

# 1 Current dynamics of displacement

At the turn of the century, UNHCR and its partners were struggling to cope with the massive population displacements unleashed by the ethnic conflicts that followed the end of the Cold War. No longer restricted to the care and protection of refugees who had crossed international borders, they were now much more widely engaged in the dangerous and uncertain task of trying to assist and protect displaced people *within* their countries of origin—usually in situations of continuing violence and political upheaval. Whether in the Balkans, Iraq, or Rwanda, this trend was accelerated by the greater willingness of powerful states to intervene in areas of strategic importance to them, or where gross human rights violations were taking place. The increasingly restrictive policies of potential asylum states also spurred the change.

These developments compelled UNHCR and its allied agencies to reassess their priorities and capacities. They renewed their efforts to seek durable solutions to displacement crises through better links between humanitarian relief and longer-term development and peace-building efforts. With the majority of new forcibly uprooted populations remaining within their countries of origin, more attention was focused on assisting and protecting the internally displaced.

There has been progress on many fronts: several violent conflicts have ended and large groups of refugees have returned home. But the dynamics of forced displacement remain complicated. Many protracted situations appear intractable. Hundreds of thousands of people continue to be uprooted by war and human rights abuses every year, and usually move within or between the poorest and least stable countries in the world. These people often find themselves in states that lack the capacity, willingness or resources to provide them even a minimal degree of assistance and protection. The efforts of humanitarian agencies to step into the breach are often impeded by dangerous political and security conditions.

This chapter highlights the main trends in forced displacement today. While the focus is on refugees and internally displaced persons uprooted by conflict and human rights abuse, forced displacement does not take place in isolation from other population flows. Millions of people are compelled to move within or out of their countries by a myriad of factors. Some are driven by poverty, fleeing to survive; others are drawn to real or perceived opportunities to better their lives away from home. This chapter also examines the plight of other displaced populations, including victims of trafficking; those involved in ‘mixed migration’; and those displaced by natural disasters, environmental degradation and development projects.

**Figure 1.1** Total population of concern to UNHCR by region of asylum and category, 1 January 2005

Region	Refugees	Asylum seekers	Returned refugees	Others of concern				Total population of concern
				IDPs of concern to UNHCR	Returned IDPs	Stateless	Others	
Africa	3,023,000	207,000	330,000	1,200,000	33,000	120	67,000	4,860,120
Asia	3,471,000	56,000	1,146,000	1,328,000	62,000	724,000	113,000	6,900,000
Europe	2,068,000	270,000	19,000	900,000	51,000	731,000	391,000	4,430,000
Latin America and the Caribbean	36,000	8,000	90	2,000,000	-	-	26,000	2,070,090
Northern America	562,000	291,000	-	-	-	-	-	853,000
Oceania	76,000	6,000	-	-	-	140	-	82,140
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,236,000</b>	<b>838,000</b>	<b>1,495,090</b>	<b>5,428,000</b>	<b>146,000</b>	<b>1,455,260</b>	<b>597,000</b>	<b>19,195,350</b>

Sources: Governments; UNHCR.

## Main trends

International efforts to improve refugee assistance and protection have been aided in recent years by the easing of some of the acute displacement crises that dominated the 1990s. Furthermore, there have been breakthroughs in the resolution of a number of long-running conflicts, allowing many refugees to return to their countries of origin. The global population of refugees of concern to UNHCR has declined in recent years, from nearly 18 million in 1992 to just over 9 million in 2004.<sup>1</sup> This is mainly due to a drop in the number of armed conflicts and several large-scale repatriations. But despite the reduction in the total number of refugees worldwide, the majority of those who remain live without any prospect of a durable solution to their plight. In 2004, there were some 33 situations of protracted refugee exile involving 5.7 million refugees. These figures do not include the millions of displaced Palestinians who come under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (see Box 5.1).

## Conflict-induced displacement

The world has witnessed a decline in armed conflict from a peak in the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> There has also been a dramatic drop in the number of autocratic regimes—and a corresponding reduction in repression and political discrimination against ethnic minorities. The number of ‘ethnonational’ wars for independence—which dominated the decade following the end of the Cold War—is at its lowest since 1960. Since 2001, 13 major self-determination conflicts have been settled or contained, as against the emergence of six new or renewed campaigns, including Darfur (Sudan). In

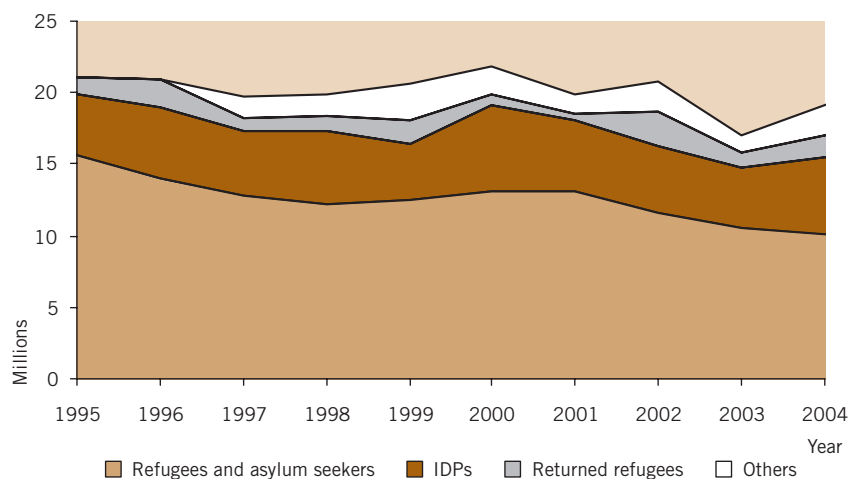
Aceh (Indonesia), a protracted, low-intensity conflict that had grown more intense in recent years was defused following a ceasefire and negotiations in the wake of the tsunami of December 2004.

However, the post-11 September 2001 global 'war on terror' has introduced a new dynamic into a number of conflicts and refugee crises around the world, particularly where it has been used to justify new or intensified military offensives. This has been the case in Aceh, Afghanistan, Chechnya (Russian Federation), Georgia, Iraq, Pakistan and Palestine. People forcibly displaced by these conflicts have faced closed borders, extremely hostile and insecure conditions in exile and/or accelerated or involuntary returns due to 'anti-terror' measures in asylum states.

Interstate conflict is not as prevalent today as 'internal' strife and civil war, particularly in Africa.<sup>3</sup> However, foreign involvement in civil wars has continued to frustrate efforts to secure peace and stability in a number of areas—including the Great Lakes region of Africa centred on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as well as West Africa. Here, economic imperatives and commercial greed are intertwined with social and political grievances, all manipulated by political, commercial and military actors from within and outside the region.

In the DRC, for example, the exploitation of local resources became progressively militarized as a consequence of the conflict. Military groups used force to acquire and maintain control of mines and other natural resources. Forced labour was often used and populations forcibly displaced. Most of the profits from mineral extraction have been siphoned off by external military, political and commercial interests.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1.2 Total population of concern to UNHCR, 1995-2004**



Note: The category 'Others' includes IDPs under UNHCR mandate who have returned to their place of residence during the year, stateless persons, etc. This type of data is not available for 1995-1996. For definition of categories see Annex 2.

All figures as at 31 December of each year.

Source: UNHCR.

