

Syrian refugee children whose family fled to Jordan for medical treatment after their house near Aleppo was hit by a shell, igniting the kitchen gas bottle and severely burning three of the children. With UNHCR support, the three girls were assisted with specialist burn treatment and skin grafts.





SAFEGUARDING FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

The provision of asylum is a consistent feature of human history. Throughout the ages, societies with different cultures and value systems have recognized their obligation to provide sanctuary and help for people in distress fleeing conflict or persecution.

This longstanding social norm was progressively incorporated into international law in the 20th century, and States continue to reaffirm their commitment to refugee protection. Close to 130 countries have national asylum laws in place, implementing relevant international conventions for the protection of refugees. More than 40 countries have a national instrument related to internal displacement; in 2015, UNHCR provided protection and assistance to 37 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in 28 countries - the highest number in the organization's history.

However, there remain a number of recurring gaps, such as: violations of the principle of non-refoulement; a lack of admission and access to asylum procedures; a lack of registration and documentation; shortcomings in refugee status determination procedures; and detention practices that violate international standards.

Similarly, while several States and regional bodies have demonstrated their commitment to eradicating statelessness by 2024, efforts need to be expanded to address the major situations of statelessness around the world.

A growing degree of 'asylum fatigue' has been witnessed over the past year. Addressing this and other contemporary protection challenges remains a high priority for UNHCR. In 2015, UNHCR continued to safeguard the fundamental right of people whose lives and liberty are at risk to seek safety and security in another State, and support States to establish and strengthen institutional refugee and asylum frameworks.

In this chapter:

- Supervising the application of the 1951 Convention
- Assuring safety from violence and exploitation
- Strengthening refugee status determination
- Ending unlawful detention of people of concern
- Eradicating statelessness
- Addressing internal displacement



SUPERVISING THE APPLICATION OF THE 1951 CONVENTION

One of UNHCR's main functions is to supervise the application of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. In seeking to ensure that the fundamental international commitments in these instruments to protect and find solutions for refugees are recognized and respected, UNHCR supports legislative processes around the world in many ways, including through the provision of official comments, expert advice and active assistance.

The protection of refugees, stateless people and others of concern to UNHCR depend increasingly on national, regional and international jurisprudence. In 2015, the organization continued to engage with legal practitioners and the judiciary as part of its core protection work, including through strengthening the capacities of lawyers and judges, developing legal tools and guidance, funding legal service providers, and organizing and participating in events and conferences.

During 2015, UNHCR supported more than 40 legislative processes worldwide to address a vast range of issues, including criteria for determining eligibility for refugee status; procedural safeguards in refugee status determination procedures and other legal processes; upholding the rights of recognized refugees; security and border management issues; and combatting trafficking.

UNHCR's views on these issues are often solicited and appreciated, positively influencing the outcome of the development or review of national laws, as seen in the past year. Concrete examples of this work are described in many of the operational reporting chapters, accessible on the Global Focus website (<http://reporting.unhcr.org>).

However, recommendations from the Office are not always followed, resulting at times in the adoption of legislation with reduced protection safeguards or provisions that are at variance with

international legal obligations. There are still a number of countries hosting large refugee populations that have no asylum legislation and are not States parties to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol.

In 2015, the large-scale movements of asylum-seekers and refugees into Europe have been followed by the swift introduction in many European States of restrictive new asylum laws and provisions, including on eligibility

for international protection; cessation of protection; limited procedural safeguards; and the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, including property rights and family reunification. A general overview of UNHCR's efforts to safeguard asylum space and reduce protection risks in the region are presented in the Europe regional summary, with more extensive coverage in the relevant country operation chapters on the Global Focus website (<http://reporting.unhcr.org>). ■

GLOBAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Registration and profiling

Registration – the recording, verifying, and updating of refugee and asylum-seeker information – is a core UNHCR activity. An essential tool of protection, registration also helps prevent refoulement, arbitrary arrest and detention, and enables people of concern to access their basic rights. Registration plays a critical role in the identification of vulnerable individuals with specific needs, providing them with immediate and targeted assistance, and helping to define appropriate durable solutions. Registration data is also crucial to UNHCR and partners' planning and advocacy efforts.

UNHCR operations reported increased levels of individual registration in 87 per cent of refugee situations in 2015. In addition, the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) was rolled

out in **Afghanistan, Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Malawi, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand**, enrolling a total of 658,327 refugees. BIMS records iris scans and finger prints and links them to individual records in UNHCR's registration database. In this way, the Office is able to confirm a refugee's identity within seconds and prevent duplicate registration.

UNHCR's registration activities were also impeded by resource constraints and insecurity. In **Niger**, a reduction in staffing due to resource constraints prevented the operation from registering the arrivals of Malian asylum-seekers in a timely manner and from renewing their refugee documents and ration cards. In **Libya and Yemen**, insecurity regularly inhibited registration.



UNHCR/Markel Redondo

ASSURING SAFETY FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

Displaced women and girls, as well as men and boys, are at increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in all regions of the world. Creating safe environments and mitigating the risk of SGBV is a high priority for UNHCR, and the Office continues to establish safeguards against such violence and response interventions for victims of abuse for all people of concern.

