



Internally displaced persons in a camp near the city of Sukker in Sindh, Pakistan. This family, together with millions of other Pakistanis, was affected by severe flooding.



Sources, Methods and Data Considerations

BOTH THE 1951 CONVENTION Relating to the Status of Refugees¹⁶ and the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees¹⁷ refer to the responsibility of States to provide statistical data to UNHCR. This includes statistics on the number and condition of refugees, asylum-seekers and other people of concern to the Office. UNHCR also collects and disseminates information on internally displaced persons (IDPs) that include statistics on their numbers and profiles.

By monitoring returnees (both refugees and IDPs) UNHCR endeavours to determine the magnitude and sustainability of returns. It engages with governments and partners within the humanitarian community both to provide comprehensive assessments of the numbers involved, and to identify protection gaps and needs of refugees, IDPs, stateless persons, returnees and other populations of concern

to the Office. Complex factors influence the availability, timeliness, quality and comparability of the statistics, and complicate the task of providing these assessments.

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the basic concepts underlying the data presented in this Yearbook. These include definitions, classifications, estimation methods and other aspects of data quality. Most of the statistics have been collected through UNHCR's Annual Statistical Reports¹⁸, and generally reflect the definition and data collection methods of governments, except in countries where only UNHCR registration systems are used.

DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

UNHCR identifies seven population categories, collectively referred to as “persons of concern”: (1) refugees; (2) asylum-seekers; (3) internally displaced persons; (4) refugees who have returned home (returnees); (5) IDPs

who have returned home; (6) stateless persons; and (7) other people who do not fall under any of the above categories but to whom the Office extends protection. In 2007, two sub-categories were introduced: (a) people in refugee-like situations (included under refugees); and (b) people in IDP-like situations (included under IDPs).

Refugees include individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; individuals recognized under the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; individuals granted complementary forms of protection¹⁹ and those enjoying “temporary protection”²⁰. The refugee category also includes people in a refugee-like situation.²¹

Asylum-seekers (“pending cases”) are individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet

¹⁶ “...the Contracting States undertake to provide them in the appropriate form with information and statistical data requested...”. (Chapter VI, article 35: Co-operation of the national authorities with the United Nations).

¹⁷ “The High Commissioner shall provide for the protection for refugees falling under the competence of his Office by ... obtaining from Governments information concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories ...”. (Chapter II, paragraph 8: Functions of the High Commissioner).

¹⁸ The Annual Statistical Report is the official data collection form completed by all UNHCR country offices.

¹⁹ Complementary protection refers to protection provided under national, regional or international law to people who do not qualify for refugee protection under refugee law instruments but are in need of international protection because they are at risk of serious harm.

²⁰ Temporary protection refers to arrangements developed to offer protection of a temporary nature until such time the situation in the country of origin improves and allows for a safe and dignified return or individual refugee or complementary protection status determination can be carried out.

²¹ The term is descriptive in nature and includes groups of people who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.

been determined. Those covered in this report refer to claimants whose individual applications were pending at the end of 2010, irrespective of when they may have been lodged.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are people or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural/man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border.²²

UNHCR is involved in situations of internal displacement in a number of countries. The populations reported in its statistics are limited to conflict-generated IDPs, or persons in an IDP-like situation²³, to whom the Office extends protection or assistance. UNHCR's IDP statistics do not therefore necessarily reflect the entire IDP population in a given country, but only those who are protected and/or assisted by the Office. Moreover, under the cluster approach²⁴ UNHCR provides support to both IDPs and other affected persons, whereas the latter are not included in the statistics. Hence, UNHCR's statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture of global internal displacement, nor of total numbers assisted by the Office in such situations.²⁵

Returned refugees (returnees) refer to refugees who have returned voluntarily to their countries of origin or habitual residence. For purposes of this report, only refugees who returned between January and December 2010 are included. In practice, operations may assist returnees for longer periods.

Returned IDPs refer to those IDPs who were beneficiaries of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities and who returned to their areas of ori-

gin or habitual residence between January and December 2010. In practice, operations may assist IDP returnees for longer periods.

