



Etaidal, 22, cradles her daughter after arriving safely by boat in Catania port, Italy. Their house in Damascus was destroyed in the war three years ago.

Ensuring Protection



The world is witnessing a dramatic growth in forced displacement, caused by a multiplication of new crises and the continuation of existing emergencies.

The need for a strong international protection regime has never been more apparent. Asylum space is shrinking and challenges in securing access to territory and protection are evident in all regions.

In 2016 and 2017, UNHCR will continue to assist States in strengthening their systems of governance and response related to displacement, based on rule-of-law principles, as well as in providing protection and assistance in emergencies. ●●●

Human mobility: appropriate responses

While the vast majority of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people escaping conflict and persecution seek safety in neighbouring countries, some travel further afield to find peace, security and livelihoods. Increasingly, this onward movement is alongside migrants.

Human mobility is a fundamental feature of a globalized world. Increasingly, situations of mixed migration are presenting new challenges for States in extending humanitarian access to their territories.

Responses to migration have included border closures, carrier sanctions, and interception and “pushbacks” of people at border points. In recognition of the mixed and complex nature of mobility today, solutions for the varied needs of people arriving in a mixed migratory context require different approaches, in accordance with the cause of movement.

There is an urgent need for States to develop expanded complementary pathways of admission to safety and safe access to territory and asylum for refugees in mixed migration flows. These steps will help protect refugees from precarious journeys, including risks from criminal networks that prey on their vulnerability.

Refugees require specific protection and safeguards, for which an established legal framework exists, in the form of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The consequences of refugees not receiving that protection from the countries they look to for asylum can be life-threatening. For migrants, other solutions may be applicable.

Meeting the challenges of increasingly complex patterns of mixed international movements will continue to involve a renewed commitment to the international refugee-protection regime, and improved migration governance by States in relation to their obligations.

**AREAS OF INTERVENTION
ANTICIPATED IN 2016**
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TARGETED
Favourable protection environment
Law and policy developed or strengthened

Advocate for and enhance the protection and security of persons of concern

- A good-practice guide on combating xenophobia, racism and racial discrimination will be published in collaboration with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Advocate for law and policy to protect, respect and fulfil the right to work for refugees

- A doctrinal position on the right to work for refugees, consistent with the first objective of the Global Strategy for Livelihoods, will be issued to “promote the right to work and the right to development”.

Advocate for the adoption or revision of laws consistent with international standards

- Technical advice will be provided to encourage States to enact new or revised legislation and policy guidance incorporating improved protection standards.
- Court interventions will be undertaken to advance the development and consistent interpretation and/or application of relevant legal standards.

Advocate for relevant legal and policy frameworks related to detention and alternatives to detention to be in accordance with international standards

- As part of the Beyond Detention Global Strategy 2014-2019:
 - Technical advice will be provided to focus countries to encourage the enactment of new or revised legislation with improved detention safeguards, including alternatives to detention.
 - The implementation and progress on the National Plans of Action of focus countries will be evaluated.
 - A learning programme on immigration detention monitoring will be developed, and regional training sessions carried out.
 - A joint IOM-UNHCR global trends statistical report on immigration detention worldwide will be developed.

Work towards ending the detention of asylum-seeking and stateless children

- Technical advice to governments and other stakeholders on child-appropriate alternatives to detention will continue to be provided.
- Child protection tools in the context of detention, such as best interests assessments and referral mechanisms to prevent the detention of asylum-seeking children, will be developed.
- Pilot project(s) and study visits on reception and alternatives to detention for children and families will be set up with national authorities and partners.

Develop, publish and disseminate guidance on international refugee protection

- Legal guidance on topical issues related to international protection, including on claims to refugee status related to situations of armed violence and conflict, will be prepared.

Advocate for greater access to justice for persons of concern to UNHCR

- As part of a review of UNHCR’s engagement with the rule of law, a series of tools developed to assist offices to map legal and political landscape in order to better assess options for durable solutions will be tested.
- The UN Rule of Law processes will continue to be supported.

Promote refugee and stateless protection in mixed migration

Promote the targeted implementation of protection-sensitive systems that facilitate access to asylum and to protection for refugees and stateless people in mixed migratory movements

- Strategies for implementation in countries of transit and destination will be further strengthened to ensure that mixed migration governance and its processes include safeguards for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people (notably in the Middle East, the East and Horn, Northern and Southern regions of Africa, the Mediterranean, South-East Asia and Central America).
- Progress made in recent years to support States and other stakeholders in identifying and providing protection responses for refugees and stateless people will be reinforced, including for victims of trafficking, (notably in the West, East, Horn and North of Africa, the Mediterranean, the western Balkans, Central America and in the Asia-Pacific region).

