© UNHCR / R. HAKOZAKI

Safeguarding Funda mental Rights

IN THIS CHAPTER:

- Ensuring refugee protection
- Registration and identity management
- Protection in the context of mixed movements
- Beyond detention
- Ending statelessnesss
- Addressing internal displacement

The realities of forced displacement and developments in 2016 underscored the need for greater and sustained support for countries of first asylum and intensified international cooperation to ensure that protection and timely solutions are available for all who need them. However, lack of respect for human rights and the rule of law, record levels of human mobility, geopolitical developments, and climate change, among other factors, exacerbated the impact of forced displacement in many regions, and

UNHCR was called upon throughout the year to exercise its protection mandate in cases where restrictive laws, policies and practices were adopted or tightened.

At the same time, the year saw noteworthy progress in reinforcing respect for refugee rights. Hosting countries and their populations continued to demonstrate their strong commitment to the principles of refugee protection. Moreover, there was wider

recognition than ever that the challenges of current refugee and mixed movements are too onerous and complex for individual countries to address alone. This recognition was among the factors that led, in September 2016, to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (see *Supporting UNHCR's work* chapter and *Glossary*), in which Member States of the UN unequivocally reaffirmed and committed fully to protect the rights of refugees and migrants.

Registration of South Sudanese refugees in Gambella, Ethiopia.

These clear statements of principle and readiness to protect fundamental rights came at a particularly important time when, despite binding legal standards enshrined in international, regional and national law, major challenges persist in ensuring respect for the international refugee protection regime in many contexts. While the past year presented many challenges with respect to global forced displacement, it also presented UNHCR with opportunities.

This chapter details the work of UNHCR and its partners to strengthen and systematize protection responses for the rights of people of concern – refugees, asylum-seekers, the stateless, and the internally displaced.

Ensuring refugee protection

UNHCR supported legislative processes in more than 40 countries worldwide in 2016 to improve protection standards for refugees.

At the end of 2016, 17.2 million refugees were under UNHCR's mandate and 2.8 million people were waiting for a decision on their application for asylum, mostly in developed countries in which refugee status is normally determined on an individual basis. Nearly 130 countries now have national asylum laws in place to implement relevant international and regional instruments for the protection of refugees. Nevertheless, a significant number of countries hosting large refugee populations have no asylum legislation or are not party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and/or its 1967 Protocol.

In exercising its supervisory responsibility for the 1951 Convention, as well as the 1969 OAU Convention (see *Glossary*), UNHCR provides official comments and expert advice to support legislative processes worldwide. These address a vast range of issues, including: the criteria for eligibility for international protection; procedural rights and guarantees, such as access to territory, asylum procedures, and family unity and family reunification; security and border management; and responsibility-sharing for examining asylum applications.

In 2016, UNHCR supported legislative processes in more than 40 countries worldwide to improve protection standards

for refugees. The Office also worked with State asylum institutions to support and increase the quality and efficiency of refugee status determination (RSD) processes, including through regional and national quality assurance initiatives. In addition, in the specific context of transitioning the responsibility for RSD from UNHCR to States, UNHCR invests in building and strengthening the capacity of government institutions responsible for asylum decision-making to contribute to the sustainability, quality and efficiency of national RSD systems.

The Office also intervenes in courts to ensure the progressive and consistent interpretation of the 1951 Convention. In 2016, 21 formal court interventions were filed in 15 jurisdictions, including in regional courts such as the European Court of Human Rights, and in national courts. In addition, UNHCR continued to expand its engagement with the legal community through capacity-building initiatives for lawyers, NGOs and judges, as well as by developing legal tools and guidance, funding legal service providers, and organizing and participating in events and conferences on international law.