## Box 1.1

## Globalization and migration

Globalization and international migration go hand in hand. As new areas of the world are pushed to forge links with the global economy, they often undergo massive social upheavals. These upheavals frequently lead to migration, which in turn can cause major changes in both sending and receiving areas. Indeed, an essential characteristic of globalization is large-scale flows of goods and services, financial assets, technology and people across international borders. Governments welcome economic flows—especially of finance and trade—but are more ambivalent about the movement of people. Rich economies lay out the welcome mat for highly skilled personnel, but often shut their doors to the less skilled and refugees.

## Key trends

The world total of international migrants (defined as people living outside their country of birth for at least a year) grew from about 100 million in 1960 to 175 million in 2000. About half these migrants are women. Most of the increase has taken place in the period of rapid globalization since 1980. Much migration is within regions. North–North migration often involves skilled personnel, while South–South mobility usually sees workers move from areas with high unemployment

to where the jobs are. But migration from the South to the North is growing fast. The number of migrants in developed countries more than doubled in the last two decades of the twentieth century: in 1980 it stood at 48 million; by 2000 it had reached 110 million. In the same period, the number of migrants in developing countries has grown more slowly—from 52 million to 65 million (see Figure 1.3).

Only about 3 per cent of the world's population are migrants, but their concentration in certain regions often puts them at the forefront of social change. By 2000, 63 per cent of the world's migrants were in developed countries, where they made up 8.7 per cent of the total population. The remainder were in developing countries, where they constituted only 1.3 per cent of the total population. According to the latest figures from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, there are 35 million immigrants in the United States, comprising 12.3 per cent of the total population. Western Europe has 32 million (9.7 per cent), Canada 5.7 million (19 per cent) and Australia 4 million (23 per cent). Migrants and their descendants seem to prefer large cities. In Toronto, for example, they comprise 44 per cent of the population. The comparable figure

for Brussels is 29 per cent, while one in four Londoners is a migrant or descendant of one.

## How globalization shapes migration

Globalization has increased disparities in income and human security between North and South. Economic liberalization, the entry of multinationals into formerly closed areas of national economies and structural-adjustment policies are all instruments of social transformation. In many parts of the South, industrialization has lessened the value of traditional modes of production, forcing people to move from rural areas to cities. When workers do not find enough work in the cities, overseas migration may be the next step. Weak economies and weak states often go together, so impoverishment and outward migration are closely linked.

Globalization also creates the cultural and technical conditions for mobility. Global media beam idealized images of northern lifestyles into the poorest villages. Electronic communications allow easy access to information on migration routes and work opportunities. Long-distance travel has become cheaper and more accessible. Once migratory flows are established, they generate 'migration networks' in which the first to arrive

Figure 1.3 Stock of international migrants by major area, 1960-2000

Major area	Number of international migrants (millions)					International migrants as percentage of population		Distribution by major area (%)	
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	1960	2000	1960	2000
World	75.9	81.5	99.8	154.0	174.9	2.5	2.9	100.0	100.0
Developed countries	32.1	38.3	47.7	89.7	110.3	3.4	8.7	42.3	63.1
Developing countries	43.8	43.2	52.1	64.3	64.6	2.1	1.3	57.7	36.9

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Economic and Social Survey 2004: International Migration*, New York, United Nations, 2004, Table II.1.

help members of their families or communities who wish to follow.

Facilitating migration has become a major international business involving travel agents, bankers, lawyers and recruiters. Governments try to restrict the illegal side of the migration 'industry'—smuggling and trafficking. Yet the more governments try to control borders, the greater the flows of undocumented migrants appear to be. Governments remain focused on national migration controls, while migrants follow the transnational logic of globalized labour markets.

### How migration shapes globalization

International migration is a major force for change. Some observers see it as an instrument for reducing global inequality and enhancing development. However, migration can also have negative effects, such as a 'brain drain' of highly qualified doctors, nurses and computer specialists. Governments of sending countries hope that migration will stimulate development through the money sent home by migrants and the transfer of skills. Indeed, global remittances were estimated at US\$130 billion in 2002—considerably more than official development aid. Much of this money goes into consumption, but some is invested in health, education and productive activities. When it comes to the transfer of skills, however, sending countries do not always gain as much as they would like. Many migrants are employed in unskilled jobs and are unable to upgrade their skills. On the other hand, migrants in high-status jobs are unlikely to return to their home countries unless these offer stability, security and growth.

Migration leads to cultural and social change. In areas of origin, returnees may import new ideas that unsettle traditional practices and hierarchies. Receiving areas, on the other hand, are being transformed by unprecedented cultural and religious diversity. The multi-ethnic societies of Europe, North America and Oceania have introduced measures to

integrate immigrant populations and to improve inter-group relations. But multicultural policies remain controversial, especially in view of security concerns that have arisen since September 2001. Policies on immigration have become highly restrictive—yet do not seem to have done much to reduce migration.

Migration can be a catalyst for political change in areas of origin, with diasporas supporting movements for democratization. (Diasporas may also provide the funds that fuel armed conflict.) In receiving countries, extremist politicians often depict migrants as threats to local livelihoods and cultural identities. Campaigns against immigrants and asylum seekers have become powerful mobilizing tools for the far right.

### Towards international collaboration

The economic issues related to globalization come under the purview of multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Migration control, by contrast, has long been seen as a preserve of national sovereignty. As a consequence, the international community has failed to build institutions to ensure orderly migration, maximize the developmental benefits that could flow from it and protect the human rights of migrants. Though elements of an international framework already exist in International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, relatively few countries have ratified these instruments.

Some regional bodies have sought to cooperate on migration. The European Union has gone furthest by introducing free movement for citizens of its member states, and is working towards common policies on asylum seekers and immigration from outside the union. No other regional body has gone this far.

High-emigration countries are motivated by the need to reduce

their labour surpluses and maximize remittances. Immigrant-receiving countries profit from cheap workers, and have been reluctant to take steps which might increase their costs. To safeguard the rights of migrant workers, more countries must implement ILO conventions and link them in a comprehensive framework. In addition, common policies on migration should be seen as an essential part of regional integration, and tied to policies on international cooperation and development.

Bilateral cooperation between states could also bring benefits; migrants could gain through better protection and social security. Emigration countries could benefit from the smoother transfer of remittances and restrictions on agents and recruiters. Immigration countries could gain a more stable and better-trained migrant workforce.

One significant move in this regard was the establishment in late 2003 of the Global Commission on International Migration. Mandated by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the commission launched its report in October 2005. One of its key conclusions is that the international community has failed to realize the full potential of international migration or rise to its significant challenges. It recommends greater policy coherence at the national level, which can in turn result in more effective cooperation both regionally and globally. Besides specific recommendations on a range of issues, the report sets 'principles for action' to help states and other stakeholders formulate a more comprehensive and global response to migration.

The patterns of mobility and displacement in such protracted crises are complex. In many situations of severe instability, including those in Burundi, Colombia, Sri Lanka and northern Uganda, the dominant trend is one of short-term, short-distance, repetitive dislocation rather than large-scale displacement into camps. It is often extremely difficult to distinguish between displaced and non-displaced populations, or to differentiate movement as a coping mechanism from movement that is forced. Millions of people living in countries affected by conflict lack, or risk losing, even the most minimal levels of security, protection and support. Different levels of vulnerability and need affect communities and individuals in different ways, with those displaced not necessarily being the most vulnerable.