Strengthen the conceptual understanding of refugees in the context of mixed migration

Work with stakeholders to enhance understanding of the imperative of refugee protection in the context of mixed migration

- A decade since the publication of the 10 Point Plan on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, UNHCR will renew its promotion of the conceptual imperative for refugee protection in the context of mixed migration.
- Guidance specific to the context of refugee protection in onward movements will be developed.

Refugee status determination

UNHCR is facing unprecedented challenges in managing the volume of pending requests for refugee status determination (RSD). Many countries manage their own RSD process, but UNHCR undertakes this function when State authorities in hosting countries do not – or do not yet - have the capacity to do so themselves. In 2014, the Office received around 240,000 new individual RSD applications in 63 countries/territories. UNHCR's global capacity to determine refugee status through individual RSD is insufficient, with the number of decisions falling significantly short of demand, resulting in a marked increase in pending applications.

With record numbers of emergencies, UNHCR is unable to allocate the level of resources required to ensure access to timely, high quality individual RSD procedures. In some operations, new applicants need to wait years before their interview with the organization. In other settings, the individual protection benefits resulting from RSD are minimal, with even recognized refugees unable to regularize their residence status in the host country and/or enhance their access to basic rights.

Against this background, UNHCR is developing a forward-looking strategic direction for its engagement in individual RSD processing.

Where appropriate, UNHCR will move away from individual RSD case-processing by pursuing alternative protection approaches for specific caseloads. Examples of alternative protection approaches may include, depending on the protection context, the pursuit of labour-migration opportunities for specific groups or temporary protection regimes. Such approaches will be fully embedded in protection strategies. In addition, where it is assessed that RSD remains a necessary protection tool, UNHCR will pursue efficiency gains in RSD processing, including through the use of caseload-specific strategies.

Consistency and quality will be promoted through the further development of tools and guidance material. The organization will seek closer cooperation with States on RSD. Where States seek to take on a larger role in RSD, UNHCR will support and accompany the process. Where the organization's involvement in RSD is limited to supervisory responsibilities under the 1951 Convention, it will continue to engage in quality assurance activities.

AREAS OF INTERVENTION ANTICIPATED IN 2016

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TARGETED

Fair protection processes and documentation

Access to and quality of status determination procedures improved

Further develop and oversee the implementation of policies, guidance, standards and procedures relating to refugee status determination (RSD)

- Ongoing and timely operational, legal and procedural advice on RSD procedures and decision-making will be provided, including guidelines on examining and assessing the credibility of RSD applications.
- Guidance on the strategic use of mandate RSD and efficient processing strategies for specific caseloads will be developed.
- The Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate will be revised and updated.
- Clear guidance will be provided to governments, UNHCR staff and other stakeholders regarding asylum/RSD procedures and how to apply the exclusion criteria in the 1951 Refugee Convention. This should lead to fairer and more consistent RSD for asylum-seekers.
- Guidelines on exclusion from international protection based on Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees will continue to be updated and revised.

Strengthen the capacity of UNHCR RSD staff and operations, including through deployments

- RSD-specific training, including delivering up to 4 sessions of the RSD Learning Programme, will be developed, benefitting up to 140 UNHCR RSD staff.
- A new interviewing Learning Programme for UNHCR staff involved in RSD and other protection-related activities will be piloted and further developed.
- Country-of-origin information (COI) training will be provided to UNHCR RSD staff, including through the roll-out of the newly-developed COI e-learning course.
- Subject to funding, support will be provided to mandate RSD operations through the deployment of RSD experts.

Provide decision-makers on asylum claims with access to up-to-date COI and country-specific policy guidance

- COI, eligibility and other country-specific guidance on major countries of origin will be published.
- UNHCR's *Refworld* website will be maintained to ensure that governments, UNHCR staff and other stakeholders in asylum/RSD procedures can continue to benefit from access to up-to-date and reliable information.

Security from violence and exploitation

Risk of SGBV reduced and quality of response improved

Ensure sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) programming in emergencies

- Up to 6 SGBV protection officers will be ready for deployment at the onset of emergencies to set up SGBV prevention and response programmes.
- 5 innovative multi-sectoral projects will be implemented to strengthen prevention of SGBV, including in emergency operations.

Provide guidance in the development and implementation of SGBV strategies

- 50 country operations will be supported to develop and implement country-specific SGBV strategies.

Increase efficient data management

- Technical support will be provided to 24 country operations to roll-out and implement the inter-agency gender-based violence information management system (GBVIMS).

Develop SGBV capacity

- The revised IASC Guidelines for integrating SGBV interventions in humanitarian action will be rolled out.
- The facilitator's guide on SGBV prevention and response will be disseminated in Arabic, English and French.
- 40% of staff will be enrolled or have completed the mandatory SGBV e-learning programme.