UNHCR also engages with UN human rights mechanisms—the Human Rights Council and its special procedures, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and treaty monitoring bodies—to complement and reinforce the protection environment for people of concern. In 2016, the Office succeeded in maintaining the overall inclusion rate of its recommendations in treaty monitoring bodies' concluding observations at 65 per cent. Themes of relevance to UNHCR, which were addressed in these observations, included: non-refoulement; reception conditions; detention; access to quality RSD procedures; birth registration; and statelessness.

While acknowledging the need to address legitimate national security concerns, UNHCR remained concerned that some States are adopting deterrence and border control measures, as well as restrictive asylum laws and policies, impacting on eligibility for international protection, cessation of protection, limited procedural safeguards, penalization for irregular entry, and the right to family unity.

KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN 2016	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016
FAVOURABLE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT	
Law and policy developed or strengthened	
Advocate the adoption or revision of laws consistent with international standards	21 formal court interventions on the interpretation and application of legal standards for the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers were filed in 15 jurisdictions.
Strengthen engagement with human rights mechanisms to advocate and enhance the protection and security of people of concern	25 country submissions were made to the UPR and 160 to treaty monitoring bodies.
	29 country-specific oral briefings before treaty monitoring bodies were conducted. The overall inclusion rate of UNHCR's recommendations in treaty monitoring bodies' concluding observations reached 65% in 2016, up from 47% in 2014.
	UNHCR worked closely with OHCHR to address global challenges with respect to forced displacement and international protection, including through its engagement with the Human Rights Council and Special Rapporteurs.
	In the Caribbean, UNHCR used the outcomes of UN human rights mechanisms to strengthen advocacy in relation to accession to the 1951 Convention and to further the legal basis for protection, in the context of the Caribbean Migration Consultations and regional consultations on the implementation of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action (see *Glossary*).
	In Southern Africa, the observations of treaty monitoring bodies supported UNHCR's protection advocacy in the subregion, despite the diminishing field presence of the organization in many countries.
FAIR PROTECTION PROCESSES	
Access to and quality of status determination procedures improved	
Further develop and oversee the implementation of policies, guidance, standards and procedures relating to RSD	Engagement with RSD was strengthened in field operations, including when identifying the place of RSD in the broader protection strategy, the use of efficient processing modalities while maintaining fairness and quality, and, where relevant, on transitioning the responsibility for RSD from UNHCR to States.
	Country-specific guidance, including eligibility guidelines, protection considerations, and non-return advisories, was published on Afghanistan, El Salvador, Honduras, Hungary, Iraq, Nigeria and Somalia.
	Legal, procedural and operational guidance on RSD eligibility standards and procedures were provided to field operations, governments and other stakeholders.
	Guidance was provided to UNHCR operations and governments on addressing security concerns without undermining refugee protection within RSD procedures, especially in the areas of exclusion, cancellation, extradition and matters relating to the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum.

•••/•••

KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN 2016	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016
Strengthen the capacity of UNHCR RSD personnel and operations, including through deployments	A new interview learning programme (ILP) for UNHCR personnel involved in interviewing, primarily for the purposes of RSD, resettlement and other protection-related activities, was finalized and delivered as a pilot ILP training of trainers for 14 UNHCR personnel who will facilitate the ILP in the future. An in-country ILP was also conducted for 35 RSD eligibility officers, reviewers and supervisors in Kenya.
	Country of origin information (COI) training was provided to UNHCR RSD personnel, including through the newly-developed COI e-learning course.
	Mandate RSD operations were supported through the deployment of 7 RSD experts.
	RSD-specific training, including 3 sessions of the RSD learning programme, benefited some 90 UNHCR personnel working in areas such as registration, RSD and resettlement.
Provide decision-makers on asylum claims with access to up-to-date COI	In response to identified information gaps, COI on important countries of origin was collected and published.
	Refworld, UNHCR's repository for country information, as well as legal and policy documents, was maintained and its content further expanded and updated.

