

# Safeguarding fundamental rights



*Once stateless, children from the coastal community of Burundians living in Kenya are now able to enjoy their full rights as Kenyan citizens.*

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The goal of all protection activities is to foster the full enjoyment of fundamental rights in response to the legal, physical and material needs of people of concern to UNHCR.

Protection work in 2019 was challenged by the increased complexity and scale of cross-border and internal displacement, but the year also saw significant protection achievements.

Many States took action to improve national asylum systems, seeking to ensure the fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity of their laws and policy frameworks.

The Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG), launched at the Global Refugee Forum, was a catalyst for action with more than 50 States pledging to strengthen their asylum systems or extend support to other States to do so. UNHCR provided guidance and practical tools to encourage compliance with international standards and facilitated the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders including law firms who pledged a significant number of pro bono hours in support of protection objectives at the Forum.

The principle of responsibility-sharing in the provision of protection and solutions also underpinned the High-Level Segment on Statelessness. At the half-way mark of the #IBelong Campaign, States committed to reinforce their actions to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness.

An updated IDP Policy, issued in 2019, promotes clarity and predictability in UNHCR's contribution to coordinated humanitarian responses and the protection of IDPs, in support of primary State responsibility. UNHCR's stepped up approach to IDP protection includes support to the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, as well as to regional institutions to promote ratification and implementation of the Kampala Convention, with three more States acceding in 2019.

To reinforce the key role of communities, as well as the effective inclusion of age, gender and diversity considerations, UNHCR strengthened its framework for

accountability to affected people and actively contributed to the development of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and relevant IASC guidelines. Work on critical child protection issues and in response to gender-based violence was also undertaken.

Enhanced cooperation with development partners was part of broader advocacy for inclusion in nationally-provided services, to improve resilience and self-reliance within refugee and host communities. Advocacy addressing the importance of safety and dignity for sustainable voluntary repatriation was only moderately successful, with protracted conflict and neglect of underlying root causes for flight remaining significant obstacles to return. Less than 5% of global resettlement needs were met in 2019 but UNHCR continued to work with States and partners in rolling out the "Three Year (2019-2021) Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways" looking to a future in which opportunities will become more available, including through the involvement of new resettlement countries, and expanding complementary pathways for admission to third countries.

## In this chapter

- Legal protection frameworks
- Identifying international protection needs and national asylum systems
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- Protecting persons with disabilities and older persons
- Protecting LGBTI persons in forced displacement

## LEGAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS



A Sudanese asylum-seeker at UNHCR's humanitarian centre near Agadez, Niger.

### 2019 RESULTS

**16** States saw the adoption of laws and legislative changes demonstrating improvements in refugee rights

**17** judicial proceedings in 10 different jurisdictions in which UNHCR provided interpretation of relevant principles of international refugee and human rights law

**89** States received technical advice from UNHCR to ensure compliance with international and regional refugee protection standards

**11** countries developed national frameworks on internal displacement with UNHCR's support

### Refugee protection policy

In accordance with its mandate, UNHCR continued to supervise the application of international conventions for the protection of refugees. At the end of 2019, 149 States were party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, or both. While no State became party to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol in 2019, one State lifted reservations to the 1951 Convention: Sweden. As a result, Sweden now accords refugees the same treatment

as nationals with respect to State pensions. States parties to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol are obliged to cooperate with UNHCR and to provide the Office with relevant information on the implementation of these instruments. As such, UNHCR continued to seek improvements to domestic laws and policies relating to the treatment of refugees, ensuring their compliance with international law.

In 2019, UNHCR issued detailed comments on law and policy proposals in 24 countries.

It strategically intervened before regional and national courts, and judicial bodies, on a range of legal and policy issues related to refugee protection, as well as the rights of people displaced across borders and stateless persons. UNHCR also provided interpretation of relevant international legal principles and standards.

Legal advice was provided to UNHCR operations, partners and States on a wide range of issues concerning international refugee protection. Importantly, a new edition of UNHCR's "Handbook and guidelines on procedures and criteria for determining refugee status" was released, ensuring further support to a full and inclusive application of international and regional refugee law instruments.

### IDP policy

UNHCR supported the development of national frameworks on internal displacement by providing legal and technical advice in 11 States, including El Salvador (which adopted its IDP law in January 2020), Ethiopia, Honduras, Liberia, Mali, Mexico and South Sudan. The Office continued to advocate for the participation and consultation of affected communities when developing such instruments, for example in South Sudan. In Colombia, it supported the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, including by sharing international experiences around the criminalization of forced displacement (see as well the *IDP Overview*).

### Climate change and disaster displacement policy

In line with its protection mandate and the analysis that disasters are expected to increase due to global warming, both in frequency and intensity, UNHCR advanced work on legal and normative aspects of the international protection of people displaced

by the effects of climate change and disasters. It also sought to raise awareness of protection principles in global policy discussions.

UNHCR was active in the State-led Platform on Disaster Displacement and the Task Force on Displacement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, at a time when both entities saw their mandate and workplans renewed. It co-organized and contributed to events where climate change and disaster displacement were key features, including with the African Union and at COP 25 in Madrid. UNHCR also worked to develop regional guidelines on human mobility in the context of climate change (see as well the *Climate Action Overview*).

### Constraints and unmet needs

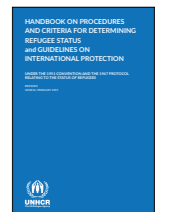
While States often solicited UNHCR's views on proposed law and policy changes, the Office was frequently given limited time to provide these, which restricted its ability to exercise its supervisory responsibility.

Despite States' obligations under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, some occasionally gave insufficient background information on existing laws and the treatment of refugees.

When UNHCR submitted its views to a legislative proposal, they were not always followed, leading sometimes to the adoption of legislation with reduced protection safeguards or with provisions that may be at variance with international and/or regional legal obligations. For instance, of the 34 countries which saw the adoption of laws and legislative changes to their international protection framework, 9 of these (26%) involved some restrictions to refugees' rights.

Lastly, in some countries, electoral processes or other national political developments delayed progress on the enactment of legal instruments and amendments in 2019.

UNHCR's Handbook and guidelines on procedures and criteria for determining refugee status



## IDENTIFYING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION NEEDS AND NATIONAL ASYLUM SYSTEMS



Ahead of the implementation of new visa laws, UNHCR staff at the Rumichaca International Bridge provide information, legal assistance, water and aid items to Venezuelan refugees and migrants crossing from Colombia into Ecuador.

### 2019 RESULTS

**2.3** million individual new and appeal asylum applications were registered globally and 121 States and territories implemented national asylum procedures



**58** States pledged to strengthen their national asylum systems at the Global Refugee Forum, specifically regarding fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity



Of this number **120,400** new individual asylum applications were registered by UNHCR, accounting for **5%** of the total



**43** States in which UNHCR strategically engaged with refugee status determination procedures, in accordance with its mandate



For more information on asylum and related trends, see Chapter 4 of the 2019 Global Trends report



Protection is a State responsibility and the existence of fully functioning national asylum/refugee status determination (RSD) systems operating with fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity are crucial.

The official launch of the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG) at the Global Refugee Forum created new momentum

for coordinated efforts to develop national asylum capacities and further State responsibility in receiving countries. In consultation with States, civil society organizations and others, UNHCR developed guidance and practical tools to help them prepare pledges in this area. Using the Forum as a focus, UNHCR's work

with States led to around 58 pledging to develop or strengthen existing national asylum systems. It also saw the Office supporting other States in their efforts.

