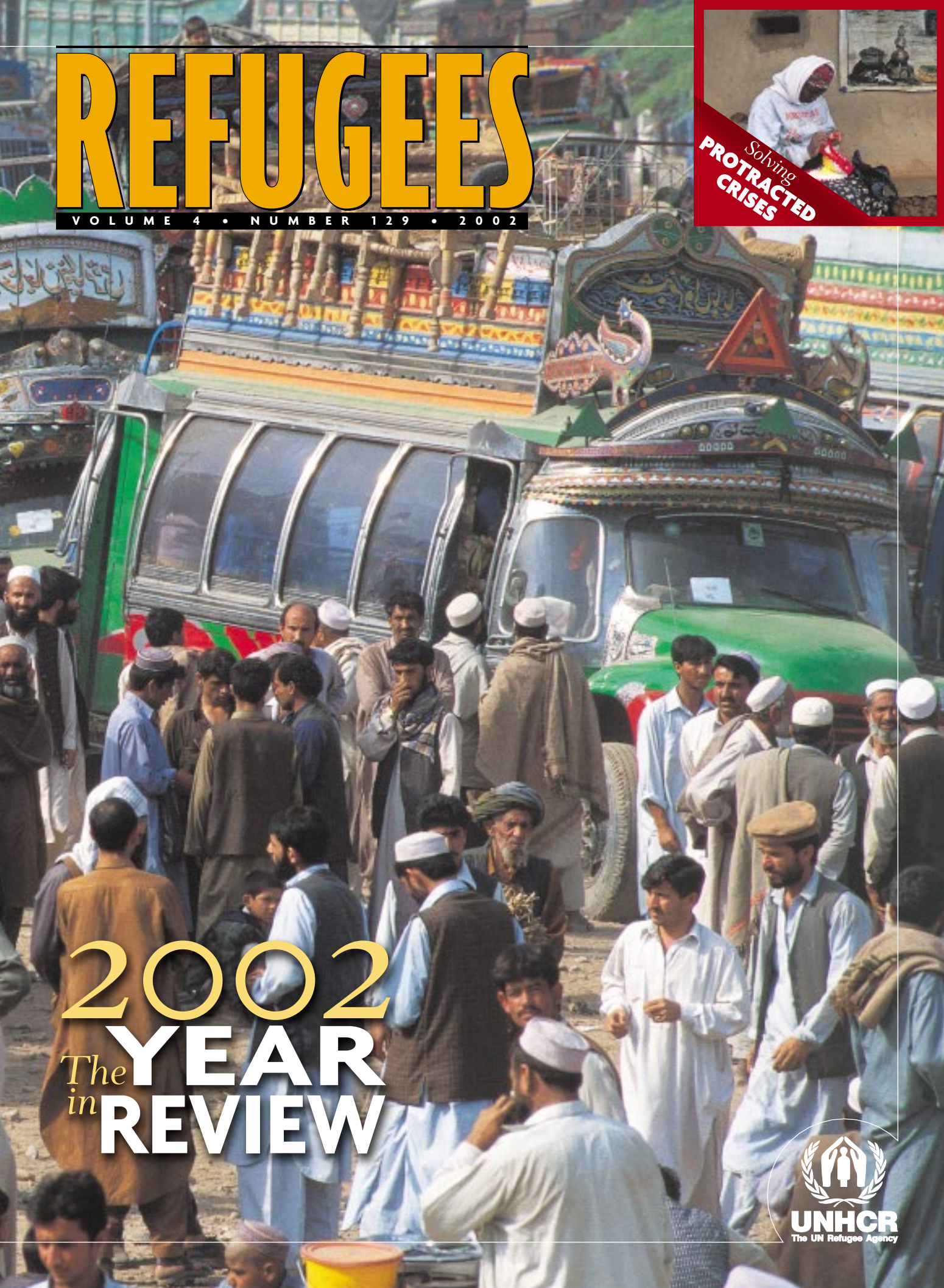


# REFUGEES

VOLUME 4 • NUMBER 129 • 2002

*Solving*  
**PROTRACTED  
CRISES**



**2002**  
*The*  
**YEAR**  
*in*  
**REVIEW**





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# REFUGEES

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**4** The year 2002 was a mixed bag of both good and bad developments around the world. More than two million Afghans returned to their shattered country and hundreds of thousands more are expected to follow in the coming year.

UNHCR/M.KOBAYASHI/CS/IDN\*2002



**16** High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers looks back on the year as one in which UNHCR has become 'part of the solution' to refugee problems.

UNHCR/N.BEHRING/DF/AFG\*2002



**20** More interest is being paid to try to solve protracted refugee crises which are often ignored by the outside world.

## 2 EDITORIAL

Helping the world's longest suffering refugees.

## 4 COVER STORY

2002 was a year of mixed results with a mass return to Afghanistan and encouraging news from Sri Lanka and Angola, but ongoing problems in other areas of the world.

**Glance**

UNHCR's first statistical yearbook reviews the last decade.

## 16 INTERVIEW

High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers reviews the last year and looks forward to 2003.

## 20 PROTRACTED

Around two-thirds of the refugees UNHCR cares for are caught in longtime crises. Now there is renewed interest in trying to find ways to resolve these problems.

*By Jeff Crisp and Ray Wilkinson*

**Map**

Mapping the world's oldest trouble spots.

## 31 QUOTE UNQUOTE

# A glimmer of light in the tunnel

**A**NGOLA IS A POTENTIALLY BOUNTIFUL COUNTRY, rich in minerals, oil and fertile land. But in more than a quarter century of conflict,

hundreds of thousands of persons were killed, similar numbers were mutilated by mines and more than four million civilians fled their homes as the country pulled itself apart.

In the early days of the war, Angola was the center of big power intrigue, a battleground which drew in the United States, the Soviet Union, Europe, South Africa and even Cuba. But then the cold war ended, Angola lost its

strategic importance, diplomats and journalists went home and the country's traumatized population drifted into what official parlance rather clumsily calls a protracted humanitarian situation.

Effectively, such prolonged crises can last for years or even decades, seemingly without end and without solution.

And there is a vicious circle at work here. Because they do go on for so long, donors lose interest in giving, the wider world loses interest in knowing, there is a dwindling effort to try to solve the root causes of the

crises and so they become even more difficult to solve and thus even more 'protracted.'

High profile emergencies such as the Balkans, Rwanda and Timor have dominated the daily headlines for years and so it is perhaps a little surprising to realize that fully two-thirds of the refugees UNHCR cares for each year are actually caught in these other underfunded, almost forgotten problems which stretch across some 20 countries in Africa, the Indian Ocean and central Asia.

Greater attention is now being paid to exploring the origins of these wars and the ways they can be resolved to allow their civilian victims to return home.

And as the two main stories in this issue report, there is some good news. The guns have fallen silent in Angola itself and people are beginning to trickle home. The same is true in the equally long civil struggle in Sri Lanka where the first of nearly one million displaced persons have already started to rebuild their lives.

The biggest advance in 2002 came in Afghanistan where more than two million civilians abandoned their exile and flooded back into their old villages and towns following the fall of the Taliban and the installation of a new government.

There were major humanitarian setbacks last year, especially in Africa, and the fallout from the terror attacks against the United States in September 2001 continued to cast a long shadow.

But many more Afghans, Sri Lankans and Angolans are ready to give peace a chance in the new year. And who knows? Breakthroughs in those previously endless conflicts might prompt progress in other dark corners of the world.



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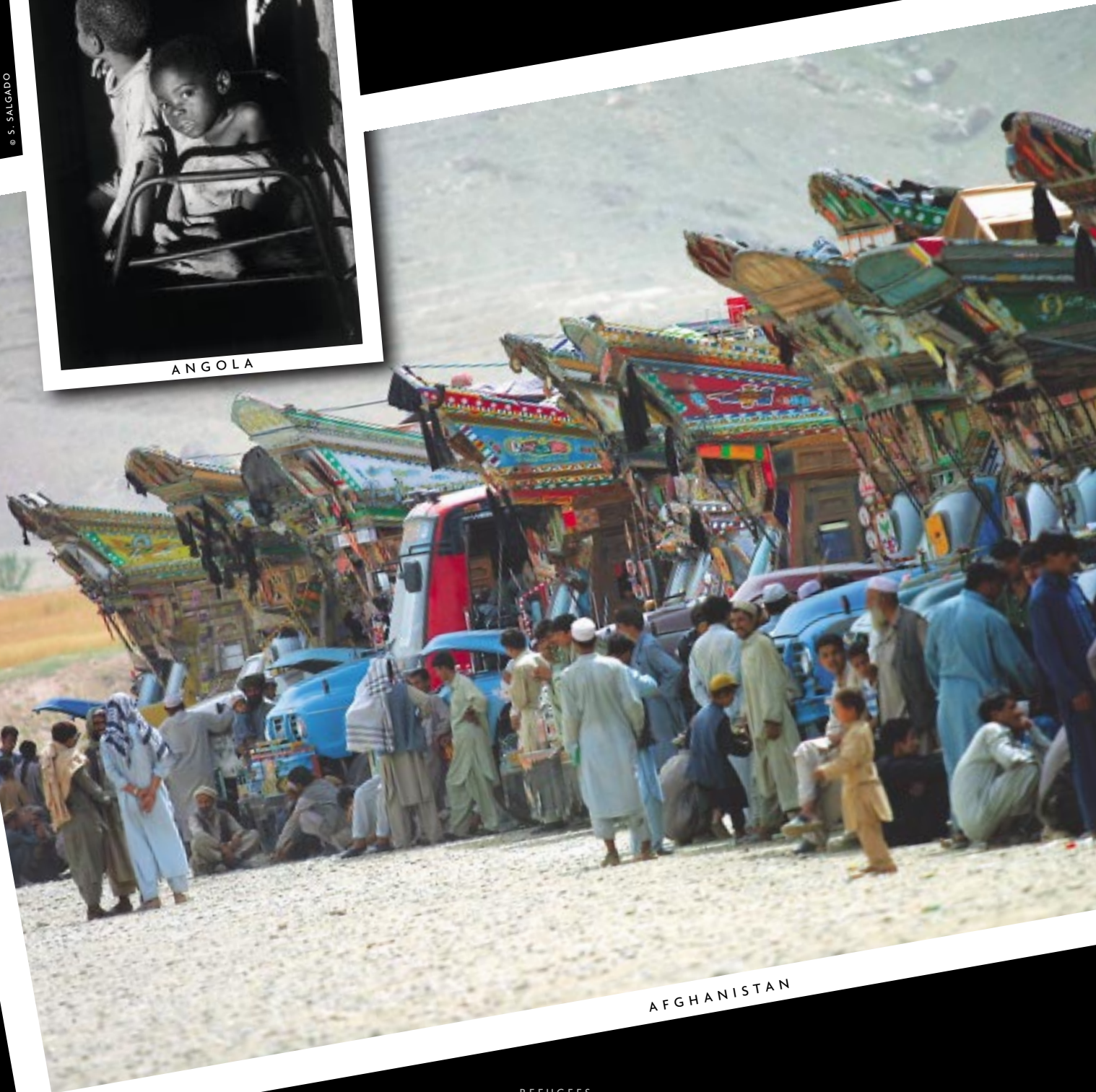
The long civil war in Angola may be coming to an end.

| COVER STORY |

# 2002: Good



ANGOLA



AFGHANISTAN

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# News **Bad** News



UNHCR/N.BEHRING/DP/AFG•2002

UNHCR/B.NORDSTROM/CS/CIS•1995



CHECHNYA



THE BALKANS

UNHCR/R.CHALASANI/CS/YUG•2001



LIBERIA

UNHCR/J.SPAULL/CS/SLE•1996

2002: Good NewsBadNews

## Major breakthroughs in Afghanistan, Angola and Sri Lanka... but more hard work ahead

**T**HEY RETURNED BY FOOT or occasionally on horseback. They came jammed in pickups, on motor scooters and buses. Groups of families surrounded by donkeys, suitcases, satellite dishes and huge wooden beams from their old homes, perched precariously atop

rutted 'highways' on earth from the east. Babies were born en route in centers sometimes jammed with 10,000 persons a day. People occasionally fell to their deaths from the convoys and warlords and bandits lurked with intent along the route.