Registration and identity management

Knowing and understanding the identities of people of its concern is central to UNHCR's work. Re-establishing and preserving identities is key to ensuring protection and solutions for refugees. Identity data assists the organization in promoting access to rights and facilitating protection and durable solutions. Identity management tools and processes also improve the integrity of UNHCR's interventions by diminishing the possibility of fraud, duplicative assistance, identity substitution or multiple registration. Identity management provides accurate population figures to inform planning and allows the organization to build detailed knowledge of people of concern to provide adequate and appropriate support over the course of—in many cases—years or decades.

In 2016, UNHCR undertook 19 registration verification exercises and deployed experts to support large-scale registration exercises in Cameroon, Kenya and Niger, as well as for emergency registration in Ethiopia, Greece and Uganda. An important update to UNHCR's registration and case management tool, proGres in Partnership, was released in August 2016 and is in use across 15 operations by UNHCR, partners and host governments to standardize registration and case management practices.

UNHCR continued to strengthen its identity management capability in 2016 through the ongoing development and deployment of biometric tools. Its two primary biometric systems, the "biometric identity management system" (BIMS) and IrisGuard, maintained more than 3.2 million biometric enrolments globally by the end of 2016. Among other applications, these systems allow UNHCR and partners to verify identities at distribution points, ensuring a faster and more secure aid distribution process, and enabling refugees to access cardless ATM transactions and purchases at certain points of sale. BIMS is currently deployed to 24 country operations globally, while IrisGuard is operational in the Middle East and North Africa region. UNHCR is committed to expanding its biometrics capability to 75 countries by 2020.

Together with governments and key humanitarian actors, UNHCR explored opportunities for strategic data sharing and interoperability of systems, guided by the "Policy on the protection of personal data of persons of concern to UNHCR." Recognizing the sensitivity of biometric data, the Office continued developing guidance and tools to ensure consistency in the collection, storage and use of this data, both internally and externally, while ensuring a high level of data security and data protection for people of concern.

Protection in the context of mixed movements

Refugees and migrants regularly use the same routes and means to reach their destination. If unable to enter a State legally, they may find other ways, such as having recourse to smugglers or embarking on dangerous sea or land voyages. These avenues heighten their exposure to risks such as trafficking, torture, violence, sexual and gender-based violence, and other human rights abuses. As an indication of these dangers, in 2016 more than 5,000 people died or went missing at sea in the Mediterranean.

To help States address mixed movements in a protection-sensitive way, UNHCR updated its "10-point plan in action on refugee protection and mixed migration," which contains more than 100 practical tools and examples of good practices, to assist States and other actors in managing complex mixed movements. Specific interventions also supported the development of regional approaches to respond to irregular mixed movements, such as collaboration with the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat and the Mixed Migration Monitoring Initiative.

UNHCR continued working with stakeholders to enhance their understanding of the imperative of refugee protection in the context of mixed movements, and to promote protection-sensitive migration systems that facilitate access to asylum and protection. UNHCR participated in key global forums on international migration, including the Global Migration Group and the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and continued to collaborate on multilateral and bilateral bases with IOM, OHCHR, UNODC and ILO, as well as with NGO partners. Specific initiatives to address trafficking in human beings were undertaken in collaboration with IOM and under the framework of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

Beyond detention

UNHCR's goal is to end the routine detention of asylum-seekers, refugees and other people under its protection mandate. The Office remained concerned about the systematic detention of asylum-seekers in some contexts, given such detention is often prolonged and in conditions falling short of international standards.

The routine detention of asylum-seekers and migrants represents a growing human rights challenge. UNHCR's many years of work and research on this issue confirm that detaining asylum-seekers and refugees is harmful, costly and, importantly, less effective than alternative measures. It has devastating consequences for individuals, as well as their families and communities, and incurs considerable costs for States. There are many alternative ways for governments to manage their asylum and migration systems which remain under-utilized.

