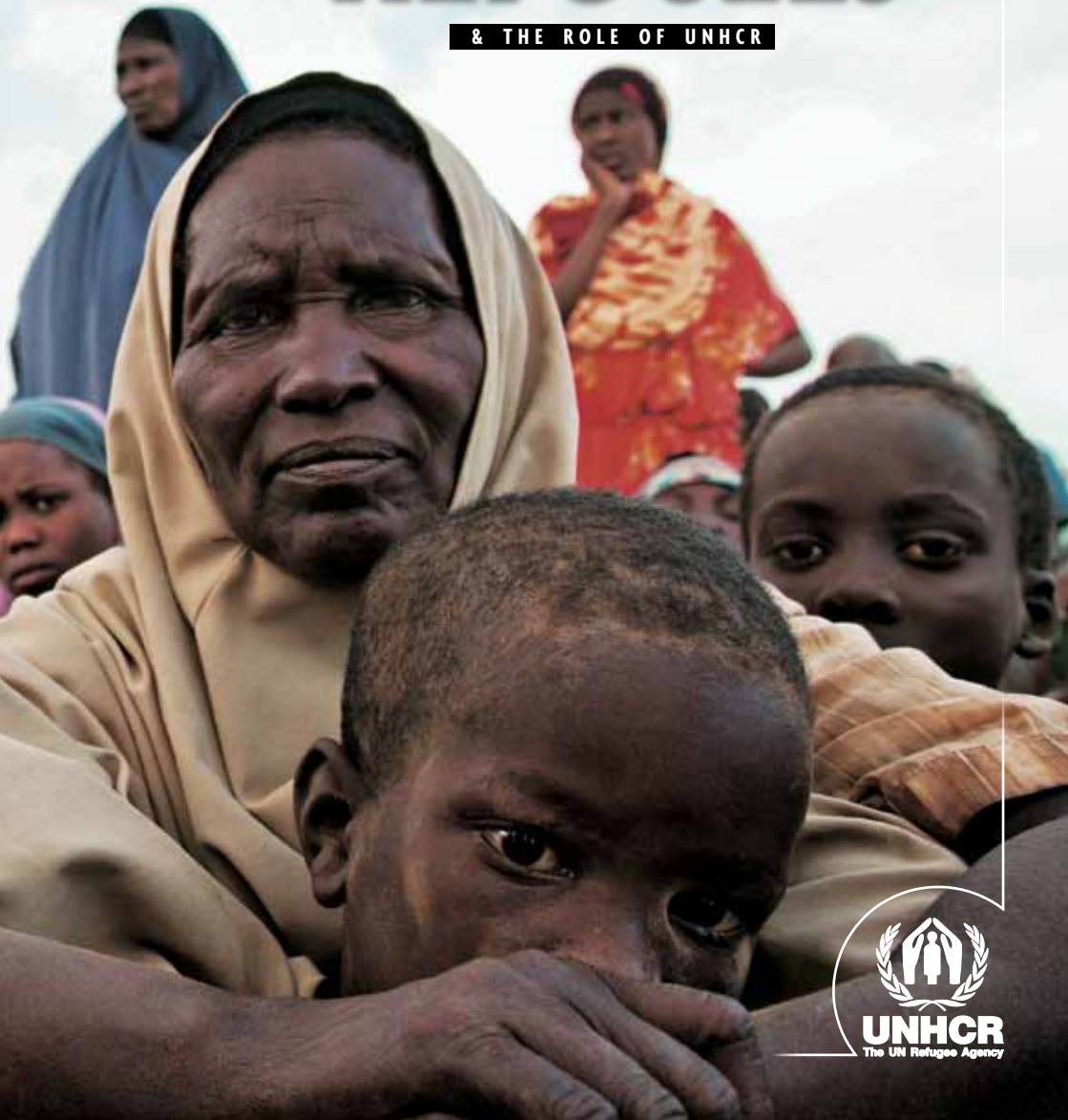


PROTECTING REFUGEES

& THE ROLE OF UNHCR



An Afghan refugee
working with a moulding
machine, provided by
UNHCR in 2009.



PROTECTING REFUGEES

& THE ROLE OF UNHCR

Cover:

This woman fled Somalia to save herself and her three children from the drought that has devastated the Lower Juba region.



UNHCR / B. BANNON / SOMI-2011

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WHO IS A REF

A REFUGEE IS SOMEONE WHO "OWING TO A WELL-FOUNDED FEAR OF BEING PERSECUTED FOR REASONS OF RACE, RELIGION, NATIONALITY, MEMBERSHIP OF A PARTICULAR SOCIAL GROUP, OR POLITICAL OPINION, IS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY OF HIS NATIONALITY, AND IS UNABLE TO OR, OWING TO SUCH FEAR, IS UNWILLING TO AVAIL HIMSELF OF THE PROTECTION OF THAT COUNTRY..."

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees



Malian refugee women await their transfer to a camp away from the volatile border of northern Niger. In the new location they will have access to all basic services.

UGEE?



FROM THE MOMENT humans began to live together in communities, some of their number were forcibly expelled from those first towns and villages.

The practice of helping such people fleeing persecution became one of the earliest hallmarks of civilization and there are references to such assistance in texts written 3,500 years ago during the blossoming of the great Hittite, Babylonian, Assyrian and Egyptian empires of the Middle East.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 with a core mandate to protect “*refugees*”. This is a legal term referring to a specific group of displaced people, but in today’s complex world there are other similarly uprooted groups or people on the move, known variously as *internally displaced persons* (IDPs), *migrants*, *stateless persons* or *asylum-seekers*.

This booklet addresses some commonly asked questions. Who, for instance, qualifies as a refugee and what rights do they enjoy? Who is an IDP, a stateless person, migrant or asylum-seeker? What is the role of UNHCR, its humanitarian partners and governments in legally and physically helping and protecting these vulnerable groups?

| REFUGEES, IDPs AND MIGRANTS |

A CROSS THE GLOBE at any particular moment millions of people are on the move.

