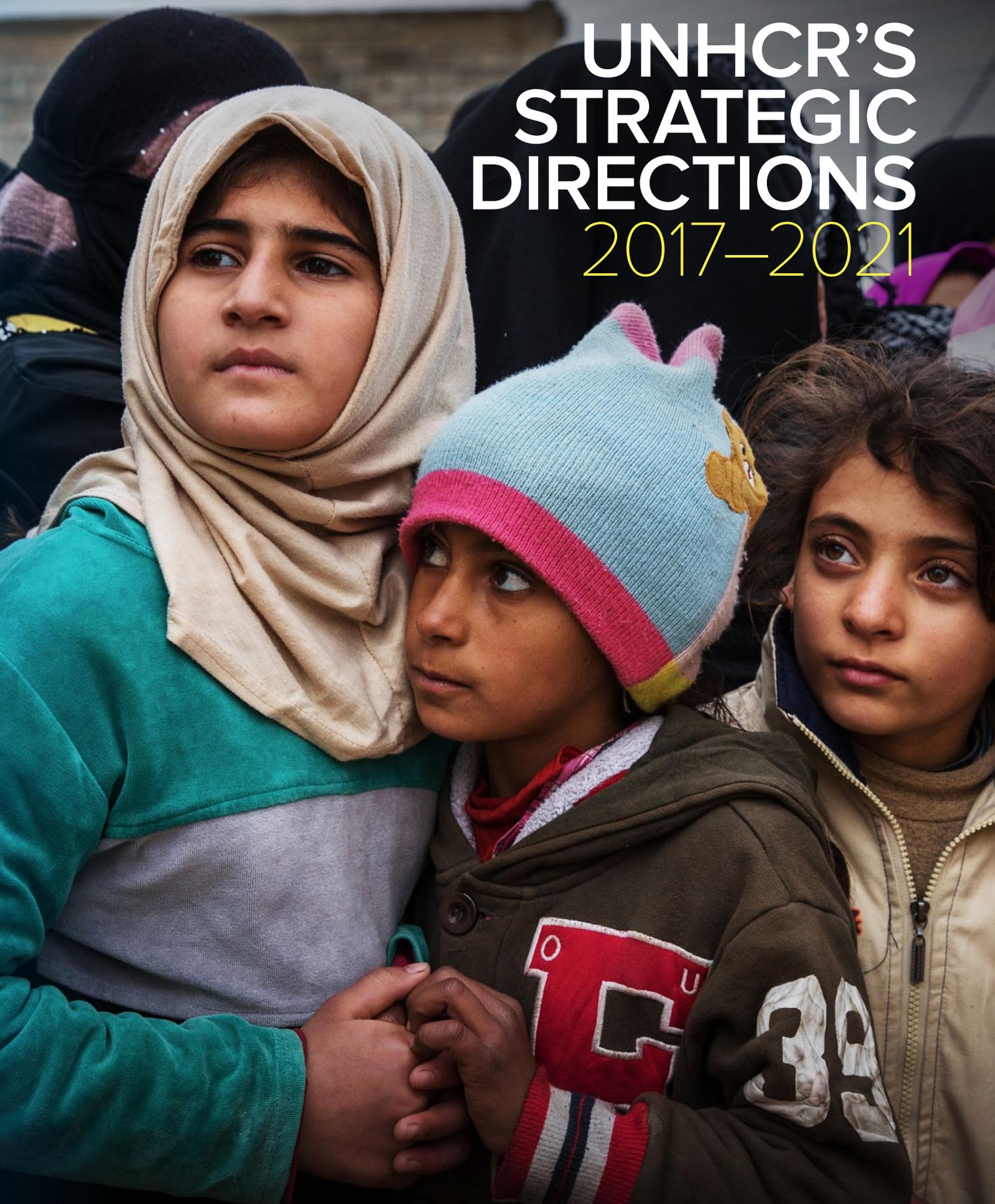




**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# UNHCR'S STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2017–2021



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*Front cover: Internally displaced Iraqi people at an aid distribution in Mosul, December 2016*

© UNHCR/IVOR PRICKETT

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# UNHCR'S STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2017–2021

UNHCR, 16 January 2017

# Introduction

This document describes the challenges and opportunities that characterize forced displacement in today's complex global environment, and sets out the strategic directions that UNHCR will pursue in the coming five years.

It describes the approach that will shape UNHCR's work, including its commitment to put people first, to strengthen and diversify partnerships, to work across the entire spectrum of forced displacement, and to provide practical, concrete support to States to secure protection and solutions for refugees, the internally displaced and stateless people.

It elaborates five core directions on which UNHCR will focus – protection; responding in emergencies and beyond; promoting inclusion and self-reliance, including through the engagement of development actors; the empowerment of the people UNHCR serves; and the pursuit of solutions.

The document also describes the institutional changes UNHCR will undertake in order to pursue these directions, and to optimize its responsiveness, effectiveness and institutional accountability.

Given the diversity of UNHCR's operations worldwide, the elements set out in this document are not a prescriptive list of priorities to be applied across all operations. Their purpose is, rather, to chart an overall course in relation to major global challenges over the next five years.



