

## CHAPTER II

# POPULATION LEVELS AND TRENDS

### INTRODUCTION

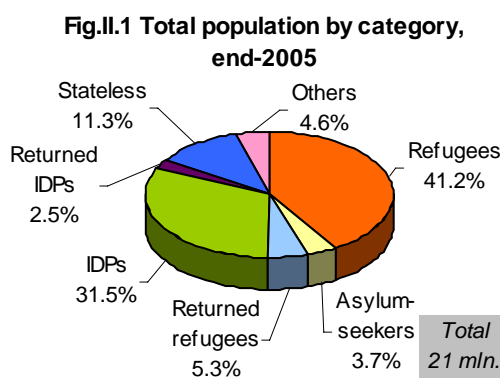
While refugees are UNHCR's mandated responsibility, the Office has also been involved with some groups of IDPs since the early 1970's. During the 1990's, the Office's involvement with IDPs and other displaced people not falling directly within the scope of the 1951 Convention increased. As a result, UNHCR's statistical coverage of populations receiving protection and assistance started expanding in the mid-1990s to include the different types known under the term "Total population of concern to UNHCR".

This chapter analyses the changes in the size, origin and flows of UNHCR's population of concern during 2005 and is central for understanding changes in comparison to 2004 and previous years. While every effort has been made to include all persons falling under UNHCR's mandate, not all have been identified to date. This is the case in particular for stateless persons. As such, a separate box has been included, covering the main reasons behind statelessness and highlighting how UNHCR addresses this issue.

### POPULATION OF CONCERN: SIZE AND CHANGES

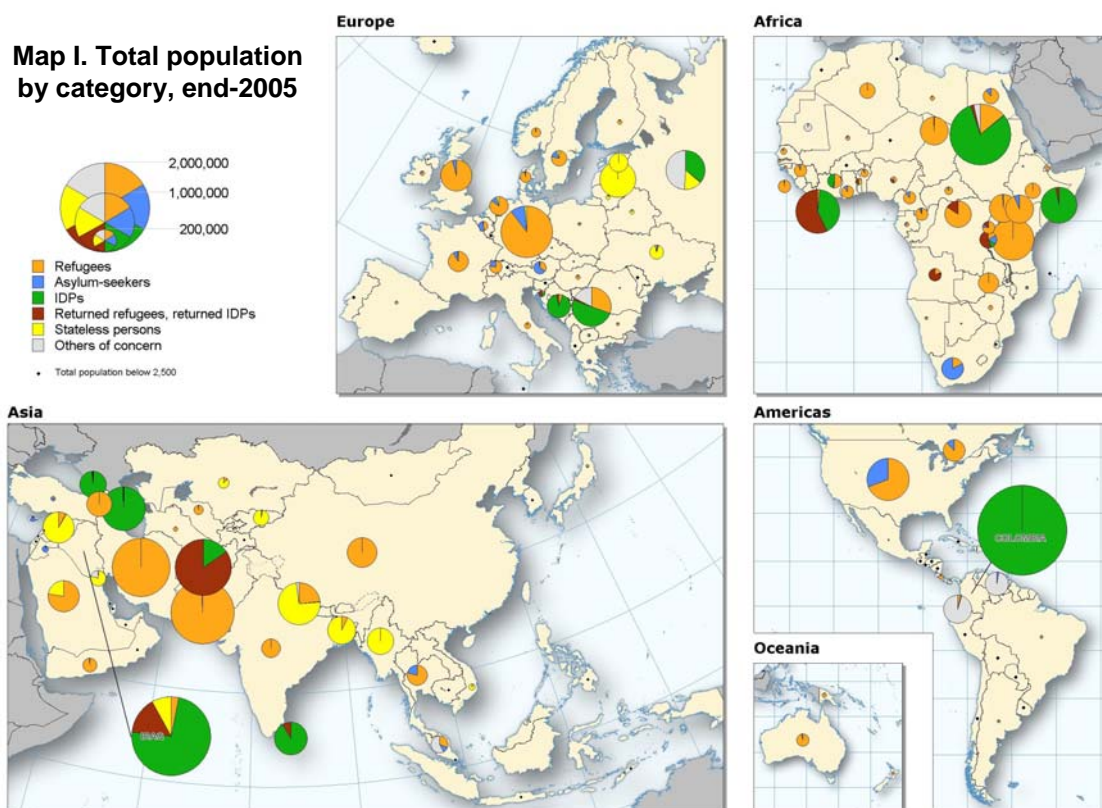
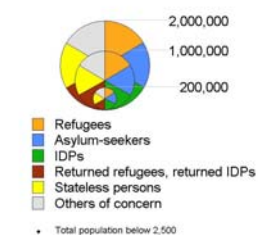
By the end of 2005, the total population of concern to UNHCR had increased from 19.5 to 21.0 million, representing an increase of 1.5 million persons (+8%) compared to 2004. This includes 8.7 million refugees<sup>1</sup>; 773,000 asylum-seekers; 1.1 million refugees who had repatriated during 2005; 6.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) protected/assisted by UNHCR<sup>2</sup>; 519,000 IDPs who had returned to their place of origin during 2005; some 2.4 million stateless persons; and 960,000 *Others of concern* to whom the Office extends protection and/or assistance (see Table I.1).