In the lead-up to the Forum, several States made welcome efforts to streamline their asylum systems, in line with UNHCR's country guidance. Examples included Mexico's decision to apply simplified procedures for cases involving certain profiles with high recognition rates; Brazil's move to recognize thousands of Venezuelan asylum-seekers as refugees on a prima facie basis; and Malawi's prima facie declaration of refugee status for certain groups of asylum-seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Whether individually or collectively, many civil society organizations and private law firms also pledged to support efforts in this area by, for example, providing free legal advice and representation, training, research and interpreters. A portion of the legal community's joint pledge at the Forum for 125,000 hours of free legal aid per year is expected to be operational as of 2020.

High-quality country of origin information and UNHCR country guidance are the starting points for identifying international protection needs and are therefore at the heart of improving the efficiency and quality of policy and decision making in national asylum systems. In 2019, UNHCR produced and commissioned country of origin information reports on major countries of origin and issued country guidance on the DRC, Iraq, Mali, South Sudan, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). In addition, UNHCR's country-specific guidance was presented to a range of different first-instance decision makers, including judges, tribunal members, lawyers, legal aid providers and other

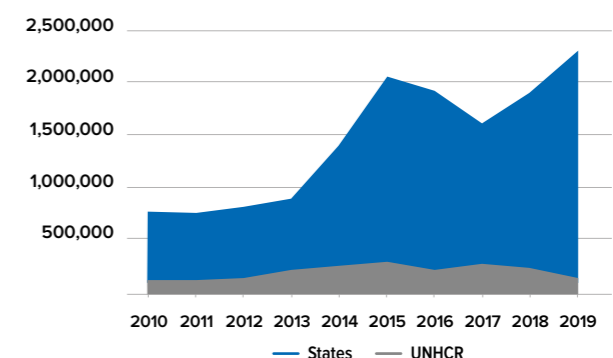
experts at the national, regional (European Asylum Support Office, Quality Assurance Initiatives) and global levels (Inter-Governmental Consultations, Priority Situations Core Group).

In 2019, close to 1.3 million substantive RSD decisions were made globally. UNHCR also completed the review and update of its "Procedural standards for RSD under UNHCR's mandate" and rolled out the new RSD learning programme. As well, 483 learners, including partner staff and State officials, completed UNHCR's e-learning modules on RSD and country of origin information. In addition, 293 individuals benefited from the continued roll-out of UNHCR's interview learning programme.

### Constraints and unmet needs

While the ACSG is expected to progressively improve the asylum landscape, challenges and gaps related to the institutional or technical components of national asylum systems remain. As such, UNHCR is expected to continue conducting RSD in accordance with its mandate in at least 43 countries, implying an ongoing need for dedicated capacity and expertise.

### NEW AND APPEAL ASYLUM APPLICATIONS REGISTERED | 2010-2019



\*In addition, UNHCR and States operating joint procedures received 149,400 applications between 2010 and 2019.

## PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS



A UNHCR staff member entertains a four-year old Eritrean child at Rome's Fiumicino Airport, after she arrived in Italy on a relocation flight from Niger.

### 2019 RESULTS

**6** **Universal Periodic Review** sessions to which UNHCR contributed through 25 stand-alone, country-specific submissions. In cooperation with Member States, this resulted in concrete recommendations to improve respect for the rights of displaced people



**12** **per month** average number of cases referred by OHCHR and human rights mechanisms related to people of concern on which UNHCR followed up. It also provided targeted support to field colleagues on human rights engagement queries (on average 20 requests per month)



UNHCR developed and issued **general guidance for its operations** on how to use the complaints procedures of the human rights mechanisms in urgent cases



**7** **Annual reports** of special procedures mandate holders to which UNHCR contributed, as well as supporting **60 country visits** by the special procedures in 2019 with detailed information



UNHCR continued to improve and strengthen its longstanding engagement with UN human rights mechanisms in 2019. This included raising issues affecting people of concern in standard setting and review processes. It also sought to encourage action by governments, civil society and other entities to promote and protect the human rights of people of concern to UNHCR.

Key achievements linked to UNHCR's engagement with human rights processes

included several Special Rapporteurs taking up the Office's calls for States to improve asylum systems and encouraging the concerned governments to strengthen asylum-seeker registration, legal aid services, accommodation and freedom of movement standards. Among other positive outcomes, vulnerable families were released from detention in a transit zone following coordinated advocacy with a special procedures mandate holder.

UNHCR also highlighted the vulnerabilities of displaced elderly persons by working with the Independent Expert on Enjoyment of Human Rights by Older Persons in an event at the Human Rights Council.

UNHCR engaged in six Universal Periodic Review (UPR) sessions by supporting field colleagues in how best to engage, preparing 42 feedback reports to operations informing them of UPR recommendations relevant to UNHCR; delivering eight oral statements related to adopting UPR outcomes at the Human Rights Council; and delivering the first oral statement on the need to strengthen respect for displaced people during the Council's general debate on the UPR.

UNHCR also regularly engaged with the UN human rights treaty bodies, raising protection considerations affecting people of concern under each of the treaties. It held eight strategic meetings with the OHCHR Secretariat supporting the treaty bodies and provided two statements and one thematic briefing to treaty body committees. These measures strengthened the channels of collaboration between UNHCR and treaty bodies, as well as their attentiveness to emerging human rights issues affecting people of concern.

In addition, UNHCR held strategic meetings related to 13 different special procedure mandate holders, identifying common synergies between mandates and proactively identifying priority issues and States for forthcoming country visits or annual reports, to which UNHCR could contribute expert advice and support. UNHCR also established and expanded existing channels for the exchange of information with the special procedures on individual cases, facilitating the sharing of information on such cases, where appropriate, and enabling their advocacy and action on behalf of people of concern, including those at risk of refoulement.

UNHCR reached out to a variety of stakeholders from NGOs, national human rights institutions and academia to strengthen partnerships, expand outreach and advocacy opportunities, and create opportunities to exchange on human rights. It also sought to strengthen existing linkages with OHCHR and other UN agencies. Developing and strengthening partnerships in the field of human rights helped identify new opportunities to ensure the mainstreaming of protection issues for people of concern. These included providing input to guidance prepared by UN sister agencies, as well as working on joint capacity-building initiatives to raise issues related to forced displacement and statelessness in international and regional normative human rights frameworks and leveraging the existing work of other stakeholders. UNHCR also participated in the UN Task Team on civic space, which is developing guidance and a UN system-wide strategy on promoting, expanding and protecting civic space and addressing cases of reprisal.

### Constraints and unmet needs

Human rights are a sensitive issue with certain States and dialogue around measures to safeguard the rights of people of concern, or redress threatened or actual violations, did not, in all cases, lead to swift action in 2019. This included situations in which obstacles derived not from lack of political will, but from limited resources, institutional capacity, and/or lack of strong systems to guarantee the rule of law. In other contexts, populist anti-foreigner rhetoric or sentiment also limited UNHCR's capacity to ensure that the rights of people of concern were guaranteed in practice.

## ADDRESSING AND RESPONDING TO MIXED MOVEMENTS



Piles of lifejackets used by refugees and migrants to cross the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece at a dumping ground near Molyvos, on the Greek island of Lesbos.

