

Syrian Kurdish refugees
cross into Turkey near
the town of Kobani.



Resilience ag

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UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Conflict and persecution forced some 13 million people from their homes in 2014, and thousands died trying to get to safety. In several regions of the world, civilians suffered horrific violence and shocking human rights violations. The ability of humanitarians to provide relief increasingly fell short of the immense needs, highlighting both the insufficiency of humanitarian funding and the fragility of access to people in need of protection in today's complex global environment.

Asylum space came under pressure in some countries, with an increased focus on border management at the expense of protection concerns. There were more reports of push-backs and prevention of entry, and the rising sentiments of xenophobia and intolerance in several parts of the world deeply affected the well-being of refugees and others falling under UNHCR's mandate.



ainst all odds

UNHCR / I. PRICKETT

And yet, 2014 was also a year that highlighted the strength and resilience of the human spirit – that of refugees, internally displaced or stateless people, and that of the people sheltering and protecting them. The vast majority of host countries and communities around the globe continued to generously take in refugees fleeing conflict and persecution. In neighbourhoods and camps, in schools and hospitals, in community centres and places of worship, in government offices and grassroots organizations, people made enormous efforts to help those who have lost everything to violence and war.

The same goes for the spirit of UNHCR and other humanitarian staff. Colleagues showed enormous courage, whether working in conflict zones, ensuring that refugees remained safe while their host countries battled the Ebola virus, or staying to deliver in many situations where

security was deteriorating. After international staff had to be evacuated from Libya in mid-2014, national colleagues, together with partners, kept protection and assistance operations running, albeit under extremely difficult circumstances.

But once more, the past year has taken a heavy toll, with over 100 humanitarian workers killed in violent incidents. In May, UNHCR lost one of its own, Abdoulaye Sall, in a brutal attack in Bangui. Dozens of other colleagues in operations around the world were threatened, attacked or injured in the line of duty. As we continue to make the safety and well-being of our staff a top priority, the memory of those lost, their courage, compassion and dedication to helping others, will inspire us to remain firm in our efforts to preserve humanitarian principles.

SUPPORT FROM DONORS AND PARTNERS

With the number of forcibly displaced people at its highest in UNHCR's history, the volume of our operations for the first time exceeded USD 3 billion in 2014. I am deeply grateful to our donors, who provided record levels of financial support to enable us to deliver life-saving assistance and protection to almost 55 million people of concern. An increasing share of these funds was earmarked for major emergencies, which led to some other operations facing shortfalls. As the gap between needs and available humanitarian resources continued to widen, and with exchange rate fluctuations which started in the final weeks of the year foreshadowing a difficult financial year 2015, it has become increasingly clear that a fundamental rethink of humanitarian financing is in order if we are to be able to continue to address the needs of the world's most vulnerable people.

Our partnerships with other organizations continued to be a central pillar of UNHCR's response throughout this past year of growing humanitarian needs. Following a high-level bilateral meeting with OCHA in April, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and I issued our *Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice* to clarify and simplify respective roles and responsibilities, as well as leadership and coordination arrangements, in mixed internal displacement and refugee situations. UNHCR also continued to roll out the Refugee Coordination Model with a number of inter-agency missions supporting operations in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan, among others. By the end of the year, operations in all of the largest refugee emergencies – the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) – were led by regional refugee coordinators and covered under regional response plans that included the affected host countries and the contributions of many partners. More than 200 organizations participated in the 2015-2016 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for Syrian refugees across five countries, which was launched in Berlin in

December. The 3RP, coordinated together with UNDP, is also illustrative of UNHCR's continued efforts to link humanitarian with development responses, so as to ensure a more comprehensive approach to large refugee crises which not only addresses immediate needs but also builds long-term resilience of refugees and affected host populations alike.

Other partnership highlights included continued work with our key NGO partners on strengthening bilateral relationships as well as implementing the partnership principles and recommendations that came out of the Structured Dialogue with NGOs in 2012. UNHCR also worked closely with WFP on a major media campaign on continued food security and nutrition needs in African refugee operations, as well as on a joint method for socio-economic targeting of food assistance in selected contexts. Throughout the year, we engaged actively in the process leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Since the second half of 2014, humanitarian agencies have been responding to four system-wide emergencies simultaneously: in the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan and Syria. By the end of the year, these four situations alone – including the refugee populations in the neighbouring countries – accounted for roughly 40 per cent of UNHCR's human and financial resources worldwide.

The Office deployed over 440 staff and standby partners to increase emergency response and preparedness capacity in field operations, continuing the strong trend set in the past two years. UNHCR's network of six global stockpiles maintained relief items for up to 600,000 people that could be deployed within 72 hours.

We also developed and launched a new emergency policy framework, the *Policy on Emergency Response Activation, Leadership and Accountabilities*, which focuses on preparedness, internal leadership and coordination arrangements and aims to make our corporate response ever more predictable and responsive.



The High Commissioner with newly arrived Syrian refugees at the reception centre in Azraq refugee camp, Jordan.

UNHCR / S. BALDWIN

PROTECTION

Protection at sea and statelessness were key themes of UNHCR's protection work in 2014. In a year that set new records in maritime migration movements, nearly 350,000 people worldwide took to the seas, with two-thirds arriving in southern Europe via the Mediterranean. Many of these dangerous journeys are made in unseaworthy vessels, with passengers putting their lives at the mercy of unscrupulous smugglers. Across the globe some 4,300 people lost their lives (including 3,500 in the Mediterranean).