The Office's "Global strategy – beyond detention" (2014-2019) has three primary goals: ending child detention; ensuring alternatives to detention are available in law and implemented in practice; and ensuring

detention conditions meet international standards. In partnership with States and civil society organizations, the strategy has been rolled out in 19 focus countries, namely Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In 2016, the progress made and achievements in implementing the global strategy were consolidated in two reports, a baseline report and a progress report, based on information gathered by UNHCR in the focus countries and informed by regular dialogue with stakeholders. The compilations are intended to guide decision-makers and practitioners in identifying and remedying any shortcomings in national frameworks pertaining to detention, as well as to support policy design. Additional information and progress on the implementation of the global strategy can be found at www.unhcr.org/detention.

Implementation of UNHCR's "Global strategy – beyond detention" (2014-2019) has resulted in:

14% decrease in the number of children detained in the focus countries.

22% increase in detention monitoring activities in the focus countries.

4 countries passing new legislation eliminating the detention of children for immigration-related reasons.

5 countries implementing measures offering alternatives to detention.

The Elsanis, a Roma family from Kosovo who live in Montenegro, recently obtained identity documents and are no longer at risk of statelessness.

© UNHCR / M. LABAN

Ending statelessness

Stateless people are not considered as nationals by any State under the operation of its law. Statelessness is estimated to have affected at least 10 million people in 2016. However, data captured by governments and communicated to UNHCR were limited to 3.2 million stateless individuals in 74 countries.

In line with UNHCR's #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024, notable progress was made in 2016 in raising awareness of the plight of stateless people and achieving concrete outcomes to prevent and resolve statelessness. Three States—Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Sierra Leone—acceded to both statelessness conventions, bringing the number of States party to the 1954 Convention and the 1961 Convention to 89 and 68, respectively.

A reported 60,800 stateless people acquired nationality or had it confirmed during 2016. Many countries are taking important steps to grant nationality to stateless people. For example, the Government of Kenya is in the process of

issuing citizenship documentation to the Makonde people, an ethnic minority group present but stateless on the territory for generations, after officially recognizing the Makonde as the country's 43rd ethnicity.

A tripartite registration exercise by UNHCR and the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines enabled more than 4,000 people of Indonesian descent in the Philippines to confirm Filipino and/or Indonesian nationality, bringing the total number of stateless cases resolved through this project to more than 8,700.

In Thailand, new laws expanded the scope of eligibility for stateless people to apply for nationality, a policy from which up to 80,000 children are expected to benefit. In Côte d'Ivoire, an estimated 6,000 stateless people acquired Ivorian nationality in 2016 through the Government's "acquisition of nationality by declaration" procedure, with many thousands of applications still pending.

National reforms in 2016 also helped to advance the prevention of statelessness. The Government of Norway issued a new

At least 60,800 stateless people acquired nationality or had it confirmed.

Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Sierra Leone acceded to both statelessness conventions in 2016.

immigration policy in October 2016, permitting all stateless children born in Norway to apply for and acquire Norwegian citizenship. UNHCR and civil society partners supported Madagascar in amending its nationality law to allow women to transmit nationality to their children on an equal basis to men. Nevertheless, 26 countries worldwide still maintained gender discrimination in nationality laws and UNHCR continues to support governments in their efforts to eliminate this form of discrimination.

The Office also continued supporting governments in establishing or improving statelessness determination procedures. Notable developments in this regard were in the Americas, where both Brazil and Ecuador passed new legislation in 2016 giving stateless people temporary legal residence, enabling the establishment of a statelessness determination procedure, and facilitating the naturalization of stateless people.

In 2016, UNHCR strengthened its partnerships to address statelessness. With UNICEF, the Office launched a new coalition to "Ensure every child's right to a nationality," with the support of a diverse group of NGOs. From 2017, the coalition will implement joint strategies in a number of priority countries. UNHCR worked closely with the World Bank on its "ID4D Initiative" to ensure people of concern are included in national efforts to improve access to legal identity, including birth registration, in line with target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The States in the "Friends of the campaign to end statelessness" group undertook several diplomatic initiatives in 2016, including the introduction of a resolution on "The right to a nationality: women's equal nationality rights in law and practice," which was adopted by the Human Rights Council. Thanks largely to the coordinated efforts of States and civil society, more than 70 statelessness-related recommendations were made during States' UPR taking place in 2016.

