

CHAPTER VII

CAPACITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF HOST COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

UNHCR works with governments, NGOs, donors, international partners and refugees to strengthen protection activities and improve the prospects for durable solutions for millions of refugees in both developed and developing countries. Although most refugees and asylum-seekers primarily seek asylum in their region of origin, many developing countries, including those hosting significant numbers of refugees, have limited capacities to protect and assist refugees in accordance with international standards. This poses significant challenges to governments and the international community alike. Refugee protection principles require sharing responsibility between countries as many countries of asylum and origin in the developing world have difficulty in coping with the large number of refugees they host.

Indeed, refugee situations have both measurable and non-measurable impacts on refugees themselves, on the country of origin and on the country of asylum. The social, psychological and economic impact on refugees themselves is significant, as most refugee situations result from wars or grave human rights violations.

For countries of origin, especially in the case of mass outflows, the social impact can be estimated for instance by analysing the level of distortion of family structures reflected by an increase in the number of separated families and unaccompanied children. The number of abandoned villages, poverty, sexual and gender-based violence and psychological disorders that usually result from conflicts may also increase. The economic impact on these countries, such as decreasing agricultural and livestock production, can also be observed.

Refugee arrivals in host countries might have both positive and negative effects. The latter is related to pressure on scarce resources, concerns about national security, or the rising of xenophobia exacerbated by political groups in some countries. In contrast, when allowed to become self-reliant or integrate locally, refugees can contribute actively to the host country economy and society as workers and consumers.

Countries' contribution to international refugee protection is multifaceted. It can take the form of providing asylum, finding a durable solution or funding refugee protection and/or assistance activities in poorer countries. For developing countries, which, due to their frequent proximity to conflict zones, host large groups of refugees, caring for refugees implies using resources from an already fragile economy. To alleviate these pressures, the international community, especially high-income countries, provides assistance through UNHCR, other international agencies, non-governmental organizations or bilaterally. They also admit refugees, either through planned resettlement programmes or by accepting asylum-seekers.

This chapter highlights the capacities and contributions of host countries in providing refugee protection. The analysis is limited to refugees only due to statistical and methodological constraints. On the basis of selected indicators, a measure is provided to compare and rank countries according to their respective contribution to refugee protection.

METHODOLOGY

Ideally, the impact of hosting refugees and other persons of concern as well as the support provided should be quantified both in terms of the national and international protection and assistance they receive, as well as the contributions they make to the host country society and economy. However, comprehensive and comparable data on these subjects are not always available. Therefore, use has been made of both the volume and the duration of stay of refugees in asylum countries as an indication for the contribution of host countries to refugee protection.

It is generally understood that the impact of hosting refugees is most strongly felt in countries with limited resources. Under the assumption that countries with strong economies, large national population or space are more likely to be capable of absorbing refugees, UNHCR determines the ability or capacity to host refugees by applying three parameters: the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita¹, the size of the national population and total land area.

For comparative purposes, the GDP (PPP) per capita is one of the most widely used means of measuring a country's wealth and development, even though it does not reflect the sometimes very unequal distribution of its wealth. The GDP, however, may not adequately take into account the informal economy, which tends to be sizeable in developing countries. By comparing the refugee population with the GDP per capita of a country, a measure can be obtained of the relative impact of providing protection although protection and assistance are not only a wealth issue. If the number of refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita (PPP) is high, the relative contribution and thus effort made by countries compared to the national economy can be considered as high. In contrast, if there are few refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita, it is considered as small.

Similarly, it may be argued that the capacity to absorb refugees is higher for larger countries, both in terms of national population size and surface area, than for smaller ones. While data on these both parameters is widely available, they have considerable limitations. In most countries, refugees are not evenly distributed over the national territory, but are often concentrated in border areas or cities. Therefore, applying country indicators provides a very simplified picture. Similarly, the national surface area does not take into account that large areas of a country may not be available for productive use.

