



UNHCR Projected Global **RESETTLEMENT NEEDS** 2026



The background of the entire page is a solid blue color with a pattern of lighter blue arrows pointing to the right. These arrows are of varying lengths and are arranged in a staggered, overlapping manner, creating a sense of movement and direction.

Cover photo:

Newly arrived Sudanese refugees are seen in the border town of Adre, in Chad. More than 700,000 refugees fleeing the violence in Sudan have crossed into Chad since the conflict began in April 2023.
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

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Executive summary

For over 70 years, UNHCR has facilitated resettlement as a vital protection tool for refugees, offering life-saving solutions for individuals facing severe risks such as deportation, violence, medical emergencies and other critical threats. Despite the record number of resettled refugees in 2024, the anticipated resettlement commitments for 2025 have significantly dropped, with quotas at their lowest since 2003.

New and protracted crises coupled with chronic underfunding leaving humanitarian responses with insufficient resources underscore the continued and growing need for resettlement as a vital tool of protection, a durable solution but also a strategic intervention. Resettlement offers a concrete alternative to dangerous journeys, helps preserve fragile protection spaces, showcases meaningful international solidarity and fosters partnerships with host countries. By offering solutions for refugees with high needs and greater dependency on assistance, resettlement helps ease the pressure on national systems in host countries and thereby supports sustainable responses.

This report highlights where resettlement needs are the most acute and explains why, drawing on the risks faced by refugees in different contexts. It also speaks to concrete examples of the strategic value of resettlement as a tool for protection and international solidarity.

The global resettlement needs for refugees are projected to decrease from 2.9 million to 2.5 million in 2026. Notably, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Türkiye have seen a substantial reduction in resettlement needs due to the changing situation in Syria. As many Syrians, however, will not be able to return in the foreseeable future, they remain the second largest group in need. Conversely, resettlement needs for Afghans — now the largest refugee population in need of resettlement — along with South Sudanese, Sudanese, Rohingya and Congolese (DRC) refugees have all increased. The needs of Sudanese refugees, in particular, have risen by 30 per cent, driven by ongoing displacement into neighbouring countries in West and Central Africa, the Eastern Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes and the MENA region. In 2026, Iran is expected to have the largest resettlement needs, while notable increases are seen in Pakistan, Chad, Bangladesh and Uganda.

UNHCR calls on States to ramp up efforts to ensure that resettlement can be sustained. It asks for more predictable and agile resettlement programmes and for adaptable quota allocations along key routes. The resettlement community has set realistic annual targets through the [Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#). For 2026, the agreed Roadmap goal is to resettle 120,000 refugees. History shows that this target is achievable. While larger resettlement quotas remain crucial, the quotas of smaller and mid-sized countries will be equally important in the coming years, especially if cases can be quickly processed and reviewed remotely. Smaller quotas can have a significant impact collectively and the engagement of less well-known resettlement countries is understood as the expression of solidarity it is intended to be. To meet our goals, we need to work more closely together and to better coordinate our efforts.



Congolese refugee Chancelline holds her 1-month-old baby daughter in the bus, as she and her family arrive in the night at the Musenyi refugee site in the south of Burundi, where refugees fleeing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are being relocated for their safety, away from the border areas. © UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

UNHCR also calls on donors to help preserve the established resettlement structures, expertise and partnerships to ensure the sustainable, safe and effective resettlement of refugees. Resettlement involves a rigorous vetting process and a comprehensive continuum from registration to reception and integration through to every stage of protection engagement, requiring coordinated efforts from multiple actors. It is crucial to maintain high standards and preserve the integrity and efficiency of resettlement through sufficient funding for critical functions such as refugee registration, integrity measures and child protection as well as the necessary logistical and reception activities.

States apply increasingly restrictive criteria for resettlement admissions, impacting UNHCR's ability to refer the most vulnerable refugees. While States have valid interests in ensuring successful integration, UNHCR encourages linking resettlement programmes with support in countries of asylum, emphasizing family reunification, language classes, vocational training and employment opportunities to enhance integration prospects. Collaboration between States and UNHCR is crucial to harness refugees' potential and resilience for successful integration.

Statement by the Refugee Advisory Group

The 30th anniversary of the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways convenes at a time of unprecedented global challenges, including increasing instability in geopolitical landscape, coupled with mounting economic pressures. These developments pose significant threats to international protection frameworks and risk to significantly weaken the global commitment to refugee resettlement.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, States should uphold refugee resettlement for various reasons. The most immediate and compelling rationale for sustaining and increasing resettlement efforts lies in its humanitarian imperative. However, while the selection of refugees is based on vulnerabilities or physical protection needs that cannot be addressed in their current country of asylum, refugees often demonstrate remarkable strength, adaptability and determination in the face of adversity, drawing on their inner resources and past experiences. When provided with appropriate support systems and opportunities for integration, resettled refugees are well-positioned to make long-term, meaningful contribution to economic development, civic engagement and social cohesion. Access to education, employment and other opportunities can empower refugees to rebuild their lives and contribute to their new communities.

Hence, it is crucial to recognize the contributions that refugees bring to their host communities and emphasize the considerable benefits of refugee resettlement. Refugees contribute significantly to their host societies, through economic participation, cultural enrichment and social cohesion. For the receiving countries, refugees can play an active role in local labour markets by filling essential roles, starting businesses and boosting economic activity. In addition to economic contributions, refugees arrive with a broad spectrum of skills, expertise, qualifications and experiences that enhance the diversity and cultural fabric of host communities. Furthermore, many refugees demonstrate remarkable entrepreneurial capacity, setting up businesses that not only provide employment opportunities but also stimulate innovation and adaptability within the local economy.

Sustained investment in refugee resettlement should therefore not be seen as merely a humanitarian gesture or fulfilment of act of kindness but as a forward-looking and strategic approach to building more inclusive, stable and economically robust societies.

We call for a renewed commitment to refugee resettlement, ensuring that programmes are maintained, expanded and sustained to meet increasing global needs. We call on the global community to treat humanitarian aid and refugee programme funding with care and thoughtfulness. Above all, we call on all actors to ensure that fact-based and evidence-based decision-making remains at the forefront and centre of policy discourse impacting on refugee resettlement and integration.

For many refugee children in Zaatari camp, winter becomes unbearable. Staying in warm shelters without worrying about water leaking and playing outside without falling in mud is their only wish. © UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush



Introduction

For over 70 years, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has worked with its partners to facilitate resettlement as a vital protection tool for refugees. In 2025, resettlement remains as central to UNHCR's mandate as it has always been, offering life-saving solutions for individuals facing deportation, violence, medical emergencies and other critical threats that cannot be addressed in their countries of asylum. From the beginning, resettlement was treated as an offer of solidarity to countries of first asylum, a characteristic that is best employed when resettlement and complementary pathways are woven into wider population and regional protection and solutions strategies.

Due to the limited number of places globally, UNHCR prioritizes resettlement submissions for the refugees who face the highest risks, while final decisions rest with States. For refugees facing acute risks in their countries of asylum, resettlement provides a meaningful chance to rebuild their lives in a country where they can be better protected and where access to naturalization and citizenship promise an end to years of displacement.

After decades of having shown its value as a solidarity and a protection tool as well as a durable solution for refugees, resettlement has reached a turning point characterized by both exceptional challenges but also opportunities.

2024 marked a record year for resettlement, with the highest number of departures after 2016. However, this success contrasts sharply with the reduced resettlement commitments anticipated for 2025, as quotas significantly drop and new limitations, such as restrictions on gender distribution within families, are increasingly imposed by resettlement countries. While larger resettlement quotas remain crucial, the quotas of smaller and mid-sized countries will be equally important in the coming years, especially if cases can be quickly processed and reviewed remotely. Every resettlement place is invaluable, offering a lifeline to those fleeing danger. Smaller quotas can collectively make a significant impact, but more needs to be done in a joint effort to address the growing demands and respond to the urgent needs of refugees.

Ongoing conflicts, persistent insecurity and the failure to address root causes of displacement continue to prevent millions from returning to their countries of origin in safety and dignity. At the same time, many refugees face significant barriers to becoming self-reliant and integrating in their host countries due to limited enjoyment of rights and essential services. Although recent developments in Syria since December 2024 have opened the possibility of return for some, many Syrian refugees remain in need of international protection and may require resettlement. Simultaneously, new and protracted crises — including those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan — underscore the continued and growing need for resettlement as a vital tool of protection and durable solution for those unable to return home or rebuild their lives where they have sought refuge.

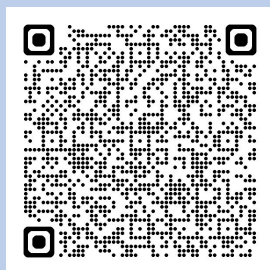


Jal and Gisma from South Sudan sit with their baby daughter Dounya ahead of their evacuation flight from Tripoli, Libya, to Rwanda through the Emergency Transit Mechanism.
© UNHCR/Ziyad Alhamadi

At the same time, mounting funding shortages have severe consequences, especially for the most vulnerable refugees, exacerbating their vulnerabilities and increasing their protection risks. Chronic underfunding has long been a challenge, with humanitarian responses in countries like Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and many other operations already struggling in previous years. More recently, critical programmes, such as those aimed at protecting vulnerable groups — particularly adolescent girls — from child marriage and other forms of violence, have been suspended, placing them at heightened risk. Cuts to essential services such as food assistance and shelter have ripple effects and make women and girls more vulnerable to exploitation and gender-based violence. Moreover, UNHCR’s inability to conduct registration and refugee status determination in some situations leaves new arrivals without aid in fragile environments.

In this context, understanding and leveraging the strategic value of resettlement is not only relevant but essential for an effective and sustainable response. Nearly 70 per cent of refugees find safety in the country next door to their own and over 85 per cent are hosted by low- and middle-income nations.¹ In these situations, resettlement serves not only as a vital protection tool and life-saving mechanism for refugees in precarious situations, but also as a tangible expression of international solidarity and a concrete step towards strengthened international partnerships. By offering solutions for refugees with high needs and greater dependency on assistance, resettlement helps ease the pressure on national systems in host countries and supports the sustainability of inclusive institutions. Host countries often view resettlement as a meaningful gesture that demonstrates that they are not alone in bearing the responsibility of hosting large refugee populations. When strategically and sustainably offered — particularly along key routes and closer to refugees' countries of origin — resettlement also provides a viable alternative to dangerous journeys and irregular movement. It enables families to remain together, offers a pathway to safety and reduces the need for desperate measures to meet basic needs such as medical care and livelihood support.

UNHCR estimates that **2.5 million refugees** will need resettlement in 2026. This report highlights where resettlement needs are the direst and explains why, drawing on the risks faced by refugees in different contexts. It also provides valuable considerations around the strategic value of resettlement as a tool for protection and international solidarity.



Further information on the **2026 Projected Global Resettlement Needs** is available by country of origin and country of asylum [here](#).

1 See [Mid-Year Trends 2024, UNHCR](#).

Resettlement needs in 2026

The global resettlement needs for refugees are projected to see a notable shift, decreasing from 2.9 million to 2.5 million, a change marked by various regional dynamics and evolving situations worldwide.

In particular, the projected needs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Türkiye have seen a substantial reduction, due to the situation in Syria. While return has become a viable option for many, nearly 443,000 Syrians still require resettlement, making them the second largest group in need. Conversely, resettlement needs for Afghans — now the largest refugee population in need of resettlement — along with South Sudanese, Sudanese, Rohingya and Congolese (DRC) refugees have all increased. The needs of Sudanese refugees, in particular, have risen by 30 per cent, driven by ongoing displacement into neighbouring countries in West and Central Africa, the Eastern Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes as well as the MENA region.

In 2026, Iran is expected to have the largest resettlement needs, while notable increases are seen in Pakistan, Chad, Bangladesh and Uganda.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTED RESETTLEMENT NEEDS



2,527,185



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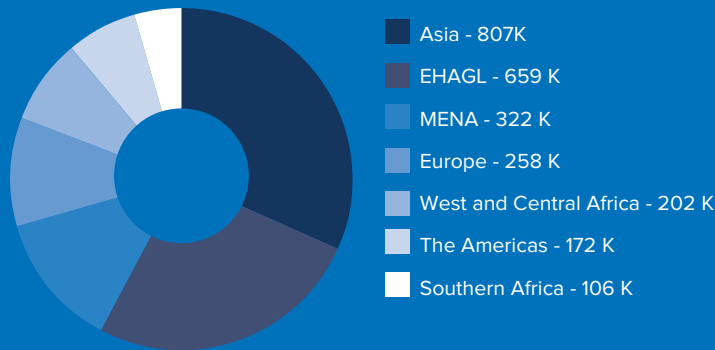
Countries of asylum where resettlement needs were identified



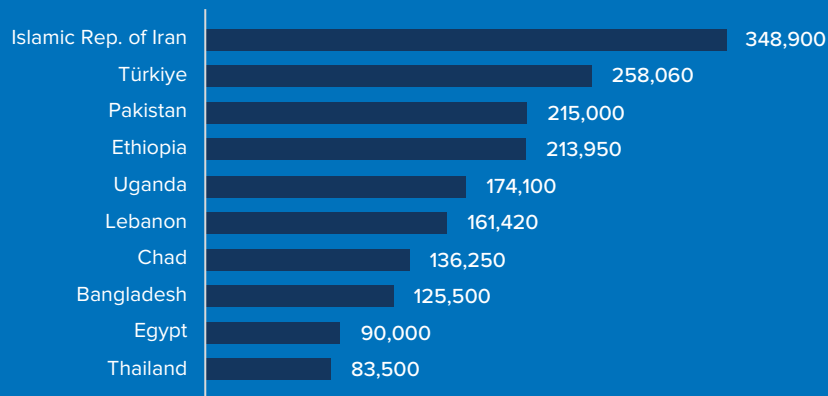
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Countries of origin with resettlement needs

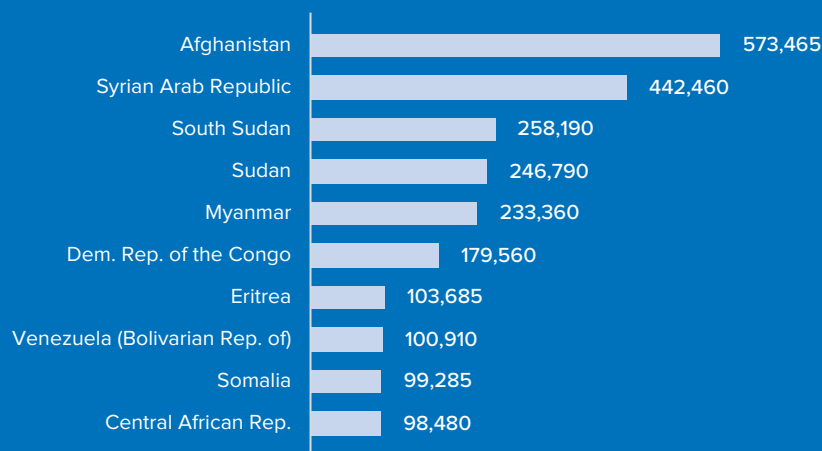
RESETTLEMENTS NEEDS BY REGION



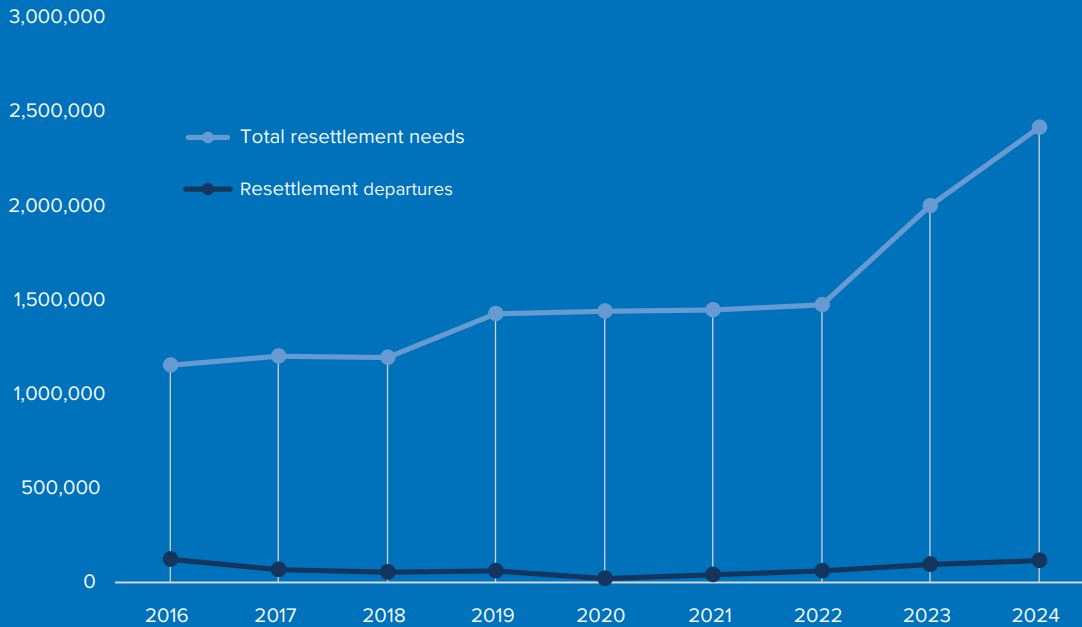
TOP 10 COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST RESETTLEMENT NEEDS BY COUNTRY OF ASYLUM



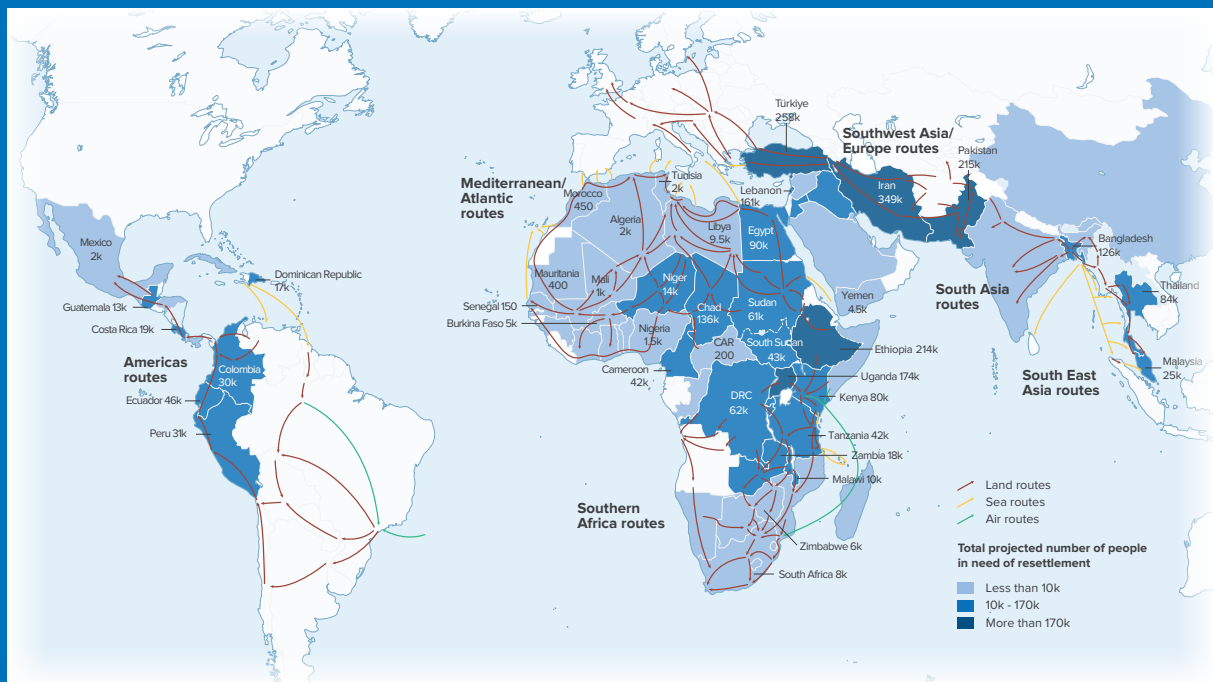
TOP 10 COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST RESETTLEMENT NEEDS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



TOTAL RESETTLEMENT NEEDS VS. DEPARTURES (INDIVIDUALS), 2016 - 2024



ROUTE-BASED APPROACH AND THE PROJECTED RESETTLEMENT NEEDS IN 2026



UNHCR's call for responsibility- sharing

Strengthening resettlement access and flexibility

The resettlement quotas expected in 2025 are the lowest since 2003, falling below the levels seen even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, resettlement needs have surged by 32 per cent over the past two decades, with a 20 per cent increase in the number of countries hosting refugees and a rise in the number of countries of origin. Last year alone, UNHCR managed 43 active emergency declarations across 25 countries, including 26 new emergencies in 2024 and 17 ongoing crises from 2023.

This relentless emergence of new crises before old ones are resolved has stretched resources to their limits. In response, UNHCR calls on States to ramp up efforts to ensure that resettlement programmes can be sustained.

This includes engaging more States in resettlement and ensuring that resettlement programmes offer both predictability and agility. In a changing landscape with fewer resources, UNHCR also advocates for closer collaboration with States to establish priorities for national resettlement programmes, allowing for **adaptable quota allocations along key routes**.

The resettlement community set itself annual targets through the [Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#). For 2026, the goal is to resettle 120,000 refugees. Resettlement data show that this is both necessary and achievable, but only if there is sustained commitment at the highest levels and a shared determination to translate ambition into action.

The collective resettlement of 120,000 refugees can:

- **Meaningfully contribute to a route-based approach**, for instance along the West Atlantic route to Europe, offering solutions to refugees closer to their places of origin, such as in Chad. This provides a real alternative to putting their lives at risk through dangerous journeys and resorting to smuggling networks.
- **Significantly help preserving fragile protection spaces and support access to territory**, such as in Indonesia, which is one of the only countries in the Asia-Pacific region to consistently provide rescue at sea and allow safe disembarkation for Rohingya refugees.
- **Improve inclusion prospects for those remaining in asylum countries**, such as those which are still hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, many of whom will not be able to return to Syria in the foreseeable future.
- **Showcase genuine international solidarity** by supporting countries, such as Tanzania or Uganda, which are grappling with economic challenges and hosting substantial refugee populations. It enables a more sustainable use of resources to address food insecurity and other basic needs among the broader population.
- **Foster collaboration with host countries**, such as in the Americas region, where UNHCR has been supporting national authorities to improve asylum procedures, accelerate case processing and promote local integration.

In all these situations, resettlement can also serve strategic interests for resettlement States. When integrated into foreign policy and development aid, it can strengthen partnerships with host countries, complementing other forms of third country engagement. Within the framework of humanitarian and protection principles, UNHCR is eager to collaborate with resettlement countries to ensure their programmes address both humanitarian needs and strategic interests.

It is essential that resettlement continues to serve as the vital tool it has proven to be over the past decades. It must not be reduced to a symbolic gesture or an option reserved for only a few. To preserve its impact, resettlement should remain a tangible solution for those most in need — reflecting a true commitment to international responsibility-sharing and the principle that access to safety should not depend on chance.



Habiba walks with three of her children at the dyke she is helping to build at the Guilmei refugee site, in Chad. Habiba and her family fled climate-related conflict in Cameroon three years ago. Just over a week ago, flood water from the nearby Chari river started rising around the site. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

Ensuring adequate resources for resettlement

Resettled refugees undergo one of the most rigorous vetting processes used by visa issuing authorities. The process involves multiple interviews and additional assessments, data verification (such as through biometrics), document checks and detailed case reviews, all necessary to maintain the integrity and efficiency of resettlement. **However, to uphold these high standards, sufficient funding is essential. This includes financial support for functions such as refugee registration, integrity or child protection.**

Resettlement is a comprehensive process that begins with the registration of refugees in their country of asylum and extends to their reception and integration in the resettlement country. This continuum relies on the coordinated efforts of a wide range of actors. In addition to UNHCR, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in identifying refugees with the greatest protection needs. Other partners support the preparation of accepted refugees for travel and help facilitate their arrival. Upon arrival, civil society organizations and community groups step in to welcome newcomers and guide them through their initial steps towards building a new life. Each stage is essential to ensuring that resettlement remains a dignified and sustainable pathway to protection.

Over the years, **essential structures, expertise and partnerships have been built. It is critical that the necessary resources are in place to preserve these achievements** and ensure the sustainable, safe and effective resettlement of refugees.



Feirus was preparing an Iftar meal for her family, when fighting erupted near her home in Khartoum, forcing them to flee in haste. After days of perilous travel, and losing what little they had to robbers along the way, she eventually arrived in Renk, South Sudan, with her children and grandchildren. Despite the hardship, she managed to carry two cherished photographs of her family, which hold a special place in her heart. © UNHCR/ Reason Moses Runyanga

Overcoming restrictive barriers through comprehensive approaches

States apply increasingly restrictive criteria for resettlement admissions. These can include considerations related to reception capacity and perceived integration potential, which narrows selection parameters and thus impacts quota allocation. Such limitations have a direct impact on UNHCR's identification work and restrict its ability to refer the refugees who are facing acute risks and urgent needs.

Resettlement countries have a valid interest in ensuring that refugees integrate successfully into their societies. This interest is shared by UNHCR and, most importantly, by the refugees themselves. While measuring integration potential is complex, States are increasingly focusing on factors such as language proficiency, gender profile, education, skills and professional background. Acknowledging the material challenges faced by receiving countries, UNHCR strives to submit balanced caseloads to prevent overwhelming reception systems and to contribute to the goals of destination countries, while at the same time seeking quotas that address identified needs. However, a too-rigid focus on specific profiles can pose challenges to comprehensively address resettlement needs.

UNHCR encourages States to consider how they can support integration during the resettlement process, with an emphasis on linking programmes in countries of asylum. Experience shows that **maintaining family unity** through efficient family reunification procedures enhances integration prospects for refugees already residing in resettlement countries. In addition, named sponsorship may provide a valuable solution for preventing long-term family separation and promoting integration. Similarly, **supporting language classes and vocational training in countries of asylum** for refugees and host communities fosters inclusion and prepares refugees for successful resettlement. Furthermore, resettlement programmes that **match refugees with employment opportunities** upon

arrival and help address labour shortages are effective — provided that existing qualifications are not a prerequisite for their resettlement acceptance. Refugees are often identified for resettlement due to the risks they face in their countries of asylum. However, they also possess significant potential and resilience. The crucial factor lies in how States, in collaboration with UNHCR, **can harness these strengths to ensure successful integration.**

Tailored approaches: resettlement and beyond

Resettlement offers a structured framework designed to respond to specific protection needs and urgent humanitarian situations. It exists alongside pathways that serve a range of complementary purposes. Some are also addressing humanitarian needs, while others such as labour mobility or education pathways focus more on refugees' skills and how they align with opportunities in third countries.

In some situations, **humanitarian pathways** can complement resettlement, while supporting its objectives by providing relief in high-need situations and promoting international responsibility-sharing with host countries bearing the greatest burden. In particular, humanitarian pathways may provide a sustainable way to solutions for specific populations impacted by crisis but with the education and experience to settle in rapidly. This includes those who may not be prioritized in a resettlement programme but who live in a country of asylum amenable to the return of refugees after labour or education experience comes to an end.

These programmes can also contribute to broader goals for both receiving communities and refugees themselves, such as offering employment opportunities from the onset of the programme to support labour market integration and economic self-reliance and/or providing higher education opportunities for youth to thrive. If well designed, humanitarian pathways can foster meaningful partnerships with the private sector, aligning the interests of industry with the need to offer protection and durable solutions. They can also become an additional stream for extended family reunification.

UNHCR is well positioned to support these efforts — not only by identifying refugees with protection needs who also have relevant skills and potential but also by assisting States and other actors with refugee status determination and identity verification. Where present, UNHCR can host recruitment companies or otherwise facilitate the identification work of sector leaders. These measures help ensure that such programmes are protection-centred, inclusive and effective in achieving various goals. UNHCR stands ready to support States interested in designing humanitarian admission programmes that are additional to resettlement and respond to humanitarian imperatives.

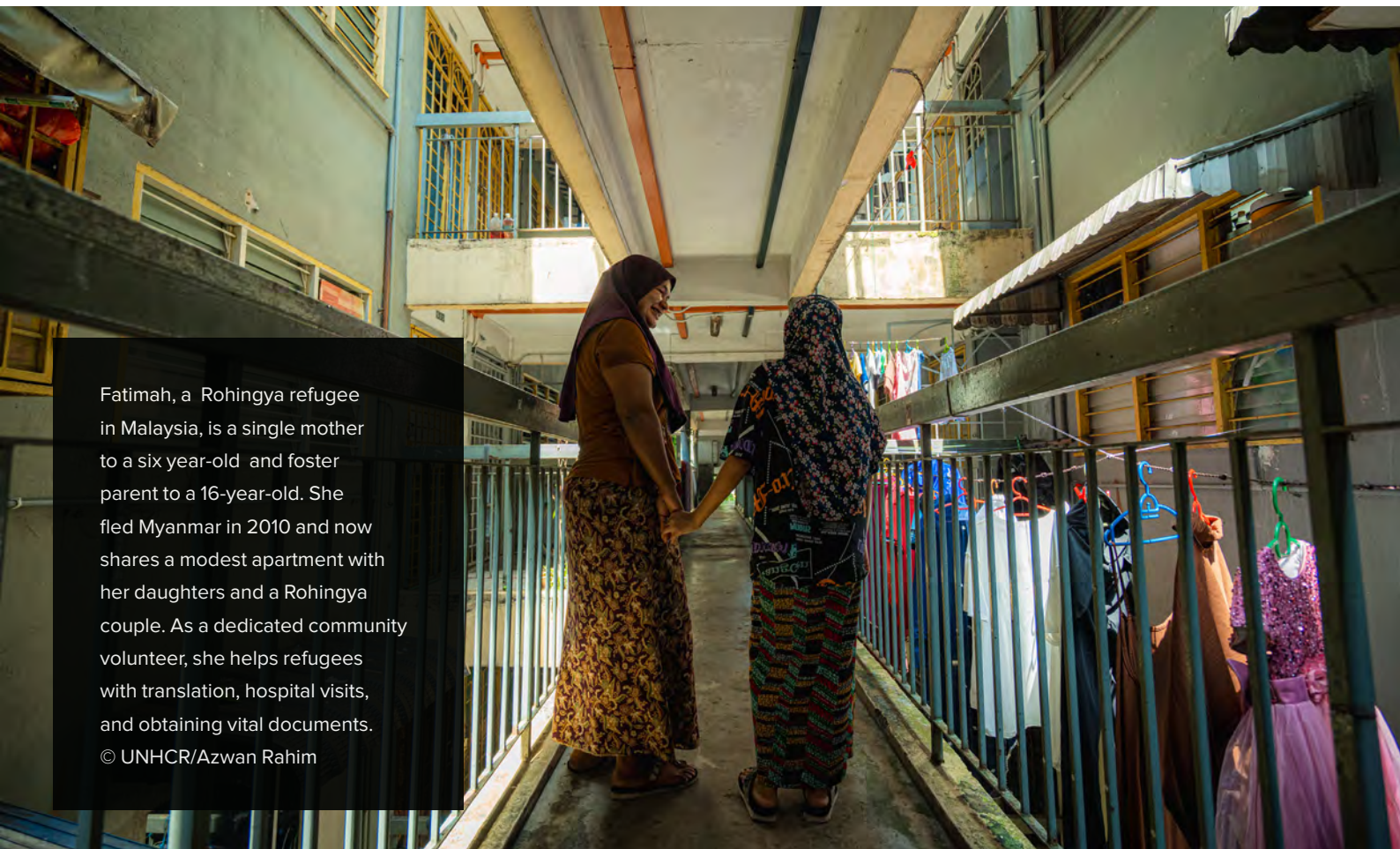
Unallocated resettlement quotas: A lifeline beyond borders

Unallocated resettlement quotas — flexible places not tied to specific countries or regions — are an increasingly indispensable component of the global refugee resettlement system.