In Colombia, irregular armed groups have sought to control segments of the civilian population and prevent them from fleeing to safe areas so as to guarantee a supply of provisions and recruits. Such communities also provide cover for guerrillas, who effectively use them as human shields.<sup>5</sup> Within Afghanistan, non-displaced populations have been among the most vulnerable, with many of their members too weak or poor to flee.<sup>6</sup> In late 2001, Afghanistan had almost four times as many vulnerable non-displaced persons dependent on aid (4,150,000) as internally displaced people (1,200,000). Indeed, there were more vulnerable non-displaced people in the country than there were Afghan refugees abroad (3,695,000).<sup>7</sup>

Despite a decrease in the overall number of conflicts and those displaced across international borders, recent years have seen new refugee movements from lower-profile clashes. These include both new emergencies, such as in Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic, and more protracted ones, including those in Burundi, Chechnya, the DRC, Myanmar, Somalia, and southern Sudan.

In a number of countries new refugee displacements were taking place at the same time as large-scale voluntary repatriations. Some states were generating refugee flows while simultaneously receiving refugees. For example, in 2004 the number of new Somali refugees arriving in Kenya, Tanzania, Yemen, and other countries of asylum outnumbered the 10,300 that returned to Somalia. Meanwhile, the return of 21,000 Liberians from Côte d'Ivoire was counterbalanced by the arrival of nearly 87,000 new Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Another 22,200 refugees were displaced into Guinea and Liberia by the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>8</sup>

## **Asylum and resettlement**

Asylum applications in the rich industrialized countries have declined substantially. Following exceptionally large asylum flows in the early 1990s due to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and political crises in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Romania and other former Eastern bloc countries, asylum claims rose more gradually in Western Europe during the second half of the 1990s, levelling off at just below 400,000 in 2000.<sup>9</sup> Although some countries have witnessed small increases,<sup>10</sup> since 2001 the overall trend has been downwards. Member states of the European Union received nearly 20 per cent fewer asylum claims in 2004 than in the previous year, and 36 per cent fewer claims than in 2001. Most countries are now reporting their lowest annual

**Figure 1.4 Major refugee arrivals in 2004**

Origin	Main countries of asylum	
Sudan	Chad	130,000
	Uganda	14,000
	Kenya	2,300
	Other	240
	<b>Total</b>	<b>146,540</b>
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Burundi	21,000
	Rwanda	11,000
	Zambia	4,300
	Uganda	1,600
	Other	260
	<b>Total</b>	<b>38,160</b>
Somalia	Yemen	17,000
	Kenya	2,400
	Other	130
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19,530</b>
Iraq	Syrian Arab Rep.	12,020
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12,020</b>
Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	5,500
	Mali	460
	Other	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5,970</b>
Burundi	Rwanda	2,900
	United Rep. of Tanzania	1,100
	Other	190
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,190</b>
Liberia	Sierra Leone	2,400
	Côte d'Ivoire	530
	Guinea	510
	Other	260
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,700</b>
Rwanda	Malawi	410
	Other	140
	<b>Total</b>	<b>550</b>
Central African Rep.	Chad	500
	<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>
Russian Federation	Azerbaijan	470
	<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>

Note: This table refers to *prima facie* arrivals only.  
Source: UNHCR.

total for several years. The number of applications lodged in Germany was 30 per cent lower in 2004 than in 2003, and the United Kingdom saw a drop of 33 per cent in 2004 when compared to the year before. New asylum claims fell by 26 per cent in North America and 28 per cent in Australia and New Zealand during the same period.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 1.5** Main origins of refugees, 1 January 2005

Origin	Main countries of asylum*		Origin	Main countries of asylum*	
Afghanistan	Pakistan**	960,000	Palestinians***	Saudi Arabia	240,000
	Islamic Rep. of Iran	953,000		Egypt	70,000
	Germany	39,000		Iraq	23,000
	Netherlands	26,000		Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	8,900
	United Kingdom	23,000		Algeria	4,000
Sudan	Chad	225,000	Viet Nam	China	299,000
	Uganda	215,000		Germany	21,000
	Ethiopia	91,000		United States	12,000
	Kenya	68,000		France	9,100
Burundi	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	45,000	Liberia	Switzerland	2,200
	United Rep. of Tanzania	444,000		Guinea	127,000
	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	19,000		Côte d'Ivoire	70,000
	Rwanda	4,700		Sierra Leone	65,000
	South Africa	2,100		Ghana	41,000
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Canada	1,900	Iraq	United States	20,000
	United Rep. of Tanzania	153,000		Islamic Rep. of Iran	93,000
	Zambia	66,000		Germany	68,000
	Congo	59,000		Netherlands	28,000
	Burundi	48,000		United Kingdom	23,000
Somalia	Rwanda	45,000	Azerbaijan	Sweden	22,000
	Kenya	154,000		Armenia	235,000
	Yemen	64,000		Germany	9,200
	United Kingdom	37,000		United States	2,600
	United States	31,000		Netherlands	1,600
	Djibouti	17,000		France	680

\* This table includes UNHCR estimates for refugees in industrialized countries on the basis of recent resettlement arrivals and recognition of asylum seekers.

\*\* UNHCR figures for Pakistan only include Afghan refugees living in camps. According to a 2005 government census, the latest estimates available, there were an additional 1.9 million Afghans living in urban areas in Pakistan, some of whom may be refugees.

\*\*\* Palestinians under UNHCR mandate only.

Sources: Governments; UNHCR.

Most asylum seekers came from countries affected by conflict or widespread human rights abuses or both, such as Afghanistan, China, Colombia, the DRC, Georgia, Haiti, Iraq, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Somalia and Turkey.<sup>12</sup> Among the factors influencing the decision of individuals to apply for asylum in particular countries are historic, linguistic or cultural ties between states of origin and destination, settled immigrant communities in the destination country and migrant networks.<sup>13</sup>

The precise reasons for the fall in asylum application rates are unclear. Restrictive policies introduced by the destination countries since the early 1990s are certainly a



significant factor, although it is difficult to attribute direct causal relationships between policies and outcomes. Direct pre-entry measures—such as carrier sanctions and visa requirements—might have had a greater impact on the number of asylum claims than indirect measures such as status-determination policies, recognition rates, detention and the withdrawal of welfare benefits. The political and economic situation in the home country is probably more significant than the characteristics of the receiving state; the movement of asylum seekers appears to be driven principally by protracted instability and conflict in regions of origin.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, a key factor in the recent drop in asylum claims in Western Europe seems to be the absence of emergencies on the region's borders. Another is shifts in the dynamics of some of the major refugee crises that had previously given rise to large asylum flows into the region. The number of Afghan asylum seekers arriving in Europe declined by 83 per cent between 2001 and 2004, while that of Iraqi asylum seekers declined by 80 per cent between 2002 and 2004.<sup>15</sup>

Refugee resettlement is far more susceptible to policy shifts than 'spontaneous' asylum flows because it is much more directly controlled by governments and humanitarian agencies, both in countries of first asylum and final destination. In the United States, for instance, new security controls introduced after the events of 11 September 2001 caused a sudden drop in the number of refugees resettled there in 2002, down to 26,800 from 65,400 in 2001.<sup>16</sup> But a subsequent reinvigoration of the resettlement programme led to the admission of twice that number in 2003 and in 2004.<sup>17</sup>

Against the backdrop of an increasing number of protracted refugee situations and growing resistance to unregulated asylum flows, recent years have seen new interest in refugee resettlement. Overall numbers remain low, however, with only some 55,500 persons admitted for resettlement to the ten main resettlement countries in 2003.<sup>18</sup>

## **Internally displaced people and other 'persons of concern'**

In 2004, there were more than 17.5 million people in the broader category of 'persons of concern' to UNHCR, including internally displaced persons, returned refugees and 'stateless persons', in addition to refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>19</sup> This figure, though down from a peak of 27.4 million in 1994,<sup>20</sup> only encompasses a small minority of the world's internally displaced persons as it is restricted to those receiving assistance or protection from UNHCR.

