

REFUGEES

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**FORGOTTEN
NO
LONGER?**



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



**“We have
failed
these
people for
too long”**

The **BIGGEST** of the **international**



Darfur women must go out in large numbers, normally with military escorts, even to collect firewood.

FAILURE

community



A NEW APPROACH
TO HELP THE WORLD'S
INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PEOPLE



The BIGGEST FAILURE

BY RAY WILKINSON

THE ATTACKS OFTEN BEGIN at dawn—gunmen on horseback, camels and battered military vehicles, sometimes accompanied by aircraft and helicopters—swooping down swiftly against an undefended village. “They killed my husband in front of me,” a recent survivor of one attack recalled. “They threw me to the ground and raped me. They took one of my children away. I have not seen him again. They burned the village and killed all of my neighbors before leaving.”

The young mother crawled away from the carnage and with her surviving four children spent several weeks with virtually no food, water or shelter stumbling toward the comparative safety of the neighboring state of Chad from her home in the Darfur region of Africa’s largest nation, Sudan.

There are literally thousands of similar atrocity stories circulating at any one time in the region. In a tragic escalation of the conflict, for the first time an officially established camp for displaced persons was attacked in September. Thirty-four persons were slaughtered including at least one man whose hands were tied behind his back and who was then dragged to his death behind a horse, Wild West style.



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the campaign of murder, loot and rape by one of the protagonists, the so-called *janjaweed* or 'devils on horseback', as nothing less than genocide. John Prendergast from the advocacy International Crisis Group described the *janjaweed* as a "grotesque mixture of the mafia and the Ku Klux Klan" and said "a government-made hurricane had hit Darfur."

The situation was so dire at times, the gunmen often turned their guns on aid workers and their precious supplies. "There is nothing left to loot but the foreigners' convoys," one local tribal leader said.

WHY THE DIFFERENCE?

SUDAN'S NIGHTMARE CONFRONTED HUMANITARIAN agencies such as UNHCR with their biggest and most complex ongoing emergency.

But it also highlighted a troubling and intractable problem which the international community has grappled unsuccessfully with for years—why millions of civilians similarly affected by war or other persecution are often treated so differently—some receiving major assistance and others virtually none at all?

An estimated 200,000 Sudanese civilians escaped the fighting by fleeing into Chad. Once they had reached a neighboring state they came under the protection of global refugee conventions which entitled them to legal protection, shelter, food and water, rudimentary though the help was at times.

But the bulk of the civilian victims, men, women and children who remained in Sudan, faced an infinitely more dangerous future, still under the sway of their own government and militia supporters rather than international treaties and with no automatic right to any help from outside organizations.

Those civilians and millions of others scattered around the globe, lumped together under the clumsy bureaucratic acronym of IDPs, or internally displaced persons, were left to suffer and die in silence for many months as Khartoum sealed its borders and refused to allow aid or aid workers into the region.

When the government finally relented, the outside world was appalled at the human destruction it discovered. "We failed these people for too long," Jan Egeland, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and effectively the world's leading humanitarian bureaucrat, said later. "While over the years we have managed to save millions of lives, our response system

They were among the latest victims of a decades-old dispute between black African farmers and Arabic nomadic communities for sparse natural resources which flamed into full conflict in 2003 when marauding bands of militia, some reputedly backed by the central government in Khartoum and others proclaiming themselves champions of the farmers, began plundering one of the most desolate and inhospitable regions of the world.

In the ensuing chaos, anywhere between 180,000 and 300,000 civilians were killed or died of war-related wounds and disease. Two million persons fled their towns and villages.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell called

Several million Angolans have returned to their destroyed towns and villages following a 2002 cease-fire between government and rebel forces.

UNHCR/AM. BIENVIDES/07/AGO-2005

“While over the years we have managed to **SAVE MILLIONS OF LIVES...** the needs of the internally displaced were often the first to fall between the cracks.”

has [also] been plagued by severe gaps. The needs of the internally displaced were often the first to fall between the cracks.”

UNHCR High Commissioner António Guterres added that “We have too often been too late with too little support.” The treatment of people internally displaced by conflict, he said, “has been the biggest failure of the international humanitarian community.”

But if nothing else, the Darfur conflict now acted as a wake-up call, according to Egeland, and forced the world to once again confront the issue of people effectively abandoned within their own countries and denied their basic human rights. He determined, along with U.N. agencies, the Red Cross and other organizations, to re-examine the whole approach toward people like the Sudanese civilians who had “fallen between the cracks” and remained trapped in their desert hell holes.

HOW DID WE GET INTO THIS MESS?

POLITICIANS, JOURNALISTS AND THE GENERAL public routinely label all civilians who flee persecution or war simply as refugees, a word which has become an easy catchall to describe anyone displaced from their homes either through war, persecution or even natural calamity, as happened during the catastrophic Asian tsunami, the earthquake in Pakistan and in the wake of hurricane Katrina which lashed the United States (see separate story page 22).

Given this oversimplified approach, it is difficult for the world to understand or accept that a Sudanese family who successfully reached Chad can be treated so differently from another family who fled from the same village at the same time and which is living only a short distance away, but inside Sudan.

The reasons are manifold—partly political, partly historical and massively influenced by the thorny issues of national sovereignty and the changing nature of conflict.

The current refugee regime was established in the wake of World War II with the creation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the adoption of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention. The definition of a refugee was spelled out precisely—as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality.”

For most of the last half of the 20th century, many innocent victims of war and persecution fitted neatly into this category.

In the post Cold War era, however, the very nature of conflict and the predicament of displaced persons began to change.

Wars between conventional armies increasingly were overtaken by internal civil conflicts involving government forces, militias, religious extremists and outright terrorist groups.

Almost unnoticed at first, millions of innocents became war victims, often deliberately targeted by one or more sides carrying guns, but unlike earlier persecuted peoples, with nowhere to run and often no one to help them. For these people, there was no international safety net in place.

It was not until the closing years of the last century that the world began to appreciate the enormity of the unfolding IDP nightmare.

When U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressed the General Assembly for the last time in the old millennium, he proposed a radical departure from the way governments and agencies had been handling the problem. Effectively, he urged member states to put aside their most jealously guarded powers—sovereignty and the sanctity of national borders—in the higher interests of protecting hapless civilians caught up in war.

“Nothing in the [U.N.] Charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond bor-

MAJOR IDP POPULATIONS WORLDWIDE*

	COUNTRY	IDPs		COUNTRY	IDPs
1.	Sudan	6,000,000	11.	Azerbaijan	575,000
2.	Colombia	3,400,000	12.	Zimbabwe	570,000
3.	D.R. Congo	2,330,000	13.	Myanmar	526,000
4.	Uganda	1,400,000	14.	Côte d’Ivoire	500,000
5.	Iraq	1,000,000	15.	Bangladesh	500,000
6.	Turkey	1,000,000	16.	Somalia	400,000
7.	Algeria	1,000,000	17.	Kenya	350,000
8.	India	600,000	18.	Sri Lanka	347,000
9.	Indonesia	600,000	19.	Angola	340,000
10.	Lebanon	600,000	20.	Russian Fed.	339,000

*Source: Global IDP Project, August 2005

ders,” he told delegates. “There is no doubt that enforcement action is a difficult step to take. It often goes against political or other interests, but there are universal principles and values which supersede such interests, and the protection of civilians is one of them.”