### 2019 RESULTS

Sea arrivals to Italy and the estimated number of dead and missing people along that route decreased by almost **50%** compared to 2018



**2,029**

people in need of international protection evacuated from Libya including through Emergency Transit Mechanisms/Centres



The year saw continuing mixed movements, with refugees in search of international protection moving alongside migrants, often sharing the same routes and the same dangers. Migration along dangerous sea and land routes was driven in many cases by the lack of opportunities for migrants to move legally, such as through labour mobility schemes. It was also driven by migrants' expectations of conditions in intended destination countries, encouraged by the rhetoric of smugglers and, in some cases, diaspora communities.

With 2019 the first year of the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), UNHCR provided guidance on how the GCR and its architecture of support could be applicable to situations of mixed movements. The Office engaged with the UN Network on Migration, as a member of its executive committee, to develop guidance and tools supporting Member States' implementation of the GCM.

Irregular, dangerous movements through the Central Mediterranean route continued. However, sea arrivals to Italy, and the estimated number of dead and missing people along that route, decreased by almost 50% compared to 2018.

UNHCR promoted respect for international protection principles in rescue and interception at sea, including through judicial engagement and collaboration with partners, such as the International Maritime Organization. This contributed to disembarkation schemes for refugees and migrants, facilitated by agreements on the distribution of asylum-seekers among different countries.

Across the Central and West Mediterranean UNHCR cooperated with more than 15 States of origin, transit and destination in sub-Saharan and North Africa to strengthen presence, protection and solutions, including resettlement opportunities for people of concern on the move. A key part of UNHCR's strategic response was the use of resettlement and, in the case of Libya, humanitarian evacuations of individuals in need of international protection including through Emergency Transit Mechanisms or Emergency Transit Centres to Italy, Niger, Romania and Rwanda. In total 2,029 refugees were evacuated from Libya in 2019: 393 to Italy, 878 to Niger, 452 to Romania and 306 to Rwanda.

UNHCR also strengthened access to family reunification activities for children at risk through the pilot project "Live, Learn and Participate". In total, 597 cases were identified in Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya and Sudan, 129 of which were formally assessed and 64 referred for legal services.

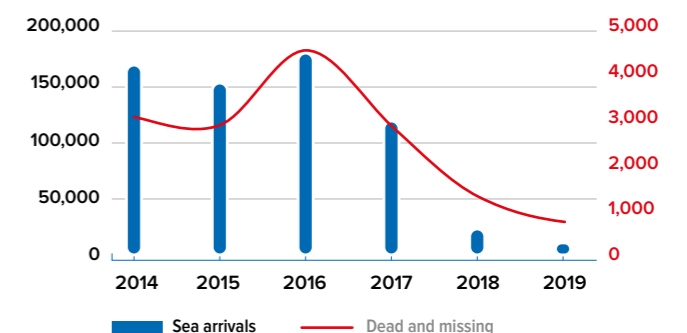
Countering the role of human traffickers in the often-dangerous movements of people of concern to UNHCR and migrants, UNHCR intensified efforts with partners, including IOM, UNODC, the Task Team of the Global Protection Cluster on Trafficking and the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. Such efforts included the development of practical tools and guidance, including the UNHCR-IOM

framework to develop standard operating procedures to facilitate the identification and protection of victims of trafficking. They also analyzed gaps in protection and assistance for victims of trafficking, including in refugee settings and situations of internal displacement. UNHCR delivered training on asylum and migration-related topics, including the Mixed Movement Learning Programme, to increase meaningful engagement by staff and partners in protection work for refugees and responses to migration that reflect human rights standards and effective, principled migration management strategies.

### Constraints and unmet needs

The complexity and scale of challenges in the area of asylum and migration require strategic, multi-actor responses. As conditions and mobility patterns evolved in different parts of the world in 2019, up-to-date information and analytical capacity were needed, alongside resources to develop and advise States and other partners on responses. This required specialist resources that could be adapted continuously and expertise in UNHCR's field operations, bureaux and Headquarters. In an environment where many competing priorities exist for UNHCR, ensuring scope for these proved challenging.

### SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY COMPARED TO ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DEAD AND MISSING PEOPLE ALONG THE ROUTE | 2014-2019






## ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION



Vulnerable refugees prepare for evacuation from Libya to Rwanda.

Across the 20 focus countries, UNHCR's "Global strategy - beyond detention 2014-2019" was instrumental in:

<p><b>Securing legal and policy developments</b> aimed at improving detention safeguards and developing alternatives to detention</p> 	<p><b>Passing or introducing laws</b> that limited or ended the immigration detention of asylum-seeking and refugee children</p> 	<p><b>Strengthening</b> immigration detention monitoring</p> 
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The end of 2019 marked the finalization of UNHCR's "Global strategy - beyond detention 2014-2019". Important progress was made in its 20 focus countries across the three goals of ending child detention; ensuring alternatives to detention are available to asylum-seekers; and promoting conditions of detention that meet international standards.

### Ending child detention

Most of the 20 participating countries passed laws or introduced high-level policy

decisions limiting or ending the immigration detention of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Such prohibitions are now legally enshrined in Canada, Malta, Mexico and the United Kingdom. Non-detention of asylum-seeking and refugee children is also the practice in Israel, Lithuania and Zambia. Bulgaria, Malaysia and Mexico made progress towards providing special protection and assistance for unaccompanied and separated children, including appropriate care arrangements and the introduction of child-sensitive screening and referral procedures.

### Alternatives to detention

Legislative reform, new regulations and effective partnerships led to the piloting of new alternatives to detention in several focus countries, including Canada, Indonesia, Mexico, Lithuania and the United Kingdom. Several of these programmes allow community-based solutions to be developed, in partnership with civil society.

### Conditions of detention that meet international standards

Immigration detention monitoring was strengthened in a number of countries, including Indonesia, North Macedonia and South Africa.

In addition to concrete achievements in focus countries, the Global Strategy served to consolidate clear and consistent protection messages regarding the detention of asylum-seekers and other people of concern. It also provided a strong platform for dialogue, capacity-building, practical cooperation and advocacy with governments and other key stakeholders in implementing countries. Similarly, it fostered the development of a capacitated and engaged global community of practice.

While the Global Strategy came to a formal conclusion at the end of 2019, UNHCR will continue to pursue its three key goals and build on its achievements and momentum. In doing so, UNHCR will capitalize on the regionalization of its bureaux to anchor detention work closer to the field, and maintain the partnerships established or strengthened in 2019 at global, regional and country level.

More broadly, developing and strengthening a wide range of partnerships was crucial in implementing the Strategy. At a global level, this included the renewal of the memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the International Detention

Coalition (IDC), reaffirming each actor's commitment to promoting effective alternatives to detention and to working together in the fields of monitoring, research, advocacy and capacity-building. In addition, UNHCR assumed co-leadership, along with IDC and UNICEF, of the Working Group on Alternatives to Detention set up under the umbrella of the UN Network on Migration. The working group will focus on consolidating good practices and common positions and guidelines, as well as establishing a government peer-learning platform to improve States' capacity to develop and use alternatives to migration detention.

As a member of the advisory board to the UN global study on children deprived of liberty, UNHCR provided input and practical examples to the report, which was presented, along with recommendations, to the United Nations General Assembly in October 2019.

### Constraints and unmet needs

Despite progress, immigration detention of children remains a challenge in many countries, including in border and transit zones, during the asylum procedure and in the context of return procedures. Exacerbating this challenge, accurate global-level data on immigration-related detention is unavailable, for children or adults, as administrative records are limited in many immigration contexts and appropriate systems for data collection often do not exist nationally.