Groups, sometimes entire villages and towns, flee war, economic hardship, religious or other persecution, often at the hands of their own governments. Their situation is often so perilous that they cross national boundaries to seek sanctuary in nearby countries and thus become internationally recognized as “refugees” with access to official assistance from UNHCR and organizations.

Internally displaced people are often wrongly identified by the popular press or general public as refugees. However, as the name suggests, IDPs have not crossed an international border but remain within their home countries. Though they may have fled for similar reasons such as war or persecution, sometimes perpetrated by their own governments, they legally remain under the protection of that same government and retain all of their rights and protection under both human rights and international humanitarian law.

UNHCR’s original mandate does not specifically cover IDPs. But because of the agency’s expertise on displacement, it has for many years assisted millions of them, most recently through a so-called “cluster” approach, whereby UNHCR takes a lead role with other government and humanitarian agencies to coordinate protection, shelter and camp management. UNHCR is currently active in 26 IDP operations, including Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan.

Millions of other civilian victims of natural disasters are also often classified as IDPs. UNHCR is only involved with this group in exceptional circumstances, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 or the devastating earthquakes in Pakistan in 2005 and Haiti in 2010 during which the agency provided emergency assistance.

Migrants, particularly economic migrants, choose to move not because of the direct threat of persecution or death but in order to improve their lives. Thus, they are treated differently under national and international laws.



However, since they often use the same routes and means of transport as refugees, such “mixed migration” patterns present a challenge to authorities trying to decide the specific status of a new arrival.

Bangladeshi migrant workers carry their belongings to the boat that will take them to Alexandria in Egypt from Benghazi in Libya.

For example, almost 53,000 people of all persuasions trying to escape chaos in the Horn of Africa in 2010 used people smugglers to cross the Gulf of Aden to Yemen. Of that number, 130 died or were reported missing. In 2011, due to the deterioration of the whole region - Somalia as well as Eritrea and Ethiopia - more than 103,000 people made the same perilous voyage, reaching Yemen’s shores in desperate condition and again, a significant number lost their lives.

To address the growing issue of mixed migration, UNHCR for the last several years has followed a 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration covering countries of origin, transit and destination. Mixed migration movements are of concern mainly in the Mediterranean basin, the Gulf of Aden, Central America and the Caribbean, South-east Asia and the Balkans.

| ...AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS |

THE TERMS ASYLUM-SEEKER and refugee are often confused: an asylum-seeker is someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated.

After due process, national asylum systems decide which claimant qualifies for international protection. Those judged not to be refugees, nor to be in need of any other form of international protection, can be sent back to their home countries.

The efficiency of any asylum system is key. If the asylum system is both fast and fair, then people who know they are not refugees have little incentive to make a claim in the first place, thereby benefitting both the host country and the refugees for whom the system is intended.

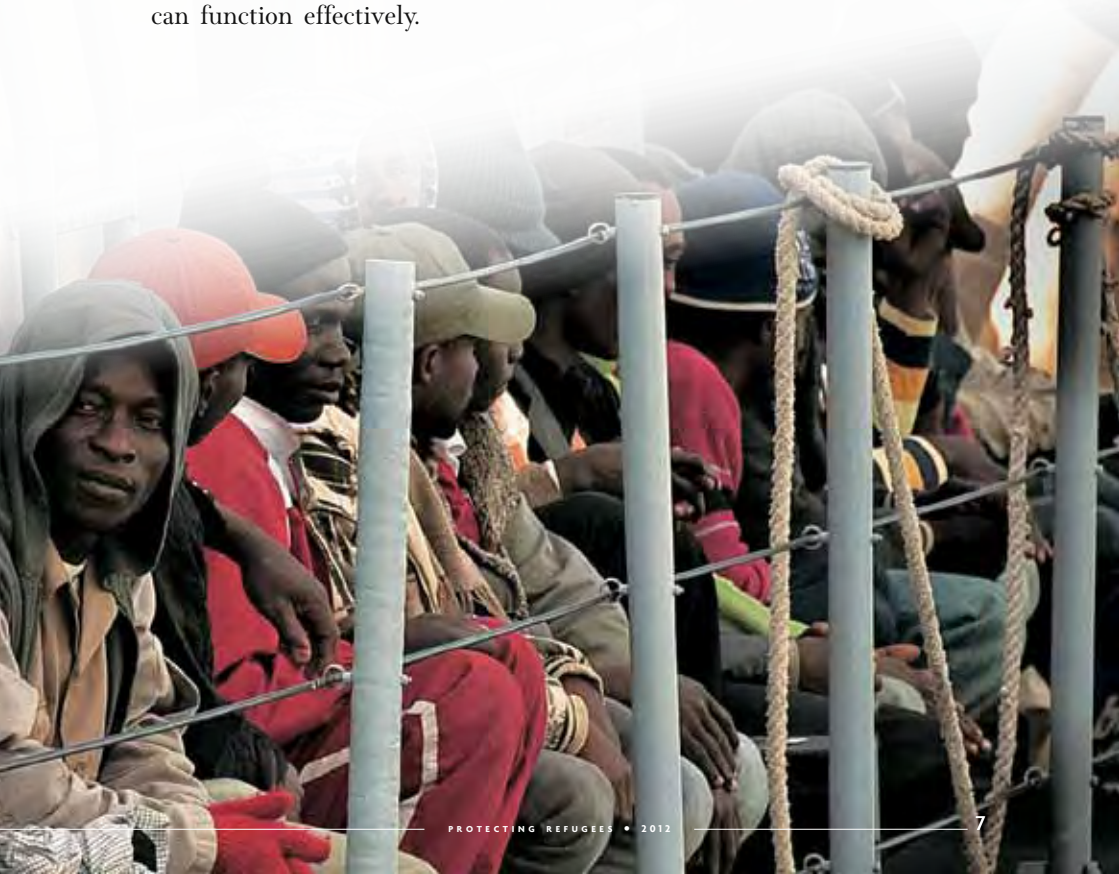
During mass movements of refugees (usually as a result of conflicts or generalized violence as opposed to individual persecution), there is not – and never will be – a capacity to conduct individual asylum interviews for everyone who has crossed the border. Nor is it usually necessary, since in such circumstances it is generally evident why they have fled. As a result, such groups are often declared “prima facie” refugees.



