

2006 Global Trends:

**Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless
Persons**

Division of Operational Services
Field Information and Coordination Support Section
June 2007

Introduction¹

The *2006 Global Trends* report is the fourth edition in the series. It is published ahead of the *2006 Statistical Yearbook*, to be issued later in the year, which will provide a more detailed analysis of the 2006 data. It reviews the trends and changes in 2006 in the global populations for which UNHCR has been entrusted with a responsibility by the United Nations General Assembly. These include refugees, returnees and stateless and internally displaced persons (IDPs), collectively referred to in the report as “persons of concern”. Limited to populations for which UNHCR has a mandate, the report thus does not purport to depict a comprehensive picture of global forced displacement. For example, some 4.3 million Palestinian refugees who fall under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are not included in the report. Likewise, the conflict generated internally displaced persons covered in the report are limited to those benefiting directly or indirectly from UNHCR’s protection and assistance activities.

The report also does not address mixed migration flows, even though, global migration intersects with and results in a range of dilemmas and challenges for asylum and refugee management. So as to ensure that protection space continues to be available for those who deserve to be dealt with under refugee obligations, UNHCR has increasingly had to concern itself with this phenomenon. The lack of precise statistical data, however, could not allow an evidence-based analysis of the problem in this report.

Unless otherwise specified, the report does not refer to events occurring after 31 December 2006. The statistics reflected in it have for the most part been reported by UNHCR country offices, which have in turn drawn the figures from Government sources, selected non-governmental organizations and UNHCR’s own registration programmes. In all cases, they have been rounded to the closest hundredth or thousandth, as the case may be, for the purposes of this report. As some adjustments may yet be made to the figures in the publication of the *2006 Statistical Yearbook* referred to earlier, they should therefore be considered as provisional.

The report shows that, at a total of 32.9 million, there has been a significant increase in the global population of persons of concern to UNHCR in 2006 as compared with 2005. The principal reasons for this apparent spike, as indeed the other key changes, are outlined in detail in the respective parts of the report, and are otherwise summarized in the table on page 15. Attention is however drawn to the fact that there have been changes in the way in which UNHCR statistics have been reported in 2006 which have had an impact on the overall figures. In the first instance, the *Annual Statistical Report*² was substantially revised to reflect better the results of individual refugee registration in UNHCR operations. Secondly, as UNHCR has enhanced its involvement with IDPs following the institutionalization of the “Cluster

Box 1. The “cluster approach”

Recognizing that no single UN agency had the mandate and resources to protect and assist internally displaced persons globally alone, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) developed a “collaborative approach” which called for agencies to pool resources and response capacity. In 2005, a Humanitarian Response Review commissioned by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator found that critical gaps in humanitarian response remained. To ensure a more predictable and efficient response, the IASC Principals endorsed the “Cluster Approach” in December 2005. Under this arrangement, UNHCR would assume leadership responsibility and accountability for three of nine “clusters”, namely protection, emergency shelter, and camp coordination and management.

¹ This report has been prepared by the Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS), Division of Operational Services (DOS) at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva. Any questions concerning the report should be addressed to FICSS at stats@unhcr.org. For other 2006 UNHCR statistics, see UNHCR’s newly-launched Statistical Online Population Database at <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics.html>. For detailed statistics on global internal displacement, see the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) website of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) at <http://www.internal-displacement.org>.

² The Annual Statistical Report is the official data collection form completed in by all UNHCR country operations.

Approach” (*See Box 1*), the scope of its data collection with respect to IDP operations has expanded steadily throughout the year. Finally, as signalled already in last year’s *Global Refugee Trends* and *Statistical Yearbook*, the active refugee caseload in some developed countries, most notably the United States of America, has been reviewed and calculated according to adjusted parameters, resulting in significantly increased figures. In fact, these and several other parameters for the statistical analysis, computation and reporting are presently under review, the impact of which will be seen in the forthcoming *2006 Statistical Yearbook* and, more comprehensively, in subsequent years.

Who is included in the statistics?

The persons of concern included in this report comprise seven different groups of persons namely (a) refugees; (b) asylum-seekers; (c) internally displaced persons (IDPs); (d) refugees who have returned home (returnees); (e) IDPs who have returned home; (f) stateless persons; and (g) a category for other persons in a refugee or returnee-like situation.

