

South Sudanese refugees find shelter and protection in Uganda.



Ensuring Protection *for People of* Concern

As conflicts proliferate worldwide, so do the numbers of people in need of international protection. Most significantly, civilians are increasingly affected by armed conflict and bear the terrible consequences of its impact.

Against this challenging context, UNHCR is working to reinvigorate and reaffirm the centrality of protection in all aspects of the humanitarian response. In 2015, the Office will continue to ensure that protection responses are integrated from the outset of emergencies, and that protection strategies address critical risks and inform an overall humanitarian response. ●●●



UNHCR will also continue to work with States to build and strengthen national systems to deliver protection. New strategies and guidance tools include a Global Initiative on Protection at Sea; the Beyond Detention Strategy; and the Campaign to End Statelessness being launched in late 2014 (see chapter *Ending Statelessness*).

Work will continue on finding ways to empower displaced communities by employing a community-based approach, and ensuring full integration of the

Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach into operations.

Examples of planned activities in 2015 are presented in matrix format, complemented by several short texts on topical subjects. They illustrate how UNHCR continues to innovate and adapt the many different ways in which it seeks to ensure respect by governments of the core principles of international refugee law across the globe, whether on land or at sea, to protect and assist all who are in need of international protection.

Clarifying the centrality of the 1951 Convention

Today's conflicts are often driven by racial, ethnic, religious and/or political divisions. In the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), and more recently in Iraq, what may appear at first glance to be indiscriminate violence often targets particular populations on the basis of their perceived support for one of the parties to the conflict.

The right to seek and enjoy asylum enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and reflected in the 1951 Refugee Convention provides the legal basis for protecting people fleeing persecution, conflict and violence related to their race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion.

In 2015, UNHCR will issue Guidelines on International Protection to help clarify why the Convention applies to people fleeing conflict and violence in such situations. A striking example is that of the many Syrians at risk of persecution by reason of alleged political opinion, or because they are perceived to belong to a religious group associated with one

of the parties to the conflict. At present, many States parties to the Convention give such individuals a form of subsidiary protection, instead of the refugee status to which the Convention entitles them. The Guidelines will thus help Governments to understand in which circumstances they need to provide people fleeing violence with refugee status under the 1951 Convention.

The scale of displacement in 2014 also means that, for some host countries, individual refugee status determination (RSD) becomes impossible. Following the issuance of guidelines on temporary protection or stay arrangements, which are one possible response in such situations, UNHCR will issue additional guidelines on international protection in 2015 for governments that may need to resort to group determination for refugee status – or determination on a *prima facie* basis. Existing operational guidelines on maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum and refugee camps will also be updated, specifying clear, practical steps to assist governments to identify, separate and deal appropriately with armed actors.

**AREAS OF INTERVENTION
ANTICIPATED IN 2015**

EXAMPLES

Favourable protection environment

Law and policy developed or strengthened

Advocate for the adoption or revision of laws consistent with international standards

- Technical advice will be provided to encourage States to enact new or revised legislation, incorporating improved protection standards.

Fair protection processes and documentation

Quality of and access to status determination procedures improved

Publish and disseminate guidance on international protection, refugee status determination and other legal positions

- Governments, UNHCR staff and other stakeholders in asylum/RSD procedures will benefit from guidelines on conflict and other situations of violence, *prima facie* recognition, the humanitarian character of asylum, credibility, procedural standards, differentiated case processing approaches, the transition of RSD processing to governments, and exclusion.

Ensure access for decision-makers on asylum claims to up-to-date country of origin information

- Country-specific guidance will be published on major countries of origin (COI), as well as other country-specific guidance documents.
- COI reports will be commissioned on specific countries of origin, from independent organizations with expertise in COI research.
- *Refworld* will be maintained to ensure that governments, UNHCR staff and other stakeholders in asylum/RSD procedures will continue to benefit from having access to up-to-date COI from a broad range of reliable sources.

Further build the capacity of UNHCR RSD staff and state decision-makers, judges and other stakeholders in asylum/RSD procedures

- 4 regional sessions of the RSD Learning Programme will be developed and delivered, benefitting 140 UNHCR RSD staff.
- A new Interviewing Learning Programme for UNHCR staff involved in RSD and other protection-related activities will be developed and piloted.
- UNHCR RSD staffing structures and levels will be further enhanced, including through the creation of posts as well as the deployment of government RSD experts to UNHCR RSD operations.
- UNHCR will continue to support the secondment of government RSD experts to UNHCR offices involved in mandate RSD and national RSD capacity-building activities under related memoranda of understanding.

