighting in Mosul.
© UNHCR/IVOR PRICKETT

PROTECT

Wherever people are forcibly displaced or stateless, we will seek to uphold their basic human rights and ensure they are not returned to a country where they may face danger or persecution. We will galvanize others to build favourable protection environments and will advocate strongly in favour of safeguarding the principles of protection, access to territory and asylum, and the rights and dignity of affected communities.

We will be proactive and vocal in our efforts to ensure that forcibly displaced and stateless people are able to exercise and enjoy their rights, irrespective of age, gender and diversity considerations. The specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+

people, female-headed households, and unaccompanied minors, do not lessen their rights, and they must receive the protection and assistance they need to ensure they can enjoy their rights on an equal footing.

We will promote burden-sharing and responsibility-sharing, in line with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. In collaboration with States, partners, and the diverse women, men, boys and girls whom we serve, we will work to develop principled and innovative approaches to protection. Ultimately, the best form of protection is a sustainable solution to situations of displacement and statelessness.



UNHCR protection assistant, Adiam Tekle, leads a focus group discussion in Bethen site for people internally displaced from western Tigray. © UNHCR/FAHMIDA KARIM



UNHCR and Qatar airlift essential winter supplies to Kabul, Afghanistan. © UNHCR/TONY ASEH

RESPOND

As a leading humanitarian actor, we will work to anticipate emergencies, and when they occur, we will respond rapidly and stay the course to ensure that people are safe from harm, their fundamental rights are respected, and that they can meet their needs.

Our response is strengthened by collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, and all of us have an interest in successful outcomes to emergency responses. We will work jointly to

prepare for and respond to emergencies, to ensure that we anticipate risks, mobilize resources, and mount responses and scale up with agility.

We will bolster preparedness processes and capacities. We will pre-position and deliver life-saving assistance, protection and solutions across the globe rapidly and reliably, and transition from short-term to longer-term focused approaches.

INCLUDE

We will advocate for the inclusion of refugees, displaced and stateless people in economic growth and poverty reduction efforts and in national and local services. We will help connect affected people to their local communities and support them to engage in economic opportunities.

The extent of support for such inclusion efforts was brought to light most clearly by the Global Compact on Refugees. We will leverage this goodwill to promote burden-sharing and support the strengthening of national systems or capacity to include displaced or stateless people.

By forging closer alliances, we will also bolster the inclusion of affected people in development programmes and national development frameworks, building on the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda.

We will also support forcibly displaced and stateless people to contribute to the communities where they live and promote the use of modalities to support their inclusion and benefit local communities.



Young women enrolled in an auto mechanics training programme in a stigmatized neighbourhood in San Salvador, El Salvador. Job schemes help keep young people out of the clutches of gangs. © UNHCR/NICOLO FILIPPO ROSSI



Young Syrian refugee, Maya Ghazal, learns to fly at the Pilot Centre in Denham, United Kingdom. This solo flight is part of the process of gaining her private pilot's license. © UNHCR/ANDREW MCCONNELL

EMPOWER

People are at the centre of what we do. Being forced to flee or stateless does not mean losing one's rights, nor should it mean losing one's agency – the ability to make decisions and choices. Our programmes and interventions will be based on upholding the rights of the people we serve, and we will seek to involve them in decisions about their own future and the development of their communities. We will draw on their own resilience, knowledge and capacity for action, and hold ourselves accountable to them for our actions.

Empowerment cannot coexist with discrimination. We will be forthright in demanding that all members of society have an equal opportunity to enjoy their rights. Invariably, women and girls constitute the biggest group at risk of being disadvantaged. Gender equality is an indivisible facet of empowerment, and it must remain central to the work we and our partners do.

Empowerment also runs in opposition to marginalization and stigmatization. Displaced and stateless people will never be able to enjoy their rights if they face a constant barrage of prejudice and xenophobia. We will combat hate speech against them, speak out on their behalf and amplify their voices through our global presence and our networks of supporters.

SOLVE

It is plain, from the relentless growth of populations of concern to UNHCR, that solutions have not kept pace with the number of people being displaced and becoming stateless. It is equally plain that the burden of responsibility for hosting these populations and meeting their needs has fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of a few.