Refugees include persons recognized under the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*; its 1967 Protocol; the *1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*; those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; persons granted complementary forms of protection³; or, those enjoying “temporary protection”⁴. UNHCR has a mandated responsibility to extend protection to all refugees wherever they may be, unless this role is otherwise specifically excepted. Thus, as indicated already, some 4.3 million Palestinian refugees in the areas of operation of UNRWA are normally not considered as falling under UNHCR’s mandate.

Asylum-seekers are persons whose applications for asylum or refugee status are pending a final decision. Those covered in this report refer particularly to claimants whose applications were pending as of the end of 2006, irrespective of when they may have been lodged (the so-called “backlog” of undecided or “pending cases”).

Internally displaced persons, for purposes of UNHCR’s statistics, are limited to conflict-generated IDPs to whom the Office extends protection and/or assistance. Nevertheless, IDPs referred to as persons of concern to UNHCR do not include all conflict-related IDPs.

Returned refugees (returnees) refer to refugees who have returned voluntarily to their country of origin or place of habitual residence. For purposes of this report, only refugees who so returned between January and December 2006 are covered.

Returned IDPs, for purposes of this report, refer to those internally displaced persons who, being beneficiaries of UNHCR’s protection and assistance activities returned to their areas of origin or habitual residence between January and December 2006.

Stateless persons are persons not considered as nationals by any State under the relevant national laws. The statistics in this report on statelessness include persons with undetermined nationality. UNHCR has been called upon by the General Assembly to contribute to the prevention of and reduction of statelessness and to report regularly on the magnitude of the phenomenon. It has been tasked to fulfil the functions under Article 11 of the *1961 Convention*

³ Complementary protection refers to formal permission, under national law, provided on humanitarian ground to persons who are in need of international protection to reside in a country, even though they might not qualify for refugee status under conventional refugee criteria.

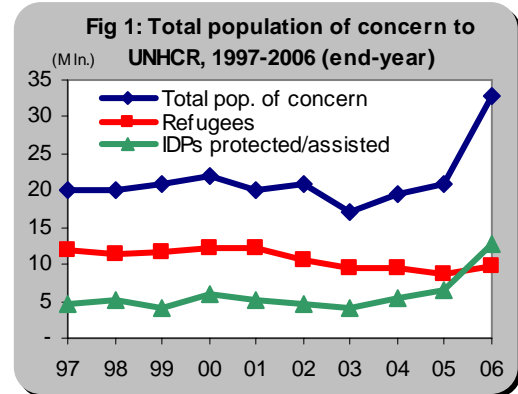
⁴ Temporary protection refers to arrangements developed by States to offer protection of a temporary nature to persons arriving en masse from situations of conflict or generalized violence without the necessity for formal or individual status determination.

on the *Reduction of Statelessness* and act as an intermediary between States and stateless persons.

Other persons of concern, refers, first, to persons who, while they may fall under any of the preceding categories, have not formally been determined or agreed to be so for one or another reason, but benefit from the protection, assistance or other activities of UNHCR. Also included are persons who may not necessarily fall directly into any of those groups but to whom UNHCR may extend its services for humanitarian or other special reasons.