Other criteria such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and its three components (education, life expectancy and GDP) were also considered. The statistical relationship between the HDI and the number of refugees by origin was, however, found to be very weak. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the calculation has also shown that both the HDI and its component indices were negatively correlated with the number of refugees per country of origin in developing countries. In other words, if a country's level of education, GDP and life expectancy, and therefore HDI, is high, it is less likely to produce refugees. Without implying any causal relationship, these findings are fully in line with UNHCR's strategy to develop policies for durable solutions and life saving activities in areas such as education, health or self-reliance, benefiting both the refugees as well as host populations.

The relationship between refugee numbers and governance indicators (rule of law, political stability) has also been explored but concerns about data quality and

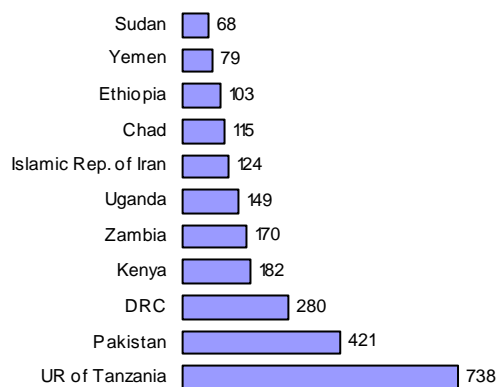
¹ In order to compare countries, the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) GDP is considered (Source: IMF).

subjective interpretation of some indicators does not permit a reliable comparative analysis. Nevertheless, although influenced by extreme values, the statistical analysis showed that, similar to the HDI components, countries with a low rule of law indicator are more likely to be a source country of refugees than those with a high or acceptable rule of law indicator. This finding is fully in accordance with UNHCR's activities in providing training to local authorities on refugee protection principles as well as humanitarian and human rights laws contributing to improved governance in some countries.

GDP PER CAPITA

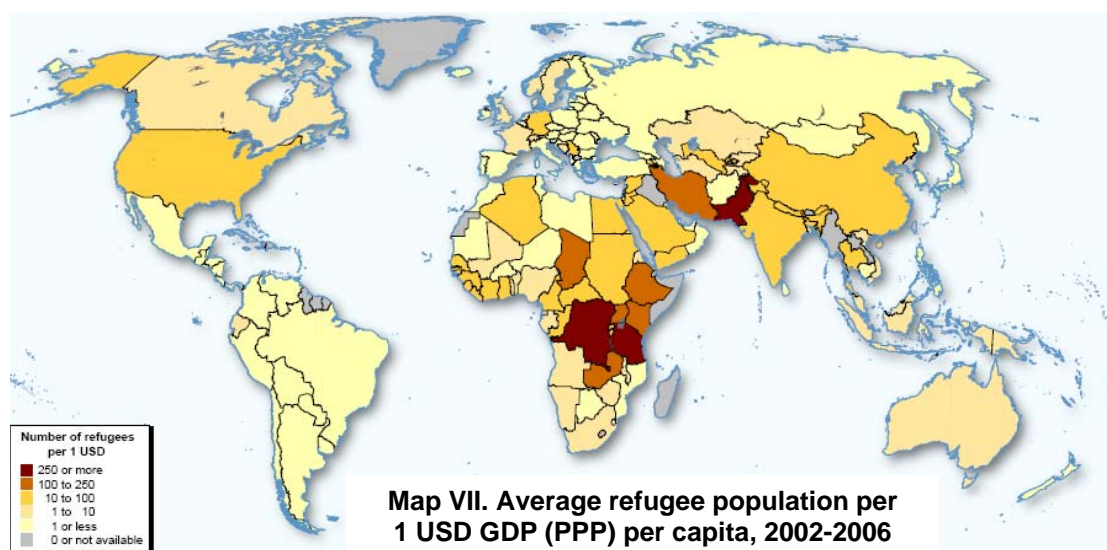
Given their low GDP (PPP) per capita and large number of refugees they host, African and Asian countries had the highest refugee population per 1 USD GDP per capita at the end of 2006. Seven sub-Saharan and three Asian countries occupy the

FigVII.1 Number of refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita, 2002-2006



first 10 places in the classification of number of refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita. Because of its relatively small GDP (PPP) per capita and the large number of refugees it has been hosting for years, the United Republic of Tanzania had the largest refugee population per 1 USD GDP per capita in 2006. During the period 2002-2006, the country provided, on average, asylum to almost 740 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita. This is, however, 15 per cent less than during 2001-2005 (868 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP)) which is most likely the result of significant numbers of Burundian and Congolese refugees returning to their

respective countries during 2006. Pakistan, which hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, was the country with the second highest refugee population compared to its economic resources (421 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita against 522 in 2005). These two countries are followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 280 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita.