Refugees constitute 41 per cent of the total population of concern to UNHCR, down from 49 per cent at the start of 2005. Internally displaced persons protected or assisted by UNHCR are the second largest group accounting for 31 per cent, followed by stateless persons with 11 per cent. As indicated above, the total population of concern to UNHCR is not fully captured in these figures, either because a significant number of stateless people have not been systematically identified, or statistical data is unavailable.

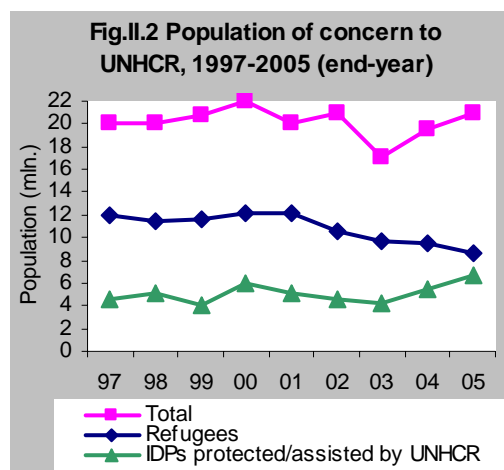


<sup>1</sup> In addition, some 4.3 million Palestinian refugees fall under the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). These refugees are not included in UNHCR statistics.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR's statistics only include IDPs who are protected and/or assisted by the Office and thus do not provide global coverage. For global IDP estimates, consult the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

**Map I. Total population by category, end-2005**

During the period 1997-2001, refugees constituted the largest group (55-61%) among all populations considered as of concern to the Office. In other words, roughly six out of 10 persons of concern were refugees. The recent years, however, have witnessed a gradual downward trend in the number of refugees worldwide while simultaneously seeing an upward trend in the overall population of concern. As a result, the proportion of refugees among the total population of concern started to decline, reaching its lowest level at the end of 2005, with four out of every 10 persons being refugees. While in absolute and relative terms refugees still make up the largest group under the Office's mandate, the current trend indicates that in future possibly only three (or less) out of 10 persons will be refugees. This scenario looks particularly likely, taking into account the expectation that UNHCR's involvement with internally displaced persons will expand in the coming years.

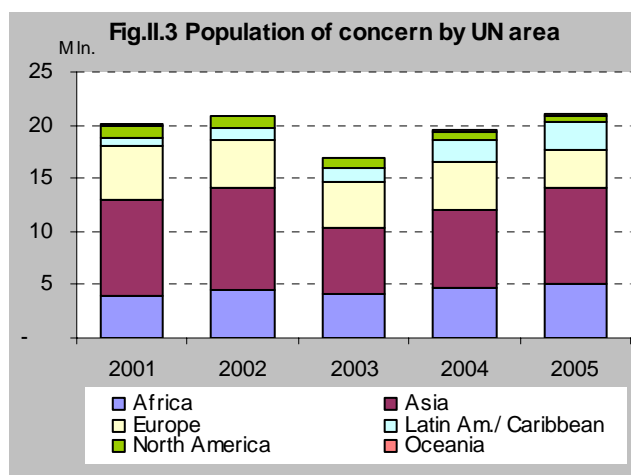


#### BY REGION AND COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

With 8.9 million out of the total of 21.0 million, the UN major area of Asia continues to host the largest population of concern to the Office at the end of 2005. In other words, four out of 10 persons of concern to UNHCR reside in Asia. The UN major area of Africa is the second largest host to UNHCR's population of concern with 5.1 million or 24 per cent of the 21.0 million, followed by Europe (3.7 million or 18%), Latin America and the Caribbean (2.5 million or 12%), North America (717,000 or 3%), and Oceania (82,000 or 0.4%). Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the

Caribbean recorded a strong increase over the past two years reflecting, among other reasons the deteriorating situations in Iraq, Sudan and Colombia. North America and Europe on the other hand witnessed a decline in 2005 compared to the previous year.

With over two million persons, Colombia remained the country hosting the largest population of concern to UNHCR by the end of 2005. Iraq is the second largest host country with some 1.6 million persons of concern, followed by Pakistan (1.1 million, UNHCR estimate), Sudan (1.0 million), and the Islamic Rep. of Iran (975,000). These five countries together hosted 6.7 million or one third (32%) of the global population of concern to UNHCR. It is noteworthy that the majority (4 million) of the 6.7 million are internally displaced persons demonstrating clearly the expanding involvement of UNHCR in IDP situations.