In 2015, UNHCR continued to promote UN system-wide accountability through SGBV prevention and response in emergencies, as part of its membership of the Real Time Accountability Partnership (RTAP) with UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOCHA, International Rescue

Committee and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.

As part of the *Safe from the Start* programme, UNHCR deployed eight senior SGBV experts to 11 operations to provide technical support on SGBV prevention and response at the onset of emergencies. The Office implemented nine multi-sectoral projects addressing SGBV prevention through the use of alternative energy, access to technology, and livelihoods programmes.

In 2015, 43 countries received support to develop and implement SGBV strategies, either at country-level or for specific areas of operation. ■

GLOBAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Prevention and response to SGBV

UNHCR made considerable progress in providing legal services to Somali refugees in Dadaab, **Kenya**. In 2015, more than 500 survivors received legal assistance and 62 per cent of reported cases were prosecuted. Activities that contributed to this improvement include the deployment of 10 translators to police stations in the camp, which strengthened

confidential reporting of incidents and enhanced the investigation of cases. Close collaboration with partners in carrying out sensitization and awareness-raising events – including the use of referral pathways to access services – reached more than 200,000 people.

Challenges were encountered in **Malawi** to provide appropriate support to SGBV survivors,

particularly for women and girls engaged in survival sex. Due to cuts in food rations and limited opportunities to engage in livelihood activities, survival sex was reported to be a significant problem, primarily for Congolese refugees. While some case management support was provided to survivors, UNHCR was not able to provide adequate livelihoods assistance and psychosocial support.

Working with international human rights mechanisms to safeguard the rights of people of concern

UNHCR continues to engage with the UN human rights mechanisms – the Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), national human rights institutions, and the treaty monitoring bodies. These are valuable protection partners and tools, complementing and reinforcing the protection environment for people of concern to the Office.

In 2015, the organization significantly increased the overall inclusion rate of its recommendations in treaty monitoring bodies' concluding observations (65 per cent in 2015 from 47 per cent in 2014). Themes of relevance to UNHCR that were addressed in these outcomes included: non-refoulement; reception conditions; detention; access to quality refugee status determination procedures; access to rights; and statelessness.

The following examples illustrate how concluding observations, recommendations, and partnerships with human rights mechanisms can be used to expand and reinforce the protection space for people of concern:

- In **Madagascar**, UNHCR's interventions based on the outcomes of the UN human rights machinery are leading to a positive change in the way local authorities fulfil their obligations under the human rights instruments to grant individuals the possibility to claim nationality.
- In **Nigeria**, UNHCR partners with the Nigerian National Human Rights Institution to ensure the protection and monitoring of internally displaced persons.
- In **Eritrea**, UNHCR is using the country's UPR commitments to positively engage government authorities and encourage them to work with UNHCR in the exercise of its supervisory responsibility concerning returnees to Eritrea.
- UNHCR's Regional Representation for **Northern Europe** uses recommendations from the human rights mechanisms to support its advocacy efforts to end detention of people of concern.
- In the **Republic of Korea**, UNHCR has used the outcomes of various human rights machinery to advocate birth registration and documentation for children of concern, including for the amendment of national law and practice to conform to the country's international standards and obligations.



Child protection

UNHCR noted an increase in the number of applications for asylum from unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in **Brazil** throughout 2015. In response, a comprehensive strategy on child protection for 2015-2016 was developed, including a particular focus on UASC cases. Brazil has established appropriate procedures for the consideration of the child's best interests and UNHCR focused

on monitoring, capacity building, and advocacy. Throughout the year, the Office strengthened its partnerships with public shelters and civil society organizations that work with refugee children. Moreover, a referrals process to specialized shelters who already have experience working with UASC was established.

Formal best interest determination procedures are yet to be established in **Mexico** and many children

remain in immigration detention, even though the country's new regulations prohibit this. In 2015, only 1 in 5 of the 18,650 UASC detained by immigration authorities were referred to appropriate interim or long-term alternative care. While access to legal representation is limited for asylum-seekers in general (less than 5 per cent have access to legal representation), children face additional difficulties as there is limited expertise on child protection issues.