With conflicts multiplying in many parts of the world, a vastly increased share of those travelling by boat were asylum-seekers, many of whom were forced to risk their lives at sea as they had no other option of seeking protection. This trend highlighted the need for comprehensive responses that focus on saving lives, and which include regional arrangements for how to deal with arrivals, identify those in need of protection, and provide them with access to asylum procedures and durable solutions. This broader approach to protection at sea also means looking at why people flee, what prevents them from seeking asylum by safer means, and how to address smuggling and trafficking. To further explore these challenges and identify

possible partnerships and response measures, UNHCR's annual Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December shone a spotlight on the issue of protection at sea, bringing together 450 participants from States, NGOs and international organizations, as well as coastguards and commercial shipmasters.

In the 60th anniversary year of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the Office published a handbook on the protection of stateless people and co-organized, with Tilburg University, the first Global Forum on Statelessness in September in The Hague. This was followed by the launch, in November, of UNHCR's global campaign to end statelessness within a decade, which builds on the growing international momentum to tackle statelessness, including through 44 accessions to the two UN statelessness conventions since the 2011 Ministerial meeting. The Global Action Plan underpinning the 10-year campaign establishes a practical framework of actions that need to be taken to end statelessness in the next decade. The campaign will be a sustained effort, and the Office is working closely with governments, partners and civil society across the globe, to promote legislative changes to prevent new cases of statelessness and resolve existing situations by 2024.

Other highlights in protection achievements included the publication of UNHCR's global strategy *Beyond detention*, which advocates alternatives to detention of asylum-seekers given the serious negative impact that detention has on people who have fled conflict and persecution. The strategy places special emphasis on national action plans to end the detention of children. 2014 also saw the finalization of the revised UNHCR protection manual.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

There was limited scope for durable solutions in 2014, with voluntary repatriation at its lowest in over 30 years. Only 127,000 refugees returned home in 2014, mainly to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Afghanistan. Some 102,000 refugees were submitted for resettlement by UNHCR, and over 73,000 departed during the year.

There were encouraging prospects for durable solutions in some parts of Africa, with the United Republic of Tanzania beginning to implement its naturalization programme for Burundian refugees, and the local integration of former Angolan refugees progressing well in Namibia and Zambia. At the Ministerial meeting of the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees in Addis Ababa in August, the Governments of the five main host countries – Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, Djibouti and Uganda – and the country of origin adopted the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali refugees, committing themselves to protect Somali refugees and asylum-seekers while creating the conditions for voluntary return and fostering durable solutions.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNHCR worked closely with governments, partners and civil society to support the commemoration process for the 30th anniversary of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. At a Ministerial Meeting in Brazil in December, States adopted the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, agreeing to consolidate the region's existing

high protection standards, work to reduce statelessness, and implement innovative durable solutions including complementary alternatives such as labour mobility schemes.

The Solutions Alliance created in Copenhagen in April 2014 brought together governments, humanitarian and development organizations, civil society and others in pursuing innovative approaches and finding durable solutions for the displaced. In addition, UNHCR's own "Seeds for Solutions" fund supported 19 country operations in establishing multi-year strategies and partnerships for durable solutions.

MAKING UNHCR A 21ST CENTURY ORGANIZATION

UNHCR innovation has become a powerful channel to bring out ideas and knowledge and help integrate new thinking in education, energy, communications, shelter and livelihoods. The innovation unit supported various divisions and field operations in implementing 13 projects worldwide during 2014, including working with refugees to manufacture solar street lights, developing SMS tools for communication with refugees, or deploying "Instant Classroom" e-readers to improve refugee children's access to education. Some 1,800 staff are now actively using our online platform, UNHCR Ideas, to explore innovative solutions to a wide variety of challenges facing people of concern and those working to protect and assist them.

CONCLUSION

With little hope of improvement in most of the large crises the humanitarian community currently faces, 2014 may prove to have been only a harbinger of even greater challenges to come. As the humanitarian family pulls together to face them, we will draw strength from our partnerships, the continued support of our donors, the dedication of our staff, and the resilience against all odds of the people we serve. ■



UNHCR / A. MCCONNELL

Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt visiting refugee communities in Lebanon.

Special Envoy

Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt continued to advocate on behalf of refugees with dedication and compassion throughout 2014. Throughout the year she made numerous statements, including on the Syria situation where she expressed concern over what she deemed the worst crisis of the century.

Her focus on the region continued throughout 2014; Ms. Jolie Pitt visited Lebanon in February and spent time with 11 year-old Hala and her five siblings, orphaned Syrian children who had been living in an informal settlement in the Bekaa Valley for nearly a year. Ms. Jolie Pitt paid tribute to Lebanon, the country with the highest per capita concentration of refugees worldwide, for hosting refugees despite its own internal challenges. See also chapter on *Hosting the world's refugees*.

“The generosity and solidarity shown by Lebanon and the Lebanese to its neighbour serves as an example to the world for which we should all be grateful. We all need to help them bear this burden,” said the Special Envoy.

On World Refugee Day, the Special Envoy visited Thailand, where an estimated 120,000 refugees from Myanmar live in nine camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Some refugees have been displaced for three decades. “After 30 years in exile, the best solution we can give these refugees is the right and power to choose their own way forward,” said Ms. Jolie Pitt. “This is our chance to get it right, to break the vicious cycle of conflict and displacement once and for all.”

In 2014, the Special Envoy also accompanied the High Commissioner to Malta to draw attention to loss of life by asylum-seekers and migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean Sea and to call for European countries to commit more resources for rescue at sea. During her visit, Ms. Jolie Pitt met with Syrian refugee families who had survived a devastating boat tragedy near Lampedusa, Italy, in 2013. In 2014, about half of the people arriving irregularly in Europe by boat were refugees from Syria. ■