

CHAPTER I

SOURCES, METHODS AND DATA CONSIDERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The changes in UNHCR's population of concern in 2007 can be explained by a number of reasons, including demographic increases and decreases; legal factors and changes in statistical reporting. The demographic factors refer to new population movements (e.g. mass outflows) as well as natural growth. Legal factors might entail, for instance, the grant of refugee status to asylum-seekers or application of the cessation clause. The activation of the cluster approach in 2007 and the new standards of UNHCR's statistical reporting have resulted in a number of changes for some population categories, especially for refugees, IDPs and Others of concern.

Understanding the complexity of UNHCR data is critical for an adequate appreciation of the observed patterns and trends. The main purpose of this chapter is to present information that will assist in interpreting UNHCR's data. The information (also known as metadata) is provided to ensure an understanding of the basic concepts that define the data in the 2007 Statistical Yearbook, including definitions, classifications, the underlying estimation methods and key aspects of data quality.

A comprehensive picture of UNHCR's population of concern is difficult to provide for a number of reasons. The existing wide range of data sources and data collection methods that are not always comparable, definitional issues and countries specificities are among the main factors complicating a comprehensive estimation of numbers of displaced people. For instance, people fleeing conflict in the same country may be recognized as refugees by some countries, but not by others. In addition, the administrative rules governing the granting of refugee status vary greatly from one country to another, even though the same definition may be used. Over the past years, some countries have implemented strict criteria for asylum-seekers to be admitted to the asylum procedure. The statistics reported in this Yearbook have been collected through the Annual Statistical Report¹⁶ and generally reflect the definition and data collection methods of Governments, except for those countries where only UNHCR registration systems are used.

Registration exercises implemented routinely, on an ad hoc basis by Governments or by the Office, constitute the main source of UNHCR data, especially for refugees and returnees. The main purpose of registration is to protect and assist refugees. Although refugees are often registered individually, the accuracy of registration varies greatly, depending on the protection and operational environment. In addition to registration, estimates based on surveys are used increasingly to enumerate and profile internally displaced persons and refugees, in particular in situations where registration is either difficult to implement or not cost-effective.

DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

The 2007 Yearbook identifies seven population categories, collectively referred to as "total population of concern to UNHCR" or "persons of concern to UNHCR". This

¹⁶ The Annual Statistical Report is the official data collection form completed in by all UNHCR country offices.

includes: (a) refugees; (b) asylum-seekers; (c) internally displaced persons (IDPs); (d) refugees who have returned home (returnees); (e) IDPs who have returned home; (f) stateless persons; and (g) other people who do not fall under any of the above categories but to whom the Office extends its protection and/or assistance activities. Two additional sub-categories have been added in 2007: (1) people in refugee-like situations (included under refugees); and (2) people in IDP-like situations (included under IDPs).

Refugees include individuals recognized under the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*; its 1967 Protocol; the *1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*; those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; individuals granted complementary forms of protection¹⁷; or, those enjoying “temporary protection”¹⁸.

The 2007 refugee population category includes people in a refugee-like situation, most of who were previously included in the Others of concern group. This sub-category is descriptive in nature and includes groups of people who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.

Asylum-seekers are individuals whose applications for asylum or refugee status are pending a final decision. Those covered in the Yearbook refer particularly to claimants whose individual applications were pending at the end of 2007, irrespective of when they may have been lodged (the so-called “backlog” of undecided or “pending cases”).

Internally displaced persons are people or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural- or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border.¹⁹

As part of the cluster approach, UNHCR is involved in the collective response to situations of internal displacement in selected countries. For purposes of UNHCR’s statistics, however, this population only includes conflict-generated IDPs to whom the Office extends protection and/or assistance. Therefore, UNHCR statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture of global internal displacement.²⁰ Moreover, UNHCR’s IDP statistics are not necessarily representative of the entire IDP population in a given country, but are limited to those who are protected and/or assisted by the Office. While UNHCR within the cluster approach deals with both IDPs and affected persons, the latter category is not included in the statistics.

The 2007 IDP population category includes people in IDP-like situations. This sub-category is descriptive in nature and includes groups of people who are inside their country of nationality or habitual residence and who face protection risks similar to IDPs but who, for practical or other reasons, could not be reported as such.

¹⁷ Complementary protection refers to formal permission, under national law, provided on humanitarian ground to persons who are in need of international protection to reside in a country, even though they might not qualify for refugee status under conventional refugee criteria.

¹⁸ Temporary protection refers to arrangements developed by States to offer protection of a temporary nature to persons arriving en masse from situations of conflict or generalized violence without the necessity for formal or individual status determination.

¹⁹ Source: Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (provisional release), p.6, Global Protection Cluster Working Group, December 2007 (www.humanitarianreform.org).

²⁰ For global IDP estimates, consult the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) website at www.internal-displacement.org.