AREAS OF INTERVENTION ANTICIPATED IN 2016

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TARGETED

Protection of children strengthened

Strengthen child protection programming

- Case management systems, including the Best interests procedures, for children at risk will be strengthened in at least 35 operations.
- Guidance and tools will be developed to strengthen child protection programmes in urban contexts.
- Targeted support will be provided to the 16 priority country operations that implement UNHCR’s Child Protection Framework.
- Operational and technical support will be provided to at least 15 country operations through the deployment of child protection experts.

Protect children on the move

- The Live, Learn and Play Safe regional initiative for unaccompanied and separated children and other children at risk will be implemented in Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen.

Strengthen programming for adolescents and youth

- 21 youth-led protection projects will be supported and funded through the Youth Initiative Fund.
- Consultations with refugee youth will be held in 5 locations.

Strengthen UNHCR’s child protection response in emergencies

- 2 roving experts in child protection in emergencies will be made available to provide strategic support to strengthen UNHCR’s response capacity.
- Targeted support will continue to be provided to 4 emergency situations through child protection deployments, development of operational tools, regional- or country-specific strategies.

Strengthen capacity for the protection of children

- Child Protection in Refugee Situations inter-agency training will be conducted for 25 child protection and education professionals.
- Training sessions will be held at global, regional and country levels.

Work to end the detention of asylum-seeking and stateless children

- As part of the Beyond Detention strategy, technical advice will continue to be provided to governments and other stakeholders, in particular on child-appropriate detention alternatives.
- Tools to prevent asylum-seeking children being detained will be developed and improved.

Ensure effective advocacy and strengthen partnerships around protection of children

- Protection of displaced children will be included in inter-agency tools and policies.
- New global and regional child protection partnerships will be developed.

● *Root causes of displacement*

The eighth annual High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges will take place in December 2015 on the theme “Understanding and addressing root causes of displacement.”

The number of people displaced by conflict has reached levels unseen since the end of World War II. At the same time, the prevalence of “semi-permanent” crises and protracted displacement is also increasing.

Almost 50 per cent of refugees have been in exile for five years or longer, and millions have been displaced for decades. Third generations of refugees are now being born in refugee camps.

Meanwhile, solutions to displacement are elusive. Because of ongoing violence and unrest in many countries, 2014 saw the lowest number of voluntary repatriations since the early 1980s.

Against this backdrop, the overarching objective of the Dialogue is to bring together States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and other relevant humanitarian and academic partners, so as to understand better existing and newly developing root causes of displacement and to identify actions to prevent, address and resolve them. ■

Striving for gender equality

Forced displacement as a consequence of conflict and natural disasters has reached unprecedented levels. While displacement affects women and men in multiple ways, the predominant reference to its effect on women has tended to portray them as helpless victims. This continues to hamper humanitarian efforts to effectively address the specific risks faced by women and girls, and also undermines work to leverage their strengths and capacities.

In reality, women display courage and resourcefulness in the face of hardship and have a remarkable ability to ensure the survival of their families and communities in unfamiliar and frequently hostile displacement settings. Recent research has confirmed this and firmly established that focused action on gender equality programming in humanitarian contexts – in education, health, WASH, food security and livelihoods – has a direct and measurably positive impact on women, their families and their wider communities (see Institute of Development Studies and UN Women, *The Effect of Gender Equality Programming on*

Humanitarian Outcomes, United Nations, New York 2015).

It is no longer acceptable to continue to use urgent, life-saving response and cultural arguments as predominant reasons for non-engagement on gender equality concerns. UNHCR recognizes, however, that overcoming these limitations and other barriers to achieving effective gender equality programming in the humanitarian context requires sustained focus, resources and innovation.

Building on decades of work in this area, the organization is now about to begin a global review of its operational practices on gender equality, including how it has advanced critical work on women, peace and security (SC Resolution 1325) by engaging with communities and civil society actors. This review will result in an update of the *High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women* (available at www.refworld.org), and will include the identification of key areas where concrete and practical support to staff and partners across sectors is needed, with a view to developing new operational guidance on gender equality programming in 2016. ■

**AREAS OF INTERVENTION
ANTICIPATED IN 2016**
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TARGETED
Basic needs and essential services
Services for people with specific needs strengthened

Strengthen capacity to address specific protection needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people of concern

- A training-of-trainers module based on the content of the comprehensive training package released in 2015 will be rolled out.
- Good practices and practical guidance to country operations will be collated and disseminated.

Strengthen capacity to address specific protection needs of people with disabilities

- Targeted technical support on disability inclusion will be provided to at least 5 operational teams.
- A comprehensive training package on disability inclusion will be made widely available.

