



# *Finding* Durable Solutions

**U**NHCR helps many refugees achieve durable solutions every year. But for several million people in protracted refugee situations, and even greater numbers of internally displaced people, solutions remain elusive.

While in exile, and pending a durable solution, the displaced can make positive contributions to their host communities if they are enabled to become more self-reliant, rather than having to depend on assistance.

With this in mind, in 2013, UNHCR continued to support skills training and explored other options for generating self-reliance opportunities and potentially leading to durable solutions. New approaches were considered, such as labour mobility, temporary migration and alternative forms of legal stay that could help bring about solutions. In the Americas, for example, UNHCR will explore the feasibility of a labour mobility pilot, using private-sector expertise. Continued close engagement with States will be essential to see these initiatives move forward. ●●●

With the support of UN member States, and other key stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and other institutions, UNHCR is reorienting its work on durable solutions towards the establishment of a comprehensive solutions-oriented planning cycle. In June 2013, UNHCR tasked an inter-divisional working group, the Solutions Steering Group, with ensuring that the organization takes a strategic and coherent approach to all aspects of solutions, including resettlement. The Solutions Steering Group has drafted a template to support operations in the design of comprehensive, multi-year solutions strategies. Effective strategies must include measurable legal, economic, social, and political components and combine robust partnerships with evidence-based approaches and dedicated resources, both human and financial. The work of the Group has led to the launch of an internal call for proposals for solutions projects (*Seeds for Solutions*), which will be implemented in 2014. Collaborative efforts also include exploration of how solutions can be consistently part of emergency planning and response: the approach to resettlement in the Syria situation is an example of how solutions are forming part of UNHCR's view of emergencies.

### VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

There has been progress in voluntary repatriation in a number of displacement situations. For instance, a return strategy is being developed for people displaced by the conflict in Mali, in light of improvements in security in some areas of the country. The situation in northern Mali is not yet conducive to large-scale return; however, Malian refugees in Niger and Mauritania who seek to return to certain locations are being given assistance to do so. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), more than 62,000 people displaced by conflict were assisted to return in 2013, bringing the total number of returns since May 2012 to 103,600.

Most countries hosting significant numbers of Angolan refugees have invoked the cessation clauses.

The latest is Botswana, where the cessation clauses went into effect at the end of October 2013. Some 1,700 Angolans returned home with UNHCR's assistance in 2013, mainly from Botswana and Zambia, although voluntary repatriation was hampered by financial constraints, logistical challenges and bad weather. UNHCR has participated in meetings with the Governments of Angola, the DRC, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia to discuss the repatriation of the 25,000 Angolans still remaining in these countries who wish to return. With regard to the Somali situation,

a tripartite agreement, signed by UNHCR, Somalia and Kenya, includes assistance with an initial phase of spontaneous return.

In Asia, efforts to implement the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries are continuing, with projects being designed to meet the specific needs in the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, in coordination with the Governments and other partners. In 2014, voluntary repatriation may be affected by the complex political and security transitions facing Afghanistan during the year.

### MAJOR REPATRIATION MOVEMENTS IN 2013

Major repatriated populations					
Countries of departure		Ivorians	Congolese (DRC)	Afghans	Rwandans
	Liberia	18,719			
	Congo (Republic of)		62,865		
	Islamic Republic of Iran			8,247	
	Pakistan			31,224	
	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)				7,199
	Togo	661			



## RESETTLEMENT

Over the past 60 years, resettlement has provided millions of refugees with protection and the opportunity to build new lives for themselves and their families. Resettlement remains invaluable in meeting the needs of refugees whose life, health or fundamental human rights are at risk in the country where they first sought refuge. UNHCR estimates that global resettlement needs in 2013 stood at about 859,000 places, a slight increase from 2012. Refugees from Somalia, Myanmar and Afghanistan constitute the three biggest groups in need of resettlement, followed by refugees from the DRC and the Sudan. The

estimated global resettlement needs increased mid-year following an appeal for the resettlement of 30,000 Syrian refugees in 2013-2014.

UNHCR prioritized the strategic use of resettlement for the following refugee populations: Somalis in Kenya; Afghans in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan; Syrians in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey; Iraqis in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria; Colombians in Ecuador; Congolese (DRC) in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania; and refugees from Bhutan in Nepal. The Congolese Contact Group led by the United States, and the Syrian Core Group led by Sweden, were established to help advance the

positive impact of resettlement, both in terms of opening asylum space in host countries and in unlocking other durable solutions.