Returned refugees (returnees) refer to refugees who have returned voluntarily to their country of origin or place of habitual residence. For purposes of this Yearbook, only refugees who returned between January and December 2007 have been included. However, in practice, operations may assist returnees for longer or shorter periods.

Returned IDPs refer to those internally displaced persons who were beneficiaries of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities and who returned to their areas of origin or habitual residence between January and December 2007. However, in practice, operations may assist IDP returnees for longer or shorter periods

Stateless persons are individuals not considered as nationals by any State under national laws. The statistics in this report on statelessness also include people with undetermined nationality. UNHCR has been called upon by the General Assembly to contribute to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons. UNHCR's Executive Committee has requested the Office to report regularly on the magnitude of the phenomenon. The Office also has specific functions under Article 11 of the *1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* to receive claims from persons who may benefit from the safeguards contained in that Convention and to assist them and the States concerned to resolve those claims.

Statelessness may be an important reason for fleeing one's place of origin. However, most stateless persons have not fled their country of habitual residence. Because stateless persons who are not refugees are often difficult to identify, UNHCR does not have a complete set of country-level data but only a rough estimate of the total magnitude of statelessness worldwide.

Other groups or people of concern refers to individuals who do not necessarily fall directly into any of the groups above but to whom UNHCR has extended its protection and/or assistance services, based on humanitarian or other special grounds.

DATA SOURCES AND PROVIDERS

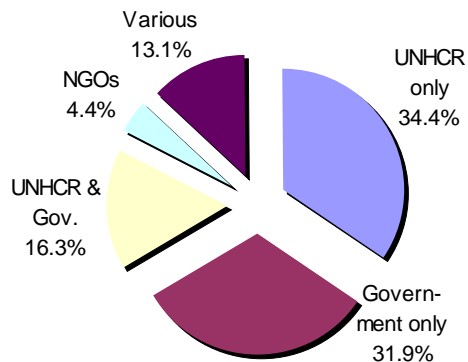
The data on refugees are provided by a wide range of sources including UNHCR offices, governments and NGOs. In most countries, governments collect and manage refugee information, mainly registration data, with varying levels of UNHCR involvement. These countries may use their own registration systems or request UNHCR to supply registration tools and relevant guidelines. Other countries lack the capacity to implement refugee registration processes and there UNHCR manages the primary registration process in collaboration with the government. A third group is composed of countries, primarily developed ones, where the Office has little or no involvement in the primary process of data collection. Here, UNHCR's role focuses on collecting data from national authorities and monitoring trends. Finally, in some countries, UNHCR relies on NGOs and other actors who collect and report refugee statistics.

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

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

By the end of 2007, information on data sources was provided by 160 countries, with a significant number reporting more than one source. UNHCR was reported as the single source of refugee statistics in more than one third of all countries (compared to 31% in 2006). Similarly, governments were the sole data providers in 32 per cent of all cases (29% in 2006). This distribution has remained relatively stable over the past four years although the combined share of UNHCR and Governments as single sources has increased to two thirds (66%) compared to 60 per cent in 2006. Simultaneously, the number of instances where UNHCR and the Government were jointly responsible for providing refugee data has gone down by 9 per cent (from 25% in 2006 to 16% in 2007).

Fig I.1 Sources of refugee data, 2007



In 54 countries (34%), there was more than one refugee data source. In 26 of these, the government and UNHCR were jointly involved in the production of refugee statistics in a variety of ways. In some countries, data collection on refugees is conducted jointly, while in other countries, parallel systems are put in place where

both UNHCR and the government collect data independently, sometimes without consultation or covering different parts of the country. On average, 13 per cent of the countries reported various sources for their refugee data including the Government, UNHCR or NGOs. The latter maintained data at the request of UNHCR in only 4 per cent of the countries, significantly less than in previous years (see Table I.1).

Year	UNHCR only	Government only	UNHCR & Gov.	NGOs	Various
2003	34	29	15	8	14
2004	31	27	20	7	16
2005	33	31	21	7	9
2006	31	29	25	4	12
2007	34	32	16	4	13

The analysis of the most recent trends in data sources and providers shows an increasing role of governments in the provision of refugee statistics. The share of governments as the sole source or one of the sources of refugee data has increased from 44 per cent in 2003 to over 55 per cent in 2007. This is in some cases the direct result of UNHCR's efforts in capacity building in an effort to facilitate governments to assume their responsibility in the area of refugee data collection.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Various data collection mechanisms and methodologies, such as registration, surveys, censuses, and estimations are being used to provide a comprehensive picture of people falling under UNHCR's mandate. Each method, however, has its own strengths and limitations.

