

Displaced people wait for assistance beside the airport in Bangui, Central African Republic



Life interrupted,

by **António Guterres**

UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

More people were forced to flee their homes during 2013 than ever before in modern-day history. Nearly 2 million people fled the brutal conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and hundreds of thousands escaped war, violence and persecution in the Central African Republic, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan and Sudan. By the end of 2013, almost 43 million people – the highest number ever – relied on UNHCR for protection and assistance.

In just five years, from being the second largest refugee-hosting country in the world, Syria has become the second largest refugee-producing country, after Afghanistan. More than 9 million people were in flight inside and outside the country in 2013, and hundreds of thousands were trapped and under siege, desperately waiting for humanitarian aid to be delivered.



starting over

UNHCR / A. GRECO

Syria's neighbours shouldered the brunt of the burden, as did other countries in the vicinity of conflict areas. More than 86 per cent of the world's refugees are now hosted in developing countries, compared to some 70 per cent a decade ago. People who fled unimaginable atrocities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, found protection in neighbouring countries where communities shared the little they had. In many instances, neighbouring communities were the providers of first resort, offering refugees shelter, food and water while international aid operations were being launched.

Such generosity can only go so far. As growing numbers of refugees put an inevitable strain on local resources and services, whether in Lebanon, where by the end of 2013, Syrian children outnumbered Lebanese children in the public school system, or in South Sudan, where refugee and host communities clashed over the use of water and land,

more support from the international community is needed. The international refugee protection system can only function with robust support for the host communities and more international burden sharing. To galvanize such support, we organized a High-Level Segment on Solidarity and Burden-Sharing with Countries hosting Syrian Refugees during the annual session of UNHCR's Executive Committee in October 2013.

The number of people displaced within their own country (IDPs) also rose, from 28.8 million at the end of 2012 to 33.3 million at the end of 2013, including 23.9 million who received assistance and support from UNHCR. In recognition of the magnitude of internal displacement and to promote new thinking on addressing difficulties and finding solutions, the sixth High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges was dedicated to *Protecting the Internally Displaced*, reinforcing our engagement in the humanitarian response to internal displacement.

RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

In 2013, the international humanitarian system was tried by simultaneous major crises, with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee activating level 3 emergency responses for Syria, the Philippines and the Central African Republic. Just as the system-wide level 3 response was deactivated for the Philippines in February 2014, another level 3 emergency was declared for South Sudan.

To improve coordination and interaction with the international humanitarian architecture in mixed IDP and refugee situations and/or complex emergencies, UNHCR reviewed the existing refugee response coordination mechanisms with partners and donors. Based on these consultations, we developed the Refugee Coordination Model, an adaptation of UNHCR's Refugee Coordination in the context of the Transformative Agenda. While the Refugee Coordination Model applies the same principles as the Transformative Agenda, namely leadership, accountability and coordination, it articulates UNHCR's mandate and responsibility for protecting refugees and finding solutions for them in cooperation with host governments and partners.

With Syria turning into a mega emergency, old crises continued unresolved and new ones erupted, putting an unmatched strain on UNHCR, our staff, financial resources and partners. My Office deployed over 460 staff and standby partner personnel to emergencies during the year. This enabled us to take up our responsibilities under the cluster framework and, as most of the emergencies also resulted in large refugee movements, to coordinate their protection and assistance in neighbouring countries.

UNHCR shipped more than 15,500 metric tonnes of relief items to different emergencies all over the globe, including 2,330 metric tonnes that were airlifted. To ensure that relief items were delivered quickly and in a cost-efficient manner, we used a combination of transport by air, land and sea. At the same time, the scope and pace of the emergencies have led UNHCR to explore alternative ways of delivering assistance. In some 60 countries, cash and voucher programmes, replacing or complementing in-kind assistance, gave the refugees the dignity of choice and determining their own needs. These programmes also reduced operational costs associated with in-kind assistance, including through the use of new technology. To respond adequately to these emergencies and avoid depleting existing

operations, UNHCR recruited over 600 local and international staff, bringing the total to more than 8,600 staff, of whom 44 per cent serve in the deep field.

PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

Protection remained at the heart of everything we did for refugees and internally displaced people providing food, water, shelter, health care and education. Protection services also saved lives. Safe learning environments for children helped prevent forced recruitment, exploitation and early marriage of displaced boys and girls. Mobile courts and training of law enforcement officers contributed to reducing impunity for perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Moreover registration of refugees, civil documentation and the birth registration of children of displaced parents contributed to the effective protection of people and the prevention of statelessness in the future.

The protection of children was a core priority. In 2013, millions of children were forcibly displaced; many, having lost contact with relatives in flight, moved on their own or were orphans. Thousands of unaccompanied children, mostly from Eritrea and South Sudan, continued to arrive in refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. While UNHCR and partner staff worked tirelessly to find adequate foster-care arrangements for them, in the Kakuma refugee camps alone, there were more than 10,000 unaccompanied and separated children.

With conflicts and crises multiplying, SGBV has become endemic and is affecting a growing number of women, girls, boys and men of concern to UNHCR. My Office updated its SGBV strategy in 2011 to respond better to this new reality. Since then, 22 country operations have implemented specific strategies tailored to their local context to reduce risks and help survivors, with a focus on groups with special needs as well as the widespread but under-reported phenomenon of survival sex. In 2013, we invested strongly in SGBV response, in particular in emergencies.

Countless lives were lost at sea in the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden and the Bay of Bengal. Uneven protection standards in departure and transit countries and the lack of opportunities to earn a decent living pushed people, including refugees and asylum-seekers, into secondary movements. Coordinated, protection-minded regional responses are needed to address this



The High Commissioner and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ertharin Cousin, are welcomed by Syrian refugees in Domiz camp, Iraq.

UNHCR / S. BALDWIN

phenomenon, including an effective crackdown on traffickers and smugglers; more uniform protection and assistance standards; and the availability of education and livelihood options that would prevent people from seeking opportunities elsewhere.

SAFEGUARDING THE INSTITUTION OF ASYLUM

The majority of people fleeing today's conflicts have found protection in neighbouring countries, but as these reach saturation point, many decide to move on. Syrians have now become the second global refugee population. As with Afghan and Somali refugees, all regions now report the arrival of people from Syria seeking asylum.

The growth in refugee numbers has put increasing pressure on the institution of asylum. In some countries of the developed world, asylum-seekers found it more difficult to access safety, hampered by border-management policies that lack the necessary safeguards for people in need of international protection. In fact, a number of governments have taken measures to curb the arrival of people in irregular movements, measures that affect people seeking asylum. Furthermore, substandard reception arrangements, the disproportionate use of detention, including of children, and the absence of adequate provisions to share the responsibility for large numbers of refugees remained a concern.

FINDING DURABLE SOLUTIONS

While most attention was focused on responding to emergencies, we continued to work hard to secure lasting and sustainable solutions for displaced people. Peace talks

between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia bode well for resolving the 50-year old conflict that has claimed thousands of lives and displaced over 5 million people. In view of a possible peace deal, UNHCR has started work on facilitating sustainable solutions through the Transitional Solutions Initiative in Colombia, as well as with the main refugee hosting country, Ecuador.

Although some progress was made in ending protracted refugee situations, notably in Africa, fewer people returned home than in previous years. And despite the repatriation of large numbers of Afghan refugees in past years, the pace of return slowed down in 2013, with some 2.5 million Afghan refugees remaining in exile, mostly in neighbouring countries. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees has developed as a regional framework for addressing the needs of Afghan refugees and advancing solutions. The strategy embodies the commitment of the international community to support Afghanistan, so it can help returning nationals to rebuild their lives. It has also garnered support for the two main hosting countries, the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, to protect refugees until they can return.

In Africa, tens of thousands of refugees returned to Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. While conditions were not conducive to promoting large-scale returns to northern Mali and Somalia, UNHCR has been supporting refugees who have decided to return spontaneously.

Resettlement continued to be an essential protection tool and a key responsibility-sharing mechanism. UNHCR helped over 71,000

refugees leave for a third country, including from Myanmar, Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To mitigate the pressures on the countries neighbouring Syria, UNHCR started a campaign to promote the resettlement of 30,000 Syrian refugees. The resettlement of Congolese refugees from neighbouring countries remained another priority.