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# A WORLD IN DISARRAY

## Causes and consequences of forced displacement

By the end of 2015, over 65 million people worldwide were displaced from their homes by conflict and persecution - up from 37 million ten years ago, and the highest number seen in decades. The tally for the year included 40.8 million people internally displaced by conflict, violence and human rights violations, over 21 million refugees,<sup>1</sup> and more than three million asylum-seekers. In 2015 alone, an estimated 12.4 million people were newly displaced, including 8.6 million inside their own countries and 1.8 million refugees, and 500,000 new refugees also fled in the first half of 2016. Numbers are likely to continue to increase in 2017 and beyond if the circumstances driving displacement persist, or as communities currently trapped in enclaves or besieged as a deliberate tactic by parties to conflicts become able to move in search of safety.

The immediate causes of refugee flows and internal displacement today are armed conflict,

violence, insecurity and human rights abuses. Major conflicts have grown in intensity and are causing many more fatalities, particularly amongst civilians, than even five years ago. Continuing conflicts around the world – some lasting for decades, some intensifying and very much in the public eye, others virtually forgotten – have forced millions of civilians to flee their homes, often several times, with no clear-cut solutions in sight.

The causes and characteristics of conflict are variable and complex. Some of the most deadly and intractable recent conflicts have been complicated by forms of violent extremism. Criminality is also - increasingly - a cause or a result of conflict or violence, subverting institutions of governance that may already be non-inclusive, perceived as illegitimate, or simply weak. Most violent conflicts today are characterized by an utter disregard for civilian life, and the deliberate targeting of civilian populations

<sup>1</sup> This figure includes 5.2 million Palestinian refugees who fall within the competence of UNRWA.



*Families displaced by fighting in the village of Shora, 25 kilometres south of Mosul, gather at an army checkpoint on the outskirts of Qayyarah. November 2016. © UNHCR/IVOR PRICKETT*

is commonplace. Other gross and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are also widespread, including, in the context of humanitarian action, through the obstruction of humanitarian access or the deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers.

Against this background of protracted and escalating conflicts, the number of refugees returning home has been at a historical low. In 2014, fewer than 127,000 returned to their countries, and only 200,000 in 2015 - the lowest numbers in many years. While numbers increased somewhat in 2016, this does not represent a general trend, and returns often took place in less than ideal circumstances and against a complex backdrop of ongoing protection challenges and limited prospects in countries of asylum. Solutions for large numbers of internally displaced people have been similarly elusive; in many countries, they have been displaced not just once, but multiple times, because of their inability to find safety or a sustainable means for survival. Often, they remain disconnected from the rest of the population and find it hard to restart their lives.

The consequences of the failure to find solutions for so many forcibly displaced people, or to provide them with opportunities to lead productive and meaningful lives in the meantime, are not only borne by the people themselves but also entail serious costs and risks for hosting communities and States.

If conflict is the primary driver of forced displacement today, it is not the only cause. Large numbers of people have also continued to flee their countries because of serious human rights abuses, including severe discrimination, weak rule of law and other aspects of bad and non-inclusive governance. Others are on the move because of acute poverty, the collapse of traditional livelihoods in a context of globalization and rapid urbanization, the effects of climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation which often exacerbate competition over scarce resources. Often these various factors overlap or reinforce others. The fact that ten million stateless people lack the fundamental rights associated with citizenship is a further source of instability and displacement.

## Protection in times of crisis

The impact of forced displacement today is highly asymmetrical. Almost two thirds of those compelled to move by conflict, violence or persecution remain within the borders of their own countries, often amidst ongoing conflict in a broader context of state fragility, directly exposed to gross violations of international humanitarian law, and with limited access to protection and support. Addressing the complex protection needs of the internally displaced and restoring

their rights is often critical to laying the foundations for greater stability and solutions for both IDPs and refugees.

In 2015, eighty-six per cent of all refugees of concern to UNHCR were in low and middle income countries close to situations of conflict. Often the level of international support these countries receive does not correspond to the scale of the responsibilities they shoulder or to the needs of the people they admit. Many continue to open their borders and to provide asylum and various forms of support to large numbers of refugees, often in circumstances in which they themselves lack the resources to cope or even to meet fully the needs of their own nationals. Despite all the challenges, it is evident that the overall commitment to providing refugee protection strongly resonates in today's world and is deeply embedded in all cultures and religions.

Nevertheless, generous though the asylum practices of many front-line States have been, large numbers of refugees remain without solutions, without prospects, without the freedom and resources to rebuild their lives and take charge of their future. They include a growing number of refugee children, who today make up 51 percent of the world's refugees, some without family members, many without access to proper education and all without the anchor of a home, and large numbers of refugee women and girls who face multiple dangers in exile, including sexual exploitation and abuse.

Moreover, patterns of displacement are also changing in a rapidly urbanizing world. While significant numbers of refugees and internally displaced people are still confined to camps or live scattered in rural areas, the number fleeing into



*A UNHCR staff member assists newly-arrived talks to refugees in Lesvos, Greece, January 2016. © UNHCR/HEREWARD HOLLAND*

urban settings has grown, further exacerbating problems of urban poverty and exclusion. Today, six out of every 10 refugees falling under UNHCR's mandate live in urban areas.