WHY DEFINITIONS MATTER

BECAUSE OF THE CONSTANT MOVEMENT of so many people on a global scale, often in mixed-migration patterns, the body of international law designed to protect refugees is under pressure as never before. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States many nations responded with stricter and stronger border controls. In such a fraught environment the result has often been that *bona fide* refugees, IDPs and economic migrants are increasingly being confused and treated with mistrust, suspicion and outright rejection. Which is why understanding the complexity of the problem and being able to accurately assess each claim is so important to assure not only that some of the world's most vulnerable people receive the assistance they need, but also that the entire global protection system can function effectively.

These asylum-seekers, who were rescued by the Italian coastguard, are lucky to be alive. Their boat sank on its way from North Africa to the Italian island of Lampedusa.



DEFINITIONS IN BRIEF

REFUGEE

The 1951 Refugee Convention describes refugees as people who are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence, and have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (for full definition see p. 4). People fleeing conflicts or generalized violence are also generally considered as refugees, although sometimes under legal mechanisms other than the 1951 Convention.

ASYLUM-SEEKER

Someone who has made a claim that he or she is a refugee, and is waiting for that claim to be accepted or rejected. The term contains no presumption either way - it simply describes the fact that someone has lodged the claim. Some asylum-seekers will be judged to be refugees and others not.

MIGRANT

A wide-ranging term that covers most people who move to a foreign country for a variety of reasons and for a certain length of time (usually a minimum of a year, so as not to include very temporary visitors such as tourists, people on business visits, etc). Different from “immigrant,” which means someone who takes up permanent residence in a country other than his or her original homeland.

ECONOMIC MIGRANT

Someone who leaves their country of origin for financial reasons.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON (IDP)

Someone who has been forced to move from his or her home because of conflict, persecution (i.e. refugee-like reasons) or because of a natural disaster or some other unusual circumstance of this type. Unlike refugees, however, IDPs remain inside their own country.

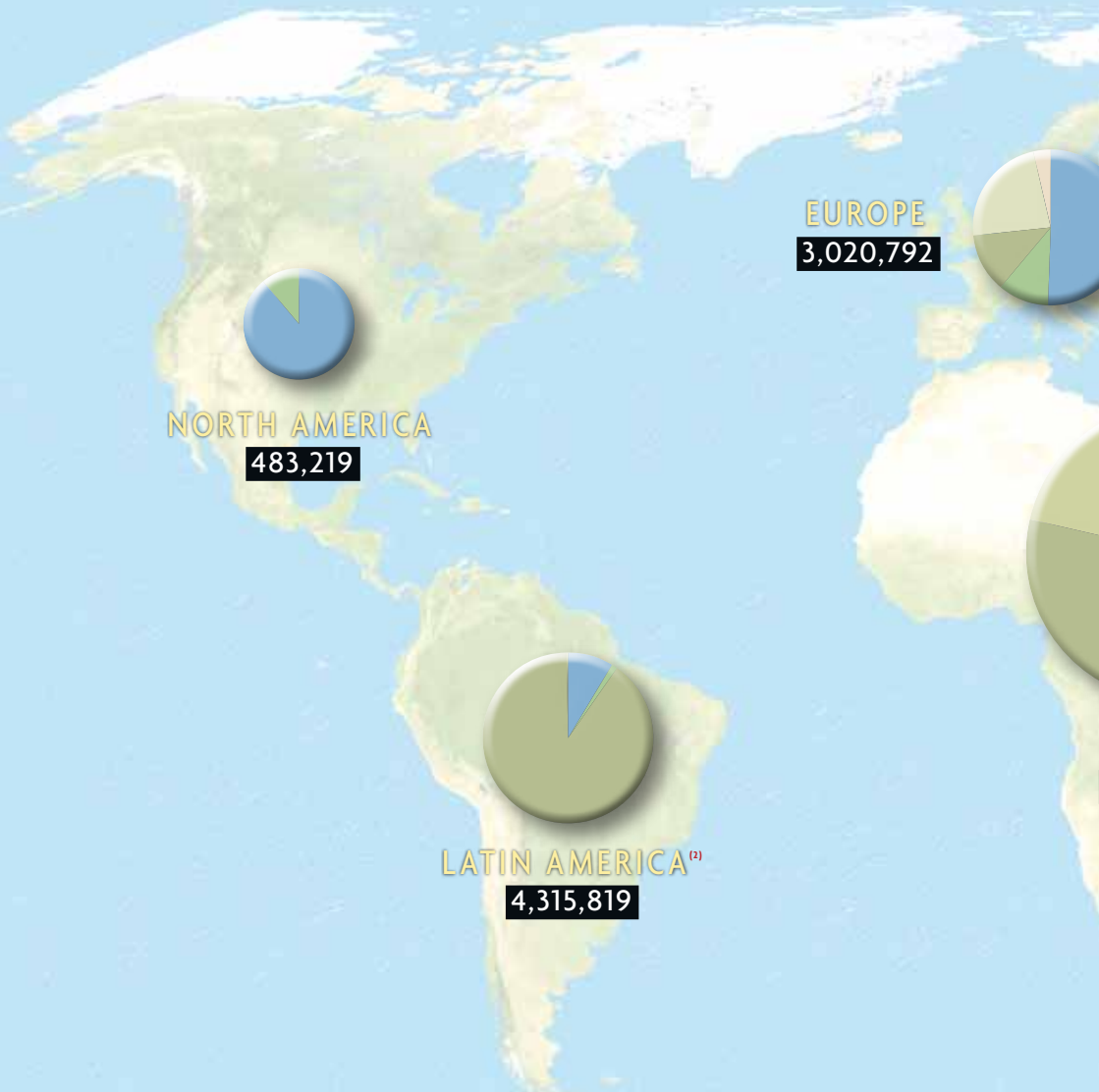
STATELESS PERSON

Someone who is not considered as a national by ANY state (*de jure* stateless); or possibly someone who does not enjoy fundamental rights enjoyed by other nationals in their home state (*de facto* stateless). Statelessness can be a personal disaster: some stateless people live in a Kafkaesque netherworld where they do not officially exist and therefore have virtually no rights at all. Unlike other groups, they may have never moved away from the place where they were born. Some stateless people are also refugees.