He suggested that the U.N., via the Security Council, should be able to intervene directly, even in internal conflicts, authorizing more preventative peace-keeping missions, enforcing existing international humanitarian and human rights laws and imposing sanctions such as arms embargoes against recalcitrant states.

The reaction, predictably, was mixed. While the Netherlands insisted that respect for human rights had become “more and more mandatory and respect for sovereignty less and less stringent,” China noted that though “such arguments as ‘human rights taking precedence over sovereignty’ seem to be in vogue these days” respect for national sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs were “the basic principles governing international relations.”

As a new century dawned, REFUGEES magazine (N° 117) called the unfolding drama “The HOT issue for a new millennium.”

25 MILLION PEOPLE IN NEED

HALFWAY ACROSS THE WORLD from the desert wastes of Darfur and the fleeing mother and her children, in the hot dry uplands of northeastern Colombia, Alicia (not her real name) faced a more insidious and prolonged form of harassment and persecution than the Sudanese civilians subject to lightning raids by the gunmen on horseback.

Alicia’s ‘mistake’ was to start a cooperative for small farmers trying to grow crops other than coca and thus escape the drug wars involving government forces and rival armed groups which had helped plunge the country into four decades of war.

Shortly after the project began, the wreaths also started arriving... every day for a month... Alicia’s name spelled out in large gold letters on the garish red ribbons. Killings followed, of friends and colleagues murdered in the most brutal fashion. The warning to Alicia was clear.

She abandoned her home and fled, as millions of other Colombians have done over the years, the outside world rarely aware of or concerned about this almost silent exodus.

Each time Alicia found a refuge, her tormentors found her and she was forced to move again.

Eventually, after years on the run across Colombia,

she arrived in Soacha, a filthy shantytown of poor housing, few basic services and little law and order, but still only a few miles from downtown Bogotá, the country’s capital. The majority of Alicia’s neighbors had similar histories, abandoning their villages and towns because of the fighting and other forms of persecution and seeking safety in the anonymity of a big city slum.

Today, every big city in Colombia has a Soacha, belts of poverty ringing affluent centers where uprooted peoples live in dire poverty, where there are few police or military and where many remain at the mercy of those same armed groups from which they fled in the first place.

“They are in their own country, yet they cannot avail themselves of the protection of the state,” says



UNHCR/J. SPAILL/COL/1997

Roberto Meier, the Representative in Colombia of UNHCR which recently opened a ‘safe house’ in Soacha to provide help to Alicia and her neighbors.

The Colombian woman and the Sudanese mother who was raped and whose husband was murdered in front of her, are among a staggering 25 million people in some 50 countries whose villages and towns have been destroyed, families killed or broken up, who have few possessions, often no shelter, little physical protection and who are constant prey to men with guns, either in uniform or with no allegiance at all except to a local warlord.

This figure compares to 9.2 million refugees worldwide.

More than half of this IDP population is in Africa, six million in Sudan alone, the largest single group of displaced persons in the world. There are 3.7 million victims of conflict displaced in the Americas, the bulk of them in Colombia, the second largest IDP global population.

Many of the estimated 3.4 million IDPs in Colombia live in appalling conditions. UNHCR currently helps around 2 million of them with a variety of projects.

“A few years ago, it would have been **impossible to talk** about the human rights of IDPs with governments. Today at least, it is acknowledged by most authorities that they do have **human rights.**”

Similar numbers are scattered around Asia and the Pacific and even in Europe.

It is a population in constant flux and motion. In 2004, an estimated three million people became newly displaced because of conflict, principally in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.

But an equal number of civilians returned to their old homes in the same period, one million people to Democratic Congo, 900,000 to Angola and other large populations to Liberia and the Sudan.

Thus in the often schizophrenic IDP world, in Congo and Sudan at least, millions of people were on the move in both directions, either fleeing parts of those countries ravaged by ongoing war or returning to other, peaceful areas and virtually at the same time.

Throughout this constant swirl of movement and to-ing and fro-ing, the overall global IDP population remained relatively constant at an estimated 25 million during the first years of the new millennium. In comparison, the numbers of refugees continued to drop modestly in the same period.

Millions of people around the world, including this family and newly born baby hiding in the rain forests of Myanmar, remain at daily risk because of ongoing wars and lack of protection or assistance from their own governments.

SOFTLY-SOFTLY

AS THE SCOPE OF THE IDP PROBLEM EXPLODED, steps were taken to address the issue.

In the wake of Gulf War I and then in the Balkans during the 1990s, governments, humanitarian agencies and donors intervened, financially, politically and with resources on the ground, to help the millions of people trapped in their own countries as well as others who fled further afield as refugees.

Perhaps for the first time, the plight of IDPs became a topic for serious debate in the corridors of power.

Sudanese lawyer and diplomat Francis M. Deng was appointed to the newly-created post of Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons, a recognition that this group of disenfranchised people needed their own champion.

After years of delicate legal maneuver and hard





ONASIA/T. FALISE/DP/ANNA/2004

bargaining with governments, lawyers, academics and humanitarians, he produced a slim booklet called *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, a set of 30 recommendations for the protection of this group.

A handful of governments incorporated some of the points in their national legislation and a few were willing to review the issue of sovereignty and international intervention.

Walter Kälin, a refugee law expert from Switzer-

land who succeeded Deng in 2004 to a slightly different post, now the Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, insisted that “A few years ago it would have been impossible to talk about the human rights of IDPs with governments. Today at least, it is acknowledged by most authorities that the internally displaced do have human rights.”

In the wake of Secretary-General Annan’s call to

arms at the end of the old century, U.N. and other specialized agencies were encouraged to take what was bureaucratically termed a ‘collaborative approach’—working closely together—to help internally displaced civilians. A small, specialized IDP unit was established within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Geneva.

Today, emergency coordinator Egeland reports bi-annually to the Security Council on the protection of civilians caught up in conflict. Peacekeeping operations in such countries as Liberia and Sudan have specific protection mandates for civilians and peacekeepers are obliged to intervene to help people at risk.

At a General Assembly summit meeting in September 2005, states agreed on a declaration spelling out their “Responsibility to Protect”—effectively committing governments to shield their civilians from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and empowering the international community to respond if countries did not live up to their obligations.

But this largely voluntary, softly-softly approach, still left huge gaps and it took the worsening crisis in Sudan to strip away the system’s ongoing failures.