Areas of intervention in 2015	Key achievements in 2015
Security from violence and exploitation	
Prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence	
Assure sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) programming in emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 8 senior SGBV protection officers were deployed to 11 operations to provide technical support on SGBV prevention and response at the onset of emergencies. The individual impact of each deployment was assessed using customized results-based performance evaluations measuring efficiency and coverage. ■ 9 multi-sectoral projects were implemented to address SGBV prevention through the use of alternative energy, access to technology, and livelihoods, using a community-based approach.
Provide guidance through roll-out of updated strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 43 countries (Argentina, Bangladesh, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), the United Republic of Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen) received support to develop and implement SGBV strategies, both at country level and for specific areas of operation. ■ UNHCR participated actively in the development and roll-out of the IASC Guidelines for GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action.
Increase efficient data management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR provided technical support to 22 operations to strengthen SGBV information management; and Iraq and Nigeria rolled out the information management system in 2015. ■ The Child Protection Index research project, which looks at measuring prevalence of and prevention and response to SGBV as part of child protection systems, completed a second baseline study in Uganda. In addition, the measurement tools were used as an emergency baseline for SGBV and child protection in Rwanda for the Burundian influx.
Reinforce SGBV prevention in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A UNHCR guidance note on education and protection was published with guidance on prevention and response to SGBV in schools, such as ensuring links with referral mechanisms, and identifying and mitigating SGBV risks for students. ■ Over 20 UNHCR operations worked on preventing and responding to SGBV in and around schools as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign in 2015.
Strengthen partnerships for access to justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR worked in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia and Uganda, amongst others, to strengthen partnerships with police, local authorities, UN and non-governmental organizations to improve access to justice for people of concern. ■ In Somalia, UNHCR partnered with the NGO Legal Action Worldwide, UNFPA and UNDP, to provide technical expertise on the drafting of the Sexual Offences Bill, which has been finalized and submitted to authorities in <i>Somaliland</i>, <i>Puntland</i> and the Federal Government of Somalia. The bill will be the first piece of legislation specifically addressing SGBV in Somalia and providing appropriate sentencing guidelines.
Develop SGBV capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The English versions of the e-learning and training package on SGBV prevention and response were finalized (launch scheduled in 2016). ■ A high-level advisory group on gender, forced displacement and protection was established to assist UNHCR to develop innovative ways to mitigate protection risks, bolster capacity, and improve protection.
Protection of children strengthened	
Provide guidance and operational support to countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Targeted support for the implementation of the Framework for Child Protection was provided to 16 priority countries, including through 26 deployments of child protection staff and a total of 138 deployment months.
Implement the child protection regional initiative covering the Horn of Africa and Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implementation of the regional initiative Live, Learn and Play Safe 2014-2016 for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other children at risk continued in 6 locations in Egypt, northern Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen. Key developments include: reinforcement of child protection expertise in all project locations through an increased number of dedicated staff; improved access of children to targeted assistance and services to address their basic needs; and a decrease in 2 of the 6 project locations in the number of young people engaging in dangerous and life threatening actions such as resorting to trafficking or organised criminal networks.
Strengthen programming for adolescents and youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 23 youth-initiated and -led protection projects were supported and funded through the Youth Initiative Fund. ■ A new programme for youth workers from refugee communities was launched in Malawi and will be expanded in 2016. ■ The Global Refugee Youth Consultations were initiated, in collaboration with the Women's Refugee Commission. The first three national consultations took place in Malta, Uganda and Jordan.





Areas of intervention in 2015	Key achievements in 2015
Strengthen child protection response in emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Roving child protection in emergencies experts supported refugee operations in Greece, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania.
Work towards ending the detention of asylum-seeking and stateless children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As part of the <i>Beyond Detention</i> strategy, technical advice was provided to governments and other stakeholders on child-appropriate alternatives to detention.
Strengthen capacity for the protection of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Child Protection Leadership Learning Programme (CPLP) was developed. ■ Trainings at global, regional and country level were organized, including the joint Save the Children-UNHCR training on child protection and education in refugee settings, the joint UNICEF-UNHCR training for standby partners, and best interest determination trainings for UNHCR and partner staff. ■ The pilot child protection case management module in UNHCR's updated registration platform, proGres v4, was developed and rolled-out in 3 country operations.
Promote the protection of displaced children in inter-agency fora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR advocated for the inclusion of refugees, displaced and stateless children in the strategy and work plan of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, established to promote the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its goals. ■ UNHCR provided technical support for the inclusion of the specific needs of refugee children in at least 5 inter-agency tools on child protection. ■ UNHCR, as chair of the inter-agency working group on unaccompanied and separated children, coordinated the finalization of the <i>Inter-Agency Handbook on Unaccompanied and Separated Children</i>, which is due to be published in 2016. ■ UNHCR supported the regional framework for the protection of Sudanese and South Sudanese refugee children with data collection and information analysis.
Services for people with specific needs strengthened	
UNHCR and partner staff strengthen their capacity to address specific protection needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people of concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A report on the first ever assessment of UNHCR's efforts to protect LGBTI people of concern was issued. ■ The first comprehensive training programme to strengthen the protection of LGBTI people of concern was produced and released publicly. ■ UNHCR and IOM partnered to develop a comprehensive training package on the protection of LGBTI people. 112 people (91 UNHCR staff and 21 representatives from partner organizations), representing 43 operations have undertaken the training and developed concrete action plans to guide their future work.
UNHCR and partner staff strengthen their capacity to address specific protection needs of people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Five operations received targeted technical support through field support visits involving consultations with people of concern, training, facilitation of participatory action planning processes and remote follow-up support. Two disability inclusion webinars were delivered for the Middle East and North Africa region.



UNHCR/Federico Scoppa

STRENGTHENING REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION

UNHCR pursued its efforts to strengthen access to, and the quality of, refugee status determination (RSD) procedures, in particular through its work on RSD quality assurance projects in partnership with States. In addition, the Office provided ongoing guidance, financial and technical support to State-led RSD first- and second-instance bodies across the globe, including through the provision of training and the publication and dissemination of guidelines on refugee status and international protection.

At the same time, UNHCR continued to conduct RSD under its mandate in more than 60 countries and territories. In 2015, the organization was again

faced with a high number of individual RSD applications, with the number of applications continuing to exceed the number of individual RSD decisions issued. Provisional statistics indicate that UNHCR received more than 269,000 individual RSD applications in 2015, and issued 91,700 substantive individual RSD decisions.