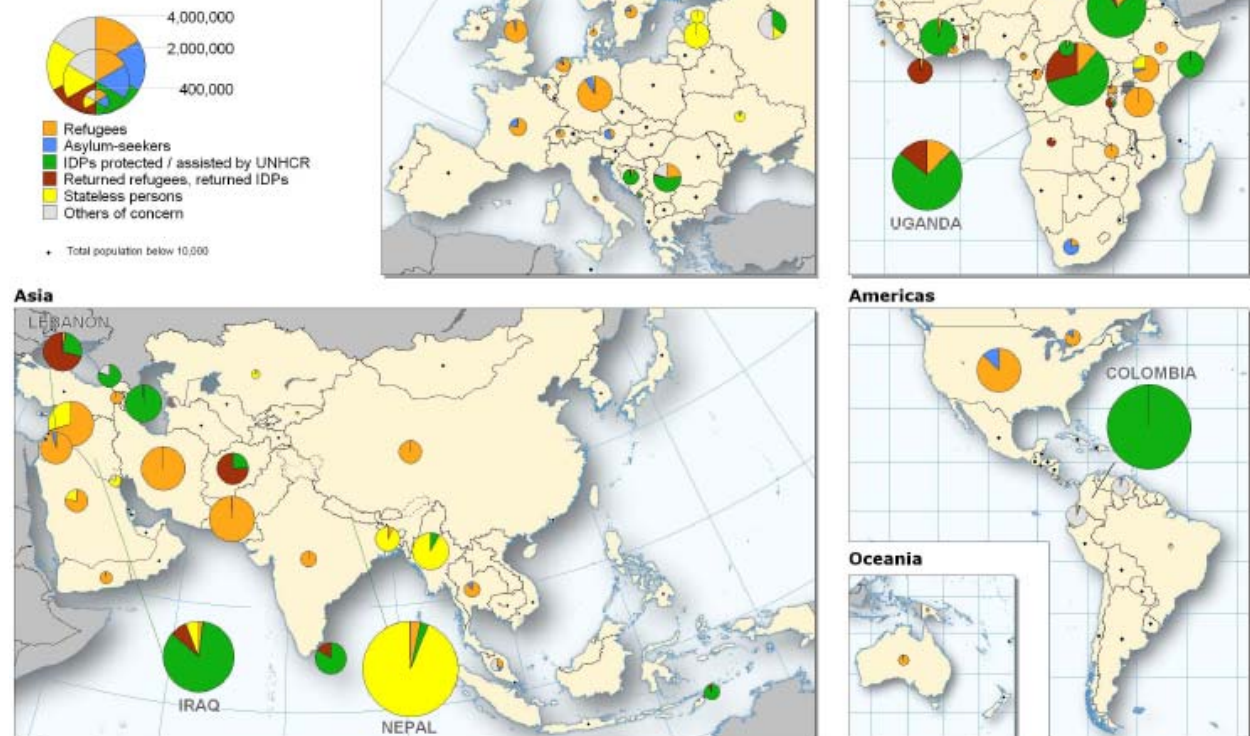
Overview of global trends

At the end of 2005, the global figure of persons of concern stood at 21 million. By the close of 2006, 32.9 million, or an increase of 56 per cent was the figure. As elaborated further below, the single largest increase has occurred among the internally displaced persons. The global refugee population itself has however also increased, for the first time since 2002. The 2006 figures for stateless persons also show a marked increase compared to the statistics for 2005.



Map 1: Total population by category, end-2006

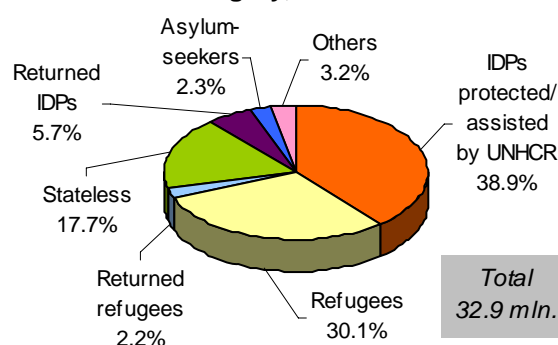
(See Table 14 for details on stateless persons)



By the close of 2006, there were an estimated 9.9 million refugees globally. For the first time since 2002, a declining trend in the global figures was reversed. Refugees continued to be the persons of concern with whom UNHCR was systematically engaged in extending the core and full range of its protection and assistance activities. At the same time, UNHCR was also, as a

committed player in the framework of shared responsibility established under the cluster approach, increasingly extending its services in respect of protection, assistance and solutions for the benefit of IDPs. As of the end of 2006, a total of 12.8 million IDPs were receiving humanitarian assistance under both the cluster approach and other arrangements in which UNHCR was either the lead agency or a partner. While these IDPs are thus a shared responsibility, they are also included in this report in the global figure of persons of concern to UNHCR.

Fig 2: Total population by category, end-2006



At 5.8 million, the number of stateless persons⁵ had more than doubled in 2006 compared with 2.4 million in 2005. That figure, however, does not capture the full scale or magnitude of the phenomenon of statelessness for the reporting period. A significant number of stateless people have not been systematically identified and the statistical data on statelessness is not yet available in many cases.

Refugee population

Since 2002, refugee numbers had declined steadily on a global basis. By the end of 2006, the figure stood at 9.9 million⁶, the highest in five years. As compared with the figure of 8.7 million at the beginning of the year, there had been a net increase of some 1.2 million refugees, or 14 per cent. The increase arose from two main sources. First, 1.2 million Iraqis sought refuge in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Secondly, changes in the methodology referred to earlier for computing the active refugee caseload in the particular case of the United States of America also led to an increase⁷.

