



United Nations

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Chapter I

Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. By the end of 2021, a succession of humanitarian crises left some 94.7 million¹ people under the care of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) worldwide, while the world was still grappling with the devastating socioeconomic effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

2. The number of people forced to flee due to conflict, persecution and violence rose to over 89.3 million, including 27.1 million refugees² and 53.2 million internally displaced persons. More than 4.3 million people were estimated to be stateless or of undetermined nationality as at 30 June 2022. However, owing to underreporting, the actual number was probably significantly higher.

3. In the first half of 2022, the international armed conflict in Ukraine led to millions fleeing their homes, resulting in the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. By late May, it was estimated that more than 100 million people were displaced worldwide, owing primarily to displacement within and from Ukraine.

4. With much of the international community's attention focused on Ukraine, UNHCR highlighted the consequences for other displacement situations and advocated for additional resources to maintain current levels of assistance. According to the end-of-year statistics for 2021, most people who were displaced across borders were from the Syrian Arab Republic (6.8 million), Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (4.6 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.4 million), Myanmar (1.2 million) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (900,000). The difficult humanitarian situations in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mozambique, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen and in the central Sahel region remained of concern. By June 2022, UNHCR had declared 37 emergencies in 25 countries, to respond to new emergency situations. It dispatched \$47.6 million worth of emergency core relief items from its seven global emergency stockpiles in 2021. Given the growing number of emergencies, the global stockpile management capacity was increased to assist 1 million people.

5. As restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic eased and borders reopened, the voluntary repatriation of refugees increased by 71 per cent in 2021 compared with 2020. Some 429,300 refugees and 3.2 million internally displaced persons returned to their countries and areas of origin in 2021. Although the pandemic continued to affect the provision of third-country solutions, some 57,500 refugees were resettled, according to government statistics – an increase of two thirds compared with the previous year, but far short of global needs.

6. Following broad consultations across the organization, the strategic directions of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were renewed for the period 2022–2026. They are focused on the organization's commitment to bolstering preparedness and response capacities, while transitioning from short-term to longer-term approaches that foster resilience, inclusion and access to rights.

¹ Updated figures are available from the Refugee Data Finder of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), available at <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=3HMho5>.

² That number includes 5.8 million Palestine refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Chapter II

Global compact on refugees

7. In its resolution 73/151, the General Assembly the global compact on refugees.³ The global compact remained essential to achieving more effective burden- and responsibility-sharing, notably through the implementation of pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and through related initiatives. As at May 2022, progress reports had been received for more than half of all pledges made, of which 74 per cent were in progress, including almost 20 per cent which had been fulfilled.⁴ Efforts to match host country policy pledges with those of financial, material and technical support continued, and several successful matches materialized.⁵ New partnerships emerged, including a collaboration with the Vodafone Foundation to connect 500,000 refugee and host community students to a high-quality digital education by 2025.

8. In the global compact on refugees indicator report, launched in 2021, stock was taken of the progress made towards the realization of the four objectives of the global compact on refugees, namely, easing pressure on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions and supporting conditions in countries of origin for the return of refugees in safety and dignity.⁶ Tangible progress had been made, including increases in the provision of official development assistance to host countries with developing economies and in partnerships in support of comprehensive responses and through the implementation of policy measures to mitigate poverty and realize voluntary return, local integration, resettlement and livelihood measures. However, the report also recognized that much remained to be done and called for the accelerated implementation of the global compact on refugees, including the diversification and broadening of support and the identification of innovative approaches to financing for refugee situations.

9. States and other stakeholders confirmed their unequivocal commitment to the global compact on refugees at the high-level officials meeting, held in December 2021. Sixty new pledges and initiatives were announced, and 20 recommendations with corresponding actions were adopted, to guide engagement towards the second Global Refugee Forum, to be held in 2023.

³ A/73/12 (Part II).

⁴ UNHCR, Pledges and Contributions Dashboard, available at <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/channel/pledges-contributions>.

⁵ UNHCR, Asylum Capacity Support Group tracker of pledging entities and matches, available at <https://acsg-portal.org/acsg-matches/>.

⁶ UNHCR, "Global compact on refugees indicator report 2021", 16 November 2021, available from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89698>.

Chapter III Protection

A. Refugees

10. The number of refugees under the mandate of UNHCR reached 21.3 million by the end of 2021. Türkiye hosted the largest refugee population, of 3.8 million people, comprised mostly of Syrians. The second largest population, of 1.8 million people, was in Colombia and comprised predominantly Venezuelans. A total of 1.5 million refugees, mostly from South Sudan (63 per cent) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (23 per cent), were living in Uganda as at the end of 2021. Low-income and middle-income countries hosted 83 per cent of the world's refugees, whereas the least developed countries provided asylum to 27 per cent, or 7 million people, of the global total.

11. In 2021, the number of newly registered individual asylum applications worldwide increased by 25 per cent, compared with the previous year, from 1.1 million to 1.4 million. The number remained lower than figures from before the COVID-19 pandemic, mostly because of continued travel restrictions and barriers faced by asylum-seekers relating to access to territory. Some 81,700 new applications were made through use of UNHCR-mandated refugee status determination procedures, 700 through joint UNHCR and State procedures and 1.3 million through national procedures.

12. As the COVID-19 pandemic moved into its second year, States and UNHCR continued to apply innovative practices to keep asylum systems functioning fairly and efficiently. Throughout the pandemic, UNHCR worked with States to uphold their international legal obligations to asylum-seekers and provided guidance and technical advice on how to safeguard the rights of refugees while protecting public health. In May 2022, UNHCR called upon the 20 countries that still denied access to asylum on the basis of COVID-19 public health measures to lift those measures.