We will strive for progress, diversifying beyond the currently available options, encouraging the creation of new avenues out of displacement and statelessness, and doing all we can to ensure that responsibility is equitably shared.

We will reinforce cooperation and strengthen partnerships among humanitarian, political, development and peace actors to move beyond short-term approaches, which often limit planning for solutions, to longer-term ones.

We recognize that solutions to problems of forced displacement and statelessness require addressing causes as well as consequences, and we will engage in comprehensive analysis and advocacy to guide early efforts to address drivers and triggers.



Liberian Gboeah-Flomo family gathers to celebrate Black History Month. They were resettled to Delaware, United States in 1992. © UNHCR/ASHLEY LE



Djuba Alois - A 75-year-old pastor. He fled violence in Democratic Republic of the Congo and found safety in Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp. © UNHCR/SAMUEL OTIENO

THE JOURNEY SO FAR: 2017-2021

The [2017-2021 Strategic Directions](#) were rooted in a period of deep global uncertainty and soaring forced displacement. The international response, amid a fractious debate that conflated and marginalized the rights of refugees and migrants, failed to keep pace with the need for protection or solutions of forcibly displaced people, while the traditional humanitarian toolkit could not stretch across the gaps.

Over the five-year period of the Strategic Directions, we noted the growing appetite for a revamped approach and a reaffirmation of international solidarity, and anticipated that the Global Compact on Refugees would be central to our strategy. In 2018, the Compact put in place a new comprehensive refugee response model,

underpinned by the ambition of the international community for strengthened cooperation and more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

Since then, the benefits of investing in comprehensive responses have become increasingly recognized, with stepped-up collaboration by governments, development partners, international financial institutions and the private sector. Amongst others, our partnership with the World Bank aims to enhance the resilience and self-reliance of hosting and forcibly displaced communities and fosters deeper cooperation with other development actors.

The Strategic Directions highlighted the importance of our ability to mobilize a rapid, reliable and effective response. Over the past five years, the approaches we took helped us respond to a record number of emergencies across the world, thereby ensuring the continuation of protection and assistance, and reaching people who were marginalized and most at risk. When the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in imposed restrictions, we leveraged communications and technology innovations to make advances in areas such as gender-based violence referrals, biometric registration and cash assistance. We adapted, working virtually and through community members to reinforce messaging on COVID-19 preventive measures. We advocated strongly for maintaining access to territory and for the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national pandemic responses and vaccination schemes. In all these efforts, we have been more proactive at managing complex security challenges, and in the face of the pandemic, health and well-being risks, to ensure we could stay and deliver.

The Strategic Directions emphasized the importance of putting people first. In 2018, we reinforced our longstanding commitment to putting affected people at the centre of our work, with updated commitments to Age, Gender, and Diversity, Accountability to Affected People, and commitments to women and girls.⁹ Along with partners, we are increasingly expanding partnerships with local civil society and community groups and using participatory approaches to design and implement programmes. There has also been an exponential increase in our provision of cash-based assistance – a reform that empowers people to determine their own needs and contributes to their protection and resilience.

9 UNHCR, “[UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy](#)”, 2019
10 This is a [victim-centred approach](#).

As part of our drive to hold ourselves accountable, we developed an updated [2020-2022 Strategy and Action Plan for Tackling Sexual Misconduct](#)¹⁰, making headway towards tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, both within the organization and in the wider humanitarian and development sectors. We have put in place strengthened efforts to combat sexual misconduct and bolstered inter-agency and partner engagement. Through better approaches, our workforce and that of our partners are empowered to prevent, identify, and respond to sexual misconduct.

These developments serve to illustrate a few of the different ways in which UNHCR and its ecosystem evolved during the first five years of our Strategic Directions. And UNHCR is still changing: the High Commissioner launched a far-reaching organizational transformation in 2017, decentralizing decision-making authority, transforming critical management systems and processes, re-positioning our work better within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

and contributing to shifts within the UN and inter-agency space for more effective collaboration.

However, the challenge we face continues to grow. The numbers of forcibly displaced continue to rise. Internal displacement has continued unabated: we were responding to situations of internal displacement in 34 countries by the end of 2020. Statelessness remains a major obstacle, not least because a lack of data on the true scale of the problem.