Unlike allocated quotas, which are based on negotiations between resettlement States and UNHCR to address broader population needs and policy priorities, unallocated quotas provide a responsive, life-saving tool to address urgent and emerging protection needs across the globe.

As UNHCR and other humanitarian actors shrink and allocated quotas face sharp global reductions, adaptable and rapid resettlement options have never been more critical. Unallocated quotas help fill this gap by enabling swift processing and departure for refugees in life-threatening situations, regardless of their location. These quotas are often the only pathway to safety for individuals at immediate risk — particularly in areas where insecurity, environmental obstacles or other constraints make traditional resettlement selection missions impossible.

This mechanism can, for example, be vital for survivors of gender-based violence, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) individuals at risk, human rights defenders, political activists and those held in prolonged or arbitrary detention, among others. It also provides solutions for a very small number of refugees with critical medical conditions — accruing benefit not only for the refugees who move but also for those able to use the medical facilities and resources they leave behind. Unallocated quotas offer a targeted and time-sensitive solution, often representing the only chance for certain individuals to access safety, dignity and life-saving health care.



Fatimah, a Rohingya refugee in Malaysia, is a single mother to a six year-old and foster parent to a 16-year-old. She fled Myanmar in 2010 and now shares a modest apartment with her daughters and a Rohingya couple. As a dedicated community volunteer, she helps refugees with translation, hospital visits, and obtaining vital documents.

© UNHCR/Azwan Rahim

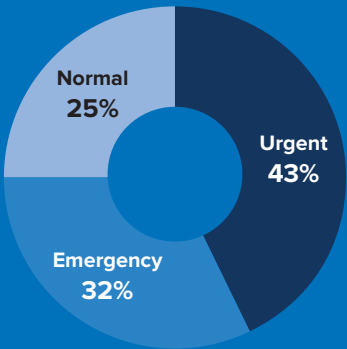
To effectively address the urgent needs of these refugees, unallocated quotas must offer greater flexibility and faster decision-making, particularly by allowing for remote reviews based on UNHCR submissions or remote interviews. UNHCR's Emergency Transit Centres can help to ensure timely access to safety. The recent severe funding cuts in the humanitarian sector have put millions of lives at risk, making the role of unallocated quotas even more critical. However, increasingly restrictive State policies and admission criteria, based on factors such as sex, age, family size, marital status, nationality, location or language ability, undermine the effectiveness of these quotas. Caps on family size, in particular, disadvantage some of the most vulnerable refugees, especially in regions where larger families are common. These policies can leave the most vulnerable refugees without the protection or solutions they desperately need.

The alarming decrease in available places for refugees with medical needs, coupled with restrictive criteria on the medical conditions resettlement States will consider, is severely affecting refugees. Unallocated quotas currently offer only a very limited number of options for refugees with serious medical conditions who often also have great protection needs. In situations where such critical medical needs cannot be addressed in the country of asylum, refugees who cannot access resettlement may die. The fact that medical care is among the first of the national services to which refugees are included means that the resettlement of those in need of medical care can lift the strain on host country services and thus support the continued offer of asylum going forward.

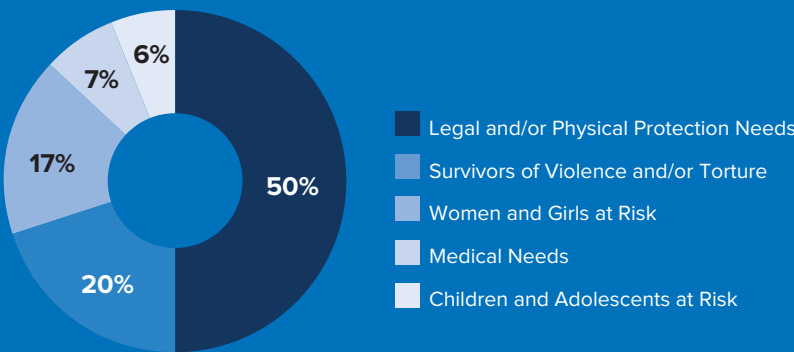
The use of unallocated quotas in 2024

In 2024, nine countries offered unallocated resettlement places in addition to their regular quotas. UNHCR made submissions for **1,555 refugees** globally from 46 countries of origin residing in 65 different countries of asylum, reflecting the need for places which are not tied to specific countries. Almost half of those were made for cases classified under urgent priority, while about a third were considered to be emergency cases requiring resettlement within a few days.

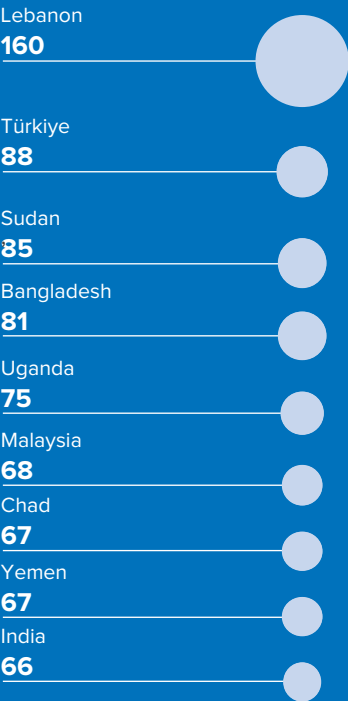
SUBMISSIONS BY
SUBMISSION PRIORITY



SUBMISSIONS BY
SUBMISSION CATEGORY



SUBMISSIONS BY
COUNTRY OF ASYLUM,
TOP 10 COUNTRIES



In 2024, a mere 7 per cent of refugees considered under the unallocated quota were submitted under the medical needs category. This alarmingly low figure starkly underscores the severe shortage of available places for refugees with critical medical conditions. The lack of sufficient medical places fails to address the urgent and life-threatening needs of these vulnerable individuals. Furthermore, limitations on certain refugee profiles, such as single men, young adults and large families, meant that these vulnerable groups were excluded from resettlement options despite their heightened protection risks.

The majority of the refugees benefiting from unallocated quotas were located in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions, 29 and 27 per cent respectively.

In 2024, the use of unallocated quotas remained critical for refugees exposed to gender-based violence, persons with urgent medical needs as well as individuals facing prolonged detention or an imminent threat of refoulement. It for example enabled the expedited resettlement of a Yemeni refugee who had fled his home country after being arrested, detained and tortured for resisting forced recruitment. Forced to work informally in order to survive, he was arrested and detained in the country of asylum. A deportation order had been issued and removal procedures were already underway, creating a risk of deportation to his country of origin at any time without prior notice to UNHCR. In this context, the only viable option for UNHCR was to use an unallocated quota, which enabled a fast departure, thereby protecting him from refoulement.

The use of unallocated quotas also helped a young woman who fled Afghanistan following threats by the Taliban because of her work and social media activities. She was subjected to severe sexual violence and blackmailed in the country of asylum. She was temporarily accommodated in a specialized inpatient facility, which supported her treatment plan and served as a safe house, as the perpetrators had been released on bail and were residing in the community. This arrangement was, however, not a long-term solution and she required urgent relocation to safety through resettlement. Regular resettlement quotas in this situation were unsuitable due to the need for expedited processing.

The unallocated quotas also enabled the quick resettlement of two refugee journalists who had fled their home country after their investigation into drug trafficking led to serious threats and violent attacks. In the country of asylum, they continued to face danger, including extortion attempts and harassment by criminal gangs. Swift resettlement was essential to protect their lives.

The importance of unallocated quotas cannot be overstated. UNHCR urgently calls on States to strengthen their commitment to this critical tool for saving lives. This means expanding access through flexible processing methods, removing restrictive admission criteria that are not grounded in protection needs or legitimate security concerns and ensuring that cases involving serious medical conditions are not overlooked. By ensuring that these quotas remain accessible — regardless of a refugee's sex, age, family size, marital status, nationality, location or language ability — States can provide timely and meaningful solutions to those most at risk. Every resettlement place counts and is valued, as it can save a life from danger.

UNHCR's contributions to resettlement in 2024



After being forced to flee Burundi, Josephine spent many years apart from her daughter Josephine. Finally reunited in Canada through resettlement, they enjoy snowfall together in their new home. © UNHCR/Amy Thorp

The year 2024 marked an unprecedented milestone in global refugee resettlement. Through the concerted efforts of 21 countries, more than **116,000** refugees were given the opportunity to find safety and rebuild their lives through resettlement. For the first time since the adoption of the resettlement departure targets set in the Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030, an annual target has been surpassed.

UNHCR played a central role in this collective achievement, surpassing its global resettlement quota with over **203,500 submissions** to **23 countries**. These submissions came from **90 UNHCR country operations** around the world and represent a **31 per cent increase** compared to 2023. This marks the highest number of resettlement submissions recorded since the 1990s — an important milestone in the organization's history and for the international community as a whole.

The acceptance rate for UNHCR submissions remained high in 2024, reaching **96 per cent**. This continued trust by States in UNHCR's processing mechanisms was particularly evident in the decision by some governments to adjudicate cases based directly on UNHCR submissions.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THESE ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE:

In the **Middle East and North Africa**, UNHCR made **resettlement submissions for over 26,300 individuals**. The strategic impact of resettlement in the region was, for example, seen in Libya, where sustainable third country solutions have strengthened cooperation between the government and UNHCR, leading to increased trust and effective advocacy. The Libyan authorities in Tripoli demonstrated unprecedented support by allowing refugee departures using UNHCR-issued travel documents, waiving exit permits and penalty fees and streamlining the process.

In **Türkiye (Europe)**, UNHCR made over **14,300 resettlement submissions**, including over 10,000 Syrian refugees severely affected by the 2023 earthquakes, many of whom faced poor living conditions, injuries and the loss of family members. Additionally, over 3,200 Afghan refugees were submitted for resettlement, reflecting their heightened vulnerability and marking a 2.5-fold increase compared to 2023.

In the **East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes**, UNHCR **submitted almost 34,000** refugees. Almost two thirds of those were **Congolese**, while thousands of Eritrean, South Sudanese, Somali, Sudanese and other refugees with compelling protection needs were also prioritized.

In **West and Central Africa**, UNHCR made **submissions for over 4,000 refugees**. Close to half of those submissions were made from Chad, where the Sudanese refugee population shows a high prevalence of women and girls at risk of violence and sexual exploitation and where forced and early marriage remains very frequent.

In **Southern Africa**, UNHCR made **submissions for close to 6,300 refugees**. Departures also increased by 56 per cent, the result of improved coordination between resettlement actors and a joint effort to address delays.

The **Americas** region recorded its highest-ever resettlement figures in 2024, **with over 76,300 submissions**, marking a 220 per cent increase compared to 2023. The region saw a record number of individuals leave for various resettlement countries — close to 27,800 — a sharp 266 per cent increase from the previous year. These achievements were supported by innovative solutions to identify vulnerable individuals through an online portal and self-registration tool and abridged resettlement referral forms.

In **Asia and the Pacific**, **over 42,100 refugees were submitted for resettlement**. This included more than 19,500 Rohingya refugees and over 8,300 Afghans. In addition, more than 10,400 refugees from Myanmar were submitted for resettlement from Thailand, in line with the large-scale group resettlement processing for primarily ethnic minority groups.

UNHCR continues to invest in strengthening the integrity of the resettlement process, making sure that the right people are resettled by combating fraud. It has developed robust methodologies through years of experience and close collaboration with key stakeholders, including resettlement States. While no system is perfect, UNHCR consistently enhances its tools to ensure the optimal use of the data it manages or can access.

UNHCR's updated anti-fraud policy framework puts the emphasis on preventing, detecting and responding to fraud committed by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. It equips UNHCR offices to implement robust fraud prevention and response measures, conduct thorough investigations and ensure data integrity and protection through awareness-raising and standardized procedures.

UNHCR employs tight safeguards throughout individual case management. The use of the corporate Population Registration and Identity Management Ecosystem (PRIMES) tools, including the proGres database and the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS), aims to enhance the accuracy and reliability of identity verification across the case processing continuum. Standard Operating Procedures are in place to report and address fraud when detected and ensure that data inconsistencies are promptly resolved. When fraud is detected, it is disclosed to resettlement States to maintain transparency and trust. These measures are in place to ensure that resettlement cases are processed with due diligence and integrity, safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders involved. Some examples of these initiatives include:

In **West and Central Africa**, UNHCR's integrity capacity was enhanced through dedicated staffing in Cameroon and Chad. Complaints and feedback mechanisms have been widely upgraded across the region, with many operations having adopted hotlines. Operations have also developed WhatsApp

A convoy of 119 refugees and asylum-seekers evacuated from Libya arriving at Kigali International Airport, Rwanda in September 2024 under the Emergency Transit Mechanism.

© UNHCR/Eric Didier Karinganire



communication trees and online platforms. Recently, a joint UNHCR-IOM fraud awareness messaging campaign has been rolled out through internal portals, social media platforms (Facebook and X) and in other places accessible to refugees. A centre for information and feedback has been put in place in Chad and supports information collection through electronic tools and face-to-face complaints and feedback sessions.

In the **East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes**, systematic mechanisms for biometric identity management and verification of registration data mitigated the risk of identity- and document-related fraud in resettlement. Supporting UNHCR operations, the Regional Bureau makes an adjudication of identity and manages cases appropriately when individuals in the resettlement process are found to be biometrically enrolled in different locations.

In **Southern Africa**, community awareness activities were complemented by anti-fraud posters, leaflets and individual counselling. In Malawi, UNHCR also uses community radio platforms to sensitize refugees and in 2024 the operation developed videos for targeted messaging in interview waiting areas in Dzaleka camp.

In the **Middle East and North Africa**, UNHCR integrity experts developed online training sessions to provide an in-depth understanding of anti-fraud procedures to staff beyond those who are directly involved in case processing. UNHCR in the region also uses a “community of practice” platform to share various materials, facilitating collaborative knowledge exchange across operations.

In **Türkiye (Europe)**, UNHCR’s main channel of communication with refugees, the counselling line, received calls related to information on exploitation schemes by various criminal networks targeting refugees. Information collected through this counselling line is used to develop anti-fraud messaging that is disseminated to communities through various channels including social media platforms, refugee-led organizations and NGO partners.

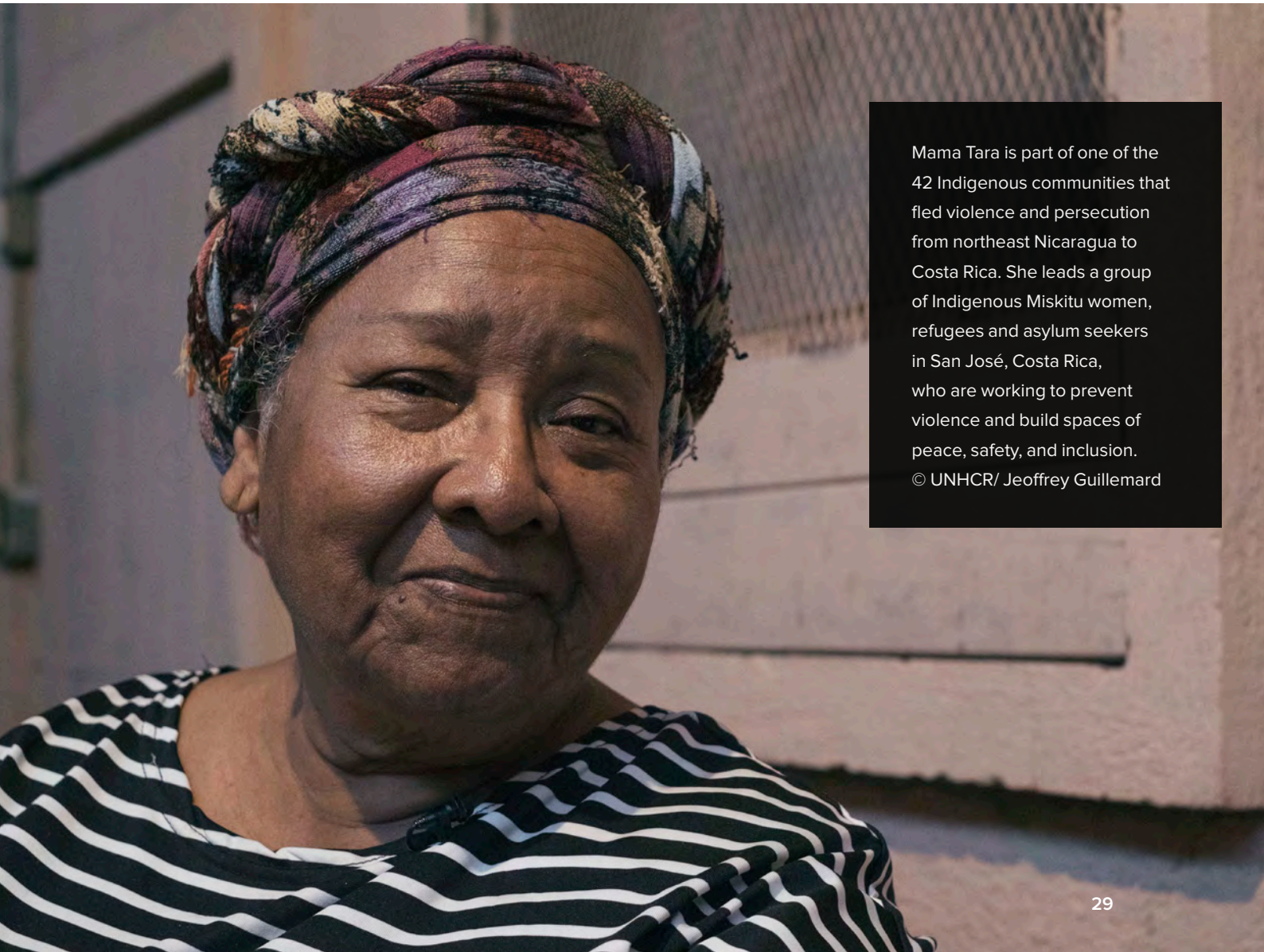
In the **Americas**, innovative solutions for identifying vulnerable individuals through a portal and self-registration tool, automated protection screening evaluation and simplified referral forms were successfully piloted under the Safe Mobility Offices initiative. Regular integrity training and improved identity verification mechanisms, including biometric registration, are key measures in place.

In **Asia**, the UNHCR office in Malaysia released a series of anti-fraud awareness videos for communities (“[Beware of Scams](#)”) to prevent and respond to scams targeting refugees, including the use of fraudulent UNHCR websites and applications as well as the impersonation of UNHCR staff.

The progress made last year shows what can be achieved when States and their resettlement partners work together to offer solutions for the refugees who need it the most. The record number of resettled refugees in 2024 reflects important gains. It, however, also brought into focus the persistent gap between needs and available places. Bridging this gap requires sustained international cooperation, political will and continued expansion of safe and legal pathways for those forced to flee.

The Americas

The [Regional Bureau for The Americas](#) provides oversight, coordination and support for resettlement activities in the Republic of Colombia (**Colombia**), the Republic of Costa Rica (**Costa Rica**), the Republic of Ecuador (**Ecuador**), the Republic of El Salvador (**El Salvador**), the Republic of Guatemala (**Guatemala**), the Republic of Honduras (**Honduras**), the United Mexican States (**Mexico**), the Republic of Peru (**Peru**), the multi-country office in Panama [covering **Aruba**, **Curaçao**, the Republic of Cuba (**Cuba**), the Co-operative Republic of Guyana (**Guyana**), the Republic of Panama (**Panama**), the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (**Trinidad and Tobago**)] and the multi-country office in Washington [covering **Antigua and Barbuda**, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas (**Bahamas**), **Barbados**, the Commonwealth of Dominica (**Dominica**), **the Dominican Republic**, **Grenada**, the Republic of Haiti (**Haiti**), **Jamaica**, **Saint Kitts and Nevis**, **Saint Lucia**, **British Virgin Islands**, **Cayman Islands**, and **Turks and Caicos Islands** and the Dutch overseas territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (**Sint Maarten**)].



Mama Tara is part of one of the 42 Indigenous communities that fled violence and persecution from northeast Nicaragua to Costa Rica. She leads a group of Indigenous Miskitu women, refugees and asylum seekers in San José, Costa Rica, who are working to prevent violence and build spaces of peace, safety, and inclusion.
© UNHCR/ Geoffrey Guillemard

At a glance



PROJECTED NEEDS FOR THE REGION

172,200



TOP THREE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RESETTLEMENT NEEDS

Ecuador

46,200

Peru

31,300

Colombia

30,000



SUBMISSIONS IN 2024

76,547



DEPARTURES IN 2024

27,890

- The situation in the Americas remains complex, with ongoing cross-border forced displacement, internal displacement and mixed migration flows. By mid-2024, 20.3 million forcibly displaced people including persons in need of international protection were hosted in the region, with Venezuelans being the largest group followed by Colombians and Ecuadorians.
- Resettlement in the Americas reduces pressure on humanitarian assistance and other limited resources, fosters regional cooperation and strengthens responses to displacement. As the number of forcibly displaced people continues to grow, it provides critical relief to host countries, ensuring protection for an increasing number of refugees.
- For 2026 UNHCR projects a figure of approximately 172,200 individuals in need of resettlement in the region, a slight reduction compared to last year. Major resettlement needs are projected in Ecuador (46,200), Peru (31,300), Colombia (30,000), and Costa Rica (19,300), among others.
- In 2024, the Americas led globally in resettlement submissions (76,547) and departures (27,890).

Overview of the protection environment in the region

The situation in the Americas remains complex, with ongoing cross-border forced displacement, internal displacement and mixed movements. Root causes such as violence, persecution, human rights violations and insecurity continue to drive displacement, further aggravated by the impact of environmental disasters. Additionally, an increase in returns is anticipated.



After crossing Darien with his 9 year old daughter, Orlando, from Venezuela, shared the realities of the jungle: “please do not risk your children, do not risk them. The jungle is hard and even harder with children. There are many cliffs, the rivers overflow. The Panamanian jungle is hard with spiders, with snakes... you find dead people on the road” © UNHCR/Melissa Pinel

By mid-2024, the region hosted 20.3 million forcibly displaced people, including those in need of international protection, coming from Haiti, Northern Central America, Nicaragua, Colombia and Venezuela. Venezuelans continued to be the largest group, followed by Colombians and Ecuadorians.

Movements from Venezuela continue, despite a slight increase in returns. According to the [R4V platform](#), co-led by UNHCR and IOM, there were some 7.9 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants worldwide by the end of 2024, the majority in Latin America and the Caribbean. In **Colombia**, 1.4 million newly displaced have been registered since the [2016 Peace Agreement](#). Colombians are also leaving the country seeking international protection. The increase in displacement in **Central America** and **Mexico** over recent years — including persistent internal displacement in some countries — has exposed those in need of international protection to heightened protection risks, while placing a tremendous strain on reception systems. 2024 closed with some 78,000 new asylum claims in Mexico, mostly of Hondurans, Cubans, Haitians and Salvadorans. **Costa Rica** remains the main hosting country for Nicaraguans in need of international protection. **The Caribbean** continues to receive refugees and other persons in need of international protection within and outside the subregion. Gang violence in **Haiti** surged in 2024, resulting in severe human rights violations and the displacement of more than 700,000 people.²

While displacement dynamics in the Americas continue to evolve, the majority of displaced persons in the region choose to remain in Latin

America and the Caribbean, where stabilization and socioeconomic inclusion efforts provide crucial support. The commendable efforts of governments and other relevant partners in advancing protection and solutions in the Americas must be recognized. Notably, 85 per cent of all 7.9 million Venezuelans in need of international protection are hosted by countries in the region, with strong support from local communities. Local integration initiatives in **Brazil**, **Colombia** and **Mexico** stand out as regional examples of good practices in socioeconomic inclusion.

As evidenced by regional intergovernmental processes and frameworks, including the [Quito Process](#) and the [Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework](#) (known by its acronym MIRPS), there continues to be strong political will, solidarity and responsibility-sharing in the region. States and host communities have made significant strides in finding solutions, including granting asylum, facilitating access to regularization and other protection-oriented legal stay arrangements, socioeconomic inclusion and naturalization efforts, all essential elements in providing opportunities for people to find safety and rebuild their lives where they are.

In 2024, Latin America and the Caribbean have reaffirmed their commitment to delivering comprehensive protection and solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless populations through the adoption of the [Chile Declaration and Plan of Action](#), a cornerstone outcome of the [Cartagena +40](#) process. This forward-looking plan positions itself as the regional framework implementing the Global Compact on Refugees, translating

2 Standing Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme Update on UNHCR operations in the Americas: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Americas-92-SC-English.pdf>

its principles into concrete actions tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities within the region.

However, despite commendable efforts by host countries to regularize and provide temporary legal stay arrangements, durable solutions remain elusive for particularly vulnerable or at-risk individuals. In this context, resettlement remains an essential protection tool for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable individuals.

Central America faces a challenging landscape, characterized by structural violence, which exacerbates social inequalities and limits access to essential services such as education and health care. These disparities, combined with entrenched social exclusion based on ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status, contribute to the region's instability. Criminal gangs and cartels further intensify violence through widespread extortion, murders, kidnappings, drug and human trafficking, and forced recruitment, driving displacement and insecurity.

In the Caribbean, people forced to flee continue to encounter barriers in accessing asylum systems, local integration opportunities, documentation and durable solutions. Given the high rates of returns and incidents of refoulement and the heightened risks of violence, exploitation and harassment, resettlement in this region is a critical life-saving mechanism for those most at risk.

The strengthening and consolidation of asylum systems across the region remain key priorities for UNHCR, in order to enhance the capacity of receiving States to process asylum claims fairly, efficiently and in line with international standards. To address challenges, such as growing backlogs, UNHCR offers legal support and technical assistance, helping streamline procedures and improve case management. In parallel, UNHCR advocates for expanding third country solutions that ensure access to residence and fundamental rights in other countries, and alleviate pressure and create more asylum opportunities in host countries. Within this framework, resettlement remains a critical protection tool, alleviating pressure on host countries and creating additional asylum opportunities.

Nationals of Latin America and the Caribbean lodged 728,400 individual asylum applications in the first half of 2024, mainly in Mexico, Spain and the United States, with over 300,000 people crossing the perilous Darien jungle, most of them from Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti and various African and South Asian nations. Approximately two thirds of people interviewed by UNHCR cited insecurity, threats, intimidation and violence as key reasons for leaving their countries of origin. Venezuelans and Colombians lodged the most asylum applications in the first half of 2024, although the number of asylum applications by other nationalities from the region is also increasing, notably by Haitians, Hondurans and Mexicans.

Resettlement within protection and solutions strategies

Jessica and Jessie are twin sisters who are refugees from Haiti in Mexico. They both work in the humanitarian sector as they believe that helping the community is the most important thing.

© UNHCR/Aurora Herrera

In recent years, resettlement activities in the Americas have significantly expanded, reaching over 76,300 submissions in 2024, more than in any other region. The strategic use of resettlement by UNHCR operations has strengthened its role as a key protection intervention and a life-saving mechanism for individuals facing heightened risks.

Resettlement activities in the Americas have been implemented as part of a broader regional protection and solutions strategy focused on strengthening national asylum systems

and expanding protection and solutions for displaced populations closer to their homes. The Americas has a long tradition of providing assistance and protection to forcibly displaced individuals. Resettlement has complemented these efforts by offering a durable solution to those facing heightened risks and acute protection, assistance and solution needs that require third country alternatives.

Resettlement in the Americas serves various strategic objectives beyond its traditional role in addressing severe protection needs

in individual cases. In line with sustainable response strategies, it reduces pressure on humanitarian assistance and other limited resources, fosters regional cooperation and strengthens responses to displacement. As the number of forcibly displaced people continues to grow, resettlement provides critical relief to host countries, ensuring protection for an increasing number of refugees. In the Caribbean, for example, **Aruba** and **Curaçao** host some of the world's highest refugee-to-population ratios — 1 in 5 and 1 in 12, respectively. Even the resettlement of a small number of individuals in these contexts can significantly ease pressure on national systems, while preventing refoulement and deportation.

Another key outcome of resettlement in the Americas is its role in enhancing solutions and fostering inclusion within countries of asylum. **Colombia**, **Ecuador**, **Peru** and **Costa Rica** have implemented temporary protection measures to ease pressure on asylum systems and facilitate local integration. In this context, resettlement has served as an additional tool for the protection of the most vulnerable, while reinforcing broader inclusion efforts for the vast majority of refugees. Notably, the **Ciudades Solidarias** ("Cities of Solidarity") initiative has enabled forcibly displaced persons and host communities to access employment and training, promoting self-sufficiency, social inclusion and stronger community cohesion. Resettlement has complemented this by addressing the needs of those who remain at risk despite local integration opportunities.

Resettlement also strengthens cooperation with host States, reinforcing their commitment to collaborative responses. In countries with resettlement programmes, UNHCR has been supporting national authorities to improve

asylum procedures, accelerate case processing and promote local integration. In this way, UNHCR helps reduce asylum system backlogs. Additionally, resettlement provides a safe and legal alternative in a third country, and can reduce the influence of trafficking and smuggling networks.

In countries affected by high levels of violence, resettlement has proven to be a life-saving intervention. It has protected human rights defenders, individuals collaborating with authorities against criminal groups and women and girls who have survived sexual violence, preventing their exposure to life-threatening risks.

Resettlement has also proven to be a transformative opportunity for vulnerable individuals with diverse skills to rebuild their lives in third countries. Those who are resettled come from a wide range of backgrounds — from manual labourers to human rights defenders, journalists, scientists and teachers — bringing valuable expertise that can meet specific needs in resettlement countries and contribute to the labour market. For example, Spain launched an innovative resettlement programme that matches individuals in need of resettlement with a private sector employer, providing an alternative integration option that fosters economic self-sufficiency from the onset.

Resettlement in the Americas has also facilitated the piloting of innovative approaches, such as the **Digital Gateway**, which enables more efficient refugee engagement. It is closely integrated with the broader protection and solutions strategy, which responds to growing humanitarian needs by strengthening asylum systems and investing in integration and inclusion in host countries.

Projected resettlement needs in the region in 2026

Projected resettlement needs in the Americas region for 2026 will remain high, with a slight reduction in comparison with the previous year. For 2026, UNHCR projects a figure of approximately **172,200** individuals in need of resettlement in the region.

Due to persistent insecurity, individuals who flee violence and persecution in their home countries and seek protection in South and Central America, continue to face risks in neighbouring countries. In this context, UNHCR in the Americas continues to promote a responsive third country solutions framework that includes refugee resettlement and complementary pathways.

Refugees from Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and, to a lesser extent, Cuba and Haiti, are the main populations considered for resettlement from the region.

In **Ecuador**, UNHCR projects resettlement needs for about **46,200** refugees. The protection and solutions strategy in Ecuador focuses on ensuring access to protection, addressing specific protection needs through community-based approaches and enhancing socio-economic inclusion. In this context, resettlement has become a primary protection tool that offers a durable solution and strengthens relations with the host government. Refugees considered for resettlement often have increased physical protection needs due to the deteriorating security situation and mainly are Venezuelans and Colombians.

Many are displaced multiple times in the country due to extortion and forced recruitment threats by gangs.