A NEW APPROACH

EGELAND ORDERED AN URGENT, INDEPENDENT study to “evaluate the humanitarian response system” worldwide.

An interagency internal displacement division was established in Geneva in 2004 to help usher in a new, more muscular approach to the problem.

The new initiative announced in late 2005, will reinforce and refine the existing collaborative approach towards IDPs. Major gaps and weaknesses

were identified, including what Egeland called the “absence of clear operational accountability and leadership in key sectors.”

Individual agencies were designated as ‘sector leaders’ to coordinate operations in specific areas to try to plug those newly identified gaps.

UNHCR will be responsible for all aspects of protection for internally displaced people, their shelter and the establishment and running of camps, should they prove necessary.

Other agencies will take lead roles in separate areas, the children’s fund UNICEF for such things as water, sanitation and nutrition, the World Food Program for logistics, the World Health Organization for health, UNICEF and OCHA for telecommunications and the U.N. Development Program for long-term rehabilitation and recovery.

Designated lead agencies will both participate directly in operations, but also coordinate with and oversee other organizations within their specific spheres, reporting the results up through a designated chain of command to Egeland at the summit.

It is hoped to establish a central emergency reserve fund of \$500 million to kick-start emergency operations at short notice and individual agencies will also seek direct additional funding from donors to underwrite their new operations.

A series of pilot projects to test the effectiveness of the new approach will be launched in 2006, probably beginning in three of the largest IDP problem areas in Liberia, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Dennis McNamara, the head of the interagency division in Geneva said, “The important point is that in future everyone should know who is responsible for

And here are **millions** more people in need...

THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 25 MILLION PEOPLE internally displaced in their own countries by war or persecution and who have been the subject of growing international concern in the last few years. But there are an equal number of civilians, also labeled as internally displaced people (IDPs), who have been uprooted, not by conflict, but by natural disasters such as earthquakes and famine. UNHCR’s mandate does not specifically cover either group.

Nevertheless, the agency has been involved in an estimated 30 emergencies in the last three decades to assist specific populations of the internally displaced uprooted by war and currently cares for 5.6 million people from this group. In exceptional circumstances, the refugee agency has also provided field staff and materials in natural emergencies such as the 2004 Asian tsunami and the earthquake which ravaged parts of Pakistan and India late in 2005.

The proposed new IDP guidelines cover only UNHCR’s role in helping IDP war victims. Other agencies such as Red Cross societies are expected to be the ‘lead’ organizations in natural disasters. The United Nations University recently estimated that the number of ‘environmental IDPs’ could rocket to 50 million within the next few years, victims not only of cataclysmic events such as tsunamis and earthquakes, but also of drought, deforestation and

desertification. According to University rector Hans Van Ginkel, the international community must get its act together in clearly defining who exactly is a victim of what disaster and which organizations should be responsible to help each group. “We need to define what we mean by political, economic and environmental refugees,” he said. “If we define the problem better, we can prepare for the level of need to be catered for.”



UNHCR/R. CHALASANI/CC/LKA/2003

UNHCR'S MANDATE is specific and **DOES NOT COVER** internally displaced people. However, the agency has been involved on an ad hoc basis with them for more than three decades.

what and that, in the final analysis, the designated lead organization must be held accountable for fulfilling the tasks assigned to it. That has not been the case in the past when there was little accountability.”

According to Egeland the new initiative must be “more effective, predictable and cost effective” all new IDP buzz words. “It must not fail as it did in Darfur in 2004,” he said.

UNHCR AND IDPs

UNHCR'S MANDATE IS SPECIFIC AND DOES NOT cover internally displaced people. However, the agency has been involved on an ad hoc basis with them for more than three decades.

Ironically, in view of the fact that the current crisis in Sudan triggered the latest initiative, it was an earlier crisis in the same country that signaled the refugee agency's first involvement with IDPs.

In a situation remarkably reminiscent of today, peace had been declared in the south of the country in 1972 after years of intermittent war. Tens of thousands of refugees began returning from surrounding countries, but their numbers were dwarfed by civilians who also began to go back to their homes from other areas of the Sudan, people not then known by their subsequent label as IDPs. The refugee agency began helping both groups of civilians and also to rebuild a landscape dev-

astated by conflict—the challenge UNHCR now faces again in the same region.

Since that first operation, either at the behest of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General or the Security Council, UNHCR has participated in more than 30 similar emergencies.

It currently helps 5.6 million people out of the global population of some 25 million.

There are obvious reasons for this overlap and dual role. Refugees and internally displaced people may be victims of the same war, even come from the same village, the only difference being whether they had crossed an international frontier or not. UNHCR's expertise is easily transferable to both groups in many circumstances.

But the agency has always maintained a cautious approach to a deeper involvement, worried about stretching already limited resources by taking on the burden of looking after millions of additional disenfranchised people; the so-called turf wars in an increasingly congested field of humanitarian agencies, governments and even armies; the practical difficulties faced by its staff in the field, particularly security issues; and perhaps most importantly the possibility of diluting or compromising its own 'core' work with refugees.

There have been persistent concerns expressed,

Even when civilians return home, they may face serious problems—ongoing conflicts, destroyed homes, schools and clinics and in Sri Lanka extensive minefields planted both by the military and opposing Tamil Tiger forces.



UNHCR/A. ERIKSSON/DP/IRQ-2004

Several hundred thousand people, mainly Kurds, have returned to their homes in northern Iraq and are rebuilding their communities. But in other areas, one million people remain uprooted by ongoing conflict.

Just **who** are these people?

Frequently asked questions about one of the world's largest and most vulnerable groups

Who are the world's internally displaced people?

They are individuals or groups of people who have been forced to flee their homes to escape armed conflict, generalized violence and human rights abuses. Millions of other civilians who have survived natural disasters such as floods are also generally classified as IDPs, but apart from exceptional circumstances, do not fall within the operational capabilities of UNHCR.

How many persons internally displaced by persecution are there?

The United Nations estimates there are as many as 25 million in 50 countries. Half of the overall total are in Africa. UNHCR currently cares for 5.6 million people from this group, in addition to some 9.2 million refugees.

How do IDPs differ from refugees?

Both groups often leave their

homes for similar reasons. Civilians become internationally recognized as 'refugees' when they cross an international frontier to seek sanctuary in another country. The internally displaced remain, for whatever reason, in their own states.

How are the two groups treated?

Newly arrived refugees normally receive food, shelter and a place of safety from the host country. They are protected by a well-defined body of international laws and conventions. The U.N. refugee agency and other humanitarian organizations work within this legal framework to help refugees restart their lives in a new state or eventually return home.

And IDPs?

The internally displaced often face a far more difficult future. They may be trapped in an ongoing internal conflict. The domestic government, which may

view the uprooted people as 'enemies of the state,' retains ultimate control of their fate. There are no specific international legal instruments covering the internally displaced, and general agreements such as the Geneva Conventions are often difficult to apply. Donors are sometimes reluctant to intervene in internal conflicts or offer sustained assistance.