While nearly 5.6 million internally displaced persons were 'of concern' to UNHCR in 2004, the total number of internally displaced persons worldwide was estimated at 25 million<sup>21</sup>—more than twice the number of recognized refugees (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of issues concerning the internally displaced). The preponderance within populations uprooted by violence and human rights abuse of the internally displaced is reflected in Sudan's Darfur region. Here, internally displaced persons—thought to number at least 1.6 million in 2004—far outnumber the 200,000 or so Sudanese who fled to neighbouring Chad.<sup>22</sup>

The estimated number of internally displaced people worldwide has remained more or less unchanged in recent years, with the figures for those returning home (approximately 3 million in 2004) nearly matching the numbers for new internally displaced populations.<sup>23</sup>

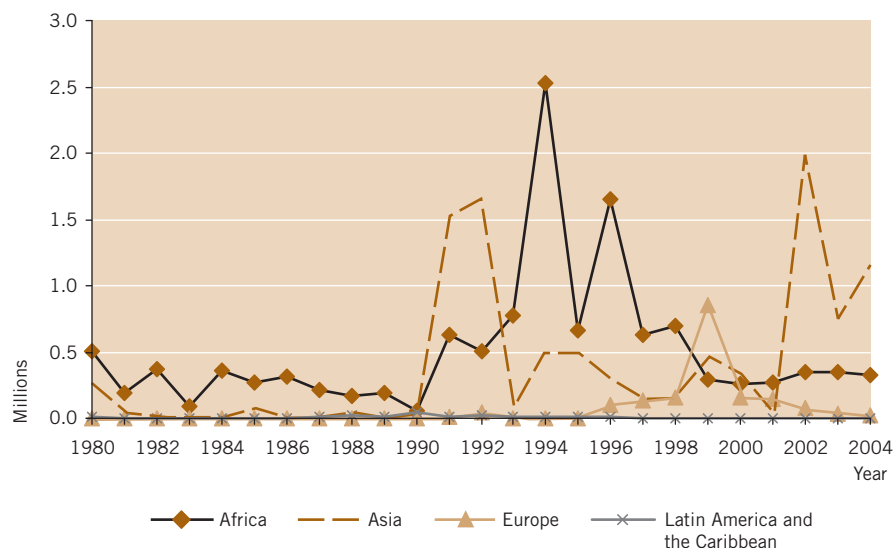
The apparently exponential increase in the number of internally displaced persons over the past two decades—from a little over a million in 1982 to at least 25 million today—is due to a number of factors. First, there has been growing international recognition of internally displaced persons as a group. Second, many potential asylum states have been restricting entry across their borders. Another key factor behind the increase is the nature of many intra-state conflicts today, where civilians are frequently targeted by warring groups. Most such wars of the past decade—including those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya, Kosovo, Myanmar, Rwanda, and Sudan—have involved the deliberate displacement of populations.

## Repatriation

In the past five years, long-standing conflicts have been brought to an end and human rights conditions have improved in a number of countries. These changes have provided new opportunities for the rebuilding of war-torn societies and the return of refugees and other displaced populations. The largest returns of recent years include the repatriation of more than 3.4 million refugees to Afghanistan and the return of over a million refugees and internally displaced persons to Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>24</sup>

In Africa, meanwhile, talks between the Sudanese government and the rebel Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement have triggered the spontaneous return home of nearly

**Figure 1.6** Repatriation of refugees by region of origin, 1980-2004



Source: UNHCR.

half a million refugees and internally displaced people in southern Sudan.<sup>25</sup> At least 300,000 refugees and 4 million internally displaced people have returned to their homes in Angola since the signing of the Luena Peace Accord in April 2002. And by the end of 2004, more than a quarter of a million refugees had returned to Sierra Leone.<sup>26</sup> Worldwide, more than 5 million refugees returned home between 2002 and 2004, including nearly 1.5 million in 2004.<sup>27</sup>

The cessation of hostilities often prompts the large-scale repatriation of displaced populations. But the security implications are often similar in scale to those posed by the initial exodus. Countries struggling to regain their footing in the immediate aftermath of conflict generally do not possess the capacity to absorb large returnee populations. Indeed, states emerging from internal armed conflicts are frequently characterized by deep social divisions, chronic instability, damaged infrastructure and hollowed-out economies. Even where large-scale repatriation programmes and other durable solutions have been successful, the situation could be reversed at any time by political instability and economic stagnation in areas that have suffered massive forced displacement. The reality for most refugees is a return to areas of persistent insecurity and poverty where longer-term development initiatives are patchy or, in some cases, non-existent.<sup>28</sup>

Uncertainty remains about the sustainability of large-scale returns of refugees and internally displaced persons, with the repatriation and reintegration period often proving the most difficult and dangerous. Returnees may face renewed violence, human rights abuse or extreme poverty, leading to further displacement in their search for safety or a viable livelihood. Indeed, security is a key factor in the success and safety of refugee returns. The necessary security and protection guarantees are least likely to be in place where returns are coerced or accelerated by 'push' factors in the asylum country, rather than by the 'pull' of peace and security in the country of origin. This has been the case for many Burundians returning from Tanzania and many Afghans returning from Iran.<sup>29</sup>

Repatriation is the beginning of a long process of reintegration that entails re-establishing ties with home communities and restoring normal and productive lives. It is a major challenge that can be as traumatic and difficult as the life of exile left behind. If returnees are not provided with adequate support and are not able to reintegrate, they may choose to flee again. This has been demonstrated time and again in regions such as West Africa, where chronic instability has hindered many repatriated refugees' efforts to reintegrate.

For instance, the return of Sierra Leonean refugees from Guinea in 2000 and Liberia in 2001, prompted by hostilities in the areas where they had sought asylum, has been likened to an emergency evacuation rather than an organized repatriation movement. Added to this, a review by UNHCR of the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees notes that the weak socio-economic structure in the country is not conducive to a rapid reintegration process.<sup>30</sup> Rather it is expected to be a lengthy and protracted one, highly dependent on the long-term commitments of the government and donors and the active engagement of humanitarian and development actors.