In **Peru**, UNHCR estimates that **31,300** refugees will need resettlement. UNHCR's strategy in Peru focuses on advocacy and technical assistance to ensure access to territory, asylum and alternative protection mechanisms. This approach aims to lay the foundation for local integration. Efforts include enhancing orientation and information services, legal assistance and exploring livelihood opportunities for socioeconomic inclusion. Despite local integration being the most feasible solution for Venezuelan refugees, the political and socioeconomic context pose significant challenges, including limited access to education, health care and livelihood opportunities as well as rising discrimination and xenophobia. Women and girls face prevalent risks such as sexual violence and trafficking. Also, the legal framework does not provide avenues for permanent residence or naturalization. Therefore, resettlement remains the only durable solution for the most vulnerable, including survivors of violence and those with serious protection risks.

UNHCR estimates that **30,000** refugees will require resettlement in **Colombia**. Resettlement is a crucial tool in addressing the forced displacement, complementing the country's efforts to promote local integration. As one of the largest hosts of Venezuelan refugees, along with individuals from other nationalities, Colombia faces significant humanitarian challenges.

In **Costa Rica**, approximately **19,300** refugees will be in need of resettlement. Resettlement remains a crucial durable solution and protection mechanism in Costa Rica, particularly in light of the political and human rights situation in Nicaragua. The proximity of the two countries' border has placed individuals at high risk of transnational persecution. In 2023, Costa Rica experienced a record number of homicides, with Nicaraguans disproportionately affected. Between December 2023 and December 2024, UNHCR reported several cases of transnational persecution, including armed attacks on refugees.

In the **Dominican Republic and North Caribbean**, it is estimated that **17,300** refugees will be in need of resettlement. In 2023 and 2024, the crisis in Haiti led to larger-scale displacement, worsening the situation for Haitian refugees in the Dominican Republic. Resettlement offered safety for the most vulnerable, alongside humanitarian assistance, legal aid and psychosocial support. UNHCR in the Dominican Republic mostly identifies refugees from Haiti who are legally and physically at risk and/or who are survivors of violence and torture, including women and girls at risk.

In **Guatemala**, approximately **13,200** refugees will require resettlement. This includes nationals of El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua as well as Guatemalans at risk who will be considered

through in-country processing. In Guatemala, UNHCR provides protection and solutions for asylum-seekers, refugees and displaced and returned Guatemalans and strengthens the capacities of government institutions, civil society and host communities. UNHCR's presence in strategic areas ensures access to asylum and timely identification of individuals with international protection needs, offering humanitarian assistance through specialized partners. Broader protection interventions, like the Cities of Solidarity Initiative, help integrate refugees into local communities. By the end of 2024, Guatemala hosted 2,970 asylum-seekers, with significant increases in new asylum applications and recognized refugees due to the government's commitment and UNHCR's assistance. For both Guatemalans identified for in-country processing and refugees, resettlement is a lifeline protecting them from violence at the hands of gangs and other organized criminal structures, threats, extorsions, sexual violence, forced disappearances, forced recruitment, gender-based violence, forced prostitution and trafficking of girls and women.

UNHCR estimates that **3,000** Salvadorans facing extreme protection risks will need resettlement in **El Salvador**. In this country, UNHCR works on strengthening the national systems to ensure protection for forcibly displaced people and those at risk, improving reception facilities and screening tools. It also focuses on collaborating with State institutions to reinforce the asylum system while advocating for the protection of affected populations. Despite progress, challenges such as violence, poverty and inequality persist and often block access to national protection systems, particularly for people facing specific risks. UNHCR provides life-saving support through in-country processing or by transferring

Rafaela is a refugee who fled to Guatemala. As talented artisans, she and her husband, found refuge in art and creation. Their jewelry store has become much more than a means of subsistence; it is a testament to their resilience and determination to start again.
© UNHCR/Victor Sánchez Mejía



individuals under resettlement consideration for protection reasons. In this context, the Office's strategy emphasizes resettlement as a strategic tool for Salvadorans facing extreme protection risks, given the limited alternatives for safety in neighbouring countries.

In **Honduras**, approximately **3,000** individuals will be in need of resettlement or in-country processing which provides life-saving solutions. In-country processing, in particular, offers a safe alternative to dangerous overland routes, while traditional resettlement offers a durable solution to refugees from Nicaragua, El Salvador and Venezuela. Identifying at-risk individuals in Honduras is challenging due to the limited outreach of the programme for security reasons. Also, applicants often need to remain hidden from their persecuting agent, including gangs and organized crime groups. UNHCR provides comprehensive support, including emergency relocation and protection services, to individuals at risk. However, challenges persist, particularly in obtaining judicial custody or exit permits for minors, which complicates the process of ensuring their safety and protection. Additionally, the prolonged waiting periods for resettlement increase vulnerabilities, as highlighted by recent tragic incidents, including the assassinations of displaced individuals who were under resettlement consideration. These delays further underscore the urgent need for timely and effective protection measures.

In **Mexico**, approximately **2,000** refugees will need resettlement. Despite a strong asylum system, the rapid increase in asylum applications in Mexico has pressured the authorities and created significant protection

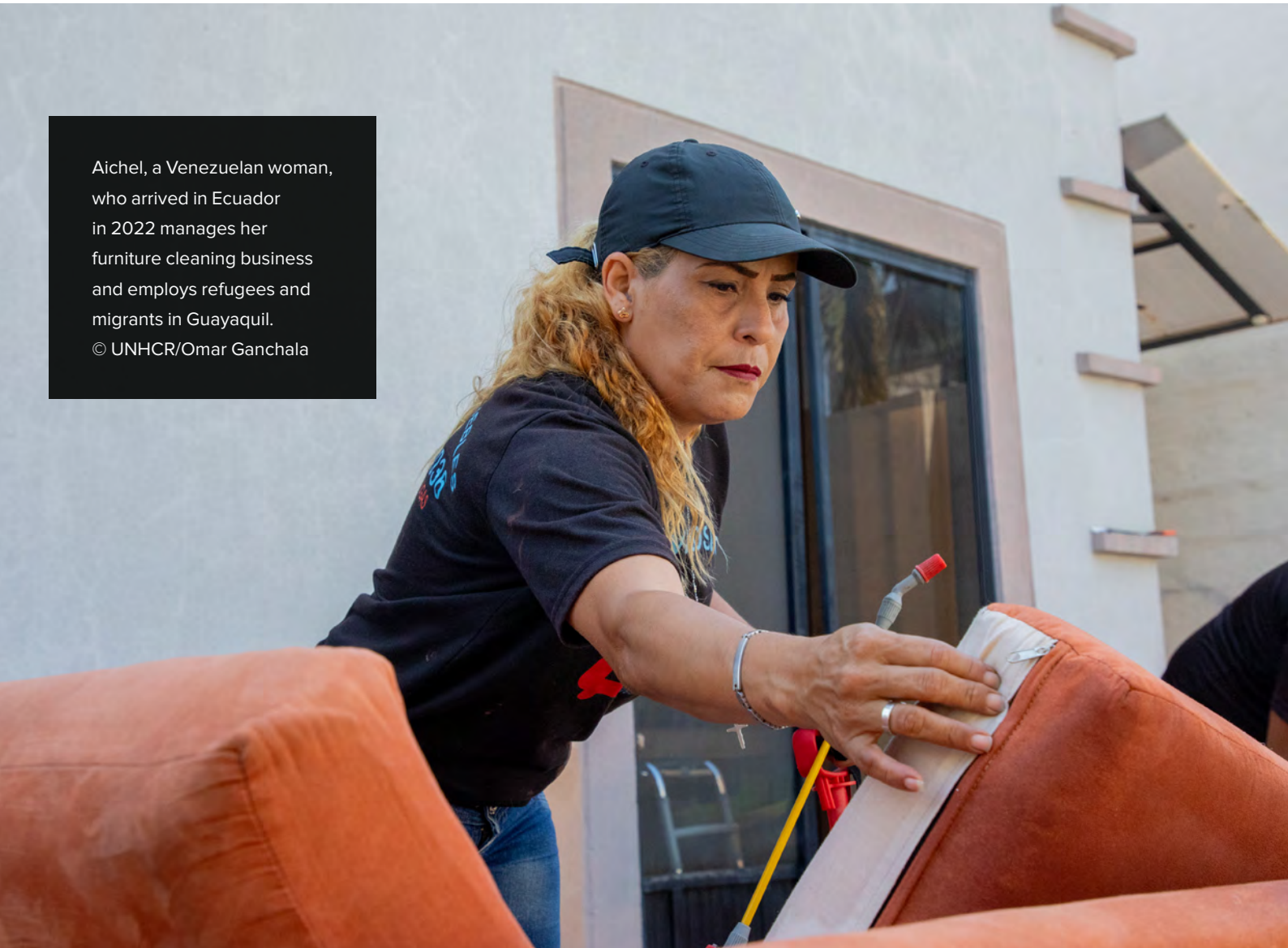
challenges. UNHCR's strategy focuses on immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term solutions, including expanding shelter, providing legal and psychosocial support and improving referral systems. Resettlement is reserved for those facing severe protection risks and is a lifeline for the most vulnerable, including survivors of violence and women and girls at risk. Close to 50 per cent of all individuals referred for resettlement by UNHCR in Mexico are children including unaccompanied or separated minors, resulting in challenges for exit permit, custody and child protection interventions. Resettlement also enhances global cooperation and supports Mexico's broader humanitarian objectives.

In the South Caribbean covered by the **multi-country office in Panama**, approximately **6,800** refugees will require resettlement. In **Trinidad and Tobago**, UNHCR enhances protection mechanisms through direct case management and humanitarian aid. In this context, resettlement combines efforts in offering limited available solutions to population at risk. In **Aruba and Curaçao**, resettlement and complementary pathways are crucial due to limited local integration prospects. In **Panama**, resettlement is vital for vulnerable individuals, including women at risk and survivors of violence, given the limited opportunities for local integration. In **Cuba**, UNHCR promotes refugee protection mechanisms and resettlement. In **Guyana**, UNHCR addresses humanitarian needs through community-based protection, focusing on preventing violence against women and girls and promoting resettlement for the most vulnerable.

Regional highlights, achievements and challenges in 2024

In 2024, the Americas region recorded the highest figures in both submissions and departures for resettlement. Specifically, the region saw a total of **76,547 submissions**, marking a 220 per cent increase compared to submissions in 2023. In terms of **departures**, the Americas registered a record number of **27,890** individuals, a sharp increase of 266 per cent compared to the previous year.

Aichel, a Venezuelan woman, who arrived in Ecuador in 2022 manages her furniture cleaning business and employs refugees and migrants in Guayaquil.
© UNHCR/Omar Ganchala



These increases occurred amidst an unprecedented regional up-scale exercise in resettlement, with the continuation of the Safe Mobility Office Initiative (SMO). The initiative was launched in 2023 in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia and Ecuador, targeting specific nationalities and profiles, including Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, Cubans, Haitians, Colombians and Guatemalans.

Overall, in 2024 resettlement in the Americas served both as a critical protection tool and a durable solution, enabling thousands of refugees to start a new life in a safe environment. Additionally, resettlement remained a vital instrument for regional cooperation and a burden-sharing mechanism vis-a-vis asylum countries in the region. In many contexts, resettlement is being implemented alongside broader protection strategies, particularly where State's ability and willingness to assess asylum claims and provide protection to refugees depends on the availability of effective responsibility-sharing. In countries like Mexico, a solid local integration programme has contributed to the integration of many individuals fleeing persecution. As a complementary measure of this wider protection and durable solutions strategy, resettlement has been a life-saving mechanism for refugees at risk who, in many cases, have endured high levels of violence and for whom other durable solutions are not viable, such as survivors of violence by gangs and organized criminal groups.

Some of the main challenges identified in 2024 in the Americas region include:

- exit permits for children travelling with only one parent or separated children;
- child protection considerations including documentation, custody permits, the

need to undertake thorough best interest assessments and determination which take time;

- accessibility to certain population especially in the Caribbean region;
- expectation management, particularly in the case of applicants with lengthy resettlement procedures in certain countries in Central America which put individuals who are in danger at further risk, especially due to proximity of persecuting agents.

Some of the major achievements registered by UNHCR in the Americas region in 2024 are closely tied to concrete initiatives piloted under the framework of the SMO. Specifically, these include innovative solutions for identifying vulnerable individuals through the portal and self-registration tool, faster and automated case processing resorting to automated protection screening evaluation and abridged resettlement referral forms. Additionally, the initiative led to faster processing and departures, supported by the resettlement authorities present in the main countries from where refugees are resettled.

In 2024, the Americas region further strengthened and expanded its resettlement programme to Spain, incorporating several innovative features. Notably, the programme established a link with a private sector company that connects resettled refugees with job opportunities, easing the burden on traditional stakeholders involved in reception and labour market integration. This collaborative approach not only supports refugees in securing employment but also enhances their long-term integration into Spanish society and promotes shared responsibility across multiple sectors.

Perspectives: MEXICO

A mother's journey through violence, kidnapping and resettlement

In 2021, Stephanie* made the difficult decision to leave her home country, Honduras, together with her nine-year-old daughter. Pregnant at the time, she was not only fleeing the escalating gang violence in her community but also the years of trauma at home: from a young age, she had been neglected by her mother and exposed to brutal violence by her mother's abusive partners.

2020 marked a turning point for Stephanie, as her brother was murdered by gang members. The family, once thriving as merchants, had refused to pay the extortion fees demanded by the gang. After her brother's murder, Stephanie herself became a target. Gang members began threatening her, warning her that they would kill her if she refused to "pay as she should".

Seeking refuge, Stephanie and her daughter crossed into Mexico looking for safety and in the hopes of starting a new chapter in life. But shortly after she gave birth to her second daughter, Stephanie and her children were kidnapped by an organized criminal group while on their way to the civil registry in the state of Chiapas. Stephanie and her daughters were held captive for three years, during which time she was subjected to repeated acts of violence and was trafficked for sexual exploitation, while her young children witnessed the violence and suffering around them. When their captors began threatening to exploit her eldest daughter, Stephanie managed to escape with her daughters, fleeing to Palenque, Chiapas, in search of help.

There, Stephanie reached out to UNHCR for support. For the first time in years, she felt a sense of relief. After being recognized as refugees by the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR), the family was relocated for security reasons to another city where they began receiving psychological and medical support from Doctors Without Borders.

In mid-2023, after having been interviewed by UNHCR, Stephanie and her daughters were informed that their case was submitted to Canada for resettlement. In April 2024, following rigorous checks and a long process, they travelled to Canada to start a new chapter in their lives.

Today, Stephanie and her daughters are rebuilding their lives and are ready to embrace every opportunity. They are learning French, and Stephanie's eldest daughter is also attending school – a dream that once seemed out of reach. Stephanie is also very active in the local Latin American community, finding strength and support in church activities. For the first time in her life, she feels a profound sense of freedom and has found peace in her new home. Embraced by the warmth of her new community, she no longer worries that she or her daughters might be exploited by others.

*The name of the individual in the story has been changed for protection reasons.

Perspectives: ECUADOR

Finding a new home Down Under

For refugees like Alberto* and María*, life in Ecuador was very challenging. They found in UNHCR's resettlement programme a chance to build new roots in New Zealand and Australia.

One, two, three trees counted Alberto* on the way to the airport to travel to New Zealand. A journey meant to change his, his sister's and his mother's lives after spending years in Ecuador. He remembers vividly his mother's words: "I will never forget it, 'thanks for the good and the bad times, it was all a lesson, and we will miss you'. That's how she said goodbye to Ecuador as soon as the plane was taking off. It was my first time on a plane," says the now 18-year-old.

Alberto, 12 at the time, and his family were resettled to New Zealand, a country he knew nothing about but saw as a new big adventure in the several chapters of his life. There, Alberto has been able to not only grow and live in safety but also continue pursuing his dream of becoming a writer and learning languages. "Arriving here was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. Learning a new culture has been wonderful," he says remembering that the first thing he saw as soon as they arrived was a rainbow. "People here are incredibly friendly and interesting. Knowing that we had to learn a new language gave me a lot of anxiety, but also filled me with excitement for the future."

But this was not the first time Alberto was counting trees from one place to the other. At the age of three, he and his parents were on a bus fleeing their home country Colombia where decades of conflict have forced millions from their homes. Many of them like Alberto had to cross borders to find safety. "I counted pine trees back then to remember where I was and never forget my way home," he says.

Despite the haven it offered, the family struggled to fully integrate in Ecuador, a country that has welcomed nearly half a million people forced to flee, mainly from Colombia and Venezuela. Years of bullying at school, difficulties to make ends meet and a violent eviction because they could not afford to pay rent meant the family needed support to fully meet their basic needs.

Alberto and his family were then identified for resettlement. "This process has taught me to be resilient. It has been a slow but rewarding process," says Alberto, who is now engaging in community leadership roles with the hope of giving back to the country which offered his family a new chance. "I am now better at the language and I have met a lot of great people. I hope to achieve my dreams without fear of the future."

53-year-old María also knows how transformative resettlement can be for a refugee. She was part of the first Venezuelans to be resettled to Australia from Ecuador. "This programme completely changed our lives and I am forever grateful to have had this opportunity," she says. María, her husband and their three children have been living "Down Under" for the past five years as security concerns and her husband's critical renal condition meant it was not safe for them to stay in Ecuador.

“There were people who hurt us really badly, we really could not stay in Ecuador,” she shares, adding how UNHCR helped them find a safer shelter in the country until the possibility of resettlement became an option. “This was the only way of imagining we could have a new life, a new beginning far away from all the bad things we’ve gone through since we first fled from Venezuela.”

“I knew nothing about Australia except the fact that there were kangaroos. Coming here has been a truly rewarding experience.” As María navigates the emotional and cultural challenges of starting anew, she grapples with the steady hope of building a safer, new future. “My husband is now terminal but he has received the care he needs here thanks to the support we have received from Australia as a whole.” María continues learning English and is now seeing her children grow into young adults, with her eldest now studying to become an architect. “I am seeing my children grow with a lot of potential of contributing to this country in the future. I wish this programme would be available for more people who need it like us, because it is really life-changing.”

*The name of the individual in the story has been changed for protection reasons.

Asia and the Pacific

The [Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific](#) provides coordination, support and oversight for protection activities in 45 countries and territories covered by 12 UNHCR country offices, one national office and three multi-country offices (covering 25 countries) throughout Asia and the Pacific, including countries of asylum hosting a significant number of refugees in need of resettlement: the Islamic Republic of Iran (**Iran**), the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (**Pakistan**), the People's Republic of Bangladesh (**Bangladesh**), the Kingdom of Thailand (**Thailand**), **Malaysia**, the Republic of India (**India**), the Republic of Indonesia (**Indonesia**) and the People's Republic of China (**China**).



An Afghan woman bringing fresh bread home in Semnan refugee settlement, Semnan, Iran.
© UNHCR/Hossein Eidizadeh

At a glance



PROJECTED NEEDS FOR THE REGION

806,700



TOP THREE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RESETTLEMENT NEEDS

Iran

348,900

Pakistan

215,000

Bangladesh

125,500



SUBMISSIONS IN 2024

42,128



DEPARTURES IN 2024

18,315

- Asia and the Pacific hosts 17.3 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons, including 7.2 million registered refugees, people in refugee-like situations and asylum-seekers. The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers originate from Afghanistan or Myanmar, countries from which individuals have fled seeking international protection for decades.
- Only 20 of the 45 countries and territories in the region are State parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee and its 1967 Protocol. Displaced individuals, often cannot work legally, are subject to arbitrary arrest, prolonged or indefinite detention and deportation and may be confined to congested camps or immigration detention facilities. They also are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, have limited access to national health, education and justice mechanisms.
- Resettlement in the region is used strategically to maintain protection space, reduce detention, support host countries, and promote refugee inclusion. It also helps counter trafficking and smuggling by offering safe, legal alternatives.
- In 2026, 806,700 refugees are projected to need resettlement, including 348,900 refugees in Iran, now the country of asylum with the largest needs globally. Other key countries with high needs include Pakistan (215,000), Bangladesh (125,500), Thailand (83,500), and Malaysia (25,200).
- Resettlement submissions and departures increased significantly, with over 42,000 submissions and 18,300 departures.

Overview of the protection environment in the region

Asia and the Pacific hosts 17.3 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons, including 7.2 million registered refugees, people in refugee-like situations and asylum-seekers, 6.9 million internally displaced persons and some 566,000 internally displaced returnees; 1.1 million others of concern; and 2.5 million stateless persons (representing over half of the world's stateless population) as of end-2024. The latter figure includes 1.4 million Rohingya who, in addition to being stateless, may also be either refugees or internally displaced.

While operations in Asia and the Pacific are host to a diverse mix of nationalities and ethnicities, individuals from Afghanistan and Myanmar remain the largest displaced populations in the region. As of end-2024, there were 5.1 million individuals from Afghanistan living as refugees or in a refugee-like situation, primarily in the major host countries of Pakistan and Iran. Close to 1.3 million refugees from Myanmar (including over 1.1 million Rohingya refugees) reside throughout the region, but primarily in **Bangladesh, Malaysia, India and Thailand**.

Only 20 of the 45 countries and territories in the region are State parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Many refugee-hosting States in Asia and the Pacific do not have a domestic legal or administrative framework covering the legal status and rights of refugees. As a result, refugees and asylum-seekers often fall under national immigration laws without reference to the right to seek and enjoy asylum and, if they enter irregularly or when they overstay visas, they are deemed “illegal immigrants”,

regardless of UNHCR status or documentation. Due to the lack of legal status in host countries, refugees and asylum-seekers in Asia and the Pacific live a fragile and tenuous existence. Displaced individuals, often cannot work legally, are subject to arbitrary arrest, prolonged or indefinite detention and deportation and may be confined to congested camps or immigration detention facilities without freedom of movement. They also are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, have limited access to national health, education and justice mechanisms and have minimal opportunities for engagement, advancement and growth. The precarious nature of their displacement may exacerbate vulnerabilities that existed prior to their displacement, trauma experienced before and during their flight from their country of origin and protection concerns that arise in the country of asylum. Large refugee populations are hosted in areas particularly prone to sudden onset events such as flooding, cyclones, temperature extremes and seismic activities, which are



Afghan refugee children fetch water in a refugee village in Balochistan, Pakistan, showcasing resilience and hope in the face of daily challenges.
© UNHCR/Humera Karim

increasingly driving new protection needs and exacerbating existing ones. This is particularly the case where access to resources to build the climate resilience of refugees is limited.

MYANMAR SITUATION

Since early 2021, political upheaval, continued conflict and deterioration of the security situation in Myanmar have resulted in an increasing number of individuals displaced within the country and seeking protection in other countries in the region. As of end-2024 the Myanmar Situation accounts for 5.6 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the region, including 1.1 million forcibly displaced and stateless Rohingya refugees hosted in

neighbouring countries. Intensified violence across Myanmar in 2024 led to a rapid increase in the number of internally displaced persons to over 3.6 million as of April 2025 as well as new cross-border movements. Due to intensified armed conflict and constrained access to areas of return, sustainable return is not a possibility for forcibly displaced populations. [UNHCR's Guidance Note on Myanmar](#), released in May 2024, urges States to grant civilians fleeing Myanmar access to territory, uphold the right to seek asylum and respect the principle of non-refoulement. In 2025, UNHCR and partners will renew the [Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis](#) under the leadership of the Bangladeshi authorities, in a call for international solidarity.

AFGHANISTAN SITUATION

The continuing instability and deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan have had significant consequences for the most vulnerable among the population. Some 3.2 million Afghans are internally displaced as Afghanistan remains at the centre of intersecting humanitarian, economic and human rights crises. Escalating restrictions, particularly against women and girls' education, movement and public participation further compounded these challenges. [UNHCR's Guidance Note on Afghanistan](#) maintains a non-return advisory, which has been in place since August 2021.

Iran and Pakistan alone are hosting more than 5 million Afghan refugees and Afghans in a refugee-like situation as of end-2024. In 2024, deportations from Pakistan and Iran continued, numbering 9,000 and 764,000 respectively. UNHCR accelerated efforts to address refugee and host community needs through the re-calibrated [Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) for the Afghanistan Situation. The [Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees Support Platform](#) continued to drive collaboration in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, facilitating the engagement of governments, civil society, development actors and UN agencies to enhance refugee inclusion, resilience and sustainable solutions.

ONWARD MOVEMENTS AND THE ROUTE-BASED APPROACH

The tenuous protection environment in host countries and the limited solutions available have led to a significant increase in dangerous onward movements for refugees and asylum-seekers in the region. In 2024, more than 10,000 stateless Rohingya refugees embarked on perilous maritime movements and 657 persons were reported as deceased or missing, marking the highest number of maritime movements and recorded deaths since the 2015 Andaman Sea Crisis.

UNHCR's route-based approach drives targeted and coordinated actions by States, civil society and partners, including refugee and migrant organizations, along main routes in countries of origin, transit and destination. Within this approach, UNHCR in Asia and the Pacific continues to advocate for access to territory and asylum for refugees and asylum-seekers who risk their lives in desperate search of protection and safety. UNHCR has also ramped up efforts to understand and mitigate the impact of online misinformation, disinformation and hate speech through tools addressing information integrity risks, while leveraging partnerships and improving access to reliable online information for displaced communities.

Resettlement within protection and solutions strategies

Resettlement in Asia and the Pacific is key to maintaining protection space, in a context where the protection environment is increasingly deteriorating in many countries.

Across the region in countries from which there are active resettlement programmes — including **Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, India** and **China** — resettlement has helped build and maintain relationships, trust and mutual understanding between UNHCR and host countries. This has been essential for ensuring continued protection and operational space,

promoting access to safety and territory, as well as asylum and protection for refugees. This is true of smaller-scale resettlement programmes with targeted quotas, such as **India, Indonesia** and **China**, as well as larger-scale resettlement programmes in **Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan** and **Iran**. Resettlement has opened avenues for advocacy and engagement on broader protection issues with host governments, enabled them to uphold their commitment to humanitarian principles and helped to support resource mobilization and wider partnerships.



A Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh, which generously hosts close to 1 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, making it one of the largest protracted refugee situations in the world.
© UNHCR/Shari Nijman

OPERATIONALIZING A ROUTE-BASED APPROACH IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

In the Asia-Pacific region, resettlement is a vital component to the operationalization of the route-based approach.

UNHCR has identified three routes in the Asia-Pacific region defined by geographical scope, rather than by specific population or modality of movement : 1) the **South-West Asia Route** which covers movements from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran and, to some extent, to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, onward to Europe;³ 2) the **South Asia Route** which covers the movements from Myanmar and Bangladesh to India and, to a lesser extent, Sri Lanka; and 3) the **South-East Asia Route** which covers the movements from Myanmar and Bangladesh through mainland and insular South East Asia (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia) and, to a lesser extent, onward to Oceania.

To help guide interventions within a route-based approach, UNHCR has identified “Safe, regular and Complementary Pathways” as one of six pillars to operationalize the approach. Under this pillar, in Asia and the Pacific, the expansion of resettlement opportunities and other safe pathways has contributed to interventions in countries of first asylum which seek to reduce the need for onward movements along the three identified routes and offer alternatives to dangerous journeys.

Another significant strategic value of resettlement is its potential to reduce the influence of trafficking and smuggling networks in the region. Refugees with access to legal and safe pathways to protection are less likely to resort to dangerous onward movements or rely on exploitative networks. Increased access to safe and legal alternatives undermines the influence of traffickers and smugglers and reduces the resources needed to combat their activities for example **in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia**. Consequently, it allows States along the routes to reallocate resources to protection and solutions both upstream and in their own jurisdictions. This enhances the safety and security of refugees in countries of asylum and contributes to regional stability and security.

In **Bangladesh**, UNHCR has sought to leverage the 2022-2024 successful upscaling of resettlement of long-staying Rohingya refugees and of those with acute protection needs to increase socioeconomic opportunities and to reduce dangerous onward movements. Greater commitments from resettlement countries and expanded access through group methodology and remote processing, have helped improve refugees’ access to education, language and vocational training and livelihoods opportunities to support socioeconomic inclusion and boost self-reliance. Increased inclusion, in turn, empowers refugees to access skilled pathways like labour mobility and education pathways.

³ In 2024, more than 87,300 Afghans moved onwards, arrived in European Union countries and lodged asylum applications with a 63 per cent recognition rate. [EU+ asylum applications decrease by 11% in 2024, and some changing trends established | European Union Agency for Asylum](#) (accessed 26 March 2025).

STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT

Throughout the region, host governments have repeatedly highlighted the need for responsibility-sharing and tangible contributions to the refugee response. While resettled refugees from host countries represent a sliver of the total population and needs, engagement by third countries to support and receive those most in need is recognized and appreciated by host governments and opens space for UNHCR to engage on broader protection issues.

SUPPORTING ACCESS TO TERRITORY AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Across the region, resettlement plays a crucial role in maintaining host countries' willingness to allow refugees to enter and to offer protection while durable solutions are sought. For example, **Indonesia** remains one of the only countries in the region to consistently provide rescue at sea and allow safe disembarkation and access to territory for Rohingya refugees who have taken dangerous sea journeys. In 2024, Indonesia allowed the safe disembarkation of more than 1,700 Rohingya refugees. Sufficient resettlement places are instrumental to help maintain a favourable protection and operational environment in which boats in distress at sea are allowed to disembark, rather than being pushed back or guided onward with high risk of sinking at sea.

In **Pakistan**, continued resettlement helps secure access to asylum and reduce risks of refoulement. Access to resettlement and third country solutions is an important element of ongoing discussions to conduct a joint exercise with the Government to register and document

Afghan nationals recorded by UNHCR as being at heightened risk. Proof of ongoing resettlement processing has provided a critical safeguard in the context of the implementation of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan and has helped ensure that refugees who are in the resettlement process are not forcibly returned to Afghanistan, where they are at risk of persecution.

REDUCING THE USE OF DETENTION TO MANAGE ASYLUM

In the Asia-Pacific region, there are unfortunately many examples where States have resorted to the use of immigration detention to manage asylum. This can have severe physical and psychological impact on refugees and is often unnecessary and counterproductive. Resettlement is used as a protection tool to offer a solution to refugees in prolonged and arbitrary detention. At the same time, resettlement can be used strategically to expand UNHCR's access to immigration detention, to increase dialogue with States to promote more humane and effective asylum management practices, and to support the larger advocacy strategy to reduce the use of detention.

For example, in **India**, where most refugees currently do not have a legal stay; face challenges in inclusion and come from countries where return is not foreseeable, resettlement is seen as the most appropriate durable solution to address the protection and assistance needs of the most vulnerable. For those in detention or at heightened risk of deportation, resettlement is used as a strategic protection tool to prevent deportation, gain wider access to those in indefinite or protracted detention to secure their release, and to advocate against the use of detention to manage asylum. In

this context, resettlement has opened space for negotiations with authorities, especially for those in prolonged detention, resulting in UNHCR gaining access for case processing in different states in India.

EASING PRESSURE ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Resettlement helps alleviate the strain on host countries' humanitarian assistance and resources in Asia and the Pacific. Many countries in the region, such as **Bangladesh**, **Pakistan**, **Iran** and **Thailand**, host large refugee populations, often with limited resources. By resettling refugees to third countries, UNHCR reduces the burden on these host countries, allowing them to allocate resources more effectively to other vulnerable populations. This redistribution of resources ensures that humanitarian assistance can be more sustainable and targeted, improving the overall quality of support provided to refugees and host communities alike.