13. The organization promoted good practices in the over 50 countries where it conducted refugee status determination under its mandate, primarily in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. An online refugee status determination training course was made available, and UNHCR provided operational support for processing asylum claims and managing backlogs. South Africa launched an ambitious multi-year project, together with UNHCR, to reduce its appeal backlog and explore ways to improve first-instance procedures.

14. Progress was made in the implementation of asylum pledges relating to the global compact on refugees. UNHCR identified matching opportunities and shared them with the relevant entities.⁷ Two new pledges linked to strengthening asylum systems were made, by Eswatini and the Netherlands, and three new matches were realized under the matching mechanism, New Zealand with the Philippines, the European Union Agency for Asylum with the Niger, and Denmark with Kenya. The additional pledges and matches were aimed at strengthening asylum systems and promoting exchange of technical expertise and good practices.

15. Simplified arrangements were used to grant immediate access to protection and services as a complement to the asylum regime. Many States demonstrated that, despite challenging contexts, it was possible to pursue such arrangements on a group basis. UNHCR welcomed the decision by the European Union to apply a temporary protection directive to the situation of displaced persons from Ukraine. In the Sudan, an efficient prima facie methodology was applied for the recognition of refugee status for new arrivals fleeing the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Brazil, Ethiopia and Mexico continued to implement differentiated modalities, including simplified procedures for certain nationalities, to ensure fair and efficient procedures, despite the increased number of asylum applications.

⁷ UNHCR, "Matching pledges", Global Compact on Refugees Digital Platform, available at <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/matching-pledges>.

B. Internal displacement

16. By the end of 2021, UNHCR had responded to internal displacement situations in 33 countries. While conflict and violence remained a primary cause of internal displacement, many people were also displaced owing to disasters and climate-related events. New, large-scale internal displacements occurred in several countries during the reporting period, notably in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Myanmar, South Sudan, the Sudan and Ukraine.

17. As a core member of the steering group on solutions to internal displacement, UNHCR was tasked with enhancing the United Nations approach of delivering as one, at both the global and country levels. The protection expert group on internally displaced persons was launched by UNHCR, in cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, to reinforce political will and national leadership for stronger protection responses.

18. Within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee framework, UNHCR led the global protection cluster and 29 of the 32 national protection clusters, providing legal aid, psychosocial support and child protection services and responding to gender-based violence. The global shelter cluster and the global camp coordination and camp management cluster were led jointly, by UNHCR with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

19. UNHCR led 16 of the 31 activated shelter clusters and 19 cluster-like mechanisms. With 470 partners, the organization provided shelter and core relief items to over 10.6 million internally displaced persons, representing 54 per cent of all those assisted. Earmarked support allowed the global shelter cluster to mobilize efforts towards climate-smart humanitarian shelter and settlement responses, including changes in the specifications of shelter materials, the introduction of environmentally friendly measures and a shift towards localized market-based interventions. With new activations in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Ukraine, UNHCR led or led jointly 20 of the 25 camp coordination and camp management clusters and cluster-like mechanisms.

20. To enhance the legal and policy environment for the protection of internally displaced persons, UNHCR provided technical assistance and capacity-building to relevant government and intergovernmental stakeholders, including the African Union on the implementation of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

C. Mixed movements

21. In the context of mixed movements of migrants and refugees, UNHCR promoted respect for the rights of both populations. The organization strengthened key partnerships, including inter-agency coordination with IOM and United Nations human rights mechanisms, to lead a multisectoral response, engaging in working groups and task forces at the country and regional levels. UNHCR engaged with key global and regional intergovernmental migration platforms, notably the intergovernmental consultations on migration, asylum and refugees, and participated in regional consultative processes. The Office welcomed the Declaration on Migration and Protection, adopted at the Summit of the Americas, held in Los Angeles, California, United States of America, in June 2022. Twenty countries pledged to strengthen national and regional efforts to create the conditions for safe, orderly, humane and regular migration and to strengthen frameworks for international protection and cooperation. Through the United Nations Network on Migration, UNHCR supported the development of capacity-building tools and policy guidance on climate change and migration, pathways for regular migration, access to services and alternatives to detention.

22. UNHCR contributed to research, policy development and the provision of technical advice, as a chair of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Trafficking in Persons. Anti-trafficking responses were strengthened, through regional consultations and information-sharing channels with front-line anti-trafficking actors. UNHCR worked with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Special

Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences. It contributed to the report of the latter mandate holder on the nexus between displacement and contemporary forms of slavery, in which he considered the vulnerability of asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons and the risks of slavery-like practices, such as forced and bonded labour and domestic servitude, that they faced.⁸

23. UNHCR worked with governments, civil society and refugee communities to provide advice on risks, enhance responses to search, rescue and disembarkation at the regional level and assist those in need of international protection. For example, 6,000 people on the move were identified in Burkina Faso, and over 1,300 of them were referred to protection services. In parallel, the organization advocated for strengthened search and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean Sea, along the West African Atlantic coast and in the Andaman Sea. UNHCR identified good practices in Indonesia, where operating procedures were put in place to ensure coordinated rescue at sea and disembarkation, as established under legislation regulating the response to new arrivals.

D. Education

24. Displaced and stateless children and young people faced significant barriers to education, including lack of documentation, poor quality learning materials and cultural norms, which hampered access to schooling for girls. Poverty forced many secondary school-age children and young people to seek work. For those who completed secondary education, gaining access to higher education was an even greater challenge.

25. An estimated 48 per cent of refugee children remained out of school globally. The number of UNHCR operations reporting on education increased, with more than 40 providing data and more than 20 providing information on national assessment pass rates. UNHCR collected information on policy and legislation related to access to education for refugees in over 90 countries, which fed into advocacy efforts. It also launched the Refugee Connected Education Challenge at the high-level officials meeting and promoted the initiative at the RewirED Summit in December 2021, with the aim of mobilizing further commitments and partnerships for digital initiatives that meaningfully included displaced communities.

