



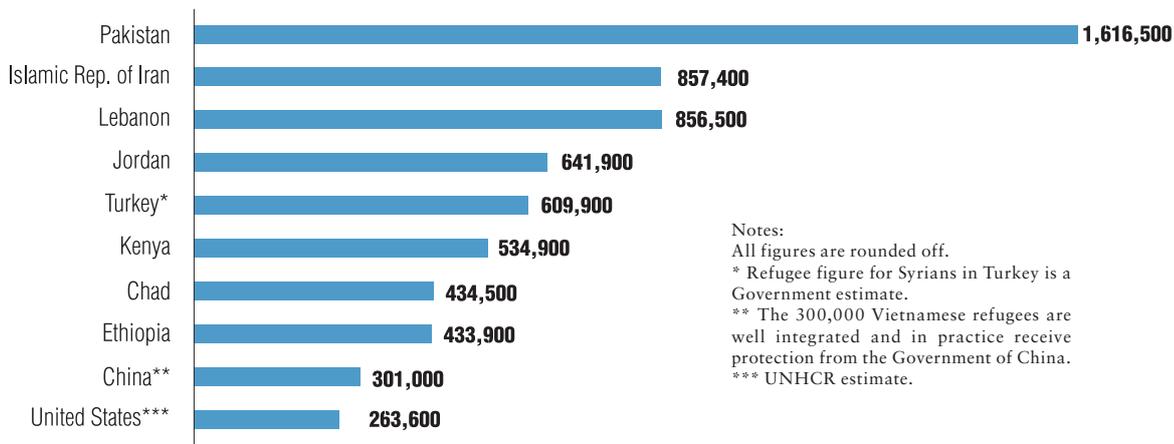
# *Hosting the* **World's Refugees**



UNHCR / J. KOHLER

**P**roviding uprooted populations with a safe and secure environment presents both challenges and opportunities for the receiving nation. While it is not possible to do full justice to the contributions that so many countries make when they give asylum and hospitality to refugees, this chapter pays tribute to the support that host countries bring to UNHCR's efforts to help vulnerable people who have been affected by conflict or persecution. Illustrations of this are found throughout this report. ●●●

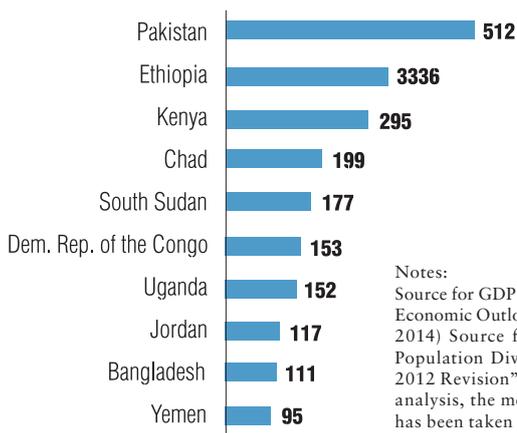
**CHART 1** Major refugee-hosting countries, end-2013



Notes:  
All figures are rounded off.  
\* Refugee figure for Syrians in Turkey is a Government estimate.  
\*\* The 300,000 Vietnamese refugees are well integrated and in practice receive protection from the Government of China.  
\*\*\* UNHCR estimate.