Stateless persons are defined under international law as persons who are not considered as nationals by any State under the operation of its law. In other words, they do not possess the nationality of any State. UNHCR statistics mainly refer to persons who fall under the international definition of a stateless person, but data from some countries also include *de facto* stateless persons, as well as persons who are unable to establish their nationality. UNHCR has been given a global mandate by the United Nations General Assembly to contribute to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons. The Office also has specific functions under Article 11 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness to receive claims from persons who may benefit from the safeguards contained in that Convention and to assist them and the States concerned to resolve those claims. UNHCR's Executive Com-

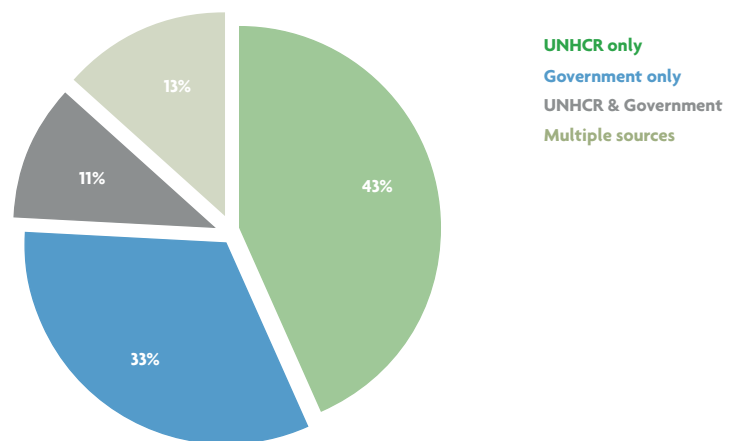
mittee has requested the Office to report regularly on the magnitude of the phenomenon.

Other groups or people of concern refer to individuals who do not necessarily fall directly into any of the groups above, but to whom UNHCR has extended its protection and/or assistance services, based on humanitarian or other special grounds.

SOURCES OF REFUGEE DATA

States bear the main responsibility to provide refugee data to UNHCR. Nevertheless, the number of data sources used to establish the size and characteristics of a refugee population varies within and among countries. Governmental agencies and UNHCR offices are the main data providers, either separately or jointly. NGOs are also key providers of refugee data in a number of countries. These three sources have accounted for more than 90 per cent of UNHCR's refugee statistics. Censuses, registration, surveys, or estimation were the main methods used to determine the figures in 2010. Although one source may provide all

Fig. 1.1 Sources of refugee data | 2010



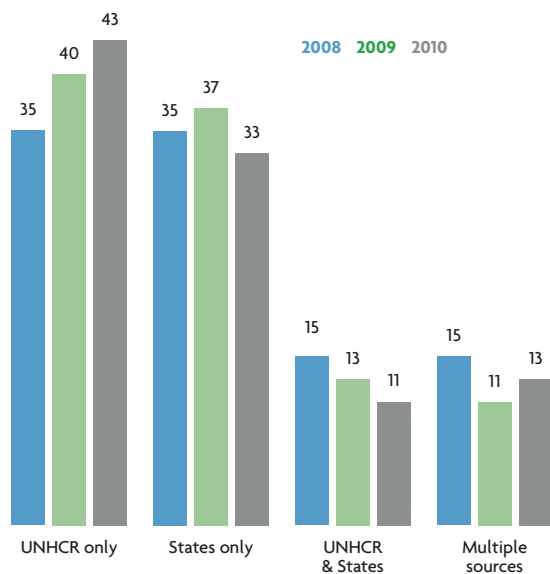
²² See: *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Addendum to the Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Francis M. Deng*, submitted pursuant to Commission (on Human Rights) Resolution 1997/39, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add2 (1998).

²³ The term is descriptive in nature and includes groups of people who are inside their country of nationality or habitual residence, and who face protection risks similar to IDPs but who, for practical or other reasons, could not be reported as such.

²⁴ In December 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed the "cluster" approach for handling situations of internal displacement. Under this arrangement, UNHCR assumes leadership responsibility and accountability for three of the nine clusters, namely: protection; emergency shelter; and camp coordination and camp management.

²⁵ Global IDP estimates are provided by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), available at www.internal-displacement.org.