26. Ensuring the enrolment of refugee children and young people in national education systems within three months of their arrival, in line with the global compact on refugees, remained a challenge, owing mainly to ongoing conflict and instability in emergency contexts. In the Sudan, on-site and remote support was provided to foster the inclusion of refugees from Ethiopia into the national education system. In countries with complex and protracted displacement situations, such as Iraq, the adoption of the refugee education integration policy helped to advance the participation of refugees in formal education and facilitate other learning opportunities.

27. Strategic partnerships with non-governmental organizations, States and donors were strengthened through the Accelerated Education Working Group of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies to promote equitable access to formal and non-formal education for older learners and young people. Together with Educate a Child, UNHCR worked to minimize disruption to schooling, support the return to school and promote school enrolment among displaced children in 14 countries. Targeted support was provided to refugee girls and refugee children with disabilities who were at increased risk of dropping out because of economic pressures and other factors that emerged during the pandemic.

28. With support from UNHCR, the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund, known as DAFI, provided 8,300 young refugees with scholarships to acquire access to higher education, in 55 countries in 2021, including in the newly participating countries of Kazakhstan and Serbia. However, those scholarships accounted for only a fraction of the actual needs. The programme served as the cornerstone of the UNHCR road map towards achieving 15 per cent school enrolment among refugee young people by 2030. The UNHCR

⁸ [A/HRC/48/52](#).

Aiming Higher campaign, with the goal of enabling an additional 1,800 refugees across the globe to gain access to higher education by 2023, raised over \$7 million for such scholarships.

E. Livelihood opportunities and economic inclusion

29. The UNHCR global survey on livelihoods and economic inclusion⁹ revealed that, in 2021, 62 per cent of refugees lived in countries with restricted access to formal employment, 59 per cent in countries that restricted access for refugees to registering and operating a business and 60 per cent in countries where refugees had limited rights to access land for agriculture. Fifty-six per cent of refugees lived in countries where a refugee identification document was not a legally recognized form of identification for opening a bank account.

30. In 2021, UNHCR allocated \$140.6 million for livelihood and economic inclusion activities, including \$13.6 million to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 30 countries, with the largest allocations being in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Chad. Specific interventions by the organization included support for poverty reduction, through the graduation approach, a sequenced package of social and economic assistance aimed at building economic self-reliance. Over 11,000 forcibly displaced persons, in over 75 countries, enrolled in the Coursera for Refugees platform, a 27 per cent increase from 2020. The initiative allowed forcibly displaced persons to access free certificate courses provided by universities and educational institutions around the world.

31. Despite disruptions to global value chains, the availability of UNHCR-supported refugee-made products, created under the trademark MADE51, expanded to 23 countries. The initiative enabled 3,100 refugee and host-country artisans to earn an income, and 30 social enterprise partners maintained their commitment to partnering with refugee artisan groups. Collaboration took place with private sector companies, with refugee artisans in seven countries working on large-scale orders with global brands. The Poverty Alleviation Coalition, comprising UNHCR, the Partnership on Economic Inclusion of the World Bank and 13 non-governmental organizations, provided self-reliance support to 60,000 refugee and host community households.

32. UNHCR commissioned the development of financial inclusion road maps in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia, which was followed by a workshop with regulators and financial service providers aimed at advancing access to formal financial services for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. Together with the International Labour Organization, UNHCR conducted inclusive market systems assessments in Egypt and Nepal, as well as in Aruba and Curaçao, and implemented the recommendations of a previous assessment in Ecuador. The assessments are aimed at more successfully integrating forcibly displaced persons into the economies of their host countries.

33. To promote the self-reliance of internally displaced persons, UNHCR supported skills-building activities, the provision of start-up grants for new businesses and the reconstruction of infrastructure in Colombia, the Philippines and South Sudan.

F. Cash assistance

34. The UNHCR policy on cash-based interventions for the period 2022–2026 was focused on increasing the use of cash in emergencies, improving protection, fostering resilience, promoting inclusion and ensuring access to local services in a sustainable manner. UNHCR invested in the efficient coordination of cash-based interventions across operations and delivered almost \$670 million to 9.3 million people in over 100 countries, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Yemen.

⁹ The survey was conducted with a view to understanding the global environment and operational approaches for advancing economic inclusion and livelihood opportunities. A total of 123 UNHCR operations, hosting 98 per cent of the global refugee population, were surveyed.

35. Some 6 million people benefited from digital payments, in 48 countries. Twenty-five per cent had access to fully owned bank or mobile money accounts, a pathway towards financial inclusion. From 2020 to 2021, an additional 26 country operations had started using CashAssist, the cash management system of UNHCR, enabling end-to-end accountability with regard to affected populations and ensuring an efficient response.

36. As a result of post-distribution monitoring in 44 countries, UNHCR found that cash assistance was effective in responding to the needs of displaced persons and improving their overall well-being. According to 95 per cent of people surveyed, cash assistance had improved their living conditions and helped to reduce stress. Data collected globally revealed that recipients used unrestricted cash assistance to meet basic needs, including by buying food (88 per cent) and hygiene items (40 per cent) and paying rent (35 per cent).

37. Using secure financial technology, combined with strict data protection measures, UNHCR provided those who had been displaced by the armed conflict in Ukraine with cash assistance securely and quickly. In June 2022, UNHCR was preparing to deliver multipurpose cash assistance to over 1 million internally displaced persons and refugees from Ukraine.

G. Specific needs

38. UNHCR built on its long-standing commitment to integrating age, gender and diversity perspectives into its policies, programmes and advocacy, across its operations. Participatory approaches were promoted, including by seeking the views of refugee, displaced and stateless persons to inform plans and interventions.