Among the 37 countries with an average of more than 10 refugees per 1 USD GDP (PPP) per capita, more than half (19) are located in sub-Saharan Africa, while 15 are in North Africa or Asia. Serbia and Montenegro (34 refugees per 1 USD GDP),

Germany (26) and the United States of America (12) are the only countries included in this list which fall outside of Africa or Asia. In addition to Germany and the United States of America, other major receiving industrialized countries include the United Kingdom (8 refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita), France and Canada (4 each). Among the 10 major refugee-hosting countries, the level of responsibility differs significantly. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the highest ranking country with respect to number of refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita, the level is almost 10 times higher than in Yemen, which ranked 10th.

POPULATION SIZE

The number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants provides a useful indication of the capacity of countries to host refugees. Countries with larger populations can be assumed to absorb refugees more easily than countries with smaller populations. This indicator is obtained by dividing the yearly average of the number of refugees hosted by a country for the last five years by the national population size of 2006.

By applying this criterion, the country with the highest contribution to refugee protection is Armenia, despite having witnessed a significant decrease in its refugee population in 2006 as a result of a census. On average, Armenia hosted 71 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants during the period 2002-2006 compared to 80 refugees for the period 2001-2005. In other words, about 7 per cent of Armenia's current de facto population consists of refugees. With an average of 36 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, Djibouti is ranked second as compared to its third place the year earlier. Serbia and Montenegro fell to third place because of a continuous decrease in the refugee population (50,000 refugees less than in 2005) which is mainly the result of cessation of refugee status of Bosnian and Croatian refugees in combination with voluntary repatriation movements. As such, Serbia and Montenegro hosted on average 22 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants at the end of 2006 (28 the year before), followed by Congo (21), Chad (20), and Jordan (17).

Fig VII.2 Number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, 2002-2006

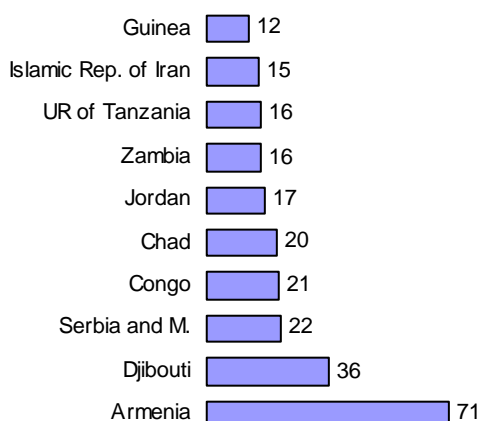
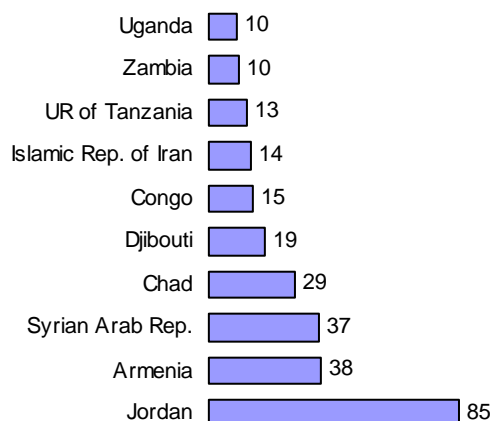


Fig VII.3 Number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, end-2006



Only taking into account the yearly average of the number of refugees in the hosting country (see Figure VII.2) can hide some interesting patterns, especially the impact of recent displacement. Figures VII.2 and VII.3 present the same indicator (refugees per 1,000 inhabitants), but cover two different time periods. First, the yearly average of refugees for the period 2002-2006, and, second the number of refugees at the end of 2006 only. As can be expected, the effect of new displacement is clearly reflected by the ranking of Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Chad, and Serbia and

Montenegro. Taking only the at the end of 2006 data into account, Jordan² occupies first place with 85 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants or roughly 9 per cent of the de facto population in the country being refugees. Given the country's current population size, and assuming that the industrialized countries had the same rate, the United States of America would be hosting as much as 25 million refugees and the United Kingdom some 5 million.