Following 23 years of war and the worst drought in living memory, travellers were

ily?" Another lamented about past glories and current uncertainties: "If a dead man had come into my garden, he would live because it was such a beautiful place. I thought I was a king here before. Now look. Nothing but destruction and death."

But despite the hiccups, the hazards, the physical hardships and the massive

destruction all around, humanitarian officials recall, almost with a touch of awe, that this sprawling and often seemingly disjointed operation had in the end been relatively orderly, efficient and 'amazingly successful.'

After all, more than two million people poured back into one of the most desolate and dangerous places on earth during the year—twice as many as had been anticipated.

### LARGEST RETURN

This return to Afghanistan, in fact, was the largest repatriation of refugees for three decades, ever since 10 million people had fled from the disintegrating region of East Pakistan into India in the early 1970s and then returned to the newly created state of Bangladesh. It also dwarfed later repatriations

such as those to Kosovo and central Africa's Great Lakes in the 1990s.

"It was a big gamble," said Filippo Grandi, head of UNHCR's operations in Afghanistan, recalling the uncertainties of those early days in 2002. "But things



Going home to Afghanistan.

convoys of trucks resembling overcrowded fairground gondolas swathed in a kaleidoscope of colors.

The journey took days, sometimes weeks, across a vast swirling sand bowl in the west and along one of the most

often greeted on their return with scenes drawn from Dante's Inferno. "Look at my hair. It went white when I saw it," one grizzled old farmer said as he returned to his village for the first time in a decade. "How to live in this place? How to feed my fam-

have already changed enormously. You can see it in the streets of Kabul, in the traffic jams. This new Afghanistan is becoming more and more a reality, and not simply a speculation in everyone's mind."

The rapidly changing situation in central Asia, sparked by the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September, 2001, the subsequent military retaliation and the fall of Afghanistan's hard-line Taliban rulers, undoubtedly dominated the headlines.

But there were other significant developments—both good and bad—in a year High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers described as a 'mixed bag.'

The number of persons cared for by UNHCR had dropped by nearly two million the previous year, to just under 20 million. Those figures kept falling in 2002, fueled mainly by the Afghan returns, and Lubbers predicted in an interview (see page 16) that this trend would likely continue. Only eight years earlier the refugee agency had been assisting more than 27 million people around the world.

And while the drop in the overall number of people needing help was encouraging in itself, equally positive was that much of this progress was reported from some of the world's worst trouble spots—situations described in official parlance as 'protracted situations.'

Of the more than 10 million bona fide refugees that UNHCR currently assists (the agency also cares for a similar number of other civilians in slightly different circumstances), fully two-thirds are trapped in these longtime situations which have simmered for years or decades seemingly without solution and without end (see page 20).

Lubbers said that rather than concentrating on high-profile emergencies and effectively "running simply to stay in place", the international community must also pay increasing attention to



UNHCR/M. KOBAYASHI/CS/LKA-1999

Peace negotiations began to end the long-running civil war in Sri Lanka and tens of thousands of people immediately began returning home.

these often overlooked and unpopular protracted crises. Only then would there be a truly meaningful impact in efforts to help all of the globe's uprooted populations.

### GUNS SILENT

Afghanistan is considered a 'protracted situation', but peace also blossomed in other perennial crisis spots.

Hundreds of thousands of persons were killed during a quarter century of war in Angola and more than four million people were displaced, but the guns fell silent there following yet another peace agreement between the government and guerrillas of the UNITA rebel movement. Earlier truces had collapsed, but following the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi this one could survive and a country which had ripped itself apart began to gingerly try to patch itself together again.

Across a still hauntingly beautiful landscape singed by the silhouettes of thousands of burnt villages and strewn with millions of mines, people, sometimes forlorn and lonely figures, sometimes in large raggedy groups, began searching for homes which may no longer exist. Malnutrition and starvation stalked the land, threatening their homecoming. Thousands of persons, desperate to trace lost husbands, wives, parents and children appeared on a state television show which, in a small way, was trying to reunite a stricken nation with a weekly broadcast.

Sierra Leone's population still bears the scars—literally—of its own horrific decade-long war. Tens of thousands of civilians were mutilated by rebels, many of them boy and girl soldiers, but as that West African state came slowly out of its nightmare—more than 200,000 people returned to the country. One young voter at an election who had had his arms

DESPITE THE HICCUPS, THE HAZARDS, THE PHYSICAL HARDSHIPS AND THE MASSIVE DESTRUCTION, THIS SPRAWLING AND OFTEN SEEMINGLY DISJOINTED OPERATION HAD IN THE END BEEN RELATIVELY ORDERLY, EFFICIENT AND 'AMAZINGLY SUCCESSFUL.'

## 2002: Good NewsBadNews

chopped off, summed up both the brutality of the past and the hope for the future with a memorable quote: "I used to vote with my hands. I did it today with my toe."

Sri Lanka was once described as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean but during two decades of equally relentless civil war in which an estimated 65,000 persons perished, it adopted a more somber name, the Teardrop of Buddha. Warring factions there also called a halt to the carnage in 2002 through a Norwegian-brokered truce and the first of nearly one million uprooted persons clambered aboard World War II vintage Chevrolet buses and other carefully preserved museum pieces, crossed the old military front lines and headed for their abandoned homes.

East Timor achieved full independence. A quarter of a million people returned home and domestic conditions improved sufficiently for UNHCR to invoke the cessation clause of the 1951 Refugee Convention, a little known mechanism under which the agency acknowledged that the great majority of uprooted nationals no longer needed refugee status and should go back to their villages and towns. The clause was similarly invoked for Eritrean refugees living in Sudan. Both directives took effect at the end of 2002.

In the Balkans, after more than a decade of major involvement, the agency continued a phase down of its operations. It could be largely out of the region in the near future as Lubbers said the emphasis shifted from refugee operations to longer-term reintegration and reconstruction. More than 2.2 million civilians had returned home in the last few years and Paddy Ashdown, the



Angolan children play among the wreckage of war. But there are hopeful signs in another

High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, described the U.N. role as "one of the unsung success stories of the post cold war era."

#### VIGOROUS PROTECTION

In the most important global meeting on refugees in a half century held in Geneva in late 2001, some 127 countries adopted a landmark declaration reaffirming the validity of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The gathering recognized the 'enduring importance' and the 'relevance and resilience' of the Convention which Lubbers described as a treaty

'about freedom from fear.'

Building on that endorsement, the refugee agency shaped what it called an Agenda for Protection to serve as a guide for governments and humanitarian organizations in their efforts to strengthen the help afforded to refugees.

Erika Feller, head of UNHCR's International Protection Department, described the Agenda as a "platform on which to build our protection strategies. It is not a blueprint as such, rather a framework containing the broad lines, general directions and yardstick activities, to be adjusted office-by-office to the

CASTING A SHADOW OVER EVERYTHING WAS THE ONGOING FALLOUT FROM THE SEPTEMBER 11 TERRORIST ATTACKS. IN THE EVENT, IT WAS NOT AS SEVERE AS INITIALLY FEARED, BUT THERE WERE STILL 'SOME SERIOUS DOWNSIDES.'





UNHCR/C. SATTBERGER/CS/AGO1994

of the world's longest running conflicts.

exigencies on the ground.”

At the beginning of 2002 the prognosis for the Agenda was not good. The world was still reeling from the after effects of what had already become commonly known as 9/11, or the terrorist attacks in the United States. Parts of Europe and Asia were awash with fear and tough talk against immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, often bunched together simply as ‘foreigners.’

In the event, Volker Turk, head of UNHCR's protection policy and legal advice team, said it was “a minor miracle that we have got as far as we have” adding that “At the beginning of the process there were many naysayers who predicted the process was doomed. This opposition has now evaporated.”

Lubbers said three major concerns had repeated themselves throughout the year—the need for better protection in the new migratory context, a more

vigorous search for permanent solutions for the world's uprooted peoples and a more equitable system of ‘burden sharing’ between donors, countries of asylum, those poorer states which hosted the bulk of the displaced and the embattled regions from which refugees fled in the first place.

While underscoring the continued centrality of the 1951 Geneva document, and in a direct follow-up of the Agenda, Lubbers launched what he called a ‘Convention Plus’ approach to strengthen the treaty in those three areas and particularly tried to position the refugee agency to be more involved in the search for solutions. “2002 was the year UNHCR became part of the solution,” he said.

Lubbers will convene a forum of experts to provide guidance on these issues and he also launched a so-called 2004 Process, essentially a review of the organization's capacity to carry out its mandate, the results of which will be incorporated into the agency's next five-year mandate period.

The Convention itself was bolstered from another quarter. Three additional countries, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Moldova and Ukraine became signatories during the year, bringing the global total to 144.

UNHCR's first ever statistical yearbook released at the end of 2002 provided an insight into global forced displacement over the past decade and the data gathered could influence future humanitarian debate.

It noted, for instance, that while developing countries produced 86 percent of the world's refugees during the period, poor nations also afforded 72 percent of them sanctuary, numbers which underscore “the responsibility of industrialized states to share in international refugee protection.”

Excluding these same industrialized countries, 10.7 million refugees arrived between 1992–2001 and in the same period 14.1 million refugees went home. Around 40 percent of the people the agency cared for lived in organized camps.

## SETBACKS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

To be sure, there were setbacks and disappointments in 2002. Parts of Africa continued to burn, or at least simmer, as longtime conflicts remained unresolved.