39. Gender equality remained a core commitment of the organization; the participation of women in leadership and management structures improved in 25 of 48 (52 per cent) refugee and internal displacement situations. The increase was particularly noticeable in 16 of 32 displacement situations in Africa, where women were actively taking part in community decision-making, helping UNHCR to address protection needs and identify solutions to the displacement of women and girls. In addition, the organization continued to engage women in the design of livelihood and economic interventions.

40. Children faced specific protection challenges, which were exacerbated by the pandemic. Ninety-two per cent of the 65 UNHCR operations reporting on child protection worked to strengthen national child protection systems and child-friendly procedures, and 86 per cent advanced efforts to establish child protection coordination mechanisms, partnerships and programming. The same proportion, 86 per cent, delivered child protection services, increasing the conduct of assessments of the best interests of the child globally by 16 per cent, after an 18 per cent decrease in 2020. Sixty-four per cent of operations engaged in activities to build children's resilience and life skills, including through education, sport or art.

41. Progress was also made at the regional level. In response to the refugee outflow from Ukraine, UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) set up Blue Dot support hubs for children and families in several European countries. Trained professional case workers, mental health and psychosocial support experts and legal aid providers offered advice and protection services aimed at addressing the risks that they faced, including gender-based violence, violence against children, distress and separation from family. In Mali, the Niger, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), refugees and asylum-seekers were included in national child protection systems.

42. To ensure safe, adequate and timely access to high-quality life-saving services for survivors and persons at risk of gender-based violence, UNHCR expanded mobile and remote service provision, including around the clock access to hotlines and updated referral pathways. Survivors of gender-based violence received psychosocial support and had access to health-care, security and legal services and cash assistance. Safe spaces for women and girls in India, the Sudan and throughout the Americas helped to establish trust and empower them. As a result, more survivors sought help, while support contributed to reducing further risks, such as child marriage, trafficking and sexual exploitation. While the COVID-19 pandemic hampered such efforts in many regions, some challenges were overcome by relying

on extended community networks and introducing remote delivery of services. As part of the UNHCR deployment scheme, through the Safe from the Start initiative, gender-based violence specialists supported emergency responses in 11 operations. They enhanced access to prevention and response services for 74,200 forcibly displaced persons and access to health services related to gender-based violence for 67,500 forcibly displaced persons. UNHCR continued to mainstream gender-based violence risk mitigation across technical sectors.

43. UNHCR invested in protection and solutions to address the situations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer forcibly displaced and stateless persons. The organization developed training and guidance material, set up safe spaces and inclusive services, supported front-line organizations and trained staff and partners. Following on from the round table on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, held in 2021, UNHCR expanded the coalition of actors working in these areas.

44. Approximately 13 million persons with disabilities were among those forcibly displaced in 2021. UNHCR made progress towards meeting the indicators of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and integrated the Washington Group short set of questions on disability into the identification and statistical methodology of the organization's registration system and other population surveys. Operations provided targeted services for an estimated 480,000 persons with disabilities in 2021, including over 7,600 children with disabilities. In Afghanistan, the UNHCR-led protection cluster, in its four areas of responsibility, supported some 144,000 persons with disabilities.

45. UNHCR provided targeted services for older persons, including access to inclusive education, cash assistance, protection, counselling, rehabilitation and assistive devices to support their autonomy.

46. The progression of the pandemic continued to trigger lockdown measures, hampering access to services, battering socioeconomic support systems and putting further strain on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of refugees and stateless persons. Many refugee-hosting countries lacked a strong national system for mental health and psychosocial support, and referral options were limited. UNHCR integrated mental health into its support for public health programmes and trained health workers to identify and manage mental health conditions. In 2021, over 1,680 primary health-care staff in refugee settings in 19 countries were trained with the Intervention Guide for mental, neurological and substance use disorders in non-specialized health settings, published by the mental health gap action programme of the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNHCR. To ensure adequate care for people with complex and severe mental health conditions, UNHCR aimed to have at least one mental health specialist available per 25,000 refugees. In 2021, a mental health professional, typically a psychiatric nurse or a clinical psychologist, was available to inhabitants in 49 of 59 surveyed camps with more than 25,000 inhabitants.

H. Climate action

47. Throughout the year, people in every region of the world experienced the adverse impacts of climate change, which in turn amplified vulnerability and drove displacement. Over 80 per cent of refugees and internally displaced persons came from the most climate-vulnerable countries worldwide; over 40 per cent of refugees, and 70 per cent of persons internally displaced by conflict, continued to live in countries that were highly vulnerable to climate change.

48. UNHCR set out its response to the climate emergency in a strategic framework for climate action, with objectives relating to operations, law and policy, as well as its own environmental footprint. The organization launched its first operational strategy for climate resilience and environmental sustainability, for the period 2022–2025, and aimed to strengthen environmental considerations in all its operational responses, from preparedness, to supply chain management to protection and solutions to displacement and statelessness.

49. In the context of disasters and climate change, Governments were assisted in the development of relevant legal and policy frameworks, for example in Mozambique.

Strengthening its multi-causal risk forecasting capabilities, UNHCR partnered with leading academic institutions to conduct an inter-agency predictive analytics project in support of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. The project improved coordination and preparedness to address food insecurity, conflict and displacement risks.

50. To reduce the global carbon footprint of UNHCR by 45 per cent before 2030, various projects were established to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. To reduce its operational footprint, UNHCR ensured that an environmental strategy was at the forefront of its shelter interventions. UNHCR and local partner Jeel Albena responded to the shelter needs of over 25 per cent of the internally displaced population in Yemen, situated in Hudaydah and Hajjah, through a green approach. Local materials, such as reed mats, were incorporated into redesigned shelters, which were then converted into longer-term housing units. The solution supported local livelihood opportunities and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, through decreased reliance on international supply networks.