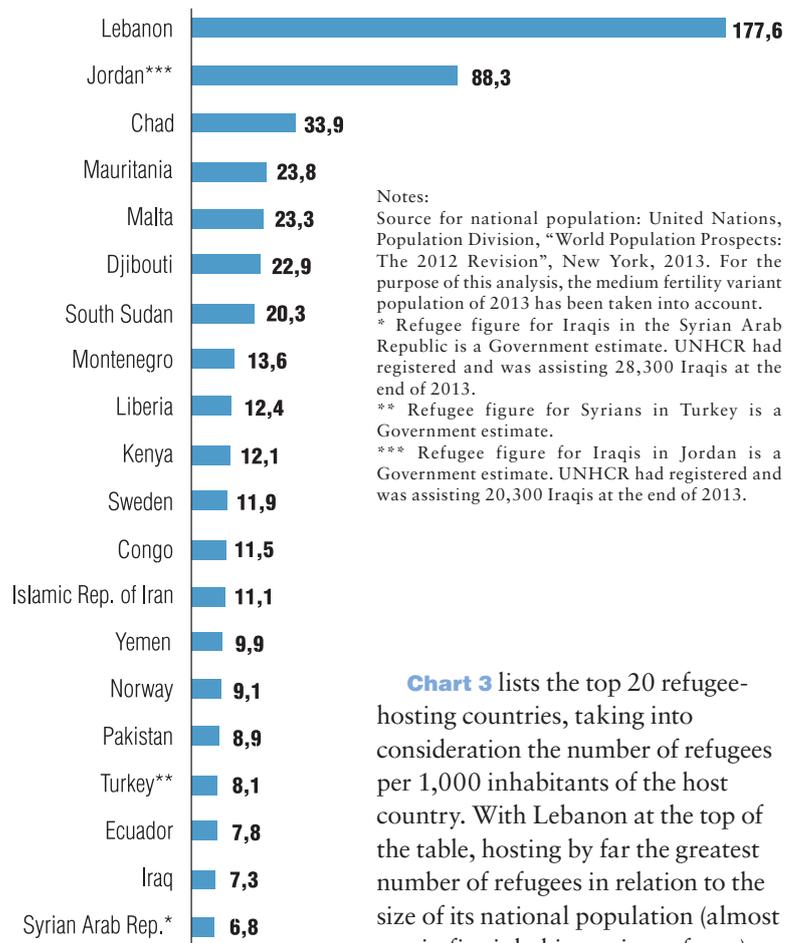
In 2013, eight of the 10 countries with the largest refugee populations were located in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, as **chart 1** indicates. Furthermore, **chart 2** demonstrates that all 10 countries with the highest number of refugees in relation to their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) were in developing regions. The rankings show that developing countries continue to receive and host large numbers of refugees; at the end of 2013, over 10 million of the world's refugees resided in developing regions. As in 2012, Pakistan hosted the highest number of refugees in the world and was also the country hosting the most refugees per 1 USD per GDP per capita.

**CHART 2** Number of refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita, end-2013



Notes:  
Source for GDP (PPP): International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2014 (accessed 16 April 2014) Source for national population: United Nations, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision", New York, 2013. For the purpose of this analysis, the medium fertility variant population of 2013 has been taken into account.

**CHART 3** Number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, end-2013 (Refugees include people in refugee-like situations)



Notes:  
Source for national population: United Nations, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision", New York, 2013. For the purpose of this analysis, the medium fertility variant population of 2013 has been taken into account.  
\* Refugee figure for Iraqis in the Syrian Arab Republic is a Government estimate. UNHCR had registered and was assisting 28,300 Iraqis at the end of 2013.  
\*\* Refugee figure for Syrians in Turkey is a Government estimate.  
\*\*\* Refugee figure for Iraqis in Jordan is a Government estimate. UNHCR had registered and was assisting 20,300 Iraqis at the end of 2013.

**Chart 3** lists the top 20 refugee-hosting countries, taking into consideration the number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants of the host country. With Lebanon at the top of the table, hosting by far the greatest number of refugees in relation to the size of its national population (almost one in five inhabitants is a refugee), and Jordan next in the ranking, the impact of the Syria crisis on these countries is clear.

For more details on refugee-related statistics, see UNHCR's Global Trends 2013 (available mid-2014).

**H**ost countries assist refugees in different ways, including – most immediately – through the delivery of life-saving assistance and critical services, in emergencies and beyond the initial phase.