The war in Liberia periodically spluttered into flame and showed no signs of ending. Neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, once the most stable of regional countries, plunged into its own civil conflict, threatening at times to destabilize Africa's entire western seaboard.

Despite almost around-the-clock regional and international peace efforts, large swathes of central Africa including the Congo basin and Burundi teetered between renewed hopes for peace and more anarchy. Tanzania, one of the world's poorest nations hosted one of the world's largest concentrations of refugees, a staggering one million people, some who have been in exile for several decades. This long time presence fed increasing calls among



UNHCR/S. MANN/CS/UGA-2003

Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda flee rebel attacks.

Tanzanian politicians and community leaders for the refugees to go home—today or, preferably, yesterday.

In a surreal cameo, groups of Burundis and Congolese returned to their homes in parts of those countries which were peaceful for the moment, while other civilians fled in the opposite direction into exile from areas where fighting continued.

This mishmash of conflicting movement was repeated in the Horn of Africa and surrounding areas. Some 25,000 Somali refugees left their Ethiopian exile

2002: Good NewsBadNews

and headed to their old villages though parts of their ancestral homeland were still considered among the most dangerous neighborhoods on earth. Eritrean refugees continued a slow repatriation from Sudan. But hundreds of thousands

certain, he believed a wider context was necessary to judge Africa's progress. "After all, at the start of the 90s, there were more than six million refugees on the continent," the Nigerian-born official said. "Now there are around 3.3 million. That is still far too many, but we should not underestimate these individual victories."

In Colombia, the worst humanitari-

bia itself inherently unsafe, many people had no alternative but to seek safety in another country.

Across the world, the fate of 269,000 refugees from Azerbaijan or 110,800 refugees from the mountaintop state of Bhutan were as far from resolution as ever, while the ongoing bloody conflict in Chechnya was highlighted in horrific fashion by the storming of a theater in



UNHCR/S. HOPPER/CP/CHE-2001



UNHCR/S. BONESS/CS/ERI-2001

An unprecedented meeting of states and organizations in Geneva set the stage for the adoption of an Agenda for Protection for refugees.

UNHCR ends refugee protection for Eritreans because of improved conditions in their country.

of Sudan's own population were blocked from their homes as tortuous peace talks between Khartoum and rebels continued. Ragtag groups of armed men and women terrorized refugee camps and other communities in northern Uganda from sanctuaries in southern Sudan.

In the far northwest of the continent, 150,000 refugees from the former Spanish territory of Western Sahara squatted in their tents, feeling forgotten and abandoned by the outside world and used as pawns by the regional powers.

"In Africa we are at a crossroads, betwixt and between," said David Lambo, head of UNHCR's Africa bureau. But if the present and the future remained un-

an situation in the western hemisphere continued to deteriorate following the collapse of a fragile peace process between Bogota and opposition forces early in the year. Since 1985 as many as two million persons were forced from their homes and around 200,000 fled in the last year alone. Many remained trapped inside the country, but increasing numbers fled to Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama and other surrounding states.

With some countries introducing visa requirements for Colombians, UNHCR issued a new set of guidelines to governments and refugee advocates on the eligibility of asylum seekers from that country. It noted that with Colom-

central Moscow and the subsequent deaths of dozens of civilians and their Chechen captors when special forces stormed the arena.

Around one million persons remained displaced in the Balkans, principally ethnic Serbs from Croatia and Kosovo currently living in the rump Yugoslav Republic of Serbia and Montenegro. Despite strenuous efforts to encourage nearly one quarter of a million Serbs to return to Kosovo few had braved the journey back. One nun in the town of Pec ridiculed claims that it was safe for them: "How can you say that security has improved for Serbs when there are virtually no Serbs here

THE REFUGEE AGENCY SHAPED AN AGENDA FOR PROTECTION TO HELP GOVERNMENTS AND HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS STRENGTHEN THEIR ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES.

IN THE BALKANS, AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE OF MAJOR INVOLVEMENT, THE AGENCY CONTINUED TO PHASE DOWN ITS OPERATIONS AND COULD BE LARGELY OUT OF THE REGION IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

and the few who have returned are living in mouseholes?”

An estimated 25 million people—twice the number of refugees—were forced from their homes within their own countries. Though these so-called internally displaced persons (IDPs) do not fall directly under UNHCR’s mandate, the agency nevertheless helps an estimated 5.3 million of them. The rest live without international aid or recognition, often the victims of deliberate discriminatory policies by their own governments. Since the start of the new millennium there has been increasing debate but few breakthroughs on who or what organization should ultimately be responsible for the protection of these people.

**9/11**

And casting a shadow over everything was the ongoing fallout from the September 11 terrorist attacks. In the immediate aftermath, as countries around the world raced to strengthen their legal and physical defenses, there were grave concerns that legitimate refugees and asylum seekers would be swept away in the rush to the barriers.

Even before 9/11 some politicians and media had described the 1951 Convention as irrelevant or even as a safe haven for the kind of plotters who crashed their hijacked aircraft into New York’s World Trade towers and the Pentagon.

UNHCR issued a list of 10 major concerns, principally that bona fide claimants might be victimized because of public prejudice and restrictive legis-

lation and that carefully built protection standards could be eroded.

In the event, the fallout was not as severe as initially feared. According to Lubbers, “Governments in general refrained from over-reacting to the situation” and Volker Turk added: “From the very first, UNHCR broadcast the mes-

When American led forces attacked Afghanistan to root out the Al Qaida terror networks and then the ruling Taliban who sheltered them, an unknown number of civilians were killed in the fighting and hundreds of thousands of persons fled their homes.

In the name of security, measures

UNHCR/P. SMITH/CS/COL-2002



**A youth group in Colombia** uses the stage to highlight internal displacement and disappearances in that country.

sage that provisions were already in place in the Convention to exclude or punish terrorists, that it did not need fundamental change, rather selective strengthening. It worked and we have been pleasantly surprised. Many countries did not want to link asylum with terrorism.”

But as Lubbers added, “That is not to say there has not been some serious downsides” around the world.

were introduced in some countries which led to the exclusion of genuine asylum seekers or even their forcible removal, an increased number of extradition requests and the introduction of overly restrictive legislation.

Australia’s so-called Pacific solution and detention policies towards asylum seekers caused continuing concerns among many humanitarian groups though Canberra vigorously



Scare headlines in the British media.

defended its approach as appropriate and measured.

The permanent resettlement of refugees to the United States, the world's largest recipient of needy cases, was particularly hard hit. Washington admitted only 27,100 people compared with a target of around 70,000, the lowest number in a quarter century.

In the highly charged post 9/11 atmosphere, individual American communities voiced their worries. The New England town of Holyoke which was

scheduled to receive some of an estimated 12,000 Somali Bantu refugees in the U.S. in 2003, urged the federal government to take back funds allocated for the new arrivals, insisting, "The city does not have the resources to care for, educate, train, house or protect said individuals." A federal spokesperson said he had never heard of an American community rejecting refugees before.

The ripples were felt further afield. In Egypt, 1,600 refugees who had already been approved for resettlement in the

U.S. were put 'on hold.' In addition to personal anguish for the selected candidates, the action had its own unfortunate knock-on effects. Because UNHCR's Cairo office had to continue to support this group indefinitely on an extremely tight budget, it was forced to reduce or even cut assistance to other refugees under its care.

### SPILLOVER

Europe's longtime efforts to harmonize its immigration and asylum policies were buffeted by the chill effects of 9/11, national elections, and media and public debate which sometimes spilled over into xenophobia or failed to differentiate, perhaps deliberately, between refugees, asylum seekers and the larger issue of economic migration.

The United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Belgium and Germany all announced or introduced asylum or immigration legislation, sometimes aimed at reducing both the numbers of and benefits for applicants.

This appeared to have the desired effect in at least some cases. During the first few months of 2002, the number of asylum seekers in 'hard-line' Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium plummeted dramatically.

In contrast, the figures in Norway, Sweden and Finland spiralled upwards, some commentators suggesting asylum seekers had switched their attention to these countries away from their 'get tough' neighbors.

In Britain, which registered the highest number of asylum claimants in 2001 with 92,000, the furore was particularly loud though Prime Minister Tony Blair strongly insisted "We are not advocating a 'Fortress Europe.' But there has to be some order and some rules brought into the system..."

Some national newspapers launched a sustained anti-immigrant campaign with headlines such as "Asylum Gravy" ▶

THREE MAJOR CONCERNS REPEATED THEMSELVES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR  
 —THE NEED FOR BETTER PROTECTION, A MORE VIGOROUS SEARCH  
 FOR PERMANENT SOLUTIONS FOR THE WORLD'S UPROOTED  
 PEOPLES AND A MORE EQUITABLE SYSTEM OF 'BURDEN SHARING.'

# The refugee world – at a glance

*The U.N. refugee agency recently released its first annual statistical yearbook. It illustrates the work of the organization and the world of refugees through numbers until the start of 2002.\* Major conclusions include:*

**The total population ‘of concern’ to UNHCR fell by nine percent** to 19.8 million people at the start of 2002 compared with the previous year. They included 12 million refugees, 6.3 million persons internally displaced within their own countries (IDPs) and other groups ‘of concern’, 940,800 asylum seekers and 462,700 returnees. (Nearly two million Afghan refugees subsequently returned home in 2002, though many of these continued to be assisted by the refugee agency).

**Asia hosted the largest overall population** ‘of concern’ to the refugee agency with 8.8 million persons, followed by Europe 4.8 million, Africa 4.2 million, North America 1.1 million, Latin America and the Caribbean 765,400 and Oceania 81,300.

**Around 500,000 people fled as refugees**, mainly as large groups in Africa and Asia, but generally as individual family units in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. This was a 31 percent fall compared with 2000. Some 463,000 refugees, repatriated, principally to Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Somalia. Repatriations fell 40 percent compared with the previous year.

**Some 92,000 refugees were permanently resettled** in new countries during 2001 because they were unable to return home or become residents in countries of asylum. UNHCR helped to resettle about one-third of the refugees.

**In the decade since 1992, the United States has accepted 77 percent** of an estimated 1.2 million refugees permanently resettled in industrialized countries followed by Canada with 10 percent

and Australia 8 percent. Forty nine percent of all resettlement refugees came from Europe, 34 percent from Asia and 10 percent from Africa. The Russian Federation was the largest single country of origin with 24 percent followed by Viet Nam with 19 percent and Bosnia 17 percent.

**Developing countries produced 86 percent of the world’s refugees** in the last decade, but also provided asylum for seven out of ten of those fleeing. “This underscores the responsibility of industrialized states to share in international refugee protection,” the yearbook said.

**Forty percent of the people UNHCR cares for live in camps**, 13 percent reside in urban areas and 47 percent are dispersed in rural regions or other unspecified areas. The situation varies widely depending on geographical location. While 50 percent of any population in Africa and Asia live in camps, the figure in Europe, the Americas and Oceania is less than 10 percent.