#### BY ORIGIN

Over the past years, Asia has not only been the main host of UNHCR's total population of concern but also by far the main source. At the end of 2005, some 8.4 million persons originating from Asia were considered by UNHCR as being in need of international protection. Africa was the second most important source region with 5.6 million persons, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (2.8 million). While not considered as a source region per se, with an estimate of 2.4 million stateless persons reported at end-2005, this group constitutes the fourth largest population among the population of concern.

Origin	Start-year	End-year	Share of total (end-year)	Change during 2005 (%)
Afghanistan	3,598,000	3,192,000	15%	-11%
Colombia	2,095,000	2,540,000	12%	21%
Stateless	1,473,000	2,396,000	11%	63%
Iraq	553,000	1,765,000	8%	219%
Sudan	1,405,000	1,568,000	7%	12%
Somalia	430,000	840,000	4%	95%
Azerbaijan	833,000	816,000	4%	-2%
Liberia	932,000	806,000	4%	-14%
Serbia and M.	597,000	548,000	3%	-8%
Burundi	585,000	527,000	3%	-10%

At the end of the year, Afghans constituted the largest group among UNHCR's total population of concern with some 3.2 million, accounting for 15 per cent of the total population of concern to UNHCR globally. Colombians were the second largest displaced population at end-2005 (2.5 million or 12 per cent of the total), followed by stateless persons (2.4 million or 11 per cent of the total, including refugees and non-refugees), Iraqis (1.8 million), Sudanese (1.6 million), and Somalis (840,000). Excluding stateless persons, the top five nationalities alone accounted for 9.9 million or almost half (47%) of all populations considered as of concern to UNHCR at the end of 2005.

## Refugees

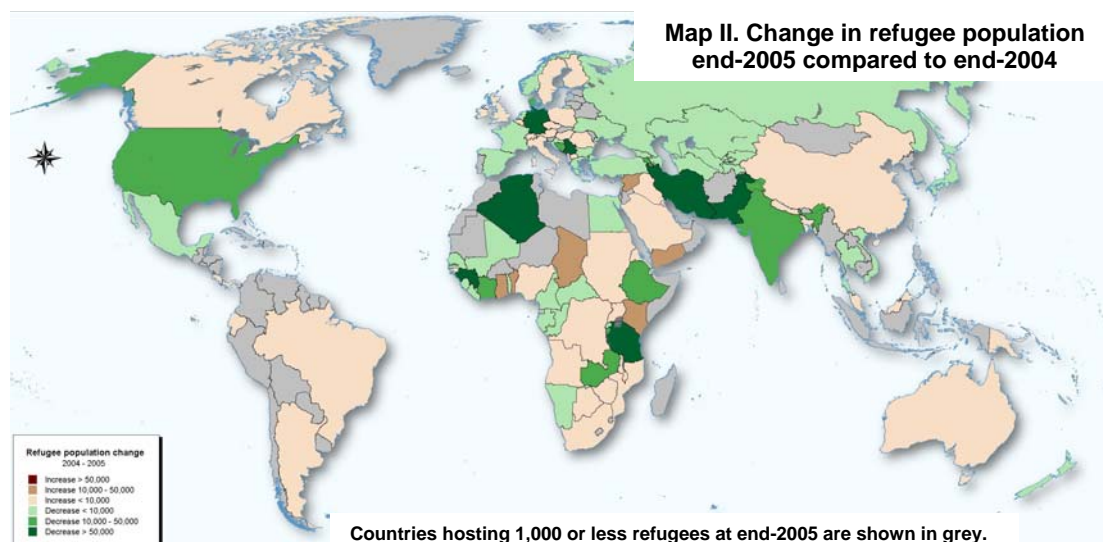
### BY REGION AND COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

By the end of 2005, the global number of refugees reached an estimated 8.7 million persons<sup>3</sup>, the lowest level since 1980. This constitutes a net decrease of almost one million refugees (-10%) since the beginning of 2005, when 9.6 million refugees were recorded. This is the fifth consecutive year in which the global refugee population has dropped and the second sharpest decrease since 2001. Over the five-year period, the global refugee population has fallen by almost one third (-29%). Decreases in the refugee population are often the result of refugees having access to durable solutions, in particular voluntary repatriation.

UNHCR regions	Start-2005	End-2005	Change	
- East and Horn of Africa	770,500	772,000	+1,500	0%
- Central Africa and the Great Lakes	1,267,700	1,193,700	-74,000	-6%
- West Africa	465,100	377,200	-87,900	-19%
- Southern Africa	245,100	228,600	-16,500	-7%
Total Africa*	2,748,400	2,571,500	-176,900	-6%
CASWANAME**	3,064,100	2,725,200	-338,900	-11%
The Americas	598,400	564,300	-34,100	-6%
Asia and Pacific	836,900	825,600	-11,300	-1%
Europe	2,327,100	1,975,500	-351,600	-15%
Total	9,574,900	8,662,100	-912,800	-10%

\* Excluding North Africa.  
\*\* Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and Middle East.