In Iraq, many refugees and internally displaced persons who returned in 2004 subsequently suffered renewed internal displacement due to limited local-absorption capacities and continuing conflict. In West Africa, UNHCR has expressed concern about the sustainability of returns due to continuing instability in the region. In Afghanistan, returnees have faced localized violence, persistent drought in some areas and lack of employment, basic social services and housing. Many have consequently headed for Kabul and other urban centres where security and livelihood opportunities are perceived to be better.<sup>31</sup>

Reflecting the importance of UNHCR's work in repatriation in recent years, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has sometimes been referred to as the 'High Commissioner for Returnees'. Recognizing the challenges facing returnees in post-conflict situations, the organization and its partners are searching for balanced and integrated approaches to make returns durable. War-torn communities cannot absorb large numbers of returnees without first improving their capacity to meet the basic needs of citizens. As such, international development agencies must invest in reconstruction and reintegration programmes for local communities in areas of return as well as for returning refugees and internally displaced people.

## Characteristics of refugee populations

### Age and gender

Humanitarian actors and donors are becoming increasingly sensitive to the particular assistance and protection needs of different groups within displaced and returning populations. Programmes now target the specific needs of women, children and adolescents, older refugees and particular ethnic or social groups. According to 2003 demographic data relating to about 7.5 million persons of concern to UNHCR, children and adolescents under the age of 18 account for nearly half this number, with 13 per cent of these children under the age of five. This reflects high fertility rates and low life expectancy in many poor countries with high levels of forced displacement, particularly in Africa.<sup>32</sup>

The large number of young people among displaced populations has important implications for protection. Displaced children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to threats to their safety and wellbeing. These include separation from families, sexual exploitation, HIV/AIDS infection, forced labour or slavery, abuse and violence, forcible recruitment into armed groups, trafficking, lack of access to education and basic assistance, detention and denial of access to asylum or family-reunification procedures. Unaccompanied children are at greatest risk, since they lack the protection, physical care and emotional support provided by the family.<sup>33</sup> Those accompanied by only one parent or carer may also be at higher risk than other children.

The vast majority of the world's refugee children seek sanctuary in poor countries. The proportion of children (under 18 years of age) among populations of concern was

## Box 1.2

## Displacement and natural disasters: the 2004 tsunami

The Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004 destroyed lives and coastal communities across the Indian Ocean. Minutes after an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred off the west coast of northern Sumatra in Indonesia, the first large tsunami hit nearby shores with devastating effect. It struck especially hard between the towns of Banda Aceh and Meulaboh in the province of Aceh. Triggered by the same earthquake, a massive upward shift in the seabed also caused tsunamis to strike coastal communities in parts of eastern India, Malaysia, the Maldives, south-western Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand before reaching the coast of Africa. The damage to life and property was terrible: some 290,000 people were dead or missing, and more than 1 million displaced across 12 countries in the Indian Ocean. A third of the victims were children.

News of the disaster—which left some 5 million people in immediate need of assistance—sparked an extraordinary mobilization of resources. Governments, private citizens and corporations and NGOs in the affected countries and beyond were quick to respond with offers of money, supplies and manpower. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) alone reportedly received US\$2.2 billion. The United Nations estimated that some US\$6.8 billion was pledged towards post-tsunami relief and recovery, with US\$5.8 billion coming from government sources and the rest from corporate and private donations.

The international machinery for the coordination and delivery of relief in complex humanitarian emergencies was revved up. A report to the UN's Economic and Social Council noted that 16 UN agencies, 18 IFRC response teams, more than 160 international NGOs and many private and civil-society groups were involved in delivering emergency relief. The large number of organizations involved posed tremendous challenges for the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In some areas

the sheer scale of the destruction posed formidable logistical difficulties. In many cases, relief operations were undertaken, at least in part, by national or foreign military forces using their own transport and equipment. Thirty-five different armed forces were involved in the relief effort, and in Indonesia and Sri Lanka the UN Joint Logistics Centre assisted in the coordination of military support.

Unsurprisingly, relief efforts had to be tailored to different situations in the affected countries, each with its own pre-tsunami political and socio-economic conditions. In the Maldives, where some 5–10 per cent of the population was initially displaced, the limited presence of UN organizations or international NGOs in the country prior to the tsunami presented challenges for those seeking to mobilize international assistance. In Somalia, where the greatest destruction to life and property occurred in Puntland, a self-declared autonomous region, the lack of a central government complicated relief efforts. The importance of military-strategic considerations in some of the worst affected areas, most notably Aceh, the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka and to some extent in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India added another dimension to the emergency response.

While disaster relief is not part of its mandate, UNHCR joined in the emergency response to the tsunami. The sheer scale of the destruction and the fact that many of affected populations were of concern to the organization prompted the move. Responding to requests from the UN Secretary-General and UN Country Teams, UNHCR concentrated on providing shelter and non-food relief. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR's presence in the country prior to the tsunami allowed for a comparatively swift and sustained humanitarian intervention—including efforts focused on the protection of internally displaced persons. In Somalia, where some 290 people died and some 54,000 were displaced by the disaster, UNHCR and the United Nations Human

Settlements Programme were primarily responsible for coordinating the provision of shelter and non-food relief. The UN's Children's Fund and the World Food Programme coordinated much of the other emergency assistance.

In Aceh, UNHCR established temporary field locations in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, and three other hard-hit towns on the west coast. It withdrew from the province on 25 March 2005, the official expiry date for the emergency phase as declared by the Government of Indonesia. (UNHCR has since been invited to return to assist the Indonesian Government in the rehabilitation of the province, as outlined in a memorandum of understanding signed in June 2005.)

A range of protection concerns were identified in the aftermath of the tsunami, including access to assistance, enforced relocation, sexual and gender-based violence, safe and voluntary return, loss of documentation and restitution of property. The tsunami response also underlined weaknesses in the areas of shelter, water and sanitation and camp management. Problems of coordination among NGOs, and between NGOs and UN agencies, pointed to the need to strengthen local and regional capacities.

The protection of displaced populations was especially urgent in areas of protracted conflict and internal displacement in Aceh, Somalia and Sri Lanka. Furthermore, there was concern for some affected populations whose governments declined offers of international aid, such as the Dalits (formerly known as untouchables) of India and Burmese migrant workers in Thailand; it was feared they might be discriminated against and their protection needs compromised. In short, the broad range of challenges across a dozen countries in the aftermath of the tsunami underlined the importance of effectively protecting affected populations and defining the obligations of local and national governments—as set out in the UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

54 per cent in Africa, 46 per cent in Asia, but only 25 per cent in Europe.<sup>34</sup> The low number of refugee children reaching industrialized countries may be partly the result of age-selective asylum migration,<sup>35</sup> including the 'secondary' movements of asylum seekers from poor refugee-hosting regions to richer countries.

The 2003 demographic data indicate a relatively equal gender balance in most regions hosting large displaced populations. It hovers around 50 per cent across most of the world, and only falls significantly below this level (to 41 per cent) in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean,<sup>36</sup> where young male asylum seekers constitute a higher proportion of those of concern to UNHCR. Where, as is the case in Africa, half of the refugee population consists of females and half are children and adolescents, roughly a quarter of the refugee population is composed of girls under 18. Meanwhile, roughly a quarter of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide are women of reproductive age, and around one in five is likely to be pregnant.<sup>37</sup>

These statistics have important implications for protection policies, since women and girls are the principal targets of sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation, and are therefore disproportionately vulnerable to associated risks such as trafficking, HIV/AIDS transmission and abduction. In the DRC, a surge in HIV/AIDS infection among the general population, including those displaced internally, has been linked to extensive sexual violence by paramilitary groups and foreign troops.<sup>38</sup> With less access to information and education than non-displaced people, many of the displaced have very little knowledge of how HIV/AIDS is contracted or avoided.<sup>39</sup>

## Camps and settlements

The highly varied conditions of exile for different displaced populations have equally diverse implications for their access to protection and assistance, and for their prospects for local integration, return or resettlement. In protracted refugee situations, many of the displaced have remained confined to refugee camps, sometimes for decades. They are marginalized in the country of asylum, unable to return home in safety, and cannot look forward to resettlement elsewhere. In some situations, those located in camps lack many fundamental rights—such as freedom of movement and the right to work—due to their forced exclusion from mainstream society. They are often exposed to high levels of violence and human rights abuse because of poor security within or around the camps.