Chapter IV Statelessness

51. In 2021, the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, in 1961, was commemorated through two specific advocacy events. UNHCR also welcomed the accessions of Iceland and Togo to both the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In March 2022, the Philippines signed the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Of the 279 pledges made by States at the high-level segment on statelessness, convened by UNHCR the seventieth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, the Global Refugee Forum and the high-level officials meeting, 81 were fully or partially implemented by the end of 2021. To increase the level of implementation and the number of commitments, UNHCR organized one global and several regional stocktaking events.

52. To close gaps, better prevent statelessness and provide solutions to the situations of stateless persons, 13 countries reformed nationality laws, policies and practices. Chile introduced a safeguard to grant nationality to all children born in its territory who would otherwise be stateless. Mexico expanded the right of parents to confer their nationality on children born abroad. In Europe, UNHCR continued to advocate solutions to the situations of identified stateless persons and the reduction of statelessness, and Armenia, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Ukraine reformed their nationality legislation to facilitate the naturalization of stateless persons, thereby providing avenues to reduce statelessness.

53. Strengthened birth registration policies and practices helped to prevent statelessness. In Kyrgyzstan, procedures were put into place to ensure that every child was registered upon birth, regardless of the parents' documentation status. In Argentina, improvements were made to late birth registration procedures. Following concerted advocacy efforts by UNHCR and its legal partner, courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina were given the discretion to legally determine a person's place and date of birth, so as to enable birth registration. UNHCR and UNICEF published a background note on sex discrimination in birth registration, to support advocacy efforts and action by States.¹⁰

54. To strengthen the identification and protection of stateless persons, Albania, Chile, Colombia and Turkmenistan passed legislation establishing statelessness determination procedures. Georgia reduced application fees for such procedures, and Brazil launched a new application system, to enable faster processing, enhance protection and facilitate naturalization. In Côte d'Ivoire, host to one of the largest known stateless populations in the world, significant work and resources were committed in order to assess individual cases, protect stateless persons and reduce statelessness. A judicial decision was issued, clarifying that individuals born to unknown parents and found as a child in the territory of the country can obtain Ivorian nationality, even in adulthood. Georgia, Namibia and Somalia adopted national action plans to end statelessness, and the League of Arab States continued its work on the action plan on belonging and legal identity.¹¹

¹⁰ UNHCR, "Sex discrimination in birth registration", background note, 6 July 2021, available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/60e2d0554.html>.

¹¹ League of Arab States, "Final recommendations towards an action plan on belonging and legal identity", 25 May 2021, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2021/06/Final-Recommendations-Towards-PoA-on-Belonging-25052021.pdf>.

Chapter V

Durable solutions

A. Voluntary repatriation and return

55. Compared with the overall needs for durable solutions, the rate of returns remained low, as conflict and insecurity persisted in many countries of origin. Several factors continued to affect the sustainability of returns, including limited availability or access to services, damaged or destroyed infrastructure, challenges in recovering housing, land and property, fragile or faltering peace processes and failure to address the root causes of displacement.

56. By the end of 2021, some 429,000 refugees had returned to their home countries, mostly in East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes regions. Nearly two thirds of them (270,200) returned to South Sudan, even as the dire humanitarian situation in the country caused further forced displacement. South Sudanese refugees returned mostly from Uganda (180,400), the Sudan (44,200) and Ethiopia (28,200). The number of returns to South Sudan was difficult to verify, given that returns tended to be self-organized and access to areas of return was often constrained.

57. There were over 65,000 returns to Burundi recorded by the end of 2021, as well as some 12,000 between January and June 2022. UNHCR also facilitated the return to Rwanda of over 1,700 refugees. More than 300 people were assisted to return to Somalia, and another 2,300 who returned on their own were provided with support on arrival, including through a job creation strategy.

58. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of over 33,000 refugees in 2021, including 22,000 to Côte d'Ivoire and 5,600 to the Central African Republic. Between 2011, when voluntary repatriation began, and June 2022, over 311,000 refugees returned to Côte d'Ivoire, a number representing 96 per cent of the number of people who had fled. An updated regional road map promoting voluntary repatriation and reintegration to Côte d'Ivoire, alongside socioeconomic integration and permanent residency for Ivorians who remained in host countries, was adopted. The application of the cessation clause by Liberia with regard to refugees from Côte d'Ivoire, came into effect on 30 June 2022, marking the end of an era of displacement for hundreds of thousands of Ivorian refugees.

59. Under a tripartite agreement with Cameroon and Nigeria, nearly 4,000 refugees returned to Nigeria. UNHCR initiated projects in areas of return to promote housing, land and property rights and to facilitate livelihood opportunities, with the support of development actors.

60. In the Middle East, some 36,500 refugees returned to the Syrian Arab Republic. While UNHCR did not consider the situation conducive for the promotion of large-scale organized returns, it worked with the Government and partners to remove obstacles to voluntary return.

B. Integration and other local solutions

61. In 2021, an estimated 56,700 refugees from 160 countries of origin were naturalized in 23 host countries, a two-thirds increase compared with the previous year, marking a return to pre-pandemic levels. Globally, the Netherlands (45,700), Canada (6,300) and France (3,700) reported the largest numbers of refugees naturalizing in 2021. Those numbers included 1,700 people who are now no longer stateless.

62. With support from UNHCR, several Governments pursued integration and other local solutions to the situations of refugees, building on momentum generated by the global compact on refugees and pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum. In many cases, UNHCR provided assistance in issuing national identity cards, which facilitated access to public services, and pursued out-of-camp strategies that favoured social cohesion.