As for reductions, the largest occurred in Western and Southern Africa (by 31% and 18% respectively), primarily due to the successful voluntary repatriations to Liberia and Angola respectively. In Europe, the consolidation of refugee statistics in Germany which started in 2005 continued and resulted in a net reduction of almost 100,000 refugees. The naturalization and subsequent provision of citizenship to 37,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in Serbia also contributed to the overall decrease.

Table 1: Refugee population by UNHCR regions

UNHCR regions	Start-2006	End-2006	Annual change	
			Absolute	%
- Central Africa and Great Lakes	1,193,700	1,119,400	-74,300	-6.2%
- East and Horn of Africa	772,000	852,300	80,300	10.4%
- Southern Africa	228,600	187,800	-40,800	-17.8%
- West Africa	377,200	261,800	-115,400	-30.6%
Total Africa*	2,571,500	2,421,300	-150,200	-5.8%
CASWANAME**	2,716,500	3,811,800	1,095,300	40.3%
Americas	564,300	1,035,900	471,600	83.6%
Asia and Pacific	825,600	875,100	49,500	6.0%
Europe	1,975,300	1,733,700	-241,600	-12.2%
Total	8,653,200	9,877,800	1,224,600	14.2%

* Excluding North Africa.

** Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and Middle East.

⁵ Refugees and asylum-seekers who are at the same time also stateless persons are not included in this figure. They are reflected in the figures relating to the refugee and asylum-seeker groups concerned.

⁶ As indicated already, this figure does not include 4.3 million Palestinian refugees who fall under the responsibility of UNRWA.

⁷ A number of developed countries lack a systematic refugee register, meaning that refugee numbers in those countries are only estimated in order to obtain global refugee estimates. Refugees landing in those countries for resettlement as well as refugees recognized through an individual refugee status determination procedure have been included in these estimates. A 10-year cut-off period was used as the average time required to acquire the citizenship in Europe and 5 years in the case of North America and Oceania. In the case of the United States, newly available naturalization data suggest that in fact, refugees take closer to 10 years, rather than only 5, before acquiring citizenship. The refugee number in the USA has therefore been estimated based on the 10-year cut-off period as signaled in last year's Statistical Yearbook. This has resulted in an increase of 464,000 refugees in the national figure, for a total of 844,000.

As explained already, the Americas region as a whole registered almost a doubling of its global refugee figures in view, principally, of the different estimation parameter explained earlier⁸. In the CASWANAME⁹ region, the Iraq situation also resulted in a sharp increase. In Africa, however, only the East and Horn of Africa region witnessed an increase (some 10%), due primarily to a new influx of Chadian refugees into the Sudan (20,000) and a revised estimate of Eritrean refugees in that same country (by some 40,000).

Box 2. UNHCR assistance to refugees

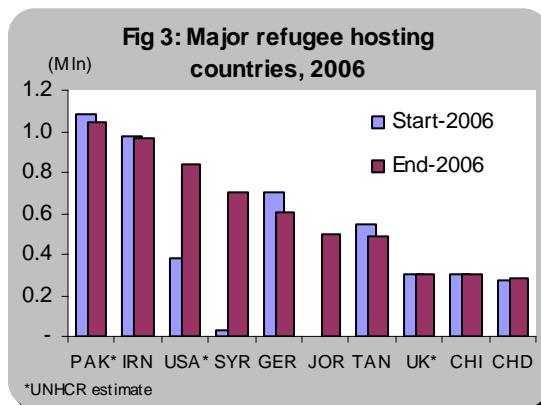
About half (45%) of all refugees benefit from UNHCR assistance programmes, with the vast majority of them being located in developing countries where UNHCR is operationally active, i.e. in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The number of refugees directly assisted by or through UNHCR, however, decreased by 146,000 persons (3%) to 4.5 million refugees by the end of the year. It should be noted that UNHCR assistance can take a variety of forms, among other, shelter and food, refugee status determination, legal advice and assistance packages.

By the end of 2006, 61 per cent of the estimated 7.2 million refugees hosted by developing countries had access to assistance provided by or through UNHCR. The level of international assistance, however, varies greatly from one country to another, reflecting the different opportunities provided to refugees by the host country for local integration and self-reliance. Major refugee asylum countries where less than 75 per cent of the refugee population were assisted by the end of 2006 include Sudan (69%), the United Republic of Tanzania (59%), Zambia (54%), India (7%), Armenia (5%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (3%), Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic (close to 0% each).