Advocate for the issuance of ICAO-compliant Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents (MRCTDs)

- The number of States issuing MRCTDs will increase, providing more people of concern with travel documents, thereby facilitating their freedom of movement.
- Engagement with ICAO processes to update Annex 9 of the Chicago Convention.

Increase birth registration

- Access to birth registration will be strengthened through the creation of a dedicated Senior Protection Officer position focusing on civil registration, including birth registration.
- A global stock-taking exercise will be undertaken to map good practices.

Protection at sea

Whether in the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden, the Caribbean or South-East Asia, loss of life at sea continues to grow. More and more desperate people are taking to the seas, often in unseaworthy boats, not only risking their lives but increasingly falling victim to exploitation, trafficking and violence during their attempts to reach safety. Among them, many are fleeing persecution, conflict and war, as they travel alongside people moving for other reasons.

This global phenomenon reveals serious gaps in search, rescue and disembarkation capacities. In some instances thorough search-and-rescue measures are taken. In others, however, “deterrence” objectives take precedence over rescue and protection or limited capabilities hinder effective action.

Recent positive efforts to save lives at sea and to disembark people to a place of safety are welcome and deserve support. It is important that disembarkation arrangements are predictable, and allow asylum-

seekers and refugees to find access to asylum and protection. To achieve this, regional cooperation among all affected States is vital.

Preventing loss of life at sea is the responsibility of all governments, including non-coastal States. This includes giving priority to search and rescue, facilitating disembarkation and care of rescued people, providing protection and long-term solutions for asylum-seekers and refugees travelling by sea, and offering alternatives to dangerous sea journeys.

In an effort to bring together all stakeholder perspectives, UNHCR’s Global Initiative on Protection at Sea aims to support action by States and regional entities that prevents loss of life at sea while ensuring that asylum-seekers and refugees travelling by sea can find protection. It will be the subject of the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2014 and is also the focus of a new Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative in which UNHCR is proposing 12 concrete steps aimed at saving lives in collaboration with concerned States.

**AREAS OF INTERVENTION
ANTICIPATED IN 2015**

EXAMPLES

Security from violence and exploitation

Risk of SGBV reduced and quality of response improved

Assure SGBV programming in emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SGBV protection officers will be deployed at the onset of emergencies to set up SGBV prevention and response programmes.
Provide guidance and operational support for roll-out of updated strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 40 country operations will be supported to develop and implement country-specific SGBV strategies in 2014-2015. ■ UNHCR will contribute to the roll-out of the revised IASC Guidelines for GBV interventions in Humanitarian Settings.
Increase efficient data management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The implementation of the inter-agency gender-based violence information system (GBVIMS) will be supported in 15 operations in 2015.
Reinforce SGBV prevention in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A quick-reference note on SGBV prevention in schools will be finalized and disseminated. ■ Programming for SGBV prevention and response in schools will be improved in 8 country operations in 2015.
Strengthen partnerships for access to justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Capacity development, advocacy and support work will continue with traditional justice mechanisms with the aim of achieving the application of international standards for women's and children's rights in 3 country operations by 2015.
Develop SGBV prevention and response capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The English version of the facilitator's guide on SGBV prevention and response will be launched at the end of 2014. It will be translated into French and Arabic, and disseminated to field operations in 2015. ■ The English version of the mandatory SGBV E-learning will be launched in the first half of 2015. The Arabic, French and Spanish version will be launched in the second half of 2015, with an expected 40 per cent staff enrolment and completion.

Protection of children strengthened

Provide guidance and operational support to countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Targeted support for the implementation of the Child Protection Framework will be pursued in 11 existing priority countries.
Implement the child-protection regional initiative covering the Horn of Africa and Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The implementation of the <i>Live, Learn and Play Safe</i> regional initiative for unaccompanied and separated children and other children at risk in northern Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt and Yemen, will continue in 2015.
Strengthen programming for adolescents and youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 16 youth-initiated and led protection projects will be supported and funded through the Youth Initiative Fund. ■ A new programme for youth workers from refugee communities will be piloted.
Strengthen child protection response in emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1 roving child-protection-in-emergencies expert will be hired (to complement a similar position seconded to UNHCR by Save the Children). ■ 6 child protection officers will be deployed to emergencies. ■ Targeted support will be provided to 4 emergency situations in the form of child protection deployments, development of operational tools, regional or country-specific strategies such as that developed for South Sudan.
Work towards ending the detention of asylum-seeking and stateless children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As part of the Beyond Detention strategy, technical advice will be provided to governments and other stakeholders, in particular on child-appropriate alternatives to detention. ■ Tools to support governments will be developed.
Strengthen capacity for the protection of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A self-learning training programme on child protection will be launched. ■ Operational tools and briefs will be disseminated. ■ Training events at global, regional and country level will be held.
Promote the protection of displaced children in inter-agency fora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Protection of displaced children will be reflected in inter-agency tools and policies. ■ UNHCR will contribute to the finalization of the Inter-Agency Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children in 2015.