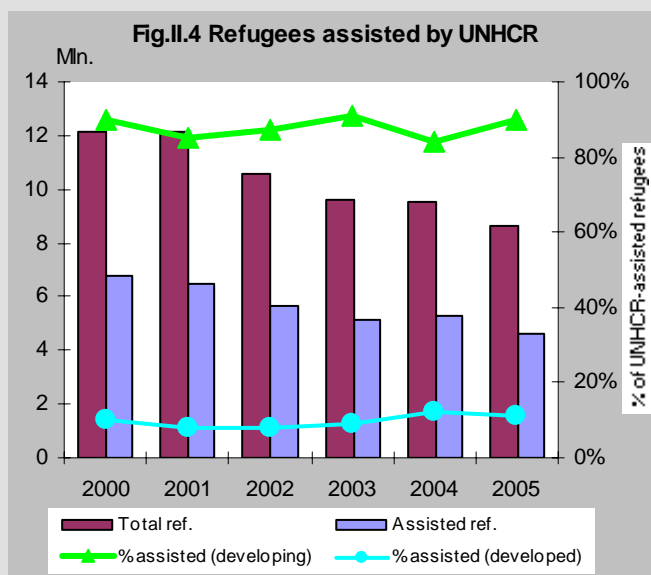
Virtually all regions reported a decrease in the refugee population during 2005 with the largest relative reductions being recorded in West Africa (-19%), followed by Europe (-15%) and CASWANAME (-11%). The only region experiencing a marginal increase was East and Horn of Africa (+0.2%). Despite of the decreases, Africa and CASWANAME each hosted one third of the global refugee population at the end of 2005. Europe hosted about one quarter (23%) of all refugees, followed by Asia and the Pacific (10%), and the Americas (7%).



<sup>3</sup> As mentioned earlier, the 4.3 million Palestinian refugees falling under the responsibility of UNRWA are not included in UNHCR statistics.

**Box 2: UNHCR assistance to refugees**

UNHCR assistance can take a variety of forms including: providing shelter and food, conducting refugee status determination, providing legal advice, granting assistance packages. While the type of assistance can vary, so does also the level, depending on the operational context and country. In general, assistance provided to refugees tends to be high where UNHCR is operationally active, i.e. primarily in developing countries. In fact, many refugees in developed countries do not require assistance from the Office, since many are considered as already locally integrated or have reached a minimum level of self-sufficiency.



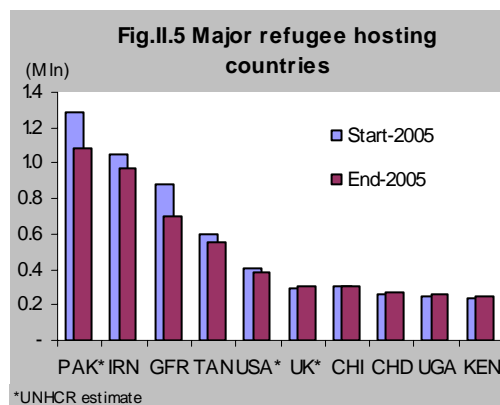
During 2005, more than half (53%) of all refugees benefited from UNHCR assistance programmes (55% in 2004). The number of refugees directly assisted by UNHCR decreased by 662,000 persons (-13%) from 5.3 to 4.6 million by the end of the year. This decline went hand in hand with the overall decline in the global refugee population. Despite witnessing a drop in the global refugee population in the past five years, the level of UNHCR assistance provided to refugees has remained fairly stable ranging between 53 to 56 per cent of the total refugee population.

Moreover, during 2005, UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) provided food assistance to

2.1 million refugees, 8.3 million internally displaced persons and 1.3 million returnees in 32 joint operations. In addition, UNHCR provided direct food assistance to a number of camp populations in Africa, including Botswana (2,500), Eritrea (4,400), Ghana (1,700), Mozambique (4,500), and Zimbabwe (3,000).

Most beneficiaries of UNHCR protection and assistance activities are located in developing countries, primarily in countries covered by the Africa and CASWANAME Bureaux. These two Bureaux together account for almost 90 per cent of all UNHCR assistance activities provided to refugees. In contrast, the level of direct assistance provided to refugees in Europe and the Americas is very low given their relatively high level of self-sufficiency. By the end of 2005, 71 per cent of the estimated 6.3 million refugees hosted by developing countries had access to assistance provided by or through UNHCR. The proportion of refugees benefiting from international assistance, however, varies greatly from one country to another, reflecting the different opportunities provided to refugees by the host country for local integration and self-reliance. Major asylum countries where less than 75 per cent of the refugee population received international aid during 2005 include the United Republic of Tanzania (64%), Sudan (51%), Zambia (48%), the DRC (8%), India (8%), and Armenia (5%).