In many contexts, the Office's role continued to be critical to ensuring the continued viability and sustainability of State-led RSD systems and, in situations where such systems do not exist or are not effective, facilitating access to UNHCR mandate RSD procedures. While RSD by both States and UNHCR faced increasing challenges throughout the

year, several operations also witnessed positive developments. These included the assumption or resumption of (greater) State responsibility for the undertaking of RSD in a number of African operations; improvements in the quality of RSD decision-making in a number of countries in Eastern Europe and the South

Caucasus through their participation in the regional Asylum Systems Quality Initiative project, as well in the Americas through their participation in the regional Quality Assurance Initiative; and ongoing efforts to streamline UNHCR decision-making approaches in the Middle East. ■

Areas of intervention in 2015	Key achievements in 2015
Fair protection processes and documentation	
Status determination processes strengthened	
Publish and disseminate guidance on international protection, refugee status determination (RSD) and other legal positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR issued a new internal RSD strategic direction to streamline the use of mandate RSD, including by identifying alternatives to RSD and/or more efficient case-processing methodologies for select caseloads/profiles, where feasible. ■ Country-specific guidance was issued on Colombia, Libya, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.
Ensure access for decision-makers on asylum claims to up-to-date country of origin information (COI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ COI reports on 8 countries, a thematic COI report, and 3 shorter query responses were published. ■ <i>Refworld</i>, UNHCR's repository of country information, legal and policy documents, was maintained and its content further expanded. ■ The RSD Community of Practice, an internal online electronic forum for exchanges on COI and RSD practice, was supported.
Further build the capacity of UNHCR RSD staff and State decision-makers, judges and other stakeholders in asylum/RSD procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR mandate RSD staffing levels were maintained globally, while new regional RSD officer posts were created in the Americas and Eastern Europe. ■ UNHCR staff continued to undergo RSD and COI trainings. 5 sessions of the RSD Learning Programme (targeting the Asia, Americas and MENA regions) were delivered in 2015. Training on the research and use of COI was provided through webinars as well as face to face trainings, while progress was made in the development of a COI e-learning programme.



UNHCR/Vivian Tan

ENDING UNLAWFUL DETENTION OF PEOPLE OF CONCERN

Detention continues to affect hundreds of thousands of women, men and children whose protection is of concern to UNHCR. Regrettably, in many countries, the detention of asylum-seekers upon arrival has become a regular response, frequently for prolonged periods and in conditions that fall far short of international standards.

International law, however, clearly states that the detention of refugees and asylum-seekers should only ever be an exceptional measure, and States are expected to consider alternatives to detention prior to any decision to detain.

Seeking asylum is not an unlawful act and asylum-seekers should not be penalized for their illegal entry or stay, provided they present themselves to the authorities without delay and show good cause for their presence. There is ample evidence that detaining asylum-seekers and refugees is harmful, costly and, ultimately, less effective than alternatives to detention and other appropriate reception models.

In this context, UNHCR continued to implement *Beyond detention 2014-*

2019: A global strategy to support governments to end the detention of asylum-seekers and refugees. The strategy was rolled out in Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Zambia. In addition, UNHCR and the International Detention Coalition released 12 national action plans during the year, outlining strategies to further improve conditions and reduce the use of detention in these focus countries.

Concerned about the devastating effects of detention on children and their development, the Office has focused primarily on engaging with existing national child protection actors to develop or strengthen emergency care arrangements for children upon release from detention, as well as the use of alternatives to detention and other case management strategies to prevent their detention. Other measures taken included prioritizing registration of asylum claims by children (and families) in detention to hasten release procedures; providing legal counselling; and introducing child-sensitive screening mechanisms, including to address

best interests and vulnerabilities, with different stakeholders. Finally, further engagement with national human rights institutions and national ombudsmen was strengthened to help bolster national capacities in monitoring immigration detention of children.

UNHCR supported various projects promoting alternatives to detention in 2015, contributing to a more humane

and cost-effective management of asylum and migration processes in some States. However, maintaining safe protection space was challenging amid the restrictive approaches taken by many governments to manage borders and asylum systems when faced with large mixed migratory flows during 2015. In Europe, the closure of external borders and imposing of criminal sanctions for illegal crossing of borders also led to more detention. ■



UNHCR/Roger Arnold

ERADICATING STATELESSNESS

In 2015, UNHCR marked the completion of the first year of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024.

The urgent need to end childhood statelessness

In 2015, there was a particular focus on eradicating childhood statelessness. In order to better understand the challenges confronting stateless young people, UNHCR carried out consultations

with more than 250 stateless children and youth, as well as their families and caregivers, in seven countries (Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, and Thailand). The consultations focused on the effects of statelessness in four areas: education, health, being a child, and employment. They confirmed that being deprived of a nationality had a profound and lasting impact on the lives of these young people. Many of them spoke of their struggle to gain an education,

receive adequate health care, or to find a life-sustaining job. The psychological toll of statelessness was apparent and damaging, with young people describing feeling “like a street dog”, “invisible” or “worthless.”