All of this contributes to the complex mix of factors that leads increasing numbers of forcibly displaced people, including unaccompanied and separated children, to move onwards within and beyond their own regions, in search of protection, livelihoods and the prospect of a future. With few legal opportunities available, many find themselves using the same dangerous land and sea routes as irregular migrants and encounter the same exploitation and life-threatening risks at the hands of smuggling and trafficking networks.

These onward movements, although smaller in scale than the displacement impacting States in regions of origin, have had major political and social repercussions in the countries affected by them, and the commitment of States to provide asylum and uphold the rights of refugees has, in many cases, been weakened. Mixed flows of refugees and irregular migrants, with few options for migration through regular channels, have put pressure on asylum procedures, fuelling perceptions that asylum is being abused. Meanwhile, economic uncertainty has given rise to negative attitudes towards immigrants more generally, amidst concerns over competition for jobs and social services, while acts of international terrorism have heightened anxiety about national security. In an increasing number of instances, shared social values and traditions are perceived to be under threat, levels of xenophobia are on the rise, and there is a growing politicization of migration and refugee issues.

In this context, some countries have taken measures to restrict access to their territories, reduce the level of rights they provide to refugees, and even prevent them from reaching safety. Some have set up barriers to entry, including arrangements to transfer asylum-seekers and refugees to other countries where many of their rights cannot be properly assured. Others have introduced quotas on the number of applicants admitted to asylum procedures, or resorted to measures such as the unwarranted detention of asylum-seekers, confiscation of assets, increased visa requirements, and interdiction practices. Restrictions of this kind have at times had the effect of driving refugees underground into smuggling or other exploitative networks, or simply diverting them towards other countries.

Current challenges are likely to persist over the next five years and beyond. Instability, conflict and large scale displacement appear set to continue in a number of regions in the absence of effective measures to address underlying causes. At the same time, the dynamic and evolving nature of today's major crises, including shifts in territorial control and the emergence of new actors and drivers of conflict, means that displacement flows are constantly changing, and even where there is no definitive end to conflict, spontaneous returns and possibilities for other solutions may open up in certain locations even as new displacement takes place elsewhere. Progress towards a political settlement in any one of today's major conflicts could have a dramatic impact on the prospects for millions of refugees and internally displaced people. Meanwhile, in many mature economies, economic uncertainty and the perceived negative impact of globalization are likely continue to fuel a nationalistic reflex and a range of social and political concerns that will also influence migration and asylum policies.

## New and emerging opportunities

Yet crisis has also given impetus to positive developments. People uprooted and in search of safety have continued to be admitted to safety and to encounter a remarkable level of solidarity among host communities in many parts of the world. The already strong involvement of non-governmental organizations in support of refugees and displaced people has gained additional impetus and has been strengthened and diversified by the emergence of new local actors. In many cases, there has been stronger involvement of specialized government agencies and of local authorities. There has been an upsurge in volunteerism and a broadening of civil society engagement on refugee issues in various regions, with many people opening their homes to refugees, becoming engaged in community projects and providing direct support.

At the same time, there has been increased recognition that refugees and internally displaced people can contribute to host communities and to local economies, if entry to the labour market and other forms of livelihoods are facilitated and barriers to inclusion removed. Many cities and municipalities have developed creative and innovative social cohesion and integration schemes. Very significantly, international financial institutions are developing new financial instruments for engagement in displacement situations, including in middle-income countries.

At the global level, there has been an appetite for new approaches that go beyond traditional humanitarian action, and a realization that forced displacement is not just a humanitarian but also a political and a development challenge. Several recent high-level initiatives to promote

international solidarity provide grounds for hope that more positive and comprehensive approaches to the tragedy of forced displacement may yet be within reach.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted by world leaders at the UN General Assembly in September 2015, and its commitment to 'leave no-one behind' provide a powerful basis for the inclusion of refugees, the internally displaced and stateless people in economic development planning, as well as in all other measures taken by States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the *World Humanitarian Summit* held in May 2016, far-reaching commitments were made, including through the Grand Bargain, to promote greater coherence, efficiencies, transparency and accountability on the part of key humanitarian aid organizations and donor countries, as well as flexible funding arrangements.

And just months later, at the first ever UN Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a historic Declaration which reaffirms, with unprecedented force, the obligations of States to fully respect the rights of refugees and migrants. Acknowledging the burden that large movements of refugees impose on national resources, especially in the case of developing countries, the *New York Declaration* also makes ground-breaking commitments in terms of international solidarity, burden and responsibility-sharing and calls for a paradigm shift in the response to large-scale refugee situations. At the Leaders' Summit co-chaired by the President of

the United States, the UN Secretary General and other Member States the day after the Declaration was adopted, a number of countries announced important policy, financial and solutions-oriented commitments.

Central to the approach set out in the New York Declaration is a *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF) which aims to secure the engagement of a much broader coalition of actors, including development actors and the private sector, in addressing both immediate and longer-term needs of refugees and host communities, and in supporting them to become resilient and self-reliant. Equally important is the call on States to expand opportunities for solutions.