In **Thailand**, since the renewal of large-scale group resettlement processing in 2023, UNHCR has prioritized for resettlement the most vulnerable refugees in the camps. UNHCR has pursued resettlement strategically to complement wider protection objectives to expand the protection space, particularly for refugees from Myanmar who have remained in the camps for many years. Since 2005, more than 117,000 refugees have been resettled many of whom had spent decades in the camps. Resettlement demonstrates the solidarity of resettlement countries and has been vital for advocating with the Government of Thailand to expand access to rights and services for refugees and their inclusion in national systems. This has also motivated the Government to take

on more responsibilities for refugees within their territory, such as the establishment of a National Screening Mechanism to distinguish people in need of international protection from migrants.

PROMOTING SOLUTIONS AND INCLUSION WITHIN THE COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

Resettlement can serve as a catalyst for promoting broader solutions and inclusion within the country of asylum. By demonstrating international solidarity and responsibility-sharing, resettlement encourages host countries to enhance their protection frameworks and integration policies. This can lead to improved access to education, health care as well as livelihoods and employment opportunities for refugees, fostering their self-reliance and social inclusion.

In **Malaysia**, UNHCR is pursuing the establishment of an inclusive legal and policy framework that grants refugees access to rights, such as access to legal work, health care and education services. In this context, UNHCR will continue to utilize resettlement strategically to support advocacy and make space for enhanced socioeconomic inclusion for refugees. Increasingly this message is being amplified by robust support from the private sector which indicates potential for the inclusion of refugees within the formal workforce to address labour shortages. This complements and enhances UNHCR's efforts to use resettlement strategically, in advocacy for access to formal employment for refugees in Malaysia.

The strategic use of resettlement can be amplified to support increased access to complementary pathways. Where resettlement

is effective at creating space for increased socioeconomic inclusion through improved access to education, vocational training and livelihoods opportunities, this will also enhance access to complementary pathways, such

as labour mobility and education pathways, by enabling refugees to build the necessary education, language skills and experience to successfully qualify and compete for these pathways.



UNHCR staff help receive a group of 152 Rohingya refugees who were rescued in South Aceh, Indonesia, in October 2024, after enduring weeks at sea, while fleeing from Bangladesh in search of safety. Tragically, three people on board the boat lost their lives.

© UNHCR/Amanda Jufrian

Projected resettlement needs in the region in 2026

UNHCR estimates that in 2026, there will be approximately **806,700 refugees** with resettlement needs in Asia and the Pacific. The vast majority (94 per cent) of refugees and asylum-seekers in the region originate from Afghanistan or Myanmar, countries from which individuals have fled seeking international protection for decades.

De-stabilizing events in those countries have resulted in increased internal and international displacement and eroded opportunities for many to voluntarily repatriate. The increasingly protracted nature of the refugee situations, the limited alternative solutions in the foreseeable future and the significant barriers in host countries to self-reliance and opportunities for growth create extremely challenging conditions for refugee populations in the region. The resulting instability, risks and limitations for refugee populations in many host countries necessitate expanded third country solutions including resettlement.

In **Iran**, **348,900 refugees** or people in a refugee-like situation are projected to be in need of resettlement. The vast majority are from Afghanistan, with a small number of refugees from Iraq. Prioritized profiles include: women and girls at risk, including survivors of gender-based violence and female heads of household; children and adolescents at risk; refugees with specific legal and protection needs such as LGBTIQ+ individuals; and survivors of violence and torture. Refugee women and girls are at particularly high risk due to the lack of economic opportunities which increases the likelihood of them taking exploitative and dangerous work to

survive. Child labour and withdrawal from school are common due to the deteriorating economic situation, as many cannot find school places or afford transportation or basic costs to keep children in school. Amongst new arrivals, many women and girls experienced gender-based violence prior to or during flight and those who had remained since the Taliban took control had commonly experienced or witnessed violence in Afghanistan.

In **Pakistan**, UNHCR estimates that approximately **215,000 refugees**, almost all from Afghanistan, have increased international protection needs and specific or cumulative vulnerabilities that put them in need of resettlement. For those that are the most vulnerable, protection risks are exacerbated by poverty and limited non-exploitative livelihoods options. This includes women and girls at risk such as single-parent households that lack adequate protection and the means to support themselves. Female-headed households are particularly vulnerable and struggle to be self-reliant given the overall protection environment, lack of access to the formal labour market and sometimes limited family or community support. Gender-based violence is largely under-reported due to social

norms, cultural stigma and the lack of effective complaint mechanisms. Female survivors who do report are often placed in safe houses to avoid retaliation from alleged perpetrators or the wider community. Refugees living with medical conditions or disabilities that may not be easily treatable or who lack access to national specialized service providers such as physical rehabilitation, prothesis and wheelchairs are also at heightened risk. Persons with disabilities are often isolated and stigmatized and do not have access to adequate services. Significant numbers of children at risk include those who work daily to support their families exposing them to possible exploitation and physical risks and therefore cannot attend school. Despite some legal mechanisms related to the protection of transgender individuals, LGBTIQ+ refugees are often discriminated against

and marginalized within their communities. Refugees from ethnic or religious minorities also face additional challenges and significant harassment.

In **Bangladesh**, UNHCR has determined that approximately **125,500 refugees** are in need of resettlement. The estimated figure includes refugees registered in Bangladesh since the early 1990s after fleeing Myanmar due to serious human rights violations, with no prospects for return. Among the profiles of refugees identified as in need of resettlement are women and girls at risk who lack traditional support mechanisms and are disproportionately affected by the increasing insecurity in the camps, separated children, and women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence and may face trauma, stigma and ostracization within the refugee



Hafsa is a 14-year-old Somali girl living in Malaysia who loves cars, reading, and drawing. She is currently recovering from corrective surgery for her severe bow legs. © UNHCR/Azwan Rahim

community, making them vulnerable to further abuse and exploitation. With safety and security deteriorating in the camps, there was a marked increase in incidents of serious crimes by gangs and criminal groups including murder, assault, abduction and extortion in 2024 compared to previous years. UNHCR will prioritize refugees with serious legal and physical protection needs. There are also high number of households with persons living with disabilities or serious medical needs, who are not receiving appropriate treatment, adequate care and do not have access to services that would either improve their condition or assist them to lead a more integrated and productive life. In 2025, UNHCR is leading a comprehensive, inter-agency approach to develop a prioritization and targeting methodology to identify refugees facing serious protection risks and those at risk of poor nutritional and health outcomes. This approach provides an evidence-based framework to determine vulnerability and capacity of refugees across the camps in Cox's Bazar and to identify those most in need of prioritization for humanitarian assistance, services and solutions.

In **Thailand**, it is estimated that **83,500 refugees**, mainly from Myanmar, will require resettlement. This number includes the verified camp population due to their protracted stay in the country and the lack of alternative solutions. It also includes registered Rohingya refugees who are held in detention centres and in social welfare shelters, as well as urban refugees with specific needs. UNHCR will focus on survivors of violence and/or torture, women and girls at risk, LGBTIQ+ refugees, unaccompanied and separated children and refugees in prolonged detention at immigration detention centres and/or at heightened risk of refoulement. UNHCR will also prioritize urban refugees with heightened protection concerns and specific needs. These

will include refugees at risk of transnational repression and refoulement linked to their political opinions, individuals detained for long periods, women and children at risk, and/or cases with medical needs requiring urgent intervention in a third country.

In **Malaysia**, it is estimated that **25,200 refugees** will need resettlement, with 83 per cent of those originating from Myanmar. Other groups with resettlement needs include refugees from Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria among other countries of origin. Refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia are regarded as “illegal immigrants” and are at risk of arrest, detention and deportation. UNHCR's access to immigration detention centres to assess international protection needs continues to be impeded. As such, vulnerable individuals, including children, are subjected to prolonged detention and are at high risk of deportation. With increased immigration raids in 2024 and prolonged detention, deportations of individuals continued in 2024. Refugees are still not able to work legally and have limited access to quality education, health care and social protection services. Given the conditions in Myanmar, voluntary repatriation remains an option for only a small number of refugees from other countries.

In **India**, UNHCR estimates that **6,600 refugees** will require resettlement. Refugees with resettlement needs include Rohingya and Chin refugees from Myanmar, Afghans, Yemenis, Somalis and other African refugees such as Sudanese, Cameroonians and Congolese, as well as some Iranian, Iraqi, Palestinian and Ethiopian refugees. Profiles of refugees to be submitted for resettlement include refugees in prolonged administrative or immigration detention or those at risk of arrest for immigration-related issues, refugees

at imminent risk of deportation and refoulement such as those who have received “Leave India Notices” from the immigration authorities, refugee victims of trafficking and LGBTIQ+ refugees at heightened risk. UNHCR will continue to prioritize resettlement for women and girls at risk who have suffered severe trauma including gender-based violence, victims of trafficking or those who face other protection risks related to their gender. Survivors of violence and torture, particularly those who could face further traumatization or remain at heightened risk in India, will also be prioritized. Other priority profiles include children and adolescents at risk with serious protection needs, including those facing child marriage, child labour, abuse, exploitation, disability and gender-based violence, prolonged or indefinite detention and refugees with serious medical needs and disabilities that cannot be adequately addressed in India.

In **Indonesia**, UNHCR has determined that **1,800 refugees**, the majority of whom are from Afghanistan, Somalia, Myanmar and Sudan, are projected to be in need of resettlement. These include the following profiles: refugees with specific protection needs or serious physical and mental health conditions; women and girls at risk who face additional economic and security challenges given the lack of effective familial protection; single parents facing increased protection risks due to family separation and barriers to family reunification; unaccompanied and separated children at risk due to limited access to national child protection systems and shelters; older persons; and LGBTIQ+ refugees facing marginalization and harassment and who are unprotected by the Indonesian anti-discrimination law. Refugees with heightened protection risks include those

who face xenophobia and discrimination due to their specific race and religion, resulting in threats to their physical safety. For example, with the significant increase in Rohingya boat disembarkations since 2023, anti-refugee sentiments targeting Rohingya have also impacted the wider refugee population and created a higher risk of physical harm. Refugees in protracted situations will be considered for resettlement due to the heightened risks associated with the prolonged stay and limitations to local integration, as will those with immediate relatives in third countries where family reunification options are not available.

UNHCR estimates that **240 refugees** in **China** will require resettlement. UNHCR will prioritize refugees in particularly precarious situations and those with urgent protection needs, such as individuals in detention and at risk of deportation and persons identified with specific needs, especially those lacking community support. These will include women and girls at risk, survivors of gender-based violence, refugees facing serious difficulties related to their sexual orientation and gender identity, single-headed households and individuals with specific physical or mental health concerns. Refugees with close family members in third countries who are unable to access family reunification procedures may also be considered. While the forcibly displaced population in the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region consists of various nationalities, most refugees who fall within the criteria described above are from Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

Regional highlights, achievements and challenges in 2024

Third country solutions for refugees in Asia and the Pacific were significantly expanded in 2024, including through strengthened resettlement programmes for refugees living in the region's largest host countries: Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Iran and Pakistan. In 2024 UNHCR **submitted over 42,125 refugees** for resettlement. This number meant surpassing the targets allocated to the region, and marked an increase compared to 2023 (39,600) and previous years. **Resettlement departures** from the region also significantly increased in 2024 to more than **18,300** from 12,900 in 2023.

Resettlement programmes benefitting Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran continued to grow with increased commitments by resettlement countries to address the high needs of this population following the destabilizing events in 2021 and continued uncertainty in Afghanistan. Since the upscaling began in 2022, UNHCR has submitted more than 28,400 Afghan refugees for resettlement, including 10,100 from Iran and 10,800 from Pakistan. Over 10,600 Afghan refugees have departed to resettlement countries. Resettlement departures from Pakistan increased significantly in 2024 despite the lack of exemption from fines related to visa overstays or irregular entry for refugees departing on resettlement. All foreigners without valid Pakistani visas, including refugees, departing to a third country continue to be subject to exit-related fines. Advocacy to reinstate a free-of-charge exit permit mechanism for refugees is ongoing.

Similarly, resettlement for those most in need amongst the 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, has grown significantly after resuming in 2022 following the suspension of this programme in 2010. More than 19,500 Rohingya refugees were submitted for resettlement in 2024. Since the upscaling of Rohingya refugees began in 2022, UNHCR has submitted 42,500 Rohingya refugees for resettlement and 9,800 Rohingya refugees have departed to resettlement countries. In addition, over 10,400 refugees from Myanmar were submitted for resettlement from Thailand, following the approval in 2023 of large-scale group resettlement processing for primarily ethnic minority groups hosted in camps for decades. As resettlement opportunities opened up from these countries, resettlement teams have been strengthened and capacitated, case processing modalities are well-established and supporting systems to enable the processing of resettlement cases have been put in place.

Perspectives: BANGLADESH

Anowar: Hopeful for a brighter future



When a gas stove stops working in Anowar's neighbourhood in the largest refugee camp in the world, people know exactly where to get it repaired. The inner workings of the stoves, gas cylinders and pressure cookers are no secret to the 26-year-old mother of two who has completed technical training to repair such small appliances.

Working as a mechanic in a sprawling refugee camp is not a common dream or a likely occupation for young Rohingya women. But, after Anowar's life drastically changed when she fled violence and persecution in Myanmar and sought safety in Bangladesh, she had to learn new skills to support her family. Anowar is one of the 1 million Rohingya people who remain in refugee camps supported by the Government of Bangladesh – trying to retain a semblance of ordinary life in new circumstances.

For years, Anowar shared her tiny shelter with her husband, two young children and her mother-in-law, until the death of her husband forced her to be the family's sole caregiver and provider. She manages the family's food rations, takes her children to learning centers and seeks medical care when needed. As a young widow, Anowar faces persistent challenges in a community where women's social well-being is closely tied to marriage.

To support her children's education and future, she completed a training programme for minor repair work organized by a UNHCR NGO partner. Thanks to this training, Anowar learned how to repair appliances in her own household and can now offer her technical skills to help others in the community.

Her mother-in-law also supports the community by watering the plants in communal gardens and cleaning the drainage in the camps to prevent flooding and mosquito breeding.

Despite their hard work, life in the camp remains fragile, especially for female-headed households. The camp is located in an area vulnerable to natural disasters and extreme weather events: a fire in the dry season could wipe away their shelter in an instant, as it has done for many others in recent years. During the monsoon, their flimsy home is barely enough to protect them when heavy rains dampen the walls and flood the floors of their shelter, and if a cyclone lands on their camps, they could lose everything they built up.

For Anowar, resettlement represents new hope amidst the uncertainty of refugee life. As she awaits her departure to Canada, she is deeply grateful for this life-changing opportunity. She is looking forward to a brighter future in her new home abroad, where she dreams of learning new skills and providing stability for her family by contributing meaningfully to society there.

“I want to see my children receiving a better education. They can become doctors and serve people in Canada.”

East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes

The Regional Bureau for [East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes \(EHAGL\)](#) provides strategic direction, oversight, coordination and operational support for resettlement activities in the Republic of Burundi (**Burundi**), the Republic of Djibouti (**Djibouti**), the State of Eritrea (**Eritrea**), the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (**Ethiopia**), the Republic of Kenya (**Kenya**), the Republic of Rwanda (**Rwanda**), the Federal Republic of Somalia (**Somalia**), the Republic of South Sudan (**South Sudan**), the Republic of the Sudan (**Sudan**), the United Republic of Tanzania (**Tanzania**) and the Republic of Uganda (**Uganda**).

Congolese refugee Ishara taking care of his young children at the Musenyi refugee site in Burundi in March 2025.

Ishara escaped an attack and forced recruitment by rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, before arriving in Burundi. His wife fled before him with their children when their daughter was just three days old.

© UNHCR/Charity Nzomo



At a glance



**PROJECTED NEEDS
FOR THE REGION**
659,400



**TOP THREE COUNTRIES
WITH THE HIGHEST
RESETTLEMENT NEEDS**

Ethiopia
214,000

Uganda
174,100

Kenya
79,600



SUBMISSIONS IN 2024
33,981



DEPARTURES IN 2024
29,336

- The region hosts over 26 million forcibly displaced persons, including 5.6 million refugees and asylum-seekers. The largest refugee populations are from South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Eritrea.
- The region faces ongoing threats of persecution, violence and human rights

violations. Natural disasters like heavy rains and severe flooding in 2024 have further impacted hundreds of thousands of people, including refugees and internally displaced persons. Several factors are driving the onward movement of forcibly displaced persons, within and beyond the region. These include inadequate asylum systems, lack of documentation, family separation, violence, exploitation, limited self-reliance opportunities, restricted movement outside camps and diminishing humanitarian aid.

- Resettlement of refugees most dependent on declining levels of humanitarian assistance supports a more sustainable use of resources to address food insecurity and other basic needs among the broader population.
- The Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Rwanda provides protection and solutions for refugees transferred from Libya, who have faced severe human rights violations. The ETM relies on regular departures to resettlement countries to accommodate new arrivals.
- UNHCR estimates that 659,400 refugees across 10 countries in the region will need resettlement in 2026, reflecting a 10 per cent increase from 2025. The countries with the largest resettlement needs are Ethiopia (214,000), Uganda (174,100), Kenya (79,600), Sudan (61,300) and South Sudan (42,500).
- In 2024, nearly 30,000 refugees were resettled from the region through UNHCR. UNHCR submitted almost 34,000 refugees to 13 resettlement countries.

Overview of the protection environment in the region

The EHAGL region is hosting more than **26 million** forcibly displaced persons (comparable to the total population of Australia), including **5.6 million** refugees and asylum-seekers from South Sudan (40 per cent), Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan and Eritrea, among several other communities. The majority have no foreseeable prospect of returning home in safety and dignity, at present. Besides continuing threats of persecution, violence and human rights violations, heavy rains and severe flooding devastated large areas of the region in 2024, impacting hundreds of thousands of people including refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.

Since April 2023, widespread conflict across **Sudan** has displaced over 12 million people, affecting Sudanese nationals as well as South Sudanese, Eritrean and other refugees living in Sudan. Many have fled to neighbouring countries in the EHAGL region, West and Central Africa and North Africa. Even before the current war, close to 1 million Sudanese were already in situations of protracted displacement outside their country owing to persecution and human rights violations. UNHCR is coordinating a sustainable regional response to the Sudan situation, however access to affected communities within Sudan, protection of civilians and delivery of humanitarian aid have been hampered by insecurity.

As of February 2025, **Ethiopia** is hosting over 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers predominantly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan. Conflict and inter-communal

tensions affect several parts of the country, including but not only in the Tigray, Amhara, Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia regions. As a result, about 1.9 million internally displaced persons are unable to return home while tens of thousands of refugees have experienced violence and secondary displacement since fleeing to Ethiopia. UNHCR has observed arrests and significant delays in the registration of new asylum-seekers from Eritrea and the issuance of civil documentation including birth certificates for children born in Ethiopia, with implications for freedom of movement and access to basic services.

Uganda continues to host the most refugees and asylum-seekers of any country on the African continent, with a population exceeding 1.8 million forcibly displaced persons, while maintaining an inclusive approach to protection. A rapidly growing number of Sudanese, Eritrean,



Congolese refugees arriving at the entry point in Sebigoro, Kikuube District, Uganda to undergo Mpox health checks conducted by UNHCR and partner staff. © UNHCR/ Emmanuel Museruka

Somali and other asylum-seekers in 2023 and 2024, however, contributed to an administrative pause affecting the registration of new arrivals which remained in effect as of March 2025. Self-harm continues to be observed among refugees, highlighting ongoing gaps in mental health and psychosocial support services. In 2024, [208 suicide attempts](#) were recorded, with 59 resulting in death. Some 47 per cent of refugee households are facing severe food insecurity.

In the first two months of 2025, over 80,000 people from the DRC sought protection in neighbouring countries, mostly in Burundi and Uganda. These were added to an existing population of over 1 million Congolese refugees living mostly in **Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya** and the Southern Africa region. UNHCR and partners are supporting

government-led efforts to address immediate protection needs with solutions from the start, while updating the [Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) for the DRC situation.

Most countries in the region have established legal and administrative frameworks for the registration of forcibly displaced persons, the issuance of identity documents, and national asylum procedures which are managed by government authorities with technical assistance and support from UNHCR. However, access to asylum in several locations is increasingly delayed due in part to lack of adequate funding and insecurity in some countries of asylum. A regional backlog of 455,000 registered asylum-seekers by December 2024 has continued to grow in early 2025 alongside a worrying number of unregistered individuals seeking international protection. Procedural

inconsistencies and national legislation have sometimes affected the efficiency, fairness and effectiveness of asylum systems.

Several interrelated factors are contributing to the onward movement of forcibly displaced persons from countries in the region, often involving perilous journeys within the region and sometimes further beyond to the Middle East, North Africa and Southern Africa. These factors include shortcomings in national asylum systems and lack of documentation for access to services and humanitarian assistance. Other factors include family separation, threats of violence and exploitation, limited self-reliance opportunities, restricted freedom of movement outside of camps and rapidly diminishing levels of humanitarian aid supporting shelter, food security, education and health care. While such movements cannot be comprehensively monitored, UNHCR's biometric registration systems have enabled cross-border identity management, advocacy, coordination and assistance to tens of thousands of people on the move and in need of international protection.

Already half of all refugee children in the EHAGL region were out of school in 2024. A substantial loss of funding in 2025 now threatens education for nearly 1 million refugee children, increasing risks of child labour, early marriage and child recruitment into armed groups as well as onward movements often involving unaccompanied and separated children. Almost all refugee children in **Burundi, Djibouti, Somalia** and **Tanzania** are at risk of receiving no formal education in 2025. Many children who cannot attend school also miss out on regular meals, with consequences for their nutrition and development.

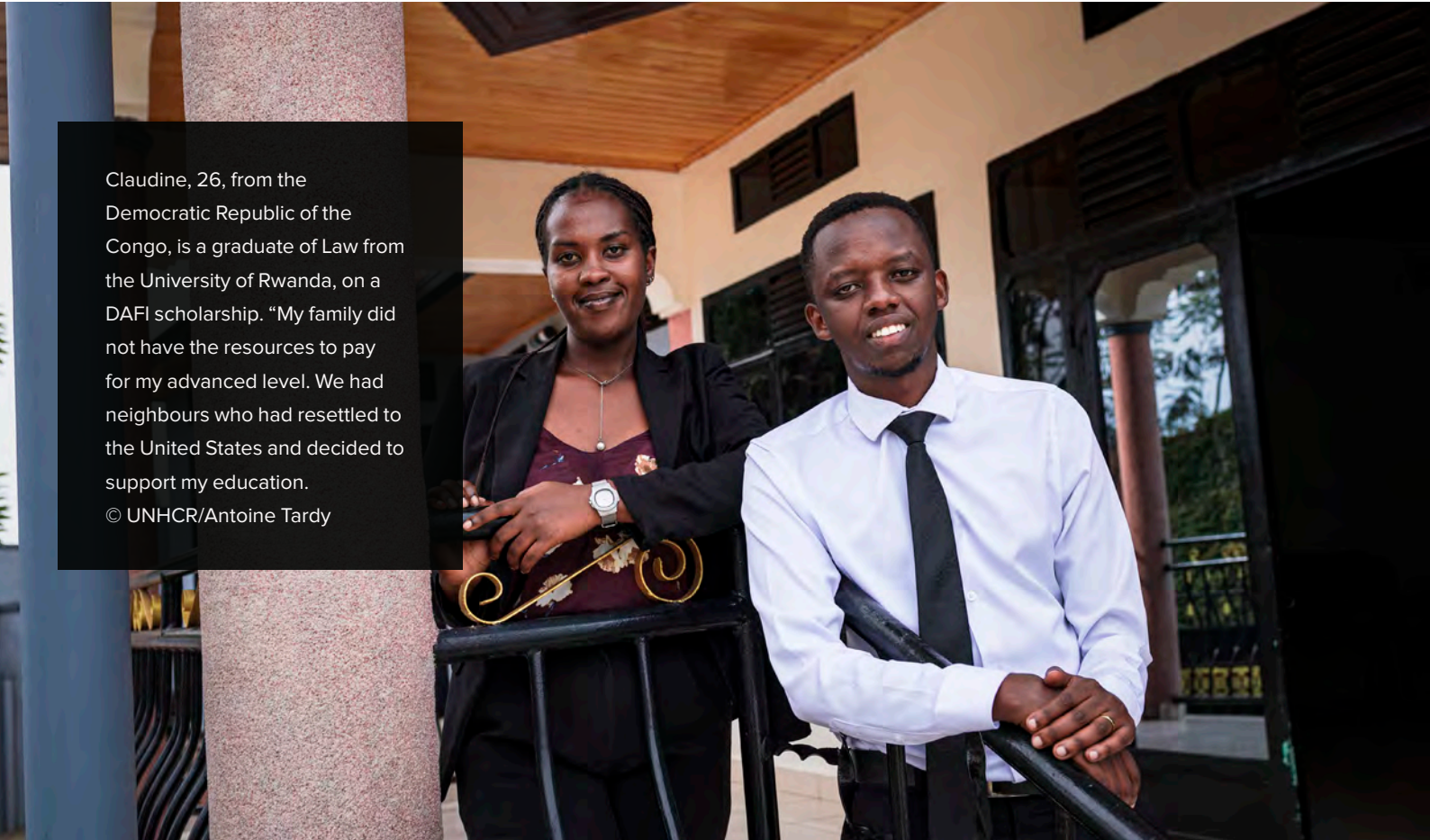
UNHCR works closely with partners including States, UN Country Teams, the African Union and Regional Economic Communities, such

as the East African Community (EAC) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), to promote human mobility and the inclusion of forcibly displaced persons in regional and national initiatives for social protection and development.

Refugees are included in a [multi-year strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training \(TVET\)](#) by the African Union as well as in the IGAD Regional Qualifications Framework (currently under development) establishing standards for recognition of prior learning and the IGAD Child Policy Framework (also under development). The [IGAD Regional Refugee Engagement Forum](#) and the [IGAD Policy Framework on Refugee Protection](#) support efforts by States to implement pledges described in the [IGAD-EAC Declaration on Durable Solutions for Refugees in East and the Horn of Africa](#).

Machine readable travel documents are issued to refugees registered in **Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan** (although interrupted since April 2023) and **Uganda**. In 2025, it is anticipated that issuance of machine readable travel documents compliant with international standards will begin in **South Sudan** and **Ethiopia**. The integration of refugees in a national system for digital identity documentation and the new directive on the right to work have also strengthened opportunities for self-reliance in Ethiopia. In March 2025, the Kenyan Government endorsed the [Shirika Plan](#), an initiative to promote socioeconomic inclusion of refugees by transforming camps into integrated settlements. Without adequate funding for humanitarian aid and development, however, progressive policies on forced displacement will be increasingly difficult to implement in the region.

Resettlement within protection and solutions strategies



Claudine, 26, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a graduate of Law from the University of Rwanda, on a DAFI scholarship. "My family did not have the resources to pay for my advanced level. We had neighbours who had resettled to the United States and decided to support my education.

© UNHCR/Antoine Tardy

The region is characterized by youth and resilience. However, as recurring violence triggers new displacement and peace initiatives stall, governments are struggling to provide adequate social services, physical safety and infrastructure. Funding for humanitarian assistance and development is insufficient, aggravated by unsustainable foreign debt. Persistent gaps leave many forcibly displaced persons little choice but to seek international protection elsewhere, within and beyond the region, even at the risk of becoming separated from their families and exposing themselves

to great danger along their journeys. Further reductions in humanitarian aid in 2025 are increasing competition for scarce resources and making vulnerable people susceptible to exploitation by armed groups, fuelling instability and increasing the potential for regional conflict.

In the EHAGL region, the resettlement of refugees most dependent on declining levels of humanitarian assistance supports a more sustainable use of resources to address food insecurity and other basic needs among the broader population. The strategic use of resettlement in this context can benefit single

parents or caregivers within families who cannot become self-reliant; children at risk of trafficking and of hazardous labour such as mining in extremely dangerous conditions; individuals who may be marginalized due to a disability or those facing discrimination for other reasons, including persons with albinism; and refugees accommodated in emergency shelters to protect them from specific threats of violence.

A limited number of refugees with serious medical needs are prioritized for resettlement if treatment in a third country will not only be life-saving but will enable them subsequently to live independently, with greater dignity. This approach enables UNHCR and its partners to extend essential health care to a larger number of forcibly displaced people in the EHAGL region.

Increasingly, due to restrictive criteria and practical barriers which prevent family reunification through safe and regulated systems and given insufficient opportunities for private sponsorship, UNHCR relies on resettlement to restore family unity based on dependency and with emphasis on the rights of the child. Resettlement in such situations offers an alternative to taking dangerous journeys for separated family members and is critical to a route-based approach to protection and solutions, while UNHCR advocates for flexible, protection-focused procedures to family reunification.

Further to a route-based approach, the **Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM)** in **Rwanda** facilitates protection and solutions for refugees transferred from Libya, including those who have undertaken or contemplated onward movements. Many have been exposed to egregious human rights violations including torture, sexual violence, slavery, illegal imprisonment, extortion and other forms of

exploitation. However, the ETM depends on regular departures to resettlement countries in order to accommodate new arrivals. Therefore, without a substantial increase in resettlement opportunities, its viability will be in jeopardy.

Following an escalation of conflict in the **DRC** and heightened political tensions, it is critical that international solidarity with neighbouring countries does not waver. This includes tangible demonstrations of support to asylum systems and resettlement commitments for Congolese refugees hosted in **Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda** and elsewhere.

The sustainability of local initiatives for refugee inclusion, such as the **Shirika Plan** in **Kenya** and similar efforts in other countries, will necessarily depend on the continuation of international engagement including through third country solutions to preserve asylum space for new arrivals, while strengthening protection and other durable solutions for refugee populations.

Numbering 2.3 million, **South Sudanese** are the largest refugee population registered in Africa by nationality. Most are registered in countries in the region hosting large numbers of forcibly displaced persons from the **DRC**, **Somalia**, **Sudan** and **Eritrea**. Peace and security in South Sudan are yet to be fully realized due to fragile governance, extreme weather events and inter-communal tensions. The situation is exacerbated by the socioeconomic disruption created by an influx of arrivals from Sudan including refugees and South Sudanese nationals — often returning for the first time since the country's independence, in adverse conditions. In 2026, UNHCR will consider the resettlement of South Sudanese, Sudanese and other refugees living in South Sudan as a strategic priority in recognition of the regional leadership demonstrated by countries such as **Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya** and **South Sudan**

itself in their response to forced displacement and their progressive policies for refugee protection and solutions.

With almost 1 million Sudanese refugees already displaced prior to 2023, the resettlement of those in a protracted situation and facing heightened protection risks remains important even while pursuing solutions from the start for more recently displaced Sudanese refugees. As the conflict enters its third year, over 3 million Sudanese are hosted in neighbouring countries. Within **Sudan**, several hundred thousand South Sudanese, Eritrean and other refugees depend on humanitarian assistance and dwindling resources. Over 266,000 refugees in Sudan have experienced secondary displacement since April 2023.

In a positive development, **Somalia** became a full member of the EAC in March 2024. However, recurring floods and drought exacerbated by ongoing conflict and food insecurity have continued to create new displacement within and from Somalia. Since a high proportion of the refugee population in countries such as **Kenya** and **Ethiopia** originates from Somalia, UNHCR prioritizes Somali refugees for resettlement within sustainable and appropriately balanced programmes.