AREAS OF INTERVENTION
ANTICIPATED IN 2015

EXAMPLES

Promote protection-sensitive migration management strategies

Promote protection-sensitive systems that facilitate protection and access to asylum for refugees and stateless people in mixed migratory flows

- Initiatives building on examples in the 10-Point Plan in Action will be strengthened in countries of transit and destination to ensure that mixed migration management processes include safeguards for asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless people (notably in the East and Horn of Africa, North and South regions of Africa, the Mediterranean, South-East Asia and Central America).
- Work will continue with States and other stakeholders to develop mechanisms that are responsive to a range of protection needs, including for victims of trafficking and others in need of protection (notably in the East and Horn and North Africa, the Mediterranean, the western Balkans, Central America and in the Asia-Pacific region).
- A second global roundtable on alternatives to detention will be held to share and update successful programmes.

Strengthen protection-at-sea initiatives to reduce the loss of lives of refugees and asylum-seekers at sea

Work with States towards implementing UNHCR's Protection at Sea Initiative and the outcomes of the 2014 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection at Sea

- A *Rescue at Sea Guide for Shipmasters*, in collaboration with the International Maritime Organization and the International Chamber of Shipping, will be revised.
- UNHCR will continue to promote tools for responding to mixed migration maritime situations, including the model framework for regional cooperation and mobile response teams (with a particular focus on the Asia-Pacific, Gulf of Aden and Caribbean regions).

Develop evidence-based responses to distress-at-sea and mixed migration

- UNHCR will collaborate with stakeholders for collation of data and targeted studies on protection at sea in key regions, to enable evidence-based responses to protection at sea.

Young people taking initiatives

The experience of displacement can have a detrimental effect on young people at a critical period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Not only do young people in displacement face similar protection risks to those of adults, they are also frequently required to take on new roles and responsibilities that may increase these dangers. For example, girls and young women are at heightened risk of harmful coping strategies, such as survival sex and early marriage, while boys and young men increasingly face forced military recruitment or exploitation in the labour market.

Yet young people are often misunderstood or expected to behave like adults while being treated as children. All this points to the importance of paying greater attention to the protection needs of forcibly displaced youth, and developing a protection response that is participatory and builds on their capabilities and aspirations.

Getting protection programming right for forcibly displaced youth can pay dividends not only for them, but also their families and communities. Such are the objectives of UNHCR's Youth Initiative Fund, launched in 2013. It asks displaced communities to design and lead projects to

address protection challenges they have identified within their own communities. In response to the growing interest among refugee youth, the Youth Initiative Fund aims to initiate two rounds of proposals and funding in 2015.

The Initiative takes a community-based approach to selecting and training coaches, and cultivating leadership among participating youth and adolescents, by enabling them to take on increased roles and responsibilities. It places the unique needs of youth and their communities at the centre of its design: participation is encouraged, but not mandatory, to take account of possible financial constraints and the demands of work. The programme serves to strengthen social cohesion, communication and understanding within and between groups, at no cost to the participants or to the community.

Examples of projects funded thus far include: an SGBV-prevention effort using Forum Theatre (an interactive methodology to encourage participants to challenge a given issue) for displaced young people in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; a project to empower young refugees to become peer educators – with a focus on the

empowerment of young women and girls – in the Islamic Republic of Iran; and a playground project in Morocco that brings together host communities and youth associations from different backgrounds to play basketball. The Moroccan project's activities are not limited to sports: trained coaches engage young refugees and the local community through a series of free activities designed to enhance life skills and local integration.

In 2015, UNHCR aims to introduce a programme that will train young people from refugee communities to become youth workers within their communities. The idea is to provide an enabling environment in which young people can empower themselves through participation in projects aimed at strengthening their own protection.

