

Former Angolan refugees on the platform at Kinshasa Est station, ready to board a train to go home.



Progressing towards Solutions



While UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and other people of concern, the ultimate goal is to help find durable solutions that will allow them to rebuild their lives in dignity.

To meet this goal, UNHCR will continue to work with partners to develop a progressive approach that targets legal elements such as the acquisition of nationality, as well as opportunities to live independent lives.

Ultimately, whatever the path towards a durable solution, every person of concern to UNHCR should be enabled to exercise their rights and to contribute to the community in which they live. ●●●

A basis for durable solutions

While voluntary repatriation is in many cases the preferred durable solution, at times the only option for a refugee is to take up nationality elsewhere – either through resettlement, migration or settlement in the country of asylum. Likewise, for different populations of internally displaced or stateless people, there can be different possible pathways towards solutions; however, these may not all be immediately apparent when UNHCR first starts working with a population.

Strategies that aim to address all elements of a potential solution, based on sound analysis and joint planning with different stakeholders, will have the most impact. While these are often initially focused on quality of life and conditions of asylum, they also need to take account of each individual's eventual ability to find a durable solution. Often, a combination of solutions within the framework of a comprehensive approach will be necessary to achieve lasting resolution of a refugee situation.

UNHCR helps achieve durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) around the

world every year. But for several million refugees in protracted situations and a greater number of IDPs, durable solutions remain elusive.

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While awaiting a lasting solution, displaced people often make positive contributions to their host societies, drawing on opportunities to become self-reliant. Enhanced skills training and opportunities for education, or work through protection-sensitive migration, can all help increase opportunities for self-reliance, and may help facilitate access to durable solutions.

Whether the outcome for refugees and IDPs is to eventually return home, to settle in the country of first asylum or resettle

elsewhere, the experience of proving their resilience and ability to support themselves and their families in a new environment can empower them and make the solution they eventually adopt more sustainable.

Several recent initiatives are intended to help ensure that more displaced people have access to comprehensive solutions, supported by UNHCR's newly-founded Solutions Steering Group: 19 operations are receiving additional funding to implement multi-year solutions strategies for refugees, IDPs and stateless groups. Innovative approaches to decrease food aid dependency, and explore alternatives to camps are also planned for 2015.

The Solutions Alliance was launched in Copenhagen in April 2014, bringing together UN agencies and civil society, host and donor governments, as well as academic and private-sector actors interested in addressing solutions from the outset of emergencies. The Alliance promotes a collective, strategic approach to the development of durable solutions and fundraising, and will also offer technical and advocacy support.

Solutions around the world

The following overview of activities planned in cooperation with partners in 2015 provides examples by region.

In **Africa**, a regional comprehensive solutions strategy for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to be implemented in the Great Lakes and Central Africa region. The strategy foresees the resettlement of at least 50,000 Congolese refugees from 2012 to 2017, to increase protection space and integration, particularly through enhanced livelihood opportunities and better access to national social services for refugees. Provided conditions for returns are safe, support for voluntary repatriation will continue. In June 2014, the voluntary repatriation operation was completed for refugees from the DRC returning from the Congo, with over 119,000 Congolese refugees returning voluntarily to Equateur Province in the DRC.

UNHCR welcomes the support of asylum and resettlement countries in comprehensive solutions efforts, and continues to work with the Government, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, and other humanitarian partners, towards creating sustainable return conditions, in particular in the eastern DRC. In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR continues to support naturalization processes.

UNHCR will continue to work towards the integration of former Angolan, Liberian and Rwandan refugees, following the cessation of

refugee status. This work contributes to the implementation of multi-year comprehensive solutions strategies for these refugee situations. In 2015 UNHCR will continue to support the Governments in the countries concerned, and assist in finalizing several local integration initiatives. In Zambia, the Government has pledged to integrate up to 10,000 former Angolan refugees. In the DRC, the local integration of up to 18,000 former Angolan refugees will continue, including steps towards the issuance of residence permits.

In Mali and Somalia, UNHCR will support voluntary return and reintegration, where feasible. In Benin and Ghana, UNHCR will work with the respective governments on durable solutions for Togolese refugees, some of whom have been in the country since 1993. In Benin, the Government has now begun issuing ten-year residence permits for Chadian, Congolese, Rwandan and Togolese refugees. The Ghanaian Government is expected to issue residence permits to Togolese refugees in 2015. Possible solutions have also begun to emerge for Mauritians in Mali, including the provision of residence permits for long-staying refugees.

Where solutions are not immediately available, UNHCR will continue to support self-reliance and mobility for refugees. For example, Ethiopia has adopted a promising approach to enable Eritrean refugees to live outside camps. Those refugees who can provide for themselves financially, or have relatives or sponsors who can support them, will no longer have to remain in camps.

With international funding and support, the opportunities opened up by this policy should provide better access to education and self-reliance opportunities, longer-term sustainable stay in the country, as well as improved possibilities for durable solutions elsewhere.