The number of UNHCR resettlement submissions rose by almost 25 per cent from 2012 to reach more than 93,200 submissions in 2013. Provisional figures indicate that some 71,000 individuals departed for resettlement with UNHCR's assistance during the year, slightly more than in 2012. With Switzerland joining the pool of resettlement countries, the number of States offering resettlement programmes rose to 27.

Other areas of achievement in the use of resettlement as a durable solution in 2013 are outlined in the following matrix.

### AREAS OF INTERVENTION

### ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2013

#### Women and girls at risk

- 12 per cent of all resettlement submissions were made for women and girls at risk, exceeding for a third consecutive year the target of 10 per cent set in ExCom Conclusion No. 105 (LVII) - 2006.

#### Resettlement in emergencies

- Videoconferencing continued to support resettlement processing in situations where interviews with refugees were not possible for security reasons or other obstacles to access.
- The use of Emergency Transit Centres (ETCs) in the Philippines and Romania was maximized in partnership with resettlement countries, enabling the transfer of 440 refugees to ETCs for final processing by the receiving countries.
- Financial support from the European Union allowed the European Resettlement Network coordinated by UNHCR, IOM and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) to focus on emergency resettlement needs and priorities. This was complemented by the ICMC-led SHARE network which works to improve reception and integration conditions in European resettlement countries.
- UNHCR launched a campaign to secure up to 30,000 resettlement places and other forms of admission for Syrian refugees in 2013-2014. Some 1,160 Syrians were submitted for resettlement and 260 departed in 2013; another 4,280 were submitted on humanitarian grounds, 800 of whom departed to the countries willing to admit them on this basis.

#### Integrity and efficiency of the resettlement process

- In December 2013, some 30 field staff preparing Congolese refugee resettlement submissions received training on fraud prevention.

#### Partnership

- The Working Group on Resettlement and the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement provide an invaluable multilateral forum for UNHCR, States and NGOs to discuss resettlement issues.
- Thanks to strong partnership work, NGO standby staff deployed to UNHCR field offices were responsible for approximately half of all resettlement submissions in 2013.

#### Advocacy and awareness raising

- Thanks to advocacy and awareness-raising efforts, the Joint EU Resettlement Programme adopted in 2012 has extended the categories of refugees considered for resettlement, and offered additional funding for new resettlement countries. This has brought in additional resources for resettlement in the European Union, not only for 2013 but also for the next seven years (2014-2020).

#### Top three resettlement countries in 2013

	Submissions	Departures
United States of America	55,494	45,524
Australia	10,076	10,809
Canada	7,779	4,632

### LOCAL INTEGRATION

The Government of Zambia has taken steps to issue 10,000 residence permits to former refugees from Angola, consistent with a pledge made at the 2011 intergovernmental meeting to commemorate the anniversaries of the 1951 Refugee and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. The first permits have already been issued. In February 2014, the strategic framework for the local integration of former refugees (including Angolans and, possibly, Rwandans) was finalized. The framework foresees alternative legal status and integration opportunities for former refugees in and around the hosting areas. The Angolan authorities have started the screening process for the issuance of national passports in the settlements in Zambia and Namibia in 2014.

September 2013 saw the Tanzanian Government complete the screening process for the naturalization of some 1,300 Somali Bantu refugees currently living in the Chogo settlement, with certificates now being processed by the authorities. In Benin, UNHCR and the Government are working to find durable solutions for the Togolese refugees who have been in the country since 2005. In June 2013, the Government of Benin began issuing residence permits, valid for a 10-year period, to the Togolese.

In Colombia, considerable operational focus was placed on the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI),

a joint project between UNHCR and UNDP. Initiatives undertaken in 17 communities thus far continued to yield good results and promote the development of public policies to consolidate durable solutions. The TSI has the potential to increase the number of displaced who are able to regain their full rights as citizens.

In Europe, UNHCR completed an EU-funded pilot project to improve refugee integration in four central European countries. The project examined factors that either hinder or aid refugee integration, as well as the policies necessary for successful integration. It also provided a forum for the exchange of good practices on housing, education, health, employment and family reunification.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a three-year, EU-funded project led by UNHCR is aimed at carrying out the Revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which mandates UNHCR to assist the Bosnian authorities in ensuring the right of return. A crucial goal of the strategy is to strengthen local planning in 10 clusters of municipalities in order to prioritize assistance to communities and families with specific needs. UNHCR is working closely with governments, civil society, local and international NGOs, the European Union, the OSCE and other UN agencies on this project.