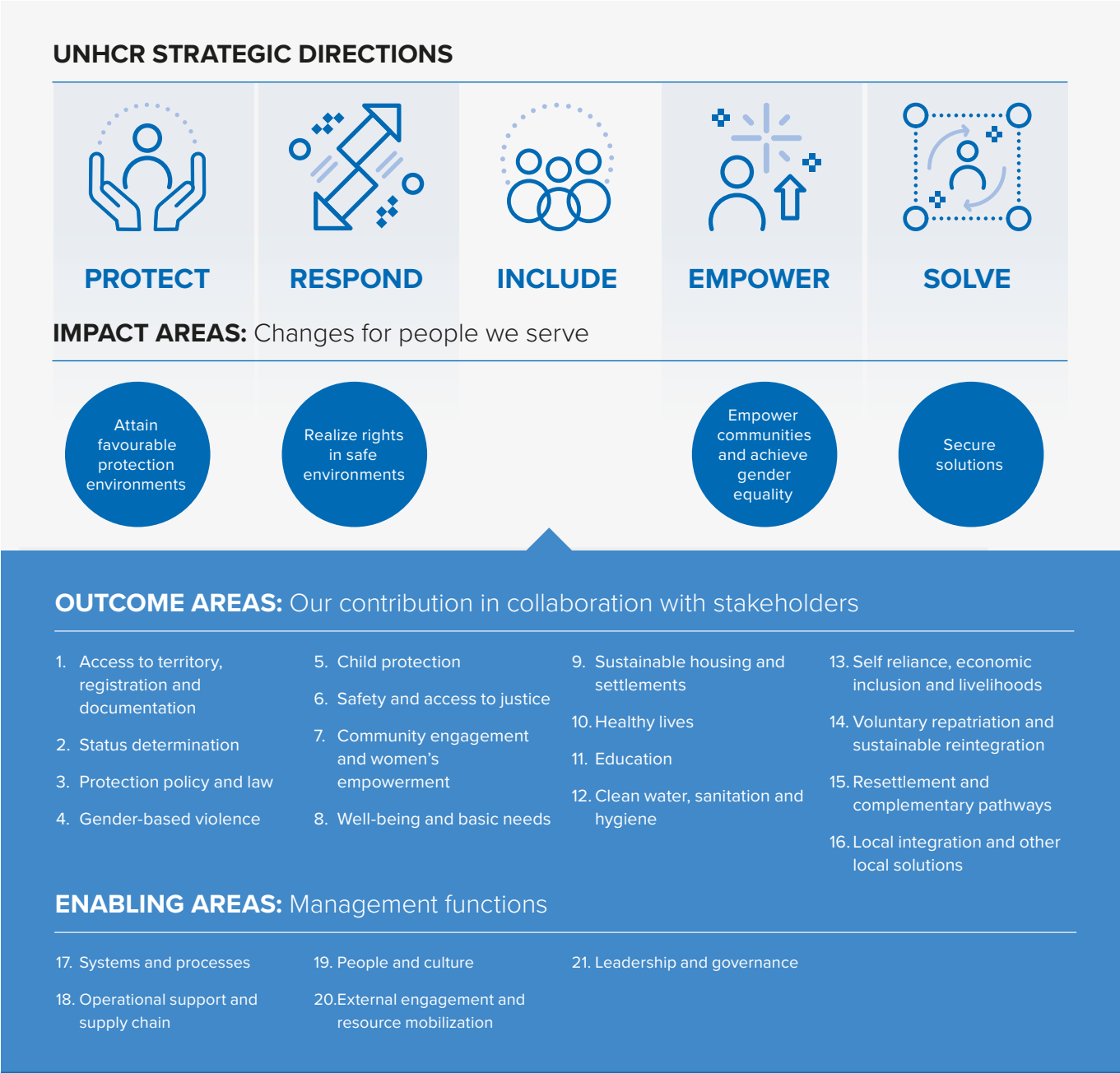
The task is bigger, but with the support of States and partners, we are better positioned to deliver on the five directions: protect, respond, empower, solve and include.