In **Asia**, the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries was launched at an international stakeholder's conference in May 2012. In Pakistan, the Government's comprehensive Management and Repatriation Strategy for Afghan Refugees combines support for host communities with interim stay arrangements. Other protection-sensitive migration schemes will be pursued in neighbouring countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In Central Asia, UNHCR will apply a regional durable solutions strategy to intensify the search for solutions for long-staying urban refugees in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

In **Europe**, UNHCR will continue to engage in the Sarajevo Process on refugees and displaced persons and the Regional Housing Programme funded by the European Union, which supports durable solutions for those displaced by the 1991-1995 conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In an intergovernmental process supported by UNHCR, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia signed a Joint Declaration in 2011 aimed at finding rapid solutions for the 74,000 refugees who remain dispersed across the region. A

regional programme has set out concrete steps to address the obstacles that remain, including an accelerated process to provide civil documentation and support for voluntary repatriation.

In the **Middle East and North Africa** region, UNHCR will continue to implement the Graduation Model in Egypt, designed with the BRAC Development Institute and the NGO Trickle Up. This approach to poverty reduction uses a sequence of interventions in the areas of livelihoods, capacity-building, social support and microfinance aimed to move people out of poverty in both rural and urban areas.

In the **Americas**, the peace dialogue between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is progressing towards an agreement. The Transitional Solutions Initiative in Colombia is yielding good practices with methodologies that will be replicated in other displacement settings to assist affected communities. UNHCR's solutions work in Colombia and its Comprehensive Solutions Initiative for Colombian refugees in Ecuador both aim to help provide durable solutions. In 2015, further opportunities to increase self-reliance and explore alternative stay arrangements are foreseen.

Opportunities for regional mobility in the MERCOSUR region will also continue to be promoted as new opportunities emerge to implement labour mobility schemes for refugees. A pilot project for some 65 people will be launched, which will include residency options for Colombians.

Why resettlement is crucial

Resettlement continues to play a vital role in protecting individual refugees at risk, while reducing the burden on countries hosting large refugee populations.

Against the pressure of multiple and ongoing emergencies, it is increasingly essential to preserve the humanitarian basis of resettlement, and for States to offer new resettlement programmes for those refugees in greatest need. It is also imperative that UNHCR, together with relevant counterparts, should continue to explore and apply innovative ways to process resettlement cases in places where it is difficult to access refugees.

Important resettlement initiatives planned for 2015 will include UNHCR's work with States and other stakeholders to simplify resettlement procedures, so that they are more efficient. Together with host and resettlement countries, UNHCR will also endeavour to consider resettlement alongside local integration and voluntary repatriation in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

To ensure the integrity of resettlement processing, UNHCR will undertake a number of new measures in 2015, such as revising the existing guidelines on preventing fraud, and developing web-based training for newly-recruited affiliate workforce, to strengthen their capacity to identify and submit individuals for resettlement.

For 2015, UNHCR estimates that globally, almost 960,000 resettlement places are needed. This represents a substantial increase of 39 per cent compared to the figure projected for 2014, mainly due to the inclusion of the resettlement needs of Syrian refugees, not included in the 2014 projections. Owing to the Syrian conflict, countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), as well as in Europe, have reported a very significant increase in their annual projected resettlement needs. UNHCR expects to submit more than 100,000 individuals for resettlement globally, which represents a 35 per cent increase compared to 2014. The regions of MENA, Europe and Africa will see the largest increases in submissions.

UNHCR will maintain its support for the work of Core and Contact Groups, created to bolster resettlement efforts in designated priority situations, to support the adoption of wider solutions objectives among resettlement countries, and to facilitate planning and priority setting at field level. The Governments of Sweden and the United States, together with the chairs of the Syria Core Group and the Congolese Core Group have contributed to ensuring that the resettlement agenda is implemented. In 2015, the Office will continue this cooperation in order to consolidate the mandate of these Core Groups. ■