Notwithstanding these positive developments, more needs to be done to accelerate achievement of the #IBelong Campaign's goals. As the first official "milestone year," when progress will be measured against each of the 10 actions in the global action plan to end statelessness, 2017 will be a critical year.

KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN 2016	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016
DURABLE SOLUTIONS	
Greater reduction of statelessness is achieved	
Assist stateless people and those with undetermined nationality to acquire or confirm nationality	At least 60,800 stateless people acquired nationality or had it confirmed.
	In Malaysia, some 870 individuals acquired nationality in 2016, supported by paralegal services provided by UNHCR's partner, bringing the total number of statelessness cases resolved between 2014 and 2016 to more than 1,400.
	In the Philippines, more than 4,000 people were confirmed as Filipino and/or Indonesian during the year.
	In Tajikistan, close to 7,500 people had their nationality confirmed.
FAVOURABLE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT	
Law and policy developed or strengthened	
Advocate, and provide technical advice to governments for, the reform of nationality laws; introduce or improve statelessness determination procedures; and draft policies and procedures to close gaps that may lead to statelessness	A good practices paper entitled "Establishing statelessness determination procedures to protect stateless persons" was published, based on action 6 of the "Global action plan to end statelessness: 2014-2024."
	In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Government adopted a resolution in March 2016 to facilitate the naturalization of refugees and stateless individuals. The resolution removed the requirement of a minimum period of residence and significantly reduced fees.
	In Costa Rica, a statelessness determination procedure was established in April 2016 and came into effect in October 2016.
	In Greece, new asylum legislation was adopted in April 2016 that granted the asylum authority the competence to apply the 1954 Convention. A presidential decree was expected to outline the procedures for determining the status of stateless people.
Advocate and provide technical advice to governments for the elimination of gender discrimination in nationality laws	At least 8 States were supported to introduce gender equality into their nationality law, including Liberia and Madagascar.
International and regional instruments acceded to, ratified or strengthened	
Promote accession to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	There were 6 accessions to the statelessness conventions in 2016; Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Sierra Leone acceded to both conventions.
	The draft African Union Protocol on the Right to Nationality in Africa was submitted to the Special Technical Committees of the African Union for review.
	The Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted a resolution that calls on SADC Governments to take the necessary steps to accede to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions, and to review and reform domestic provisions on nationality, where necessary.
	In the Middle East and North Africa, the League of Arab States and UNHCR jointly drafted recommendations that would support universal birth registration, enhance the capacity of civil registration and vital statistics systems, and further align nationality laws in the region with international standards.
	A new civil society network, the Statelessness Network Asia Pacific, was launched in November 2016 to complement existing regional networks in the Americas, Europe and elsewhere. The network aims to build and strengthen cooperation and capacity among 40-plus civil society actors to end statelessness across the region.
FAIR PROTECTION PROCESSES AND DOCUMENTATION	
Identification of statelessness improved	
Increase knowledge of stateless populations, their situations and possible solutions	Studies and surveys were completed in 6 States, including Austria and Côte d'Ivoire.
	Statistical data was available on 74 countries.

Local residents near Luhansk, Ukraine, picking up shelter materials from UNHCR to repair their houses damaged by conflict.

© UNHCR / A. CHERKASHINA

Addressing internal displacement

Since 2011, conflict and violence have driven up the numbers of people internally displaced. A key objective for UNHCR is supporting States, in partnership with the special rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs and other key stakeholders, to develop and implement legal and institutional frameworks to prevent, respond to, and facilitate solutions for IDPs.