Resettlement is not only a critical protection intervention for individuals and families; it is equally essential to ensuring sustainable responses to forced displacement and consistent regional standards for asylum. By

addressing the various factors contributing to onward movements via multiple routes, including family separation and gaps in effective legal and physical protection, the resettlement of refugees in the EHAGL region has a stabilizing impact.

Furthermore, in addition to offering safety, being a tangible demonstration of responsibility-sharing and having a stabilizing effect for the region, resettlement also provides opportunities for refugees to use their skills and thereby contribute to the society in which they are resettled. This includes those with an advanced education, professional qualifications or vocational skills which they may be unable to use in the context of forced displacement. In **Ethiopia, Uganda** and other countries, registration data, community engagement and livelihoods projects attest to a large proportion of refugees with valuable work experience in agriculture, construction, livestock industries, plumbing, mechanical and artisanal trades, health care, engineering, media and the creative arts. In more developed economies, refugees have enormous potential to contribute through employment, business activities and community-level support.

Resettlement promises an end to hunger, a decent education, a meaningful childhood and the support which every child needs to grow up healthy and thriving, with a safe place to call home, putting an end to displacement for current and future generations.

Projected resettlement needs in the region in 2026

UNHCR estimates that **659,400 refugees** located across 10 of the 11 countries in the EHAGL region will need resettlement in 2026, compared to close to 601,300 refugees in 2025. The overall increase of 10 per cent reflects analysis from UNHCR operations in Djibouti and Sudan which were not factored into the projected resettlement needs for 2025 as well as growing needs identified in Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

Although UNHCR estimates that fewer refugees in **Ethiopia (214,000)** will have resettlement needs in 2026 compared to 2025, protection and solutions for this diverse refugee population will continue to represent a core strategic priority in the region, central to a route-based approach. Most live in camps and settlements, with less than 10 per cent, mostly from Eritrea, residing in Addis Ababa and other urban areas. Food insecurity is a life-threatening concern throughout the country, contributing to conflict. In 2024, UNHCR and partners assessed that half of refugee children in Ethiopia aged 6-59 months were undernourished and at risk of acute malnutrition and stunting. Over 25,000 refugee children are registered as unaccompanied or separated. Limited livelihood opportunities lead many forcibly displaced people including children to find work in gold mines and other hazardous labour, exposing them to protection risks including exploitation, serious injury or death. Reported incidents of large-scale arrests particularly targeting undocumented Eritreans are driving onward

movements from Ethiopia to other countries, due in part to the ongoing moratorium on registration with few exceptions.

UNHCR expects that resettlement needs in **Uganda (174,100)** will further increase in 2026. This increase stems from new displacement from countries of origin, family separation and the humanitarian imperative to find third country solutions for those most in need among a steadily growing population which already comprises 1 million children. Among these children, many are at risk of missing out on school and over 72,000 are registered as unaccompanied or separated and are reportedly exposed to child labour, bullying and self-harm.

Resettlement needs in **Kenya** have increased to **79,600** refugees following the adjudication of asylum applications involving new arrivals as well as refugees with asylum cases pending for several years who have become eligible for resettlement. UNHCR has made technical recommendations to improve the efficiency of national asylum procedures. However, the legal status of 224,000 asylum-seekers

is yet to be adjudicated. Among recognized refugees, protection referrals have documented discrimination and specific physical threats targeting certain groups and individuals. More than 9,500 displaced children are registered as unaccompanied or separated.

In **Sudan**, numerous protection risks have been heightened by the conflict including physical violence, forced recruitment by parties to the conflict and the use of child soldiers, forced marriage, human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. In this context, UNHCR estimates that **61,300** refugees mostly from South Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia will be in need of resettlement in 2026. While humanitarian access, movement within the country and communication with refugees present challenges, UNHCR and partners are continuing to facilitate third country solutions in coordination with the authorities.

Since 2023, UNHCR has been developing a new resettlement programme in **South Sudan** for the first time since the country's independence. In 2026, UNHCR anticipates that resettlement needs will grow in connection with the Sudan Situation and a range of protection issues affecting **42,500** refugees in South Sudan. These issues include abduction, forced recruitment of children by armed groups, limited access to justice, physical safety concerns and inadequate livelihood opportunities which lead some refugees to take desperate measures for survival.

Resettlement needs in **Tanzania** will rise to **42,200** as restrictive government policies limit self-reliance opportunities, freedom of movement and access to basic services for protection, aggravating the risks already faced by minorities such as persons with albinism. Third country solutions will be an essential feature of advocacy to preserve asylum space

for new arrivals from the DRC, many of them survivors of extreme violence, for Congolese in protracted displacement and for Burundian refugees assessed to be still in need of international protection, despite the promotion of voluntary repatriation or alternative stay arrangements for this population.

UNHCR projects a small decrease in resettlement needs among refugees hosted in **Rwanda (24,300)**, partly as a result of departures through resettlement and complementary pathways in 2024. Despite inclusive policies and the relative freedom of movement for refugees in the country, the strategic use of resettlement for refugees in protracted displacement supports government efforts to receive more people forced to flee from the DRC and other countries of origin, while maintaining the ETM for refugees evacuated from Libya. As of 17 March 2025, nearly 600 evacuees from Libya were accommodated at the ETM, including dozens of unaccompanied children. The ETM has facilitated resettlement for more than 2,100 refugees since September 2019.

Resettlement needs in **Burundi (19,700)** remain consistent, with no significant improvement in the protection environment observed during the past year. The country continues to lack the protection capacity to effectively address the needs of the displaced Congolese population and other refugees, many of them traumatized by violence (particularly rape) and witnessing the killing of their loved ones. An influx of new arrivals from the DRC has triggered an emergency response in early 2025.

In **Djibouti (1,400)**, resettlement needs are identified among refugees at heightened risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, including human trafficking and urgent child

protection concerns. In this country, unallocated resettlement quotas play an important role for quick and targeted interventions.

In **Somalia**, where **200** refugees are estimated to be in need of resettlement, UNHCR will continue to rely on unallocated quotas to address urgent protection needs where a third country solution is considered most appropriate

and where necessary to restore family unity. Adverse environmental factors and competition over access to water, land, pasture and other natural resources which are essential for food security aggravate the protection risks affecting refugees from Yemen, Ethiopia and elsewhere in a context of fragile governance and insecurity.



Refugees walking through the Ura refugee settlement in Ethiopia's Benishangul Gumus region where Sudanese refugee arrivals live side by side with their local hosts.

© UNHCR/Sona Dadi

Regional highlights, achievements and challenges in 2024

In 2024, nearly **30,000 refugees were resettled** from countries in the EHAGL region through UNHCR programmes, a historic record, complemented by family reunification and private sponsorship pathways and emerging opportunities for labour mobility and higher education in third countries. Exit permits were sometimes withheld, however, creating challenges to ensure equitable access to third country solutions and prolonging family separation.

Daud, a Somali refugee in Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya uses a wheelchair to navigate the thick sands and mud puddles of the camp. He uses his skills to advocate for the rights of persons living with disabilities. His determination and optimism make him a source of inspiration to all who meet him.

© UNHCR/Mohamed Maalim



UNHCR, IOM and resettlement States worked constructively with Regional Economic Communities, such as IGAD and EAC, and national authorities to overcome barriers to departure, recognizing an individual's fundamental right under international law to leave a country subject to necessary and proportionate measures for national security and other legitimate State objectives.

UNHCR **submitted almost 34,000** refugees in EHAGL to **13 resettlement countries** in 2024, while responsibly managing cases after their submission and before their departure, comprising more than 120,000 refugees by year's end. Nearly one third of these refugees are waiting five years or longer for an outcome in the form of a resettlement decision or departure after UNHCR submitted their case. Managing their expectations while they have been in limbo for such a long time has been a challenge, requiring continuous counselling and support. Joint efforts by UNHCR and resettlement States steadily improved accountability to refugees, including timely notification of decisions, and supported the increase in departures.

UNHCR in the region also reviewed several hundred resettlement cases involving individuals registered in different locations. These are detected through biometric information, showing onward movement across borders or within the same country of asylum either before or after being identified for resettlement consideration⁴. The effective use of registration and identity management systems to strengthen procedural safeguards has enhanced programme integrity across the region.

Almost two thirds of the refugees in the region submitted by UNHCR for resettlement in 2024 were Congolese, while thousands of Eritrean, South Sudanese, Somali, Sudanese and other refugees with compelling protection needs were also prioritized. UNHCR continues its efforts to align limited resettlement opportunities and States' selection criteria with evolving priorities. These priorities include a route-based approach to displacement and the need for sustainable responses to refugee situations, with due consideration for equitable access to third country solutions.

4 In 2024, close to 44,000 registered individuals in the region were identified by UNHCR to have moved from one country of asylum to another, an increase of 19 per cent compared to 2023. A majority (65 per cent) moved within the EHAGL region, mostly to Uganda and Kenya, while 29 per cent moved out of the region and the remainder arrived in the EHAGL region from other regions. Most of these movements involved refugees originating from South Sudan, Sudan and Eritrea, travelling onwards from Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and South Sudan to other countries of asylum within and beyond the region. This data verifies the trends observed by UNHCR field offices, however the sample remains much smaller than the number of actual movements taking place.

Perspectives: TANZANIA

A future reimagined: Kashindi's resettlement journey

Kashindi and her children
at the resettlement
interview site in
Nyarugusu Refugee
Camp, Tanzania.
©UNHCR/ Eric Muhire



“I felt a sense of hope I had not felt for years,” Kashindi says. She adds that she has seen on social media how her fellow refugees’ lives changed when they got a chance to be resettled to a third country. Finally, her dream will also come true after UNHCR invited her for a resettlement interview in 2024.

Kashindi, a 28-year-old woman, has lived nearly her entire life in the two refugee camps of the Kigoma region in the United Republic of Tanzania, after fleeing violence as an infant. Born in Fizi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1997, Kashindi’s father was killed in the war. Her mother died during childbirth, leaving Kashindi under the primary care of her elder siblings. Kashindi fled the DRC with one of her sisters who later disappeared, leaving Kashindi alone. With the support of UNHCR, she was then placed under the care of Sifa, a kind-hearted Congolese woman who was resettled to the USA in 2023.

Kashindi has no memories of the DRC and fears to go back there due to ongoing insecurity and violence by armed rebel groups. She studied in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Tanzania until Grade 11, but life's hardships and an early pregnancy forced her to drop out of school. Now, as a single mother of four, Kashindi grapples with the challenges of camp life, including poor health facilities, inadequate shelter and reduced food rations. She is not even allowed to leave the camp, which makes it hard to earn a living and provide food for her family. Like other women, Kashindi is also extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation from men who promise to marry and provide them with security and financial support, only to abandon them when they fall pregnant.

Now, Kashindi has been accepted for resettlement to Sweden and eagerly awaits her departure. She dreams of working as a beautician and utilizing the sewing and embroidery skills she has cultivated in the camp into a career. In Sweden, she sees the potential to turn her passions into a livelihood and provide a brighter future for her children. She is also excited about giving her children access to better education. "I had lost hope as they were going to grow up like me here in the camp", she says. "But now, I can give them something different: a chance for a better life, a chance to pursue education." She is also enthusiastic about contributing to Swedish society. "I want to learn the Swedish culture and make an impact there. I will first study and work hard to provide for my children and give them the lives they deserve. It's a big opportunity for them."

Perspectives: ETHIOPIA

Family about to start a new life in Australia after a decade of displacement



Abdella with his wife Gisma and their son Issa at the UNHCR Field Office in Sherkole Refugee Camp, Ethiopia ©UNHCR/ Sara Kelifa

Meet Abdella. Abdella is in the UNHCR compound to thank the UNHCR staff and bid farewell as he prepares to leave Sherkole refugee camp in Ethiopia, where he spent almost a decade of his life. In a few days, Abdella and his family will be resettling to Australia.

Abdella fled Sudan in 2014 due to conflict and has been living in Ethiopia ever since. “I dream of a peaceful and better Sudan. I dream that I could be well educated and be able to return to my country and help my community in any way I can,” he says. But as conflict continues to rage in Sudan, he has not been able to make this dream come true yet.

Abdella, his wife Gisma and their son Issa will soon begin their new life in Australia. “I am very happy and excited,” he shares. “I think that people will receive us from the airport and show us around,” says Abdella when asked what he expects when he arrives in Australia. “I do not know where exactly we will be living, but we look forward to it. I heard that Australia is a beautiful country and that they support refugees a lot,” Abdella adds.

While living in Ethiopia, Abdella has been working as a carpenter, crafting and selling furniture in the camp market. He plans to make good use of these skills in Australia, if given the opportunity. He also wants to take computer courses that can help improve his chances of finding a job.

His wife Gisma, who is a housemaker in the camp, is eager to take driving lessons and enrol in school to learn English once she gets there. She plans to continue her studies and fulfill her dream of becoming a doctor. “My son loves school and playing football, I am sure he will receive a better education and football training there,” Abdella adds.

The family is looking forward to finding better opportunities, education and essential services in their new home. They are also excited to learn more about the culture, including the different foods, and are eager to start this new chapter in Australia!

Europe

The Regional Bureau for Europe provides oversight, coordination and support for resettlement activities in **Türkiye**. Resettlement may also be used as a protection tool from time to time for refugees facing heightened protection risks in other countries of asylum in the region.

Refugees and host community members attend UNCHR supported vocational training centres in Ankara to benefit from various classes such as Turkish language, cooking, graphic design or tailoring.

© UNHCR / Emrah Gürel



At a glance



**PROJECTED NEEDS
FOR THE REGION
258,100**



**SUBMISSIONS IN 2024
14,320**



**DEPARTURES IN 2024
10,756**

- The regional protection environment in Europe remains complex and fluid, shaped by the ongoing international armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine and evolving policy frameworks on migration and asylum across the region.
- Türkiye, the main country in the region where resettlement needs are identified, hosts over 3.1 million refugees and asylum-seekers, including 2.8 million Syrians.
- Following the change of government in Syria, there is hope for stability in the country, prompting voluntary returns. While supporting voluntary returns to Syria, Türkiye maintains temporary protection for Syrians with many vulnerable Syrian refugees having profiles that make return to the country of origin unlikely in the short to medium term.
- The combination of economic hardship, ongoing post-earthquake recovery challenges as well as challenges towards resilience contribute to onward movements towards Europe and reliance on negative coping mechanisms.
- Resettlement remains a vital tool for international responsibility-sharing, particularly for vulnerable groups such as earthquake survivors, women at risk, and LGBTIQ+ refugees.
- UNHCR estimates that 258,100 refugees in Türkiye will need resettlement in 2026, with the majority being Syrians.
- In 2024, UNHCR made 14,320 resettlement submissions from Türkiye, with 10,756 persons departing on resettlement.
- European States pledged 60,700 places for resettlement and humanitarian admissions for 2024-2025 globally, although only 37 per cent materialized in resettlement arrivals.

Overview of the protection environment in the region

The regional protection environment in Europe remains complex and fluid, shaped by the ongoing international armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine and evolving policy frameworks on migration and asylum across the region.



Refugees from Afghanistan
Haseebullah and his wife Muska were
resettled to Slovenia from Türkiye
after the earthquake on 6 February
2023. © UNHCR/Zsolt Balla

The war in Ukraine, now in its fourth year, continues to drive large-scale displacement with 6.8 million refugees from Ukraine worldwide with the overwhelming majority — 6.3 million — seeking safety in Europe. Despite strong solidarity from European States, refugees often face difficulties as host countries grapple with economic challenges making it difficult to provide the necessary support and resources. The application of the [Temporary Protection Directive](#), which continues in the European Union (EU) until at least March 2026, provides a critical framework for refugee protection. Meanwhile, within Ukraine, humanitarian needs remain severe, with 12.7 million people requiring assistance.

The [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) (“the Pact”), set to take full effect in 2026, introduces significant reforms to the European asylum system. UNHCR has been actively engaging with EU institutions and Member States to identify vulnerable individuals, safeguard rights in border procedures and improve independent monitoring mechanisms. The EU emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to migration and asylum, requiring States to engage in the external dimension of the Pact as a complement to its internal dimension. For example, it underscores the importance of enhancing partnerships with third countries and facilitating access to legal pathways as key components of this comprehensive approach. In this regard, the [Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation](#) (URF), adopted in May 2024, is one of the instruments to support the Pact’s implementation. It establishes a common approach to resettlement and humanitarian admissions, strengthening safe and legal pathways for protection in the EU. The URF also highlights that resettlement and humanitarian

admissions are a solidarity tool with host countries, also called third countries from a European perspective, hosting large numbers of refugees. It lays the foundation for a strategic, predictable and sustainable resettlement system within the EU.

Addressing mixed movements continues to be a priority, as persistent protection risks such as expulsions, pushbacks and incidents of deaths at sea remain. The whole-of-route approach to address the challenges posed by mixed and onwards movements in countries of origin, arrival and destination, of which resettlement and labour migration are key components, is key to address the root causes of irregular movements and identify regular pathways that offer alternatives to dangerous journeys.

Meanwhile, the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 has prompted an increase in voluntary returns of Syrian refugees from neighbouring countries including some 80,000 having returned from Türkiye by early 2025. UNHCR continues to coordinate regional efforts to ensure informed decision-making for those considering repatriation, while maintaining advocacy for flexible policies that allow temporary visits to Syria without loss of legal status in host countries, as already implemented by the Türkiye Government.

In 2024, the number of asylum-seekers in the EU+ region — including Norway and Switzerland — reached 1,014,000 marking an 11 per cent decrease from the applications recorded in 2023. Asylum-seekers originated mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Venezuela. Applications were mostly made in Germany (237,000 — a decrease of 29 per cent compared to 2023), followed by Spain, Italy and France.

TÜRKİYE

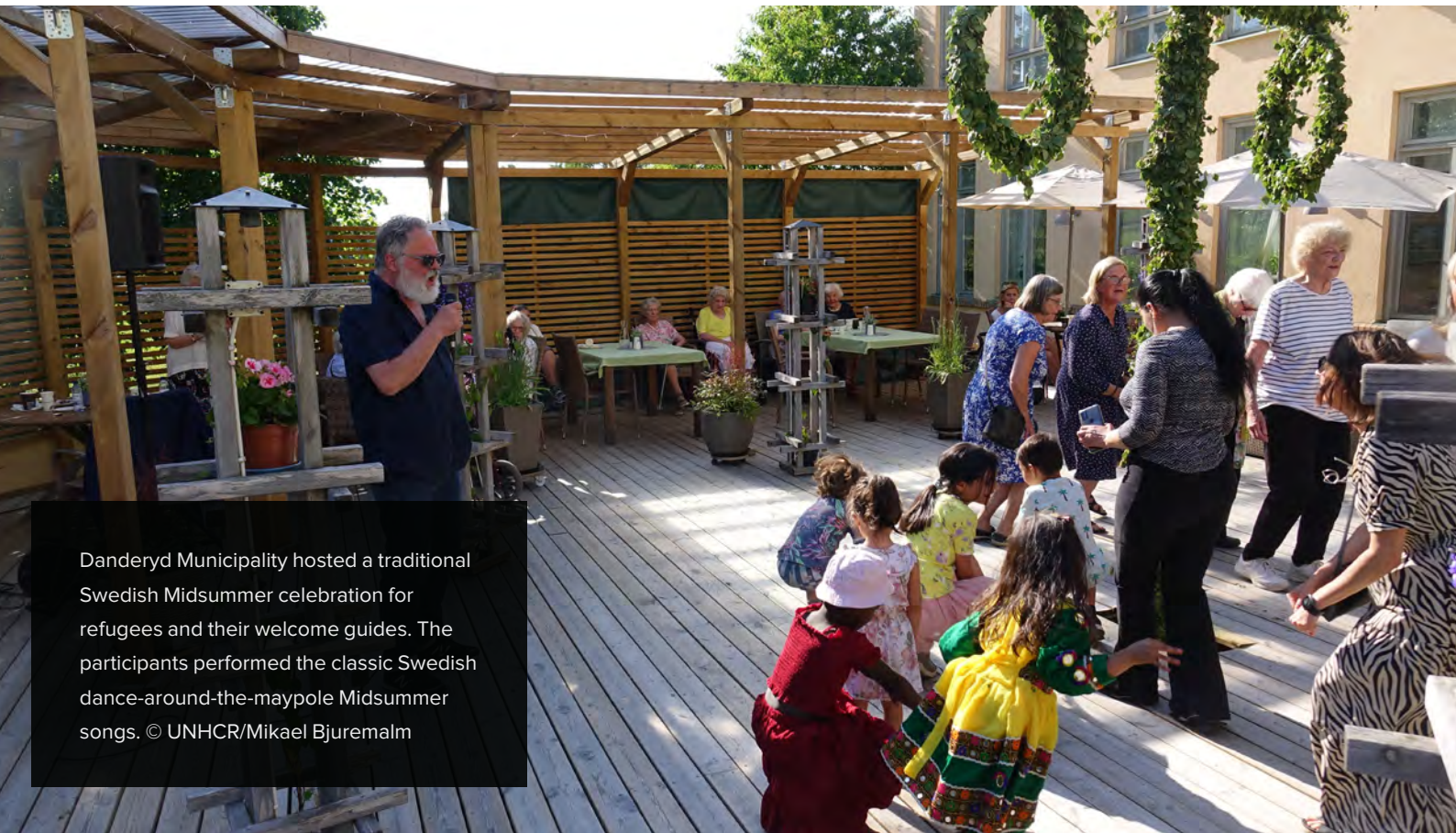
Türkiye remains home to one of the world's largest refugee populations, hosting over 3.1 million refugees and asylum-seekers, including 2.8 million Syrians under Temporary Protection as well as individuals from 62 countries of origin, mainly from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Ukraine, who are applicants for international protection.

While supporting voluntary returns to Syria, Türkiye maintains temporary protection for Syrians with many vulnerable Syrian refugees having profiles that make return to Syria unlikely in the short to medium term. Meanwhile, asylum-seekers from other countries undergo Türkiye's national refugee status determination procedure carried out by the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) since September 2018. Due to Türkiye's geographical limitation under the 1951 Refugee Convention, non-European applicants receive "conditional" refugee status,

allowing them to remain legally in the country while awaiting resettlement or another durable solution. However, this framework offers limited local integration opportunities despite access to services and employment in accordance with applicable legislation.

Economic challenges have continued to impact on the situation of all populations in Türkiye, including that of refugees and asylum-seekers. Rising costs, challenges in accessing formal employment and difficulties in accessing affordable housing and health care created additional obstacles to refugees' prospects for self-reliance. The combination of economic hardship, post-earthquake recovery challenges as well as challenges towards resilience contribute to onward movements towards Europe and reliance on negative coping mechanisms.

Resettlement within protection and solutions strategies



Danderyd Municipality hosted a traditional Swedish Midsummer celebration for refugees and their welcome guides. The participants performed the classic Swedish dance-around-the-maypole Midsummer songs. © UNHCR/Mikael Bjuremalm

The refugee response in **Türkiye** is led by the government under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, which serves as the key legislation regulating asylum procedures and defining the rights and obligations of individuals seeking international protection. Türkiye's refugee response is guided by a policy of inclusion and an approach to social cohesion between refugees and host communities referred to as "harmonization". UNHCR supports the government in registration, protection procedures and service delivery at national and local levels. However, challenges remain due to the large population of refugees and asylum-

seekers, geographic spread and varying local capacities and practices across the country's 81 provinces.

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2011, resettlement has been essential in supporting asylum and protection space in Türkiye while serving as a key responsibility-sharing mechanism to ease the strain on the country's infrastructure and resources. This became especially crucial after the devastating 2023 earthquakes, which severely affected refugees and host communities alike. UNHCR and the Turkish authorities prioritized the resettlement of refugees affected by the earthquake. This

included individuals who became disabled as a result, those suffering from chronic health conditions or individuals with other vulnerabilities exacerbated by the disaster. Two years later, accommodation remains a serious challenge, prolonging protection risks for many refugees.

Recent funding challenges have had a significant impact on resettlement activities, which are conducted by UNHCR upon referral from the Turkish authorities. Due to the current funding situation, many refugees who were part of UNHCR cash assistance programmes will face hardship following the termination of these programmes as of May 2025. The programmes supported adolescents transitioning from child institutions, refugee women and other individuals at risk. As a result, some will experience increased vulnerability and may resort to means that are unsafe and exploitative to make ends meet. This situation will require resettlement opportunities for those in need.

Furthermore, UNHCR has observed an intensification of measures against irregular migration, leading to an increase in detentions and reports of forced returns of foreign nationals with irregular status. This has created significant fear and anxiety among the asylum-seeker and refugee populations. In this context, resettlement is a critical protection tool to offer solutions for the most vulnerable.

Following the fall of the Assad government in Syria in December 2024, there is hope for stability in Syria, prompting voluntary returns. By January 2025, Turkish officials reported approximately 80,000 refugee returns. However, ongoing uncertainty in Syria and individual protection needs of persons with certain risk profiles mean that continued support is necessary for some Syrians in Türkiye.

While claims of fear of persecution related to the Assad regime are considered to have ceased, other protection risks persist, particularly for individuals fearing harm from different armed groups, ethnic or religious minorities, persons with legal and physical protection needs as well as and vulnerable women and children.

Returns to Syria therefore have been considered in the context of a fragile and fluid situation. A careful balance is needed to support returnees who are willing to re-establish themselves in Syria; assure host countries and refugees of continued engagement and support; and resettle those whose return to Syria is not a viable option. This balanced approach is critical to avoid a collapse of the humanitarian situation in Syria and ensure continued protection for those in need in host countries. UNHCR will continue to monitor developments in Syria and adjust risk assessments for Syrians in need of resettlement.

Resettlement remains a vital tool for international responsibility-sharing, particularly in the context of Türkiye, where the authorities continue to register and consider applications for international protection. Recognizing the limited availability of resettlement places, the Government of Türkiye has also committed to solutions by developing complementary pathways. Through its pledge at the Global Refugee Forum, Türkiye aims to work with UNHCR to promote alternative admission routes and remove existing barriers, giving more refugees access to safety and stability when traditional resettlement options are not fully available.

RESETTLEMENT WITHIN THE ROUTE-BASED APPROACH IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Many people continue to travel from Türkiye to Greece, Bulgaria and beyond in search of better living conditions. While a number of these individuals were previously registered in Türkiye under temporary or international protection, most of refugees who found protection in Türkiye appear reluctant to undertake unsafe journeys. In addition, although the number of Syrian refugees seeking to cross into Europe has decreased following recent events in Syria, a large number of Afghans remain on the move, including many unaccompanied children.

Resettlement remains essential to preserve the asylum and protection space in Türkiye as well as a key responsibility-sharing mechanism to ease the strain on Türkiye's infrastructure and resources.

In addition to resettlement opportunities, UNHCR continues to encourage States to consider complementary pathways opportunities for refugees. These pathways can help mitigate the drivers of dangerous onward movements to Europe by reducing the risks associated with irregular travel. Relevant complementary pathways include (nuclear and extended) family reunification as well as work and education opportunities.

Projected resettlement needs in the region in 2026

UNHCR estimates that in 2026, approximately **258,100 refugees** in Türkiye will be in need of resettlement. The vast majority are from Syria, followed by Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran.

While the developments in Syria in December 2024 have led many refugees to consider returning, many remain vulnerable, making returns unlikely due to their individual circumstances. In light of the evolving protection context in Türkiye, the Government of Türkiye and UNHCR have called for increased resettlement efforts, particularly for earthquake survivors, women and other refugees at risk who face growing vulnerability due to reduced financial assistance and limited protection options. They have urged for higher resettlement quotas, more flexible criteria and expedited processing and departures.

Refugees with the following profiles are among those projected to be in need of resettlement:

Children and adolescents at risk: Many refugee children in Türkiye are out of school, engaging in often hazardous child labour. Others are at risk of early marriage because of the socioeconomic vulnerability of their families, which has been exacerbated by the dramatic inflation and housing crisis in the country.

Refugees with legal and physical protection

needs: Refugees, whether individuals or families, may face protection risks due to their profile or personal circumstances, which may include physical threats. The most vulnerable among them rely heavily on previous cash assistance, as they face significant barriers to accessing both formal and informal labour markets, some of them due to discrimination, at time also based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. With shrinking protection space and reduced financial support, many are becoming increasingly vulnerable to violence, abuse and health issues.

Women at risk: Many refugee women in Türkiye, often single mothers, are struggling to provide for themselves and their children. Many have endured sexual violence in their country of origin, during transit or in Türkiye. Without cash assistance, some may feel forced to reunite with abusive partners just to secure housing and education for their children, putting them and their families at further risk.

Regional highlights, achievements and challenges in 2024

In 2024, UNHCR in Türkiye made **14,320 resettlement submissions to 15 resettlement countries**. Over 10,000 of these were Syrian refugees who were severely affected by the earthquakes.

Many of them were living in sub-standard accommodation, suffered serious injuries during the earthquakes and lost family members. During the same period, UNHCR submitted 3,247 Afghans for resettlement consideration recognizing their vulnerability in Türkiye. This was a 2.5-fold increase in Afghan submissions compared to 2023.

In total, **10,756 persons departed** on resettlement from Türkiye in 2024 — a 30 per cent decrease compared to 2023, when 13,827 persons departed on resettlement. While these departures demonstrate continued international responsibility-sharing with Türkiye, quota reductions resulted in many vulnerable refugees being unable to achieve a durable solution. Given the evolving protection context and significant funding shortfalls affecting UNHCR and its partners including the Turkish authorities, the situation of the most vulnerable refugees is expected to deteriorate further. As a result, resettlement becomes all the more critical.

European States continue to demonstrate commitment to third country solutions, with 15 countries in Europe engaged in resettlement. For 2024 and 2025, 12 EU Member States pledged 60,700 places to the EU Commission including 31,000 resettlement places (in addition

to 29,700 humanitarian admissions). As of March 2025 however, only 37 per cent of these had materialized in resettlement arrivals.

The EU also adopted the URF, which came into force in 2024, aimed at harmonizing resettlement programmes across the EU and providing adequate funding support. The Regulation emphasizes the value of the Projected Global Resettlement Needs as a primary reference for the EU's and Member States' resettlement priorities. It also underlines the importance of enhanced collaboration recognizing UNHCR's crucial role in the process and highlighting other actors, such as EUAA and other organizations. UNHCR is engaging with the European Commission, which recently reaffirmed its commitment to work with UNHCR and Member States to increase resettlement to Europe.

In 2024, the total resettlement submissions to Europe amounted to 17,788 persons, including 15,736 to EU Member States. In terms of departures, 14,140 refugees were resettled to 15 European countries, including 10,914 to 12 EU Member States.

Overall, challenges were noted in Europe with the limited reception capacity of some Member States already hosting large number of refugees from Ukraine and from Afghanistan.

Perspectives: TÜRKİYE

A journey of resilience: Zakaria's story

In the heart of Hatay, Türkiye, Zakaria and his family of nine lived a life filled with love. Despite the challenges of finding suitable housing for such a large family, they managed to create a warm and welcoming home in Hatay province. However, their lives were forever changed by the devastating earthquakes of 2023.

The earthquakes brought unimaginable loss to Zakaria's family. Many relatives perished under the rubble, including his wife, their little girl and his nephew's four daughters. The grief was overwhelming. The family was forced to stay in a tent amidst the devastation in the region. Living in the tent was a struggle; Zakaria and his family had to endure extreme weather conditions, a lack of basic amenities and overcrowding, at one point sharing the tent with twelve people.