While alternatives to detention have been introduced in several countries, discrepancies between legislation and practice persist, creating uncertainty for asylum-seekers and challenges to judicial oversight. In several countries, conditions of detention fall short of international standards and intermingling of asylum-seekers with criminal offenders remains a problem.

## PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO STATELESSNESS



Sama Bajau children, an indigenous and nomadic ethnic group at risk of statelessness, play in the Valle Vista resettlement community, near Zamboanga city, Mindanao, the Philippines. It is estimated that around 85% of the Sama Bajau in Zamboanga have no birth certificates. UNHCR and UNICEF have launched a pilot project to register 1,500 Sama Bajau and provide them with birth certificates.

### 2019 RESULTS

**94** States parties to the 1954 Statelessness Convention, and **74** States parties to the 1961 Convention, compared to **83** and **61** respectively at the start of the #IBelong Campaign in 2014

**20** States established dedicated statelessness determination procedures, compared to **9** at the start of the #IBelong Campaign

**92** States reported reliable quantitative data on stateless persons, compared to **77** at the start of the #IBelong Campaign

**81,074** individuals who were formerly stateless acquired nationality or had their nationality confirmed, compared to 37,100 at the start of the #IBelong Campaign

Results of the High-Level Segment on Statelessness

To mark the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness, a High-Level Segment on Statelessness was convened as part of UNHCR's 70<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee. An unprecedented 360 pledges were submitted by States, international and regional organizations, and civil society

organizations to accelerate progress in preventing and resolving statelessness. In particular, 66 States made 252 concrete, time-bound commitments to prevent and resolve statelessness. These included acceding to or ratifying the UN Statelessness Conventions, facilitating naturalization of

stateless persons, preventing statelessness by removing gender discriminatory provisions in nationality laws, ensuring universal birth registration, providing protection to stateless persons, and enhancing or initiating data collection on stateless populations. These pledges gave a strong boost to the #IBelong Campaign and the implementation of the accompanying Global Action Plan to End Statelessness.

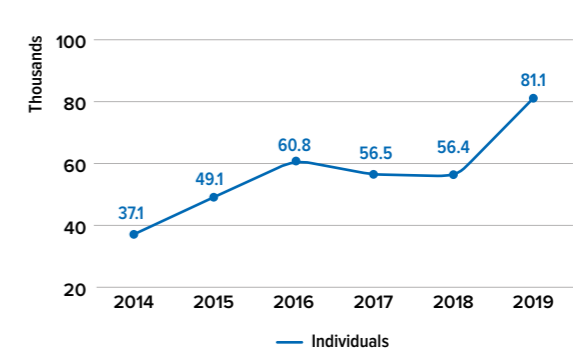
2019 saw some of the most significant progress in preventing and resolving statelessness since 2014. The granting of nationality to some 81,100 stateless persons represented the key achievement of 2019. The Kyrgyz Republic became the first country to resolve all known cases of statelessness on its territory, having granted nationality to 13,700 stateless persons over the last five years. This remarkable achievement can be attributed to the close collaboration between government authorities, civil society organizations and UN agencies and illustrates what can be done when political will is matched with dedicated support. Considerable progress was also made in other countries in Central Asia, such as in Tajikistan, where a large statelessness identification and reduction programme is underway following the example of the Kyrgyz Republic. Elsewhere, in the Asia and the Pacific region, significant reductions were achieved in Malaysia and Thailand.

With technical support from UNHCR, 13 States reformed their nationality laws, policies and procedures to close gaps leading to statelessness in 2019. Important examples include the passage of a law in Latvia automatically granting citizenship to children born to “non-citizens”; the adoption of provisions allowing for

facilitated naturalization of stateless persons in Argentina; and the removal of barriers to birth registration in a large number of countries with significant populations of persons at risk of statelessness. UNHCR also continued supporting States in establishing and improving statelessness determination procedures, including Argentina and Panama.

Deepening existing partnerships to address statelessness, UNHCR worked with the World Bank on a groundbreaking new study on the socioeconomic implications of statelessness among the Shona minority group in Kenya. The “Friends of the #IBelong Campaign”, a group of States represented by their Geneva-based Permanent Missions, raised awareness on the issue of statelessness, including through their participation in the Universal Periodic Review. UNHCR also maintained its collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, working with parliamentarians to help them more effectively address issues of statelessness.

### INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE ACQUIRED A NATIONALITY | 2014-2019



For more information on statelessness, see Chapter 6 of the 2019 Global Trends report

### Unmet needs and constraints

The key unknown in UNHCR's work to resolve statelessness remains the actual number of stateless persons around the world. Current statistics cover only 76 countries, with 4.2 million stateless persons captured. With the true global figure estimated to be significantly higher, a key priority in 2019 was to improve data on statelessness. Working to remedy this, UNHCR supported studies on statelessness in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, while questions on statelessness featured for the first time in censuses in Kenya and Niger.

Despite these efforts however, the number of States reporting statelessness data decreased in 2019. In December, UNHCR and UNFPA co-convened a global expert meeting on improving official statistics on statelessness in Thailand to enhance the

capacity of national statistics offices to collect data on stateless persons. Work to develop a handbook with recommendations on the production of statistics on statelessness will continue in 2020.

In 2019, there were four accessions to the UN Statelessness Conventions, with many States pledging to accede to the Conventions in 2020 and throughout the remainder of the #IBelong Campaign.

UNHCR's advocacy to address statelessness was negatively affected by the rise of xenophobia and pernicious forms of nationalism in many parts of the world. Going forward, it will be critical to continue making the strongest possible case for inclusive societies and, specifically, the removal of discriminatory provisions in nationality laws, civil registration laws and related procedures and practices.



### Colombia gives Venezuelan newborns a start in life

Under a new measure enacted by the Government of Colombia, children born in Colombia to Venezuelan parents are now granted Colombian nationality. This eliminates barriers to accessing education, health care and other vital rights enjoyed by Colombian citizens. Thanks to the measure—which went into effect in August 2019, will remain valid for two years, and retroactively includes babies born since January 2015—some 27,000 children born in Colombia to Venezuelan parents are now acquiring Colombian nationality.

UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF have pitched in to help pay for extra personnel at some of the registrar's offices with the heaviest workloads. The goal is to finish modifying all eligible children's birth certificates by the end of the year.



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## REGISTRATION, DOCUMENTATION AND IDENTITY MANAGEMENT



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Rohingya refugees in Nayapara camp are registered using the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) in a joint exercise between UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh.

### 2019 RESULTS

**10.2 million** individual records migrated/registered in proGres v4 compared to **4.1 million** in 2018



**8.8 million** individual records biometrically registered in BIMS compared to **7.2 million** in 2018



**73** country operations using proGres v4 compared to **45** in 2018



**69** country operations using BIMS and Irisguard compared to **60** in 2018



**14** country operations using UNHCR's Global Distribution Tool compared to **7** in 2018



The registration and identification of refugees is key for the people concerned, as well as for States to know who has arrived. It facilitates access to basic assistance and protection and enables the early identification of individuals at

heightened risk. Being registered can protect against refoulement, arbitrary arrest and detention; it helps keep families together; and it assists UNHCR in reuniting separated children with their families.