63. In Liberia, the Government implemented a local integration strategy for Ivorian refugees. Conditions were created for equal access to services and access to national identity

cards and work and residence permits, thereby facilitating the socioeconomic integration of refugees. UNHCR advocacy and assistance, both to governments and refugees, resulted in the issuance of residence permits for refugees in Albania and North Macedonia. In Guinea-Bissau, UNHCR assisted the Government in completing the naturalization of some 6,200 refugees.

64. UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies published an advocacy paper¹² in 2021, with a view to exploring the availability of local options. UNHCR supported the development of comprehensive government-led strategies, such as the solutions initiative for South Sudan and the Sudan,¹³ that take into account integration and other local strategies. In Albania, UNHCR contributed to a comprehensive strategy and multi-year action plan for refugee inclusion and integration. In Kenya, the joint road map developed by UNHCR at the request of the Government contained a framework for discussions on the scope of local opportunities for refugees.

C. Resettlement and complementary pathways

65. While the number of resettled refugees increased by 67 per cent in 2021, compared with the previous year, reaching 57,500 according to government statistics, it remained substantially below pre-pandemic levels. In 2021, the level of resettlement of arrivals constituted just 4 per cent of the 1.4 million people whom UNHCR estimated to be in need of resettlement. During the reporting period, 86 per cent of refugees whose cases for resettlement were submitted by UNHCR to States were survivors of torture and violence, individuals with legal and physical protection needs and/or particularly vulnerable women and girls. Women and girls comprised 50 per cent of the submissions, and 52 per cent of overall submissions were children.

66. Nineteen per cent of submissions were made on an urgent or emergency basis due to specific protection needs. Most of the refugees originated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. The largest number of UNHCR-facilitated resettlement departures were from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Rwanda and Türkiye. In addition, over 700 people were evacuated from Libya through the emergency transit mechanisms to Italy, the Niger and Rwanda, in 2021.

67. While obstacles to third-country labour and education opportunities remained, complementary pathways programmes continued to expand globally. New countries, including Belgium, France, Ireland, Mexico, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States, initiated refugee-specific projects in labour mobility and education pathways.

68. Under the sustainable resettlement and complementary pathways initiative, UNHCR and IOM implemented capacity-building activities and supported initiatives that were aimed at fostering a welcoming environment by mobilizing communities for the reception and integration of refugees. Together with the Migration Policy Institute, UNHCR contributed to the findings of a global mapping of refugee resettlement and complementary pathways, including areas where such programmes could potentially be scaled up.¹⁴ The UNHCR Integration Handbook for Resettled Refugees, a key reference text for the integration of resettled refugees, which included checklists, advice and good practices, was launched.

¹² UNHCR and International Council of Voluntary Agencies, “Local solutions for refugees: key considerations”, available at https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Local_solutions_for_refugees_-_key_considerations.pdf.

¹³ Governments of South Sudan and the Sudan, Intergovernmental Authority on Development and UNHCR, “Joint statement on the solutions initiative for 7 million forcibly displaced people”, 5 October 2021, available from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/10/615c418c4/joint-statement-igad-unhcr-governments-south-sudan-sudan-solutions-initiative.html>.

¹⁴ Susan Fratzke and others, “Refugee resettlement and complementary pathways: opportunities for growth”, Migration Policy Institute, available from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/refugee-resettlement-complementary-pathways>.

Chapter VI Partnerships

A. Development partners and financial institutions

69. In line with the High Commissioner's strategic directions, the global compact on refugees and the reform of the United Nations development system, UNHCR worked to diversify its partnerships and strengthen collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The Office led, in whole or in part, a number of initiatives that provided support towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including issue-based coalitions that contributed to data and analysis and capacity-building programmes for local and government actors. UNHCR supported the resident coordinator system with \$2.5 million in funding, through the United Nations cost-sharing agreement.

70. Together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and the Development Coordination Office, UNHCR released a report showing progress made by the 15 United Nations entities that had made pledges under the global compact on refugees towards the inclusion of refugees in development plans and national systems. The participating entities agreed to 10 actions to accelerate delivery against the common pledges before the next Global Refugee Forum, in 2023. Regional refugee response plans continued to ensure links between humanitarian action, resilience activities and development approaches.

71. In the fourth quarter of 2021, UNHCR adhered to the recommendation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which was aimed at strengthening coherence among those spheres. Through the participation in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee results group on humanitarian and development collaboration-peace, UNHCR and WHO facilitated the issuance of guidelines on collective outcomes, a living document aimed at ensuring a common understanding of analyses, funding and financial strategies and the effective coordination of initiatives. UNHCR also helped to map good practices in those areas and contributed to the design of the Nexus Academy of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to support the workforce and facilitate collaboration across the United Nations system. In addition, UNHCR partnered with the United Nations Development Programme on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, the rule of law and local governance and peacebuilding initiatives.

72. UNHCR continued to partner with international financial institutions through close cooperation on policy and programme development and implementation, data, analytics, knowledge management and human resources development. UNHCR strengthened its strategic partnership with the International Monetary Fund, including through consultations on the Fund's strategy on fragile and conflict-affected States and policy dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan and Lebanon.

73. UNHCR collaborated with the World Bank through the provision of systematic assessments of refugee protection and policy frameworks to support policy dialogue, project design and implementation. The collaboration brought additional development financing to 21 refugee-hosting countries. Between mid-2017 and mid-2022, some \$3.2 billion had been allocated for 60 projects in 16 low-income countries through the window for host communities and refugees of the International Development Association of the World Bank. Since 2016, collaboration with the World Bank through the Global Concessional Financing Facility has resulted in the provision of up to \$800 million in grants to support 25 projects, amounting to \$6.3 billion in five middle-income refugee hosting countries.