Registration data is a vital source of statistics for planning and management purposes. Registers are also created to establish a legal or administrative record, as evidence of legal status, or to administer entitlements and deliver services. For protection delivery to be effective and comprehensive, registration is an absolute imperative and at the core of any protection intervention. Using UNHCR's registration

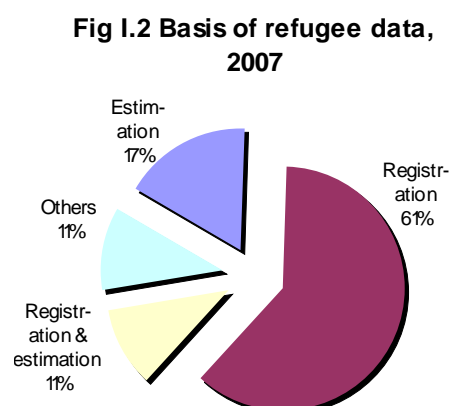
software *proGres* (Profile Global Registration System) has helped the Office in getting more harmonized and up-to-date statistics. *ProGres* can also capture a wide range of events relevant to the refugee status determination process, resettlement, and voluntary repatriation. The use of biometrics, such as fingerprinting, has been introduced on a pilot basis in order to improve the quality of registration information. An evaluation has been initiated in 2008 to analyse this methodology with respect to accuracy, cost-effectiveness, and its compliance with data protection principles

During the registration process, data are collected, verified and updated, ideally for each individual or for each household. Such data include name, sex, date of birth, country of origin, relationships within household, marital status, place of displacement and specific needs. The data are normally stored in a database and should be continuously updated for changes in the population.

In addition to registers, surveys and censuses provide good data for planning purposes, but usually do not allow follow up at the individual level. Although a census includes each individual, it provides only a “snapshot” of the situation and quickly becomes outdated. Surveys are cost-effective, but, unless carried out according to strict rules, may not provide a representative picture. UNHCR is increasingly using surveys to profile the IDP population it protects or assists, with a view to collect data that cannot be obtained otherwise (see Box 2).

The Office’s increasing involvement in situations of internal displacement has led it to support the development of a scenario-based IDP Profiling Guidance document, jointly with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in the framework of the Global Protection Cluster Working Group.²¹ The guidelines were designed to help Humanitarian Country Teams gather better data on IDPs by proposing different methodologies and providing advice for choosing the optimum method for a given country context. They also examine a series of related issues: how to obtain a better picture of who IDPs are and where they are located; the difficulties of distinguishing IDPs in surrounding communities; and how to compile workable estimates for protection, programming and advocacy purposes.

Similar to previous years, registration remains the main basis for UNHCR’s refugee data and was reported as the sole data collection method for refugee statistics in 96 countries (61% of all countries), 8 per cent more than in 2006. Estimates formed the basis of refugee data in 17 per cent of the countries, mostly industrialized ones. Estimation as the sole source as well as the combination of registration and estimates are decreasing because of more countries having access to *proGres*. More than two methods of data collection, in most cases surveys, registration and estimation, were reported by 11 per cent of all countries.



Most of the 27 countries where only estimates were used are industrialized countries without a dedicated refugee register. In these countries, UNHCR estimates the size of the refugee population based on official data on the number of asylum-seekers who have been recognized over a 10-year period (see page 21).

²¹ See www.humanitarianreform.org

Box 1. Best practice in data collection: the case of Ecuador

The spread of the internal conflict from Colombia's central regions to its remote border areas affected large numbers of people, displacing them both inside Colombia as well as forcing them into neighbouring countries. During the last decade, there has been much discussion about the presence of large numbers of Colombians in need of international protection in Ecuador. Estimates of their number varied from 50,000 to half a million. However, despite large numbers of people displaced by the Colombian conflict, under-registration is common and only 50,000 people were officially registered. The remaining "invisible refugees", especially indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities are most likely to lack documentation, while single women and girls are especially at risk and prone to abuse.

Under-registration is partly due to people in a refugee-like situation not coming forward to register, some because they are not aware of their right to ask for asylum, others because they are uncertain of the consequences. Others know their rights but do not have the means to reach the nearest registration office and depend on UNHCR visits to be able to lodge a formal asylum claim. Their lack of legal documentation makes this population extremely vulnerable, limiting their access to assistance and education, increasing levels of workforce exploitation and depriving them even of basic protection mechanisms.

In 2007, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Government of Ecuador, carried out an assessment in order to determine both the magnitude and the profile of the Colombian population in a refugee-like situation and to assess the main protection gaps. The assessment strategy included three approaches: an initial desk review of existing data; a qualitative analysis; and a quantitative survey. The latter was designed, tested and conducted by specialized staff in the main refugee-hosting areas: the four border provinces, the capital Quito and selected provincial capitals. Surveyors were recruited and trained on protection issues. After almost one year, results for the border provinces were consolidated, processed and analyzed. The quality control of the main findings was then carried out by UNHCR.

