

CHAPTER I

SOURCES, METHODS AND DATA CONSIDERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The 1951 Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention provide clear refugee definitions. The fact that more than 140 countries have acceded to the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol, and many of these countries have incorporated the refugee definition contained in that Convention in their national legislation, makes refugees relatively easy to count.

Refugees can only be adequately protected when they are registered. Refugee statistics are generally based on individual registration records, kept by the host government. As such, UNHCR often supports countries in registering and documenting refugees.

Although many countries have implemented the international refugee definition in their national laws and procedures, keeping accurate statistics is not always straightforward. First, there may be a difference of opinion between UNHCR, NGOs and the host country about who is a refugee. For instance, nationals fleeing conflict in their country of origin may be officially recognized as refugees by some countries, but not by others. UNHCR statistics generally reflect the views of the host country. Second, although refugees are often registered individually, the accuracy of registration varies greatly, depending on the protection and operational environment. Third, refugees may not be aware of the need to register or may perceive the costs of registration as higher than its benefits. Fourth, some countries grant not only Convention refugee status, but also subsidiary forms of protection which are more difficult to compare internationally. Fifth, even though there is an international refugee definition, the administrative rules governing the granting of refugee status vary greatly. For instance, some countries have implemented strict criteria for asylum-seekers to be admitted to the asylum procedure. Sixth, administrative records tend to overestimate the actual number of persons, because it is easier to register than to de-register persons. This is particularly the case when registration is linked to the provision of services or benefits.

DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

UNHCR populations of concern are composed of various groups of people including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and returnees.

In UNHCR statistics, **refugees** include persons recognized under the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, its 1967 Protocol, the *1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, persons granted a complementary form of protection and persons granted temporary protection.

The UNHCR mandate covers all refugees, except Palestinian refugees residing in areas of operation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). By the end of June 2005, 4.3 million

Palestinian refugees were living in Jordan (1.8 million), the Occupied Palestinian Territory (1.6 million), the Syrian Arab Republic (425,000) and Lebanon (401,000). These Palestinian refugees are not included in UNHCR's statistics. However, the 351,000 Palestinian refugees living outside the UNRWA areas of operation fall under the responsibility of UNHCR and are thus included in the 2004 Yearbook.

Asylum-seekers are persons who have applied for asylum or refugee status, but who have not yet received a final decision on their application. A distinction should be made between the number of asylum-seekers who have submitted a request *during a certain period* ("asylum applications submitted") and the number of asylum-seekers whose asylum request has not yet been decided *at a certain date* ("backlog of undecided or pending cases").

Internally displaced persons or IDPs are often displaced for the same reasons as refugees. However, because IDPs have not crossed an international border, their legal situation as well as the international response to their plight differs significantly from that of refugees.

As per end-2004, UNHCR statistics are limited to IDPs to whom UNHCR extends protection or assistance, generally pursuant to a special request by the United Nations Secretary-General or by a competent organ of the United Nations and with the agreement of the country concerned. As such, UNHCR statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture of global internal displacement.

Returnees refer to displaced populations (mainly refugees and IDPs) who return to their country or place of origin. In returnee situations, UNHCR seeks to reintegrate former refugees and IDPs as soon as possible by targeting both returnees as well as receiving communities. Partners are actively engaged to provide development assistance. For statistical purposes, only refugees and IDPs who have returned during the past 12 months are included in the population of concern to UNHCR. In practice, operations may assist returnees for longer or shorter periods, however.

In addition to protecting persons who are or have been recently displaced, UNHCR extends support to stateless persons by seeking to avoid and reduce statelessness. A **stateless person** is someone who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.

UNHCR has been entrusted by the General Assembly with fulfilling the functions under Article 11 of the *1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*. As the agency designated to act as an intermediary between States and stateless persons, UNHCR provides expertise in the area of nationality and has been requested by its Executive Committee to promote accession to the *1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* and the 1961 Convention.

Statelessness may be an important reason for fleeing one's place of origin. However, most stateless persons have not fled their country of habitual residence. Because stateless persons who are not refugees are difficult to enumerate, reliable global estimates on the scope of statelessness are currently not available.