Among the top 10 refugee-hosting countries per 1,000 inhabitants, four countries, namely Chad, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia feature also among the top 10 countries with the highest refugee number per 1 USD GDP per capita.

As noted earlier, the 4.4 million Palestinian refugees falling under the mandate of UNRWA are not included in UNHCR statistics. However, in relation to their population size, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Syrian Arab Republic all rank among the top refugee-hosting countries or territories.

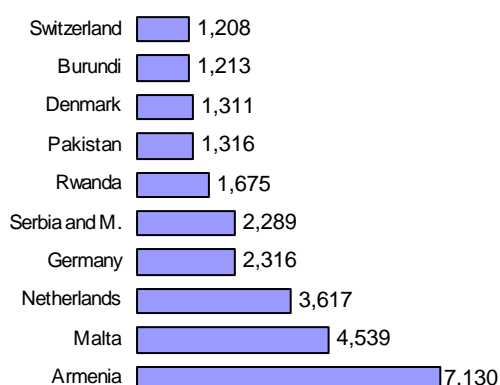
The above analysis suggests that, the economic and demographic effects of hosting refugees are felt mostly in Africa and Asia. Because of the significant number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, these two countries are the main countries outside the African continent where the economic impact of refugees on the local economy is most significant. The demographic impact is quite equally similar in the two regions but when recent displacement only is considered, all top three countries are located in Asia.

LAND AREA

The capacity of countries to absorb refugees not only depends on their economic structure but also on their population density. In developing countries, where the economy is primarily driven by agriculture, population density and availability of land have crucial protection implications. The size of the national territory, however, is a very crude indicator because it does not differentiate between land that can be used for productive purposes and one that cannot be. Moreover, this indicator also does not take into account the type of economy. While access to arable land is essential in developing countries and in particular for refugees with farming background, this is less important in more developed countries which can sustain much denser populations than agricultural societies can do. This indicator can, however, provide a good insight into the problem of land pressure and subsequently potential protection-related implications it might have in developing countries.

Unlike the other two criteria analysed above, six of the countries included in the top 10 countries based on the comparison of the average annual refugee population during 2002-2006 and the size of the country are developed economies. Like in 2005, Armenia hosted the highest number of refugees per 1,000 square kilometres. On average, the country hosted 7,100 refugees per 1,000 square kilometres. With 4,500 refugees per

Fig VII.4 Number of refugees per 1,000 square kilometres, 2002-2006



² Jordan was the sixth largest refugee hosting country in 2006 with an estimated 500,000 refugees, mainly from Iraq.

1,000 square kilometres, Malta is now hosting the second largest number of refugees compared to its national size, followed by the Netherlands (3,600 per 1,000 km²), the latter having ranked second in 2006. Germany (2,300 refugees per 1,000 km²), Serbia and Montenegro (2,300), and Rwanda (1,700) are other important hosting countries based on this indicator. The top 10 countries remain the same as last year, albeit with different order. Serbia and Montenegro and Armenia are the only countries appearing in the top 10 countries of both population and land criteria and among the major 20 countries of all three criteria.

Although the economic and demographic effects of hosting refugees are particularly felt in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, the impact on the size of the national territory is higher in industrialized countries. Seven out of 10 countries with the lowest capacity to host refugees according to the land indicator were located in Europe, primarily because of their land size. However, it was also noted that the number of refugees per 1,000 square kilometres is of limited relevance in determining the capacity of industrialized countries to host refugees.

When only developing countries are included in the classification, Rwanda is ranked first, followed by Pakistan, Burundi, Jordan, Uganda, Gambia, Nepal, the Syrian Arab Republic and Djibouti. Most of these countries are characterized by small superficies and their economy is primarily driven by agriculture.