**Females comprise around 48 percent** of the uprooted people the refugee agency cares for and a slightly larger number, 51 percent, live in camps.

**Some 915,000 people submitted asylum applications** in 144 countries. More than half—595,700 applications—were lodged in major industrialized countries. A total of 932,000 pending asylum cases were decided during the same period. Of that total 445,000 were rejected, 168,000 received refugee status and 78,000 were allowed to stay in host countries on humanitarian grounds.

**The United Kingdom received the**

**largest number** of asylum applications among leading industrialized countries with 92,000 followed by Germany, 88,300, and the United States, 83,200. The trend in applications varied sharply between countries. While Austria (65%), the U.S. (45%), Sweden (44%), Norway (36%) and Canada (29%) reported sharp increases; there were sharp declines in Belgium (-42%), Italy (-38%) and the Netherlands (-26%). Afghans, Iraqis and Turks were the largest groups of asylum seekers.

**Since 1982 this group of states received 8.7 million asylum applications**, peaking for a single year in 1992 with 858,000 submissions. During the entire period almost two million people were officially accepted. By far the largest number, 1.6 million, were allowed to stay in Europe.

**Seven out of every 10 asylum seekers are male. A survey of 32 countries showed, however, that 76 percent** of females compared with 68 percent of males were granted refugee status.

**On a per capita basis, Switzerland received the largest number** of refugees (23.4 percent per 1,000 inhabitants) among industrialized countries in the last decade, followed by Sweden 16.6 percent and Denmark 13.8 percent.

**UNHCR expenditure on operational activities came to \$19 per person**, fluctuating between more than \$100 in Central America, Central Europe and the Baltic States to less than \$10 in Eastern Europe, South-West Asia, South America, Western Europe, North America and the Caribbean.

\*All figures refer to the calendar year 2001 unless otherwise stated.

## 2002: Good NewsBadNews

► “Train” or “200,000 Asylum Seekers Vanish.” When the government introduced proposals to educate refugee children in special centers because they were ‘swamping’ local schools, refugee advocates likened the scheme to South Africa’s old white apartheid regime.

In southern Europe, Spain announced new visa controls, Greece signed a readmission agreement with Turkey and Italy introduced a new immigration and asylum law which UNHCR worried offered insufficient safeguards for people seeking sanctuary in that country.

The southern tier of states considered themselves particularly vulnerable to fleets of rusting tramp ships, high speed motor launches and so-called *pateras* or duck boats which ferried thousands of Africans, Middle Easterners and people from even further afield, some of them genuine asylum seekers, others simply seeking a better life in Europe.

## DEATHS

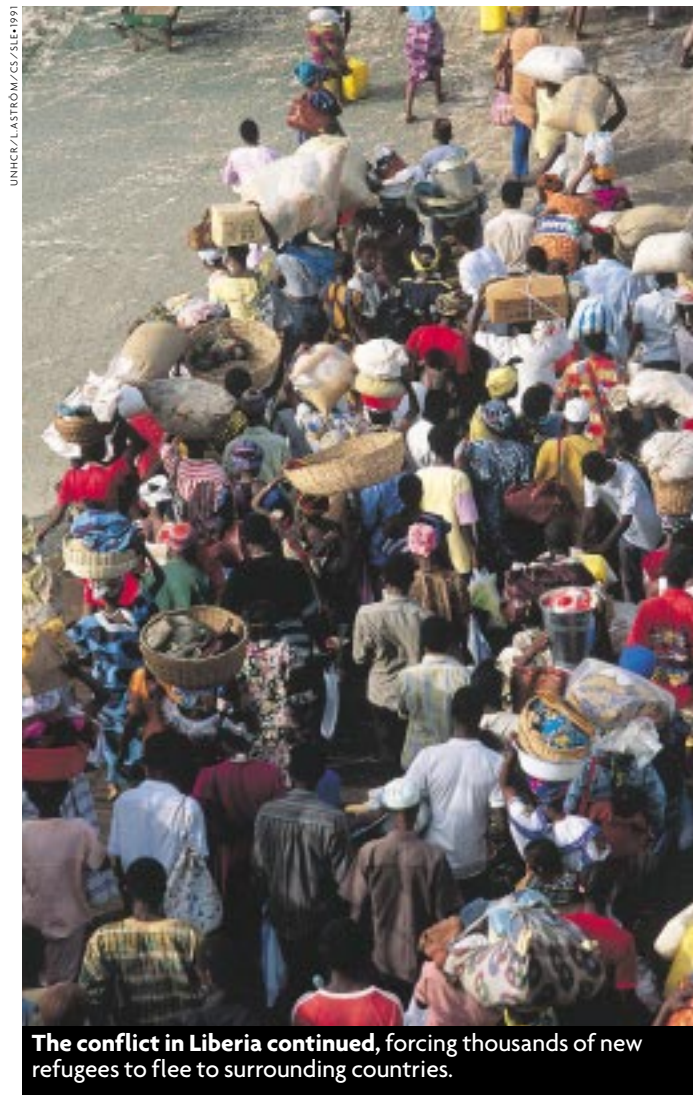
Greece reported several dozen persons, including small children, had perished in the first months of 2002 in their attempts to gate crash the continent. The real figure was undoubtedly much higher. Off Italy in March, a vessel carrying some 65 Kurds sank in rough seas and a few days later the navy intercepted one boat with 22 people aboard and the bodies of six others hooked to the sides of the ship. A Turkish vessel arrived shortly afterwards in Sicily with nearly 1,000 people crammed aboard.

Such headline stories often obscured the good news. Germany through legislation and France through a shift of policy, came into line with most other European countries on the issue of whether a

person could be recognized as a refugee if they were fleeing persecution by so-called ‘non state agents’ such as rebel movements or the Taliban regime in Afghanistan which had never received any international recognition. These European governments previously had insisted refugee status could be granted only in the case of persecution by ‘recognized’ states.

“This issue has been troubling us for several decades,” UNHCR’s Volker Turk said. “It is a major breakthrough.”

In Austria, a young woman from the African state of Cameroon was granted refugee status on the grounds she feared circumcision in her homeland, the first time in Austrian history a person had been approved on the grounds of gen-



UNHCR/LASTROM/CS/51E/1991

der-based persecution. Two months later, a 14-month old baby girl from Ethiopia received permission to stay on similar grounds.

In Britain, several initiatives were started to refocus attention on the integration of refugees and the government announced it would join UNHCR’s annual resettlement program for the particularly needy.

On the pan-continental level, European Union members agreed, but still had to endorse, one common piece of legislation covering reception conditions for asylum seekers. Negotiations continued on three other elements of a harmonization package including common asylum procedures, the revision of the Dublin Convention to decide which state was ultimately responsible for hearing an individual’s asylum claim and on the basic definition of a refugee.

## BREAD AND BUTTER

Away from the world’s headlines, UN-

HCR’s bread-and-butter work continued on a daily basis and in a thousand ways, with field personnel advising and helping to strengthen national asylum legislation, providing individual counselling or introducing special programs to help the particularly vulnerable.

In the Czech Republic, a pilot project was introduced to provide the country’s minority Roma population with small financial increments with the eventual aim of fully integrating them into mainstream society. In Moscow, a forbidding city for any would-be asylum seeker, a modest program was launched to integrate refugee children into the local school system.

In Central Europe, UNHCR continued the so-called Uzghorod process, the

“IN AFRICA, WE ARE AT A CROSSROADS, BETWEEN AND BETWEEN. AT THE START OF THE 90S THERE WERE MORE THAN SIX MILLION REFUGEES. NOW THERE ARE AROUND 3.3 MILLION. THAT IS STILL FAR TOO MANY, BUT WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THESE INDIVIDUAL VICTORIES.”

cross border cooperation between Slovakia, Hungary and the Ukraine.

The refugee agency was heavily involved in training border officials, the judiciary and local non-governmental agencies in Croatia and helping returning ethnic minorities to move back into their old homes.

In Africa, field officials participated in the Zambia Initiative, a program in which at least some of the 285,000 refugees in that country will be integrated into local communities. In the immediate post World War II era, local integration was often a popular method of helping refugees, but as their numbers swelled and the issue of displacement became more politicized, the policy was all but abandoned. The Zambia Initiative is one of the few local integration efforts currently underway.

In Mexico, the local integration of more than 6,000 Guatemalan refugees who had arrived in the 1980s was successfully completed and the refugee agency, which had previously carried out refugee status determination decisions in that country, handed over responsibility to the government.

In Latin America, strengthening refugee legislation and drawing up contingency planning was pursued vigorously in view of the deteriorating situation in Colombia.

Around the world, UNHCR was heavily involved in environmental projects both to rehabilitate abandoned refugee camps and surrounding areas and in home regions to which refugees were now re-

turning (see REFUGEES No 127).

As part of its global watching brief on new national refugee and asylum legislation introduced by governments, UNHCR expressed concern that an agreement between the United States and Canada to more strictly control the flow of would-be asylum seekers across their common land border could deny some people access to a full and fair adjudication of their claims.

In a similar vein, the agency complained that tighter guidelines in Austria against some asylum seekers there would throw them out onto the streets and was against directives laid down by the European Union.

## THE FUTURE

If results in Afghanistan in 2002 were ‘staggering’ High Commissioner Lubbers said “huge tasks still lie ahead.”

Around four million Afghans remained abroad. With an anticipated budget of some \$200 million for 2003, UNHCR expects to help an additional 1.5 million return in the next 12 months.

But like the early arrivals they will come back to a country still on its knees, where reconstruction has been modest, warlords reign supreme in some regions, where healthcare is among the worst in the world and where there is the beginning of a backlash against one of the most promising developments since the fall of the

*Continued on page 19* ▶

UNHCR/P. SMITH/CS/COL-2002



**As the situation in Colombia deteriorated, as many as 200,000 people fled during the year and UNHCR employed mobile registration vehicles to help people obtain ID cards.**

# AFGHANISTAN, Agenda for

High Commissioner **Ruud Lubbers**

## REFUGEES: What did 2002 mean for refugees and for UNHCR itself?

**LUBBERS:** It was a tough year, essentially a mixed bag, both good and bad. On the positive side nearly two million refugees and internally displaced civilians returned to their homes in Afghanistan. This was the largest refugee repatriation in three decades. There was suddenly peace in Angola. And in Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone. East Timor gained independence. The number of people of concern to my office dropped by around two million in 2001 and the trend continued in 2002. These are all good developments.

## And the bad news?

Some countries, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire for instance, were in flames for part of the year. There were ongoing problems in Burundi, Sudan, Somalia and Democratic Congo. Millions of refugees remained trapped in longtime crises in places like Western Sahara and Bhutan.

## What is the situation in the Balkans?

More than two million civilians have returned home in the last few years and (though more than one million people remained uprooted) 2002 was particularly significant for UNHCR. We started the year with a huge operation, a reflection of past events, but by the end of the year we had begun to phase out. It is no longer primarily a question of refugees there, but of reconstruction.