Durable solutions	
Potential for voluntary return realized	
Provide return assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Refugees will return to Mali, including from Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. ■ Spontaneous returns of refugees and IDPs in Somalia will receive integration assistance from UNHCR and partners. ■ The voluntary return of 172,000 Afghans will be facilitated. ■ At least two trainings for UNHCR and partner staff on large-scale organized voluntary repatriation movements will be organized. ■ Individual assistance will be provided to family groups seeking to return.
Potential for resettlement realized	
Submit resettlement files	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approximately 100,000 individuals will be submitted globally for resettlement consideration in the course of 2015, which represents a substantial increase over past years. ■ UNHCR will continue to call for 100,000 places to be made available for the resettlement of Syrian refugees in 2015-2016. ■ UNHCR will submit approximately 25,000 Syrian refugees for resettlement in 2015 (a further 25,000 Syrians will be submitted through other forms of admission not involving UNHCR referrals). ■ Following the finalization of population verification exercises, resettlement submissions for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the Central Lakes region of Africa will increase. ■ 100 victims of trafficking, who are currently in Egypt, will be submitted for resettlement consideration. ■ In light of recent developments in the country, UNHCR will advocate for the strengthening of the resettlement programme for Iraqi refugees. ■ UNHCR will advocate for the need to find innovative resettlement procedures for populations who cannot be accessed.
Arrange resettlement departures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In 2015, UNHCR will continue to work together with relevant counterparts to increase the number of departures, with a view to ensuring that available quotas are fully utilized.
Assure the integrity of resettlement procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Existing policies on preventing and responding to fraud perpetrated by refugees will be revised. ■ The Resettlement Service will participate in a number of multi-functional technical anti-fraud assessment missions to provide support and advice to UNHCR operations on minimizing fraud.
Undertake capacity-building initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR will develop webinars and other training instruments for staff who plan and manage resettlement operations
Potential for integration realized	
Facilitate acquisition of residence permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 18,000 Former Angolan refugees will receive residence permits in the DRC. ■ Residency visas based upon family links will be issued for at least 500 eligible refugees in Ecuador. ■ 2,000 Togolese refugees will receive residence permits in Ghana ■ Residence-permit issuance and integration assistance for former Angolan (10,000) and Rwandan (4,000) refugees in Zambia will continue. ■ 13,000 Mauritanian refugees in Mali will receive residence permits. ■ Together with national authorities, UNHCR will provide technical and financial support for 1,500 refugees to pursue alternative migratory solutions, including by obtaining family reunification visas, residence visas or naturalization.
Comprehensive solutions strategy developed, strengthened or updated	
Explore potential for labour migration schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At least 100 Colombian refugees will benefit from the labour mobility scheme in the Americas Region, with the goal of assisting them to become self-sufficient.
Develop and implement solutions strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Guidance on strategic planning for solutions will be implemented globally for the 2016 year cycle, with special support being offered to priority situations. ■ Preparatory work on solutions strategy implementation will allow for the implementation of multi-year comprehensive solutions programmes.
Promote local integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A mapping of opportunities for naturalization, residency, freedom of movement and right to work in eight locations will be completed and will inform 2016 planning. ■ Practical guidance will be developed and piloted on rule-of-law initiatives, such as right to work, housing land and property and access to justice.

Step by step, Kosovo refugee rebuilds life in Montenegro

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

23 JULY 2014

CAMP KONIK, Montenegro, July 2014 |

Tefik Berisa is a difficult man to reach. Calls to his home are often answered by a polite childish voice: “My father is not available, he is at work.”



UNHCR/N. LUKIN

The Berisas have turned their container in Camp Konik, Podgorica, into a comfortable home, but hope to have a more permanent roof over their heads soon.

In person, his face reflects the hard life he's been through but Tefik's attitude reveals a man who believes dignity is built through hard work. In 1999 he and his family fled Kosovo for Montenegro with little more than the clothes on their backs. Their belongings and documents were left behind.

“We had nothing when we came to Montenegro. Luckily, food was generously provided in the camp, but I did not want my family to depend on aid. I wanted a life of dignity for my family, although we had nothing,” said Tefik. “Lacking civil documentation made me feel as if my family did not exist. So I decided to take it step by step: first food, then the documentation.”

He started working to support the family, which has grown from three to eight people since they arrived. Work was usually hard physical labour.

For the last 15 years, his family has been living in a container settlement in Konik, Podgorica, the country's largest Roma refugee settlement, currently hosting some 1,500 people.

Regarding his documentation problem, Tefik said, “I understood well that not having personal documents would make my family's life more complicated, so I immediately sought ways to obtain them.”

Not having civil documentation poses a major obstacle for refugees, who cannot build a stable life without being legally recognized by the host country. In 2009, in order to support the local integration of refugees from the Former Yugoslavia, the Government of Montenegro made it possible for displaced people to apply for the status of foreigner with permanent or temporary residence, under special conditions.

International and humanitarian organizations have been instrumental in helping displaced people obtain personal documentation. UNHCR and a Montenegrin NGO, Legal Center, organized bus visits to Kosovo, which enabled Berisa and his wife to obtain the documentation and apply for foreigner status.

Governments in the region have been engaging in bilateral projects to help the refugees in innovative ways. In May this year,

the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo (Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)) sent four mobile teams to Montenegro to collect applications for personal documents. Among some 400 refugees, the mobile teams helped Tefik fulfil his dream of permanent residence in Montenegro. His children now have passports of their own, which will enable them apply for the status of foreigners with permanent residence.

“Now I can plan their future properly. All of them are going to school, so that they can find better jobs in the future. This is my greatest wish. I do not want them to do the kind of hard work I do,” said Tefik. “There is only one more thing to do on my step-by-step list: A proper roof over our heads. I think this is crucial for building safe future for the family.”

The Berisa family is expected to benefit from housing assistance under the Regional Housing Programme, which aims to bring the region's displacement issue to a close by providing housing for refugees, returnees and internally displaced people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. ○