At the centre of UNHCR’s work with registration and identity management is PRIMES, UNHCR’s digital Population Registration and Identity Management Ecosystem. The interoperable use of PRIMES tools, including providing partners with secure access to data for continuity of identity in resettlement case management, digital distribution processes and biometric identity verification, has had tangible benefits. Incidents of misrepresentation, recycling and multiple distribution have been mitigated, leading to overall savings in assistance and assurance that aid is channeled and provided to beneficiaries.

In 2019, proGres v4 (UNHCR’s web-based registration and case management database, and a key component of PRIMES) was deployed to an additional 28 country operations, taking the overall number using the tool to 73. As part of this, the records of 10.2 million individuals of concern to UNHCR were registered or migrated to the system, up from 4.1 million at the end of 2018.

Additionally, PRIMES’ Biometric and Identity Management System was rolled out to a further nine countries, taking to 69 the number of operations biometrically enrolling populations of concern, and the number of individual records to 8.8 million, up from 7.2 million at the end of 2018.

UNHCR supported its field operations by providing training, negotiating data sharing agreements with partners and responding to emergencies. Eleven registration and data management specialists were deployed to emergencies in Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Niger and Rwanda. They supported the planning, preparation and implementation of emergency registration activities and facilitated refugee access to documentation, protection and assistance. To strengthen operations’ capacities to carry out continuous registration, population verification and preparations for PRIMES tools, a roster was established with the Danish Refugee Council resulting in the deployment of seven registration specialists to Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel, Malawi, the Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda.

UNHCR also developed a secure platform to share biographic and biometric data with key resettlement countries, thereby improving the resettlement case submission process. In support of resettlement applications, UNHCR shared the biometric records of over 25,000 people of concern with key resettlement States using this data transfer platform. This provided greater assurance that individuals undertaking interviews,

medical checks and departures were the same as those who, prior to entering the resettlement process, were originally registered by UNHCR’s robust and proven procedures. This process, used for example by the Government of the United States, will be expanded to other resettlement States in 2020.

In 2019, UNHCR strengthened its engagement with strategic partners to promote the inclusion of all people of concern to UNHCR, including those at risk of statelessness, in governments’ digital identity management systems. It also promoted greater recognition of refugees’ identity credentials to access public and private sector services, including financial services. It undertook an online consultation project, in partnership with the Government of Canada and a wide range of external partners, on how digital identity can provide greater opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers, allowing them to better contribute to their host communities. The findings were presented at the Global Refugee Forum and are

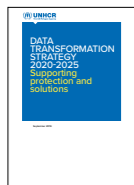
contributing to a five-year action plan, in line with UNHCR’s “Data transformation strategy 2020-2025”.

### Constraints and unmet needs

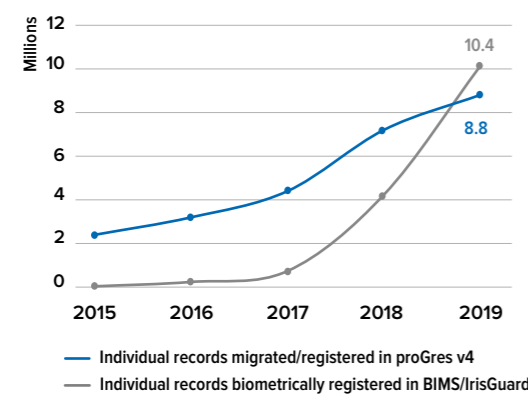
Interoperability between PRIMES and the systems and databases of other humanitarian actors, including UNICEF and WFP, was slower than anticipated. Additional interoperability resources, such as the Joint Excellence Hub and the UN Common Cash Statement will, however, become available in early 2020 to accelerate progress.

Other PRIMES development initiatives had to be deprioritized in 2019 due to competing priorities. These initiatives included the centralization of UNHCR’s Global Distribution Tool (GDT), which provides UNHCR and partners (including WFP) with secure access to its biometric database for identity verification purposes during aid distributions, for example. Other initiatives that were put on hold in 2019 included the developments of mobile applications for both BIMS and the GDT.

UNHCR’s Data Transformation Strategy 2020-2025



### INDIVIDUAL RECORDS REGISTERED BY UNHCR | 2015-2019



The Global Virtual Summit on Digital Identity for Refugees



## AGE, GENDER AND DIVERSITY-INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING




In Chad, a UNHCR staff member begins the process of registering newly-arrived Sudanese refugees.

### 2019 RESULTS


**510** participatory assessments reported across UNHCR operations



**15** operations in the Americas, East Africa and the Middle East and North Africa benefited from UNHCR's AGD policy roll-out




**4** Programming for Protection learning programmes implemented, benefiting 95 participants of multi-functional teams in 4 operations



**28** operations supporting refugee, IDP, returnee and stateless populations reported progress in the disaggregation of data by age, sex and diversity



**70+** refugees participated in the Global Refugee Forum through panels and speakers' corner presentations



Participatory approaches remain a critical component of UNHCR's age, gender and diversity (AGD) and community-based protection approaches, which are

implemented across its operations. Globally, 510 UNHCR-led participatory assessments, inclusive of all people of concern, were reported across operations in 2019, with

some operations applying particularly creative participatory methods. For example, in Rwanda, interactive activities and games with children, including theatre, photography and painting workshops, led to increased engagement and feedback. In Lebanon, 129 refugees were mobilized as evaluators to help increase refugee engagement in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. By the end of 2019, this practice was expanded to different sectors, such as water, sanitation and hygiene.

UNHCR's AGD policy and its 10 core actions promote participation and non-discrimination, recognizing that each person of concern has unique capacities and priorities and faces different protection risks. Supporting the continued roll-out of the policy, a stock-taking and self-assessment tool was piloted in 15 operations, while an AGD policy monitoring tool, to record and track progress on the 10 core actions through 19 indicators, was also developed and field-tested in six operations.

To account for the differing needs of people of concern, UNHCR collected, as contextually appropriate, data disaggregated by age, sex and diversity, for both analysis and programming purposes. In 2019, 28 operations reported progress disaggregating data by age, sex and diversity. Moreover, all three UNHCR-led or co-led clusters—protection, shelter and CCCM—ensured that data collected for needs analyses and response planning was disaggregated by age, gender and increasingly, disability.

Over 70 refugees participated in the Global Refugee Forum through panels and speakers' corner presentations. They advocated and provided insight and guidance on the unique needs of women, youth, children, persons with disability and others of diverse backgrounds. Their engagement was sought both in the preparations leading up to and at the Forum.

### Constraints and unmet needs

It is often difficult to collect disaggregated data reflective of the true diversity of a population, meaning not only age and gender, but also identifying who within it may need particular assistance because of a disability, belonging to a particular ethnic group, or because of sexual preference. Where disaggregated data is not available, this may result in programmes that are inadequately responsive to all the community's needs.

Though data is typically disaggregated by age, its collection by differing age groups represented a challenge to UNHCR in 2019. This resulted in certain populations and their needs, such as youth, going unidentified and, therefore, overlooked. Due to limited funding, emerging priorities and the need to reprioritize activities, the development of the updated AGD e-learning programme was postponed to 2020.

UNHCR's Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity



## COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION



Members of Women Standing, an association that helps widows and orphans, both Christian and Muslim, overcome trauma and rebuild their lives, celebrate Mother's Day in Begoua, near Bangui in the Central African Republic.