In 2016, UNHCR issued operational guidelines for its engagement in situations of internal displacement, as part of a coordinated response. The Office also published an "Internal note on humanitarian evacuations in violence and armed conflict." Building on pre-existing guidance, as well as drawing from the lessons learned and tools developed by UNHCR and its partners, the note sets out key protection and operational considerations, including minimum standards, for in-country humanitarian evacuations in situations of armed violence and conflict where

individuals or groups face an immediate threat to life.

UNHCR's action on behalf of IDPs in conflict situations remains centred on the inter-agency cluster leadership approach. Through its leadership role in the Global Protection, Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Clusters, the organization provides global inter-agency policy advice and guidance, supports country-level clusters, and builds additional capacity at global and country levels.

UNHCR is the Global Cluster lead agency for protection. In 2016, the **Global Protection Cluster (GPC)** provided support and guidance to 35 protection clusters and cluster-like mechanisms, of which 25 were led or co-led by UNHCR. Protection policy developed by the GPC was adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The GPC also issued guidance to Humanitarian Country Teams

on the development of protection strategies and published a review of actions taken in 2016 to strengthen the centrality of protection, including a collation of good practices. UNHCR and the special rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs co-led the GPC task team on law and policy and created a database on national and regional IDP laws and policies.

The **Global Shelter Cluster (GSC)** is co-led by UNHCR in conflict situations and IFRC in natural disasters. It supported 26 country-level clusters or cluster-like mechanisms in 2016, of which 12 were led by UNHCR. The organization provided coordination services to some 380 partners who provided 9 million people with shelter or non-food items.

The GSC continued to work towards the objectives of the "Global Shelter Cluster strategy" (2013-2017). GSC staff undertook missions to support country-level clusters and ensure predictable and consistent cluster coordination until longer-term expert capacity was in place. In 2016, the GSC expanded the pool of qualified cluster coordinators able to provide surge capacity through capacity-building and training initiatives.

The **Global CCCM Cluster**, led by UNHCR in conflict situations and by IOM in natural disaster settings, supported field operations responding to internal displacement,

developed tools and technical guidance, strengthened information management systems, and provided capacity building. Population data management, and data collection and analysis, are at the core of the cluster's work, and the Global CCCM Cluster encourages strong partnerships with national actors and governments.

In 2016, UNHCR led or co-led 10 country-level clusters in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Turkey under the framework of cross-border assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), and Yemen. To improve its governance structure, the Global CCCM Cluster established a strategic advisory group with ACTED, Danish Refugee Council, Lutheran World Federation and Norwegian Refugee Council participation. A five-year strategy for the cluster was also finalized.

To strengthen the capacity of camp managers and other humanitarian actors in the field, the Global CCCM Cluster developed an e-learning programme on camp management that was piloted in selected operations at the end of 2016. A methodology for systematically monitoring sites was also developed and implemented in a number of operations to capture essential information about displaced communities, with a view to monitoring, analysing and informing humanitarian responses.

Children fleeing South Sudan struggle in CAR refugee villages

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story.
9 June 2016

Disabled twins Semo and Seto Abu, aged 10, fled their home in South Sudan to Abossi settlement in Bambouti, Central African Republic.

KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN 2016	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016
FAVOURABLE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT	
Law and policy developed or strengthened	
Advocate the development or promotion of a normative framework on IDPs	Mali and Sri Lanka were supported to develop IDP policy and law. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR and UNDP jointly contributed to the development of a national policy on solutions for IDPs, which was adopted by the Government in August 2016.
	The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (known as the Kampala Convention) has been signed by 40 countries and ratified by 25 of the 54 Member States of the African Union.
	A study on UNHCR's engagement with national human rights institutions for IDP protection was published, providing an overview of UNHCR's operational engagement with such institutions in the past and lessons learned, in order to promote better future coordination.