Jammu a 17-year-old Pakistani IDP, lived in a relief camp after heavy monsoon rains triggered flooding in lower parts of Sindh province and northern parts of Punjab province, Pakistan.

PEOPLE OF CON



EUROPE
3,020,792

NORTH AMERICA
483,219

LATIN AMERICA⁽²⁾
4,315,819

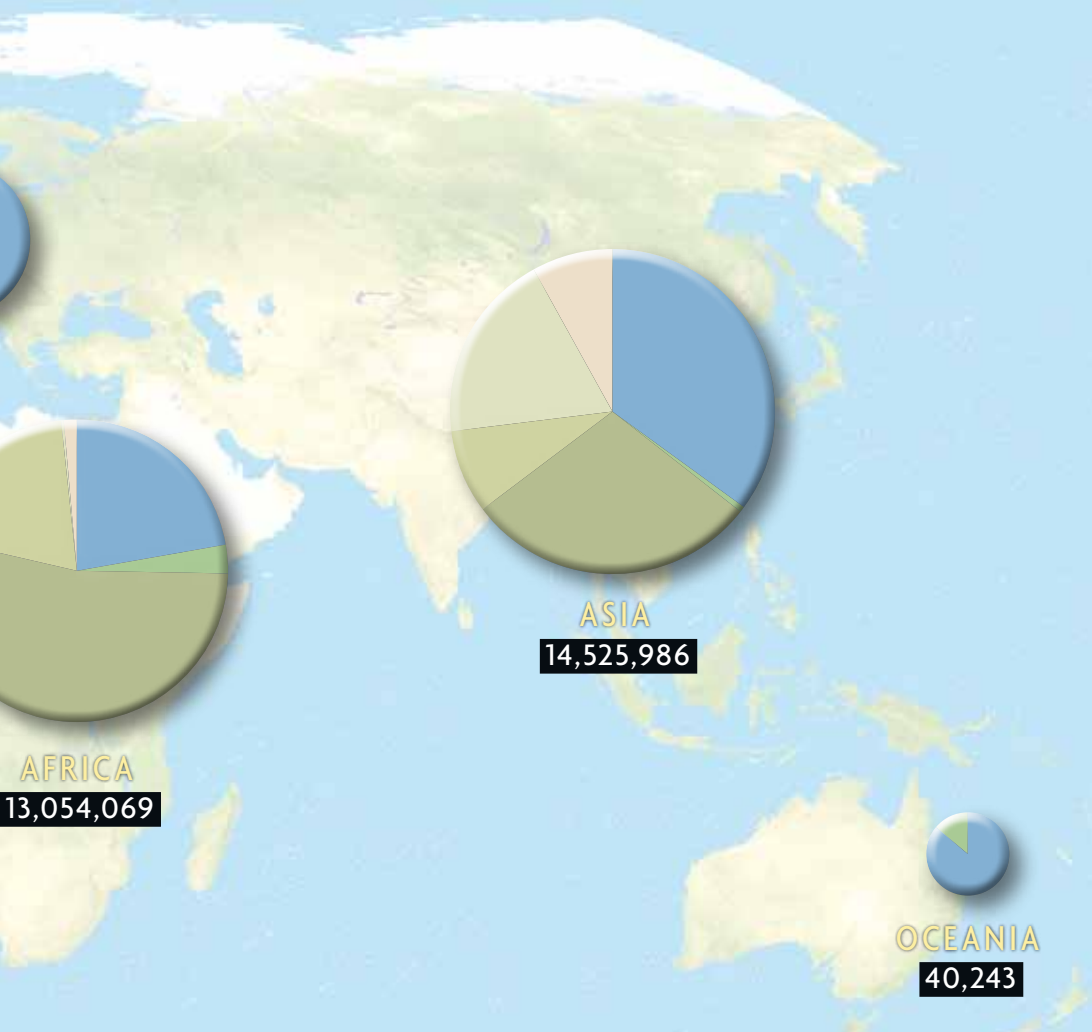
⁽¹⁾ Includes people in refugee-like situations. The refugee like situations category is descriptive by nature and includes groups of people who are outside of their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.

⁽²⁾ Includes Caribbean.

⁽³⁾ Includes people in IDP-like situation. This 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 not been ascertained, for practical or other reasons.

⁽⁴⁾ Includes both returned refugees and IDPs.

CERN TO UNHCR



AFRICA
13,054,069

ASIA
14,525,986

OCEANIA
40,243

| | REFUGEES ⁽¹⁾ | ASYLUM SEEKERS | IDPs ⁽²⁾ | RETURNEES ⁽⁴⁾ | STATELESS PEOPLE | OTHERS | TOTAL |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| AFRICA | 2,924,091 | 390,715 | 6,961,093 | 2,582,718 | 21,119 | 174,333 | 13,054,069 |
| ASIA | 5,104,115 | 83,130 | 4,254,311 | 1,192,200 | 2,759,418 | 1,132,812 | 14,525,986 |
| EUROPE | 1,534,415 | 312,701 | 369,665 | 2,764 | 696,544 | 104,703 | 3,020,792 |
| LATIN AMERICA ⁽³⁾ | 377,784 | 49,677 | 3,888,309 | 29 | 20 | - | 4,315,819 |
| NORTH AMERICA | 429,646 | 53,573 | - | - | - | - | 483,219 |
| OCEANIA | 34,755 | 5,488 | - | - | - | - | 40,243 |
| TOTAL | 10,404,806 | 895,284 | 15,473,378 | 3,777,711 | 3,477,101 | 1,411,848 | 35,440,128 |



UNHCR / X. CREACH / COL-2016

In Venezuela, a UNHCR staff member talks to Diña, a Colombian refugee, who could not get to the local hospital to give birth because she lacked the necessary documentation.

| PROTECTING REFUGEES |

GOVERNMENTS GUARANTEE the basic human rights and physical security not only of their own citizens but also for refugees on their territory.