WHAT WE WILL DELIVER

In the coming five years, we will consolidate the progress already made and drive further progress by embedding the Strategic Directions into our organizational decision-making. This linkage of strategy and action is built into UNHCR’s new approach to planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting, with the Global Results Framework aligned with the Strategic Directions.

As envisioned by the Global Compact on Refugees, our plans are designed in close collaboration with others to develop the comprehensive responses required to protect and meet the diverse needs of the people we serve. We contribute through many different areas by undertaking efforts such as advocacy, direct delivery, and working in partnerships.

How UNHCR makes a difference for forcibly displaced and stateless people



As part of our efforts, we have identified eight areas where gains on results for forcibly displaced and stateless people have been uneven or slow and would benefit from focused attention over the coming five-year period. These areas are situated within the wider framework of the Strategic Directions. **We will tackle these areas with discipline and unwavering commitment to improve the lives of forcibly displaced and stateless people.**



Asylum-seeker Abdullah from Burkina Faso sits on the deck of an Italian Coast Guard ship after being rescued off the coast of Libya
© UNHCR/VANIA TURNER

1. Safeguard international protection, including in the context of mixed movements.

States have varied and inconsistent practices towards the populations that UNHCR has a mandate to protect. The world has witnessed acts of solidarity and inclusion grounded in humanitarian principles but also blanket denials of access to territory, inhumane policies and rising discrimination and xenophobia. A growing focus on border control, coupled with false and harmful narratives around people on the move, has undermined once strong commitments to protection in many parts of the world, with the world's forcibly displaced paying the price. While many countries have maintained a laudable commitment toward people who have fled from danger, the protection space has shrunk dramatically in some countries, and serious gaps have emerged in asylum and reception systems. The tendency for States to disclaim and transfer responsibilities for protection to other States represents a threat to the global asylum system.

Safeguarding international protection will demand enhanced efforts in the coming five years. We will work with States and our partners to build more adapted and sustainable asylum systems that can respond to the phenomenon of mixed movements, while ensuring that people on the move are able to exercise their rights in line with international standards. UNHCR will strongly advocate for meaningful responsibility-sharing arrangements to support hosting States, while simultaneously working to safeguard the right to seek asylum on all territories.



Refugee representatives issue a joint statement on the results of the Global Refugee Forum
© UNHCR/STEVE FORREST

2. Strengthen accountability to the people we serve, especially women and children

People caught up in humanitarian crises may be at greater risk due to their age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion. Children constitute a large proportion of forcibly displaced and stateless populations, often more than half of the total. In a context of overlapping crises, deepening inequalities, and marginalization at a global scale, adapting and strengthening engagement and ensuring greater accountability to affected people, responding to their specific needs and addressing gender inequality is critical. Our community-based approaches and engagement with people are part of our comparative advantage. Advances in technology and communication create new opportunities to enhance community participation and receive feedback more effectively, such that we can better address diverse needs and redress existing inequalities. In the coming five years, we will take specific initiatives to ensure our interventions are

more accountable to affected communities, effectively designed with them, and use their strengths and insights to meet their needs.

The pandemic has put decades of fragile progress on gender equality and women's rights at risk of being reversed.¹¹ We recommit to ensure that that this does not happen, as an integral part of our protection mandate. We will strengthen the mainstreaming of gender equality in our programming, work more closely with others to advocate and uphold the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls, support their access to services and opportunities, and reinforce their meaningful participation in decisions affecting their lives and communities. We will, in partnership with others, protect displaced and stateless children from violence, abuse and exploitation, ensure their rights, and undertake efforts for them to have a promising future.

¹¹ UN Women, "From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19", 2020

3. Reinforce efforts to strengthen gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response.

Preventing, mitigating and responding to gender-based violence is a core component of our protection mandate. Women and girls are often affected disproportionately by gender-based violence. UNHCR and its partners have made gains in decreasing the risks of gender-based violence and improving access to quality specialized services for survivors, but progress remains uneven and persisting challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Stepped up efforts must address root causes, strengthen prevention interventions, mitigate the risks across all areas of work and ensure timely life-saving response is available for survivors and those at risk of gender-based violence.

Over the coming five years, we will deliver specialized programming to strengthen prevention and response interventions and bolster integrated approaches across our areas of work, especially from the onset of emergencies. We will also reinforce our victim-centred approach towards eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, continuing to lead and contribute to coordinated initiatives in the broader humanitarian sector.