As of the end of 2006, roughly 4 out of 10 refugees were hosted by countries falling within UNHCR's "CASWANAME" region. Africa on the other hand hosted a quarter of all refugees, followed by Europe (18%), the Americas (10%), and Asia and the Pacific (9%).

Pakistan¹⁰ continued to be the asylum country with the single largest number of refugees, followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. By the end of the year, both countries together hosted one out of five (20%) of the world's refugees. While some 387,000 Afghans returned to their country during the period under review, their official total number in both countries decreased only by 4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively, owing to the fact that the vast majority of the returnees had not been part of the UNHCR registered refugee population. Bearing in mind the change in the methodology explained already for computing the active caseload of refugees, the United States of America was estimated to have

some 844,000 refugees. The Syrian Arab Republic had 702,000 refugees, almost all Iraqis and Germany 605,000, the figure having dropped by almost 100,000 due to an improved registration system that yielded more accurate statistics¹¹. Along with the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan also moved into the top 10 asylum countries, hosting an estimated 500,000 Iraqi refugees. Among this group of major hosting countries, in the United Republic of Tanzania, the refugee population dropped from 549,000 to 485,000 (some 14%) due to the voluntary repatriation of 43,000 Burundian and 24,000 Congolese refugees respectively.



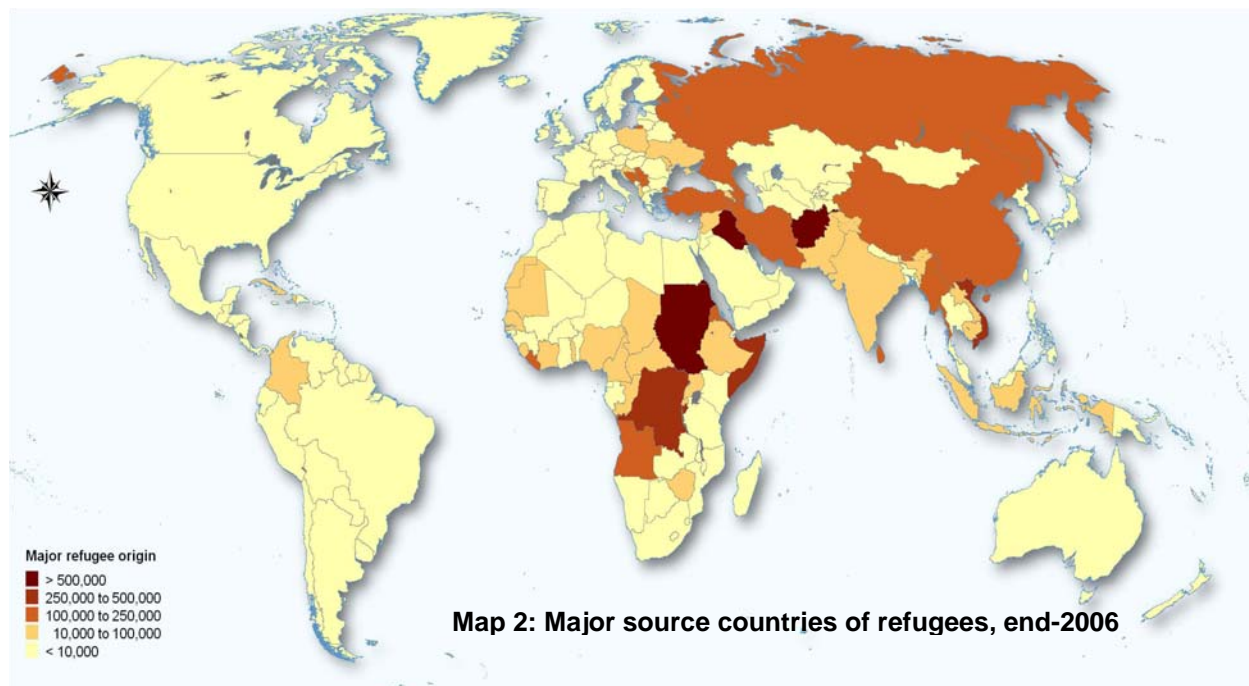
⁸ See preceding footnote.

⁹ This acronym refers to one of the geographical designations according to which UNHCR's global operational management is structured. It includes Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

¹⁰ UNHCR figures for Pakistan only include Afghans living in camps who are assisted by UNHCR. There are an additional 1.3 million Afghans living outside the camps, some of whom may be refugees. They do not receive UNHCR material assistance, but may benefit from the Organization's programmes for voluntary repatriation. As of the time of publication of this report, the number of Afghan citizens in Pakistan was under review as a result of a comprehensive registration exercise implemented between October 2006 and February 2007.