Distributing relief items, building or improving infrastructure and bearing the administrative, staff and other costs of managing settlements, camps or other types of accommodation are part of these efforts. Even before UNHCR and other relief organizations are on the scene, host communities are the first provider of support to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Refugee-receiving States have generously assumed this responsibility, many for prolonged periods of time, which implies significant financial burden, as well as economic and social costs borne across many sectors, including shelter, health, education, water, energy and infrastructure. Services are often stretched beyond their limits particularly in countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East that today host 86 per cent of the refugees in the world. Moreover, 46 per cent of refugees under UNHCR's mandate can be found in countries with a GDP of less than USD 5,000 per capita, where resources may already be under pressure. Nonetheless, host countries keep their borders open and play a critical role in protecting and assisting the displaced.

### SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Maintaining an open-door policy and providing international protection to people fleeing persecution and conflict demonstrate States' humanitarian solidarity, and are fundamental principles of international law. By accepting and guaranteeing adequate legal status and access to legal procedures for

refugees and asylum-seekers, States protect and preserve their rights. The issuance of identity papers and civil and travel documents, as well as the setting up of registration and refugee status determination procedures, help prevent discrimination and arbitrary treatment, including detention.

UNHCR welcomes and encourages such efforts.

Sometimes, conflict or generalized violence can spill over frontiers, putting refugees at renewed risk and affecting host communities. States may also fear that the spread of fighting or tensions onto their territory may destabilize national security. In such situations, the authorities in refugee-hosting countries often have to put in place measures to strengthen security in refugee camps and along border areas, as well as in transit sites and centres. They may make available police or security forces to ensure the safety of inhabitants and maintain law and order.

### ESSENTIAL SUPPORT

Ensuring that refugees and asylum-seekers are able to access health care is another form of vital support; and similarly, in many host countries, refugee children are included in the national education system – either enrolled in public schools or attending classes in refugee camps. Yet, for the host communities, the costs associated with providing additional staff, space and resources to address the educational needs of large numbers of refugee children can be remarkable, placing great strain on public services and infrastructure.

States offering asylum often allocate land for refugee camps and settlements, as well as shelter in urban areas; farming land for refugees; and in many countries, refugees are allowed access to firewood and water sources. This

helps them to be more self-reliant and less dependent on assistance. However, it does not reduce the pressure on overstrained systems. Unless the needs of all concerned are taken into consideration, competition for scarce resources, like water or grazing pastures, may lead to environmental degradation, create tensions between host and refugee communities and even fuel further displacement.

#### UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE

In some countries – regardless of their economic situation – fears built on negative stereotypes and prejudice have fuelled xenophobia and racism directed at populations of concern and foreigners in general. UNHCR works closely with governments of host countries around the world to promote understanding and acceptance of refugees and to highlight the positive contributions they can make to the societies where they have found refuge and hospitality. Much of the Office's advocacy work is focused on disseminating such messages and encouraging solutions.

Despite common perceptions that hosting large numbers of refugees may lead to socio-economic problems, the opposite can also happen, especially in the longer term. At the local level, new markets, structures or business relationships can benefit both the displaced and host communities.

While there are many examples of positive contributions to refugee welfare by host societies at the local level, fostering conciliation and peaceful coexistence among

refugees, local authorities and host communities remains vital. Enhancing the integration of refugees is central to ensuring that their presence does not upset the existing balance, especially where resources are already scarce. UNHCR supports projects and interventions that benefit both refugees and local populations, so as to nurture social cohesion and resilience and bolster protection.

Committed to help maximize the positive impact that refugees can have on a society and its economy, especially when they are allowed to move freely and have access to land and the labour market, UNHCR emphasizes the need for measures that support self-reliance. Partnerships with development actors play a major role in creating opportunities for people of concern to build livelihoods and economic independence.

#### TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

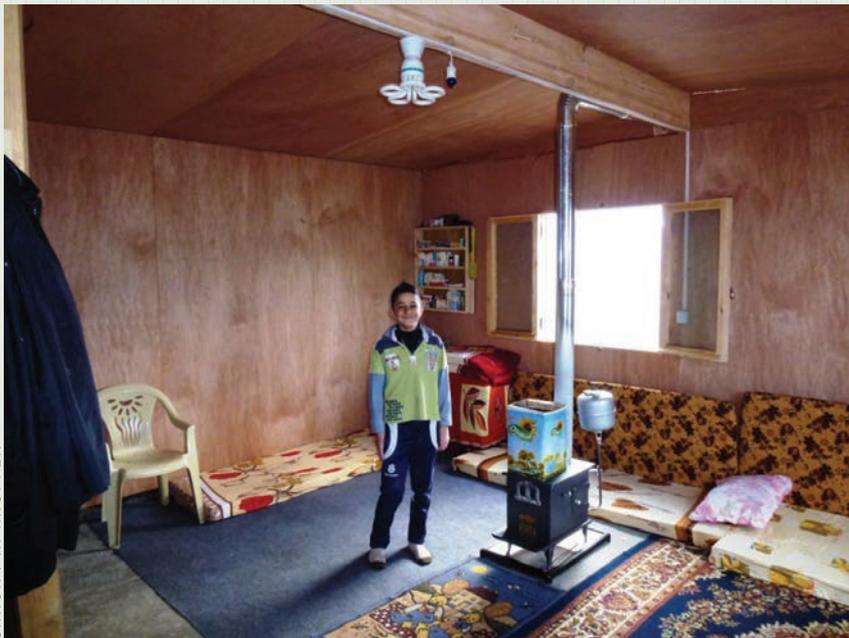
Refugees with no prospect of return to their country of origin may be obliged to remain in exile for years. In such situations, host countries may provide a home for successive generations. In recognition of this, UNHCR advocates for sustained international solidarity and burden-sharing by the international community while durable solutions continue to be sought.

The vast majority of refugees wish to go home once the conditions for their safety are in place. In the meantime, the generous hospitality and support afforded to refugees by host communities and governments around the world deserve continued recognition. ■

# Lebanese quietly welcome tens of thousands of Syrians into their homes

*This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story*

4 MARCH 2013



UNHCR / R. KNUPPER

Syrian refugees find generous hospitality in a shelter erected in the yard of a Lebanese host family's home

**SAOUIRI, Lebanon, March 2013** | *As more and more Syrians flood into Lebanon, thousands of families have been quietly welcoming the uninvited guests into their homes, swelling the populations of many villages in Lebanon's Bekaa Governorate.*

Since the start of the Syria conflict in March 2011, more than 320,000 Syrian civilians have registered as refugees or applied to register in a country of just 4.5 million people. The Government says there are about 1 million Syrians in Lebanon, including migrant workers who have been joined by their families.

Such an influx has put a tremendous economic and social burden on a country just one quarter the size of Switzerland. But everywhere in this eastern border region, people like Faddeyah and her husband Ali Abou have been opening their doors and sharing their modest resources with traumatized families.

Faddeyah and Ali Abou live in a modest home in the village of Saouiri, and have just one spare room which they generously offered to needy refugees from Syria shortly after the fighting erupted across the border. The need for accommodation became so great that they ended up taking in three families who had fled from Damascus. At first, the three families lived together in the one room, but it was simply too crowded and so UNHCR's partner, the Danish Refugee Council, put up two pre-fabricated houses in Faddeyah's yard.

The generosity and hospitality shown by Faddeyah and her husband have been multiplied many times over in their village.

Host families in Saouiri are providing shelter for about 500 Syrian families, or 3,000 people. The new arrivals have increased the village population by about 40 per cent.

Public buildings are also being used to accommodate refugees. The Government, with assistance from UNHCR and other partners, continues to identify empty public buildings for renovation and use as collective centres, providing shelter for many more Syrian families arriving in Lebanon. ○