UNHCR’s partner Fundación Casa de Refugio Matilde staff show their support for survivors of gender based violence at a march in Quito, Ecuador. © UNHCR/JAIME GIMÉNEZ



Somali refugee, Rahma, and her children depart Dadaab, Kenya to be resettled in Sweden. © UNHCR/SEBASTIAN RICH

4. Expand, pursue and adapt options for resettlement and complementary pathways.

While refugee numbers continue to increase, progress on solutions is on a slower trajectory. In 2020, UNHCR estimated that 1.4 million refugees were in need of resettlement, but barely 2.4 per cent were resettled. Although more than 250,000 refugees returned to their country of origin, either spontaneously or with our assistance, this continued a downward trend seen during the previous two years and was the third-lowest annual total in a decade, a period that had repeatedly produced new records in displacement.¹²

Looking forward, UNHCR will step up efforts to search for solutions, working closely with States and through new partnerships fostered by the Global Compact on Refugees. We will also aim to expand opportunities for resettlement for some of the world’s most at risk refugees and to advance complementary pathways.

¹² UNHCR, “[Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2020](#)”



Khaled, a father of eight children, stands in an irrigation canal that was rehabilitated by UNHCR in Maskana, Syria.
© UNHCR/HAMEED MAAROUF

5. Mainstream development engagement in our responses from the outset, especially by building coalitions with development partners.

Most of the world's forcibly displaced people live in exile for too long in countries of asylum, with many of these countries themselves impacted by conflict or confronting significant development challenges. Short-term responses have proven limited, and the need for comprehensive responses that offer lasting benefits to host communities and the displaced is pressing.

We will deepen advocacy to build greater participation in economic opportunities, strengthen national and local systems and services, and reinforce resilience and self-reliance for those displaced. We will strengthen early and effective engagement with development actors and international financial institutions, as well as peace actors, and embed these partnership approaches more effectively in our ways of working. We will also continue to work with States and partners to unlock the full potential of humanitarian-development-peace cooperation – testing new approaches, learning from previous lessons, and building on successes.

6. Grow our engagement on responses and solutions for internally displaced people.

In 2020, the number of internally displaced people reached the highest level ever recorded, an astounding 48 million people.¹³ Today – and for at least the last two decades – internally displaced people constitute the majority of the world's forcibly displaced.

As IDP situations around the world continue to grow in scale and complexity, with solutions for internal displacement remaining insufficient, we will consolidate achievements to date and make the investments needed to prepare for, scale up and deliver protection and solutions as part of our

collective response in support of States and affected populations.¹⁴ We will also step up leadership and coordination of protection, shelter, and camp management in situations of internal displacement. Furthermore, we will catalyse and join stronger alliances among humanitarian, development and peace actors to promote solutions for IDPs and more effective support by the international community, in line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General's [High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement](#).

¹³ UNHCR, "[Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2020](#)"

¹⁴ UNHCR, "[Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#)", 2019



Internally displaced women collecting water in IDP site in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique.
© UNHCR/MARTIM GRAY PEREIRA

7. Re-double efforts on statelessness so that the objectives of the #IBelong campaign are best pursued.

As the world marked the 60th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 4.2 million people were known to be stateless across the globe. Challenges with data collection mean that this figure is likely an underestimate.¹⁵ It has become clear that ending statelessness requires concerted political will and a commitment to very practical actions. With only three years remaining in the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024, it is vital that we step up efforts to eradicate statelessness and ensure the right to a nationality.

15 UNHCR, “[Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2020](#)”

Working in close collaboration with governments and our partners, we will continue to support States to realize the objectives of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024 by providing legal and policy support to change national laws and practice, identifying and better protecting stateless persons, and preventing new cases of statelessness from emerging, focusing on high impact areas and situations.



Kinsilina and her family receive birth registrations in the Philippines, as part of a registration drive launched by UNHCR and UNICEF aimed at ending statelessness among the Sama Bajau people. © UNHCR/MARTIN SAN DIEGO



Reforestation project turns Minawao refugee camp in Cameroon green again.
© UNHCR/XAVIER BOURGOIS

8. Proactively act to mitigate the effects of the climate change crisis on displacement and in line with our protection mandate.