¹¹ With the introduction of the new Immigration Act in 2005, the Central Aliens Register now encompasses new residence categories and simultaneously refines previous ones, allowing for a better differentiation of the figures. As a consequence, the 2006 refugee estimate for Germany cannot be compared to previous ones, and should be considered as provisional pending further details.

Afghanistan continued to be the leading country of origin of refugees. As of the end of 2006, there were 2.1 million refugees from that country in 71 different asylum countries, or 21 per cent of the global refugee population. Iraqis were the second largest group, with 1.5 million having sought refuge mainly in neighbouring countries (1.2 million in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic alone). Iraqi refugee numbers had thus more than quintupled in the course of 2006. Sudan, with 686,000 of its nationals outside the country, was next. The three other main source countries were Somalia (460,000 representing an increase of 18%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi (about 400,000 each).



As a result of statistical corrections, revisions or verification exercises in Germany (for Turkish refugees), the United States of America (for Bosnian refugees), and Sudan (for Eritrean refugees), the global figures for those refugees increased significantly, respectively by 33 per cent, 82 per cent and 30 per cent. The global number of refugees from Myanmar also increased by 23 per cent, following the grant of refugee status to 8,600 in Malaysia and 15,800 in Thailand. There was an increase in the global figure of refugees from Somalia, due mainly to new arrivals in Yemen and Kenya.

2006 also witnessed significant decreases for some of the major refugee populations in the world, most notably those originating from Azerbaijan¹² (46%), Liberia (31%), Burundi (10%), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (7%), the latter three due to voluntary repatriation. Significant decreases were also reported for refugees originating from Croatia (by 25,000), Serbia (by 16,000), and Togo (by 24,000), often as a result of achieving durable solutions or revised refugee estimates following registration exercises.

Durable solutions

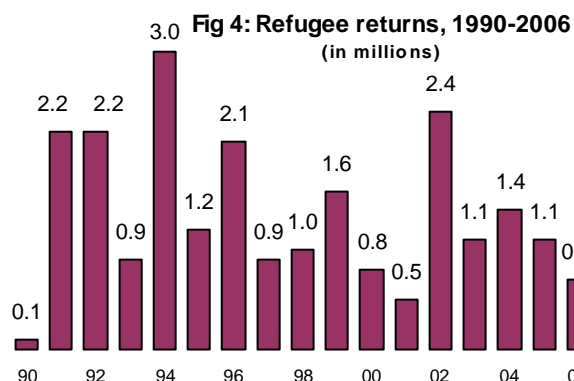
UNHCR protects, assists and seeks durable solutions for refugees. The three main solutions are (i) voluntary repatriation to the home country; (ii) local integration in the country of asylum; and (iii) resettlement in a third country. Voluntary repatriation is generally considered as the preferred option of the three. Local integration is a legal, socio-economic and political process by which refugees progressively become fully integrated members of their host societies.

¹² A census conducted in Armenia, among Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, established that the majority of those refugees had either naturalized in Armenia or left the country.

However, available data concerning this solution is limited to those cases in which refugees have, through naturalization, acquired the full range of the protection and legal rights of the host country. Resettlement of refugees in third countries is a key protection tool and an important mechanism for sharing responsibilities.

Voluntary repatriation

Based on consolidated reports from countries of asylum (departure) and origin (arrival), it is estimated that some 734,000 refugees repatriated voluntarily during 2006, one third less than in 2005 which had a total of 1.1 million returnees. The main countries of return included Afghanistan (388,000), Liberia (108,000), Burundi (48,000), Angola (47,000), Sudan (42,300), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (41,300).

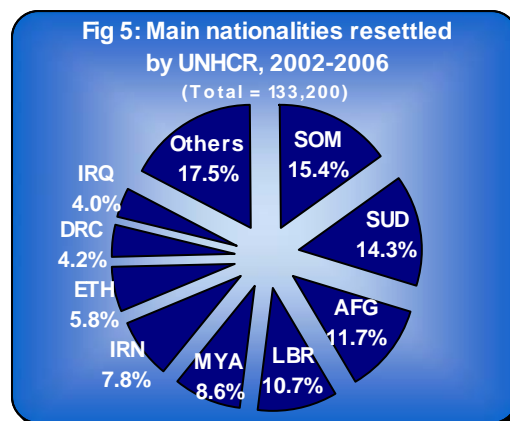


Notwithstanding these returns, the total number of returnees during 2006 was the second-lowest in the past 15 years. Only in 2001 was the number of returnees, a total of 462,000, lower. Globally, an estimated 11.6 million refugees have returned home over the past 10 years, 7.4 million, or 63 per cent, of them with UNHCR assistance.