In 2005, Pakistan continued to be the main asylum country for refugees followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the year, both countries together hosted one out of four (24%) of the world's refugees.<sup>5</sup> Both, however, experienced a 16 and seven per cent decrease respectively during the year as a result of the voluntary repatriation of some 751,000 Afghan refugees. Germany remained the third largest asylum country of 2005 despite



<sup>4</sup> The refugee population in the Islamic Rep. of Iran has been revised retroactively from 714,000 to 974,000 following a registration exercise ("Amayesh II").

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 3.

witnessing a 20 per cent drop during the year. This decrease is primarily due to an improved registration system providing more accurate statistics on the number of refugees in the country.<sup>6</sup> The United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America (UNHCR estimate)<sup>7</sup> remain as the fourth and fifth largest asylum countries despite experiencing decreases of nine and six per cent respectively during 2005. Among the top-10 asylum countries, only Chad (+15,500 refugees) and Kenya (+11,400 refugees) saw a significant net increase during 2005 (see *Map II*).

#### BY ORIGIN

Afghanistan continues to be by far the largest country of origin of refugees under the Office's mandate. At the end of 2005, 2.2 million Afghan refugees were reported by 72 asylum countries. As such, Afghans constituted one quarter of the global refugee population, excluding the 4.3 million Palestinians who fall under the mandate of UNRWA. Nevertheless, due to continued voluntary repatriation, the number of Afghan refugees dropped by 10 per cent during the year.

Other major countries of origins of refugees experiencing important decreases during 2005 were Burundi (-10%), Iraq (-16%), Liberia (-31%), and Serbia and Montenegro (-20%). The strong fall in the Burundian, Iraqi and Liberian refugee populations is primarily the result of voluntary repatriation movements, whereas the sharp decrease in the refugee population from Serbia and Montenegro primarily reflects the changed methodology for estimating the number of refugees in Germany.<sup>8</sup> Significant decreases in the refugee population, often as a result of durable solutions or revised refugee estimates following registration exercises were also recorded for refugees originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina (-119,000), Croatia (-96,000), Western Sahara (-75,000), and Sudan (-37,000).

Nevertheless, some refugee nationalities recorded an increase in the population during 2005. The number of Togolese refugees quadrupled, from 10,800 at the start of the year to 51,100 at the end of the year, due to movements, mainly to Benin and Ghana. The number of refugees from Rwanda increased by 36,500 (+57%), primarily due to a revised population estimate in the Dem. Rep. of the Congo while the number of Eritrean and Colombian refugees increased by more than 13,000 each (+10% and +28% respectively).

#### NET REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

By comparing the number of refugees originating from a region with the number of refugees hosted by that region, the "net refugee balance" can be calculated. In other words, some regions receive more refugees than they send to other regions. If a region hosts more refugees, regardless of their origin, than the number of refugees which are originating from it, regardless of their place of residence, then the regional balance is positive. Conversely, when the number of refugees originating from a region exceeds the number of refugees who have found asylum in that region, the region can be considered to have a negative balance.

<sup>6</sup> With the introduction of the new Immigration Act in 2005, the Central Aliens Register now encompasses new residence categories and simultaneously refines previous ones, allowing for a better differentiation of refugee statistics. The refugee data included in the Statistical Yearbook refer to 15 December 2005.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR's method of estimating the refugee population in the United States is currently under review due to newly available information. As a result, the estimated refugee population in the country might increase significantly as of 2006.

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 6.

Even with large intra-continental variations, Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean are a net 'source' of refugees, while Europe, North America and Oceania are net 'receivers'. By the end of 2005, Europe hosted one million refugees more than the overall number of refugees originating from Europe. North America recorded the second largest positive net refugee balance (526,000), followed by Oceania (79,000). Regions with a negative refugee balance are Asia (-928,000), Africa (-446,000), and Latin America and the Caribbean (-80,000) (see Fig.II.6).