Forcibly displaced and stateless people are on the frontlines of the climate emergency. Over the past decade, an average of 21.5 million new displacements of people each year were triggered by weather-related and environmental hazards, a figure that constitutes more than twice the displacements caused by conflict and violence.¹⁶

Over the coming five years, we will continue to step up our commitment and ambition to meet the humanitarian and protection challenges already being amplified by the climate emergency, and work with stakeholders to mitigate and prepare for those to come. We will both engage directly and work to catalyse action in three mutually reinforcing ways. We will provide legal and policy

guidance and support and undertaking evidence-based advocacy in the context of climate change and disaster-induced displacement. We will strengthen the resilience and protection of the most vulnerable persons of concern and their hosts to the effects of climate change, including through climate risk mitigation, adaptation, and mounting operational responses to displacement related to climate change. Lastly, we will embark on an organizational effort to reduce UNHCR’s own environmental footprint.

16 UNHCR, “[Displaced on the frontlines of the climate emergency](#)”, 2021

REALIZING THE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2022-2026



UNHCR, partners and youth volunteers build refugee housing units to expand a community diner in Ibarra, Ecuador.
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Five years ago, we committed to making changes in systems, staffing, culture and ways of working to better assist and uphold the rights and dignity of the people we serve. In renewing these Strategic Directions, we recognize the significance of this transformation journey.

Over the coming years, as we complete our organizational transformation, we will be further equipped to tackle emerging and future challenges more efficiently; and in doing so, we will draw on and leverage our longstanding institutional strengths. In order to better equip ourselves to take the Strategic Directions from vision to reality, we commit to:

- 1. Invest in our workforce and enabling work environment.** Our work would not be possible without the commitment to adapt and deliver by our diverse, talented and dedicated workforce. By continuously investing in better people management and improving the daily experience of our workforce, we will facilitate their growth and dedication in pursuit of results for forcibly displaced and stateless people. We are committed to ensuring the security, occupational health, and safety of all colleagues. We will strengthen our security posture and foster an inclusive and enabling work environment. We will also continue to strengthen our response to integrity and workplace challenges, including by preventing and addressing all forms of sexual misconduct.
- 2. Further leverage our decentralized operational presence.** Our operational presence and proximity to and direct engagement with affected people is a key comparative advantage that we will preserve and bolster, including by optimizing our decentralized set up and strengthening delegations of authority.

3. Strengthen and diversify our partnerships.

To meet growing challenges and better support host governments and the international community to deliver on the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, we will bolster our efforts to collaborate and engage with a wide array of actors. These range from traditional actors such as UN sister agencies, non-governmental organizations and governments, to development actors, the private sector, faith-based leaders and organizations, academic institutions and research faculties. Growing our engagement with new civil society actors and organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people such as youth and women-led organizations is a priority and in line with our Grand Bargain commitments.

- 4. Advance data, analysis and information relating to forcibly displaced and stateless people.** The Data Transformation Strategy will strengthen our ability to generate, analyse, and utilize data on forcibly displaced and stateless people to better advocate for and secure protection and solutions.

- 5. Consolidate transformations towards managerial effectiveness.** As part of our broader transformation efforts, we will bolster evidence-based decision-making and further streamline systems and processes to optimize effectiveness. This also includes completing the Business Transformation Programme, deploying effective change strategies, and delivering on digital transformation.

Given the diversity of UNHCR operations, the UNHCR Strategic Directions are not prescriptive; they provide the overarching vision for UNHCR's contributions in this regard, with related, contextually relevant strategic planning processes helping to translate this vision into action. At the country level, UNHCR plays multiple roles to effect change for forcibly displaced and stateless people.

HOW WE REFLECT THE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2022-2026 IN OUR PLANNING AND BUDGETING

In 2021, UNHCR launched a new approach for strategic planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting. Under it, UNHCR operations, Regional Bureaux, and Headquarters work in close cooperation with stakeholders to set out changes they will achieve for forcibly displaced, returnee and stateless communities, and their hosts. These are defined in context-specific plans and budgets covering a one-to-five-year period. These plans are then linked and aggregated within the Global Results Framework.

