

# UNHCR'S Mission



UNHCR / C. FOHLEN

The High Commissioner for Refugees is mandated by the United Nations to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems.

UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. In its efforts to achieve this objective, the Office strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, and to return home voluntarily. By assisting refugees to return to their own country or to settle permanently in another country, UNHCR also seeks lasting solutions to their plight.

UNHCR's Executive Committee and the UN General Assembly have authorized involvement with other groups. These include former refugees who have returned to their homeland; internally displaced people; and people who are stateless or whose nationality is disputed.

The Office seeks to reduce situations of forced displacement by encouraging States and other institutions to create conditions which are conducive to the protection of human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In all of its activities, it pays particular attention to the needs of children and seeks to promote the equal rights of women and girls.

The Office works in partnership with governments, regional organizations, international and non-governmental organizations. It is committed to the principle of participation, believing that refugees and others who benefit from the organization's activities should be consulted over decisions which affect their lives. ■

## Basic Facts



**42,873,743:** People of concern to the High Commissioner (as of January 2014)



**6,234,449,563:** Total 2015 UNHCR budget (USD)



**123:** Countries where UNHCR is present



**456:** Locations where UNHCR is present



**7,519:** UNHCR regular staff members



**6,611:** Staff members in the Field



**908:** Staff members at Headquarters



**1 per 5,702:** Ratio of staff members to people of concern



**59:** Junior Professional Officers



**148:** States parties to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol



**94:** Members of the Executive Committee

*After 34 years with UNHCR, Janet Lim, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, agreed to share some memories and advice...*

# Three questions\*

## WHY DID YOU JOIN UNHCR?

I joined UNHCR when I was doing research on Indo-Chinese refugees who resettled in Germany in the late 1970s. I wanted to better understand how the work of UNHCR impacted on refugees at the individual level. My initial contract was for three months, and that led to one interesting assignment after another, and before I knew it 34 years had passed!

## A MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT?

There are too many memorable moments, over the 34 years, to single out just one. But I will always recall: the emotional encounters with Vietnamese refugees who had just been rescued from pirate attacks on the high seas where many lives were lost; the sense of satisfaction when accompanying Laotian refugees home on organized voluntary repatriation programmes; or meeting again with refugees, after many years, to hear their success stories. There are also memorable experiences of working with colleagues in close-knit teams in the most difficult circumstances in emergencies - and surviving with good humour intact.

## ADVICE FOR A YOUNG PERSON JOINING UNHCR TODAY?

To get the best out of working with UNHCR you need to be passionate, committed, creative and always ready to face new challenges. If you want just an easy job, UNHCR will not be your best option!

\*The *Three Questions* interviews put the spotlight on colleagues who have dedicated much of their working lives to UNHCR and the refugee cause.



Arrival of a small boat of 168 Vietnamese refugees, Malaysia, December 1978.