74. Engagement with regional multilateral development banks, such as the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank, was strengthened. A memorandum of understanding was concluded with the Inter-American Development Bank to address the development challenges and opportunities generated by rising forced displacement across Latin America and the Caribbean. As a result, the Bank approved \$300 million to support policy reforms for the socioeconomic inclusion of Venezuelans.

B. Inter-agency engagement and United Nations partnerships

75. UNHCR contributed to the conceptualization and implementation of the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda, in particular in the workstreams it led on statelessness and the United Nations policies on age, gender and diversity. It also worked with United Nations entities to leverage complementarity and expertise. Collaboration with UNICEF on the blueprint for joint action reached some 10 million refugees and members of host communities with services in education, child protection and water, sanitation and hygiene. Its main aim was to further the inclusion of refugees in national systems and to ensure more predictable coordination from the outset of an emergency. The Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub of UNHCR and the World Food Programme helped to prioritize assistance for refugees to meet their food and basic needs. UNHCR and IOM concluded a framework agreement on engagement, to strengthen collaboration in responding to cases of mixed movements, finding durable solutions to the situations of internally displaced persons and sharing data to ensure the greatest impact.

76. UNHCR worked with the International Telecommunication Union to enhance connectivity for displaced persons and host communities and reached groups with special needs, including people with disabilities. A joint regional action plan was developed with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), with specific activities aimed at advancing gender equality in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Pakistan.

77. UNHCR, WHO and the Gavi Alliance promoted vaccine equity, delivered vaccines for displaced populations and host communities and supported local health systems. UNHCR also facilitated access to vaccines for its workforce and partners in the field, allowing them to stay in the field and deliver on their mandates, and strengthened medical facilities and the provision of psychosocial support.

78. Under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNHCR led work on accountability and inclusion and spearheaded the provision of guidance on localization with the consortiums of non-governmental organizations in Somalia. Achievements included expanded membership in local and national non-governmental organizations and the establishment of a localization repository¹⁵ and a platform hosting guidance and best practices on accountability and inclusion.

C. Non-governmental organizations

79. Building on regional consultations conducted in 2021, the global consultations with non-governmental organizations held in June 2022 were focused on localization, community engagement and climate action. Regular consultations with non-governmental organizations were organized jointly with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies on topics such as COVID-19 vaccinations, protection, legal action and coordination. During the first months of the response to the armed conflict in Ukraine, weekly thematic briefings were organized to provide information to non-governmental organizations.

80. In 2021, UNHCR disbursed approximately \$1.2 billion to 911 national and international non-governmental organizations. Over 60 per cent of UNHCR implementing partners were national and local responders, including local governments, and, for a third consecutive year, the organization met its grand bargain commitment of transferring 25 per cent of its programme expenditure to local and national partners.¹⁶ UNHCR piloted a new grant agreement with organizations led by forcibly displaced persons in eight operations, ensuring that displaced and host communities became equal and active partners. UNHCR

¹⁵ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Result group 1: sub-group on localization online repository" (<https://reliefweb.int/topics/iasc-result-group-1sub-group-localization-online-repository>).

¹⁶ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "UNHCR engagement in the grand bargain: progress made over the past 5 years", 22 March 2022, available from <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/unhcr-engagement-grand-bargain-progress-made-over-past-5-years>.

awarded seven refugee-led organizations in 2021 and seven women-led organizations in 2022 for their innovative solutions in response to displacement. An independent perceptions survey of over 700 partner staff and 84 UNHCR operations found that 92 per cent of respondents from non-governmental organizations and 90 per cent of UNHCR respondents rated the UNHCR-partner relationship as good or excellent.

D. Private sector

81. Together with national partners, in 2021, UNHCR raised \$625.3 million (\$377.2 million from individual donors and \$248.1 million from companies, foundations and philanthropists), including over \$281 million in unearmarked funding, which represented 16 per cent year-on-year growth, far exceeding the fundraising target for 2021 of \$510 million, and which accounted for 13 per cent of overall funding. Generous and timely emergency contributions from private donors, including over \$90 million from individuals and some \$177 million from private sector partners, supported the UNHCR response to new and ongoing crises around the world.

E. Parliaments, local authorities and city networks

82. UNHCR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union signed a memorandum of understanding in August 2021, which was aimed at strengthening collaboration on parliamentary engagement and capacity-building and supporting initiatives, comprehensive responses and the dissemination of information and good practices relating to the situations of refugees and stateless persons.

83. With more than 60 per cent of the world's refugees, and over half of those who are internally displaced, sheltering in cities, local authorities are front-line actors in protecting and assisting displaced populations. UNHCR released a toolkit for municipality engagement, developed jointly with the Migration Policy Group. In May 2022, 36 cities pledged their support for refugees and migrants through a call to local action, launched by the Mayors Mechanism of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, in partnership with UNHCR, at the first International Migration Review Forum. The Forum provided a way for cities to showcase their political engagement, actions and experience in contributing to the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees.

F. Civil society

84. Through its collaboration with Religions for Peace, UNHCR strengthened its engagement with the Multi-Religious Council of Leaders, formed in 2021 to support collective efforts from religious leaders across regions and faiths to help to address the root causes of forced displacement through initiatives in global advocacy, reconciliation, peacebuilding and social cohesion. Members of the Council made individual commitments, following the third high-level round table held on 9 May 2022, to promote peace and offer support to forcibly displaced people, including by participating in advocacy and promoting greater access to education, housing and mental health services. They also committed to addressing and eradicating statelessness by endorsing the "I belong" campaign to end statelessness (#IBelong).