Zakaria described those days as filled with tears and sorrow. The harsh living conditions took a toll on their emotional and psychological well-being. Witnessing children dying from the cold and the overall harshness of life in the tent was heart-wrenching. "In the tent, the situation was difficult. I wouldn't wish anyone to endure staying in a tent forever."

Despite Türkiye's efforts to support those affected, the scale of the disaster was beyond comprehension. Hope arrived when UNHCR, with the assistance of Airbnb.org, rented a house for them in Gaziantep province. This move significantly improved their living conditions. The house provided basic amenities like hot water and a refrigerator, transforming their lives and allowing them to wash themselves and have fresh food. Zakaria expressed his gratitude, remarking: "The difference is quite significant. For those who lived in a tent, a house is a palace."

With safety and stability restored, Zakaria and his family were able to regain hope for a better future. "Safety is better than everything in life. When safety exists, life exists too." Zakaria prioritizes his children's education above all other needs. His two daughters had applied to nursing programmes at the university but had to drop out due to the earthquakes. Zakaria believed that resettlement could enable them to rebuild their lives through education.

Zakaria's story is a testament to the strength of family bonds and the enduring hope for a brighter tomorrow. It reminds us that even in the face of adversity, the human spirit can overcome and thrive when given the right opportunities. Zakaria and his family were resettled to the United States in 2024, marking a new chapter in their journey towards a better future.

Middle East and North Africa

The [Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa](#) (MENA) provides oversight, coordination and support for resettlement and complementary pathways in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (**Algeria**), the Kingdom of Bahrain (**Bahrain**), the Arab Republic of Egypt (**Egypt**), the Republic of Iraq (**Iraq**), the State of Israel (**Israel**), the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (**Jordan**), the State of Kuwait (**Kuwait**), the Lebanese Republic (**Lebanon**), the State of Libya (**Libya**), the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (**Mauritania**), the Kingdom of Morocco (**Morocco**), the Sultanate of Oman (**Oman**), the State of Qatar (**Qatar**), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (**Saudi Arabia**), the Syrian Arab Republic (**Syria**), the Republic of Tunisia (**Tunisia**), the **United Arab Emirates** and the Republic of Yemen (**Yemen**). The MENA Bureau also maintains functional oversight of the Republic of Türkiye (**Türkiye**) operation for the Iraq and Syria regional responses.

A woman wearing a red headscarf and a red garment with a decorative brooch is sitting in front of a tent. The tent has blue and white patterns. To the right, there are stacks of colorful plastic baskets (red, green, pink).

Umm Saddam, a Syrian refugee
in Lebanon is still living in a tent
after 13 years of being a refugee.
© UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

At a glance



PROJECTED NEEDS FOR THE REGION

322,200



TOP THREE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RESETTLEMENT NEEDS

Lebanon

161,400

Egypt

90,000

Jordan

32,500



SUBMISSIONS IN 2024

26,305



DEPARTURES IN 2024

19,869

- By the end of 2024, the MENA region was host to over 860,000 asylum-seekers and almost 2.4 million refugees, primarily from Syria, Sudan and Mali, as well as over 13 million internally displaced persons, predominantly in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. The MENA region faces ongoing political,

economic and security challenges. Refugees and stateless individuals often lack access to basic services and have limited space for self-reliance or inclusion into national systems and social protection schemes.

- The change of government in Syria has shifted regional dynamics. While some Syrian refugees express hope for return, most remain cautious. UNHCR emphasizes that returns must be voluntary, safe and part of a broader protection strategy, with resettlement remaining essential for vulnerable individuals who cannot return.
- North Africa continues to experience significant mixed and onward movements, where resettlement plays a crucial role as part of a route-based approach, especially along the Central Mediterranean route, with countries like Egypt, Libya and Tunisia facing heightened pressures.
- Resettlement is recognized as a tangible demonstration of responsibility-sharing by governments in the region. It supports advocacy and builds trust with host countries.
- The region sees a significant reduction in the projected needs in 2026, predominately related to the Syria Situation. Approximately 322,200 refugees in the MENA region are projected to need resettlement. Lebanon (161,400), Egypt (90,000) and Jordan (32,500) have the highest needs.
- Over 26,000 resettlement submissions and nearly 20,000 departures were recorded by UNHCR in 2024.

Overview of the protection environment in the region

The MENA region continues to face economic, political and security challenges and the needs of the forcibly displaced and stateless individuals remain high. They lack access to basic services and have limited space for self-reliance or inclusion into national systems and social protection schemes. By the end of 2024, the region hosted over 860,000 asylum-seekers and almost 2.4 million refugees, primarily from Syria, Sudan and Mali, as well as over 13 million internally displaced persons, predominantly in Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

SYRIA SITUATION

The fall of the Assad government on 8 December 2024 represents a seismic shift in the political and humanitarian situation in Syria and the region. Notwithstanding the changes, the economic and protection environment in Syria remains dire and the security situation fluid. Many Syrian refugees have expressed hope about the prospect of returning to their homes, but many have also expressed caution. Crucially, for Syrian refugees, return and reintegration should be situated within a broader development response and an encompassing protection and solutions approach for the region. Many refugees will not return to Syria in 2025 and some returnees may face continued or new protection risks inside Syria.

Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, having carried most of the responsibility for protecting Syrian refugees since the onset of the crisis, are also looking towards the changes in Syria as an opportunity for Syrian refugees

on their territory to return. Many countries in the region express fatigue carrying the responsibility of repeated crisis in and around their country. There is increased rhetoric in host countries and further abroad about the need for Syrians to return to Syria, further reducing the already limited protection space that exists for Syrian refugees.

The limited protection space for refugees in **Lebanon** is further compounded by the worsening economic crisis and further heightened by the conflict displacing Lebanese and refugees alike in 2023 and 2024. Refugees in Lebanon have faced repeated displacement, negative public discourse, increased arrests, raids, detention and deportation and discriminatory measures, including lack of access to shelter, additional taxes and restrictions on their movement. **Egypt** is also significantly impacted by regional conflicts, the Sudan and the Gaza crises most notably, and faces a deteriorating socioeconomic situation. Refugees have limited access to



Syrian refugee Al Muntaser counts on repairing bicycles as a way to earn a living inside Zaatari refugee camp. © UNHCR/ Shawkat Alharfoush

income opportunities. Furthermore, since June 2024, a government directive making access to state-based services dependent on a valid residency creates new obstacles for refugees to rely on such services. UNHCR estimates that approximately 76 per cent of the registered population in Egypt is living at or below the national poverty line. In addition, restrictive entry requirements have led individuals to resort to irregular entry methods, exposing them to the risks related to smuggling and trafficking as well as to arrest. Positively, in 2024, the Government of Egypt adopted a new asylum legislation which will see the eventual transfer of responsibilities from UNHCR to a new national refugee affairs body established by the government of Egypt.

In **Iraq**, new Administrative Instructions adopted by the Government in 2024 have the potential to improve the protection environment for refugees who will be able to legally stay in the country and have better access to employment and basic public services, such as education,

health care and protection from refoulement. However, refugees with certain profiles like LGBTIQ+ refugees may continue to face protection concerns.

Jordan has long had a favourable inclusion policy for refugees in critical public services, such as health and education. However, a potential reduction of humanitarian resources may lead the country to restrict access to such services, putting already vulnerable refugees in an even more precarious situation. Refugees in Jordan already face challenges due to the absence of a national asylum legislation, leading to potential risk of refoulement, limited access to work and social protection. Non-Syrian refugees are particularly at risk as a result of restrictive immigration policies, risk of detention and deportation, limited access to services and discrimination.

Linked to the above, **refugees and asylum-seekers inside Syria** still face multiple displacements and the loss of social and community support increases their socioeconomic vulnerability. Destruction and collapse of public services coupled with economic challenges and international sanctions continue to exert pressure on humanitarian needs.

THE MEDITERRANEAN SITUATION

Mixed and onward movements affect the entire North Africa region including Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. In this context, UNHCR works with different actors to operationalize the **route-based approach** and to strengthen State-based protection. While positive steps have been taken in several countries in North Africa, the protection space for refugees remains extremely limited, with risks of arrest and deportation across North Africa and limited access to services. In this context, refugees are at heightened risk of falling prey to traffickers and smugglers.

Mauritania has one of the most favourable protection environments for refugees, with inclusion in public services and employment. However, compounded by continuing new arrivals, the Government has expressed concerns about the growing number of refugees and insufficient humanitarian and development support. A new law enacted in September 2024 allows migrant expulsions through administrative decisions, which could affect refugees.

The Government of **Algeria** is working on a new asylum legislation. However, currently in the absence of a formal asylum framework, reception systems or referral mechanisms, significant protection challenges remain.

UNHCR continues its mandate activities and advocates for the release of asylum-seekers and refugees affected by periodic roundups of irregular migrants. In **Morocco**, a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, a national asylum law is pending. Refugees face arrests and forced relocations due to lack of access to national refugee cards.

In **Libya**, the 2011 Interim Constitutional Declaration recognizes the right to asylum, but the lack of national asylum legislation subjects refugees to general immigration laws. Despite a [slight reduction in the number of deaths](#) in the Mediterranean compared to 2023, risks remain high for refugees and migrants, including forced returns and pushbacks. Deportations of refugees and asylum-seekers are a critical concern.

In **Tunisia**, the operational environment has become increasingly challenging. The absence of a national asylum framework remains a significant obstacle. Furthermore, in June 2024, the Government of Tunisia suspended registration of new asylum-seekers and formal status determination procedures by UNHCR. Unregistered persons with protection needs cannot access minimum services or assistance including basic health care, while additional protection risks persist.

ISRAEL, YEMEN AND THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC) COUNTRIES

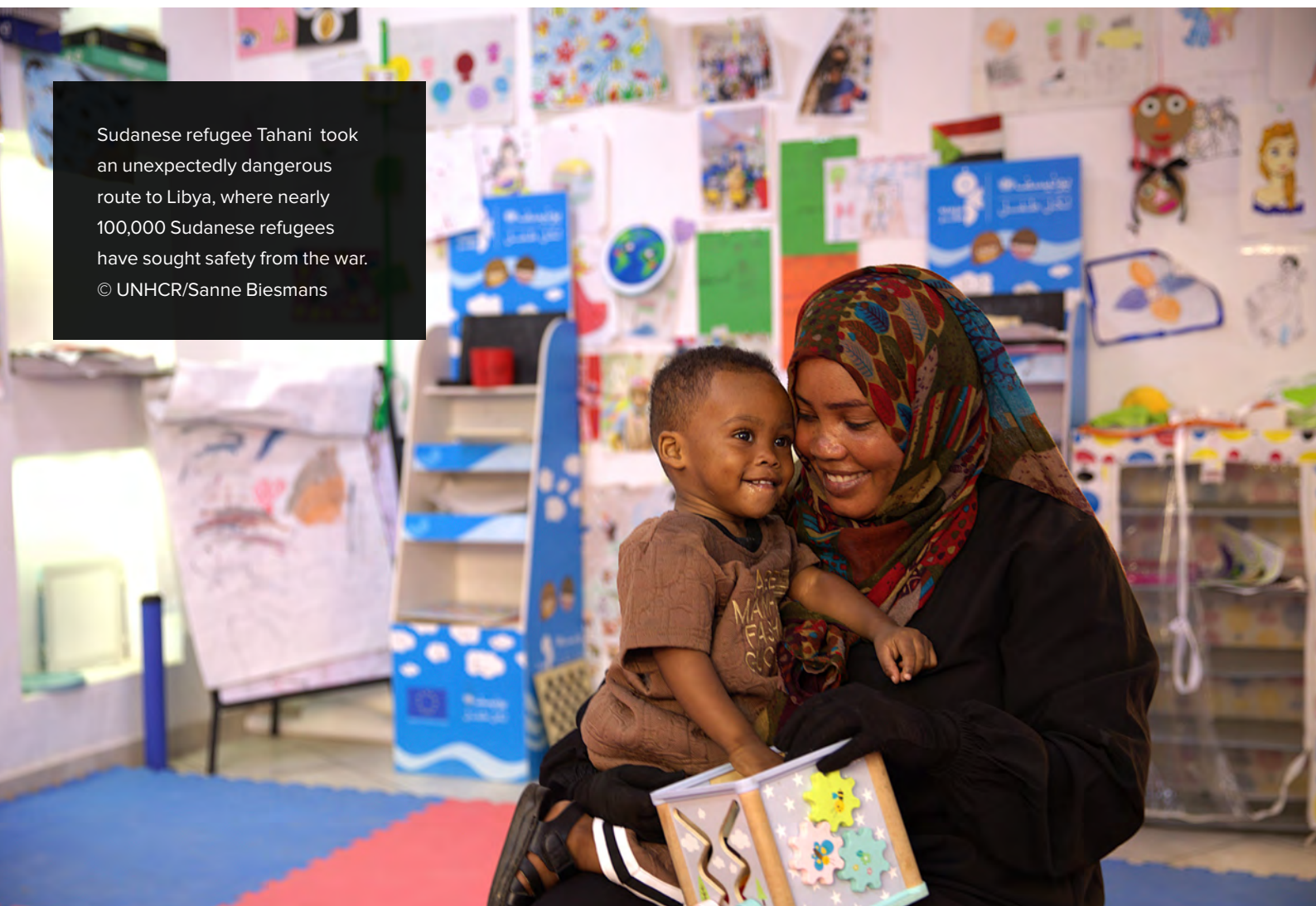
While **Israel** has seen a decrease in the number of asylum-seekers, partly due to fewer new arrivals, the country continues to grant asylum-seekers limited rights and a temporary status, with an intention to encourage their departure from the country. **Yemen** continues

to experience one of the world's worse humanitarian crises leading to an increasingly fragile and diminishing protection space for refugees and asylum-seekers, which continues to undermine stability and expose them to heightened risks. Public opinion and official rhetoric increasingly blame asylum-seekers and refugees for slowing the economy and overburdening public services. Authorities enforce stringent rules that prohibit refugees and asylum-seekers from obtaining work permits, frustrating prospects for self-reliance and local integration. In northern Yemen, detention and forced relocation campaigns against irregular migration launched by the

De Facto Authorities often affect refugees, particularly those from the Horn of Africa, further shrinking the protection space.

Individuals seeking international protection in the GCC countries (**Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates**) often encounter severe restrictions accessing public services, health care, education and employment. Access to those services continues to be contingent on legal stay through work permits. Without a permit, individuals are at risk of arrest, detention and deportation.

Sudanese refugee Tahani took an unexpectedly dangerous route to Libya, where nearly 100,000 Sudanese refugees have sought safety from the war.
© UNHCR/Sanne Biesmans



Resettlement within protection and solutions strategies

Governments in the MENA region recognize the resettlement of refugees as a tangible demonstration of responsibility-sharing by the international community. This practice has helped establish long-standing partnerships and foster dialogue with various governments and authorities in the region. Predictable resettlement planning that encompasses all countries in the MENA region not only provides life-saving opportunities and new beginnings for resettled individuals but also offers strategic benefits. It continues to open avenues with host governments for advocacy, builds trust and fosters meaningful partnerships.

STRATEGIC USE OF RESETTLEMENT AND THE CONTINUED NEED OF RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIANS

After 14 years of crisis, including years of stalemate, the MENA region witnessed dramatic changes after the severe escalation of conflict-related violence in Lebanon, followed by the fall of the Assad government in December 2024 which has a major impact on displacement trends and population movements in the region. Given, however, that the situation remains fluid inside Syria, UNHCR's response needs to remain agile and ensure refugee voices are at the heart of discussions about their future.

UNHCR's recent [Flash Refugee Perception and Intention Survey](#) reveals a significant shift in the return intentions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. However, only 27 per

cent plan to return home within the next 12 months, while the majority remain undecided or plan to return within the next five years.

UNHCR does not currently consider that the requirements for cessation of refugee status for Syrians have been met. Nor does it promote large-scale returns. While the risks related to persecution by the former government have ceased, other risks may persist or become more pronounced. UNHCR continues to adjust the risk profiles for Syrians prioritized for resettlement as the situation in Syria unfolds. Resettlement remains an important protection tool for individuals at risk, including members of religious and ethnic minority groups and persons contravening strict Islamic rules, LGBTIQ+ refugees and women and children with certain profiles or in certain circumstances.

The continued availability of resettlement will not deter those choosing to return to Syria and the thousands of refugees who have returned in a self-organized manner since December 2024. In line with UNHCR's operational framework on returns, refugees across the region have also been supported by UNHCR to voluntarily return to Syria. These included some refugees in the resettlement process, who subsequently withdrew their resettlement case. This showcases that the two durable solutions can and should coexist, while guided by protection needs and refugee voices. A sustainable response relies on refugees' intentions and decision-making in planning and programming of all actors.



Sudanese refugee Ozaz receives medical treatment for her two-year-old son Mazem, who suffers from anaemia, in Cairo, Egypt.
© UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

The combination and availability of voluntary repatriation, resettlement and complementary pathways will be key in lifting the pressure on host communities. Voluntary repatriation has the potential to lead to an increase in the solutions taken up by Syrians, while resettlement remains a key responsibility-sharing mechanism and a protection tool for the most vulnerable. Complementary pathways through work, education or family reunification continue to offer opportunities or solutions to those who qualify. Capacity building programming for skills enhancement can ensure that refugees access sector-specific trainings to enhance their skills which could be linked to prospects of returns, local inclusion or third country opportunities. Achieving scalable solutions and resettling those at high risk can improve inclusion prospects for those remaining in asylum countries and demonstrates continued solidarity with host governments. The absence of resettlement and complementary pathways will, however, negatively affect the momentum and advocacy efforts with host governments in achieving local inclusion. Durable solutions for large-scale displacements like Syria's

are interlinked — returns, resettlement and local integration must coexist in an effective refugee response.

RESETTLEMENT WITHIN THE ROUTE-BASED APPROACH IN THE NORTH AFRICA REGION

Mixed and onward movements significantly impact the MENA region, particularly North Africa. A comprehensive route-based approach is needed along the Central Mediterranean route encompassing West and Central Africa, the East and Horn of Africa and North Africa.

In 2024, the need for international protection for many people crossing the sea from North Africa into Europe remains critical. This highlights the continued need for increased and stable resettlement planning as part of the route-based approach to offer alternatives to dangerous sea journeys.

Given the volatile situations in countries along the Central Mediterranean route, planning must take into consideration ongoing and new

crises and political shifts in transit/host countries where the protection space is shrinking. The situation in North Africa is increasingly complex, with **Egypt** at the forefront having received an influx of over 1 million Sudanese refugees since 2023, further exhausting the limited services and resources available. In **Tunisia**, the situation has significantly deteriorated including increased risk levels of arrest, physical attack, gender-based violence and eviction, especially for those coming from countries in the East and Horn of Africa and West/Central Africa. Those affected include unaccompanied minors. Nevertheless, new arrivals of refugees continue. The Government of Tunisia has consistently emphasized the need for UNHCR to continue assisting only registered asylum-seekers and refugees and identify solutions including resettlement. Resettlement could put UNHCR in a better position to support other refugees and asylum-seekers.

A key element of the route-based approach is enhanced access to resettlement, family reunification and complementary pathways for refugees. However, ensuring solutions needs to be coordinated with efforts along the route including regional coherence in the availability of resettlement among North African countries. Supporting a regional resettlement programme directly linked to the route-based approach in West and Central Africa, that includes **Mauritania**, is one way to further coordinate and direct needed resettlement places. In addition, UNHCR is working on diversifying the availability of solutions together with IOM and other partners. This includes understanding the profiles and needs of the population on the move and the perception of refugees of complementary pathways through a skills mapping exercise across North Africa.

OPERATIONS WITH NO RESETTLEMENT QUOTAS OR OF VERY SMALL QUOTAS:

Several operations in the MENA region face significant challenges due to non-existent or limited resettlement quotas that fail to address existing protection needs and life-saving interventions.

In **Yemen**, resettlement serves as a vital advocacy tool to help strengthen the protection space by preventing refoulement and releasing refugees from detention, among other things. Similarly in the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** countries, resettlement plays a strategic role, paving the way for general protection activities and interventions against refoulement. Without resettlement, UNHCR will struggle to continue coordinating and leveraging in-country opportunities and linking those to third country solutions and prospects of returns, where possible. Successful interventions have strengthened relationships between UNHCR and local authorities across the GCC and in Yemen.

Syria is at a crossroads and there is now a remarkable opportunity for the country to move towards peace. For many years, UNHCR has insisted on the need to redouble efforts to create favourable conditions for refugees and displaced people to return home. The current situation opens new opportunities in this regard, that must be seized by all. Establishing small-scale resettlement programmes in Syria can reinforce the message of international solidarity and will provide a lifeline for refugees in protracted situations who had remained in Syria throughout the crisis. Resuming selection missions will also help in re-establishing partnerships inside Syria.

Projected resettlement needs in the region in 2026

UNHCR projects that approximately **322,200** refugees in the MENA region will need resettlement in 2026. The region sees a significant reduction in the projected needs in 2026, predominately related to the Syria Situation.

UNHCR estimates an increase in the number of Syrian refugees voluntarily returning. The projection follows recent return trends and a [recent intention survey](#) (February 2025). Given that return now constitutes a real option for some, the projected resettlement needs of Syrians in the MENA region have decreased. However, the projected resettlement needs continue to take into consideration that around 73 per cent of refugees have no intention to return in the next 12 months, while some 20 per cent have no intention to return at all.

Syrian refugees who continue to be in need of resettlement include:

- those who might face acts of violence by unidentified perpetrators particularly targeting specific minorities and on sectarian grounds in Syria;
- those who are at risk of being caught in fighting between Turkish-affiliated armed groups and the Syrian Democratic Forces in northern Syria targeting civilians;
- women and girls with specific risk profiles: victims of forced marriage, domestic violence, sexual violence and single mothers without male “protection”;

- members of ethnic and religious minorities are at risk who may be in conflict with the Sunni majority, especially Kurds or Yazidis;
- secular individuals who contravene strict Islamic rules and take a stand against an overly strict role for religion in public life or who pursue professions that could potentially come into conflict with the new government.

LGBTIQ+ individuals across the region are particularly at risk in their environment and are frequently exposed to gender-based violence and severe protection risks stemming from familial or societal threats. Survivors face many challenges in accessing services and deal with heavy social stigma. Same-sex conduct is criminalized in most countries in the region and often combined with other risks or threats to life in countries of asylum. LGBTIQ+ refugees live in fear of harm from their families, their communities and the authorities. They have little means to survive economically, as they are stigmatized and rejected. In some cases, refugees are deported back to their countries of origin regardless of the certainty that they will face serious harm upon return.

Sudanese refugees, including survivors and victims of human trafficking and those who have fled because of the war, are also deemed to be highly vulnerable and in need of durable solutions. Newly arrived refugees describe grave human rights abuses including extreme violence and torture in Sudan and many continue to face long-term physical or psychological lingering effects as a result.

In **Lebanon**, approximately **161,400** refugees, including 157,200 Syrians and 4,220 refugees of other nationalities, are projected to need resettlement. UNHCR Lebanon will continue to prioritize for resettlement women and girls at risk, particularly those at risk of gender-based violence, people at risk of refoulement, LGBTIQ+ refugees at risk, children exposed to the worst forms of child labour and violence and refugees in need of life-saving medical interventions.

UNHCR in **Egypt** estimates that **90,000** refugees — including 60,000 from Sudan and 30,000 of other nationalities such as Eritrea,

South Sudan, Ethiopia or Syria — are projected to need resettlement in 2026. These needs increased compared to 2025 as a result of the Sudan influx and the deteriorating protection space in Egypt. The operation is prioritizing refugees with compelling legal and physical protection needs arising from lack of legal status in the country of asylum, individuals particularly vulnerable to threats, discrimination, abuse, harassment, assault and those at imminent risk of deportation. Other risk profiles include refugee women and girls who continue to face serious protection risks, discrimination and harassment; children and adolescents with protection concerns; refugees with serious medical conditions; and survivors of violence and/or torture.

In **Jordan**, UNHCR estimates that about **32,500** refugees will need resettlement. This includes refugees from Iraq, Sudan and Yemen as well as the most compelling cases of Syrian refugees. The operation prioritizes those facing severe socioeconomic challenges, which have an

Jamela is a Somali refugee living in Dar Saad District in Aden. Talking about life in her neighborhood, where many refugees and asylum seekers live, she says the sewage blocks their way into the house and has caused stomach problems for her and her family.

© UNHCR/Gregory Doane

adverse impact on their lives, including for refugee children who often have to drop out of school to work. Women, children, refugees with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ refugees, refugees at risk of detention and deportation and those with medical needs are also prioritized for resettlement.

In **Iraq**, UNHCR estimates that **10,700** refugees will need resettlement, with Syrian refugees constituting the majority. The operation will prioritize women and girls at risk, persons with legal and physical protection needs, including LGBTIQ+ refugees, refugees facing imminent risk of refoulement and refugees with serious medical needs.

In **Libya**, approximately **9,500** refugees will need resettlement, including 5,500 refugees from Sudan. The operation prioritizes women and girls at risk, including victims of smuggling or trafficking on the way to Libya and who may have attempted sea crossings, single female heads of households and survivors of gender-based violence. UNHCR also prioritizes other highly vulnerable refugees such as larger families or families with an individual who has a serious medical conditions or disabilities; children and adolescents; and those facing life-threatening risks, such as LGBTIQ+ refugees, stateless refugees, political activists and human rights defenders.

In **Israel**, UNHCR estimates that approximately **5,600** refugees are projected to need resettlement in 2026. Those prioritized for resettlement include single parents, families with children with disabilities, persons with chronic untreated illness, survivors of trauma and LGBTIQ+ refugees. Israel also hosts a small population of Palestinian asylum-seekers, largely LGBTIQ+ individuals and women

escaping gender-related violence, such as forced marriage, domestic violence and physical/sexual abuse.

UNHCR in **Yemen** estimates that about **4,500** refugees will need resettlement. Women and girls at risk of gender-based violence are prioritized for resettlement, especially when living alone. Refugees with serious medical conditions and those with disabilities, including persons living with HIV in all parts of Yemen, are seriously affected by social stigmatization. In the north, persons living with HIV are at particular risk of detention, denial of access to available services and forced removal. UNHCR will also prioritize unaccompanied children, who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

In **Algeria**, approximately **2,100** refugees are projected to need resettlement. The main refugee populations and groups prioritized for resettlement will be sub-Saharan refugees, women and girls at risk and survivors of trafficking and LGBTIQ+ refugees. Refugees with disabilities and serious medical conditions, Syrian refugees who continue to be at risk in Syria and unaccompanied and separated refugee children will also be prioritized.

In **Tunisia**, UNHCR estimates that **2,000** refugees will need resettlement. The operation will prioritize women and girls at risk, families with children who cannot enrol in the public education system for several reasons and children and adolescents at risk — including 600 unaccompanied minors of whom 64 per cent are Sudanese. Other populations that will be prioritized for resettlement include LGBTIQ+ individuals and survivors of violence and torture — most of whom are single males and often transited through Libya and Algeria where many have been exposed to physical and sexual abuse, exploitation and detention.

In **Syria**, it is estimated that approximately **1,400** refugees will need resettlement. Most refugees in Syria are Iraqis. However, Syria hosts a very diverse refugee population coming from about 30 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. The operation will be prioritizing refugee children who have not been able to access school for prolonged periods due to numerous obstacles and refugee women and girls. Refugees who may be subjected to religious and ethnic sectarianism will also be prioritized. Lastly, refugees with medical needs requiring resettlement include persons who are unable to access critical or life-saving treatment in Syria.

In **Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar** approximately **1,200** individuals will need resettlement. In these locations, UNHCR is prioritizing refugees with legal and physical protection needs, particularly those facing deportation amounting to refoulement; women and girls at risk; children at risk; LGBTIQ+ refugees; refugees living with HIV, who face serious legal challenges and threats to life; and those who have converted from the Islamic faith.

In the **United Arab Emirates**, UNHCR estimates that **450** refugees will need resettlement. This includes refugees without legal residency, which severely restricts their access to basic services, employment and long-term stability. Additionally, certain refugee profiles, such as LGBTIQ+ individuals, women at risk and survivors of violence and torture, face heightened risks due to social and legal barriers that prevent them from securing safe housing, health care and livelihoods. Medical cases requiring urgent treatment unavailable in the country are also prioritized for resettlement.

In **Morocco**, approximately **450** refugees are projected to need resettlement. Refugees prioritized for resettlement include refugees mainly from Sudan, the Central African Republic and Cameroon who are survivors of violence and/or torture either in their country of origin or in transit countries. In addition, the operation will prioritize LGBTIQ+ refugees, who cannot obtain a refugee card and residency permit and face serious security concerns; women and girls who face protection issues particular to their gender; unaccompanied and separated children; and refugees with serious medical needs which cannot be addressed in Morocco.

In **Mauritania**, UNHCR estimates that **400** refugees are projected to need resettlement. In view of the protection environment in Mauritania, the following risk profiles will be considered for resettlement: LGBTIQ+ refugees who experience specific protection risks; survivors of violence and torture; women and girls at risk, including female heads of households; survivors of gender-based violence; children at risk of exploitation and early marriage; and, lastly, refugees with serious medical conditions, due to the lack of appropriate medical care in the country of asylum.

UNHCR also estimates that about **45** refugees will need resettlement in **Kuwait**. Refugees with specific needs, such as those at risk of deportation, LGBTIQ+ individuals, survivors of torture, survivors of gender-based violence and those at risk, including women, children and the elderly, are prioritized for resettlement. In addition, HIV or Hepatitis B/C positive refugees are also recognized as high priority. Apart from societal and systemic stigma, these people face arrest, detention and deportation, as doctors are obliged by law to report such cases to the government potentially leading to deportation.

Regional highlights, achievements and challenges in 2024

In 2024, operations in the MENA region made resettlement **submissions for 26,305** individuals, thereby exceeding their annual target. Resettlement **departures** from the MENA region totalled **19,869 refugees**. Maintaining the momentum in both submissions and departures supports regional advocacy efforts, highlighting the strategic impact of resettlement on preserving and even expanding protection space in host countries.

In Libya, sustainable resettlement and complementary pathways programmes have opened avenues with the host government for advocacy, built trust and fostered meaningful partnerships. The Libyan authorities have shown unprecedented openness and cooperation with UNHCR by allowing asylum-seekers and refugees to depart to third countries using travel documents issued by UNHCR, waiving the exit permit and penalty fees imposed on refugees and making the process quicker and more efficient.

In Morocco, following UNHCR's advocacy, the authorities increased their hearing sessions in 2024 and were more flexible with some of the requirements, resulting in more refugee

recognitions. The increased resettlement encouraged Moroccan authorities to enhance their activities, leading to more refugees obtaining Moroccan documentation and gaining access to services and employment opportunities.

Resettlement processing for several operations, including Libya, Yemen and Syria, continues to be impacted by the lack of access by resettlement States and the inability to conduct full remote processing. Refugees in these locations are particularly vulnerable and most affected due to the lack of access to solutions and UNHCR calls for States to adopt flexible processing modalities.

Perspectives: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Together at last: refugee family reunites after three years



A new beginning: Aylan and his family finally reunited in Canada thanks to resettlement. (photo courtesy of Aylan)

For Aylan and his family, resettlement has meant more than just a change in geography: it has been a lifeline, an opportunity to heal and a promise of a future where they can thrive together. After years of displacement, they finally found safety in a new home.

But life has not always been like this as the family had to endure a painful separation for three years. After being forced to flee their homeland Syria due to conflict, they found themselves separated in different countries. In addition to being detained for an entire year, Aylan suffered three long years of being apart from his family. During this time, he missed the birth of his youngest daughter, and he could not be by her side in her early years of life, an absence that weighed heavily on his heart. The separation deeply affected the whole family who were filled with uncertainty about their future.