The results of the consultations were analysed and compiled into a report called *I Am Here, I Belong – The urgent need to end childhood statelessness*. Launched on the first anniversary of the campaign, the report recommends four concrete actions to resolve and prevent childhood statelessness:

- Allow children to obtain the nationality of the country in which they were born, if they will otherwise be stateless.
- Reform laws to allow women to pass on their nationality to their children on an equal basis to men.
- Eliminate laws and practices that deny children nationality because of their ethnicity, race or religion.
- Ensure universal birth registration for all children.

Towards a world without statelessness

Endorsement of the #IBelong campaign and the corresponding Global Action Plan by States will be key to achieving their goals. Despite greater global acknowledgment of the plight of stateless people, the number of stateless people who acquired nationality remained relatively low and fewer nationality law reforms took place in 2015 than anticipated. While several States and regional bodies demonstrated their commitment to the implementation of the Global Action Plan during the first year of the campaign, efforts need to be amplified to address in particular the major situations of statelessness around the world.

UNHCR continued to provide technical advice and support to governments on accession to the two UN Statelessness Conventions. The Office promoted national legal reforms to harmonize State policies and the implementation of international standards to prevent and reduce statelessness, and to protect stateless people.

As a result, in 2015 four countries acceded to the Statelessness Conventions and a number of States reformed or took important steps towards amending their national laws and procedures. For example, in November 2015, members of Madagascar’s Parliament confirmed their commitment to eliminate gender discrimination in the forthcoming Nationality Act. Reforms to remove gender discrimination from nationality laws are also underway in the Bahamas, Liberia and Somalia.

Armenia amended its citizenship law to ensure all children born on Armenian territory who would otherwise be stateless may acquire Armenian nationality. In April, Kosovo (all references to Kosovo in this report shall be understood in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), henceforth referred to as Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))) adopted an administrative instruction that established a statelessness determination procedure and grants protected status to stateless individuals. The Estonian Parliament adopted amendments to the Citizenship Act in January 2015, enabling children born to stateless parents to acquire citizenship automatically at birth, and easing the requirements for naturalization for people over 65 years of age – a change that would potentially benefit many of the 88,000 stateless people in the country.

To prevent statelessness arising in the context of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), the Office continued to promote and support universal birth registration among Syrian children born in the neighbouring countries, as well as those born in Syria. As part of these efforts, legal aid and counselling services for refugee families was established in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

In addition, to bolster the work of operations in key areas around the world, UNHCR provided targeted resources to support statelessness activities in 19 operations through the Seeds for Solutions mechanism and other specialized funds.

For example, in Malaysia, building on the progress made during the previous year, a local NGO supported by UNHCR registered nearly 7,000 stateless people and those of undetermined nationality, and provided them with advice on acquisition and confirmation of nationality. Subsequently, community-based paralegals submitted more than 5,000 of these cases to the Government for grant of nationality, and at least 500 people had acquired nationality by the end of the year.

In Zimbabwe, UNHCR supported the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission to conduct a study to assess the scope of the risk of statelessness in the country, while in Kenya, efforts to develop a national action plan to end statelessness were boosted and birth registration of 4,000 children in communities at risk of statelessness was supported.

In Thailand, UNHCR's support to the Government and a local NGO accelerated

the process of confirming the nationality of members of hill tribes who were living in remote border areas with limited access to information about nationality procedures.

Continued efforts by the governments of Central Asia, local civil society organizations and UNHCR resulted in further progress towards ending statelessness in the region. For example, in Tajikistan, more than 19,000 stateless people or people at risk of statelessness were identified and assisted to find a solution to their situation.

To increase awareness of statelessness, and the capacity to address it, in the Middle East and North Africa, the issue was included in regional protection training conducted in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. Participants included officials of the Governments of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as representatives of civil society. As part of the training, participants from North African States shared their good practices in removing gender discrimination from nationality laws.

UNHCR continued to reinforce its partnerships with NGOs globally, including through the fourth annual statelessness retreat, where 25 organizations from 20 countries shared good practices related to the implementation of the relevant actions of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness and discussed ways to enhance their collaboration.

Strengthening NGO collaboration also continued in Asia and the Pacific, where more than 40 civil society participants agreed to establish a network focused on eradicating statelessness in the region. ■