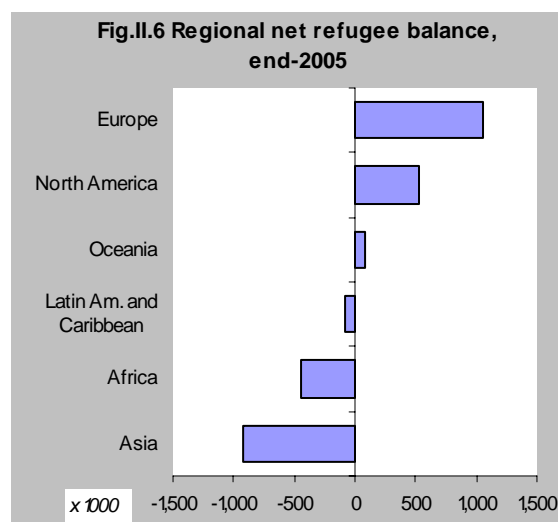
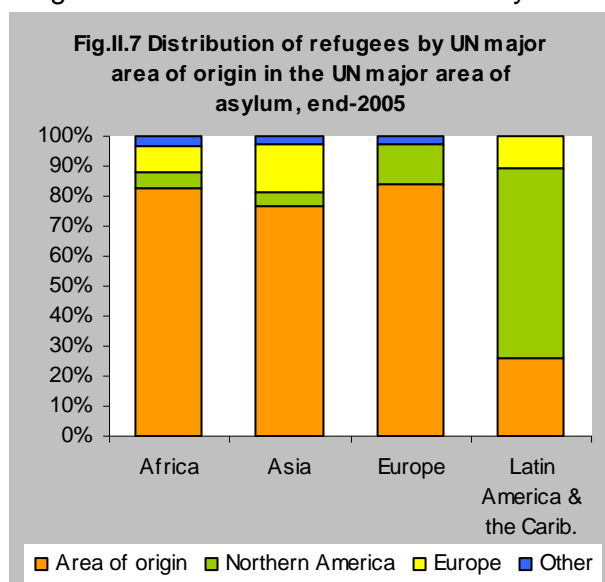


Fig.II.7 shows the relationship between UN major area of origin and asylum for the four largest areas of refugee origin and the main destinations. It confirms that most refugees tend to move across relatively short distances, finding primarily asylum in their region of origin. By the end of 2005, 83 per cent of refugees originating from Africa (3.2 million) found asylum on the same continent (2.7 million) while for Asia the corresponding value amounted to 77 per cent (3.4 million out of a total of 4.4 million Asian refugees).



Whereas refugees originating from Latin America and the Caribbean predominantly find asylum on the American continent (89%), it is interesting to note that roughly two thirds end up in North America (63%) compared to less than one third (26%) in Latin America and the Caribbean itself.

#### ASYLUM-SEEKERS

The population of asylum-seekers comprises persons who have submitted an asylum application, but who have not yet received a decision. The number of undecided or 'pending' cases is an important indicator of the efficiency of asylum procedures in determining refugee status. An increase in pending cases during the year indicates that the number of new applications outweighed the number of asylum decisions taken, often leading to an increase in the waiting period for asylum-seekers. Conversely, if more applications are decided than submitted, the backlog of undecided cases will be reduced. Despite improved reporting over the past few years, the global number of undecided cases is underestimated as some countries, particularly in the industrialized world are not able to report these figures.

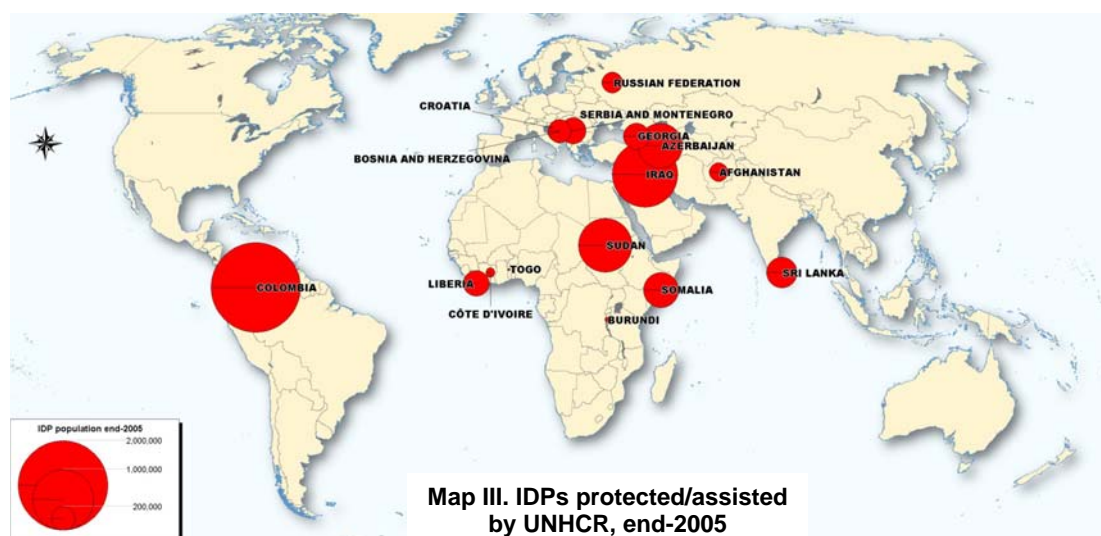
The number of asylum claims which have not yet been adjudicated, both at the first instance and on appeal, has decreased gradually over the past few years, reaching an estimated 773,000 of pending cases by the end of 2005, the lowest level in at

least a decade. In fact, the global number of asylum-seekers waiting for a decision has gone down by 29 per cent since 2002. As indicated, a fall in the backlog of asylum cases might indicate that asylum procedures have become more efficient. In addition, the drop in the backlog can also coincide with a decrease in new asylum applications, a situation currently experienced by many industrialized countries in Europe and North America.