As the family remained separated, it also faced great challenges in meeting its basic needs. With Aylan being the primary breadwinner, his wife struggled to provide for the household, including food, housing, and healthcare. She was also unable to support their children's education and increasingly had to rely on informal networks for survival.

When families are separated during their flight and end up in different countries of asylum, resettlement to a third country may be the only available path to reunification. When Aylan and his family were identified for resettlement, UNHCR worked closely with the resettlement country to ensure that all of them could be resettled to the same place. When Aylan found out that both he and his family would be resettled to Canada, he was overwhelmed with relief and gratitude. After years of waiting in limbo, they were finally given a chance to be back together in a safe home. The journey to getting there was not without challenges: managing

the complicated process and going through the rigorous checks and assessments while also navigating the uncertainty and dealing with the emotional toll of separation was difficult. But Aylan persevered, fuelled by the hope that he would soon be back with his family.

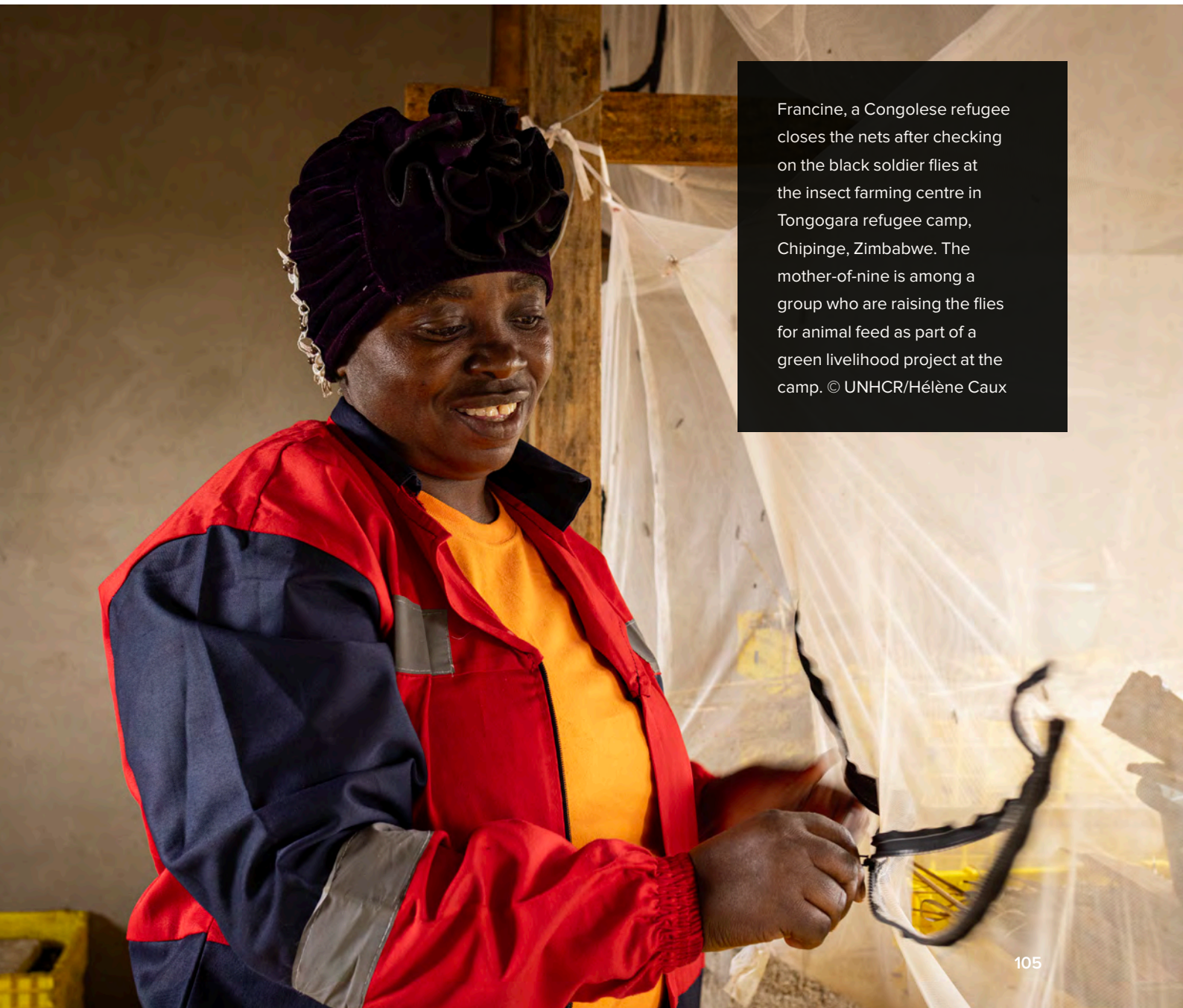
The moment he arrived in Canada and saw his wife and daughters again will be etched in his heart forever. Meeting his youngest child for the first time was both emotional and surreal. This long-awaited reunion marked the beginning of a new chapter, filled with possibilities, stability and the warmth of family.

In Canada, Aylan and his family have found a lot more than safety; they have found a place where they belong. They are now settled in and have embraced their new home, thanks to the support they received from the community. Aylan is focused on finding a job and registering his daughter at school and feels ready to give back to the country that gave him a second chance in life.

Being with family is a human right. Where family reunification procedures are not accessible for separated refugee families and protection risks are too high, resettlement can help restore family unity and uphold refugees' human rights.

Southern Africa

The [Regional Bureau for Southern Africa](#) oversees, coordinates and supports resettlement activities in the Republic of Malawi (**Malawi**), **Zimbabwe**, **Zambia**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, the Republic of Angola (**Angola**), the Republic of Mozambique (**Mozambique**), the Republic of the Congo (**the Congo**), and the South Africa Multi-Country Office (MCO) [covering the Republic of Botswana (**Botswana**), the Union of the Comoros (**the Comoros**), the Kingdom of Eswatini (**Eswatini**), the Kingdom of Lesotho (**Lesotho**), the Republic of Madagascar (**Madagascar**), the Republic of Mauritius (**Mauritius**), the Republic of Namibia (**Namibia**), the Republic of Seychelles (**Seychelles**) and the Republic of South Africa (**South Africa**)].



Francine, a Congolese refugee closes the nets after checking on the black soldier flies at the insect farming centre in Tongogara refugee camp, Chipinge, Zimbabwe. The mother-of-nine is among a group who are raising the flies for animal feed as part of a green livelihood project at the camp. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux

At a glance



PROJECTED NEEDS FOR THE REGION

106,100



TOP THREE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RESETTLEMENT NEEDS

DRC

61,700

Zambia

17,900

Malawi

10,000



SUBMISSIONS IN 2024

6,477



DEPARTURES IN 2024

6,141

- By the end of 2024, Southern Africa hosted over 812,900 refugees and 201,400 asylum-seekers, primarily from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia and Ethiopia.
- The region faces restrictive legislations, including encampment policies and movement restrictions in five countries, and asylum claim backlogs remain a challenge.
- In a context where refugees are known to move onwards between countries in Southern Africa and to Southern Africa from countries further afield in East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, resettlement plays a key role as part of the route-based approach. It is also used strategically to alleviate the burden on host States, many of which are low-income countries facing high national debt, unemployment, the effects of droughts and flooding and, in some cases, prolonged internal conflicts.
- Around 106,100 refugees will require resettlement, with the highest needs in the DRC (61,700), Zambia (17,900) and Malawi (10,000).
- UNHCR in the region submitted 6,477 refugees for resettlement, with 6,141 departures.

Overview of the protection environment in the region

By the end of 2024, the Southern Africa region was home to over 812,900 refugees and over 201,400 asylum-seekers, primarily from the DRC, the Central African Republic (CAR), Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia and Ethiopia.

The displacement situation is characterized by protracted refugee situations in host countries such as the **DRC, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, the Congo, South Africa, Zambia** and **Zimbabwe**. Additionally, complex humanitarian emergencies in the DRC and Mozambique and hostile weather patterns are disrupting efforts to secure local solutions and are creating new displacement situations.

Restrictive legislations and policies are prevalent across the region. This includes the application of encampment policies and restrictions on in-country movement in five countries (Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe). Four Indian Ocean islands (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles) do not have national asylum systems to adjudicate asylum claims, while some countries with robust asylum systems restrict the processing of applications by certain categories of people, most notably, LGBTIQ+ asylum-seekers. Asylum backlog processing is also a challenge in the region with over 187,000 applications pending adjudication by the end of 2024. Furthermore, 11 States have made reservations on the 1951 Refugee Convention, limiting freedom of movement, the right to work, access to basic education and inclusion in social protection schemes.

In addition to a restrictive protection environment that limits the enjoyment of socioeconomic rights, the Southern Africa region experiences significant onward movement by refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from the East Horn and Great Lakes regions. Secondary movement between countries in Southern Africa is also prevalent, with the majority of those moving destined for South Africa. Most movements occur from rural camp settings to urban areas and, in some cases, involve human traffickers. The main reasons cited by individuals on the move include restrictive asylum environments, family reunification, congestion in camps and the overall search for better living conditions. In 2024, UNHCR identified over 3,000 refugees and asylum-seekers who moved from host countries in the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region to Southern Africa and between countries in Southern Africa in search of a better protection. Onward movement to and within the region presents risks of extortion and physical violence by traffickers, exposure to gender-based violence and exploitation of children, among other protection risks.

Youth population is rapidly increasing in the host countries in the region, while governments struggle to offer adequate social services due



Chantal, a mother of eight and refugee from the Central African Republic in the Democratic Republic of Congo, heads a traditional bakery cooperative made up of refugee and local women, supported by UNHCR and its partners. She continues to work hard to improve the bakery's production and become self-sufficient. © UNHCR/ Maimouna Amadou Djibo

to sluggish economic conditions. In this context, refugee women and girls face heightened risks of gender discrimination and often cannot take part in decision-making or access justice. They also have limited socioeconomic opportunities and are more dependent on others for their basic needs. As a result, they are more vulnerable to violence. Furthermore, limitations in health care and psychosocial services, coupled with social stigma, significantly impact recovery efforts for gender-based violence survivors. The lack of adequate support systems especially in encampment settings prevents survivors from rebuilding their lives and achieving a sense of normalcy.

Xenophobia and discrimination remain a challenge for refugees and asylum-seekers in some countries in the region. The phenomenon is largely attributed to declining economies and anti-foreigner political rhetoric which has on some occasions led to physical attacks, evictions, killings and destruction of property belonging to refugees and asylum-seekers. Some States with progressive asylum laws plan to review their refugee legislation and restrict socioeconomic rights such as the

right to work, housing and access to social protection systems. In this context, anti-foreigner sentiments are likely to increase and further affect refugees in these countries.

LGBTIQ+ asylum-seekers face challenges accessing international protection in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe where same-sex relations are criminalized. In countries where same-sex relations are fairly tolerated even if not legalized, social discrimination and stigma are common including when accessing public services, making asylum untenable in these locations.

Several countries in the region, including Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, have however initiated processes to review their domestic legal frameworks to align with the 2019 [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) commitments. It is expected that these reforms will improve protection outcomes for refugees and will lead to less restrictive encampment policies, increased freedom of movement, better access to socioeconomic rights and reduced reliance on humanitarian aid.

Resettlement within protection and solutions strategies



Jeamette, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo waits to receive cloth donation with her Burundian refugee friend, Emelyne in Dzaleka refugee camp, Malawi

© UNHCR/Tiksa Negeri

The use of sustainable approaches to protection needs from the onset and the implementation of the route-based approach to address refugee protection needs in mixed migration settings can help enhance the protection environment and access to solutions in the region. Sustainable responses will enable host countries in the region to incrementally transition from short-term life-saving humanitarian assistance programmes towards self-reliance and greater resilience for refugees and host communities. UNHCR will focus on reinforcing collaboration

with displaced and host communities, national governments and local authorities, development actors and the private sector to foster a supportive legal policy environment, increase inclusion in national services and enable access to economic opportunities under Sustainable Responses strategies. This will be done with the aim of increasing resilience of displaced communities and improving their opportunities for sustainable local integration in host countries.

In promising contexts like **Zambia**, UNHCR's multi-year strategy aims to support changes in the protection and solutions prospects by (i) leveraging the harmonization of the country's legal and administrative frameworks related to refugees; (ii) expanding partnerships with development actors and national stakeholders to sustain the asylum space; and (iii) improving the protection environment and fostering local solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons as an overarching goal.

In Southern Africa, implementation of the route-based approach ensures better protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in the context of mixed and onward movement of refugees and migrants along the route towards South Africa. There are significant challenges for transit and destination countries in the region to guarantee access to asylum, protection and assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers in mixed flows. As of 2024, at least 40,000 refugees had moved onwards between countries in Southern Africa and to Southern Africa from countries further afield in East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. The majority was seeking to move to South Africa, which has Africa's most progressive asylum regime. To address protection challenges in the context of mixed flows, UNHCR is working with governments, UN partners and development actors in countries of origin, transit and destination on upholding refugee rights, access to basic protection services like registration and documentation, durable solutions consideration and improved socioeconomic inclusion in host countries.

Despite most countries maintaining an open-door policy, developing asylum capacity remains a priority for UNHCR to ensure fair and efficient processing of asylum backlogs and new claims. UNHCR will continue to support States in establishing and improving national asylum systems through technical assistance and partnerships with development actors including the **Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)** to support the implementation of State commitments. The strategic use of mandate refugee status determination⁵ will be promoted in countries without asylum systems and for specific profiles, such as individuals at risk of refoulement and LGBTIQ+ persons facing heightened protection risks.

The inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in national registration systems and the issuance of individual documents (birth certificates, identity cards and travel documents) will be pursued, recognizing their importance in enhancing inclusion in national services, including social protection systems and access to livelihood opportunities. Enhancing inclusion in national social protection systems in countries like **Mozambique** and **the Congo** will contribute to reducing protection risks for some of the most vulnerable refugees and ultimately providing access to local solutions.

Reliable quantitative and qualitative planning data remains crucial for humanitarian and development responses in the region as well as for identifying refugees for solutions including resettlement. UNHCR will continue to offer technical assistance to States on refugee

⁵ Refugee Status Determination (RSD) is the legal or administrative process by which governments or UNHCR determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional or national law. RSD is often a vital process in helping refugees realize their rights under international law. States have the primary responsibility to conduct RSD, however, UNHCR may conduct RSD under its mandate when a State is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or does not have a fair and efficient national asylum procedure in place. More information on the refugee status determination process can be found [here](#).

registration and verification. It will also continue advocating with countries, including **Angola** and **Mozambique**, to fully resume registration and documentation to ensure accurate data for decision-making and response planning including solutions.

In countries with existing asylum systems that need to be improved and more efficient — such as **South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, the DRC and Angola** — UNHCR is providing support for asylum capacity development. This assistance aims to strengthen these systems, enabling them to deliver high-quality decisions within a reasonable timeframe.

Congolese, Somali and Burundian refugees are the primary groups considered for resettlement in the region. By offering resettlement opportunities, receiving countries have shown their commitment to alleviating the burden on host countries in Southern Africa. Many of these host countries are low-income nations facing high national debt, unemployment, the effects of droughts and flooding and, in some cases, prolonged internal conflicts. For example, in Malawi, resettlement has helped reduce congestion in the Dzaleka camp and eased pressure on social services. It has also positively influenced relations with the government, especially when UNHCR has limited resources to support the establishment of new settlements. In Zambia, where same-sex conduct is criminalized and the national asylum system struggles to deliver fair decisions on asylum claims made by LGBTIQ+ refugees, resettlement has also improved government relations.

The strategic use of resettlement is a regional priority for implementing the route-based approach to address onward movement along the route towards Southern Africa. Conducting

resettlement activities in key transit countries like **Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia** has positively impacted relations with South Africa, the main onward movement destination, and the regional body SADC. This ensures that refugees with serious protection concerns can access durable solutions closer to their current locations, reducing the likelihood of onward movement in search of solutions.

In the **DRC**, where the largest refugee population is from the CAR, resettlement plays a critical role in ensuring access to a viable solution for refugees with serious protection needs. This is especially the case for political dissidents, survivors of gender-based violence and children at risk of recruitment into armed groups. Providing access to resettlement for most at-risk individuals complements the country's efforts to ensure access to other durable solutions, mainly voluntary repatriation for refugees from the CAR as part of the country's commitments under the **CAR Platform**. In the east of the country, where most Burundian and South Sudanese refugees reside, violence remains endemic and disproportionately impacts women and girls. Here, resettlement plays an important role in ensuring access to a viable solution for individuals with serious protection needs. Despite the highly complex context in the DRC, characterized by security risks and limited infrastructure, assisted voluntary repatriation and reintegration is also being conducted for those residing in eastern parts of the country in the context of UNHCR's efforts for a comprehensive approach to durable solutions.

In **Mozambique**, efforts to fulfil the Global Refugee Forum pledges on socioeconomic inclusion are hindered by reservations taken to the 1951 Refugee Convention, such as restrictions on refugees' access to basic

education. Despite these challenges, the physical protection environment in the country is favourable and a local integration strategy is being developed as part of UNHCR's efforts to support pledge implementation. Voluntary repatriation rates remain low for some refugee communities, particularly Burundian and Rwandan refugees, due to concerns about reintegration prospects after years in exile. For example, many Burundian refugees report difficulties in obtaining restitution for housing, land and property rights in Burundi as a key factor influencing their decision to return.

In **the Congo**, the legal and policy environment is conducive to local integration. UNHCR is working with the government and development actors to ensure refugees are included in social protection systems, eligible refugees can access naturalization and that refugees and stateless persons are included in national statistical data and development planning statistics. The country mainly hosts refugees from the CAR, the DRC and Rwanda. While integration prospects exist for certain refugees, resettlement remains crucial for those with serious protection concerns, especially survivors of gender-based violence, children at risk and individuals with heightened legal and physical protection needs such as political dissidents. Maintaining access to resettlement for those who need it is also necessary as it positively impacts advocacy efforts by UNHCR and development actors to enhance refugees' access to viable local solutions.

In **Zimbabwe**, the focus is on improving access to livelihoods to promote refugee self-reliance. However, the effectiveness of these interventions has been significantly hindered by the challenging socioeconomic environment, characterized by high inflation, unemployment, international sanctions, a limited presence of

development actors and reservations about the 1951 Refugee Convention. Most refugees in Zimbabwe originate from eastern DRC and face limited prospects for safe and dignified return. In 2023, the Zimbabwean government began reviewing its refugee law, suggesting that a revised legislative framework could enhance access to socioeconomic opportunities.

In January 2024, the **Zambian** government adopted a progressive national refugee policy and implementation plan aimed at creating an enabling legal, socioeconomic and administrative environment to promote protection and local solutions. The operationalization of this policy, supported by major development actors like the World Bank through its [International Development Assistance - Window for Host Communities and Refugees](#) funding, has begun and is expected to continue over the next few years, culminating in improved access to sustainable local integration for eligible refugees and former refugees. Despite this significant milestone, resettlement remains crucial for addressing the needs of refugees who have limited opportunities for voluntary return or local integration. This includes LGBTIQ+ refugees at risk of enforced disappearance or forcible return to their countries of origin, individuals with serious medical needs and survivors of gender-based violence. While UNHCR facilitates voluntary repatriation for those seeking to return, most refugees in Zambia are from eastern DRC and have limited opportunities for safe and dignified return to their hometowns.

In 2023, **Malawi** initiated a review of its 1987 Refugee Law with support from UNHCR, indicating that a revised legislative framework could enhance socioeconomic opportunities for refugees in Dzaleka camp. This review is expected to conclude in 2025 with the adoption

of the new legislative framework. Despite this promising development and significant uptake of voluntary resettlement to Burundi and Somalia, resettlement remains the most viable solution for refugees with serious protection needs, including survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence.

In the context of promising legislative reviews in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, prioritizing resettlement for refugees with serious protection concerns will significantly support efforts by the host governments to enhance refugees' access to local solutions. This includes improving freedom of movement, providing access to land for food security initiatives and supporting inclusion in national services.

In **South Africa**, refugees face significant protection concerns due to discrimination and xenophobia, which are largely driven

by economic challenges such as high unemployment and a declining economy. Although the existing refugee protection framework is highly progressive, the implementation of [South Africa's 2023 White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection](#) which seeks to have the country exit the 1951 Refugee Convention and re-enter with reservations could negatively impact a wide range of rights currently available to refugees including access to socioeconomic rights. To address these challenges, UNHCR has utilized mandate refugee status determination and merged refugee status determination/resettlement case modalities to navigate the substantial asylum processing backlogs. This approach ensures that refugees with serious protection needs are identified for resettlement in a timely manner.



Malawi. A refugee holding peanut butter ready for sale in a peanut butter production center in Dzaleka refugee camp.

© UNHCR/Tiksa Negeri

Projected resettlement needs in the region in 2026

UNHCR estimates that around **106,100** refugees will require resettlement in the Southern Africa region in 2026, reflecting a **15 per cent** decrease compared to 2025. This decline is largely attributed to enhanced protection data analysis of refugee populations in countries such as the **DRC, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.**

The refugees in need of resettlement will mainly come from the DRC, the CAR, Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi. The assessment of resettlement needs focuses on providing protection and solutions for refugees facing serious protection risks, limited opportunities for local integration, increased risk of trafficking and economic exploitation and restricted chances for safe and dignified return and re-integration in their home countries.

In **the DRC**, approximately **61,700** refugees from countries such as the CAR, Burundi, Rwanda and South Sudan need resettlement. This group includes vulnerable individuals like children at risk, survivors of gender-based violence, those with serious medical conditions and victims of torture and forced recruitment into armed groups. The majority of these refugees have endured severe human rights abuses before they fled their homes and continue to face significant risks, particularly in conflict-affected regions of the country. The prolonged instability in these areas severely limits their chances for safe integration, while a dignified return to their home countries remains

a challenge. For these refugees, resettlement remains the only appropriate solution to their protection needs.

In **Zambia**, UNHCR projects that approximately **17,900** refugees — most of whom originate from the DRC, Burundi, Somalia and Rwanda — will need resettlement. This is particularly the case for vulnerable refugees who have lived in a protracted situation with limited return or local integration prospects and for individuals with urgent protection needs that cannot be addressed in Zambia. These include women and girls at risk, LGBTIQ+ refugees, high-profile refugee dissidents and human rights activists who are at risk.

In **Malawi**, around **10,000** refugees will need resettlement due to a restrictive legal framework that poses significant protection challenges, especially for refugees with specific needs. This includes people who have experienced torture and violence, victims of trafficking, women and girls at risk and LGBTIQ+ individuals. The majority of this target group are refugees from eastern DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.

They have limited opportunities to return to their homes, and, if not supported, they risk facing violence, torture, human trafficking, having to resort to survival sex and experiencing teenage pregnancies.

In countries under the **MCO South Africa** [covering the Republic of Botswana (**Botswana**), the Union of the Comoros (**the Comoros**), the Kingdom of Eswatini (**Eswatini**), the Kingdom of Lesotho (**Lesotho**), the Republic of Madagascar (**Madagascar**), the Republic of Mauritius (**Mauritius**), the Republic of Namibia (**Namibia**), the Republic of Seychelles (**Seychelles**) and the Republic of South Africa (**South Africa**)], it is estimated that **8,700** refugees will need resettlement, mainly from the DRC, Burundi and Somalia and smaller population from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Pakistan. Survivors of repeated xenophobic attacks, women and girls at risk, survivors of violence and/or torture, LGBTIQ+ persons and asylum-seekers (including many from the Kivu provinces in DRC) at risk of re-foulment are among the refugees in need of resettlement.

In **Zimbabwe**, around **5,500** refugees will need resettlement due to a restrictive legal framework that hinders socioeconomic inclusion, even for refugees who have resided in the country for many years. The increased dependence on humanitarian assistance is particularly difficult for those with specific needs, including survivors of torture and violence, victims of trafficking,

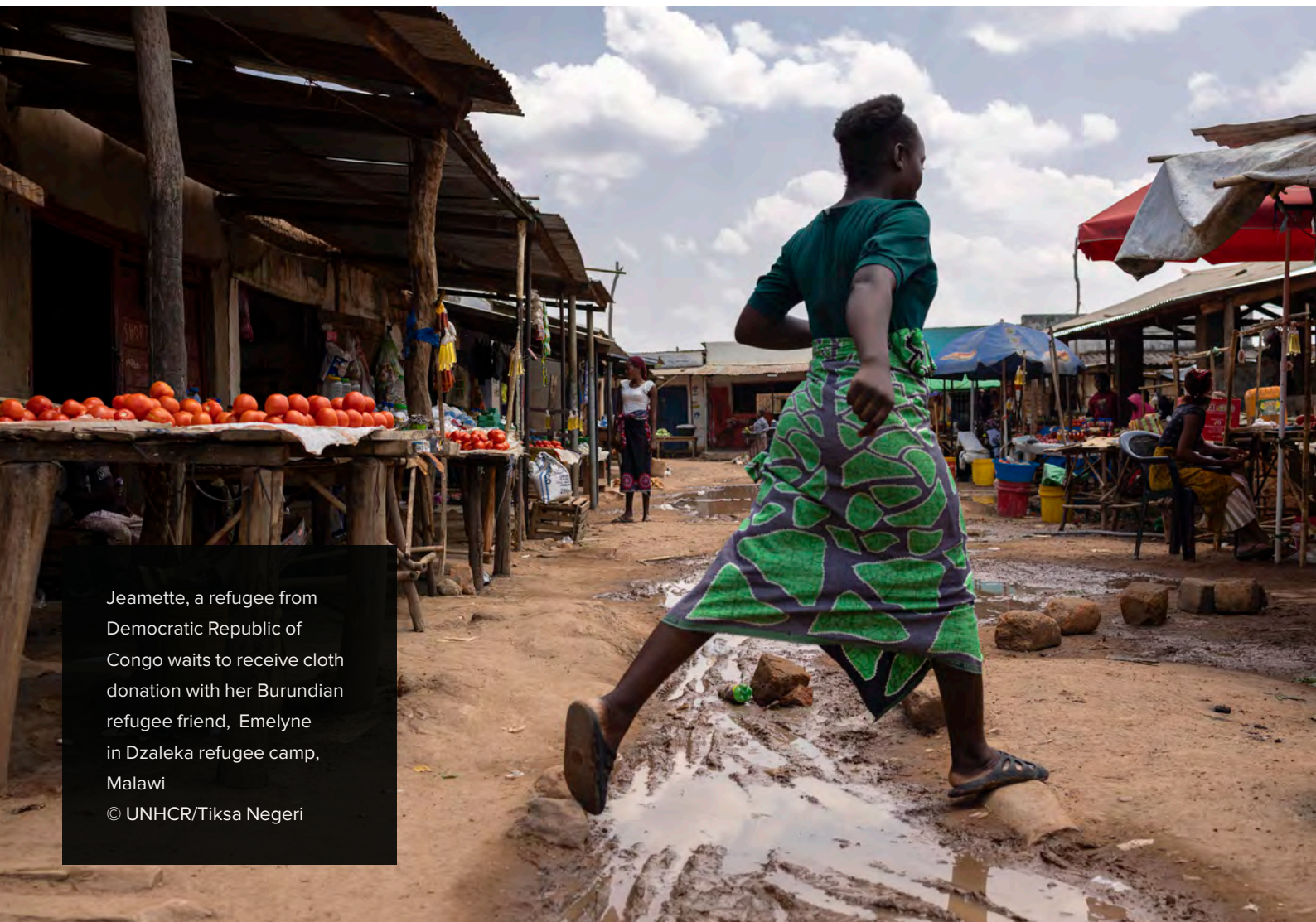
women and girls at risk and LGBTIQ+ individuals. Most of these individuals originate from eastern DRC, Burundi and Rwanda. They have limited opportunities for safe and dignified return to their home countries as well as diminished prospects for local integration in Zimbabwe, which is affected by heavy economic sanctions, rising unemployment and a high cost of living.

In **the Congo**, **2,200** refugees are estimated to have resettlement needs. Refugees with disabilities, chronic illnesses or those with physical and emotional trauma due to sexual violence are among the least able to become self-sufficient and integrate in the country. Female-headed households, children separated from their parents and elderly individuals without social support also face significant challenges and are at high risk of exploitation, including labour exploitation. In both rural and urban settings, refugees from the DRC, the CAR and Rwanda continue to endure the effects of sexual violence suffered before seeking asylum or while residing in the Congo.

In **Mozambique**, approximately **100** individuals, mostly from the DRC, Burundi, Somalia and Rwanda, will need resettlement. These include those denied access to national asylum procedures, at risk of re-foulment or abduction and other vulnerable individuals such as women and girls at risk, children at risk and survivors of violence and torture.

Regional highlights, achievements and challenges in 2024

In 2024, UNHCR submitted **6,744** refugees from the region for resettlement to seven countries. Compared to 2023, **departures** increased by 56 per cent and reached **6,141**, with most refugees travelling to the United States. This significant increase in departures was largely attributed to better coordination between UNHCR and its partners, which expedited the departure of individuals at advanced stages of processing.



Jeamette, a refugee from Democratic Republic of Congo waits to receive cloth donation with her Burundian refugee friend, Emelyne in Dzaleka refugee camp, Malawi

© UNHCR/Tiksa Negeri

As part of efforts to improve access to national asylum procedures in **South Africa**, where the asylum backlog continued to impact the pace of case processing throughout the year, UNHCR utilized mandate refugee status determination procedures to fast-track status determination for urgent protection cases. To complement the use of mandate refugee status determination procedures and increase the efficiency of case processing approaches, the South Africa multi-country office adopted merged refugee status determination and resettlement procedures. This initiative expedited resettlement case processing for 233 individuals with serious protection needs, the majority of whom were women and children from the Kivus in eastern DRC.

In **Malawi**, UNHCR collaborated with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the police, the Immigration Department and civil society organizations in Malawi to ensure improved access to resettlement for refugees with serious protection needs as a direct consequence of human trafficking. In this context, UNODC completed timely witness protection assessments and civil society organizations provided safe housing, while reinforced physical safety measures were put in place to protect refugees acting as court witnesses and police informants. During the year, 73 per cent of refugees submitted for resettlement were survivors of violence and torture with a significant number of these being victims of trafficking originating largely from the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions.

While the region made significant achievements with regards to submissions and departures, several challenges impacted the region's case

processing efforts in 2024. For instance, in the DRC, poor road infrastructure and security challenges hindered resettlement activities, in some instances leading to the cancellation of case processing missions to remote locations for security reasons. To mitigate the high costs of domestic air travel to Kinshasa, UNHCR worked with partners to conduct field missions in various locations across the DRC. These missions facilitated pre-screening interviews and cultural orientation sessions, offering a more sustainable alternative to centralizing case processing activities in the capital. Additionally, partners recognized video interviews for resettlement country assessments as a cost-effective solution well-adapted to the unique context of the DRC.

In Mozambique, the 2024 post-election crisis required UNHCR to prioritize staff safety. As a result, planned visits to camps and refugee settlements were cancelled, impacting case processing activities.

In the Congo and Namibia, the limited number of departures due to fewer selection missions during the year posed a significant challenge for UNHCR in managing the expectations of refugees at advanced stages of case processing.