The IDP problem recently became more widely debated. Why?

In the wake of World War II, the international community focused its attention principally on helping the most obvious victims of the conflict—refugees. In the immediate postwar years, UNHCR was established to further that goal and an international legal framework for refugees was created. As the Cold War ended, the nature of conflict began to change, from superpower confrontation to smaller, internal struggles. These wars helped

produce far larger numbers of internally displaced victims.

How has the international community reacted?

These civilians received limited assistance in the past. The International Committee of the Red Cross, as the guardian of the Geneva Conventions, has been active in this field for many decades. Other agencies and governments began a wider debate in the last few years and in 2005, acknowledging a widespread failure to adequately help internally displaced civilians in the past, adopted what they described as a more coordinated, expansive and 'predictable' approach to tackle the problem.

Guiding Principles

A booklet, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, was also drawn up. The Guiding Principles are not legally binding, but the 30 recommendations—which define who IDPs are, outline a large body of international law already in

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both from within UNHCR itself and by governments and other agencies, over the possible contradiction in trying to help the two groups at the same time. According to this logic, helping people in situ, in their own countries, could complicate another vital branch of the agency's work, helping refugees to seek asylum.

Potential receiving countries could argue, as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia did in 1999, that there was no need to allow civilians fleeing Kosovo to cross into a second country where they would be eligi-

ble to seek asylum because they were already receiving aid inside their own country.

Conversely, other experts argue that states might be prepared to accept asylum seekers more readily if they are convinced that everything has been done inside a troubled country before civilians are forced, as a last resort, to seek the protection of a foreign state.

UNHCR's Executive Committee, has insisted that whatever its involvement inside states "the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law

existence protecting a person's basic rights and the responsibility of states—were designed to help governments and humanitarian organizations in working with the displaced.

With this increased attention, is the number of IDPs decreasing?

The overall number of internally displaced has remained relatively stable at around 25 million in the first years of the new millennium. The refugee agency currently cares for around 5.6 million people in this group, a 21 percent increase compared with 2003. This jump primarily reflected revised government figures from Colombia, where the number of aid recipients rose by nearly 760,000 to 2 million, as well as a group of 660,000 newly registered IDPs in the Darfur region of Sudan.

What is UNHCR's position vis-à-vis the internally displaced?

The agency's mandate specifically covers refugees, but in the last 30 years it has assisted in some 30 operations around the world, from Colombia to Africa to Afghanistan. A comprehensive agreement reached in 2005 will



A SCHOOL IN SOUTHERN SUDAN.

UNHCR/M. PEARSON/DP/SDN2005

reinforce and make more explicit the roles of the international community and specialist agencies in helping internally displaced people.

How does UNHCR respond in the field?

The plight of refugees and IDPs often overlaps and in earlier crises a single coordinated operation has been the most sensible solution, especially during repatriation movements when IDPs were often in the same geographical locations. Under the new regime, UNHCR will take a

specific 'lead' role in the areas where it can bring widespread expertise to bear—protection, shelter and camp management. Other agencies will undertake similar roles in water, sanitation, health, food and logistics. It is hoped to establish a central multimillion dollar fund and increase donor contributions

insurgents. There have also been difficulties at times in helping refugees and IDPs simultaneously. Programs designed to help people in situ—IDPs—by their very nature may complicate asylum procedures. During the Kosovo conflict, for instance, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia argued there was no need to allow displaced persons to cross a frontier to seek asylum because they were already receiving aid in their own country.

Have there been other problem areas in the past?

In the former Yugoslavia and Timor, UNHCR decided to provide protection and assistance to all uprooted peoples on the basis of humanitarian needs rather than refugee status. Refugees are sometimes a minor component in an otherwise massive internal displacement, Colombia being such a major operation in which UNHCR is involved. Effective reintegration of returning refugees also may require assistance to be extended to the internally displaced in the same region as happened in Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Guatemala. ■

to UNHCR as a series of pilot projects to launch the new cooperative measures begins in 2006.

Is there any friction between UNHCR's role with refugees and IDPs?

The organization's Statute has been interpreted flexibly to allow it to work with IDPs and the new cooperation will strengthen this. However, there have been restraints in the past including a lack of security and refusal of access to the displaced by governments and other



and the institution of asylum must not in any way be undermined.”

The debate continues. Writing in Oxford University’s Forced Migration Review journal, Roberta Cohen called the lack of adequate protection for IDPs the “biggest gap” in current efforts to help the group and

said the refugee agency must both expand and redefine its protection role.

“With refugees, it [UNHCR] basically defends their legal right to asylum and *non-refoulement* [the forcible return to a country where a civilian may face persecution],” she said. “With IDPs they are in their own coun-



In the heart of Africa, in Uganda (left) and neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, some 4 million men, women and children have been forced from their homes, often living in the flimsiest of shelter and under constant harassment.

PANDS/A. TORENNI/DP/UGA•2003

tries and should enjoy the same rights as other citizens, but there are no international legal agreements to help,” according to Cohen from the Brookings Institution in Washington. “Protection involves defending their physical safety and a broad range of human rights to which they are entitled.”

In the absence of a specific IDP organization, many advocates in the last decade strongly suggested that UNHCR itself should be designated as the clear lead agency.

In the 1990s, then High Commissioner Sadako Ogata decided that the problems of trying to help addition-

Continued on page 18 ▶



UNHCR/H. TIMMERMAN/S. CS/COL-1998



UNHCR/C. NEVEU/07/AGO-2002



AP/S. AZIM/07/DRCD003



UNICEF/M. FURRIER/HOGA-0251

Colombia

UNHCR helps an estimated 2 million of Colombia's 3.4 million uprooted civilians who often live in appalling shantytowns on the outskirts of the country's major cities. Because of decades of civil conflict, it is the worst humanitarian crisis in the Western Hemisphere.

Angola

Early in the new millennium, Angola was officially classed as the worst place in the world for a child to grow up in. During a quarter century of war, millions of people were forced to flee and hundreds of thousands were killed. In the last three years, following a peace treaty between government and rebel forces, several million people have returned home, including 900,000 in 2004 alone—proof that even the most deadly crises can be resolved successfully.

D.R. Congo

More than 2.3 million civilians were displaced in Democratic Congo, the third highest total in the world. But in a bewildering mosaic of movement, even as new groups were being uprooted in the heart of Africa, an estimated one million people went back to their homes in safer parts of the country.

Uganda

The situation among an estimated 1.4 million uprooted people in northern Uganda is so precarious that entire villages often decamp at night, moving to safer locations such as schools and factories (pictured) to escape armed militias of the so-called Lord's Resistance Army who routinely destroy homes and kill, kidnap and rape hapless civilians.



The world's INTERNALLY



Sudan

Sudan has the largest number of IDPs in the world – a staggering six million. Many live in appalling conditions, particularly in the Darfur region, and continue to be subject to military attack, rape and kidnap. Basics such as food, water and shelter are often in short supply with even aid convoys subject to armed attack.