Finally, the total population of concern also includes **Others of concern**, that is populations not falling within the mandate of UNHCR but to whom the Office extends protection and/or assistance

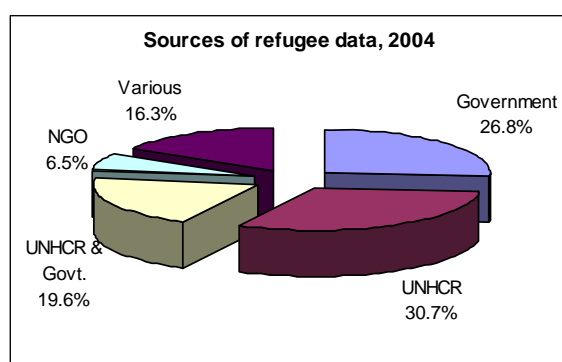
DATA SOURCES AND PROVIDERS

In most countries, various sources are used to establish the size and characteristics of the population of concern to UNHCR. There are three main providers of data regarding the population of concern to UNHCR: governmental agencies, UNHCR field offices and NGOs. Data are compiled or collected using mainly registers, surveys, registration processes or censuses. Whereas the refugee or aliens registers, wherever available, may be the primary source of refugee statistics, asylum-seeker data are often derived from a separate administrative system. Adding to the complexity, voluntary repatriation and resettlement are often managed by separate government agencies. Sources may also differ within countries. In many countries, refugee registration is not centralized, but maintained at the local level. Refugee characteristics, such as sex, age and specific needs may not be available from the register, but collected on an *ad hoc* basis through surveys.

In most industrialized countries, the host government is generally the sole data provider. In most non-industrialized countries, UNHCR assists the host country in refugee registration for the purpose of international protection, assistance or durable solutions. This assistance may vary from providing technical advice and limited assistance in countries with a more developed statistical infrastructure to managing the entire registration in countries with limited means.

To ensure that the refugee register is up-to-date, a record should be kept of all changes in the size of the population, including births, deaths, new arrivals, durable solutions and changes in legal status. In mass refugee situations and when populations are highly mobile, maintaining a refugee register is a serious challenge.

By the end of 2004, UNHCR was reported as the single source of refugee statistics in 47 countries (31%); governments were the sole data provider in 41 countries (27%), whereas NGOs maintained data at the request of UNHCR in 10 countries (7%) (see *Table VI.1*).



In 55 countries, there was more than one refugee data source (36%). In 30 countries, statistics were a combined responsibility of the government and UNHCR, while eight countries reported that the government, UNHCR and NGOs provided the data.

In total, UNHCR was quoted as either the single source or one of the sources for refugee statistics in 91 countries. Governments were the single source

or one of the sources in 83 countries (see *Table VI.1*).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Each data collection method has its own strengths and limitations. A register is often created to establish a legal record, to administer entitlements or to deliver services. In a register, all persons should be included and records should be updated regularly. As pressures to register outweigh those to de-register, data from a register may become inflated, requiring periodic verification. On the other hand registers have a tendency to miss out parts of the population, as not all those who qualify are able or

willing to register.

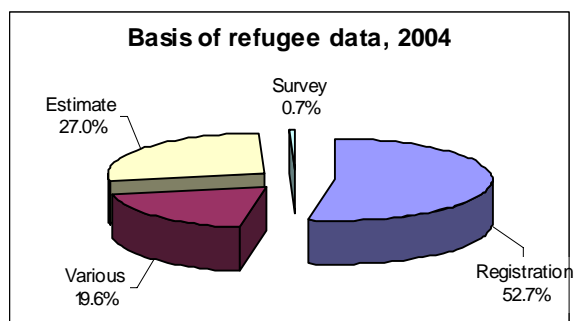
Surveys and censuses are excellent sources for planning purposes, but do not allow for follow-up at the individual level. Although a census includes each individual, it provides only a “snapshot” of the situation and quickly becomes outdated. Surveys are cost effective, but, unless carried out according to strict rules, they may not provide a representative picture. In general, various data methods should be combined and triangulated to obtain the best possible picture.

The role of UNHCR in registration depends on the country of operation. In many cases the government is doing the registration alone, whereas in other situations UNHCR may assist the government or be fully in charge of it. Over the last couple of years UNHCR has developed and started implementing a new registration software – *proGres*¹ – which is a comprehensive database with possibilities for the individual and continuous registration of beneficiaries. It is expected that the implementation of this new registration software will improve the statistics and facilitate well-founded programming decisions.