The national authorities normally work in concert with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and in many cases with UNHCR staff. The location of refugee groups can vary from capital cities to remote camps and border areas. Protection staff offer various services to provide both legal and physical protection and in some cases to minimize the threat of violence, including sexual assault, which is quite common, even in asylum countries.

THE 1951 UN REFUGEE CONVENTION

THE 1951 UN REFUGEE CONVENTION AND ITS 1967 PROTOCOL are the cornerstones of modern refugee protection, and the legal principles they enshrine have permeated into countless other international, regional and national laws and practices.

One of the most crucial principles laid down in the 1951 Convention is that refugees should not be expelled or returned “to the frontiers of territories where [their] life or freedom would be threatened.” The Convention also outlines the basic rights which states should afford to refugees, and it defines who is a refugee – and who is not (for example it clearly excludes fighters, terrorists or people guilty of serious crimes).

Following the fall of Saigon in 1975, Vietnamese refugees were forced to a dramatic exodus across the South China Sea. This group of 162 people arrived in Malaysia, on a small boat which sank a few metres from the shore.

TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

[AT THE END OF 2011]

| COUNTRY | REFUGEES* |
|-------------|-----------|
| Afghanistan | 2,664,400 |
| Iraq | 1,428,300 |
| Somalia | 1,077,000 |
| Sudan* | 500,000 |
| DR Congo | 491,500 |
| Myanmar** | 414,600 |
| Colombia** | 395,900 |
| Vietnam*** | 337,800 |
| Eritrea | 252,000 |
| China | 205,400 |

* May include citizens of South Sudan (in absence of separate statistics for both countries).

** Includes people in a refugee-like situation.

*** The 300,000 Vietnamese refugees are well integrated and in practice receive protection from the Government of China.

Note: Some 94,000 Palestinian refugees also come under UNHCR's mandate, while a further 4.8 million Palestinian refugees are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

UNHCR / K. GAUGLER / VNIM • 1975



TOP 10 ASYLUM COUNTRIES

[AT THE END OF 2011]

| COUNTRY | REFUGEES |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Pakistan | 1,702,700 |
| Iran | 886,500 |
| Syrian Arab Rep.* | 755,400 |
| Germany | 571,700 |
| Kenya | 566,500 |
| Jordan* | 451,000 |
| Chad | 366,500 |
| China** | 301,000 |
| Ethiopia | 288,800 |
| USA*** | 264,800 |

* Government estimate. UNHCR has registered and is assisting 132,500 Iraqi refugees in both countries.

** The 300,000 Vietnamese refugees are well integrated and in practice receive protection from the Government of China.

*** UNHCR estimate.

The 1951 Convention was never intended to sort out all migration issues. Its sole aim was – and still is – to protect refugees.

Today's challenge is to find other efficient mechanisms to manage economic migration and maintain border security – legitimate state concerns that need to be carefully balanced with their responsibility to protect refugees.

By December 2010, a total of 148 countries had signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol (see separate brochure on the 1951 Refugee Convention for more details).



Asylum-seekers at the federal asylum reception centre in Kapellen, Belgium.

| WHAT IS UNHCR? |



UNHCR / D. TELEMANS / BEL+2011

THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS High Commissioner for Refugees, more commonly referred to as the UN refugee agency or (UNHCR), was created by the UN General Assembly in 1950 and began work on 1 January 1951. Its statute was drafted virtually simultaneously with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which became the cornerstone of refugee protection in subsequent decades.

UNHCR's initial task was to help millions of uprooted peoples – mainly in Europe – who were still homeless and hungry in the aftermath of World War II, and to seek permanent solutions for them. Arguably, the Convention's most important provision was the obligation by governments not to expel or forcibly return (*refoulement*) an asylum-seeker to a territory where he or she faced persecution.