Areas of intervention in 2015	Key achievements in 2015
Durable solutions	
Greater reduction of statelessness achieved	
Develop and implement strategies to address protracted situations of statelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National action plans to end statelessness were adopted in 6 countries. ■ More than 49,000 stateless people acquired nationality or had it confirmed. ■ In Côte d'Ivoire, UNHCR supported the Government in processing applications for naturalization by declaration. Around 123,000 applications were received – approximately 50,000 were granted preliminary approval (an estimated 50% are formerly stateless), and 4,300 nationality certificates were delivered (an estimated 50% are formerly stateless).
Assist stateless people and those with undetermined nationality to acquire or confirm nationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In Kyrgyzstan 5,579 people acquired Kyrgyz nationality or received identity documentation. ■ In Malaysia, nearly 7,000 stateless people and those of undetermined nationality were registered and advised by a community-based NGO. More than 5,000 cases were submitted requesting grant of nationality by the Government. In total, 545 people had acquired Malaysian nationality by the end of the year. ■ In the Philippines 7,135 individuals of undetermined nationality were registered. Some 2,100 were assisted in completing case documentation and 664 individuals had their nationality confirmed.
Provide training and technical advice to government officials on statelessness reduction measures, including acquisition or confirmation of nationality by stateless people and those with undetermined nationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In Tajikistan, 585 people identified through registration had their nationality confirmed. ■ In Costa Rica, nearly 1,400 Ngöbe Buglé indigenous people were assisted in having their nationality confirmed or obtaining documents proving their nationality. ■ UNHCR published a good practices paper on Action 1 of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: Resolving existing major situations of statelessness.
Promote facilitated naturalization procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In the Republic of Moldova, following a country-wide campaign initiated in 2013 by the Government to issue Moldovan identity cards to those who only held expired Soviet passports, at least 212,000 people had been assisted by mid-2015. ■ The Government of Thailand announced that more than 18,000 people had been granted nationality in Thailand in the last three years, including thousands who were assisted by UNHCR and partners to have their Thai nationality confirmed.
Favourable protection environment	
Law and policy developed or strengthened	
Advocate reform to ensure that nationality laws are consistent with international standards on the prevention of statelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocacy was undertaken and advice provided in 63 countries. ■ Armenia and Estonia amended their nationality legislation, improving the prevention of statelessness at birth through automatic acquisition of nationality. ■ Montenegro adopted legislation that introduced a judicial procedure for late birth registration of people born outside the health-care system – an important measure to mitigate the risk of statelessness in the country. ■ Belarus amended its Law on Citizenship to allow children born on the territory to stateless parents residing temporarily in Belarus to acquire Belarusian citizenship (previously only children born to permanent resident stateless parents could acquire nationality). ■ Tajikistan adopted the Constitutional Law on Nationality, including a number of provisions for the prevention and reduction of statelessness.
Support development of national capacity to implement standards contained in the Statelessness Conventions by providing expert and technical advice, as well as training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR, the Center for Justice and International Law, and the Open Society Justice Initiative organized the first regional meeting of the Americas Network on Nationality and Statelessness (ANA) in San José, Costa Rica. More than 30 representatives from NGOs discussed common challenges related to preventing and responding to statelessness, particularly in the context of operationalizing UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024 and the Brazil Plan of Action. ■ UNHCR published a good practices paper on Action 3 of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: Removing gender discrimination from nationality laws. ■ In the Middle East and North Africa, 17 training events were attended by more than 800 officials from the subregion, including from Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to examine areas where national legislation and civil registration systems could be strengthened.





Areas of intervention in 2015	Key achievements in 2015
International and regional instruments acceded to, ratified or strengthened	
Conduct advocacy to encourage accession to the statelessness conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 accessions to the statelessness conventions: Belize (1961 Convention), El Salvador (1954 Convention), Italy (1961 Convention) and Turkey (1954 Convention). ■ All 15 ECOWAS Member States committed to accede to the statelessness conventions through the Abidjan Declaration. ■ UNHCR published a good practices paper on action 9 of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: acceding to the UN statelessness conventions.
Fair protection processes and documentation	
Identification of statelessness improved	
Undertake studies to boost knowledge on the number of stateless people, their situation and possible solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Statistical data available on 78 countries. ■ Studies were conducted in 13 countries. ■ UNHCR and IOM published the report <i>Nationality, Migration and Statelessness in West Africa</i>. ■ All 15 ECOWAS Member States committed themselves, through the Abidjan Declaration, to obtaining information and conducting studies to identify obstacles in the acquisition of nationality, and to document the situation of stateless people.
Advocate and provide technical advice to ensure the improvement of the quality of procedures to identify stateless people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR carried out advocacy and awareness-raising activities, and provided technical support on statelessness determination procedures and the protection of stateless people, in Armenia; Belgium; Bulgaria; Cyprus; France; Georgia; Hungary; Finland; Iceland; Italy; Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)); Montenegro; the Netherlands; Norway; Republic of Moldova; Ukraine; the United Kingdom; and South Africa. Statelessness determination procedures were established in Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)), while asylum legislation was amended in France to explicitly include a chapter addressing the protection of stateless people.
Civil registration and civil status documentation increased	
Promote civil registration and universal birth registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legal aid and counselling were established in all Iraq and Syria situation operations (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey); community-based protection and communication with communities was strengthened to help families register new births and marriages; and solutions were reached with host governments to make procedures simpler and more accessible. With the benefit of these interventions, the percentage of Syrian refugee children born in the region who went undocumented at birth (receiving neither a birth certificate nor a medical birth notification) reduced from 35% in 2012, to 7% in 2015 across the region. ■ Some countries witnessed dramatic improvements: in Jordan, 12 times as many Syrian refugee children born in camps in 2015 received an official birth certificate in comparison with 2013; in Iraq, Syrian refugee birth registration rate increased from 30% in 2012 to 73% in 2015; and in Egypt, interventions achieved a 93% birth registration rate for Syrian refugee children. ■ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 60 focus group meetings in Roma communities were conducted, reaching a total of 1,147 Roma of different ages and gender. Participants also included representatives in charge of civil registration from municipalities and centres of social welfare as well as representatives of Roma NGOs/Roma mediators. In 2015, 153 field visits were conducted by UNHCR and its partner <i>Vasa Prava</i> to 107 Roma communities.