## How long will UNHCR stay in the region?

I would expect to stay in Bosnia-Herzegovina perhaps another year and for not much longer in Serbia. Now there is a very interesting situation. To what extent can displaced Serb civilians (an estimated 700,000 people) be convinced that not everyone can go home? A number of these people will not be able to go back to sur-

UNHCR/L.TAYLOR/CS/SLE.2001



The situation in Sierra Leone had once seemed hopeless, but now young female refugee returns learn a new skill in the capital, Freetown.

*The number of people of concern to UNHCR dropped by two million in the last year. And the trend should continue in the future.*

rounding areas, especially Kosovo.

## What other major trends developed during the year?

We are moving ahead to implement an Agenda for Protection and to strengthen the 1951 Refugee Convention in areas that it doesn't adequately cover currently,

through a process I call 'Convention Plus.' These approaches will allow the international humanitarian community to improve refugee protection, promote better long-term solutions through improved reintegration programs in their home countries, local integration in countries of asylum or expanded permanent resettlement in third countries. Special agreements should be drawn up and aimed at more equitable 'burden sharing' responsibilities between donors and countries hosting large numbers of displaced persons or asylum seekers. I will establish a forum of experts to help develop these ideas.

**It may take years to consolidate the initial successes in Afghanistan and there are already some concerns that**



# Protection, EUROPE, LIBERIA

*looks back on a turbulent year*

**the international community could abandon the country again.**

I think not. We must now shift the emphasis more to reintegrating the returning civilians and keep them in-country.

**But as time goes on the so-called 'sexiness' of any operation disappears and so does the money.**

We'll see. We have asked for almost \$200 million for 2003 and, knock on wood, we will get it. The situation is manageable. Let us also remember that mature economies are having increasing difficulty in handling large numbers of refugees and asylum applicants at home. What this means is, if you want to reduce these numbers, you have to work on solutions in affected regions and introduce successful reintegration programs, for example in Afghanistan. I have to explain that the industrialized countries should allocate some of the money they are spending in their own areas on regional refugee solutions. Europe spends billions of dollars dealing with refugees and asylum problems that reach the continent. If you took only 10-20 percent of that money you could fund many global refugee solutions.

**There are high hopes of peace in Angola, but will donors be willing to give money for a country where there is reportedly widespread corruption?**

Angola will be a difficult one. It has mineral resources and oil and is potentially rich. It is difficult to convince countries to come forward with money, but maybe they will understand that UNHCR has to give technical assistance to bring people home. We are not talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, but dozens of millions.

**Are governments willing to invest in permanent solutions, especially for refugee**

**problems which have lasted for decades?**

It's not easy. The global economy is weak. Let me compare it to a factory which is not investing because it is making a loss. It needs to invest in new machinery to turn this situation around. The factory argues it cannot invest more because it is already losing so much money. But it is losing precisely because it has lousy machinery. So, many European countries say they have spent too much already on refugees. Ministers of finance always think in terms of cash, not investment. But governments have started to think long term and the need for follow-up programs after a refugee emergency.

**You are promoting a concept called the 4Rs in which agencies will cooperate on the repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation of refugees and the reconstruction of their communities. This has been tried before and never really succeeded.**

We are doing it more consistently than in the past. More countries understand the need for follow-through after the emergency phase of an operation. And there's something new at the World Bank and (at the U.N.) in New York which now understand that international agencies must concentrate much more on so-called post-conflict projects. We have already started four pilot projects—in Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

**Turf battles between organizations was a problem blocking cooperation in the past.**

We are very near the point where those who used to be in the business of turf wars see the advantage of this 4Rs approach. In similar circumstances in the past refugees were often marginalized and there was a general feeling that 'UNHCR takes care of refugees so why should we include them in our recon-



UNHCR/H.J. DAVIES/DP/FRA • 2002

**UNHCR is becoming more involved in resolving specific problems, including the future of would-be asylum seekers at the controversial Sangatte center in France.**

*Governments in general refrained from over-reacting to the detriment of refugees and asylum seekers in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States. There were, however, some serious downsides.*

struction programs.' There's still work to do, but the 'turf battle' element is not too bad.

**When you first came to UNHCR two years ago was it your understanding that this was an organization which was not providing enough concrete solutions to refugee problems?**

Ah no. There was talk that we were providing too much assistance and not enough protection. What I found most relevant was that we could be criticized for speaking so much about protection. But the ultimate protection for a refugee is a solution. 2002 was the year UNHCR started to portray itself as part of the solution. Take Sangatte (a controversial Red Cross center on the French coast for would-be asylum seekers trying to reach Britain). Not so long ago that was portrayed as a problem for the French and British governments. It was not 'our problem.' I came to the conclusion this was not a very intelligent approach. And I told the governments we want to help with a solution. That approach creates a very different climate, and it's needed. Because otherwise we become irrelevant to governments.

**In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington there was widespread concern that a backlash could develop against asylum seekers and refugees. How serious is the problem?**

We were very alert and active in raising our concerns and it has worked. Governments in general refrained from over-reacting to the situation to the detriment of these groups. That is not to say there has not been some serious downsides. Refugee resettlement, especially in the United States, dropped considerably in the aftermath of the attacks. A high temperature against foreigners in Europe crossed a new threshold, especially in countries like Denmark and the Netherlands, traditionally major UNHCR donors and supporters. Interestingly, the number of refugees in Europe has dropped considerably, but many

people and politicians still cry out as if they were facing national disasters because of them. There is also the very grave risk of a major rift between the Islamic world and the rest of the world. We need to do more in the Islamic world because 50 percent of the people of concern to my office originate from there.

**Humanitarian work is sometimes portrayed as a 'fig leaf' or an excuse for political and military inaction by governments. Is that still the case in areas like Western Sahara?**

We may reduce our presence there. We have proposed to the parties, Morocco and the Polisario movement, a series of confidence building measures, organized contact between peoples in the Western Sahara region and refugees in the camps (in Algeria). If that happens, it could improve chances for a political solution, but as long as the parties do not permit us to do that sort of thing then, yes, we are a fig leaf only.

**The conflict has lasted for more than two decades. Why not simply withdraw?**

That's not what I propose. We will continue to be there on a limited scale. If we can do the kind of meaningful work I have outlined, then perhaps we can expand our presence again.

**You are promoting the concept of integrating refugees locally in host countries, but apart from one program in Zambia, what is happening in this field?**

Yes, it is limited. But recently, Saudi Arabia agreed for the first time to accept 2,000 Iraqis from a refugee camp there. In Yemen, Somali refugees are allowed to work in the local economy. These are small examples, exceptions. But we have to expand these kinds of initiatives.

**And resettling refugees permanently in other countries?**

My ideal scheme is that key countries would accept one refugee for each 1,000 head of population which would yield maybe 800,000 places each year. This is a

dream of course. But let's make a calculation on one resettlement place for every 4,000 people. This would mean 65,000 resettled refugees in the United States, 90,000 in the European Union and maybe another 50,000 worldwide which would yield around 200,000 places. Probably the urgent needs of refugees lie somewhere between the two figures.

**The number of people 'of concern' to UNHCR declined in the last two years. Will this trend continue?**

Yes, I think so though it's hard work. I'm very worried, however, about Africa, the ongoing climate of people there in the business of starting and prolonging civil war through greed. With globalization the standards of greed have gone up, not down.

**UNHCR has undergone wrenching changes recently, including downsizing, but the fi-**

*2002 was the year UNHCR started to portray itself as part of the solution to refugee problems. This approach is needed. Otherwise, we become irrelevant to governments.*

**financial situation still seems critical. Why?**

The total funding in 2002 was higher than recent years, not lower, but that was specifically because of the Afghanistan operation. There was still an overall need to reduce the budget, especially at a time when the world at large is providing only 'sluggish generosity.' There is increased understanding for the need for durable solutions and this will bring in some additional money, but the situation is tough.

**So will UNHCR as an agency continue to streamline itself?**

We are still at the beginning. I said recently that UNHCR is not there to serve its staff. The staff of UNHCR is there to serve refugees. There is a lot of work to be done. Our operations in 2002 were larger than the previous year. But we have to go the extra mile in self-discipline. We must be tough on ourselves.

2002: Good NewsBadNews

## IF RESULTS IN AFGHANISTAN IN 2002 WERE 'STAGGERING', NEVERTHELESS HUGE TASKS STILL LIE AHEAD.

► Continued from page 15

Taliban, the education of girls.

Some Afghans fear the task of rebuilding the country is so enormous

were expected to continue the long march home begun in those countries in 2002.

But parts of Africa such as Liberia, Western Sahara and Burundi remain

be successfully tackled. "The current global economic structure is simply crazy," he said, "an insult and an enemy of many Africans."

UNHCR also planned a compre-



UNHCR/N.BEHRING/DP/AFG.2002

Rebuilding Afghanistan gets underway.

the international community could eventually just walk away, as it did once before, though Lubbers doubts that.

If Afghanistan's future was fragile, progress in the other two major 'break-through areas' Sri Lanka and Angola appeared sturdier, with some of the major causes of conflict resolved. Hundreds of thousands of civilians

deeply troubled. Looking beyond immediate refugee crises, UNHCR's Lambo insisted there had to be fundamental improvements in the way millions of Africans were treated by the rest of the world, including how they were compensated for their products such as cocoa or coffee crops, before the root causes of displacement could

be successfully tackled. "The current global economic structure is simply crazy," he said, "an insult and an enemy of many Africans."

UNHCR also planned a comprehensive study in the coming year on alternatives to detention for asylum seekers.

And there was THE big unknown, whether there would be a conflict in Iraq which would most likely trigger a fresh exodus of civilians in the region. If 2002 was a 'mixed bag', 2003 promises to be more of the same. ■



UNHCR/W. VAN DE LINDE/SDN/1972

Sudan, 1972

# CRISES WITHOUT END OR



## *Why millions of refugees get caught in ‘protracted’ situations which can last for decades*

by Jeff Crisp and Ray Wilkinson

**B**ONIFACE NTIBAZONKIZA was 12 years old when the first round of massacres began. “The soldiers began arresting everyone in my village, in the shops, in the fields,” he remembers. “They were loaded into trucks. They never returned.” The youngster’s parents bundled Boniface and his 15-year-old sister out of their home and told them to head for the frontier with the anguished rejoinder that, “If we are all going to die, let us not die in the same place at the same time.”

Brother and sister evaded the troops and the fate of literally tens of thousands of civilians who were butchered in the killing fields of the central African state of Burundi in 1972 and reached neighboring Tanzania. They then walked halfway across that sprawling land before taking shelter with an aunt in the town of Tabora.

“Everything seemed so wonderful again,” he said. “I was safe. I went to school. The Tanzanians were fine and friendly. I was treated as one of them. I could have stayed, been given land to farm and even received Tanzanian citizenship in those days.”