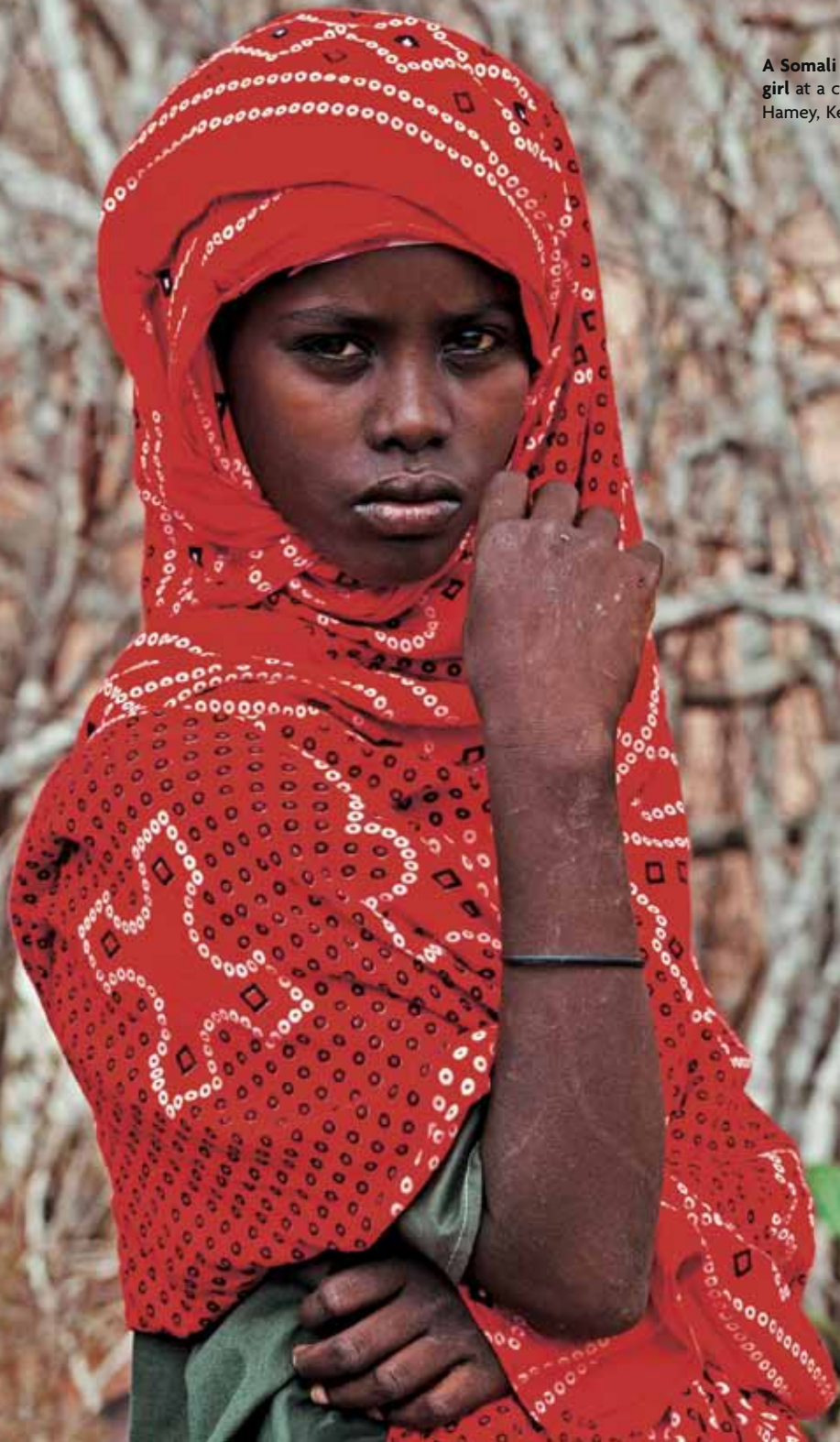
The agency was given three years to accomplish this task. But as new refugee crises proliferated across the globe, the mandate was repeatedly renewed until the UN General Assembly in 2003 abolished this requirement.

A 1967 Protocol strengthened global refugee protection by removing the geographical and time limitations written into the original Convention under which mainly Europeans involved in events occurring before 1 January, 1951 could apply for refugee status.

“THE CONTRACTING STATES UNDERTAKE TO COOPERATE WITH THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES...”

*Article 35,
1951 UN Refugee Convention*

A Somali refugee girl at a camp near Hamey, Kenya.



HOW UNHCR'S ROLE HAS EVOLVED

SINCE ITS FOUNDING, THE AGENCY has worked not only to strengthen legal instruments such as the 1951 Convention, but increasingly has assisted related groups such as IDPs and the stateless, worked directly in conflict areas and has provided material as well as legal assistance to help victims of major natural disasters.

In 2001, the most important global refugee conference in half a century adopted a landmark declaration reaffirming the commitment of signatory states to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Through a process of global consultations, UNHCR drew up an “Agenda for Protection,” which continues to serve as a guide to governments and humanitarian organizations in their efforts to strengthen worldwide refugee protection.

In 1974 UNHCR was designated by the UN as the agency responsible for monitoring and protecting all stateless persons in the world.

Aid has yet to arrive in many of the delta areas hit by Cyclone Nargis, which struck Myanmar in May 2008.



It is a key player in the UN's “cluster approach” to help millions of internally displaced people who, unlike refugees, have never had a single agency wholly dedicated to their well-being.



View of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from its ruined parliament building, in 1996.

UNHCR plays a prominent and more direct role in countries where displacement is occurring – either because of its substantial involvement in helping returning refugees settle back into their home areas or because of its increased activities on behalf of IDPs in countries such as Colombia, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. In the 1990s UNHCR ran the world's longest-ever airlift to assist besieged populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



UNHCR / A. ZHOKOBAEV / KGS/2010

The agency launched major operations to help victims of natural disasters, including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and China's 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

This woman has only an expired Soviet passport as identity. She is seeking advice from a local NGO on how to get Kyrgyz citizenship and a passport.

| ASSISTING REFUGEES |

PROTECTION AND MATERIAL HELP are interrelated. UNHCR can best provide effective legal protection if a person's basic needs – shelter, food, water, sanitation and medical care – are also met.

The agency therefore coordinates the provision and delivery of such items, manages – or helps manage – individual camps or camp systems, and has designed specific projects for vulnerable women, children and older people who comprise 80 per cent of a “normal” refugee population. Education becomes a major priority once the emergency phase of a crisis is over.

UNHCR seeks durable solutions to refugees' plight, by helping them repatriate to their homeland if conditions warrant, or by helping them to integrate in their countries of asylum or to resettle in third countries.

TEN BIGGEST OPERATIONS IN 2011

| COUNTRY | EXPENDITURE (US\$) |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Sudan | 239,130,178 |
| Pakistan | 233,353,175 |
| Kenya | 216,265,708 |
| Iraq | 208,678,238 |
| Chad | 207,153,326 |
| Ethiopia | 199,321,851 |
| DR Congo | 139,611,889 |
| Syria | 116,968,029 |
| Afghanistan | 100,505,129 |
| Liberia | 90,222,725 |

Volunteers from local universities load onto trucks some of the 2,000 tents donated by UNHCR as part of the international relief effort following the 2008 earthquake that devastated Sichuan province in China.