At the end of 2005, the largest number of undecided cases at the first instance and on appeal was reported by the United States of America (169,700), South Africa (140,100), Germany (71,600), and Austria (40,700). Many countries were able to reduce the number of undecided cases during 2005, including the United States of America (-93,000), Germany (-29,200), the Netherlands (-13,800), and Sweden (-12,300). The strong reduction of backlog cases in the United States of America is primarily because of the closure for administrative reasons of cases from El Salvador (-44,400) and Guatemala (-25,600) during 2005. Increases in the backlog were reported by Thailand (+31,100), South Africa (+24,900), Burundi (+9,200), and Jordan (+5,500).

### INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

In addition to refugees and asylum-seekers, the population of concern to UNHCR also includes two types of internally displaced persons: those who are internally displaced at the end of the reporting year as well as those who have returned to their place of habitual residence during the calendar year. In general, internal movements are less subject to government control and therefore intrinsically more difficult to monitor than movements across international borders.



As per end-2005, UNHCR does not have a global mandate to protect or assist all IDPs, and therefore, UNHCR statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture of the global scope of internal displacement.<sup>9</sup> A major challenge is the lack of appropriate data collection tools, guidelines and methodologies and, therefore, accurate and reliable data on IDPs in general. A number of reasons are responsible for this, including lack of access to the population because of insecurity, short-term population movements and the perceived limited benefits of registration. As IDPs have not left the country in which they have been persecuted, they sometimes show

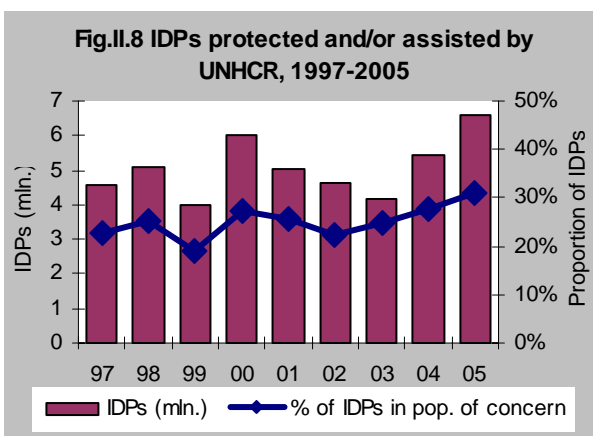
<sup>9</sup> For global IDP estimates, please consult the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) website at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).



reticence to register officially. UNHCR in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council and OCHA are currently developing a tool for profiling IDP populations. It is expected that this tool will substantially improve the quality of IDP statistics.

At the end of 2005, UNHCR country offices reported 6.6 million internally displaced persons who are protected and/or assisted by the Office in 16 countries compared to 5.4 million IDPs in 13 countries one year earlier (+22%). This increase primarily reflects the newly reported IDP situations in Iraq (1.2 million), Somalia (400,000), and Togo (3,000).

Many countries reported a decrease in the number of IDPs indicating that durable solutions were found for those populations, including Liberia (-261,000 IDPs), the Russian Federation (-164,000), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (-126,500).



No significant change, however, was witnessed in the number of IDPs in Colombia (over two million IDPs)<sup>10</sup> and Azerbaijan (578,500). Considering the deteriorating situation in Sudan and the absence of a solution in sight, the number of internally displaced persons in the country reported by UNHCR has increased from 662,000 to 842,000 during 2005. With UNHCR's role expanding in protecting and assisting

IDPs, it is expected that the global number of internally displaced persons reported by UNHCR offices will increase substantially in the future. As such, the available data confirms that the share of IDPs among the total population of concern has reached its highest level in at least a decade. In other words, at the end of 2005, roughly one out of three persons of concern to UNHCR was an IDP.

## STATELESS PERSONS

In addition to refugees, UNHCR has been tasked by the United Nations General Assembly through the various resolutions to contribute to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and protection of stateless persons. In particular, UNHCR has been asked to regularly inform the international community on the magnitude of the problem of statelessness.<sup>11</sup>

A survey UNHCR conducted among States in 2003 on steps taken to reduce statelessness and to protect stateless persons found that many States have difficulties in identifying stateless persons. Only 45 per cent of the 74 States responding to the questionnaire said to have general information on the potential number of stateless persons and the States which responded positively were overwhelmingly European.<sup>12</sup> Since 2004, UNHCR has reinforced its collection of statistics relating to stateless persons and these efforts continued yielding positive results in 2005. The number of States reporting figures on statelessness increased

<sup>10</sup> The Government of Colombia has recently acknowledged that there are some 3.0 to 3.5 million IDPs in the country, of whom some 2.0 million are registered.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/152 of 9 February 1996 (A/RES/50/152).