85. To reach new audiences and various segments of civil society, UNHCR leveraged the power of sport to demonstrate the resilience of refugees and to combat negative stereotypes. The partnership with the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Refugee Foundation facilitated access for refugees to sport at amateur and elite levels and ensured ample press and social media coverage. A new cooperation agreement was signed with the Union of European Football Associations to facilitate messaging on refugee issues to wide audiences during the European Football Championships. Partnerships were also developed with Cricket Without Boundaries, the International Chess Federation and the World

University Service of Canada. A small number of refugee athletes were resettled through a new complementary pathway focused on sport.

Chapter VII

Reform, accountability and oversight

A. Transformation

86. Work continued on six related projects under the business transformation programme. The projects were aimed at improving and modernizing systems related to programme management, partner financing, supply, human resources, including the Workday platform, and external relations management, through cloud-based technologies to optimize and simplify key processes. During the reporting period, UNHCR retired and reduced official policies and guidance by 25 per cent, as part of its simplification process.

87. The new results-based management system, COMPASS, enabled operations to develop multi-year strategies and plans. As at January 2022, 24 operations were implementing multi-year plans and strategies, working towards a global shift by 2024 and allowing greater alignment with the plans of the United Nations and development partners.

88. UNHCR also worked towards making strategic investments in data and digital transformation. The data transformation strategy for the period 2020–2025, is set to improve access to, and the use of, data in decision-making.

89. The digital strategy launched during the reporting period was aligned with the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation and aimed at strengthening digital literacy and capacity across the organization, as well as broadening digital access for refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless people, so that they were better able to secure protection, greater inclusion and solutions to displacement and statelessness.

B. Accountability and oversight

90. Feedback from managers and independent oversight providers led the organization to begin a review of the roles, accountabilities and authorities framework originally issued in October 2019. The review was informed by the updated three-lines model on oversight and risk management and benefitted from a standardized approach to reflecting functional roles within the regulatory framework of UNHCR.

91. To respond more effectively to workplace issues, UNHCR launched a support desk, coordinated by the Ethics Office, providing colleagues with a mechanism for advice, referrals and follow-up. The support desk was complemented by an ongoing project to strengthen the collection, analysis and use of data related to cases of workplace issues with the aim of enabling more data-driven management thereof.

92. UNHCR equipped field operations to better identify, prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. Efforts included the launch of new multilingual learning materials for both UNHCR personnel and partner organizations and the provision of a platform to facilitate peer-to-peer exchange. In parallel, the policy on a victim-centred approach to addressing sexual misconduct was operationalized and mainstreamed into relevant processes and procedures.

93. Efforts to further strengthen risk management in the organization continued, through the implementation of a five-year risk management strategy, with the aim of reaching an advanced level of risk maturity by the end of 2025. In line with that objective, risks and opportunities were mapped to planned outcomes, thereby strengthening the link between risks and results. Regular risk assessments were complemented by dedicated risk analysis, where relevant, including for the business transformation programme. There were 145 risk registers in place, of which 7 were regional, 113 were in the field and 25 were at headquarters. The risk review conducted in 2022 had a 100 per cent compliance rate and successfully identified 1,794 risks and opportunities.

94. Independent oversight providers resumed their visits to operations, as pandemic-related travel restrictions eased. Visits were coordinated by the Inspector General's Office to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the independent oversight system. Initiatives

included the development of information technology platforms for the consolidated tracking of oversight workplans and recommendations and the commencement of work, in partnership with the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat, to modernize its engagement as the internal auditor of UNHCR.

95. The Inspector General's Office continued to provide a robust and professional investigations function, supporting the firm response of UNHCR to integrity issues and complaints of misconduct. The Inspector General's Office also supported initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of the work of independent and management entities on workplace matters, including the support desk for workplace concerns referred to above.

Chapter VIII

Contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

96. The final budget of UNHCR for 2021 was \$9.248 billion, including four supplementary budgets to address emergency needs relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) situations.

97. UNHCR raised \$4.680 billion in contributions in 2021, including the assessed contribution of the United Nations regular budget of \$43.2 million. Total funds available reached \$5.153 billion, leaving a 44 per cent funding gap. Expenditure totalled \$4.918 billion, an increase of 1.7 per cent compared with 2020.¹⁷

98. In 2021, there was a welcome reversal in the trend towards decreased flexibility in donor contributions, with a total of 36 per cent of flexible funding, of which 15 per cent was unearmarked. It provided UNHCR with vital flexibility in determining how best to protect and assist people in situations of concern who are in the greatest need or at the greatest risk. The multi-year funding available to the organization totalled \$575.1 million.

¹⁷ More information on budget and expenditure for 2021 is available from the UNHCR web page on the subject (<https://reporting.unhcr.org/financial?year=2021>).

Chapter IX

Conclusions

99. In a year marked by conflict, violence, persecution and discrimination, compounded by the climate crisis and food insecurity, millions of people were again forced to flee their homes. Reaching the tragic milestone of 100 million refugees and other displaced persons around the world should serve as a wake-up call for stronger action to promote peace and address all causes of forced displacement.

100. With nearly a quarter of the UNHCR workforce operating in locations with threat levels assessed as substantial or high, UNHCR and partner personnel face challenges and risks as they seek to help those in need. While serious security incidents were recorded in a number of countries, including those affecting humanitarian workers, in large part, they managed to stay in the field and deliver vital protection and other services to refugees, displaced persons and stateless people and those who are hosting them, in various parts of the world.

101. To manage the increasingly growing and complex task of safeguarding the lives and prospects of people forced to flee, UNHCR will continue its efforts to establish a wide network of support with partners at the regional and global levels. The steady implementation of pledges made in the context of the Global Refugee Forum throughout the reporting period has confirmed the willingness of the international community to engage in burden- and responsibility-sharing. Bolstered by that show of solidarity, UNHCR is determined to achieve a collective and sustainable positive impact for forcibly displaced and stateless persons and the States and communities that host them.