Strengthen gender equality in displaced communities with the aim of advancing the women, peace and security framework

- Key recommendations arising from the agency-wide gender review conducted in 2015 will be made to further embed gender equality integration into UNHCR's operational practices.
- Key operations and regions will be identified to strengthen the integration of gender equality into operational planning and implementation.
- Drawing lessons from the 2015 review of the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to Refugee Women, gender equality guidance will be finalized and implemented, with the aim of increasing women's meaningful participation in all decision-making structures.
- E-learning modules aimed at enabling staff to effectively address and include gender equality considerations in all programme activities will be developed.
- The gender architecture across UNHCR will be developed and strengthened to provide support on gender equality programming.

Community mobilization strengthened and expanded

Strengthen capacity to design, implement, monitor and evaluate protection and assistance programmes, in close collaboration with people of concern to UNHCR

- Targeted support will be provided to at least 4 operations.
- A learning initiative on community-based protection will be implemented in at least one region.

Strengthen UNHCR's participatory approach and mechanism for accountability to affected population

- An accountability framework will be developed and practical guidance will be provided to country operations.

Improve access to quality education

Provide technical support to operations for the inclusion of refugees within national education systems and programmes

- Global operational guidance on the inclusion of refugees into national education systems will be issued.
- Technical support will be provided to at least 20 countries to strengthen the integration of refugees into national education systems.

Increase enrolment and retention of out-of-school children in primary school

- Targeted technical support will be provided to 12 countries under the Educate A Child programme to enrol 140,000 out-of-school children in primary school.

Evaluate the impact of UNHCR's Education Strategy 2012-2016, which will inform the development of the next multi-year education strategy

- A 5-year Global Education Strategy 2017-2021 will be developed in line with UNHCR's global protection strategy.

Expand and promote innovation in education

- Targeted technical support will be provided to 11 priority countries to implement innovative projects in education.

Enhance access to tertiary education

- Scholarships will be provided to more than 4,000 refugees through the annual Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) tertiary scholarship and other UNHCR/partner scholarship programmes.
- A consortium of partners on connected learning will be led, supporting access for 2,000 refugee learners.

Worsening conditions inside Syria and the region fuel despair, driving thousands towards Europe

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

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UNHCR/B. DIAB

Syrian children play in the streets of Aleppo, home to well over a million internally displaced people.

GENEVA, September 2015 | *Deteriorating conditions in Syria and neighbouring countries are driving thousands of Syrians to risk everything on perilous journeys to Europe, the UN refugee agency cautioned. As the crisis digs deeper into its fifth year with no sign of a political solution in sight, despair is on the rise and hope is in short supply.*

Despite the many challenges and volatile operating conditions, UNHCR continues to provide help to those in need throughout Syria, including providing relief items, cash, health care, shelter, psychosocial support and legal aid.

Syrians now face increasing challenges to find safety and protection in neighbouring countries, which, faced with overwhelming refugee numbers, insufficient international support and security concerns, have taken measures this year to stem the flow of refugees – including restricting access or closer management of borders and introducing onerous and complex requirements for refugees to extend their stay.

For the over 4 million Syrian refugees already in neighbouring countries – the vast majority of whom live outside of formal camps – hope is also dwindling as they sink deeper into abject poverty.

“I feel imprisoned here,” said Hind, who lives with her husband and three young children in a storage unit in the northern Jordanian city of Mafraq after fleeing Damascus. Six months ago, their dwindling resources forced them to give up the apartment they were renting. “We don’t go out, we don’t do anything... We have lost any hope we had left for the future.”

Recent studies in Jordan and Lebanon have found a marked increase in refugee vulnerability amidst funding shortfalls for refugee programmes. A UNHCR assessment in Jordan, where more than 520,000 Syrians are living outside the country’s refugee camps, showed that 86 per cent of those in urban and rural areas are now living below the poverty line.

Having exhausted savings and other assets they once had, more than half of all refugee households there have high levels of debt and are taking increasingly extreme measures

in order to cope. Many are eating less or sending family members – including children – out to beg.

A similar picture exists in Lebanon. The preliminary findings of a recent vulnerability study there found that 70 per cent of Syrian refugee households live far below the national poverty line – up from 50 per cent in 2014. Here too, more refugees are buying food on credit, withdrawing children from school and resorting to begging.

There are 4,088,099 registered Syrian refugees in countries neighbouring Syria, including 1,938,999 in Turkey, 1,113,941 in Lebanon, 629,266 in Jordan, 249,463 in Iraq, 132,375 in Egypt and 24,055 in several countries in North Africa. Only 12 per cent of refugees across the region live in formal refugee camps. ○