The findings confirm most assumptions and reveal valuable information on the refugees' protection concerns. First of all, the survey provided more accurate data on the scale of Colombian displacement to Ecuador and its distribution in the territory: out of the 130,000 to 140,000 Colombians in a refugee-like situation, some 41 per cent live in the northern border provinces. It also found that displacement to Ecuador has increased steadily since the year 2000, with marked acceleration from 2005, provoked by growing violence in the Colombian departments of Nariño and Putumayo during this year. The results show that the 'invisible' population is ethnically diverse and predominantly young. Almost 15 per cent of households are headed by single women. Some 40 per cent have never come forward to register and only 50 per cent declared to have partial jobs in the informal urban market, seasonal agriculture and domestic services.

These survey results triggered the Government and UNHCR to improve the asylum regime in the country. The survey has thus led to the recognition of the magnitude of this displaced population by the Ecuadorian authorities and increased their willingness to enhance registration. It was suggested to implement a registration exercise to identify and document people in need of international protection in the northern border area.

The results of the survey generated a new momentum in refugee protection in Ecuador. By September 2008, the Government adopted a progressive policy on asylum with a view to strengthening refugee protection in the country. The survey has also been the main tool for UNHCR's Global Needs Assessment activities in Ecuador. Using the methodology of the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, UNHCR and the Government also initiated national consultations which brought together government ministers, NGOs, refugees and international organizations. This process ended with the participants' commitment to a two-year plan of action. At the centrepiece of this comprehensive strategy is the enhanced registration exercise which will benefit over 50,000 people in the northern border area who are believed to be in a refugee-like situation but who have neither been registered nor documented.

Following a region-wide information campaign, mobile brigades will visit communities to receive asylum claims and process them on the basis of both the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Cartagena Declaration. At the same time, based on the results of the survey, UNHCR will continue to work with its partners to find practical solutions focused on the local integration of Colombians which seems the most realistic solution for the large majority of refugees who reaffirmed that they are not ready to return home. Within this framework, the Global Needs Assessment opens new opportunities to raise additional support in order to strengthen the asylum regime and improve the living conditions of refugees in Ecuador. As such, Ecuador constitutes a successful example of data collection for the enforcement of refugee protection.

Refugees living outside camps are more difficult to track and tend to be under-represented in UNHCR's statistics. Nevertheless, estimates for self-settled refugees are included in the statistics of a number of countries.

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

ESTIMATING REFUGEE POPULATIONS

As many industrialized countries do not maintain a dedicated refugee register and are thus not in a position to provide accurate information on the number of refugees residing in their country, UNHCR estimates the refugee population in a number of those countries. To ensure that the refugee population in these countries is reflected in global statistics, the number is estimated based on the recognition of asylum-seekers over a 10-year period. This cut-off period reflects the average time it generally takes for a refugee to acquire the nationality of his/her host country.

This is an example of estimating the refugee population based on the above method:

Example: Poland

Asylum-seekers granted Convention refugee status, 1998-2007: **2,315**

Asylum-seekers granted a complementary form of protection and/or allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons, 1998-2007: **7,755**

UNHCR estimate of the refugee population in Poland (= sum of both categories), end of 2007: 10,070.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS PRESENTED IN THE 2007 YEARBOOK

In addition to providing the size and trends of UNHCR's population of concern, the 2007 Statistical Yearbook also contains a variety of population characteristics, broken down according to demography and location.

Demographic characteristics include sex and age group distribution of the population of concern. However, this type of information is available for only around 63 per cent for sex and about 42 per cent for age. Location refers to the types of settlement of populations: camps, urban areas or rural/dispersed areas (see Chapter II). UNHCR has data on locations available for 43 per cent of persons of concern to the Office. While much progress has been made in collecting information on such basic factors as age, sex and location, much more needs to be done to improve and expand this coverage. The protection benefits of this basic data cannot be overemphasized.

UNHCR's efforts in finding durable solutions for refugees feature prominently in this Yearbook. Conversely, the absence of a durable solution, i.e. the number of protracted refugee situations, is also given attention (Chapter III). With regard to asylum-seekers, information about the level and type of procedure as well as the recognition rate is provided (Chapter IV). Selected indicators on education, food and nutrition are also used to illustrate the potential of data for decision making (Chapter V).

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

OTHER DATA CONSIDERATIONS

Statistics concerning the former USSR have been reported under the Russian Federation while those concerning the former Czechoslovakia have been reported under the Czech Republic. Data concerning the former Yugoslavia as well as Serbia and Montenegro have been reported under Serbia. In most annex tables, the word "Democratic" has been abbreviated to "Dem.", whereas the word "Republic" is often reflected as "Rep." The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is referred to as TfYR Macedonia.

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

Unless specified otherwise, the 2007 Statistical Yearbook does not refer to events occurring after 31 December 2007.