Instead, he eventually returned to Burundi during an intermittent period of calm in that tortured land before fleeing for a second time in 1996, again to Tanzania, as another round of killings erupted between the country’s two main ethnic groups, the Hutus and the Tutsis.

His reception this time was far differ- ▶

# SOLUTION

CRISES WITHOUT END OR SOLUTION

► ent to the 1970s. The farmer, his two wives and 13 children currently live in a huge refugee camp near the border town of Kibondo. They are safe from the mayhem which continues to engulf their homeland. They receive food and other assistance from the international community, but the camaraderie, the feeling of brotherhood-through-adversity and the generous gifts of land and citizenship are no longer on offer.

Boniface and more than a half million other refugees in Tanzania feel they are unwelcome prisoners in their camps. Many Tanzanians who once greeted them so warmly would now prefer the Burundis to go home just as quickly as they can.

**DRAMATIC CHANGE**

What happened to produce such a dramatic change between the same groups of people?

Both sides have become trapped in what is officially termed 'a protracted refugee crisis'—a situation seemingly without end and without solution. In such circumstances everyone—refugees, hosts and potential donors—increasingly feel victimized or taken advantage of.

have little chance of being accepted anywhere else.

The problem may be more widespread than is perhaps generally recognized. Among the estimated 10 million refugees UNHCR cared for at the end of 2002, nearly two-thirds of them or more than six million people from regions as far flung as sub-Saharan Africa to Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have been trapped in interminable crises, some for 30 years or more.

Another 3.9 million Palestinians, some of whom were displaced a half century ago, are assisted by a sister organization, the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

And because these crises have been around for many years—often overshadowed by more immediate, headline grabbing emergencies such as Kosovo or Timor—they tend to get overlooked or ignored by an increasingly cash-short international community.

The longer protracted crises continue, the more difficult it becomes to fund them or find a solution. They produce a dynamic of their own including, in the case of Tanzania and its refugees, a growing intolerance even among the most generous of hosts towards some of the most deserving of exiles.

Now, perhaps for the first time, the wider humanitarian world has begun to focus specifically on these protracted problems—their origins and possible solutions—realizing that different, more unorthodox approaches may be necessary to tackle them.

High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers has urged other international organizations such as the World Bank and U.N. Development Program to join the refugee agency in drawing up joint projects under his so-called 4Rs/DLI approach. This is an effort to help refugees integrate in local communities to their mutual benefit (Development through Local Integration—DLI) or to create a seamless operation between donors during the four major phases of a refugee's return home, namely repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction or to help refugees integrate.

With funds provided by the United States, UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit undertook a worldwide study examining why some crises become 'protracted' in the first place, the human toll exacted and what can be done to end these long-term emergencies.



Tanzania, 1976

UNHCR/M. LUNDGREN/632/6/TZA-1976

There is no specific definition of what constitutes a protracted crisis though in general terms it could be said to cover refugees who have lived in exile for more than five years, who cannot go home, cannot settle permanently in their current country of asylum and

SURPRISINGLY, HOPE RECENTLY BLOSSOMED IN SOME CORNERS OF THE WORLD WHICH HAVE REMAINED IN DARKNESS FOR TOO LONG.

**MESSY CONFLICTS**

Since the end of the cold war, conflicts have become more 'messy'—internal, ethnic or communal in nature—which in turn are often more difficult to resolve than conventional struggles between states. The study concluded that warlords, the military, local and

however, these same governments show little interest in intervening in remote, low-level wars which then fester interminably.

Afghanistan is a classic example underlining the effects of the involvement of big powers in all phases of a protracted crisis—helping first in its creation, then its



Iran, 1986

UNHCR/A. HOLLMANN/IRN+1986

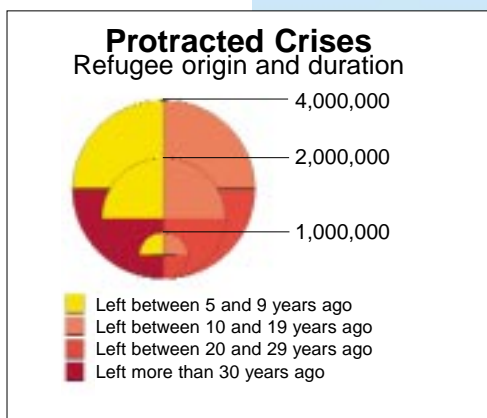
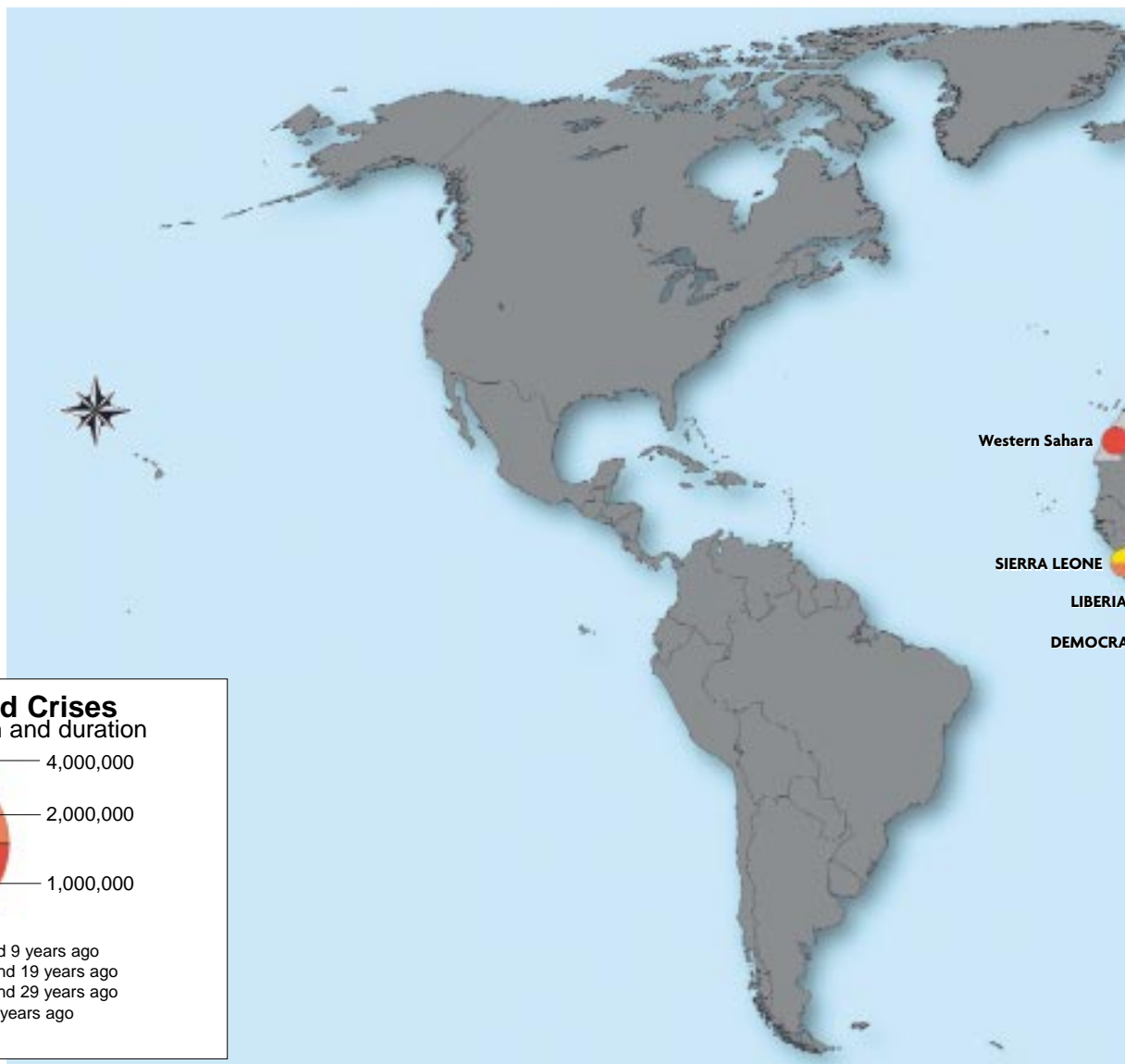
international entrepreneurs and even groups within a refugee community itself have vested interests in prolonging fighting which may continue for decades. In those circumstances refugees cannot go home and a 'protracted crisis' is born.

The world's most powerful states play a key role, inadvertently or not, in helping to shape the direction of a refugee emergency. When they acted decisively, as in northern Iraq following the Gulf War, Kosovo or East Timor, hundreds of thousands of refugees were able to return home quickly. More often,

prolongation and finally, hopefully, its resolution.

The 1979 Soviet invasion of that country sparked what would become the world's biggest single humanitarian crisis for the next two decades. Following its subsequent withdrawal from the country, both Moscow and its western adversaries led by the United States, walked away from the mess. With international interest and funding dwindling, as many as six million Afghans became trapped in seemingly permanent exile.

The September 11, 2001, terror attacks in the ►



CRISES WITHOUT END OR SOLUTION

- ▶ United States again focused international attention on Afghanistan. The ensuing military and political upheavals sparked yet another civilian exodus, but eventually nearly two million Afghan refugees and other displaced persons were able to go home as the situation inside the country stabilized.

That may be good news, but humanitarian officials were also aware that unless this renewed interest remained focused on Afghanistan for years to come, and there was no guarantee of that, the country could even now backslide into more chaos—again trapping millions of people in a new ‘protracted crisis.’

**LOCAL INTEGRATION**

If the changing nature of war helped spawn more protracted crises, the changed perceptions and political realities not only of the major powers, but of hosting countries were also vital factors.