According to UNHCR's 2003 demographic data, of the 13.1 million displaced persons of concern to the organization, some 36 per cent were located in camps or centres, 15 per cent were living in urban areas, and 49 per cent were either dispersed in rural areas or living in an unknown type of settlement.<sup>40</sup> In Africa, almost half the people of concern to UNHCR are in camps, as compared to less than a quarter in Asia.

However, these figures do not capture the overall situation of displaced populations, since they exclude internally displaced people who are not assisted by UNHCR and incalculable numbers of 'self-settled' refugees worldwide. Many internally displaced persons and self-settled refugees are in countries where the

## Box 1.3

## Protection for victims of trafficking

The perception of trafficking as a human rights violation, rather than a security issue, has gained prominence in recent years. This has been accompanied by the recognition that trafficked persons should not be seen as offenders, but rather as victims in need of protection and assistance. Along with prevention and prosecution of traffickers, the protection of those victimized by trafficking has become part of a three-pronged approach to the larger fight against trafficking in persons. The 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, recognizes this and includes provisions for the protection of victims.

It is widely accepted that it is extremely difficult to obtain reliable data on the scope and magnitude of people-trafficking. However, the 2004 *Trafficking in Persons Report* of the US Department of State estimates that each year 600,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders. Other estimates of international organizations and NGOs put the number much higher. Asylum seekers and refugees have been identified as populations vulnerable to trafficking.

Just like asylum seekers and refugees, trafficked persons are often in need of protection. Many victims are afraid to return home for fear of retribution from their traffickers, are deeply traumatized by their experience and in need of medical and psychological support. Effective prosecution of traffickers relies, for now, on the cooperation of those trafficked, but providing evidence can put the victim in danger of reprisals. Increasingly, for those countries that have no specific legislation for the protection of trafficked persons, it has been suggested that victims be offered asylum, though it should be emphasized that this should only be used as a last resort for trafficking victims.

Protection programmes have developed substantially over the past decade, and many states now offer victims protected-status visas if they are afraid to return home. Protection of trafficking victims requires that they are identified quickly, and not automatically charged as criminals and/or deported. While asylum systems rely on claimants being aware of their rights, the majority of trafficked persons are unaware that they might be entitled to protection—a fact exploited by traffickers. Proactive identification of trafficking victims by law enforcement and immigration authorities is vital, but the similarity of some trafficking scenarios to smuggling and illegal employment makes this a difficult task. As a result, many countries have created screening processes, established referral mechanisms and trained police and social workers to spot possible trafficking cases.

Though swift action can be critical when prosecuting traffickers, the trauma of the trafficking experience can leave victims unfit to assess their own interest. Some countries, such as Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands offer victims a short reflection period. They are provided with medical attention, safe shelter, legal advice and time to consider the options available to them. This method offers essential breathing space and may ultimately lead to improved cooperation with the authorities.

Many trafficking victims want to return home immediately. For those who wish to stay, few states offer permanent-residence status. An exception is the United States' T-visa, which allows certain victims of trafficking to remain and, after three years in 'T' status, to apply for permanent residency. But there is a limit to the number of such visas that may be issued each year. More common is a short-term residence permit. While in some countries this permit is renewable, eligibility for renewal is usually linked to criminal proceedings against the trafficker.

In the majority of countries where residence permits are available, they are conditional upon the victim's ability and willingness to cooperate with authorities. This puts pressure on a victim afraid to return to his or her country of origin, and can create mistrust between the victim and the authorities. Regardless of whether they cooperate or not, victims need medical, psychological and social support. However, many of the assistance programmes available in destination countries are tied to cooperation with criminal investigations.

Italy provides a model for effective protection of trafficked persons. Temporary residence permits are offered to all victims, regardless of whether they cooperate or not. The six-month permit is renewed for the victims who cooperate, are deemed to be at risk, attending an education programme or employed when the permit expires. Victims can access social services and find jobs, and are required to attend social-assistance and reintegration programmes run by local organizations. It is important to note that encouraging victims to testify—rather than putting pressure on them to do so—has not adversely affected prosecution of traffickers.

Given that there are few channels for permanent settlement in destination countries, the vast majority of victims return home eventually. As a result, countries of origin (in cooperation with NGOs and bodies such as the International Organization for Migration) have begun to develop support programmes for victims who return home.

Avoiding conditionality between protection schemes and counter-trafficking investigations, and offering social assistance at home as well as in host countries, give victims a real choice as to how they rebuild their lives. Trafficking is a modern form of slavery. Freedom to choose is thus a vital element of rehabilitation for victims of trafficking.

government is either indifferent or actively hostile to their assistance and protection needs. In at least 13 countries in recent years, including Myanmar, Sudan and Zimbabwe, state forces or government-backed militia have attacked displaced and other civilian populations.<sup>41</sup>

## ‘Mixed migration’, trafficking and smuggling

The combination of poverty, marginalization and politically induced displacement is critical in explaining the high levels of mixed migration in every part of the world. The phenomenon covers migrant workers uprooted by sudden changes in economic or political conditions in the country where they are working. It also includes internally displaced persons, refugees and other forced migrants moving on after their initial displacement to seek better protection and livelihood opportunities in other countries or regions. The number of international migrants in 2005 has been estimated at about 175 million,<sup>42</sup> of which asylum seekers and refugees constitute only a small part. The rapid growth of such migration has been attributed to the advances in communications and transportation brought about by globalization.

Modern migratory patterns make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between the various groups on the move. Population flows are not homogeneous but of a mixed, composite character. The immediate causes of forced displacement may be identified as serious human rights violations or armed conflict. But these causes often overlap with, or may themselves be provoked or aggravated by, economic marginalization and poverty, environmental degradation, population pressure and poor governance.

Asylum seekers and refugees may use the same modes of travel as undocumented migrants and resort to, or be exploited by, smugglers and traffickers. In some cases, refugees may use these channels to leave one country of asylum and move to another to escape insecurity or economic hardship. On the other hand, persons who do not qualify for international protection may resort to claiming asylum in the hope of being allowed to stay abroad.

The motives behind the secondary movement of many forcibly displaced persons and ‘voluntary’ migrants are numerous, and cannot be easily categorized. For example, initial displacement may lead subsequently to ‘secondary’ migration or displacement as part of individuals’ or households’ coping and livelihood strategies. In Afghanistan, for instance, complex transnational patterns of displacement and migration have become an essential feature of coping mechanisms in a harsh and insecure environment, with many families seeking to enhance economic opportunities through the migration of family members.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most important supports for many refugees and internally displaced persons in protracted displacement crises is money sent to them by family members living abroad. A recent report on Liberian refugees in Ghana notes how, with the assistance they receive from UNHCR dwindling, remittances have proved crucial to their survival.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the importance of remittances should not be underestimated;



not only do they sustain many displaced populations, they also support—and thus possibly prevent the displacement of—many communities living in protracted crisis situations.