Registration was reported as the sole source of refugee statistics in 78 countries (53 per cent of the countries) and estimates formed the basis in 40 countries (27%). More than one method of data collection was reported by 29 countries (20%). In 23 of the 29 countries where more than one method of data collection was reported, registration was mentioned as one of them (see Table VI.1).

Among the 40 countries where only estimates were used, 24 are industrialized countries without a refugee register. In these 24 countries, UNHCR estimates the size of the refugee population based on official data on refugee arrivals and the number of asylum-seekers who have been recognized over a 5-year or 10-year period (see below).

Refugees who are living outside camps, sometimes unlawfully, are more difficult to track and are underrepresented in UNHCR's statistics. Nevertheless, estimates for self-settled refugees are included in the statistics of a number of countries.



As noted earlier, refugee registers require continuous registration or verification to align the administrative records with the changing situation on the ground. Consequently, the population size in refugee camps is sometimes subject to significant periodic adjustments.

ESTIMATING REFUGEE POPULATIONS

Most industrialized countries lack a refugee register and are thus not in a position to provide accurate information on the number of refugees residing in their country. To ensure that the refugee population in these countries is reflected in the global statistics, the number of refugees is estimated by UNHCR, based on refugee arrivals and the recognition of asylum-seekers over a 10-year (Europe) or 5-year (North America and Oceania) period respectively. These different cut-off periods reflect the

¹ Profile Global Registration System.

time it generally takes for a refugee to acquire the nationality of his/her host country.

In the two below examples, the refugee population is calculated based on the above method.

Example 1. Canada

- Immigration ("landings") of Convention refugees, 2000-2004: **83,992**;
- Immigration ("landings") of resettled refugees, 2000-2004: **57,434**;
- **UNHCR estimate of the refugee population, end of 2004: 141,398.**

Example 2. United Kingdom

- Asylum-seekers granted Convention refugee status at the first instance, 1995-2004: **76,138**;
- Asylum-seekers allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons ("exceptional leave to remain") at the first instance, 1995-2004: **103,263**;
- Asylum-seekers granted Convention refugee status and "exceptional leave to remain" under the backlog programme of 1995-2004: **29,249**;
- Asylum seekers recognized on appeal during 1995-2004: **80,399**²;
- Resettlement arrivals 1995-2004: **240**;
- **UNHCR estimate of the refugee population, end of 2004: 289,054.**

KEY CHARACTERISTICS PRESENTED IN THIS YEARBOOK

Although the Statistical Yearbook primarily intends to present the size and trends of UNHCR populations of concern, the available data also permits the presentation of breakdowns according to a variety of characteristics including demographic, legal basis, residence and location.

Demographic characteristics include sex and age group distributions of the population of concern. However, such information is reported for less than 60 per cent for sex and less than 35 per cent for age (see Chapter V). Location refers to the types of settlement of populations: camps, urban areas or rural/dispersed areas (Chapter V).

For the refugee population, this Yearbook also provides information about the type of recognition (individually recognized or group based/prima facie) and the legal basis (conventions/protocol or mandate) under which the refugee status was granted (Chapters III and IV).

For asylum-seekers, information about the percentage and the level and type of procedure as well as the recognition rate is also provided (Chapter IV).

A detailed description and explanations of the above and other characteristics will be presented in the corresponding chapters.

OTHER DATA CONSIDERATIONS

Statistics concerning the former USSR have been reported under the Russian Federation, those concerning the former Czechoslovakia have been reported under

² Number of persons estimated by UNHCR based on an average of 1.3 persons per asylum case (61,615 recognized cases x 1.3 = 80,399 persons recognized).

the Czech Republic and those concerning the former Yugoslavia have been reported under Serbia and Montenegro. In most tables, the word “Democratic” has been abbreviated to “Dem.”, whereas the word “Republic” is often reflected as “Rep.” The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is referred to as TfyR Macedonia.

Figures below 1,000 are generally rounded to the nearest 10, figures between 1,000 and 10,000 are rounded to the nearest 100, figures between 10,000 and 100,000 are rounded to the nearest 1,000, figures between 100,000 and one million are rounded to the nearest 10,000 and figures above 1 million are rounded to the nearest 100,000.