### 2019 RESULTS

**33** operations reported a higher percentage of implemented programme priorities identified by community members



**29** operations reported a higher percentage of people of concern represented in leadership management structures



**24** operations reported a greater percentage of host community members' expressions of support for the continued presence of people of concern



**4,235** community groups supported by UNHCR operations across all regions, while 1,620 community self-management structures were strengthened in 45 operations



People of concern are powerful agents of their own protection and UNHCR is committed to ensuring their central participation in decisions that affect their lives. To strengthen this important work in its operations, UNHCR ensured dedicated community-based protection expertise and capacity was embedded in each of the seven newly-established regional bureaux.

Efforts in 2019 to ensure proximity and foster meaningful participation through community-based approaches included supporting community action plans, building leadership and project management skills,

diversifying communication and outreach channels, and strengthening community self-management and self-protection structures.

In Bangladesh, for example, community outreach volunteers reached 598,405 refugees with messaging on protection and emergency preparedness, and 554 religious leaders were engaged to positively influence the behavioural norms of their communities. In Jordan, 26 community centres and community support committees in the camps and urban areas served as protection hubs and provided a platform for structured dialogue between

UNHCR, refugees, host communities and local authorities. In Italy, the PartecipAzione programme expanded to 11 regions, targeting 145 refugees (50% women) affiliated with 69 community-based organizations with training to reinforce communication, fundraising, international protection, project management and administration activities. More than 6,000 people directly benefitted from these micro-projects. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNHCR provided protection responses through 98 community centres and 33 satellite centres in 12 governorates, as a result of which 619,051 vulnerabilities were recorded.

UNHCR's capacity at country level to implement community-based protection was also supported through the community-based protection learning programme, which targeted 75 participants. In addition, a community-based protection online training module was launched in November 2019.

### Constraints and unmet needs

Effective community-based protection requires time, resources and constant

innovation to adapt to rapidly changing contexts. While the community-based protection learning programme allowed for this knowledge exchange, funding constraints limited the number of staff who could join the programme in 2019.

Support for community-based mechanisms was also challenged by funding limitations as well as context-specific realities, such as places where outreach and meaningful participation was hindered by insecurity and/or restrictions imposed by authorities. Where such limitations prevailed, and indeed more broadly, UNHCR invested in innovative means of outreach and communication, including with those it has limited or no direct contact with. For example, UNHCR operations in Egypt, Lebanon and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) used WhatsApp to communicate key messages and receive information from communities. In Algeria, UNHCR started working on a feedback and complaint system using the KoBo toolbox as an additional means of seeking and collecting feedback in challenging environments from people of concern.

### Delivering through partnerships



#### Strengthening neighborhood policing in Bele refugee settlement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In Haut Uele Province, which hosts high numbers of South Sudanese refugees, a joint pilot project is underway between UNHCR, UNDP and UNPOL.

The project is designed to reinforce local governance, rule of law, community-based protection and the local economy by building the capacity of local authorities to protect communities. It involves 150 people from the local administration, police, the army, civil jurisdictions, traditional chiefs and others in and around the new Bele refugee settlement, to which South Sudanese refugees are being relocated. UNDP contributes by putting in place neighborhood policing structures, such as local peace and development committees. Under UNDP's supervision, UNPOL reinforces the technical and operational capacities of the police with training to ensure the respect of six key principles—proximity, partnership, prevention, resolution of problems, accountability, and respect of human rights. Modules cover topics such as escorting refugees, ensuring security in refugee settlements, respect of human rights, prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, protection and more. UNHCR supports income-generating activities, with a focus on women and youth.

*“Even the most experienced trainers saw this training as a plus. It has already helped us in our ways of working and dealing with refugees.”*  
—Major Saidi Mwinji Kaslow, Deputy Superior Commissioner of the Faradje police, trained at the police school in Ituri Province in November 2019.



## GENDER EQUALITY



© UNHCR/Anna Turner  
Somali high school students share a joke during computer lessons at Ifo Secondary School in Dadaab, Kenya's largest and oldest refugee camp.

### 2019 RESULTS

**56%** of situations reporting on UNHCR's global strategic priority indicator for female participation had either improved or maintained the percentage of female participants in leadership and management structures



### UNHCR's COMMITMENTS TO WOMEN AND GIRLS

- 1 Women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in all decision making, community management and leadership structures, and committees of people of concern.
- 2 Women and girls are provided with individual registration and documentation, directly or through support provided by UNHCR.
- 3 Women and girls have equal access to and control over management and provision of food, core relief items, and cash-based interventions.
- 4 Women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities, decent work, and quality education and health services.
- 5 Women and girls have access to comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services.

UNHCR's Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity



Guided by UNHCR's five updated commitments to women and girls, as outlined in the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, the Office continued to promote and strengthen gender equality throughout its operational work.

A priority was to ensure women's equal and meaningful participation in all decision making, community management and leadership structures, as well as

committees of people of concern. Operations, including in Burkina Faso, Egypt, India, Malaysia, Nepal and Uganda, made specific efforts to provide individual registration and documentation, with an emphasis on women. In Liberia and Zambia, efforts were made to ensure equal access to and control over assistance, for example by including women on distribution committees. Access to economic opportunities and education

services was promoted in operations including in Burkina Faso, Jordan, Uganda and Yemen, where daycare in camps and community centres allowed mothers to continue their studies and engage in livelihood activities. Operations also worked with community structures to identify sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) risks and support prevention and response mechanisms.

UNHCR focused on increasing organizational gender equality capacity and strengthened its staff's ability to respond effectively to gender equality concerns across operational contexts. Colleagues from operations across Africa participated in the third cohort of UNHCR's gender equality learning programme, enhancing their capacity to function as technical gender focal points and advocates within operations.

To enable cross-operational learning and inspire action to advance gender equality, promising practices were documented and shared. This includes promising practices on gender equality from the Asia and the Pacific region, as well as a study on barriers to IDP women and girls' participation in humanitarian settings. The findings from the study were shared with staff and partners through a webinar, which was part of a series celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary

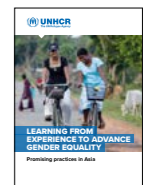
of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Operations also received guidance on how to apply the Gender with Age Marker to the operational planning process to strengthen gender equality integration in UNHCR programmes. The marker is also used to strengthen gender equality integration in projects included in Humanitarian Response Planning in inter-agency IDP responses.

### Constraints and unmet needs

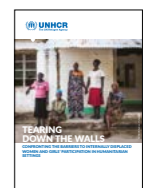
Deeply rooted and restrictive gender norms, discriminatory practices and structural barriers frequently prevent refugee women, internally displaced women and other women of concern to UNHCR from realizing their rights and participating meaningfully in the decision-making and leadership structures impacting their lives and communities.

UNHCR and partners must continuously strengthen and innovate when working with women and girls, their families and communities to maximize the change opportunities present in displacement contexts and to progressively and positively address entrenched and restrictive norms. This includes seeking out strategic partnerships around gender equality and partnering with local women's rights organizations.

Learning from experience to advance gender equality: Promising practices in Asia



Tearing down the walls: Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girl's participation in humanitarian settings



### Gender audit of the Global Refugee Forum

UNHCR promoted global-level participation and leadership of refugee women through support for a gender audit of the Global Refugee Forum and the processes leading up to it. Led by refugee women, the audit drew attention to gender equality-related challenges in refugee contexts. It sought to ensure the commitments made to refugee women and girls in the Global Compact on Refugees were acknowledged and integrated concretely through the Forum pledging process and by identifying good practices. Throughout the preparatory meetings, and at the Forum itself, the gender audit team documented the way gender equality, age, gender, diversity and SGBV were addressed by different stakeholders across key thematic areas. The team also provided specific recommendations on how to effectively implement and monitor pledges focusing on these areas.