In Colombia, decades of conflict have forced the movement of millions of people, with many heading from rural to urban areas to seek both protection and better economic opportunities. Once settled in towns and cities, they may be difficult to differentiate from the wider populations of the urban poor.<sup>45</sup>

Migrant workers may become vulnerable to forced displacement when there are sudden changes in local political or economic conditions, or where they are employed in the informal sector and lack legal status or effective protection from the state in their country of residence. For instance, the situation of Burmese workers in Thailand was particularly insecure following the tsunami in December 2004. In Côte d'Ivoire, where migrant workers constitute 30 per cent of the population, Burkinabe, Guinean and Malian workers within refugee populations have been displaced by the recent conflict, triggering large-scale returns to their countries of origin.<sup>46</sup>

The poorest and most marginalized people are particularly vulnerable to abduction, forced military recruitment and trafficking. This vulnerability is heightened in situations of displacement and armed conflict, where people are separated from their homes, families, communities and livelihoods.

There is now growing evidence of large-scale trafficking of persons within and between every continent by organized criminal networks. The evidence suggests that such trafficking is highly diverse and varied in terms of routes and destinations. Some of it takes place within countries—as when women and children are forced away from rural areas into domestic work or prostitution in urban centres—and some takes place internationally, across regions and continents.

Children and young women are disproportionately affected by international trafficking, since much of it is linked to the sex industry. Such trafficking is also often associated with severe physical and mental abuse and exploitation. Displaced people are also more vulnerable to trafficking due to their relative poverty and separation from homes, families, communities and livelihoods—with displaced children and women especially at risk.

Although some of the same criminal networks might be involved, the smuggling of migrants and asylum seekers is a separate phenomenon from trafficking. People-smuggling is primarily concerned with enabling individuals to evade controls at borders where legal entry would be difficult or impossible. Although smugglers provide a clandestine service sometimes used by both forced and voluntary migrants, smuggling is not a form of forced migration *per se*. Many asylum seekers now use smuggling networks to try and enter industrialized countries, since the introduction of visa restrictions and other controls makes it difficult for them to do so any other way. While many succeed, unknown numbers perish as a result of unsafe conditions, such as unseaworthy or overloaded boats.

## Box 1.4

## Prevention and reduction of statelessness

Estimates of the number of stateless persons in the world vary between 9 and 11 million. The 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons is the international instrument which defines a stateless person and sets out his or her rights and obligations. UNHCR has a specific mandate relating to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons, as specified by the UN General Assembly in 1974 and 1976. That mandate has been expanded by resolutions of the General Assembly and UNHCR's Executive Committee. In February 1996 the General Assembly requested UNHCR to actively promote accession to the 1954 Convention and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The Assembly also directed UNHCR to help interested countries prepare nationality legislation and called upon states to adopt such laws to reduce statelessness. However, despite UNHCR's efforts only 57 states have ratified the 1954 Convention.

#### Activities contributing to resolving statelessness

In its search for durable solutions for the displaced, UNHCR has helped determine the nationality status of many stateless refugees, particularly in the context of voluntary repatriation programmes or implementation of the refugee cessation clause. (In the latter, refugee status is withdrawn when there is no longer any recognized need for international protection.) For some refugee groups such as Black Mauritians, or Feili Kurds from Iraq, arbitrary deprivation of nationality had been the main reason they have been recognized as refugees. The implementation of reintegration programmes in Mauritania and voluntary repatriation programmes in Iraq guaranteed refugees' right to recover nationality upon return.

More generally, UNHCR tries to ensure that in repatriation agreements between countries of asylum and countries of origin, children born in

the former are considered nationals of the latter. These provisions complement the efforts of UNHCR and countries of asylum to ensure the systematic registration of births of refugee children. Such a registration system has been implemented for the enormous Afghan refugee populations in Pakistan and Iran. But in other situations, even when the reasons which forced refugees to flee their home countries come to an end and the cessation clause is envisaged, refugees who have developed strong ties with the country of asylum are allowed and helped to apply for citizenship.

For instance, many stateless refugees who did not opt for voluntary repatriation to Tajikistan were granted nationality by Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in 2004 and 2005. The Government of Kyrgyzstan has been granting citizenship to Tajik refugees since 2000, and more than 5,000 Tajiks have become citizens. Similarly, presidential decrees adopted in 2005 granted Turkmenistan citizenship to 13,245 people, most of them stateless refugees who fled Tajikistan during that country's 1992–97 civil war.

Other situations involving stateless refugees have not progressed as well. Muslims from northern Rakhine State in Myanmar who have returned home have not been able to gain citizenship and remain stateless. Similarly, many refugees from Bhutan who were deprived of citizenship languish in camps in Nepal and foresee little chance of returning home or reacquiring their citizenship.

#### Prevention of statelessness

When states consider enacting or revising citizenship legislation—or administrative procedures related to citizenship—UNHCR tries to provide legal and technical advice to help prevent statelessness. In the last five years, the organization has provided advice to many states, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe, but also to Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of Congo, The former

Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iraq, Mexico, Montenegro, Serbia, Timor Leste, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam, among others.

In addition to the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, there are regional instruments which further contribute to the prevention, reduction and elimination of statelessness. One is the 1997 European Convention on Nationality. There is also a draft protocol on the avoidance of statelessness in relation to state succession which should be adopted by the Council of Europe and open for ratification by the beginning of 2006. The protocol was drafted in an effort to avoid statelessness through state succession, which may occur as a result of a transfer of territory from one state to another, unification of states, dissolution of a state, or separation of part or parts of a territory.

Elaborating on the convention's general principles on nationality, the draft protocol contains specific rules on nationality in cases of state succession. Its 21 articles provide practical guidance on such issues as the responsibilities of the successor and predecessor states, rules of proof, the avoidance of statelessness at birth, and the easing of acquisition of nationality by stateless persons.

#### Finding solutions to protracted situations

In October 2004, taking into account the findings of the first global survey on statelessness conducted by UNHCR, the organization's Executive Committee requested it to continue to provide technical and operational support to states and to pay more attention to situations involving protracted statelessness. The challenges before UNHCR are many, and include trying to end situations of protracted statelessness which leave millions without effective citizenship. It will have to give priority to situations where the stateless live in extreme poverty but must also address those in which the stateless enjoy almost all the rights of citizens.

Some long-standing situations of statelessness have recently ended due to the political will of the states concerned and the assistance of UNHCR and national or local NGOs. Some examples:

- In Sri Lanka, 190,000 stateless persons acquired citizenship in 2004 on the basis of the 'Grant of Citizenship to Persons of Indian Origin Act', unanimously approved by Parliament in October 2003. This benefited persons who during British colonial rule were brought from India to work on Sri Lanka's tea and coffee plantations. UNHCR and the Sri Lankan authorities designed an information campaign to ensure that stateless persons could apply for citizenship in a fair and transparent manner, and without long or complicated administrative procedures.
- In Ukraine, a new legal framework allowed acquisition of citizenship by the formerly deported Crimean Tatars and their descendants. Between October 2004 and the end of March 2005, more than 2,800 returnees from Uzbekistan were able to acquire Ukrainian citizenship under the favourable provisions of a new citizenship law. The number of Crimean Tatars who still need to obtain Ukrainian citizenship has reached a record low; hundreds of thousands of

them were able to acquire citizenship in the last decade.