Fig. 1.2 Trends in sources of refugee data (%)
| 2008-2010



the data within a given country, more commonly more than one source is used to obtain data on refugees.

In 2010, information on data sources was provided by 175 countries and territories. Joint governmental and UNHCR statistics were quoted as the single source or one of the main sources in over 150 countries. The host government was the sole data provider of refugee statistics in 57 countries (33%). This represented a small decrease compared to 2009 (37%), and resulted from the inclusion of a number of Pacific and Caribbean islands where UNHCR was in many cases the primary source of information.

Despite UNHCR's efforts to transfer responsibility for data collection to States, the capacity of a number of countries to provide refugee statistics is limited, and this responsibility remains with UNHCR. At the end of 2010, the Office was reported as the single source of refugee statistics in 76 countries (43%), 3 per cent more than the previous year. Together, States and UNHCR accounted for 76 per cent of global refugee data as compared to 60 per cent in 2006. The number of countries where UNHCR and the government were jointly re-

sponsible for refugee statistics has decreased in recent years. At the end of 2010, in only 19 countries (11%) the collection and provision of statistics was reported as a combined undertaking whereas in 2006, one in four countries (25%) reported a joint responsibility for refugee statistics.

Multiple sources that can include UNHCR, governments, NGOs and others, were reported in 23 countries (13%). Forty-two countries reported receiving data from more than one source.

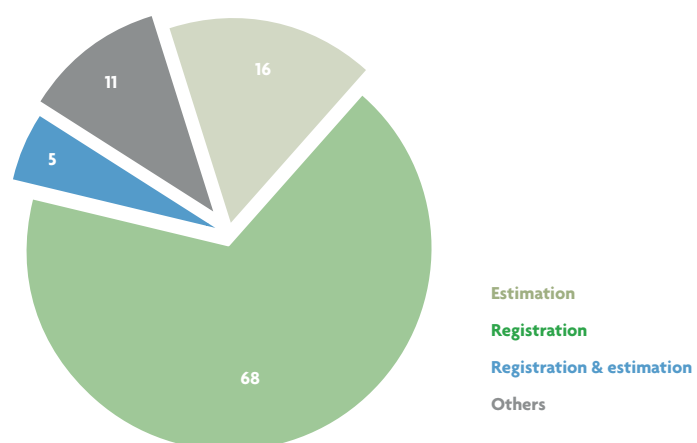
DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Together with its partners, UNHCR uses a wide range of data collection methods such as registration/registers, surveys, censuses, and estimations, to provide a comprehensive picture of persons of concern to the Office. Each method has its own strengths and limitations. To ensure the comparability of data across population categories and countries, UNHCR ensures that statistics from all these sources are triangulated.

Registration is a vital source of statistics for planning and management purposes. It often establishes a legal or administrative record, as evidence of legal status, or provides the basis for the delivery of entitlements and services. For protection to be effective and comprehensive, reliable registration is therefore imperative. UNHCR's registration software *proGres*²⁶ has helped provide meaningful, consistent and up-to-date statistics. In 2010, this software was used in 82 countries, including its application by governments in six countries.

During the registration process, data are collected, verified and updated for each individual or household. They include name, sex, date of birth, country of origin, relationships within the household, marital status, place of displacement and specific needs. The data are normally stored

Fig. 1.3 Basis of refugee data | 2010



²⁶ Profile Global Registration System.



Sources, Methods and Data Considerations

in *proGres*, complemented as needed by paper files or additional case management tools.

Periodic registration exercises often lead to a revision of population estimates. Refugee statistics are generally based on individual registration records kept either by the host government, by UNHCR, or jointly. Although registration is a government responsibility, UNHCR may assist or undertake registration activities if the government is unable to perform this task.

Registration was the method of data collection most frequently used in 2010, and represented the only method in 116 of the 172 countries and territories (67%) that reported on data collection methods. Although registration is the most reliable source of refugee data, many refugees are not able or willing to be registered. For this reason, in 22 other countries (13%) registration was combined with estimation or other methods to obtain overall refugee figures.