Other examples of progress with regard to local integration in 2013 are provided in the matrix below. ■

### AREAS OF INTERVENTION

### ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2013

Côte d'Ivoire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local integration is available legally for nationals of ECOWAS countries. In cooperation with the Liberian Government, the Ivorian authorities started to work on providing 1,500 Liberians with passports and residence permits.</li> </ul>
Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR worked with UNDP to provide IDPs with access to housing and livelihood opportunities.</li> </ul>
Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Government of Panama indicated that it will provide permanent residence documents to approximately 400 Colombians who have benefitted from temporary protection status in the Darien region for the past 15 years.</li> </ul>


**RESETTLEMENT**

In **Pakistan**, resettlement submissions and departures increased significantly compared to 2012. By the end of 2013, 1,107 refugees residing in urban areas had departed. Thanks to continued engagement by interested States, an Islamabad-based contact group on resettlement was formed to mobilize international support for resettlement from Pakistan on a more predictable, multi-year basis, and to advocate for alternative solutions for the remaining refugees in Pakistan. In July 2013, the Government of Pakistan extended the validity of the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards held by Afghan refugees until the end of 2015. PoRs assist the fast issuance of exit permits for resettlement departures. To prevent identity fraud, UNHCR introduced biometric checks in May 2013 in order to verify the identity and family composition of all Afghan asylum-seekers against the national database of Pakistani identity cardholders, prior to processing these applications. Approximately 10 per cent of the applicants were found to be registered in that database; therefore as Pakistani nationals, they were not admitted to UNHCR procedures.

In **Thailand**, resettlement departures fell by almost 20 per cent, on account of lower than expected interest expressed during the closure of the US group resettlement programme. The decline reflects the shifting of the programme from group to individual resettlement processing, and also the positive developments in the country of origin, Myanmar, which moved the focus from group resettlement to tentative preparations for voluntary repatriation. ●

# Ivorian refugee repatriation from Liberia this year tops 10,000 mark

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

30 JULY 2013



UNHCR / LIBERIA

Ivorian returnees cross the Cavalla River on a UNHCR-chartered barge

**MONROVIA, Liberia, July 2013** | *More than 10,000 Ivorians have returned home so far this year from Liberia with UNHCR's help, almost double the 2012 figure.*

The landmark was passed late last week. The refugees, mostly living in camps and communities in Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Maryland and River Gee counties in Liberia, have returned to areas such as Toulépleu, Tabou and Danane in western Côte d'Ivoire.

The UN refugee agency, in collaboration with the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission and other partners, has been organizing road convoys for those wishing to return more than two years after fleeing post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire. Those heading back from Maryland County cross the Cavalla River to Côte d'Ivoire on a barge operated by UNHCR.

"Last year, we facilitated the repatriation of more than 6,000 refugees. For this year, our planning figure is to facilitate the repatriation of 16,000 refugees,"

said UNHCR Officer-in-Charge Andrew Mbogori, who also thanked donors for supporting the repatriation efforts. "With 10,000 refugees repatriated over the past seven months, notwithstanding border security concerns a few months ago, we are definitely on track to attain our target," he added.

The repatriation operation had been interrupted by attacks on villages on the Ivorian side of the border and the killing of seven UN peacekeepers in June last year. "We welcome the improvement in border security, which is encouraging more refugees to return, and we hope the security situation will continue to improve," remarked Mbogori.

Many of those crossing the border at the Cavalla River stressed that the improved security had been a major factor

in their decision to return. "Now that security has improved in my country, I am happy to be returning to Tabou region to maintain my cocoa plantation, which is my main source of income" said Pierre, a father of five, as he crossed into Côte d'Ivoire, the world's largest cocoa-producing country.

Other refugees are returning to continue their education back home. "I was at a university in Abidjan which closed in 2011 as a result of the post-election violence [from November 2010 to April 2011]. Now that it has reopened and there is peace in our capital, I am happy to go back and continue my education," said 25-year-old Gnato.

Upon return to Côte d'Ivoire, former refugees receive a cash grant, food and non-food items. Liberia currently hosts more than 58,000 Ivorian refugees. ○