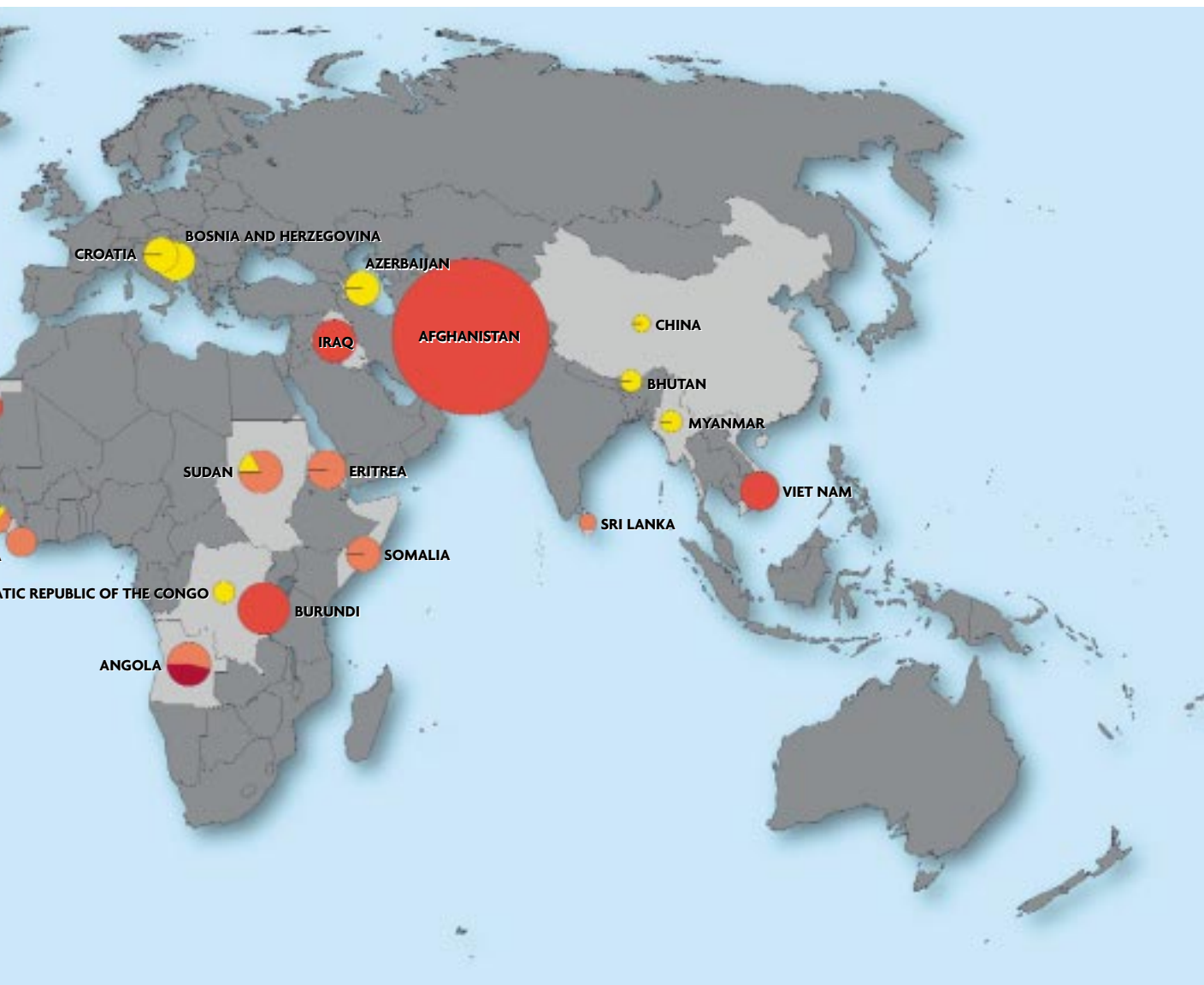
As Boniface Ntibazonkiza fondly remembers,

when he first fled Burundi in the 1970s, neighboring African states welcomed him as a brother. Julius Nyerere, the then president of Tanzania guided Africa’s open door policy and as late as 1999, shortly before his death, re-emphasized this theme in an interview with REFUGEES, saying: “We had these refugees for years and when I visited them, they looked and sounded like other Tanzanians. The word in Swahili for refugees is *wakimbizi* “they run away.” I did not like this term and I said “Why can’t you become citizens?”

He added, “The people in Rwanda and Burundi are the same people as in Tanzania. Why shouldn’t they stay here? I know some people will say we don’t have enough land in Tanzania, but that idea is absurd. The country is empty.”

Though he is still affectionately remembered as *mwalimu*, or teacher, in Tanzania, many of Nyerere’s ideas, especially for locally integrating refugees, such as Boniface have been discarded.





“Tanzania for the Tanzanians. Burundi for the Burundis,” one government minister recently insisted, reflecting widespread fears not only in Tanzania but in other traditional host countries that refugees have become economic, environmental and security burdens.

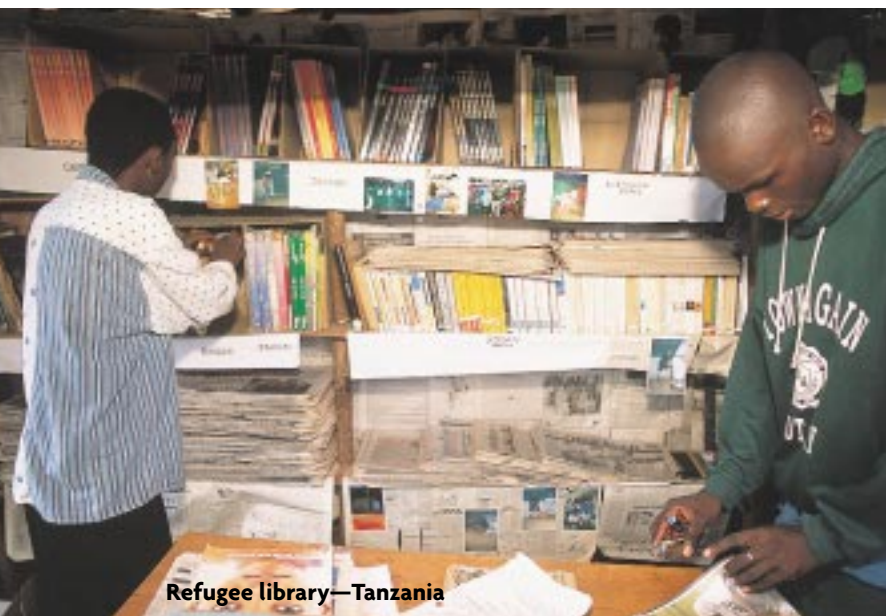
There is a global perception, realistic or not, that there are simply too many millions of uprooted persons who are staying in host countries for too long,

and one of the first casualties has been the virtual abandonment of efforts to locally integrate them.

Permanent resettlement has become a second casualty of the prevailing harsh humanitarian climate. Like local integration, resettlement previously had offered a major lifeline to refugees and millions of people fleeing Hungary in the 1950s, the Soviet bloc in the 1960s or Indochina in the 1970s found new homes in the West. ▶

BOTH SIDES HAVE BECOME TRAPPED IN A SITUATION SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END AND WITHOUT SOLUTION. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES EVERYONE INCREASINGLY FEELS VICTIMIZED.

CRISES WITHOUT END OR SOLUTION



Refugee library—Tanzania

UNHCR/L.TAYLOR/CS/TZA•2002



UNHCR/A.HOLLMANN/ARM•1999

Container homes—Azerbaijan

- ▶ That wide open door is now only partly ajar, especially in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the United States, and compared with those earlier millions only an estimated 100,000 refugees whom UNHCR cares for can expect to obtain invaluable resettlement places each year.

Repatriation has taken the place of resettlement and local integration as the ‘preferred’ solution to refugee crises, but even when huge numbers of refugees can return, some displaced persons often remain behind for a variety of reasons.

They may have a continued fear of persecution at home; they are too old, too young or too sick to go back; they do not have any financial resources but in any case, their homeland may be so devastated they will not be able to survive there; and finally they may have developed close social and economic links with their ‘adopted’ country and the bulk of their children may have been born there and never even seen ‘home.’

The end result is that an already lengthy crisis may continue indefinitely.

**HUMAN TOLL**

Any civilian forced to abandon home, country and often even close family, undergoes major traumatic stress. This may be alleviated if displaced populations return home quickly, but for people faced with years of uncertain exile, the psychological and physical burdens are crushing.

Most refugees have little money and few possessions when they arrive in a new country. Shunted into inhospitable and often virtually inaccessible camps, increasingly deprived of international sup-

port, already meagre food supplies sometimes reduced, they can quickly become trapped in a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Education is a major casualty. Though UNHCR attempts to fund primary classes, there are few funds available for secondary education, setting the stage over a period of years not only for a ‘lost generation’ of young people deprived of any learning, but also helping to create an increasingly bored and resentful population.

Women turn to prostitution, human traffickers or recruiters for local militia flourish as do drugs, alcohol and, inevitably domestic violence and disease such as HIV/AIDS. Refugees are exploited for their cheap labor or, in turn, engage in fraud and theft.

Interestingly, the UNHCR evaluation found that, contrary to popular perception, many refugees try to avoid the so-called ‘dependency syndrome’ of total reliance on aid and instead establish their own livelihoods by opening tea shops, barber shops, bars, market stalls, weaving carpets or making pottery. Entrepreneurs have even installed television satellite stations or created mobile phone services in camps.

**WAITING TO DIE**

Fifty-two-year-old Nahimana Pascal is a typical product of Burundi’s unending cycle of violence, the kind of exile some aid workers now refer to as a ‘professional refugee’ so long has he been uprooted.

Until 1988 he was a successful businessman in the Burundi capital of Bujumbura, owning a series of fishing boats on Lake Tanganyika, with money in the bank and a home in a smart area of town. But one day in 1988, the roundups and the killings by Tutsi soldiers of Hutu civilians began again.

“My neighbors were being slaughtered and I knew that I would be next,” he said. “I just ran,” without even informing his wife, until he reached neighboring Rwanda. He has been on the run ever since.

He ended up in a refugee camp. Two years later one of the positive events in Nahimana’s life occurred.



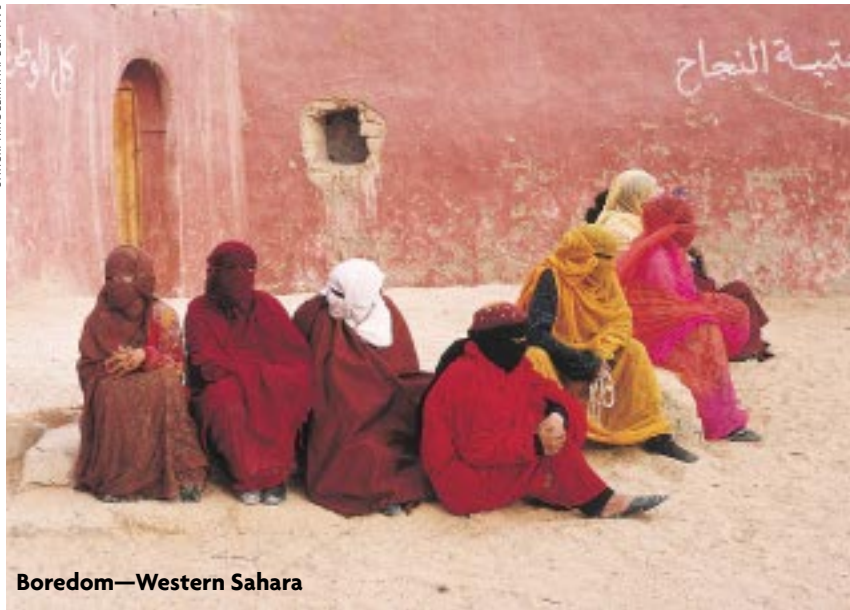
UNHCR/L.TAYLOR/CS/TZA\*2002

The barber's—Tanzania

“I was sitting alone, just watching the street. I saw this woman and child. I was shocked. I had had no contact with my wife since leaving Bujumbura, but there she was. She had arrived in the same camp just by luck.”