UNHCR has been tasked with further developing this Framework as the basis for the adoption of a *Global Compact on Refugees* in 2018. This task, and the subsequent implementation of the Global Compact, will be central to our strategic directions in the next few years. A substantive dialogue with and among States and other key partners will be a priority in the effort to achieve the ambitions of the New York Declaration, notably the CRRF, and to steer the follow-up to the Global Compact once adopted.



German language class for asylum seekers in Austria, December 2016. © UNHCR/GORDON WELTERS

# RISING TO THE CHALLENGE — OUR APPROACH

*A UNHCR staff member helps Burundian refugees build a shelter in Nduta refugee camp, Tanzania, February 2016. © UNHCR/SEBASTIAN RICH*

UNHCR is the world’s leading organization charged with protecting refugees and other forcibly displaced people and with helping to resolve problems of statelessness. In the course of our 65-year history, the massive challenges of forced displacement have led us to move beyond our primary role in protecting and assisting refugees and helping to solve refugee problems, into a broader engagement with people forcibly displaced inside their own countries. Our work extends as well to important areas of prevention and stabilization, including efforts to address the situation of the world’s estimated 10 million stateless people.

Today, the scale and complexity of situations of forced displacement, the lack of commensurate solutions, and the rapidly changing global environment in which displacement is occurring give rise to unprecedented demands to which we must adapt and respond. The following key considerations will guide our approach over the next five years.

## Putting people first

Refugees, the internally displaced, and stateless people are of concern to UNHCR wherever and whoever they are. Their rights, needs, dignity and perspectives will continue to define and shape our work. With a firm commitment to putting people first, our priority will be to bring about concrete improvements in the lives of all those we work for. In simple terms, this means finding ways to ensure that people uprooted from their homes by conflict, violence and persecution, or who are stateless or at risk of losing their nationality, can find protection from harm; live peacefully; learn, work and flourish as contributing members of the communities where they live; and find longer term solutions that enable them to build a secure future.

In playing our role, we will seek to be as close as possible to the people we serve. We will maintain our direct and unique knowledge of their perspectives, aspirations and circumstances through our extensive field presence, which currently comprises 450 offices in 128 countries, including in the world's most unstable and insecure areas. We will draw on the rich range of experiences, capacities and aspirations of displaced and stateless men, women, girls and boys, and their diverse ethnic, gender and other identities. We will be answerable to the people we serve and strive to ensure that their voices, perspectives and priorities are heard and acted on – not just by us, but by all those whose decisions have an impact on their lives.

## Strengthening and diversifying partnerships

There is a growing recognition that the engagement of a broad range of actors - including those beyond the traditional humanitarian sphere - is critical to mobilising an effective response and pursuing solutions to forced displacement and statelessness today. We will step up our efforts in this regard, developing operational and advocacy partnerships with regional, national and local actors, as well as forging strategic alliances in key areas.

The CRRF annexed to the New York Declaration provides an important platform for developing partnership-based responses to large-scale refugee situations and for engaging with both States and a wide range of existing and new partners, including development actors and financial institutions. Individuals and companies in the private sector are also increasingly prominent and visible partners, contributing with funding, technical expertise, creativity, and innovation. They are also often well positioned to drive policy change and influence public opinion, and will play an important role in the application of the CRRF. As work on the development of the CRRF is taken forward, it will potentially have a transformative effect across the entire spectrum of our work and the partnerships that support it.

More broadly, we will give strong priority to extending and strengthening partnerships in ways that make the most effective use of available resources and expertise - taking full advantage of the diverse funding pools available to different actors and drawing on complementarities, while focussing our own funding and activities on areas where we best add value. We already maintain relationships with more than 900 partners, including NGOs, governmental institutions and UN

agencies. We channel some 40 per cent of our annual expenditure through partners, and work with many who bring their own resources and expertise to operations. We will make particular investments in strengthening our collaboration with national and local partners, working to complement and reinforce national capacities, with an emphasis on sustainability.

## Supporting States to address protection challenges

As a multilateral institution, we work closely with States, who are the principal actors in providing protection and in enabling solutions to problems of forced displacement and statelessness. We will carry out our work with States in principled ways that are at the same time responsive to the political, economic and security problems that they encounter in the face of large-scale displacement. Our aim will be to secure adherence to protection standards by offering practical support and solutions. While maintaining a strong continuity of purpose and tools tried and tested over many years, we will adapt creatively, seeking problem-solving approaches, including through the work we do to develop comprehensive responses to refugee situations under the CRRF.

## Working across the entire spectrum of forced displacement

We will engage across the entire spectrum of forced displacement, with refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people, endeavouring to ensure access to protection, address factors that may contribute to further displacement or onward movement, and give a stronger impetus to both solutions and prevention. In particular, we will ensure a more decisive and predictable engagement with internally displaced people, in collaboration with our partners, and guided by the policy, coordination and operational arrangements established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We will do this in a manner that takes into account our different responsibilities for different categories of forcibly displaced people.

# WHAT WE WILL DO: FIVE CORE DIRECTIONS

Over the next five years we will place particular emphasis on the following **five core directions** which, taken together, will advance protection and solutions for refugees, internally displaced and stateless people.

Efforts in these areas will be pursued in a mutually reinforcing and integrated way. While being itself a set of specific activities to safeguard rights and address needs, protection will also drive and underpin all areas of activity. At the level of delivery, work in the different areas will feed into our planning and operations. It will also inform our efforts to develop the comprehensive approaches

to large scale refugee situations called for by the *New York Declaration*.