Also planned for the coming year is close collaboration with the newly-appointed Secretary-General's Envoy for Youth and Sport. This cooperation will involve integrated sports programming for displaced youth, with a focus on the prevention of violence, including SGBV, and exploitation, and the identification of young people at risk, through life-skills training. ■

AREAS OF INTERVENTION ANTICIPATED IN 2015

EXAMPLES

Strengthen gender equality in displaced communities

Improve the extent to which women are able to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family and communities.

- Operational support will be provided to strengthen the implementation of the AGD Policy. This will ensure that the findings of participatory assessments and other forms of consultations with displaced communities are better reflected in planning, programming, implementation and monitoring.

Ensure that there is a conducive environment for women and girls to achieve their potential as family and community advocates for change and a peaceful future rather than being perceived as vulnerable and reliant on international assistance.

- At least 5 operations will be provided with direct protection support to work with communities to create an enabling environment so that women and girls can fully utilize their capacities, including in the areas of education and livelihoods.

Improve access to education

Provide technical support to operations

- At least 21 countries will receive technical support in the roll-out of their education strategies, including emergency operations.

Increase enrolment rates for out-of-school children

- Efforts to ensure access to safe and quality education for out-of-school children, particularly for girls, will be expanded. Through the Educate A Child (EAC) programme, 140,000 out-of-school children will be enrolled in primary school in 12 countries.

Strengthen data management and monitoring of learning outcomes

- Monitoring of education programmes and education information management will be improved with a focus on learning outcomes.

Promote the use of technology in education

- Use of innovative pedagogies and information communication technologies (ICTs) will be expanded to 5 additional operations to increase educational opportunities and enhance their quality.

Enhance access to tertiary education

- Scholarships will be provided for over 3,000 refugees through the DAFI tertiary scholarship and other scholarship programmes.
- Opportunities to access higher education will also be increased by engaging Ministries of Education and distance learning providers.

Services for people with specific needs strengthened

UNHCR and partner staff strengthen their capacity to address specific protection needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people of concern

- At least two regional LGBTI workshops will be held with at least 100 participants, including UNHCR and partners.
- One comprehensive training package on protection of LGBTI people of concern will be made available online to UNHCR and broader humanitarian community.
- UNHCR will continue a global mapping of progress and gaps by region of efforts to enhance protection of LGBTI people of concern.

UNHCR and partner staff strengthen their capacity to address specific protection needs of people with disabilities

- At least four operations will continue to receive targeted technical support on disability inclusion, including training on policy and support in the development and implementation of action plans.

Community mobilization strengthened and expanded

Operations will strengthen their delivery of community-based protection interventions.

- A community-based protection expert will provide targeted technical support to at least 6 operations.
- A catalogue of good practices in community-based protection will be issued.

UNHCR calls for urgent European action to end refugee and migrant deaths at sea

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

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UNHCR/A. D'AMATO

Onboard an Italian ship, a Syrian man holds his one-year-old son as they wait to be checked by doctors after being rescued from the Mediterranean sea.

GENEVA, July 2014 |
The UN refugee agency called Thursday for urgent European action to stop rising numbers of refugee and migrant deaths at sea. More than 260 people have died or been reported missing trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to get to Europe in the last 10 days alone.

Survivors reported disturbing incidents of mass drownings, suffocations and a suspected multiple stabbing, UNHCR said in a statement issued in Geneva. The grim tally brings to some 800 the number of deaths at sea so far this year, compared to a total of 600 deaths in all of 2013, and 500 in 2012.

“The death of 260 people in less than ten days, in the most horrifying of circumstances, is evidence that the Mediterranean crisis is intensifying,” said António Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. “Europeans need to take urgent action to stop this catastrophe getting worse in the second half of 2014.”

The tragedies mark an intensifying crisis on Europe's shores, as many fleeing Eritrea, Syria and other countries torn by violence seek safety in Europe by risking their lives at sea in the hands of smugglers.

More than 75,000 refugees and migrants arrived by boat in Italy, Greece, Spain and Malta in the first half of 2014 – 25 per cent more than the 60,000 who made the same journey in the whole of 2013, and over three times the 22,500 who arrived in 2012. During the weekend of 19-20 July alone, Italian and Maltese authorities, together with several commercial vessels, rescued 8,000 people.

Guterres praised both Italy and Malta for their efforts, but said European States needed to step up their assistance. He called on governments to strengthen rescue operations, provide swift access to asylum procedures for those in need of protection, and offer legal alternatives to dangerous sea crossings. ○