Resettlement

Resettlement is a vital tool of protection for refugees whose life or liberty may be at risk in their first country of asylum. It also serves as a durable solution, especially for refugees for whom return to the country of origin may not be possible and for those who may also not be able to remain in the country of asylum, as well as a responsibility sharing mechanism.

In 2006, some 29,560 persons were resettled with UNHCR assistance. Of these, 27,700 were recognized refugees; the remainder were family members or family reunification cases, not necessarily refugees themselves. The 27,700 refugees resettled with UNHCR assistance represent some 2,800 (9%) less than in 2005. By nationality, the main beneficiaries of the UNHCR-facilitated resettlement programmes were refugees from Myanmar (5,700), Somalia (5,200), Sudan (2,900), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2,000), and Afghanistan (1,900).



Some 84 UNHCR country offices were engaged in facilitating resettlement departures during 2006, essentially the same number as in 2005. The largest number of refugees resettled with UNHCR assistance departed from Kenya (6,200), Thailand (4,700), Egypt (2,000), Turkey (1,600), and the United Republic of Tanzania (1,600).

A total of 71,700 refugees were admitted by 15 resettlement countries, including the United States (41,300)¹³, Australia (13,400), Canada (10,700), Sweden (2,400), Norway (1,000), and New Zealand (700). Overall, this was 11 per cent below the total for 2005 (80,800). Over the last

¹³ Resettlement statistics for the United States, Canada and Australia may also include persons resettled for the purpose of family reunification or other humanitarian programmes.

few years, States in Latin America have emerged as new resettlement countries, offering a durable solution for refugees primarily from Colombia.

Local integration

In some countries, refugees have the opportunity to integrate locally because they have access to land or the labour market. In others, they may remain confined to camps where they depend on international relief assistance. The acquisition of the citizenship of the country of asylum would be the most crucial step in obtaining the full legal and protection rights of the host country as foreseen by Article 34 of the 1951 Convention. However, national laws in many countries do not permit refugees to become naturalized. Even in those cases where refugees acquire the citizenship of the asylum country through naturalization, statistical data is usually very limited as the countries concerned generally do not distinguish between refugees and other categories in the relevant data. Their naturalization is thus both restricted as such but also under-reported. For 2006, UNHCR was informed of refugees being granted citizenship in the United States of America (98,500), Belgium (2,500), Armenia (1,200), Kyrgyzstan (600), and the Russian Federation (420).

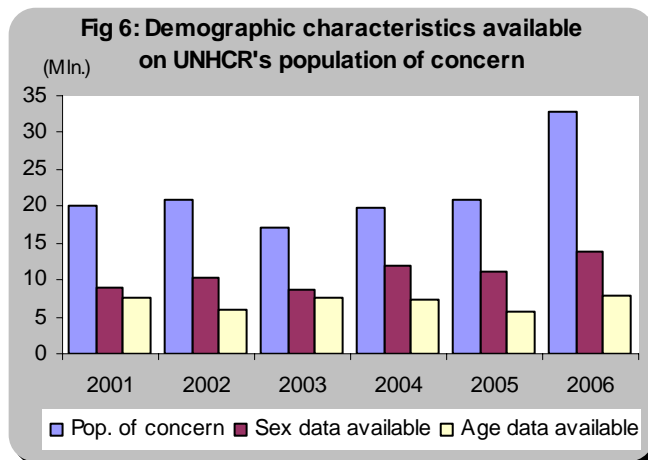
Sex and age

UNHCR's policy priorities on gender equality, children, including adolescents, and older refugees require that its data on persons of concern should be disaggregated by, among others, age and sex. However, demographic information on the populations of concern is not available for all countries, or tends to be very variable. The coverage tends to be high for refugees and returnees and low for stateless persons and returned IDPs, even if the overall populations of concern in these last two groups has increased in absolute terms.