- In The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, amendments to a citizenship law adopted in 2004 allowed long-term residents to regularize their citizenship status. The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with UNHCR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, organized a campaign to disseminate information on the procedures for residents to regularize their citizenship status. The campaign included dissemination of brochures and TV spots in the languages of the Albanian and Roma populations considered most at risk of statelessness.

In other areas of the world too there was some progress on issues of statelessness. In Estonia and Latvia, every year more of the large population of permanent residents rendered stateless by the collapse of the Soviet Union apply for naturalization and gain citizenship. In addition, children born to stateless parents are granted Estonian or Latvian nationality through a simple declaration. In the Russian Federation, as well as in most other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, citizenship legislation and bilateral dual-citizenship treaties are dealing with the consequences of the dissolution

of the Soviet Union. One exception: despite many interventions at the federal and local level, the situation of the Meskhetians of Krasnodar has not been settled. Most of the 17,000 members of this community in Russia have not gained citizenship and the majority are being resettled in the United States.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a new citizenship law enacted in November 2004 provides the legal basis to solve the nationality status of the Banyarwanda population. In December 2003, Ethiopia enacted a new citizenship law which should allow many ethnic Eritreans living in the country to reacquire the nationality they were deprived of in the late 1990s.

Despite these improvements, many protracted situations of statelessness remain, leaving millions of persons disenfranchised and with few rights. Some of these communities are the Biharis in Bangladesh; the Bidoons in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Saudi Arabia; some Kurds in Syria; and the Muslim populations of Myanmar, in particular those residing in or originating from northern Rakhine State. Thailand and many other Asian countries such as Brunei, Cambodia, Malaysia and Viet Nam also host populations with undetermined nationality. All are part of UNHCR's casebook for the coming years.

## Environmental and natural disasters

This broad category includes millions of people displaced directly or indirectly by environmental degradation and natural or man-made disasters. The rise in the number of victims of natural disasters over the past decade and ever-greater levels of displacement caused by development projects have added millions to the number of forcibly displaced people in the world. According to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the total number of people affected by natural disasters has tripled over the past decade to 2 billion people, with the accumulated impact of natural disasters resulting in an average of 211 million people directly affected each year.<sup>47</sup> This is approximately five times the number of people thought to have been affected by conflict over the past decade.

It is increasingly recognized that the recent escalation in the numbers of those affected by disasters is due more to rising vulnerability to hazards than to an increase in the frequency of hazards *per se*. However, it is recognized that climate change may be playing a part in intensifying the number and severity of natural hazards.<sup>48</sup>

In many ecological and economic crises, mobility and migration represent crucial survival strategies. It can therefore be very difficult to distinguish between forced disaster-induced displacement and mobility linked to people's coping mechanisms. Sometimes, restrictions on mobility are a major factor in the development of famine, as was seen when Eritrea's borders with Kenya and Sudan were closed.

Displaced populations and other migrants are often disproportionately vulnerable to disasters because their normal livelihoods have already been disrupted or destroyed, or because their presence has contributed to environmental degradation in their areas of refuge. Where disasters occur in conflict zones, the destruction of infrastructure and lack of state services can seriously hamper the provision of relief and recovery assistance.

The tsunami of December 2004 exemplified the interaction between politics and the impact of natural disasters. In the Indonesian province of Aceh, conflict, violence and a massive counter-insurgency campaign by the Indonesian military against separatist rebels had displaced more than 300,000 people since 1999. A further half-million or so Acehese—12 per cent of the population—were displaced by the tsunami. Relief efforts were complicated by the fluid and complex displacement that resulted from the combination of political causes and the immediate devastation of the tsunami.<sup>49</sup>

'Self-settled' refugees and internally displaced persons living in urban areas are often highly vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters; many live in informal and unsafe settlements where they have no legal entitlement to their homes and are not served by any risk-reduction measures. But all those displaced by disasters have specific needs, including access to assistance, protection from violence, and the restoration of their livelihoods. The UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement suggest that those uprooted by natural or man-made disasters are entitled to protection and assistance. However, this does not apply to those displaced by development policies and projects.

## Development-induced displacement

The World Bank has estimated that forcible 'development-induced displacement and resettlement' (DIDR)—including the forced movement of people to make way for large infrastructure projects such as dams, urban developments and irrigation canals—now affects an average of 10 million people per year. India is thought to have the largest number of people displaced by such projects, at least 33 million. It is calculated that for every large dam (of which there are 3,300 in India) around 44,000 people are displaced.<sup>50</sup>

As with disaster-induced displacement, there is often a link to political factors, since the most impoverished and marginalized ethnic groups often bear the brunt of the dislocation caused by development projects. For example, in India, Adivasis (tribal people) account for 40–50 per cent of communities affected by DIDR, though they constitute only 8 per cent of the country's population.<sup>51</sup>

Growing awareness of the problem in the 1980s led the World Bank to attach conditions to its loans designed to ensure compensation and appropriate resettlement for displaced communities.<sup>52</sup> While the major donors now generally impose such conditions, they are difficult to enforce<sup>53</sup> and the compensation is often inadequate. As a consequence, the result for those displaced is often dispossession of land and resources, violation of their human rights and a lowering of living standards.<sup>54</sup>

There are many more people displaced by development projects than there are refugees. But unlike refugees, the millions displaced by development do not have an adequate protection regime. They often face permanent poverty and end up socially and politically marginalized.<sup>55</sup> Many of them drift into urban slums, or become part of floating populations which may spill over into international migration.<sup>56</sup>

## Looking ahead

The return of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes following years of exile, the recent reduction in asylum flows to industrialized countries and the fall in overall refugee numbers worldwide represent a shift in the dynamics of forced displacement. Especially when compared to the mass refugee crises of the 1990s, the picture is undoubtedly a positive one for the large numbers of people who now have the chance to return home and rebuild their lives.

Yet the recent reduction in refugee numbers does not indicate a significant decline in forced displacement *per se*. While progress has been made towards solving a number of major conflicts around the world, many protracted conflicts continue to prevent millions of refugees from returning home. Peace, where achieved, is almost always uncertain. Violence and abuse continue to cause displacement and suffering, with many of those affected unable to seek or find effective protection.

Most forced displacement—whether caused by human rights abuses, natural disasters or development projects, or in the form of trafficking or abduction—takes place in poor countries, and has the greatest impact on the poorest and most vulnerable people in those societies. In some countries, entire populations are caught up in a pernicious cycle of extreme poverty and violence in which displacement and mobility have become part of complex coping and survival mechanisms. The efforts of humanitarian actors and the wider international community to mitigate such conditions have proved entirely inadequate.

Addressing the human rights abuses, development failures and conflicts that force so many millions to leave their homes remains an immense challenge. A better understanding of the local and global factors behind forced displacement and greater respect for the rights of uprooted populations is essential if prevention and protection efforts are to be effective. Also needed is greater cooperation between the many political, humanitarian and development actors concerned. Ultimately, the success of global efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals will depend on the success of the international response to the crisis of forced displacement.

# Endnotes

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