## CHILD PROTECTION, YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT



Rohingya children participate in "Essence of Learning" activities in one of Caritas's child-friendly spaces in Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh.

### 2019 RESULTS

In **25** operations, the proportion of unaccompanied or separated refugee children for whom a Best Interests Procedure was completed or initiated increased



compared to **32** operations in 2018

In **18** operations, non-discriminatory access to national child protection and social services for refugee children was improved



compared to **22** operations in 2018

**55,769** best interests assessments were conducted in **63** operations



compared to **62,790** in **57** operations in 2018

**551** children's committees, groups and other structures were supported across 19 operations



compared to **763** such structures across **18** operations in 2018

**18** youth-led initiatives were supported under UNHCR's Youth Initiative Fund



compared to **25** in 2018

Working with national authorities, civil society, communities and children themselves, in 2019 UNHCR protected displaced and stateless children and youth by strengthening national systems, scaling up best interests procedures and improving case management, and empowering and engaging youth, children and communities.

#### Strengthening national systems

At the Global Refugee Forum, 36 pledges related to child protection and youth

empowerment were made, with concrete initiatives from States including greater inclusion of refugee children in national child protection and birth registration systems, ending child detention and ensuring family unity. Progress was made regionally, too, with UNHCR supporting Member States of the East Africa Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to strengthen their inclusion of refugees in national child systems. It also promoted cross-border

collaboration to respond to the needs of refugee and migrant children.

Demonstrating its commitment to IDPs at country level, UNHCR built up case management capacity in Iraq and enhanced the child protection expertise of 174 staff from a local NGO working with IDP children, as well as staff from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Directorate of Social Affairs. Staff were coached on child protection and case management at tailored child protection training sessions and peer-to-peer discussions.

#### Scaling up best interests procedures and improving case management

Despite UNHCR's work to scale up access to, and improve the quality of, best interests procedures and other child-friendly procedures, during the last three years the number of best interests assessments undertaken has decreased (from 65,561 in 2017 to 55,769 in 2019), while the number of unaccompanied and separated children in need has continued to increase. This has led to a widening gap between needs and access to services. Operations have cited a lack of both staffing and comprehensive, community-based programmes for children that allow for the effective identification and support of unaccompanied and separated children, and for other children at risk.

UNHCR's investment in timely identification and referral of children at risk, alongside quality best interests assessments, has been essential to improving the quality of care for children at risk. For example, UNHCR worked in the Syrian Arab Republic with ILO and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to offer specialized case management services in support of 489 IDP children engaged in the worst forms of child labour. Of these children, 10% returned to school, 8% enrolled in

vocational training and 47% joined remedial classes with the objective of returning to school in 2020.

#### Empowering and engaging youth, children and communities

UNHCR improved the linkages between case management for refugee children and family strengthening initiatives, in line with guidance from the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. In Uganda, UNHCR reinforced alternative care monitoring for unaccompanied and separated children and positive parenting activities. UNHCR and partners trained 1,148 stakeholders to identify children at risk and implemented the Best Interests Procedure for individual children in need of targeted support. Together, they also conducted positive parenting training for 15,027 parents and caregivers, and awareness sessions on ending violence against children for 10,921 community members and 2,566 adolescents.

UNHCR supported a range of initiatives to strengthen youth leadership and action, including through youth-led projects, the Global Youth Advisory Council, and capacity building for youth. In 2019, UNHCR funded 18 youth-led projects in 16 countries under the Youth Initiative Fund. Some 900 refugees, host community and IDP youths identified creative solutions to address the protection problems they faced, including sexual and gender-based violence, child protection, integration with host communities, and the lack of education and livelihood opportunities.

#### Coordination, knowledge, and information management

UNHCR strengthened information management capacity for child protection to maximize resources, ensuring smarter, more effective and evidence-based programming.

Such investments resulted in 30 UNHCR operations using the child protection module in proGres v4, UNHCR’s case management software, up from 16 at the end of 2018. At the end of 2019, 8,047 child protection cases were entered in proGres v4, a 150% increase compared to 2018.

**Constraints and unmet needs**

In promoting inclusion in national child protection systems, challenges remained due to the complexity of the issues and involvement by stakeholders. Legal, policy or procedural barriers often prevented access to child protection systems and services. Where national child protection systems were accessible to refugees and other children of concern, key service providers often lacked the knowledge and capacity to effectively coordinate and respond to the complex protection needs of these children.

For UNHCR and its governmental and NGO partners, a commonly cited challenge in providing quality case management for children at risk was insufficient staffing. Further challenges included sudden increases in the numbers of unaccompanied and separated children and their onward movement in crises; little support for foster families; lack of access to unaccompanied and separated children in detention; limited capacity on best interests procedures; limited availability of durable solutions and specialized services; and weak national systems.

There is a strong foundation of innovative approaches to youth programming across UNHCR. However, no streamlined way exists to capture youth-disaggregated data across humanitarian agencies. This continued lack of a common means to systematically track progress and ensure accountability for the implementation of the Core Actions for Youth is hampering further progress.

**Delivering through partnerships**



**Football providing role models and mentors for children**

From May 2019 to February 2020, UNHCR teamed up with the Scort Foundation and the FCSA—the Football Club Social Alliance, a network of European football clubs from Austria, Germany and Switzerland—to implement the Young Coach Education Programme in Mexico.

This programme, which in the past few years has been rolled out in conflict-affected, post-war or developing regions around the world, uses football to create positive social change within host communities like in Mexico by empowering young people to become role models and mentors for children.

Drawn from 15 of UNHCR’s local partners in Mexico, 41 young adults were educated to become so-called Young Coaches—community leaders and grassroots football coaches for children aged 6-12. They learned how to promote the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers through football, how to pass on important values such as acceptance, openness and tolerance, and thus how to ease tensions between refugee and host populations.

During the modules, UNHCR and partners provided the Young Coaches with knowledge on relevant social topics such as child protection and sexual and gender-based violence, which now helps them in their work with youth. To date, the Young Coaches have passed on their knowledge to 321 peers, and over 7,700 children from both host and refugee populations have benefitted from these regular activities.

FCSA works with UNHCR in five different locations, providing full funding for programmes to use sport education and football as a tool to help integrate refugee children into their new communities.



© Scort Foundation

**PROTECTING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OLDER PERSONS**



© UNHCR/Amr Al-Sayid

Refugees returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan rebuild despite challenges.

**2019 RESULTS**

**30** operations reported progress in the percentage of older persons of concern who received services for their needs



**49** operations reported progress in the percentage of people of concern with disabilities who receive services for their needs



Persons with disabilities make up an estimated 15% of the global population, although disability prevalence in situations of forced displacement, particularly among refugees and other displaced populations, is estimated to be considerably higher.

The year saw the launch of two new resources to enhance UNHCR’s capacity to better protect and respond to the needs of persons with disabilities in situations of

forced displacement. The new e-learning programme provides an understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities, offers a foundation to strengthen inclusion, and suggests practical approaches to addressing barriers and fostering participation. The revised need-to-know guidance on working with persons with disabilities in situations of forced displacement presents principles and

actions for strengthening UNHCR's work across all areas of protection, assistance and solutions.