In pursuing these objectives, we will exercise leadership wherever expected and appropriate, but will also rely extensively on a range of robust and dynamic partnerships in support of shared goals across all areas of our work.

.....  
We commit ourselves to:

Protect

Respond

Include

Empower

Solve

.....

*Displaced Iraqis prepare for dinner next to UNHCR tents, a month ahead of winter's arrival, November 2014. © UNHCR/DOMINIC NAHR*

# 1. Protect



A UNHCR staff member talks to a displaced family at the Chami Ruru settlement, Colombia. December 2013. © UNHCR/SEBASTIAN RICH

At a time when the fundamental principles of protection, asylum and access to safety are being severely tested, we will work to secure and defend the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people and to ensure that they are protected from harm. Taking a holistic approach that encompasses the entire continuum of forced displacement, we will seek to embed the need for protection and solutions at the centre of our response. In doing this, we will work in strong partnership with the people we serve, as well as with States, helping the latter to develop, both individually and collectively, principled, practical and problem-solving approaches to protection challenges.

## We will:

- **act as a strong, principled and persuasive advocate for the rights and needs of forcibly displaced people and of stateless persons**, working to ensure that refugees and the internally displaced have access to safety, are protected from return into situations of harm, and that all have access to the enjoyment of their rights and to appropriate standards of treatment;
- **strengthen protection across the whole spectrum of forced displacement**, ensuring that a protection perspective is central to all aspects of our work with the people we serve - be they asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced or stateless people - and guides broader humanitarian action and engagement by others;
- **engage more decisively and predictably in situations of internal displacement**, undertaking concerted operational, advocacy and strategic efforts to achieve better protection for internally displaced people;
- **pursue creative, principled and pragmatic approaches** to the challenges of forced displacement and statelessness, that are based on a dynamic interpretation and the progressive development of law and practice, are responsive to current trends, focused on solutions, and supported by research, analysis and a strong evidence base;
- **promote responsibility-sharing arrangements amongst States**, which expand support to countries and regions receiving large numbers of refugees, strengthen protection, help stabilize displacement situations, and improve access to solutions - applying and adapting the CRRF approach to specific contexts;
- **further strengthen our operational capacity for the delivery of protection**, prioritizing registration and documentation of refugees, the protection of unaccompanied or separated children and measures to protect and empower displaced women and girls;
- **strengthen regional and national protection frameworks and capacities**, working closely with States and other relevant institutions and actors

- **engage with Governments and strategic partners on how to respond to mixed flows of asylum-seekers and migrants** in ways that address the concerns of States, including national security considerations, while ensuring that rights are respected and that refugees have access to protection and solutions;
- **undertake strategic, evidence-based advocacy and outreach** to mobilize support for the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced and stateless people, including through constructive engagement with people who may feel disenfranchised and marginalized in their own societies, to build a climate of confidence and promote tolerance;
- mobilize States, development actors, civil society and the UN family to **ensure that global support for the Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024 yields concrete results** in terms of the resolution of protracted statelessness situations and the prevention of statelessness in line with the solutions-oriented targets contained in the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness.
- **reinforce our contribution on protection matters within UN/ Humanitarian Country Teams**, providing protection expertise and analysis of protection risks and needs affecting entire crisis-affected populations, and driving and supporting the development of related protection and solutions strategies; and
- **contribute to advancing legal, policy and practical solutions for the protection of people displaced by the effects of climate change and natural disasters**, in recognition of the acute humanitarian needs associated with displacement of this kind, and its relationship to conflict and instability.

## 2. Respond

*Burundian refugees are transferred from the shore of Lake Tanganyika, on Kagunga Peninsula in Tanzania, to the MV Liemba, May 2015.*

© UNHCR/BENJAMIN LOYSEAU

More than ever, we will give priority to maintaining and building our capacity to mobilize rapidly, reliably and effectively in response to emergencies, and to strengthening emergency preparedness. Both in emergencies and beyond, our focus will be on ensuring that protection is secured and human needs are met.

We will leverage the opportunities created by the New York Declaration and the CRRF to mobilise operational partnerships and coalitions of actors, and progressively diversify sources of support and funding, focusing our own activities on leadership and coordination where direct assistance is available from other actors, or where other investments can offer better solutions to refugees and internally displaced people.

At the same time we will maintain an operational engagement sufficient to ensure protection, as well as the expertise, capability and readiness to deliver in line with our mandated accountabilities. We will aim for a response that responds to the priorities and needs of those uprooted and displaced, protects them from harm, draws on and supports local capacities, and promotes longer-term inclusion and self-reliance.