ADDRESSING INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

It is estimated that 80 per cent of the world's internally displaced people (IDPs) had been uprooted from their place of origin for more than five years (Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, December 2014). Reversing this trend by focusing on law and policy related to solutions for IDPs remained a priority for UNHCR operations worldwide in 2015.

In Sri Lanka, UNHCR supported the development of an IDP policy intended to ensure that durable solutions were found for the country's conflict-affected displaced people. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the organization actively supported the development of a national solutions strategy that engaged national development actors to better the situation of almost 1.5 million people displaced by armed conflict in the country. In *Puntland*, Somalia, UNHCR supported the authorities in implementing its 2012 IDP policy through a local integration strategy for IDPs. Several operations, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sudan, laid the groundwork for drafting laws or policies concerning durable solutions for IDPs.

As the lead of the Global Protection Cluster, UNHCR engaged in the protection of civilians in the Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan, and continued its work to galvanize inter-agency support for government-owned solutions plans based on development approaches, which will be implemented alongside humanitarian responses. The Office pursued its collaboration with governments, civil society and the private sector to support the removal of legal and practical barriers to self-reliance.

The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC), co-led by UNHCR in conflict situations and by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in natural disaster settings, supported 25 country-level clusters or cluster-like mechanisms in 2015. UNHCR led the shelter cluster in 11 countries including the Central African Republic, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine, coordinating some 340 partners responding to the needs of 12 million people with shelter solutions and non-food items such as plastic sheeting, mats, blankets and kitchen sets. The organization's shelter cluster support team mobilized experts for 650 days to

nine countries in the course of the year, stepping up the cluster capacities in areas such as information management in Iraq, Somalia and Ukraine.

UNHCR also co-led the Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster in conflict settings, alongside IOM, the co-lead in natural disasters. The Global Cluster encourages strong partnerships with key government actors and national stakeholders to enhance capacity in coordination and management of displacement situations, based on general principles of protection and seeking durable

solutions. In 2015, the Global CCCM Cluster supported 35 national clusters and cluster-like mechanisms in emergencies and situations of protracted internal displacement through expert deployments, the development of tools and guidance, and capacity building for national authorities and civil society. UNHCR led nine country-level clusters in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar, Pakistan, South Sudan, Turkey (under the framework of cross-border assistance to Syria) and Yemen, four of which were operating jointly with the shelter cluster. ■

Areas of intervention in 2015	Key achievements in 2015
Favourable protection environment	
Law and policy developed or strengthened	
Advocate for the adoption or revision of laws consistent with international standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Technical advice was provided to Nigeria on its draft IDP policy and to Kenya in ensuring the country's national legislation was in line with the Kampala Convention.
Advocate for the development or promotion of a normative framework on IDPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In Mali, a technical committee composed of members of key ministries, members of parliament, civil society and the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel, was created to work on integrating the Kampala Convention into national law and policy. The technical committee's action plan called for a draft law by 2016-17. ■ In commemoration of the third anniversary of the entry into force of the Kampala Convention, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) task team on law and policy held a three-day capacity-building workshop for parliamentarians, civil society actors, UN and international humanitarian and development organizations, expert IDP law and policy practitioners, and other stakeholders from six countries (Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan and Zambia). The workshop focused on the domestic implementation and operationalization of the Kampala Convention; promoting national responsibility and the sharing of experiences between countries; and strengthening the role of the African Union and of other inter-governmental and non-governmental actors. The six country teams produced and committed to roadmaps for the passage of a domestic Kampala bill in their respective countries. ■ A study on UNHCR's engagement with national human rights institutions (NHRI) for IDP protection was undertaken in 2015. The stock-taking exercise included seven findings related to UNHCR's engagement with NHRIs, which will form the basis of a GPC roundtable in 2016.
Durable solutions	
Improve livelihood opportunities for IDPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNHCR collaborated with governments, civil society and the private sector to support the removal of legal and practical barriers to self-reliance. ■ UNHCR's partnerships with ILO and ITC promoted the right to work and labour mobility through dialogue with governments and employment representatives, and supported market development activities for people of concern.