The Balkans

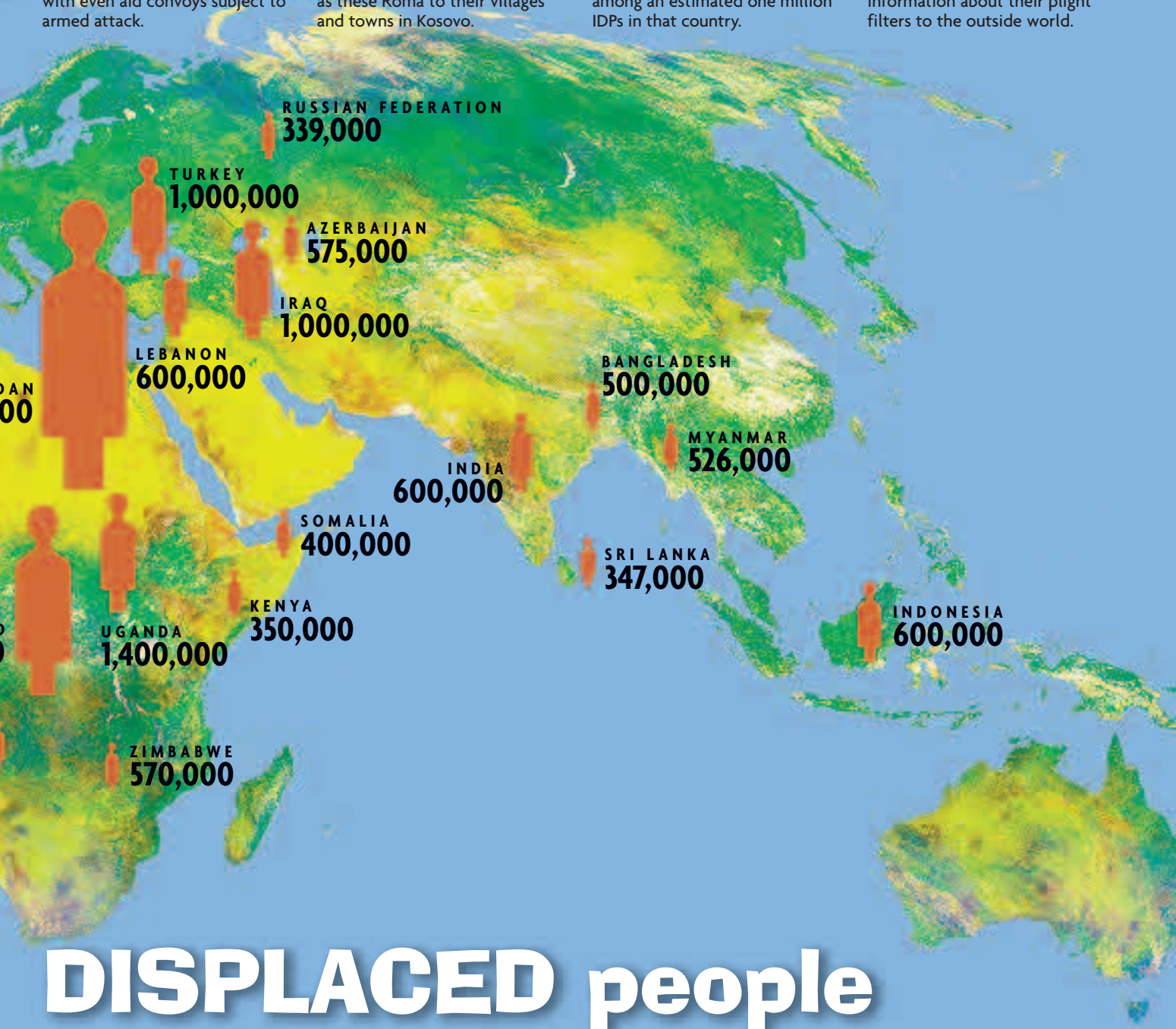
The shooting has stopped in the Balkans and more than 2.5 million people have returned to their homes. But hundreds of thousands of other civilians are still waiting for a chance to go back to their ancestral lands, particularly ethnic Serbs and minorities such as these Roma to their villages and towns in Kosovo.

Iraq

Following the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, several hundred thousand persons returned to their homes, mainly Kurds in the north of the country where the refugee agency has ongoing programs. However, many others continued to flee their homes because of ongoing violence, among an estimated one million IDPs in that country.

Myanmar

Millions of people in at least 20 countries remain at 'constant risk of death' because of ongoing military activities near their homes and villages. Many other uprooted persons, such as this family in Myanmar, receive no aid from their own governments and little information about their plight filters to the outside world.



DISPLACED people

al millions of people—the need for more financial and physical resources, mandate complications and the suspicions of other agencies—were simply too enormous for one organization and backed away from that approach.

Joel Charny, vice-president for policy at the advocacy group Refugees International remains a champion of a single leadership approach. “The collaborative response remains deeply flawed,” he wrote in the Forced Migration Review. The U.N. leadership should “agree to make UNHCR the centerpiece of the global response to internal displacement” such an approach

bringing ‘clarity’ to a broken system.

High Commissioner Guterres outlined his own approach in August. The agency’s traditional refugee mandate would not be compromised, he said, even as its role with IDPs expanded.

Additional funding would be vital, but he stressed the same targets as Egeland—predictability, coordination and cooperation.

“We are part of a team,” he emphasized, recognizing the sensitivity of the subject. “We are willing to have a leading role in some areas, but within the framework of a team, respecting the mandates of all other agencies. We are not going to do anything alone.”

DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD

THE FUTURE REMAINS uncertain. However effectively humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR respond to the legal and material needs of the world’s uprooted peoples, ultimately only political solutions will solve any particular emergency.

“We have failed these people for too long,” Egeland repeated recently. “Too often we have been a big plaster covering the wound. But this will not heal without political agreements to settle the problem.”

Angola is a case study, highlighting not only the worst kind of deprivation and persecution hapless civilians are subject to, but also how quickly even the most protracted crisis can be turned around, given the political will of opposing groups.

Three years ago, the southern African state was literally a humanitarian basket case. Potentially one of the continent’s richest countries with an abundance of oil, gems, minerals and agricultural land, it had been mired in civil war for more than a quarter century since independence from Portugal.

It was officially classed as the worst place in the

world for a child to grow up in and the legacy to its young people, even if they survived into adulthood “will be a vast plain of scorched earth,” according to the U.N. at the time.

The World Food Program reported: “Civil war has been bleeding the country for so long that the cynical observer would be inclined to think it is business as usual there” where “the dead already number in the hundreds of thousands, the mutilated more than 100,000, the displaced well into the millions.”