## We will:

- **maintain and reinforce our capacity to respond to emergencies in a rapid and effective way** in order to ensure that lives are not lost, that harm does not befall people of concern to us, and that protection is assured;
- **ensure effective preparedness for displacement emergencies**, working collaboratively with partners, including national and local governments and organizations, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;
- **invest in building the preparedness and response capacity of national actors**, in recognition of their role as first, local-level responders, and support their participation as equal partners in coordination mechanisms;
- **strengthen an early focus on solutions** in the context of the CRRF, by engaging a broader range of actors, including development organizations, from the emergency preparedness phase, helping them develop the reflexes and mechanisms required for participation in emergency response;
- **lead and coordinate responses to refugee emergencies in close collaboration with national authorities**, working to optimize coherence within the United Nations system and engaging a broad range of actors in the context of the CRRF;
- **maintain the technical capacity to set policies and standards in key assistance sectors** such as education, health, shelter, and livelihoods, as well as to develop tools, ensure technical integrity, engage effectively in partnerships, and coordinate responses;
- **maintain the expertise and capability to deliver assistance in emergencies and beyond, prioritizing the most vulnerable**, wherever the capacity of local and national partners is weak, where assistance is not available from other sources, or when the delivery of assistance yields important protection dividends;

- as part of a broader inter-agency response, **engage in a more consistent, predictable and in a sustainable way in situations of internal displacement, assuming both a coordination and an operational delivery role** in the areas of protection, camp coordination and camp management, and emergency shelter, and making every effort to ensure that key needs are met, focusing on the most vulnerable.
- **contribute to any inter-agency response to emergencies resulting from natural disasters**, with a particular focus on providing protection leadership, where the three criteria of field presence, a government request and inter-agency agreement are met; and;
- **formulate all assistance interventions with a protection and solutions orientation in mind** which addresses risks and ensures access to safety and support, builds bridges to local communities and capacities, and maximizes opportunities for inclusion in local services and self-reliance;



*Burundian refugees seek refuge in the Democratic Republic of Congo, October 2016. © UNHCR/EDUARDO SOTERAS JALIL*

## 3. Include

*The Iranian government, supported by UNHCR, has encouraged Afghan children living in the country to enter the state school system. Seven-year-old Mahdieh attended summer school before the official opening of the school year, September 2015. © UNHCR/SEBASTIAN RICH*

At a time when increasing numbers of displaced people live in a situation of long-term marginalization, we will place stronger emphasis on encouraging their inclusion in national services and economies, and mobilizing development interventions to support these efforts. We will make a priority of helping to connect refugees, internally displaced and stateless people to local systems and communities, reducing their dependency on aid, enabling the progressive realization of their rights and better preparing them for eventual solutions. To help bear the main cost of such inclusion, and in the spirit of the New York Declaration, we will multiply efforts - including through the development of the CRRF - to mobilize support to States and communities hosting refugees and internally displaced people.

## We will:

- build on the commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no-one behind, and on the Sustainable Development Goals to **promote the inclusion of refugees, the internally displaced and stateless people in National Development Frameworks**;
- engage strongly with States, host communities, civil society, and key national service providers to **promote the inclusion of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people in mainstream national systems**, including health and education, pending durable solutions to their displacement;
- engage with international development actors and financial institutions to **secure the inclusion of refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people in the strategies, planning and financing instruments of development programmes**, with a view to strengthening the capacity of national services and systems to respond to their needs;
- work closely with States to **discourage approaches which locate people in camps or separate settlements** or contribute to exclusion in other ways;
- place **increased emphasis on cash-based forms of assistance** which promote and support the inclusion of displaced people and benefit local communities and economies, with the aim of significantly increasing funds programmed for cash-based interventions; and
- **present an evidence-based case for enabling displaced and stateless people to contribute to the communities in which they live** and secure their own futures, including through freedom of movement, education (including tertiary education) and access to employment and other economic opportunities.



## 4. Empower

South Sudanese refugee women winnow rice harvested from a farm in Mirieyi village in Adjumani in Northern Uganda, January 2017. UNHCR/MICHELE SIBILO

At a time when a larger than ever number of forcibly displaced people are left in a state of dependency, we will take all possible steps to ensure that people of concern can participate in decisions that affect them and thereby gain better control over their own destinies. We will build on the resilience, knowledge and skills of displaced and stateless people, recognizing them as agents with the potential to determine and build their own future and contribute to the development of the communities where they live.

## We will:

- hold ourselves accountable to the people we serve in all aspects of **our work** by involving them, including women and youth, in identifying and analysing their needs and the risks they face, and in designing, implementing and evaluating our operations;
- ensure that **confidential feedback mechanisms are in place** for people who are unable or prefer not to air their concerns and grievances openly, or who wish to report abuse;
- ensure that our programmes and activities take account of diverse ethnic, gender and other identities;
- recognize, utilize, and build on the education, skills, and capacities of **forcibly displaced people**; ensure that they are equipped with relevant skills and capacities in locations of displacement, and promote access to education and livelihoods to improve self-reliance and support solutions;
- ensure that refugees, internally displaced and stateless people **have access to reliable information** as a basis for taking decisions about their lives, making full use of the information channels that they themselves increasingly use, notably electronic and social media; and
- actively pursue **innovative ways to amplify the voices of the people we work for**, and take advantage of new technologies to enhance our ongoing dialogue with them and their connectivity with the global community.