Estimation is the second main data collection method used by UNHCR and partners. In most industrialized countries, which do not provide information on the number of refugees, UNHCR estimates this number using official data on the number of asylum-seekers recognized over a 10-year period. In 2010, estimation as the sole source was used in 24 countries (16%), most of them industrialized. It was combined with registration and other methods in 12 other countries.²⁷

The example of Poland (*see right box*) illustrates the estimation process in industrialized countries. Ten years are assumed to be the average time required for a refugee to acquire the nationality of his/her host country.

Estimation methods are also often used to gather IDP statistics. In view of the operational and legal difficulties involved in registering IDPs on

Example: Poland

- Asylum-seekers granted Convention refugee status, 2001-2010: **2,538**
- Asylum-seekers granted a complementary form of protection, subsidiary protection and/or allowed to remain in the country for humanitarian reasons, 2001-2010: **13,017**
- UNHCR estimate of the refugee population in Poland, end of 2010: **15,555**.

an individual basis,²⁸ most humanitarian agencies rely on IDP profiling. This allows them to obtain a more accurate picture of IDP populations, and to identify where they are located, what are the difficulties of dis-

²⁷ Since many countries now have access to *proGres*, estimation is rarely used in non-industrialized countries.

²⁸ See www.humanitarianreform.org



Improving data management in UNHCR

Strengthening UNHCR's capacity for evidence-based planning and results-based management depends heavily on good operational data. Proper data management can help reinforce the monitoring systems in operations, helping UNHCR and partners conduct needs assessment, undertake protection case management activities and deliver assistance. To this effect, UNHCR launched the Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2007. The principle goal of the ODMLP was to train UNHCR staff to be able to design, operate and maintain robust monitoring systems, and to interpret

the resulting information in order to support good programme decisions.

The ODMLP is a cross-sectional learning programme that has been developed to improve data collection and management capacity in UNHCR operations. The data collection and management principles taught in the curriculum apply to all displaced populations equally well and use examples from all UNHCR activities including registration, child protection, health, and durable solutions.

The ODMLP starts with a six-month self-study phase followed

by hands-on training. The programme requires participants to apply what they have learned in their operation, with direct and positive impact on operations and on the population of concern. Projects have included developing Standard Operating Procedures on how assistance is recorded in UNHCR's registration software *proGres* to avoid duplication of assistance; designing a process flow for fraud reporting; GIS project mapping to make graphical representation of camps; tools for earmarking resources, and training initiatives that focus on population tracking, data confidentiality and

data collection methods and analysis. Participants have developed tools that track reintegration projects, and monitor returns. Over 220 staff members have been trained since 2007 with an average 89 per cent completion rate in the self-study phase, and an average 82 per cent completion rate in the graduation phase.

These projects have assisted operations to directly address weaknesses in their information systems, while allowing staff to apply the concepts and principles from the ODMLP to real-life operational situations. ●



UNHCR / S. KRITSANAVARIN

Refugee children in Nayapara camp, Bangladesh play on swings in the refugee camp.

tinguishing IDPs from host communities, and to compile baseline information for protection, programming and advocacy purposes.²⁹

In some countries, more than two methods have been used, making data comparability difficult. UNHCR has thus ensured that statistics from all sources were triangulated to increase the reliability and quality of the data. This has required regular interaction with the stakeholders involved in collecting and compiling statistics.

OTHER DATA QUALITY ISSUES

Historical data pertaining to the former USSR are reported under the Russian Federation, while those for the former Czechoslovakia are reported under the Czech Republic. Data for the former Yugoslavia as well as Serbia and Montenegro have been reported under Serbia (and Kosovo: S/RES/1244 (1999)). In most tables in the Annex, the word “Democratic” has been abbreviated to “Dem.”, whereas the word “Republic” is often reflected as “Rep.”

Figures below 1,000 are generally rounded to the nearest 10; figures between 1,000 and 10,000 are rounded to the nearest 100; figures between 10,000 and 100,000 are rounded to the nearest 1,000; figures between 100,000 and 1 million are rounded to the nearest 10,000; and figures above 1 million are rounded to the nearest 100,000.

Unless specified, the 2010 Statistical Yearbook does not refer to events occurring after 31 December 2010. ■

²⁹ See www.IDP-profiling.org