But when a peace treaty was signed between the government and rebel forces in 2002, villagers immediately began flocking back to their homes, many walking hundreds or thousands of miles without assistance to start rebuilding villages which had been razed to the ground. An estimated 900,000 went back in 2004 alone and though the country remains in a fragile state, there is at least cautious optimism for what had been one of the world’s most vicious and intractable conflicts.

A power sharing agreement the following year in neighboring Democratic Congo triggered a similar mass return. There were signs of movement in the broken state of Somalia on the Horn of Africa. People on foot, in trucks, on bicycles, by air and by boat went back to Liberia, parts of Sudan and Afghanistan. Significantly, there were no major new conflicts in 2004.

However, there were as many ongoing ‘black spots’ as there were hopeful developments. As earlier noted, for every civilian returning home, another was displaced last year.

If some governments had incorporated the Guiding Principles into domestic legislation and others at least paid lip service to the idea of honoring human rights obligations, many others ignored international pressure and insisted the concept of absolute sovereignty was paramount.

In at least 13 countries, governments responsible for the protection of their own populations, were actively involved in military campaigns against those same civilians, according to the Global IDP Project run by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Nearly 20 million civilians in 20 countries remained at ‘constant risk of death’ because of ongoing military activity near their homes, the project reported. In 19 states there was not even any real information on the wars in those regions and the fate of millions of other people, it added.

Such precarious situations—ongoing war, scarce information, governments fighting their own populations—underlined the enormous challenges faced by the international community, particularly UNHCR and its protection portfolio—even if leading humanitarian organizations are now willing to increase their assistance.

Will recalcitrant states, especially governments such as those in Myanmar, the Central African Republic or Nepal who, according to the Global IDP Project, offer no help to embattled civilians, cooperate? How

MAJOR IDP POPULATIONS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR

	COUNTRY	IDPS
1.	Colombia	2,000,000
2.	Sudan	662,300
3.	Azerbaijan	578,500
4.	Liberia	531,700
5.	Sri Lanka	386,100
6.	Russian Federation	353,800
7.	Bosnia-Herzegovina	327,100
8.	Serbia-Montenegro	257,700
9.	Georgia	237,500
10.	Afghanistan	186,900
11.	Côte d’Ivoire	38,000
12.	Croatia	12,500

will field officials be able to offer protection in areas where conflicts continued unabated? How will protection officers protect themselves in such hostile environments?

A TURNING POINT?

DENNIS McNAMARA, the director of the internal displacement division in Geneva believes that despite ongoing concerns about the new approach to IDPs, it nevertheless “represents a pretty dramatic development in U.N. terms.” He added, “The trick now is that we must transform these commitments into action on the ground.”

As well as convincing involved governments to cooperate, traditional donors must also be brought on board. Many have already expressed their concerns that victims of internal displacement have been ignored for too long, but the costs of addressing the problem will be enormous—at least \$1 billion annually, according to McNamara.

The donors, needing to meet increasing global demands with smaller budgets, have, like the agencies themselves, been criticized on occasion for ‘picking and choosing’ the crises they assist. Thus, while high profile catastrophes such as the Asian tsunami triggered an overwhelming global response and virtually



the donors are prepared to move in,” he said recently after months of high level consultations. “But only if they see the agencies working effectively on the ground.” He added that this could be a Catch-22 situation: “It is admittedly a vicious circle. The agencies can’t work effectively without those additional resources.”

The bottom line was summed up by former UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner Kamel Morjane who said: “It is neither ethical nor practical to distinguish between human beings because of a border they may or may not have crossed. Human life should have the same worth whether a person is a refugee or an IDP.”

A key component in helping the bulk of Liberia’s civilian population to resume their normal lives has been the disarmament of thousands of young fighters who surrender their weapons in exchange for a small fee.

“It is neither ethical nor practical to distinguish between human beings because of a border they may or may not have crossed. Human life should have **THE SAME WORTH** whether a person is a **REFUGEE OR AN IDP.**”

unlimited funding, many far less ‘glamorous’ emergencies received scant attention or assistance. Some aid workers worried that as their role with IDPs increased, funds might be transferred from ongoing projects rather than new money being found.

Walter Kälin, the U.N. appointed IDP representative on human rights, believes the donors will respond... in certain circumstances. “My feeling is that

And the challenge of a newspaper editorial in the Canberra Times written after the U.N. Secretary-General’s call to arms more than five years ago remains as relevant today as it did then: “On whether history will view it [Kofi Annan’s initiative] as a quixotic gesture or a first and brave step towards a genuine new world order, rests the prosperity, happiness and perhaps the lives of millions of human beings.” ■

“The word echoed in my mind like a conviction or a diagnosis for an incurably ill patient”

COMING TO TERMS WITH BEING A REFUGEE

BY MARIJANA ILIC

T

THE CURTAIN FELL AND WE ALL ran off the stage to the sound of applause. Near the wardrobe door there was a man with a microphone in his hand and another with a camera on his shoulder. The microphone man approached me:

“Hi! You were great on the stage. Tell us some things about yourself. Like, how old you are. How and

when did you start acting and anything else you wish to say about yourself...”

I looked up at him and at the microphone. The things I could not tell about myself came to my mind first.

Once upon a time I became a refugee. Although I thought that at my age I could only be a boy and that my play yard would be there for as long as there were waking mornings, it did not take long before I perceived how wrong I was.

This is a story about some roads: the one I have already travelled and the other I have just started. The first is still very vivid in my memory and the second blurred in my expectations

I remember how I walked that first road holding my mum's hand. There were other families with cars, tractors, grandmas, aunts... We had none. Just the two of us.

That road was unfamiliar to me, and obviously not picked by mum. Throughout the trip I was scared to let go of her hand. I was five and she was twenty-nine, and yet I felt as if we were both very small.

Drifting away, I saw our village all in flames and

smoke and wondered what had happened to my bed-mate, the plush penguin. The very recollection of my toys was enough to fill my heart with sadness and my eyes with tears. I was tired and I needed my bed. Was there an end to this road, and if so, what would be there when we arrived?

It was during our walking when mum and I learnt from a relative that dad had been killed. Uncle's jumbled words, bits and pieces that were splashed into my face, interfered with my mind. I was never to see dad again!

Mum was standing still, fixedly looking at her feet, her hand becoming sweaty. I did not take mine away; instead, I moved closer, and stayed tightly next to her. Not detaching her eyes from her feet, mum nodded silently, marking the end of that conversation.

As I looked back at my uncle, I realised that it was also a goodbye to my dad. Perhaps the end of that conversation was also the end to our hopes. Only then did I see the tears rolling down mum's cheeks.

Mum did not stop crying along the whole road of meaningless kilometers. At its end there was nobody and no place waiting for us. We were shifted from one point to another, yet, none was ever our own village. Dad was not waiting for us anywhere.

Once, as we stopped to eat, I looked at mum and said: “Please don't cry.” She touched my head and kissed me softly in the cheek: “I love you, angel.” With my nose resting at her neck and my arms around it, everything was almost back to normal. I needed so little! Then I thought how all children needed so little.