## 5. Solve



*A group of private sponsors provide support to a family of Syrian refugees in Whitehorse, Canada, October 2016. © UNHCR/ANNIE SAKKAB*

At a time when so many people are trapped in situations of extended displacement by protracted and recurrent conflict situations, and when others are in danger of being displaced, there is a need to reinforce ongoing efforts to move beyond conventional, short-term responses to crises, which often limit planning for solutions. In line with the New York Declaration, we will sharpen our ‘solutions reflex’ and partner with a broader range of actors - through the development of the CRRF and otherwise - in a drive to expand and diversify solutions opportunities for refugees and internally displaced people, to address the underlying causes of displacement, and to prevent and solve problems of statelessness.

## We will:

- **give strong new impetus to our engagement with development actors and processes**, national regional and multi-lateral, in addressing the causes of forced displacement and statelessness, and impediments to solutions; leveraging the CRRF and working towards a Global Compact on Refugees as important opportunities to pursue this objective;
- **strengthen also our partnerships with political, security and human rights actors**, fostering approaches to solutions based on a comprehensive analysis of obstacles to voluntary and safe return home for both refugees and internally displaced people;
- **actively engage with national and regional peace processes**, whenever relevant, to ensure that the causes of displacement and opportunities for sustainable solutions are factored into political agreements;
- **proactively support peacebuilding initiatives** that seek to address, or prevent the aggravation of conditions leading to displacement;
- **pursue voluntary repatriation for refugees, and in-country solutions for internally displaced people**, upholding the right to return and actively pursuing opportunities that emerge, including for localized solutions, with action that promotes the conditions for safe, dignified, and sustainable return;
- **actively support the reintegration of returnees** (both in the case of refugees and internally displaced people), helping Governments, wherever required, to fulfil their primary responsibility vis-à-vis returning nationals, and engaging development actors and relevant international and local partners;
- **vigorously pursue an expansion of third country solutions for refugees**, including resettlement opportunities and complementary pathways for admission of refugees such as medical evacuation and humanitarian admission programmes, family reunification, and opportunities for skilled migration, labour mobility and education;
- **identify and leverage opportunities for the local integration or local settlement** of refugees wherever appropriate and feasible;
- mobilize States, civil society and the UN family to help **ensure that global support for the Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024 gives impetus to the protection of stateless people**, and yields concrete results in terms of the **prevention and reduction of statelessness**;
- **promote family reunification** as a key element of all other forms of solution.

# MAKING IT WORK

*A UNHCR staff member talks to Afghan refugees at Vinojug reception centre, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, near the border with Greece, October 2015. © UNHCR/MARK HENLEY*

Taking forward this vision requires changes in systems, staffing, culture and ways of working in order to ensure that UNHCR is the responsive, nimble, technologically able, and results-oriented organization that it aspires to be. In recognition of this, we will:

## Build information systems and be data adept

We will continuously adapt and improve our information systems to ensure maximum efficiency, embracing and investing in new technologies wherever they support our goals, including in biometrics and in big data analysis to strengthen decision-making, communications and accountability.

We will strengthen our capacity, both directly and through partnerships, to gather, access and manage information on forcibly displaced and stateless people, becoming more adept in analysing and presenting data in the form of evidence.



This will increase our ability to:

- engage with States on protection and solutions;
- work with development actors in addressing the causes and consequences of displacement, in enabling solutions, and in connecting displaced populations to national and local services and communities;
- prevent new displacement by identifying emerging protection risks and drivers of conflict and persecution, and mobilising early action to address them;
- respond to new patterns of displacement and manage new ways of delivering assistance, including through greater emphasis on cash based interventions;
- provide the people we have a responsibility for with the information they need to take informed decisions about their lives and futures; and
- maintain and further strengthen the trust of donors, other States, partners and the public through evidence-based reporting.



Refugee children from the Central African Republic play with their "phones" in remote Gbiti, Cameroon, October 2009. © UNHCR/FREDERIC NOY

## Strengthen our ability to analyse and learn

We will upgrade our capacity for research and knowledge management in order to strengthen the basis for the policies we develop, the proposals we put forward, and the advocacy that we undertake.

We will increase our investment in monitoring, reporting, and evaluation to generate evidence-based assessments of our performance, to inform policy and programming decisions, and to demonstrate transparency and accountability.

We will prioritize knowledge management, promoting the exchange of lessons across operations and regions and cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences, and will strive to be a learning organization, refining and adjusting our approaches based on analysis, evaluation and peer reviews. We will also actively engage in learning from partners, promoting dialogue and exchange and seeking to identify and build on best practices.

## Innovate

We will embrace innovation and change to pursue these Strategic Directions by leveraging creative ideas, brokering key partnerships and developing services, platforms and products to drive the institutional change we need - with the ultimate aim of ensuring that the people we are trying to help have more control over their lives. We will aim to design and develop scaled solutions, working towards a world in which refugees can access and manage their own digital identity, gain accredited online education, support their families, and communicate effectively through improved connectivity.

## Be effective, efficient, agile and accountable

We will build a multi-year perspective in our planning and budgetary processes; this is indispensable to support planning for inclusion and solutions and our ability to work with development actors.

We will review our budget structure and resource allocation processes to ensure that they enable UNHCR to be engaged reliably and consistently in situations of internal displacement, and that they incentivize investment in solutions.

We will overhaul our results-based management (RBM) system to better reflect our overall goals and enable better measurement of progress in key areas such as solutions and livelihoods.