CASH ASSISTANCE FOR IDPS

In 2016, UNHCR's largest cash assistance programmes for IDPs were in Iraq, Niger, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen. In Iraq, to deliver cash assistance in a secure and reliable way that enabled proper financial tracking and reporting, UNHCR piloted a mobile money system. This system enabled the distribution of multi-purpose cash assistance to some 270 IDP families and 250 refugee families, as well as seasonal cash assistance to 2,300 IDPs and members of host communities.

People eligible for assistance were registered and issued with a SIM card managing a special mobile money wallet registered in their name. Families were informed via SMS when their assistance was available for withdrawal at more than 2,000 locations across Iraq. The mobile money solution also addressed challenges in finding cash transfer options that were accessible across the country. UNHCR plans to expand the use of this model across Iraq in 2017.

© UNHCR / P. NTEMGWA

BAMBOUTI, Central African Republic |
At home in South Sudan, priests cared for Semo and Seto Abu, disabled 10-year-old twins who struggle to walk and look after themselves. But civil war forced them to flee to the Central African Republic (CAR), where they face a desperate plight.

"Armed people attacked our village in Source Yubu in November. We fled and spent several days on the road, and finally arrived here, where a family friend took us in," says Semo. The brothers ended up in Bambouti, a small collection of villages in eastern CAR that is today home to more than 10,000 South Sudanese refugees.

Their father died late last year from a snake bite while farming his fields at home. The Lord's Resistance Army, a militia that terrorizes swathes of the region, kidnapped their mother three years earlier.

Here in Bambouti, they were lucky to come across Jules Sabu, an old friend of their parents, who has taken them into his meagre refugee shelter and is looking after them alongside his own seven children.

"In South Sudan, we were helped by priests who sent us to school and provided us with tricycles," says Seto, clearly upset at the memory of the specially-adapted wheelchairs he used to move around. "I wish I could go back to school."

The last functioning school here in Bambouti was destroyed in CAR's own internal conflict in 2002. Similarly, there are no doctors or health facilities, no major markets, very little drinkable water, almost no government or humanitarian agency representation, and no tricycles for the twins.

The original population here was perhaps 950 people. The community's ten-fold increase since the refugees arrived has seriously strained local resources, and vulnerable children like Semo and Seto are the worst affected.

"The presence of several unaccompanied minors among the refugees in Bambouti is a big concern," says Lazare Kouassi Etien, who heads UNHCR in CAR.

"Starting in mid-June, we will carry out a fuller registration of these refugees, while also identifying host families in the community in Bambouti who can provide a home for them. We will set up avenues for reunification with their family members as soon as the security situation in South Sudan improves."

South Sudan's main civil war erupted in December 2013 and ended with a peace deal in August 2015. But a series of smaller-scale conflicts continue, like the one in Western Equatoria that the refugees at Bambouti ran from.

During a recent rapid assessment mission in Bambouti in May, UNHCR staff spoke to 10 unaccompanied or vulnerable children among the refugee population. Many more may be found when the wider registration exercise is completed in June.

Brothers Wenya, 10, and Essem, 12, became separated from their four older siblings as they fled fighting in November near Source Yubu, where they lived in South Sudan. Their parents have both died. In Bambouti they are being looked after by their aunt, Antunta. "We have received some basic household items like blankets and pots from UNHCR, and spades so that we can start cultivating crops to feed the children," she said. "They can no longer go to school and this is a real concern for them."

Humanitarian agencies face extreme difficulties raising funds to meet even the basic needs of water, food, shelter, and emergency medical care for the 2.4 million South Sudanese displaced by the conflict. But despite struggling daily for food and clean water and living in a makeshift shelter, Susan Aminisa, 10, whose parents died in fighting in Source Yubu in November, says her priority remains her schooling. "I wish we could pursue our education so that in future we can take care of ourselves," she says. "I would like to become a teacher so that I can teach other unfortunate children."