As mentioned earlier, the Global Results Framework is fully aligned with UNHCR’s Strategic Directions. The four impact areas represent positive changes and effects for those we serve and are linked directly with four Directions, while the fifth Direction, Include, cuts across all the others. The actions and efforts of UNHCR are represented below, in the form of sixteen outcome areas and five enabling areas — these directly contribute to the positive changes. This approach enables a clear line of sight between country plans and global results, guides resource allocation and management, and allows for the consolidation and presentation of plans in a coherent way in the UNHCR Budget, Global Appeal and Global Report.

UNHCR will measure progress through a set of core indicators (see box). UNHCR will also monitor progress on these in multiple ways. On an annual basis, UNHCR will: (i) review and refine country plans; (ii) monitor progress on the impact indicators; (iii) undertake regional strategy reviews. This multi-tiered process will ensure the reflection, feedback and course corrections required for progress at the global level. Country, regional and Headquarters-level guidance will also help inform choices and trade-offs on interventions and advocacy efforts at these various levels.

- To assess progress against the five Strategic Directions, the measures of success include:
- Extent to which people seeking international protection can access asylum procedures.
 - Extent to which persons of concern can move freely within the country of habitual residence.
 - Numbers of people returned to a country where they would face persecution or a risk to their life or freedom, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement.
 - Extent to which people we serve who are living above the national poverty line and who reside in physically safe and secure places where they can access basic facilities.
 - Numbers of people of concern who have access to health services.
 - Numbers of men and women who have the right to decent work.
 - Numbers of children and youth enrolled in primary and secondary education.
 - Numbers of women, men, girls, and boys who feel safe in their neighbourhoods.
 - Numbers of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin or who depart on resettlement or through complementary pathways.
 - Numbers of stateless persons who have been given a nationality.
 - Numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers who have been given residency status.

Furthermore, we are developing action plans for the areas identified as needing focused action in the coming five years. These plans build on existing policies and initiatives to bridge policy and planning through a coherent approach anchored in global standards and best practices. They will identify barriers and opportunities, key

actions needed, requirements and, where appropriate, target operations. Given the urgency of action in these areas, we will review regional and global progress in these areas each year, ensuring that our focused actions are yielding results.

CALL TO ACTION

In renewing these Strategic Directions, we recommit to our promise to forcibly displaced and stateless people across the world.

UNHCR and our dedicated workforce will not tire of ensuring the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced and stateless people are upheld. In the spirit of the GCR, a whole-of-society approach is critical; a wide range of stakeholders have important contributions to make. We will work with and mobilize others to help achieve our collective ambition so that affected communities can thrive. Specifically, we ask:

- States** – Respect and uphold international refugee, humanitarian and human rights law. Keep your borders open for people forced to flee their countries. Include the forcibly displaced and stateless persons in your national plans. Share responsibility with other governments that are hosting large numbers of refugees and internally displaced people. Step up your efforts in support of forcibly displaced and stateless people.
- Partners** – The challenges of forced displacement and statelessness necessitate that we step up our collective efforts to protect, assist and find solutions for affected people. Situations of displacement are only growing, with the average length of protracted situations reaching 26 years. Accelerate the transition to sustainable solutions by partnering with us and including the forcibly displaced and stateless in your programmes and plans. When humanitarian, peace, development and government actors work together, lasting impacts in the lives of forcibly displaced communities and their hosts are possible.
- Private sector** – People forced to flee arrive with their resilience, courage and talent. They have much to offer. Boost your efforts and create decent opportunities for them and for hosting communities. Champion evidence on the benefits of economic inclusion.
- Communities** – Forcibly displaced and stateless people bring substantial benefits to the communities they live in. UNHCR recognizes that you are among the first to welcome them and counts on your sustained generosity. We will continue to advocate for support and promote stability and resilience.
- People everywhere** – [Support us](#) in our commitment to save lives and protect the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people. Bring [attention to](#) and amplify their voices.



Displaced Afghan family cope with winter cold and food shortages in Kabul, Afghanistan.
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COVER IMAGE

*Rohingya girls, Anarkoli, Nur and Subeda
(right to left) in Kutapalong Camp,
Bangladesh.*

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