UNHCR / J. BOWEN / CHIN2008



| FINDING DURABLE SOLUTIONS |

THE AGENCY'S MANDATE also includes actively looking for long-term refugee solutions. Several options exist:

Voluntary repatriation to their own country is the preferred solution for the majority of refugees as soon as circumstances permit. Providing it is safe and reintegration is viable, UNHCR encourages this and often provides transportation and a start-up package, including cash grants, income-generation projects and practical assistance such as farm tools and seeds.

| TOP 5 REPATRIATIONS IN 2011 | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| COUNTRY | RETURNEES |
| Libya | 148,950 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 135,200 |
| Afghanistan | 71,150 |
| Iraq | 67,090 |
| Sudan | 50,080 |

Together with NGO partners, UNHCR on occasion extends this help to include the rebuilding of individual homes and communal infrastructure such as schools and clinics, roads, bridges and wells. Such projects are often designed to help IDPs as

Naseema, an old Afghan woman, and her family, have returned to the province of Balkh. Her family is known for carpet weaving skills.

well as returning refugees – while also benefitting other impoverished people in the area who may never have moved anywhere. Field staff monitors the well-being of returnees in delicate situations. Longer term development assistance is provided by other organizations.

In all, more than 531,000 refugees repatriated voluntarily to 39 countries during 2011. Globally, an estimated 9.1 million refugees have returned home over the past 10 years, including 6.7 million with UNHCR assistance.

Local integration and resettlement

SOME REFUGEES CANNOT GO HOME or are unwilling to do so, usually because they could face continued persecution. In such circumstances, UNHCR helps to find them new homes, either in their current asylum country (though relatively few nations offer this option) or in third countries where they can be permanently resettled.

TOP 5 COUNTRIES OF RESETTLEMENT, 2011

| COUNTRY | REFUGEES |
|----------------|----------|
| United States* | 51,460 |
| Canada | 12,930 |
| Australia | 9,230 |
| Sweden | 1,900 |
| Norway | 1,270 |

* During US fiscal year 2011 (1 October - 30 September), some 56,400 refugees were resettled to the USA.



A resettled Bhutanese family now living in Wommels, the Netherlands.



A refugee woman from Myanmar works at a UNHCR soap factory in Nayapara Camp, Bangladesh.

Twenty-five countries now regularly offer resettlement places, with Bulgaria, Hungary and Spain being the most recent new resettlement states, and Japan starting to implement its pilot resettlement programme in 2010. Compared with 2005, when only 14 countries offered resettlement places, it is clear that the pool of resettlement states has been significantly broadened.

Who benefits from resettlement?

PEOPLE FACING PARTICULAR PROBLEMS or continued threats to their safety in their first asylum countries are foremost among those who can benefit from resettlement. In some cases, it is an essential life-saving option – or the only way to save a particular refugee from having to resort to desperate measures. One unfortunately common example is the rape victim who has been rejected by her family and society, and has nowhere else to turn. Some very specific refugee populations are also on occasion beneficiaries of group resettlement programmes.

In 2011, UNHCR submitted the names of some 92,000 refugees for resettlement, but only 62,000 could depart with UNHCR's assistance for 22 resettlement countries. The largest number (18,100) departed from Nepal, followed by Thailand (9,600) and Malaysia (8,400).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

■ What rights and obligations does a refugee have?

A refugee has the right to seek asylum. However, international protection involves more than just physical safety: refugees should receive at least the same basic rights and help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident, including freedom of thought, of movement and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. They should also benefit from the same fundamental economic and social rights. In return, refugees are required to respect the laws and regulations of their country of asylum.

■ What is the difference between an asylum-seeker and a refugee?

When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another state, they often have to officially apply for asylum. While their case is still being decided, they are known as asylum-seekers. If asylum is granted, it means they have been recognized as refugees in need of international protection.

■ What happens when governments cannot or will not provide help?

In certain circumstances, when adequate government resources are not available (for example after the sudden arrival of large numbers of uprooted people),

UNHCR and other international organizations provide assistance such as legal help, food, tools and shelter, schools and clinics.

■ Are people who flee war zones refugees?

The 1951 Convention does not specifically address the issue of civilians fleeing conflict, unless they fall within a particular group being persecuted within the context of the conflict. However, UNHCR's long-held position is that people fleeing conflicts should be generally considered as refugees if their own state is unwilling or unable to protect them. Regional instruments, such as the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention on refugees and the Cartagena Declaration in Latin America, explicitly support this stance.



UNHCR / D. TELEMANS / BEL2011

Asylum-seekers waiting for their cases to be reviewed at a federal asylum reception centre in Belgium.



■ Can governments deport people who are found not to be refugees?

People who have been determined, under a fair procedure, not to be in need of international protection are in a situation similar to that of illegal aliens, and may be deported. However, UNHCR advocates that a fair procedure has to include the right to a review before they are deported, since the consequences of a faulty decision may be disastrous for the individuals concerned.

■ Can a war criminal or terrorist be a refugee?

No. People who have participated in war crimes and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law – including acts of terrorism – are specifically excluded from the protection accorded to refugees.

■ Can a soldier be a refugee?

Only civilians can be refugees. A person who continues to pursue armed action from the country of asylum cannot be considered a refugee. However, soldiers or fighters who have laid down their arms may subsequently be granted refugee status, providing they are not excludable for other reasons.

■ Do all refugees have to go through an asylum determination process?

In many countries, people who apply for refugee status have to establish individually that their fear of persecution is well-founded. However, during major exoduses involving tens or even hundreds of thousands of people, individual screening may be impossible. In such circumstances, the entire group may be granted “prima facie” refugee status.



Under a staircase in the immigration building at the Egyptian-Libyan border, families of Arabic country migrant workers wait for their men to get the necessary paperwork to enter Egypt.