<sup>12</sup> Final Report concerning the Questionnaire on Statelessness pursuant to the Agenda for Protection (addressed to 191 States), March 2004.

from 30 in 2004 to 48 in 2005. Simultaneously, the number of reported stateless persons increased from 1.5 to 2.4 million. This increase was primarily due to the inclusion of newly available estimates on stateless populations in a number of countries, notably Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, and Viet Nam. These estimates were supplemented by official figures on statelessness from predominantly European countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Despite this improvement in statistical reporting of statelessness, the data is only partial as UNHCR estimates that there are between 11 and 15 million stateless persons worldwide.

Despite improvements in the identification of stateless populations and a considerable reduction of the number of stateless persons in some countries, statelessness remains a problem of a vast scale and is largely unidentified. The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons had at the end of 2005 been acceded to or ratified by 58 States. Among these, a few States had put in place procedures to properly identify stateless persons and grant them the legal status provided by the Convention. This largely explains why official statistics on stateless persons are difficult to obtain even in many industrialized countries where stateless persons often are registered among individuals who cannot be removed because no country can be identified that would be willing to accept them back. In the majority of the world's countries, however, official statistics on statelessness are not available, as the country either does not identify or register stateless people, or if it does, the data may not be publicly available. For some of these situations, UNHCR can only refer to an estimate of the number of stateless people. In many of the largest situations in the world in which populations are stateless or at risk of statelessness, however, not even a reliable estimate can be made, like for instance in Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic., or Thailand.

In 2006, UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom) encouraged states in possession of statistics on stateless persons or individuals with undetermined nationality to share those with UNHCR.<sup>13</sup> The ExCom called on UNHCR to continue to work with interested governments to identify stateless persons and populations with undetermined nationality in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, in particular UNICEF and UNFPA. In addition, UNHCR was asked to establish a more formal, systematic methodology for information gathering, updating and sharing of statistics on stateless persons. The Office thus hopes to be able to further improve its statistical data gathering through continuing efforts to properly identify statelessness situations (*see also Box 3 below*).

#### OTHERS OF CONCERN

Finally, UNHCR extends protection and/or assistance to persons who it considers "of concern", but who do not fall into any of the above population categories. During 2005, their number increased from 606,100 at the beginning of the year to 960,400 at the end of the year (+58%). This increase primarily reflects the newly included persons of concern from Colombia in Ecuador (250,000) and the Bolivarian Rep. of Venezuela (an increased estimate from 26,400 to 200,000). These persons have not formally applied for asylum for various reasons, including security concerns, despite being in need of international protection.

It should be noted that stateless persons are no longer included in the category

<sup>13</sup> Executive Committee Conclusion on Identification, Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness and Protection of Stateless Persons, No. 106 (LVI) 2006.

“Others of concern”. Therefore, the 2004 statistics cannot be directly compared to the 2005 data.

### Box 3: Reducing statelessness

In addition to indicating countries with large stateless populations and where statelessness is an increasing problem, UNHCR statistics also serve as a tool to indicate where States make efforts to reduce the number of stateless persons on their territory. As such, statelessness can mainly be reduced by allowing stateless persons to acquire the citizenship of the State where they reside. During 2005, some countries reported a significant reduction in the number of stateless persons or persons at risk of statelessness, including Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. As such, the data shows the ongoing efforts on part of these States to integrate stateless persons by granting, confirming or restoring their citizenship.

In some situations, UNHCR has actively assisted States with the launch of citizenship campaigns to enable stateless persons to acquire the citizenship of this country. In the past, such a campaign for instance enabled more than 200,000 stateless Tamils of Indian origin to acquire and enjoy the nationality of Sri Lanka where they had been resident for decades. Since 2004, when the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia revised its Citizenship Law, UNHCR has also supported a citizenship campaign launched by the Government for long-term habitual residents who remained without an effective nationality after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. The Citizenship Law, which entered into force in 1992, gave long-term habitual residents a one-year opportunity to apply for facilitated acquisition of citizenship. After the deadline expired however, several thousand individuals remained without an effective nationality and thus regularized stay and could not enjoy a range of basic rights in the country. When the Government of FYR Macedonia introduced amendments to the Citizenship Law, it was therefore encouraged by UNHCR and other international organizations to reintroduce a two-year transitional provision allowing the facilitated acquisition of citizenship for long-term habitual residents. The revised law entered into force in 2004. In cooperation with the relevant State authorities, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and USAID, UNHCR helped launch a citizenship information campaign on national television and assisted the Government in preparing and printing a brochure on citizenship which was also translated into Albanian, Roma, Serbian and Turkish. In addition, UNHCR, through a local implementing partner, runs a legal aid programme established to assist asylum-seekers and refugees as well as individuals applying for citizenship. This programme assists individuals to lodge applications, to acquire documentation required for the application, and vulnerable families receive financial support to cover the application fees. Since the transitional provision entered into force in 2004, approximately 3,000 long-term residents lacking an effective nationality have been able to acquire the citizenship of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