In line with UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, efforts to collect data disaggregated by age, sex and disability as a minimum diversity requirement were strengthened. To better identify persons with disabilities in Algeria, Lebanon and Mauritania, UNHCR operations started using the Washington Group Questions, a standardized set of questions designed to identify people with disabilities during registration activities. In Jordan, these questions were included in the vulnerability assessment framework. Data from this assessment ultimately revealed that up to 21% of Syrian refugees were living with a disability and 45% of households had at least one individual with a disability.

To further advance the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNHCR actively contributed to developing the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and the IASC guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

At the regional and country levels, collaboration was strengthened with national and international disability and ageing partners, including organizations of persons with disabilities, the International Disability Alliance, Humanity and Inclusion and HelpAge International. For example, in Lebanon, UNHCR collaborated with the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union

to improve support for those with disabilities during a humanitarian response. As a result, the Union signed cooperation protocols with 97 companies, which began adding inclusion standards to their employment policies, as well as ensuring full accessibility to their buildings. In Yemen, 156 children with disabilities had access to rehabilitation and education services in UNHCR-run early learning centres for children with disabilities, preparing them to enroll and learn in formal schools. In Libya, UNHCR collaborated with Humanity and Inclusion and four organizations of persons with disabilities to offer support to refugees and advocate their inclusion in social activities and vocational training, as well as their access to prosthetic devices and information and awareness raising. Over 860 persons with disabilities accessed rehabilitation services.

As a result of UNHCR's consultations with organizations of persons with disabilities to prepare for the Global Refugee Forum, 14 pledges supporting UNHCR's work on disability inclusion were made at the Forum. Commitments, most of which were global in scope and coverage, included developing policies and programmes that are disability inclusive; strengthening disability-inclusive practices in education and livelihood projects; supporting the institutionalization of disability inclusion in all UNHCR's activities through greater technical capacity; and facilitating the integration of refugees with disabilities.

They also pledged to strengthen the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities for meaningful participation and leadership, which is expected to generate an institutional agreement for collaboration between the International Disability Alliance and UNHCR in 2020.

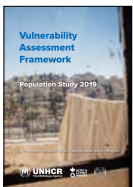
Recognizing the need to prioritize work on disability inclusion, UNHCR invested in additional staff resources to ensure both institutional mainstreaming and disability inclusion at the country level.

### Constraints and unmet needs

As displaced populations are often located in areas of conflict with limited government infrastructure, persons with disabilities remain under identified and do not fully

access assistance or services. UNHCR's methodology used to collect data on disability still relies heavily on observation (82% of all data disaggregated by disability), which is not in line with international recommendations. As such, the most pressing constraints identified in relation to the objectives laid out in the Global Compact on Refugees include: the development of harmonized or interoperable standards for the collection, analysis, and sharing of age, gender, disability and diversity disaggregated data on refugees and returnees; dedicated human and financial resources; and expertise to strengthen accessibility and the provision of reasonable accommodation in all refugee responses.

Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Population Study 2019



© Courtesy of Baw Ra



### Internally displaced persons with disabilities share their stories

Since 2017, UNHCR has partnered with professional photographers to provide a 12-day masterclass on photo storytelling in Myanmar for internally displaced people with disabilities and their caregivers. The project empowers displaced persons with disabilities by giving them the skills, confidence and opportunity to tell their story and advocate for their needs. It also enables caregivers and frontline humanitarian workers to raise awareness on disability and the challenges associated with disability.

In February 2019, Baw Ra, a young woman who acquired a physical disability when she was five, was selected to compete in the Yangon Photo Festival and won third prize in the emerging photographers category. She subsequently shared her skills in photo-training workshops for other displaced persons living with a disability in IDP camps in Kachin State.

↓ ↓  
 **PROTECTING LGBTI PERSONS IN FORCED DISPLACEMENT**



UNHCR/Diego Barria Sanchez

Two Syrian refugees who risked their lives for the sake of love, await resettlement.

**2019 RESULTS**

**5** regional consultations organized to better assess protection risks and priorities of LGBTI persons in forced displacement



Partnerships with global, regional and national LGBTI stakeholders established or strengthened through regional consultations



**50** UNHCR and partner staff in East Africa benefited from the LGBTI learning programme "Working with LGBTI persons in forced displacement"



UNHCR has made steady progress in the last several years to better protect persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. These efforts have included issuing guidance and tools, and developing training that help create safe spaces and identify solutions for LGBTI persons of concern.

Despite this progress, in most operations, many LGBTI refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and returnees continued to experience discrimination and abuse. To counter this, UNHCR operations around the world invested in better understanding

of the needs and protection risks faced by LGBTI persons in forced displacement to ensure a rights-based and results-oriented response. This included creating a welcoming environment in UNHCR and partner offices, engaging with LGBTI displaced communities and their organizations, ensuring communication and feedback channels are accessible to them, and that services are available and accessible for those in need.

In Jordan, for example, UNHCR ensured its offices were safe for LGBTI persons and that staff were trained to identify and

address their concerns. Specific measures included a network of LGBTI-sensitized staff and fast-track, confidential and specialized standard operating procedures. Similarly, in Uganda, UNHCR established and trained gender and LGBTI focal points in all settlements, while in the Venezuela situation, questions on LGBTI protection risks were included in the protection monitoring tool used in all countries involved in the response.

Other operations recruited LGBTI refugees as outreach workers with the aim of conducting targeted and low-profile information sessions that meet the information needs of LGBTI refugees. In Thailand, in collaboration with an operational partner, a peer support group for LGBTI persons of concern was established to combat the overwhelming feelings of isolation often experienced by individuals in this population. In Ecuador, UNHCR reviewed its partner's interview and registration process to ensure sensitivity towards LGBTI persons and partnered with LGBTI organizations to establish safe spaces.

UNHCR continued to invest significantly in training and capacity-building of staff, partners, asylum officers and service providers, both at Headquarters and

country level. The official UNHCR learning programme on working with LGBTI persons in forced displacement was organized with a primary focus on East Africa. In addition to the global and regional training initiatives, operations also organized country-level training sessions that were contextualized and adapted to national needs, such as in Belgium, Israel, Kenya, Mozambique, Tajikistan and Uganda.

**Constraints and unmet needs**

In many parts of the world, LGBTI persons of concern face virulent and often violent discrimination. Despite all efforts, they remain a largely under-identified population and, as such, targeted programmes and interventions remain limited. Building the capacity to the required scale of UNHCR staff, partners, service providers and asylum adjudicators in this area will require significant further investment.

While identified LGBTI refugees most at risk are prioritized for RSD and resettlement, the reality of shrinking resettlement opportunities dictates that more effort must be dedicated to identifying alternatives, including complementary pathways and carefully-crafted integration strategies, where possible.

**LGBTI regional consultations across the globe**

Beginning in May 2019, UNHCR embarked on regional consultations in the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, and East and West Africa to gain a contemporary understanding of the protection risks, perspectives and priorities of LGBTI persons in forced displacement. A wide range of actors in the LGBTI space were consulted, including civil society advocates and those displaced with an LGBTI profile. In addition to fostering the creation of new networks and avenues of collaboration, findings from these consultations will be the basis of a global round table in 2020, aimed at identifying concrete actions that will advance protection and solutions for LGBTI displaced and stateless persons.