■ What is “temporary protection”?

Nations sometimes offer “temporary protection” when their regular asylum systems risk being overwhelmed by a sudden mass influx of people, as happened during the 1990s conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In such circumstances, people can be rapidly admitted to safe countries, but without any guarantee of permanent asylum. Temporary protection can work to the advantage of both governments and

asylum-seekers in specific circumstances. But it only complements – and does not substitute for – the wider protection measures, including formal refugee status, offered by the 1951 Refugee Convention. UNHCR advocates that, after a reasonable period of time has passed, people benefitting from temporary protection who are still unable to return home should be given the right to claim full refugee status.

UNHCR tents are delivered and set up for flood-displaced communities in Thatta district, Sindh, Pakistan.



UNHCR IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S principal humanitarian agencies, with some 6,650 employees and 259 offices in 118 countries. In the last six decades, the agency has provided assistance to more than 50 million people, earning two Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981.



UNHCR / S. PHELPS / AFG-2011

Afghan refugees boys read an exercise book during morning lessons at their school in the Khazana refugee camp, Peshawar, Pakistan.

António Guterres, who became the 10th High Commissioner in June 2005, reports verbally to the Economic and Social Council on coordination aspects of the work of the agency, and submits a written report annually to the UN General Assembly on the overall work of UNHCR.

UNHCR's programmes and guidelines are approved by an Executive Committee of 78 member states which meets annually in Geneva. A second working group, or Standing Committee, meets several times a year.

Where does its money come from?

UNHCR IS FUNDED ALMOST ENTIRELY by voluntary contributions, principally from governments but also from inter-governmental organizations, corporations and individuals. It receives a limited subsidy of just over three per cent of its funding from the United Nations regular budget, for administrative costs, and accepts in-kind contributions, including relief items such as tents, medicines, trucks and air transport.

UNHCR presented a global needs-based budget for 2010 amounting to US\$3.3 billion. Although 2010 was characterized by a world-wide financial and economic crisis, UNHCR received US\$1.86 billion in voluntary contributions from traditional donor countries, as well as growing support

from new and non-traditional donor countries, an increase by almost US\$150 million compared to 2009. Nevertheless, voluntary contributions covered 57 per cent of the budget requirement, leaving many needs unmet during the year.

What other organizations help refugees?

AS HUMANITARIAN CRISES have become more complex, UNHCR has expanded both the number and type of organizations it works with. United Nations sister agencies include the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Other organizations include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and some 640 non-governmental organizations.



Food distribution day in Treguine, Chad. Sitting on bags, local staff from the Chadian Red Cross distribute salt donated by the European Union to Sudanese refugees.

UNHCR / E. NOY / SDN2011

General

- In 2011, an estimated **43.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution.**
- By the end of 2011, **the total population of concern to UNHCR** was estimated at **35.4 million** people, broken down as follows:
 - 10.4 million refugees;
 - 895,300 asylum-seekers;
 - 531,900 refugees who had repatriated during 2011;
 - 15.5 million IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR;
 - 3.2 million IDPs who had returned to their place of origin in 2011;
 - 3.5 million stateless persons;
 - 1.4 million others of concern.
- By the end of 2011, according to UNHCR's global estimates, there were close to **2.7 million Afghan refugees**, accounting for one out of four of the global refugee population under UNHCR's responsibility. **Iraq** was the second largest country of origin of refugees [**1.4 million**], followed by **Somalia** [**1.1 million**], **Sudan** [**500,000**], and **the Democratic Republic of the Congo** [**491,500**].

Refugees

- The largest refugee camp in the world was **Hagadera camp in Dadaab, Kenya**, with 138,000 inhabitants at the end of 2011. This camp, along with the Dagahaley and Ifo camps, is part of the Dadaab complex with a total population of more than 453,000 refugees by the end of 2011.
- In 2011, **531,900 refugees repatriated voluntarily** to their home country, more than double the figure in 2010 [**197,600**]. The main countries of return included **Libya** [**149,000**], **Côte d'Ivoire** [**135,200**], **Afghanistan** [**71,100**] and **Iraq** [**67,100**]. Overall, 14 countries of origin each reported the return of more than 1,000 refugees.
- Among refugees and people in refugee-like situations, children constituted **46 per cent of the population**. The proportion was significantly higher among refugees who returned home in 2011 [**52%**].

Asylum-seekers

- During 2011, some **876,100 individual applications for asylum or refugee status** were submitted to governments and UNHCR offices in 171 countries or territories. This was a 3 per cent increase compared to the previous year [**850,300 claims**]. UNHCR offices registered some **98,800 applications**, equivalent to 11 per cent of all applications.
- Some **216,500 asylum-seekers** were either recognized as refugees [**172,500**] or granted a complementary form of protection [**44,000**] during 2011.
- The 27 member states of the European Union registered **277,400 asylum claims** in 2011, a **15 per cent** increase compared to 2010 [**240,000**]. The EU-27 together accounted for **85 per cent** of all asylum claims in Europe.

* Figures do not include some 4.8 million Palestinian refugees registered under a separate mandate by UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

■ Internally displaced

- The number of internally displaced persons, including those in IDP-like situations, benefitting from UNHCR's protection and assistance activities, was **15.5 million** at the end of 2011. This was the second highest figure on record, and almost 800,000 more than at the end of 2010 [14.7 million].
- UNHCR offices reported at least **2.9 million** IDPs who were newly displaced in 2011, while at least **3.2 million** IDPs were able to return home during the same period.

■ Stateless

- By the end of 2011, UNHCR identified some **3.5 million stateless people** in 64 countries. However, the actual number of stateless persons worldwide was estimated at up to 12 million**.

** These figures, however, do not capture the full scale or magnitude of the phenomenon of statelessness. A significant number of stateless people have not been systematically identified and the statistical data on statelessness is not yet available in many cases.

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Congolese refugees
collect their food at
the Nkamira transit
centre for refugees
in western Rwanda.