The first time

It was when we arrived at our final destination that I heard the word ‘refugee’ for the first time. It was confus-

ing to realise that I became someone defined by a word I had never heard of before. And it has never become clear to me when this metamorphosis took place: whether I became a refugee when we left the village, on the road, or when we arrived at the collective center. For some reason, I imagined that I became a refugee the moment my dad died.

Mum worked 'from time to time' and I joined a kindergarten. Many people visited the center. Cars with different huge labels on their doors would come and go, and the people in the cars were called humanitarian workers.

In our new environment, instead of having friends there were people who were paid to pay visits. They were 'friends' by profession. I wondered if they would also come to my birthday party, bring me presents, or perhaps bring their children to play with me. I learnt that this was a different kind of friendship, where we did not even have to know each others' names.

Among other things mum got a stove for our room with a label on it: UNHCR. I first tried to scrape off the letters, which was impossible and then copied the sign into my book.

"What's this for, mum?" I asked. "Nothing son. It's there to make sure we understand we are refugees." After that, I stopped drawing the sign in my notebook, and tried to avoid even looking at it.

When children at school called me a 'refugee' the word echoed in my mind like a conviction or a diagnosis for an incurably ill patient. And indeed, I often felt like a patient. Different memories haunted me: memories from the past with my dad and my yard, as well as the ones from recent days, where I was struggling to trade the name 'refugee' for the title of 'teenager.'

A compromise

One day, one of our new 'friends' came to explain about some loans and how anybody who wanted to start something could apply.

"What do you think?" I asked mum.

"No."

"But mum, you could try."

"No, That is not for us. As if I could ever get that. I am a nobody. Just another refugee."

Later, on another Sunday morning mum came to me with a leaflet. UNHCR was organizing a local theatre troop and children aged 7 to 16 were invited to become actors. I continued to watch TV. Mum said:

"Well? What do you think?"

"About what?"

"This theatre. You could join. That would be good for you."

"No, that's not for me."

"I think you need to do something, apart from your school. I think that acting is very healthy."

"Well, maybe. But, it's not for me. I'm fine as it is."

Our eyes met. I stood up and asked:

"Why don't you take that loan then?"

"That's different."

"Is it? O.K. This is different, too."

"Listen, you are young. You need to do something for yourself..." Before she finished, I interrupted her.

"Mum, listen. Let's put it like this. If you apply for the loan, I will join the theatre."

Our eyes met and she delicately touched my head. She smiled so seldom that I had forgotten that she was capable of such a motion. It reminded me of the fact that I had a very beautiful mum with the warmest eyes I could imagine.

She nodded and firmly said:

"All right. Let's do it."

Happily, I stood up to give her a big hug; with my nose resting at her neck and my arms around her shoulders, everything was back to normal. And once again I thought that I needed so little. This time I whispered to her ear:

"Are you afraid to try and fail?"

She nodded wordlessly. It was the first time, after we had passed our road, that I saw her crying again.

That night, before going to bed I took out from the drawer a photograph where dad was holding me on my new two-wheel bike. I turned the back of it and read for the first time the words: "You will never ride if you don't have a go."

I held the photograph pasted on my cheek, and then whispered

"Mum?"

"Yes?" She replied from her bed.

"Nothing. Just wanted to hear your voice," I said.

And I want us to have a go, I thought.

Standing in front of the dressing room, the reporter took my arm: "Let's sit there," he said pointing at a couple of chairs at the end of the passage. The cameraman followed. We sat down, and I looked around. At that moment the red camera lamp turned on, and I started my first sentence:

"I am a teenager, and I joined the troop when I was ten..."

"I heard the word 'refugee' for the first time. It was confusing to realise that I had become someone defined by a word I had never heard of before."

2005

JUXTAPOSED, THE IMAGES are both horrifying and hopeful. In the steamy waters of the Gulf of Aden, bodies wash lazily ashore onto the pristine beaches of Yemen. The hands of the dead men are lashed tightly behind their back, victims of smugglers or pirates. They stood no chance in their desperate dash for freedom from the chaos which engulfs parts of the Horn of Africa. But in other areas of that benighted region, in southern Sudan, hundreds of thousands of people are spontaneously on the march, returning to their tribal towns and villages after years of warfare, rebuilding their huts and opening their schoolbooks in bullet riddled classrooms.

In Colombia, teenage boys are coldbloodedly executed by armed gangs as that country's relentless decades-old internal conflict shows few signs of ending. Further north, in the American town of Utica, two young girls pore over computers and textbooks en route to a bright new future. Unlike the Colombian youngsters, these girls came up lucky in the perilous global lottery in which millions of the world's uprooted people are forced to play each day. They escaped the ravages of a similar conflict, this time in the jungles of Myanmar in Southeast Asia, but were able to restart their lives after being selected to permanently resettle in the United States (REFUGEES N° 138).

In today's worst humanitarian crisis, in Darfur, women are routinely raped, men killed and dragged through the streets behind horses and camels and even aid convoys are pillaged because there is nothing else left to loot. Two million people have been ripped from their homes there. In Afghanistan, which suffered similar devastation to Darfur, more than 4 million civilians have returned to their homes since late 2001, including more than 700,000 in 2005. This ongoing repatriation has been one of the largest and most successful population returns in modern history.

SHARP CONTRASTS

ERIKA FELLER, the director of international protection at UNHCR, summed up these decidedly conflicting humanitarian snapshots and the year 2005 in general as a time of "sharp contrasts" marked by ongoing widespread violence, endemic human rights

abuses and waning generosity among traditional humanitarian donors, but also a period of high rates of civilian returns in some parts of the world and falling numbers of people seeking asylum.

At the start of 2005, for instance, the number of refugees worldwide had fallen to 9.2 million, the lowest in nearly a quarter century. The 839,000 asylum seekers in leading industrial countries was also the smallest number in 16 years. Those trends continued through 2005.

In addition to the returning Afghans and southern Sudanese mentioned above, people were moving back to their ancestral lands in the heart of Africa, in Angola, in the West of the continent and in parts of Iraq and Sri Lanka.

The Balkans marked the 10th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords which helped bring an end to the wars there. More than 2.5 million people have returned home throughout the region.

A so-called Mexico Plan of Action signed by 20 countries and described as the most sophisticated operational instrument to protect refugees in the world, was beginning to make an impact in Latin American countries.

But in sharp contrast to those success stories, the number of people uprooted by conflict but still living in their own countries stayed at a stubborn total of 25 million. Leading humanitarian agencies, including UNHCR, agreed that a new, more collaborative approach was necessary to successfully tackle this problem (*see page 2*).

Additionally, the most recent information classified another 11 million people as 'stateless'—or persons without a country to call their own and often without access to even the most basic human rights, including education, housing and even the right to die legally.