We will undertake a Headquarters review, aimed at redefining and validating the structure and mix of functions provided at Headquarters, to make sure these are connected to our priorities and are geared to support our field operations. Where appropriate, we will rebalance our structures and adjust our processes to locate decision-making and resources closer to the point of delivery.

We will carry out an urgently needed simplification and streamlining of procedures, processes and tools, including in key areas of programme, procurement, supply, and administration and finance, to ensure that these function as efficiently as possible as tools for enabling field delivery.

We will introduce a more rigorous, focused and prioritized policy development process with a view to improving institutional coherence – consolidating disparate policies, strategies and initiatives, and eliminating overlaps and inconsistencies. We will ensure that new policies or guidelines are concise and clearly linked to these *Strategic Directions*.

We will continue efforts to optimize our oversight services and the interfaces between them, strongly promoting a culture of accountability. We will maintain a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and all forms of fraud and corruption, taking all possible steps to raise awareness and to improve detection and response.



*Baw Meh is an elderly Karenni refugee living in the Ban Mai Nai Soi camp in Northern Thailand. She still wears all her traditional clothing and jewelry that she brought with her from her homeland of Myanmar.. © UNHCR / SEBASTIAN RICH*

## Adapt and support our workforce

We will give strong priority to maintaining a committed and healthy workforce, recognizing that our greatest asset is our dedicated, competent and diverse staff, many serving in remote locations.

We will continue to adapt our staffing profile, building on existing core functions, to reflect a greater emphasis on advocacy, strategic communications, community outreach, development expertise, innovation, data collection and analysis, and information management. At the same time, we will maintain a robust and flexible capacity for rapid and effective operational delivery, through staff and affiliate workforce, including standby arrangements with partners. We will also strengthen our own expertise and that of our partners by pursuing strategic reciprocal secondments.

We will improve our outreach for new talent, streamline our assignment system, and introduce measures to better address critical gaps in emergency and non-emergency situations including through enhanced workforce planning and the nurturing of talent pools. We will actively support career growth and development, and undertake leadership and succession planning, building talent pools of people ready to take over and inspire excellence.

We will step up efforts to foster an inclusive working environment and a respectful workplace where innovative thought is encouraged and diversity is valued as a strong asset. We will commit ourselves, moreover, to further diversifying our workforce from entry to middle and senior management levels.

We will continuously strive to improve working and living conditions for our workforce, invest in their health and safety, protect their physical and mental well-being, support staff and their families in managing their mobility, and enhance opportunities for our national staff and affiliate workforce.

## Stay and deliver

Together with our UN and NGO partners, we will ensure a proactive approach to security management to ensure that we can remain present and deliver for those in need, even when faced with complex security challenges.

We will take steps to ensure that security threats are comprehensively evaluated and understood and to integrate this understanding into operational planning, through thoughtfully adapted measures and appropriate investments. Where risks are great, a decision to continue delivering programmes will be weighed carefully, bearing in mind the extent to which they are critical for the people we are serving. We will ensure that the situation of national staff is given heightened attention in security planning and management.

We will ensure that our staff are aware of their environment and have the training and skills to manage security threats and continue to deliver effectively while operating in complex security contexts.

## Tell the story

We will give emphasis to strategic, evidence-based communications and advocacy that demonstrate our knowledge of the people we are working for, how global and local developments are impacting on their lives, and how we can and are making a difference, with a view to maintaining the confidence of States, the public, partners, and the private sector, and mobilizing moral and financial support.

Through targeted messages, strategies and campaigns, we will make increased and determined efforts to reach and engage with elements of society that may feel threatened by the presence of asylum-seekers and refugees; we will seek to build empathy, dispel misinformation, and promote understanding and tolerance, leveraging wherever possible the participation and expertise of local partners.

*Refugees from the Central African Republic in Dossey refugee site, Southern Chad, February 2015. © UNHCR/OLIVIER LABAN-MATTEI*

## Mobilize resources and diversify support

We will pursue creative approaches to resource mobilization, matching wherever possible identified needs with donor interest or expertise. Notably, we will draw attention to opportunities to invest in solutions for particular groups of internally displaced people, refugees and stateless people.

We will continue efforts to maintain and further increase levels of funding, especially flexible funding which allows us to allocate resources across programmes in accordance with needs. We will use targeted, evidence-based advocacy to communicate the importance of such flexibility, and provide additional visibility to donors who do not earmark or earmark broadly.

We will actively pursue new sources of funding, including through strongly articulated representations to those G20 governments that do not yet contribute substantially to UNHCR, as well as through private sector partnerships. We will also seek to diversify sources of support to operations by embracing operational partnerships that tap into alternative sources of funding.

We will advocate and make the case for enhanced financial support to and other forms of investment in major refugee-hosting States and communities based on the principle of responsibility-sharing, in line with the New York Declaration.

We will ensure that our use of resources is as efficient as possible, recognizing that sound financial management, robust accountability and transparency support a climate of confidence amongst donors and key stakeholders, whose trust is essential as we take these *Strategic Directions* forward.





*Internally displaced youths jump rope at Qaymawa camp (formerly known as Zelikan camp), Iraq November 2016. © UNHCR/RASHEED HUSSEIN RASHEED*

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