Areas of intervention in 2015	Key achievements in 2015
<p>Adopt a progressive approach to solutions for IDPs, in close collaboration with partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In Colombia, UNHCR sought to ensure the country's restitution policy complemented reparation and protection by promoting a permanent coordination between the Land Restitution Unit, the National Protection Unit, the Ministry of the Interior and local authorities. ■ In Somalia, the recently approved IDP policy in <i>Somaliland</i> was used as a focus for training on durable solutions. In <i>Puntland</i>, UNHCR supported the authorities' follow-up on the 2012 IDP policy through a jointly agreed upon local integration strategy for IDPs. ■ Several operations, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sudan, laid the groundwork for drafting laws or policies concerning durable solutions for IDPs in 2016. ■ In Sri Lanka, UNHCR supported the development of an IDP policy intended to ensure durable solutions were found for conflict-affected displaced people in Sri Lanka. Technical assistance was provided to draw up a national policy on this issue, scheduled for completion in 2016. ■ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR supported the development of a national solutions strategy that engaged national development actors. ■ In September 2015, UNHCR initiated a regional inter-agency consultation in Nairobi with the participation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, as well as other key stakeholders. It focused on the theme of "preserving the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum and IDP settlement". The recommendations that emerged included to enhance cooperation and guidance for government and UN counterparts in the protection of refugees and IDPs in particular, and for civilians exposed to forced recruitment, both within the context of UN peace operations and in non-mission settings.
<p>Coordination and operations support</p>	
<p>Coordination and operations management strengthened</p>	
<p>Build field capacity for a stronger and more targeted operational response in IDP situations, notably in emergencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Operational guidelines for UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement were completed in 2015 (release scheduled in 2016). The guidelines, which replace the 2014 provisional guidance, establish institutional standards and parameters for UNHCR's engagement (or expected engagement) in a coordinated response to internal displacement. ■ More than 500 individuals enrolled in the IDP e-learning course, with at least half completing the course in 2015. In addition, five separate IDP protection training sessions were held for 155 participants. ■ An information management toolkit containing a variety of needs assessments tools, as well as tools for protection monitoring and population data tracking, was finalized and released. ■ Good practices and lessons learned gathered by the GSC support team through assessment and evaluations were publicly available on the GSC website (www.sheltercluster.org), which increased its reach in 2015 to 60,194 unique visitors with 229,997 page views - a 190% increase in the number of unique visitors and 120% increase in visits compared to 2014. ■ In order to increase the pool of experts available to deploy as members of the cluster coordination team, IFRC and UNHCR, in collaboration with Oxford-Brookes University, developed a master-level course on humanitarian shelter coordination. 25 participants successfully completed the course and have been included in the shelter coordination surge capacity roster. ■ Two deployment roster modalities – rapid response team technical experts and CCCM Cap deployees – reinforced CCCM capacity in several system-wide, Level 3 emergencies as well as protracted situations. In 2015, the Cluster conducted field support missions and deployed experts to the Central African Republic, Chad, Iraq, Jordan, Nigeria, State of Palestine, Somalia, South Africa and Yemen. Tools, lessons learned and guidance for field-based practitioners were either updated or developed. ■ The Global CCCM Cluster increased its efforts for improved and sustained communication with its partners. Its website (www.globalccmcluster.org) continued to be used widely as a knowledge-sharing platform, offering access to CCCM tools, training materials and information. Almost 16,000 people accessed the website in 2015. ■ The Global CCCM Cluster issued a fully revised camp management toolkit in April 2015 and launched camp closure guidelines. ■ With the support of the Global CCCM Cluster, 1,539 individuals were trained in CCCM in field operations, including 662 by experts deployed by UNHCR to Burkina Faso, Iraq, South Africa and South Sudan. In April 2015, a global trainers' workshop in Turin, Italy, brought together CCCM experts and trainers to review and update the existing training and capacity-building materials, and to create a community of practice. An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of CCCM capacity-building activities was also undertaken to gather lessons learned.

Refugee and sexual violence survivor restores hope in Rwanda

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story.
17 December 2015

KIGALI, Rwanda | Jacqueline Umutesi had a traumatic childhood. But that hasn't stopped the 37-year-old refugee from helping to heal others as one of Rwanda's most outspoken community organisers fighting sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

Jacqueline's own experiences of exile and violence underpin her work, having been forced to flee her home in Itongo in Rutshuru, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) at the age of just 14.

For a year, she and her family lived in the Mudende Refugee Camp. Then, in 1997, a militia invaded and opened fire, killing hundreds. Seeking safety, Jacqueline moved to Gihembe Refugee Camp, which today houses over 14,500 Congolese refugees – almost all of whom are survivors of the massacre.

One year after arriving in Gihembe, Jacqueline experienced a cultural practice known as *guterura* – traditional bride kidnapping. “In the middle of the night, a group of people came to my home,” she recalls. “I was seventeen. They put a plastic bag over my mother's head so she could not see, and they took me.”

“The following year I gave birth to a girl, my first born daughter,” she continues. “The man who took me became my husband. He was a soldier from the DRC.”

For the next two decades, Jacqueline was subjected to violence, humiliation and deprivation. “Even when I became pregnant, my husband would beat me,” she



UNHCR/S. Masengesho

Jaqueline Umutesi, a Congolese refugee, works to prevent sexual and gender violence in Gihembe camp, Rwanda.

says. “He would sleep with other women and became infected with HIV. He was angry and tried to set fire to my house, so I ran away to live with my mother.”

Despite her fears, Jacqueline was determined to restart her life. Today, she is part of a team of nine community mobilizers with UNHCR partner Plan International, who work in Gihembe camp, engaging in discussions and raising awareness on SGBV and gender equality.

The results of their efforts are clear. The practice of bride kidnapping and forced marriage has stopped, and physical and sexual violence against women and girls is no longer considered acceptable. “Today, if someone beats his wife, people cry out against him and we bring them to the police.”

However, survival sex is still a problem, with many refugee women and girls desperate enough to sell their bodies for food, clothing or other essential needs. As a mother, Jacqueline worries about her daughter. “I worry about the risks she faces after school, especially survival sex, which is a problem for adolescent girls,” she says. “At least when my daughter is in school, I know I don't have to be worried.”

But, having seen how her work has already transformed the lives of women and girls in the camp, Jacqueline has high hopes for the future.

“I hope that by telling other women what happened to me today, tomorrow the same thing cannot happen to them.” •