That good fortune ran out again in 1993 when ethnic violence engulfed Rwanda, as it had Burundi before it. The family fled to neighboring Zaire, but war continued to dog this family. In 1997, Nahimana returned from a 15-day work trip to find that his wife and children had disappeared in new fighting which had broken out near their latest refugee home. He fled to Tanzania.

“When I lived in Bujumbura there were 56 members of my family,” he said. “I have lost them all, in-



UNHCR/A.HOLLMANN/DZA\*1998

Boredom—Western Sahara

cluding my wife and children. I don't know where they are. They are probably dead. Now I am old and broken. I can't do anything but die.”

Nahimana is indeed prematurely grey, has little hope of ever going home or much else to look forward to. But... he recently became a camp watchman, and with a little stature and a little income, is emerging as a community leader and spokesman. And... suddenly, there is a tiny glimmer of hope for this one refugee.

**SOLUTIONS**

By their very nature, protracted crises are now probably the most difficult of any humanitarian problem to tackle effectively. They are often overlooked and ignored by the key players who could make a difference. And when donor dollars are so difficult to find, they are increasingly shortchanged compared with more important 'sexy' crises.

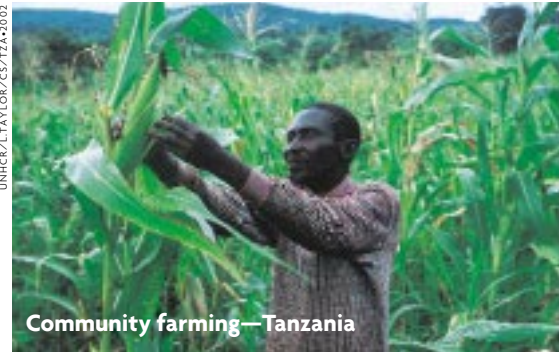
But there are various steps at various levels which should be examined. These include strengthening the basic rights of refugees, providing them with additional basic resources, ensuring their right to voluntary repatriation or, in some circumstances, integrating locally or resettling in third countries, and ►

AMONG THE 10 MILLION REFUGEES UNHCR CARES FOR, A STAGGERING TWO-THIRDS OF THEM OR AROUND SIX MILLION PEOPLE FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA TO SRI LANKA ARE TRAPPED IN INTERMINABLE CRISES.



Television lounge—Kenya

UNHCR/R. WILKINSON/CS/KEW-2002



Community farming—Tanzania

UNHCR/L.TAYLOR/CS/TZA-2002

CRISES WITHOUT END OR SOLUTION

- ▶ more vigorously tackling the root causes of these festering wars.

Taken together, these steps could make a difference to at least some of the refugees currently trapped in this seemingly unbreakable cycle.

For instance, refugees who have reached a neighboring country may be relatively safe from the chaos which first caused them to flee, but they then often forfeit many of their basic rights such as freedom of movement or the right to work while in exile. This in turn hinders attempts at self-reliance, driving refugees further into poverty and putting greater strain on the resources of host countries and humanitarian agencies.

UNHCR's recently adopted Agenda for Protection could help address this problem, coupled with improved resources such as better water and medical facilities, increased humanitarian expertise and better schooling.

Education, in fact, is key to the future, not only by helping to improve the quality of life in the camps, but also in preparing refugees for the task of reconstructing their homeland when they return. Refugees themselves recognize this priority, but little international funding has been made available to provide decent schooling. UNHCR, for instance, is restricted by budgetary constraints to providing only primary ed-

ucation for the millions of children in its care.

**UNEXPECTED DIVIDEND**

An anomaly of the Afghan situation, which perversely underlined the importance of education, was that because of the harsh Taliban regime inside Afghanistan at the time, girls were virtually banned from receiving an education there. However, in neighboring Pakistan and Iran where millions of civilians fled, young female refugees were able to attend school, an investment which should yield major dividends in helping rebuild the country and could act as a benchmark in other crises.

As noted earlier, protracted crises often develop because original conflicts which forced refugees to flee, have been allowed to fester, sometimes for years, and then decades. But as also noted, effective, high-level intervention can short-circuit many of these wars. Obviously more intensive mediation, peace-keeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding by various players such as the United Nations, regional bodies and major powers, could influence the direction of any given problem.

Though many nations are even more wary of 'foreigners', including refugees, in the wake of last year's terrorist attacks in the United States, an expanded permanent resettlement program involving far more

PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE WIDER HUMANITARIAN WORLD HAS BEGUN TO FOCUS SPECIFICALLY ON THESE PROTRACTED PROBLEMS—THEIR ORIGINS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.



Tree saplings—Tanzania

UNHCR/L.TAYLOR/CS/7124-2002



Local integration—Zambia

UNHCR/L.TAYLOR/CS/ZIMB-2000

countries than currently participate, is feasible.

Local integration might be reintroduced in specific situations, and one project is being developed in Zambia as part of High Commissioner Lubber's Development through Local Integration (DLI) approach.

The 4Rs—repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction—could also potentially benefit a large cross section of refugees, including many of those caught in the trap of protracted crises.

The caveat to all of these approaches is that many of them have already been tried, generally with little sustained success. It will take a renewed and strengthened commitment from all sides to make them work this time.

An immutable fact remains that the repatriation of any refugees must continue to be voluntary, despite an increasing groundswell of opinion that if conditions in a country of origin appear safe, then civilians must go home, even if coercion is necessary.

Such actions are contrary to international refugee law and protection principles and they ignore the fact that a clause contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention, the so-called cessation clause, can be invoked legally when the reasons for flight have been resolved. Too, the large scale return of civilians against their will might place at least some of them in new jeopardy and could even destabilize a country only slowly recovering from war.

## IRONY

There can be one final irony in any particular 'protracted' crisis. Undoubtedly, the arrival of large numbers of refugees in a given location may cause major hardships to local communities and cause severe

strain on national and international networks trying to help them.

It is not until the refugees do return home, however, that some of the advantages their presence brings become obvious.

Until the 1990s, the Tanzanian town of Kibondo was a dirt-poor village with no running water, little electricity, which could be cut off from the outside world for days at a time during the rainy season.

It has since quadrupled in size and developed into a bustling rural town with regular air and road links to the outside world, well stocked shops and better schools and clinics for not just refugees but also for locals as well.

Refugee labor also helped developed local farming and when Rwandan civilians returned home in the 1990s local merchants used to grumble, "Why did they go back? Now we have no one to sell our bananas to."

In Sudan, the repatriation of refugees is a politically sensitive issue since the government is only too aware of the huge funds which have flowed into the country to support them, and more indirectly Sudanese towns and villages.

In Kenya, local members of parliament have been vociferous in condemning refugees for allegedly destroying the environment around the Dadaab camp complex. But the complex is also the region's biggest employer.

One day recently, Kenya radio ran an unusual item. It reported that coastal residents had held a demonstration to protest the closure of a nearby refugee camp. The Kenyans complained that the camp had stimulated the local economy which would be devastated if they left. They didn't want their 'guests' to leave. ▶

AFGHANISTAN IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF BIG POWERS IN ALL PHASES OF A PROTRACTED CRISIS—HELPING IN ITS CREATION, ITS PROLONGATION AND FINALLY, HOPEFULLY, ITS RESOLUTION.



► **HOPE**

Surprisingly, perhaps, hope recently blossomed in some corners of the world which had remained in darkness for too long.

Afghanistan was the largest story during 2002 and an estimated two million people returned home following the fall of the Taliban regime and the installation of a new government. Many more refugees could go back if an admittedly fragile situation continued to hold.

There was progress in one of South Asia's longest running conflicts in Sri Lanka. Following a Norwegian-brokered truce in February between government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels, tens of thousands of mainly internally displaced persons went back to their towns and villages after two decades of war.

Across the globe in Africa, a cease-fire between the

Angolan government and UNITA rebels raised hopes for a sustained peace and the possible return of nearly a half million refugees from surrounding countries as well as millions of persons left homeless inside the country itself.

There were also return movements of Somalis from Ethiopia and Eritreans from Sudan and they were expected to continue into the new year. In East Timor and Eritrea conditions had improved to the point where UNHCR invoked the cessation clause of the 1951 Convention at the end of 2002, urging all refugees outside those countries to return home.

Heading into a new year some of the world's most intractable crises seemed a little nearer to a solution. If that trend spread, it could bring hope to millions of refugees who felt for years they had been forgotten and abandoned by the outside world. ■



“Just as terrorism must never be excused, so must genuine grievances never be ignored.”

U.N. Secretary-General KOFI ANNAN.

“Asylum seekers make a perfect target for people who want to invoke the age-old prejudice against foreigners. Asylum seekers can’t answer back.”

High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers about ongoing fears of a backlash against refugees.



“Going back to Somalia would be to plunge back into the flames. Going to America is a dream. It is the choice between the fire and paradise.”

One of an estimated 12,000 Somali Bantu refugees expected to be resettled in the United States.



“The city does not have the

resources to care for, educate, train, house or protect said individuals.”

A resolution taken by the city council of Holyoke, USA, trying to block the proposed arrival of the Somali Bantu, and reflecting increased apprehension in some areas of the world about ‘foreigners’ in the wake of September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the USA.



“We are not advocating a ‘Fortress Europe.’ But there has to be some order and some rules brought into the system whereby people come into Europe.”

British Prime Minister Tony Blair on proposed new measures to crack down on illegal immi-

gration into Europe.



“The United Nations role in Bosnia is one of the unsung success stories of the post cold war era. Bosnia will be seen as a new model of international intervention – designed not to pursue narrow national interests, but to prevent conflict, promote human rights and rebuild war-torn societies.”

Paddy Ashdown, High Representative in Bosnia.



“The prospect of returning to the type of war Angola has witnessed in the last decade is almost zero.”

U.N. Special Advisor Ibrahim

Gambari on the prospects for peace in a state where millions of persons have been killed, maimed or forced to flee during three decades of civil war.



“No more blood must run.”

Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, signing a peace agreement with neighboring Rwanda to try to halt what has been dubbed Africa’s World War.



“I used to vote with my hands. I did it today with my toe.”

A voter in Sierra Leone, who was mutilated during that country’s recent civil war, but is now looking forward to elections and a peaceful future.



“Do I still have a future?”

A Liberian who has fled three times in six months from what is currently one of the worst humanitarian problems in Africa.



“We came back because we heard there was peace and security. But there is no work and no place we can afford to live. We have freedom now, but we cannot eat that.”

One of nearly two million returning Afghan refugees on the uncertain future faced by that country.



“States should include women in the negotiations and implementation of peace accords, constitutions and strategies for resettlement and rebuilding.”

A U.N. Security Council resolution supporting the greater inclusion of refugee women in any negotiations on such issues as peace talks and resettling displaced populations.