Security remained a major headache. Millions of refugees and internally displaced persons such as those in Sudan and Colombia, the boat people en route to Yemen or the Africans trying to gate-crash Europe across the Mediterranean Sea and through several Spanish enclaves on the African mainland, were under daily threat. Aid workers themselves continued to be regularly targeted. Several were killed in Afghanistan, Sudan and other countries during the year.

"Protection is not a choice, but an obligation," Erika

Year in Review

Feller had to remind states attending UNHCR's annual Executive Committee meeting. At the same venue, High Commissioner António Guterres warned that this protection regime was under threat by populist politicians and scaremongering media campaigns which had created an atmosphere of xenophobia and rising intolerance in some parts of the world.

SHAKING ALL OVER

AND THEN EVEN THE EARTH MOVED... twice... terrifyingly... at the end of 2005 high in the Himalayan mountains and valleys between Pakistan and India, leveling thousands of towns and remote mountain-top villages... and earlier, in late 2004, along the sun drenched, palm fringed beaches of the Indian Ocean.

Within minutes, the lives of millions of people were destroyed by the two natural calamities.

More than 200,000 people were killed when the India and Burma tectonic plates grated against each other far below the earth's surface on December 26, 2004, triggering an underwater earthquake and a massive wave of death called a tsunami towering 100 feet high which crashed onto the shores of at least 13 countries. It was one of the deadliest earthquakes ever recorded, lasting nearly 10 minutes compared to a 'normal' tremor of a few seconds.

The entire globe vibrated at least a few centimeters and lesser quakes were recorded as far away as Alaska. While countries such as Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand bore the brunt of the tsunami, people were killed as far away as Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 5,000 miles from the epicenter.

In the Himalayan catastrophe, around 80,000 persons were killed and weeks later, as winter and heavy snows closed in on the region, it continued to be a race against time to try to save the lives of untold numbers of other civilians facing some of the most severe conditions on earth with virtually no shelter or food.

The crises confronted governments, aid and humanitarian agencies with unprecedented dilemmas, challenges and subsequent 'lessons learned.'

UNHCR, for instance, doesn't normally become involved in natural emergencies, but such was the scale of each catastrophe that in addition to its ongoing refugee projects, it also geared up to join virtually every other available organization in pouring field teams and emergency supplies—tents, blankets, cook-

ing stoves, plastic sheeting and temporary accommodations from its warehouses around the world—into the stricken regions.

In an effort to beat the impending snows in the Himalayas, it mounted a joint airlift of supplies with NATO cargo planes from several countries, the biggest humanitarian air bridge since a 3 1/2-year operation helped to sustain the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo during the Balkan wars in the early 1990s.

The response to the tsunami was so overwhelming that bizarrely, a negative backlash developed. In Sri Lanka alone, as many as 500 charities arrived and organizations often got into each other's way, a situation which has plagued some earlier refugee crises. The Red Cross later criticized agencies for failing to adequately coordinate their operations.

The two earthquakes highlighted the capricious and fragile nature of funding humanitarian crises.

The tsunami triggered an overwhelming international response, partially because the disaster was recorded instantly by legions of professional and amateur movie cameras, video phones and still cameras, partially because some of the victims were tourists from wealthy countries and partially because the hardest hit areas were relatively accessible.

Billions of dollars poured in. So much so that some agencies returned unspent funds to donors. Oxfam claimed that much of the aid which did arrive was distributed among wealthy landowners rather than the worst hit victims.

In contrast to the tsunami largesse and despite increasingly frantic appeals and the menacing approach of winter, aid for the Pakistan earthquake victims remained extremely limited and late and for exactly the opposite reasons to the tsunami—partially because much of the devastation and suffering had not been captured dramatically on film and broadcast to a shocked world audience, partially because there were no tourists or other highly visible foreigners in the region and partially because the worst hit areas were very inaccessible.

Virtually everyone agreed the international community had to do better to help all uprooted persons—refugees, people displaced by natural calamity or war within their own countries. Strategies were adopted and projects mapped out. The forthcoming year will be a major test on whether organizations will be able to translate their words into deeds.



THE INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI and its aftermath ushered in the new year. An equally devastating earthquake in Pakistan completed an annus horribilis. Around 300,000 persons were killed in the two natural calamities and the lives of hundreds of thousands of others were destroyed. The U.N. refugee agency, already helping more than 19 million uprooted persons, nevertheless stripped its warehouses of emergency supplies such as tents and blankets, organized airlifts including a coordinated air bridge with NATO planes to Pakistan and dispatched field teams to the regions in an unprecedented effort to help the stricken victims.



UNHCR/B. BALOCH/DP/PAK*2005

2005 YEAR IN REVIEW



AFP/5. ARANDY/DP/MAR-2005



ANSA/F. LANNINO/DP/ITA-2005/ PHOTO COURTESY OF ANSA, NOT FOR ARCHIVING OR RESALE.



SHS/N. BANJANOU/DP/YEM-2005



TRYING TO ESCAPE WAR OR PERSECUTION, SEEKING A SAFER LIFE can be as deadly as the original conflict. Untold numbers of victims, like the bodies of these Somalis and Ethiopians washed up on the shores of Yemen and their abandoned smugglers boat, never make it. Others trek for thousands of miles across inhospitable landscapes, like this African sleeping in the middle of the Sahara desert or take a hazardous sea trip en route to a hoped for new life in Europe.

2005 YEAR IN REVIEW



UNHCR/B. HEGER/DP/7CD-2005



UNHCR/M. PEARSON/DP/UGA-2005



UNHCR/N. BEHRING/DP/ZMB-2003



UNHCR/B. HEGER/DP/ECU-2004

MILLIONS OF REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS were on the move during the year. Many were returning home (*right*), some after years or decades in exile: across the African continent in Angola, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and other countries, in Afghanistan and Iraq. But there were large numbers of newly uprooted peoples, some of them ironically from states such as Sudan, Democratic Congo and Iraq which were welcoming back groups of civilians who had fled earlier upheavals.



UNHCR/R. COLVILLE/DP/AFG+1997



UNHCR/B. HEGER/DP/TCD+2005




UNHCR/N. TAKAGI/DP/DRC+2005



UNHCR/R. OLCHIK /DP/LBR+2004



UNHCR/M. FARSON/DP/BDN+2006



IN AN ERA OF RISING XENOPHOBIA, PHYSICAL AND LEGAL DETERRENDS AND HUMAN rights abuses against uprooted peoples in many regions of the world, UNHCR again insisted that the protection of innocent civilians was an obligation and not a choice. But the barriers continued to go up: the border at the Spanish enclave of Ceuta; Indian and Bangladeshi asylum seekers in detention in Slovakia; the British tabloid press and its war against asylum seekers.

FAMILY EXPRESS
PAPER 5p
Why do most women now believe they will only find happiness if they quit work?
ASYLUM IS SIX TIMES WORSE THAN FEARED
Shock figures from Home Office expert