In 2013, UNHCR also welcomed the conclusion of the strategic framework that will guide the process of local integration for thousands of Angolan refugees in Zambia.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

As UNHCR's operations expanded, relations with our many partners grew stronger. During the year, we spent more than USD 1.15 billion delivering protection and assistance through more than 920 partners, made up of UN agencies, governmental institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including more than 560 national NGOs. These numbers alone show that partnership is the foundation of today's humanitarian work. UNHCR also redoubled efforts to cement relations with a broad range of partners in order to raise awareness and strengthen capacity ahead of the launch of its 2014 campaign to end statelessness within a decade.

It was a challenging year for both ourselves and our partners, not only because of the many humanitarian crises we had to respond to, but also because of the growing insecurity. A total of 116 aid workers lost their lives, including in attacks on IOM, ICRC and IRC in Afghanistan and on the UN compound in Mogadishu. Many of these losses were the result of deliberate and targeted attacks on the international community. Delivering in a complex security situation required efficient coordination among partners and continued investment in risk mitigation, strengthening of premises, equipment, including armoured vehicles, and specialized training for staff and partner organizations.

As humanitarian crises proliferated, our financial requirements grew from USD 3.9 billion, as approved by the Executive Committee in October 2012, to USD 5.3 billion by the end of 2013. Donors, from both governmental and private sectors, responded generously, contributing more than USD 2.9 billion to UNHCR's programmes – the largest amount ever. While I am deeply grateful for this generosity and the level of confidence in UNHCR, I would like to underline that the funding available covered mainly immediate

and basic, lifesaving assistance, as the numbers and needs of people of concern grew so significantly. In Africa alone, 80 per cent of our expenditure was on basic, lifesaving activities, with little left for education, solutions or for protecting the environment.

UNHCR's structural reform process, started in 2006, continued to pay off. In 2013, expenditure on headquarters, including the Global Service Centre in Budapest was 6.5 per cent of the total expenses, compared to 13.5 per cent in 2006. Programme delivery and support accounted for 96 per cent of our costs, while the remaining 4 per cent was spent on management and administration. Because of this, we were able to direct all unearmarked contributions from governments to our field operations, mostly in Africa.

STARTING OVER

The 2013 laureate of the Nansen Refugee Award, Sister Angélique Namaika, a nun from the north-eastern corner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a humble demeanour and contagious smile, is truly a model of human resilience and courage. Life as she knew it was violently interrupted in 2009 when she was forced into displacement as rebels attacked her town. Not only did she find the strength to start over again, but since then, she has helped and inspired thousands of displaced women who have suffered sexual violence, and other abuse at the hands of armed groups, to rebuild their lives through education and skills training.

With 2014 set to be as complex and challenging as the past year, Sister Angélique's quiet determination to help displaced women overcome great trauma, and live as normal a life as possible, is an example to us all.

I am deeply grateful for the support we have received in 2013 from all our partners: donors, hosting countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations, sister UN agencies and many other entities and individuals around the world. I am confident that with this support, together we will be able to rise to the challenges of the coming year. We will continue to deliver on our mandate to protect, assist and find durable solutions for refugees; rally support for refugee-hosting countries; build international political will and capacity to bring an end to the problem of statelessness; and ensure protection and assistance for internally displaced people. Together we can make sure that the millions of refugees and IDPs whose lives have been interrupted have a chance of starting over. ■



UNHCR / O. LABAN-MATTEI

Special Envoy

Special Envoy Angelina Jolie listens to weary Syrian refugees who have just fled for their lives across the border to safety in Jordan

In the 13 years that Special Envoy Angelina Jolie has served with UNHCR, she has undertaken almost 50 field visits to UNHCR operations around the world.

Since her appointment in 2012 as High Commissioner António Guterres' Special Envoy, Ms. Jolie has focused on complex emergencies resulting in the displacement of

masses of people, notably the Syria situation. To date, she has carried out eight visits to Syria's neighbouring countries.

On the occasion of a mission to Jordan to commemorate World Refugee Day in 2013, the Special Envoy called upon world leaders to set aside their differences, to unite to end violence and to make diplomacy succeed. ■

“ I have met refugees around the world. They are resilient, hard-working and gracious people ... They have experienced more violence and faced more fear than we will ever know ... They have lost their homes, their belongings and their countries. They have often lost family and friends to horrific deaths. They deserve our respect, our acknowledgment and our support – not just today but for the duration of their ordeal. By helping refugees across the globe, we are investing in people who will one day rebuild their countries and a more peaceful world for us all. So on this day, I honour them, and I am privileged to be with them. ”