Overall, while most of the region enjoys a stable political environment, restrictive policies result in a growing number of refugees with serious vulnerabilities and reduce opportunities for self-reliance, inadvertently increasing refugee dependence on humanitarian assistance. However, as the needs for resettlement grow, annual resettlement quotas decline, making the prioritization of individuals for resettlement an increasingly difficult task for UNHCR in the region.

Perspectives: SOUTH AFRICA

A new horizon: Marie's journey to safety

For 24 years, Marie and her family have been searching for a place to call home. In 2000, at just 12 years old, Marie was forced to flee the Democratic Republic of the Congo with her parents and younger siblings to escape conflict. Their hopes for a safer future were shattered in 2016 when Marie witnessed the brutal murder of her mother in a xenophobic attack inside their home. The tragedy deepened when her father disappeared, leaving Marie with the immense responsibility of caring for her five younger siblings.

Life as a refugee in South Africa was fraught with challenges. Despite holding valid refugee documents, Marie faced frequent arrests and detention without charge, driven by escalating xenophobic sentiments in the country. Employment opportunities were scarce and Marie struggled to support her family by selling second-hand clothes. Her siblings often went to bed hungry.

In March 2024, the family was notified that their case would be considered for resettlement to Canada. One of their greatest concerns was not to be separated during this process; fortunately, they were assured that they would be able to stay together. The journey ahead was long and rigorous, requiring months of interviews with UNHCR and Canadian authorities as well as medical examinations and travel preparations. After seven months of anticipation, Marie and her family received the final clearance to travel.

On December 4, 2024, they arrived safely in their new home — Canada, a moment that marked not just the end of a long journey but the beginning of a new chapter filled with hope and promise. With resettlement to Canada, Marie and her siblings would be able to access quality education, benefit from community support and experience the freedom to dream without fear. Armed with a renewed sense of purpose, she will be empowered to embrace the unknown, confident that together they would overcome any obstacles and build a brighter, more secure future for themselves in this new land.

West and Central Africa

The **Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa** provides oversight, coordination and support for resettlement activities in **Burkina Faso**, Cameroon Multi-Country Office [covering the Republic of Cameroon (**Cameroon**), the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (**Equatorial Guinea**), the Gabonese Republic (**Gabon**) and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe (**Sao Tome & Principe**)], the Central African Republic (**CAR**), the Republic of Chad (**Chad**), Cote d'Ivoire Multi-Country Office [covering the Republic of Benin (**Benin**), the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (**Côte d'Ivoire**), the Republic of Ghana (**Ghana**), the Republic of Liberia (**Liberia**), the Togolese Republic (**Togo**)], the Republic of Mali (**Mali**), the Republic of the Niger (**Niger**), the Federal Republic of Nigeria (**Nigeria**) and Senegal Multi-Country Office [covering the Republic of Cabo Verde (**Cabo Verde**), the Republic of the Gambia (**Gambia**), the Republic of Guinea (**Guinea Conakry**), the Republic of Guinea-Bissau (**Guinea-Bissau**), the Republic of Sierra Leone (**Sierra Leone**) and the Republic of Senegal (**Senegal**)].



In Nigeria, Favour, a Cameroonian refugee has a deep passion for fashion design and is dedicated to empowering other refugee girls with essential livelihood skills. She learned fashion design at a technical college in Cameroon and honed her sewing skills through online classes. ©UNHCR/Lucy Agiende

At a glance



PROJECTED NEEDS FOR THE REGION

202,500



TOP THREE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RESETTLEMENT NEEDS

Chad

136,300

Cameroon

42,400

Niger

13,700



SUBMISSIONS IN 2024

4,016



DEPARTURES IN 2024

4,172

- The West and Central Africa (WCA) region is projected to have 15.2 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons in 2025. There are currently 2.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers, 81 per cent of whom are women and children. Chad is the largest refugee-hosting country in the region with 49 per cent of the total population, followed

by Cameroon with 16 per cent. Sudan, the CAR and Nigeria are the main countries of origin, accounting for 74 per cent of the region's refugee population.

- The region faces significant insecurity, particularly in the Sahel, driven by conflict, political instability and extreme weather events like devastating floods. Complex protection challenges include gender-based violence, child labour, early and forced marriage and other human rights violations. Lack of humanitarian access is impacting the delivery of services in several areas, including notably in parts of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger but also in the Central African Republic, the Lake Province of Chad and the anglophone regions and far north of Cameroon.
- Resettlement is used strategically to counter the shrinking humanitarian space and provide an alternative to onward movements. It helps alleviate pressure on host countries and fosters collaboration with national authorities.
- UNHCR estimates that 202,500 refugees in 13 of 21 countries in the WCA region will need resettlement in 2026, a 14 per cent increase from 2025. The countries with the largest resettlement needs are Chad (136,300), Cameroon (42,400), Niger (13,700) and Burkina Faso (5,400).
- By the end of 2024, the region submitted 4,016 individuals for resettlement consideration to 11 resettlement countries, while 4,172 refugees were resettled.

Overview of the protection environment in the region

In West and Central Africa, insecurity continues to intensify across the Sahel region, in a context of political transition, new and protracted crisis and with conflict remaining the primary driver of forced displacement in the region.

The number of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the region in 2025 are projected to reach 15.2 million, including 8.2 million internally displaced persons. There are currently 2.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers, 81 per cent of whom are women and children. There are approximately 8.1 million internally displaced persons in the region, with Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Cameroon accounting for the majority. These figures reflect the impact of the crisis in **Sudan**, the continued deterioration of the security situation in **the Sahel** and the persistent insecurity in the **Lake Chad Basin**, in addition to less prominent crises which continue to drive forced displacement across the region.

The outflow of refugees is expected to persist driven by significantly reduced resources and exacerbated by the growing impact of extreme weather events including devastating floods which displace communities across the region. On 30 September 2024, UNHCR declared a **Level 1** emergency due to floods affecting around 4.6 million people in **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria**. The region is also affected by economic shocks and financial crises which increase humanitarian needs.

Chad is the largest refugee-hosting country in the region with 49 per cent of the total population, followed by Cameroon with 16 per cent. Sudan, the CAR and Nigeria are the main countries of origin, accounting for 74 per cent of the region's refugee population.

There are four significant situations within the region: the **Sahel Plus Situation** (including the Gulf of Guinea countries of Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, in addition to Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), the **Central African Republic Situation**, the **Sudan Situation** (including the CAR and Chad) and the **Lake Chad Basin Situation**. Almost 4 million refugees and asylum-seekers are hosted within these four situations. **Chad, Cameroon and Niger** host 83 per cent of the refugee population and represent the largest resettlement operations in the region.

The security crisis in the Sahel has led to growing forced displacement and refugee movements, particularly in Burkina Faso, and towards Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. By the end of 2024, the number of individuals arriving in the northern regions of these four countries had risen to 160,300, including 74,700 refugees and 85,700 asylum-seekers.

A photograph of a man, Amadou, standing in front of his cafe restaurant. He is smiling and giving a thumbs up. The background shows a kitchen area with a stove and a large blue thermos on a counter.

In Cameroon, Amadou a refugee from the Central African Republic stands in front of his cafe restaurant which he opened after getting help from UNHCR through the DAFI scholarship.
© UNHCR/Ruth Mbendong

In the **Sudan Situation**, Chad and the CAR continue to receive thousands of new Sudanese arrivals. Since the beginning of 2025, the number of Sudanese arrivals in the CAR has surged to over 1,000 per week, more than five times the average weekly arrivals recorded in December 2024. This sharp increase is expected to continue throughout 2025. Chad is hosting 1.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers and is experiencing the largest influx of Sudanese refugees in decades. Since April 2023, more than 760,000 Sudanese refugees have arrived in Chad, including 40,000 since January 2025. Planning figures from the Government and Humanitarian Country Team in Chad suggest that around 250,000 new Sudanese refugees will arrive in the country by the end of 2025, bringing the total number of Sudanese refugees to 1.4 million.

Complex protection challenges such as gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, child labour, early and forced marriage and other human rights violations and impunity persist across the region, largely due to the ongoing conflict. The situation is exacerbated by the combined effects of increased competition over

resources, pressure on essential public services and the impact of severe weather effects. Lack of humanitarian access is impacting the delivery of services in several areas, including notably in parts of **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Niger** but also in the **CAR**, the Lake Province of **Chad** and the anglophone regions and far north of **Cameroon**.

The security crisis has impacted the education sector with over 14,000 schools closed in 2024, affecting 2.8 million children, mainly in **Burkina Faso, Cameroon** and **Mali**.

West and Central Africa is also a region of origin, transit and destination for mixed movements, with flows towards coastal countries and towards North Africa and Europe through both the Central Mediterranean and West Atlantic routes. The key drivers of refugee and migrant mixed movements within the region are conflict, political instability, the impact of extreme weather events, such as drought and flooding, as well as prevailing socioeconomic challenges, including poverty and high levels of unemployment, especially among young people.

Resettlement within protection and solutions strategies



Sudanese refugee and school student Haifa was born in the Farchana refugee camp in eastern Chad. She dreams of being a doctor, but with uncertainty around available funding support for education, she feels sad and says she cannot think of the future anymore.

© UNHCR/Ala Kheir

Resettlement in the West and Central Africa region will remain an essential protection tool in 2025 and 2026. Already firmly imbedded into protection strategies, its use in a region that continues to experience unprecedented levels of forced displacement, but where resettlement quota allocations have plummeted, will be increasingly strategic.

In addition to its effectiveness in addressing the needs of at-risk and vulnerable refugees, resettlement is being promoted progressively

to counter the shrinking humanitarian space. It offers small but important relief to allow host countries to absorb the growing number of people forced to flee and alleviate pressure. This gesture of solidarity and responsibility-sharing fosters confidence and trust and has been instrumental in promoting collaboration with the national authorities to the benefit of forcibly displaced people. This is illustrated by the limited incidents of refoulement and border pushbacks within the region and a regional

asylum space that remains largely intact despite the significant strain it is under. It is also visible in the fact that resettlement exit procedures are smoothly managed by national authorities. What is more, the demonstration of solidarity through resettlement can contribute to building opportunities in the country of asylum. Thanks to the excellent collaboration with the authorities in Chad, in part supported by continuous resettlement, a small number of these refugees, including doctors and lawyers, have been able to work in their respective professions in the country.

Resettlement and the availability of complementary pathways in the region and beyond are also strategically important in providing an alternative to the onward movement of refugees in protracted situations, notably among new and protracted refugee populations from Sudan in eastern Chad. Recent intention surveys conducted with newly arrived refugees through a regional protection monitoring mechanism, [Project 21](#), reflect a greater intent to move on among those who are university graduates and professionals.

The spread of drought and desertification, competition for heavily depleted fundamental resources and destructive weather events continue to be a driver of forced displacement throughout West and Central Africa. The intersection with the many conflicts in the region is pushing already vulnerable populations into even more precarious situations. The region currently hosts 13.9 million forcibly displaced people, most of whom are living within areas that are exposed to such environmental hazards. The Sahel region includes some of the most vulnerable countries in this regard. Four of the 22 countries identified as priority countries within [UNHCR's Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024-2030](#) are located within the region

(**Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad and Niger**); three are in the Sahel region. Resettlement helps alleviate the strain on critical resources in areas where these are the scarcest. This in turn improves coexistence between refugee and host populations and helps to address the most serious protection risks associated with increasingly depleted resources, including exposure to gender-based violence and other forms of exploitation and abuse.

Maintaining the small but sustainable resettlement programmes and the required capacity within the context of the Sahel Plus Situation will remain a priority, as it will in contexts where increasingly restrictive legislation is putting certain vulnerable groups at heightened risk, including human rights defenders, LGBTIQ+ refugees and those who advocate for them.

RESETTLEMENT AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF THE ROUTE-BASED APPROACH TO MIXED MOVEMENTS

Significant mixed movements take place in the West and Central Africa region along increasingly dynamic routes, the most well-established of which are the routes to the **Central Mediterranean** and the **West Atlantic** crossings.

The principal driver of these mixed movements continues to be the proliferation of conflict and violence affecting the region, often exacerbated by the impact of destructive weather events on a fragile environment where basic resources have become increasingly scarce. Other significant drivers include the region's socioeconomic challenges, high levels of unemployment and poverty, the increasing difficulty facing many

national authorities to host a growing number of displaced people and an overall reduction of international support to help meet the needs of this population.

The shifting dynamics of these routes is apparent. While crossings dropped by 59 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023, the route still accounted for about 67,000 crossings, the second highest among all routes globally. Meanwhile, over the same period departures along the Western African route saw an 18 per cent increase in arrivals to the Canary Islands, reaching almost 47,000.⁶

Mixed movements within the West and Central Africa region frequently expose people on the move to life-threatening protection risks. In 2024 there were 9,757 deaths along the West Atlantic route alone, an average of [30 deaths every day](#).

Between January and December 2024, there were 2,722 onward movements of registered refugees from the West and Central Africa region detected through UNHCR's Biometric Identification Management System (BIMS). This is only partially indicative of the actual trend, since many refugees may choose not to approach UNHCR in a second or third country, having already been registered in another.

In West and Central Africa, the route-based approach has been operationalized in four countries: **Chad, Mali, Niger** and **Senegal**. It is also operationalized in Mauritania, which falls under the oversight of the [UNHCR Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa](#). A second phase is envisaged for other countries along the Central Mediterranean and Atlantic routes in the near future.

UNHCR is developing a proposal for a regional resettlement programme directly linked to the route-based approach. This programme would be open to refugees with clearly identified resettlement needs who are travelling in mixed movement flows within West and Central Africa. Priority would be given to refugees identified within the five countries where the route-based approach is operationalized. However, eligible refugees could also be identified within mixed movement flows in other countries of the region. The initial regional quota allocation would be moderate but with a view to providing a sustainable programme for the future. As operationalization of the route-based approach expands to other countries of the region, quota allocation would incrementally increase. As it expands beyond the region, including within the neighbouring North Africa subregion and the East Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, multi-region quotas would gradually allow for a whole-of-route approach to resettlement.

6 For more information, see [Irregular border crossings into EU drop sharply in 2024](#), Frontex, January 2025.

Projected resettlement needs in the region in 2026

In 2026 UNHCR estimates that, **202,500 refugees** will be in need of resettlement in 13 of 21 countries within the WCA region, an increase of 14 per cent compared to 2025. The rise is driven by the continued influx of Sudanese refugees into Chad and the CAR and increased displacement within the Sahel Plus Situation. Both the CAR and Mali operations are included in the 2026 regional chapter as a result of these increases.

In **Chad**, it is estimated that **136,300** refugees will need resettlement. Resettlement continues to be instrumental in helping to maintain the protection space in Chad and, as a gesture of solidarity, continues to strengthen relations with the national authorities. Chad is one of four countries in the region that has operationalized the route-based approach. In 2024, Chad was also shown as having the highest number of onward movements originating from the country according to records in UNHCR's BIMS. With Chad being situated early along migratory routes, resettlement is used strategically to prevent refugees joining dangerous mixed movements. The main refugee populations are Sudanese who are based in the east of the country and refugees from the CAR who are situated mostly in the south. The outbreak of violence in Sudan in April 2023 and the influx that followed more than doubled an already significant Sudanese protracted refugee population in Chad. This continued influx has progressively heightened hardship levels and protection risks for this population. Among the protection risks observed, there is a significant risk of gender-based violence, including rape,

abduction and forced marriage, among women and girls. Minority ethnic groups who faced violence in Sudan experience heightened risks in the camps and sites of Chad and children with disabilities continue to face acute isolation and cannot access basic education facilities or infrastructure to meet their needs. Some refugees with particular profiles also face heightened risk, including LGBTIQ+ refugees and their advocates.

The **Cameroon Multi-Country Office (MCO)** covers **Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon** and **Sao Tome and Principe**. The operation estimates that **42,400** refugees are projected to be in need of resettlement in 2026. Although an MCO, with the exception of a small number of individual cases identified in Equatorial Guinea, all resettlement activities are taking place in **Cameroon**. Approximately 90 per cent of this population are refugees from the CAR, 9 per cent from Nigeria and the remaining 1 per cent are of other nationalities. Approximately 80 per cent of refugees with resettlement needs in Cameroon are women and girls at risk and refugees who are survivors of violence



Fati, a Malian refugee works in a market garden in what was once a camp for Malian refugees but is now known as an urbanised settlement, an effort to move away from the isolated nature of camps towards settlements that encourage the inclusion of refugees in host communities.

© UNHCR/Helen Ngoh

and torture. Resettlement in Cameroon has significant importance both as a gesture of solidarity to the host country's continued commitment to receiving refugees and to address the significant needs of those with extremely limited prospects of integration or return. Resettlement is also used by the operation as a safe and legal alternative to refugees engaging in dangerous onward movements.

In **Niger, 13,700** refugees are estimated to be in need of resettlement. The Niger resettlement programme is focused on the local refugee population, primarily composed of Nigerian and Malian refugees and a small number of urban-based refugees of various nationalities. The Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), which Niger has hosted since 2017, remains in a dormant state, since the Memorandum

of Understanding with the authorities has not been renewed and evacuations from Libya to Niger have ceased. Niger is one of the five countries to have operationalized the route-based approach and remains a key departure, transit and destination country. Resettlement in the context of Niger is of great strategic use in preventing dangerous onward movements within the Central Mediterranean and West Atlantic migratory routes, both of which pass through Niger. It may be equally effective in reducing both smuggling and trafficking activities. Finally, resettlement remains a critical protection tool to address the needs of those most at risk, which include survivors of religious, ethnic or gender-based violence and small numbers of highly vulnerable LGBTIQ+ refugees.

In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR estimates that **5,400** refugees will be in need of resettlement. Over 94 per cent of the refugee population in Burkina Faso are Malian refugees, the majority of whom are based in the Sahel and northern Burkina Faso. These zones continue to be heavily impacted by the security crisis. This is leading to increased onward movements of Malian refugees towards other asylum countries, including Mauritania and Niger, as well as returns to Mali under conditions that are not conducive. UNHCR expects resettlement to play an important part in the operationalization of the route-based approach, as a safe and legal pathway offering an alternative to dangerous onward movements along West Atlantic or Central Mediterranean mixed migratory routes. Women and girls at risk, Malian refugees from ethnic minorities facing significant discrimination in the country of asylum and other refugees facing legal and physical protection needs, including LGBTIQ+ refugees at risk, are among the populations prioritized for resettlement in Burkina Faso.

The **Côte d'Ivoire Multi-Country Office (MCO)** provides operational support and coverage to operations in **Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia** and **Togo**. The Côte d'Ivoire MCO was opened in 2024 as a response to the increased refugee movements towards Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo generated by the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso. The Office estimates that **1,600** refugees will need resettlement. These needs more than doubled compared to 2025. This is explained by the Ghanaian authorities' recent decision to extend prima facie refugee status to Burkinabe refugees. Resettlement is primarily focused around four countries of the subregion: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Since its inception, the MCO has worked to ensure that a small

sustainable resettlement capacity is accessible to refugees within the coastal countries of the Sahel Plus Situation from both new and protracted caseloads. Resettlement has mainly been used to address the needs of refugees facing heightened protection risks, most notably women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence and refugees with highly sensitive profiles including LGBTIQ+ refugees. Resettlement in the context of the countries of the Côte d'Ivoire MCO also has a strategic use in preventing refugees in both protracted and new displacement situations from joining dangerous onward movements.

In **Nigeria**, UNHCR estimates that **1,500** refugees will be in need of resettlement. The figure reflects the growing number of refugees displaced by the conflict in northwest/southwest Cameroon in the last year, which currently stands at 69,400, most of whom are based in the Southeast. UNHCR's multi-year strategy in Nigeria aims to provide solution-driven protection services for all forcibly displaced people, while providing humanitarian interventions for critical protection and assistance needs of refugees and refugee returnees, with emphasis on five core directions: protection, response, empowerment, solutions and inclusion. Resettlement plays a crucial role in easing the strain on host communities, particularly given the limited resources and infrastructure. It helps strengthen relations with the authorities and between host communities and the international community. The resettlement profiles under consideration in the context of the Cameroon crisis are principally women and girls at risk, mostly survivors or those at risk of gender-based violence (which although underreported, remains one of the most prevalent protection risks) and persons with legal and physical protection needs. Among the urban population, refugees with legal or

physical protection needs including refugees with disabilities will also need resettlement. An increasing number of LGBTIQ+ refugees have also been identified from both the settlement and urban contexts. Criminalization, widespread societal discrimination and hostility against LGBTIQ+ refugees create severe barriers to their integration, making it nearly impossible for them to rebuild their lives.

In **Mali**, it is estimated that **1,100** refugees will need resettlement. The main refugee population is Burkinabe, displaced through the ongoing insecurity. Mali has historically used resettlement as a protection tool to address the needs of a small number of refugees facing heightened protection risks. However, with the increased levels of new refugee arrivals and the growing strain on local resources and absorption capacity, the operation is aiming to make greater strategic use of resettlement to help address a rapidly shrinking protection space. Additionally, as one of the four countries of the West and Central Africa region where the route-based approach has been operationalized, UNHCR advocates for a small local resettlement quota to help prevent vulnerable refugees from joining dangerous onward movements, notably along the perilous West Atlantic route, offering instead a safe, legal alternative.

The **Senegal Multi-Country Office (MCO)** provides operational support and coverage to six countries in the region: **Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal** and **Sierra Leone**. UNHCR estimates that **430** refugees will need resettlement in these countries. The main refugee nationalities represented are Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the CAR. Resettlement activities

are undertaken through small locally allocated quota programmes or through the unallocated quota programme for urgent and emergency priority cases. Although UNHCR advances a combination of durable solutions through a multi-year protection and solutions strategy, voluntary returns perspectives continue to remain limited for many refugees. UNHCR's efforts in these countries are therefore focused primarily on achieving local integration for its refugee populations, with resettlement used to expand the protection space for refugees in the six countries and to respond to immediate protection needs. The principal risk profiles being considered for resettlement remain women and girls who have survived or are at risk of gender-based violence and LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers, the majority of whom are survivors of violence and torture.

UNHCR in the **CAR** estimates that **200** refugees will be in need of resettlement. The principal countries of origin of refugees in the CAR are Sudan, the Democratic the Republic of the Congo, Chad and South Sudan. Resettlement is used primarily as a critical protection tool for those who are the most at risk and require an immediate intervention. However, the refugee context has become increasingly challenging. The influx of refugees from Sudan is impacting the limited absorption capacity of the host community and has increased competition for basic resources, with refugees facing increased hostility and struggling to access their rights. In the face of these developments, a small local resettlement quota, used strategically with other durable solutions, could help broaden the protection space and address some of the most pressing protection needs.

Regional highlights, achievements and challenges in 2024

By 31 December 2024, the West and Central Africa region submitted **4,016 individuals** for resettlement consideration to **11 resettlement countries**. This was achieved through investing in resettlement capacity building in key locations, notably in Cameroon and Chad, with a vision of a predictable and consistent programme implementation in the long term. During the same period, **4,172 refugees were resettled**.



Kadidja, a refugee from Mali, in the ruins of her home swept away by flood waters in Harobanda, Niamey, Niger.
© UNHCR/Helen Ngoh

Throughout 2024, resettlement has been used increasingly strategically to strengthen relations with host authorities and maintain critical protection space. It has positively impacted newly arrived refugees and those in protracted displacement, offering a safe, legal alternative to the many refugees who seek to join perilous mixed movements along the Central Mediterranean and West Atlantic migratory routes.

In Chad, the prevalence of women and girls among the Sudanese refugee population at risk of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation or forced and early marriage remains very high. Resettlement has played a critical role in responding to many of the most urgent interventions that are unavailable or extremely limited in Chad.

In many countries of the region, there has been significant investment in supporting initiatives to strengthen refugees' skills as well as their ability to use their skills, thereby improving their local inclusion opportunities, increasing their prospects for accessing complementary pathways and, for those who are resettled, supporting smoother integration into a country of resettlement. In Chad, refugees with particular profiles, including some health care professionals, teachers and legal experts, have

been able to integrate into the local workforce and thus contribute to the local economy, while continuing to practice their profession and further building their experience. In Cameroon, Ghana and other countries of the region, refugees have been supported by UNHCR and its partners to navigate some of the platforms available to refugees to access regular employment migration pathways and, should they be resettled, improve their prospects of rapidly entering the workforce.

Reduced access due to security concerns negatively affects the implementation of resettlement activities in the region. This has been notably prevalent in Burkina Faso and parts of Niger. Despite the challenges, the Burkina Faso operation has been successfully implementing resettlement activities, however departures from particular locations have been impeded. This constitutes a significant challenge in the management of refugee expectations.

While the region presents challenges for resettlement selection missions by States, including the need to often transport refugees from camps to capital cities, UNHCR is working with resettlement countries to explore solutions to address these including through hybrid selection missions with both remote and presential interviews.

Perspectives: CHAD

A doctor's resettlement journey

Mona laughs across the phone lines. “My first day? A fellow refugee Mohammed found me in the kitchen crying – a member of the welcome team had greeted me with ‘Tjena’ (‘hello’ in Swedish)” which sounded like ‘Shena’, the Arabic for heinous. Mohammed laughed and explained the misunderstanding. We sat for the rest of the afternoon drinking tea and laughing.” Years have passed since Mona’s arrival in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2018. She is now fluent in Swedish, but the memory of those first days remains stark in her mind.

Mona is a doctor. She used to work in Omdurman hospital in Sudan and had a small pharmacy and clinic. In 2015, she had to flee her country due to the conflict. She fled to Chad where she suffered domestic abuse. After fleeing to escape violence from her husband, she began to assist a fellow Sudanese refugee who was suffering from a severe medical condition, hosting him in her house in N’Djamena. Both were eventually identified for resettlement due to the risks they each faced in Chad, and were accepted by Sweden. “It was a great relief to be resettled with him, as I was not alone. At first, we lived together in Gothenburg and, even when we both had our own apartments, we saw each other every day.”

Upon arriving in Gothenburg, Mona was struck by the kindness and helpfulness of Swedish people. “The morning after we arrived, I heard a knock on the door and found ten people standing outside, there to check on me and my friend and to make sure all was well. They immediately helped us get what we needed, especially coats, hats and boots as we had arrived in the middle of winter.” Mona was quick to find her feet in Sweden. She started working in hospitality while studying Swedish, then moved on to teaching science at an English school. Finally, Mona enrolled in a master’s degree in public health which she is currently completing part-time, whilst working as a doctor’s assistant.

Seven years after being resettled to Sweden, Mona has visited Chad again, to volunteer in a private clinic and helping refugees and locals access treatment. “Here in Africa, people still suffer from diseases that are preventable, such as typhoid, malaria and malnutrition. In Sweden, I have learned the importance of preventative medicine and care. Now, I want to bring my skills to those in need.” Keen to do more, she also hopes to be able to go out to the refugee camps to deliver medicines and treatments to those unable to attend the clinic in the country’s capital.

Mona hopes to take the Swedish medical licence exam next year, to begin practicing there and continue helping others. “No one chooses to be a refugee, to flee one’s country, to leave behind mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. We need to be kind and supportive, be there for others.”

Perspectives: CAMEROON

Humanitarians at heart: Ali and Fadimatou's resettlement and story of dedication

Ali has always been dedicated in helping others. Coming from the Central Africa Republic, he was the director of an NGO promoting sexual education for young people in Bangui. In 2014, however, the civil war in his country forced him to flee to Douala, Cameroon, with his wife Fadimatou and their three children.

Ali and his family remained in Cameroon for over seven years. He did his best to support his family, including their child born in Cameroon, working as an interpreter while his wife worked as a salesperson. Ali also kept working to support others and participating in talks and debates at refugee associations to advocate for refugee rights.

Their efforts were not enough to support their large family and their four children were at risk of dropping out of school as the family could not afford the high school fees. Every month, Ali accumulated more debts, while constant flooding and insecurity in Cameroon made life even harder. Especially after COVID-19, making ends meet was a challenge.

In 2022, Ali and his family got the news that they had been accepted for resettlement. "It was a moment of relief," says Ali. All the stress and anxiety lifted, "we finally had a perspective ahead, a new life, a new continent". Ali and Fadimatou started preparing themselves to depart to France —the children especially could not wait to be able to go back to school.

The family was resettled to Meru, a town some 50km north of Paris in April 2022. Three years later and Ali still remembers their very first night there; the silence of that night stood in stark contrast to the constant noise and threat of flooding they were used to in Douala.

Starting a new life in France was not easy, but Ali and his family remained true to their ethos of altruism and were quick to engage in their new community. Ali, a humanitarian at heart, wanted to make himself useful for his city. So, he began working as community and mediation agent for a local French association promoting the inclusion of those facing difficulties and reinforcing the communities. Ali assists the elderly, school dropouts, drug users, those at risk of eviction and refugees find solutions to daily challenges and integrate in the community. His outstanding work in support of others has been honoured by the mayor and prefect of his region.

Fadimatou volunteers for an association in support of destitute people, sorting donated clothes in their warehouse. Their son Abdel Samih is taking first aid courses with the prefecture after witnessing the impact of poor health provision as one of his neighbours passed away from cardiac arrest in Douala. The eldest son, Farihd, is a great basketball player since his childhood in the CAR and dreams of making the big league. The family also welcomed their youngest member, Mouaz, after moving to France.

"We are humanitarians, we are proud members of our community, and we feel like we belong in France."

Concluding statement by the Government of Spain, co-chair of the 2025 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

Spain is honored to serve as Chair of the 2025 Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP). This responsibility comes at a time when global solidarity and a collective commitment to protection are more crucial than ever.

Resettlement remains, first and foremost, a life-saving protection tool. It provides a lifeline to those refugees who are most at risk — survivors of violence, children at risk, women facing exploitation, and many others who cannot find safety in their first countries of asylum. Upholding this protection mandate must continue to be the foundation of our shared efforts.

At the same time, resettlement and complementary pathways carry significant strategic value. They are crucial instruments for supporting the efforts and welcome of host countries, fostering regional stability, and promoting international cooperation. By offering safe, regular, and humane pathways to protection and solutions, resettlement also serves as a credible alternative to dangerous, irregular journeys — journeys that too often end in tragedy. By expanding refugee access to regular migration pathways, we not only protect refugees but also strengthen migration governance on the basis of dignity, order, and shared responsibility.

Spain's unique position at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and the Americas gives us a broad perspective on the challenges of managing complex migration and refugee flows, and reinforces our conviction that these challenges must be addressed through coordinated international responses. This experience has also shaped the development of our national resettlement programme, increasingly embedded within broader regional and global priorities.

Today, Spain continues to experience a substantial arrival of people in need of protection, and we are convinced that third country solutions must play an important role in the comprehensive management of this phenomenon. It is from this perspective that we see resettlement and complementary pathways as essential tools which, if coordinated effectively among resettlement countries, can maximize both their humanitarian and strategic impact. Spain strongly believes that coherent, collective action is essential to unlock the full potential of these solutions for the benefit of refugees and the international community alike.

As we look ahead to 2026, Spain calls upon all partners — States, civil society organizations, the private sector, and communities — to match the growing needs with renewed ambition, creativity, and partnership. Together, we can reaffirm resettlement and complementary pathways as powerful expressions of solidarity and shared humanity.

We call for a renewed commitment to refugee resettlement, ensuring that programmes are maintained, expanded and sustained to meet increasing global needs. We call on the global community to treat humanitarian aid and refugee programme funding with care and thoughtfulness. Above all, we call on all actors to ensure that fact-based and evidence-based decision-making remains at the forefront and centre of policy discourse impacting on refugee resettlement and integration.



Congolese refugee families depart from Kasulu airstrip to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on their way to a resettlement country.
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