At the end of 2006, data broken down by sex was available for less than half of the overall population of concern (only 13.9 million out of 32.9 million). Roughly half of them are female, although the proportions will vary greatly depending on the refugee situation, region of asylum and age distribution. For instance, in mass influx situations, the proportion of female refugees tends to be around 50 per cent. The percentage of females among asylum-seekers, however, is significantly lower in both developing and developed countries.

Moreover, women are over-represented in the older age category (60 and over).

Information on the age breakdown itself was available for only about one quarter (7.8 million persons). Some 45 per cent of these are children under the age of 18; 11 per cent being under the age of five. Half of the population is between the ages of 18 and 59 years, whereas 5 per cent are 60 years old or more. The availability of information is particularly limited for developed countries in Europe, North America and Oceania. Thus, the figures just summarized are not fully representative for the entire population under the Office's mandate.



Asylum-seekers

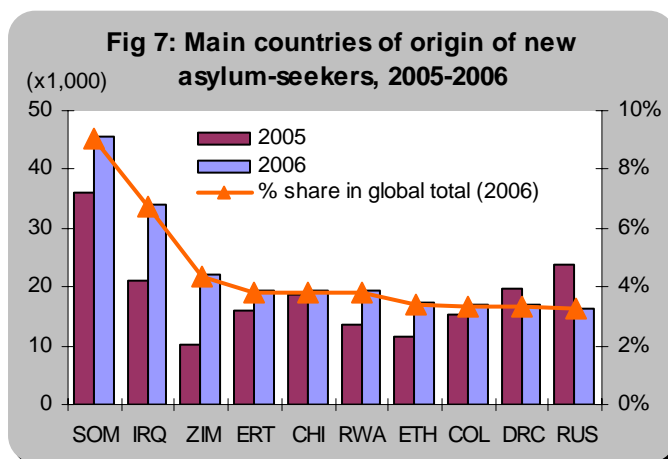
During 2006, in total, some 596,000 first instance or appeal applications for asylum or refugee status were submitted to Governments and UNHCR offices in 151 countries. An estimated 503,000 of these were lodged for the first time in 2006 itself, 91,500, or 15 per cent, with UNHCR offices. The number of new and appeal applications decreased by 11 per cent compared to 2005 when 674,000 claims were lodged globally. Most applications were registered in Europe (299,000), followed by Africa (159,000), the Americas (78,000), Asia (53,500), and Oceania (7,100)¹⁴. It should be noted that these figures include applicants who have been unsuccessful at first instance and subsequently filed an appeal.

Table 2: New and appeal applications received				
	2003	2004	2005	2006
Government	774,000	604,000	576,800	480,900
UNHCR	61,800	75,500	89,300	91,500
Jointly*	4,900	1,800	7,900	23,800
% UNHCR	7%	11%	13%	15%

* Refers to refugee status determination conducted jointly between UNHCR and the Government.

New individual asylum applications received¹⁵

With 53,400 new asylum claims lodged in 2006, or roughly one tenth of individual application globally, South Africa became the main destination for new asylum-seekers. With a cumulative total of 205,000 individual asylum applications since 2002, this country is one of the largest recipients in the world. The United States of America was in second position in 2006 in terms of new asylum claims (50,800) during 2006, followed by Kenya (37,300), France (30,800), the United Kingdom (27,800), Sweden (24,300), and Canada (22,900).



By nationality, the highest number of new individual asylum claims was filed by Somalis (45,600), Iraqis (34,200), Zimbabweans (22,200), Eritrean (19,400), Chinese (19,300), and Rwandans (19,200). These figures should, however, be considered as indicative because some asylum-seekers' country of origin is not known. About 60 per cent of all new Somali asylum claims were submitted in Kenya, where UNHCR conducts refugee status determination. Iraqi citizens claimed asylum in more than 70 countries world-wide during 2006, including 9,000 in Sweden, 2,800 in the Netherlands and 2,100 in Germany. Sweden witnessed an almost quadrupling of Iraqi asylum requests in 2006 as compared to the year before. The highest concentration of Zimbabwean asylum-seekers was in South Africa (19,000 new claims) and the United Kingdom (2,100). The majority of Eritrean asylum applications were lodged in Sudan (8,700), the United Kingdom (2,700), Ethiopia (2,700), and Switzerland (1,200).

An estimated 691,000 decisions on asylum applications were rendered during 2006, a 17 per cent decrease as compared to the 834,000 decisions in 2005. This also includes some

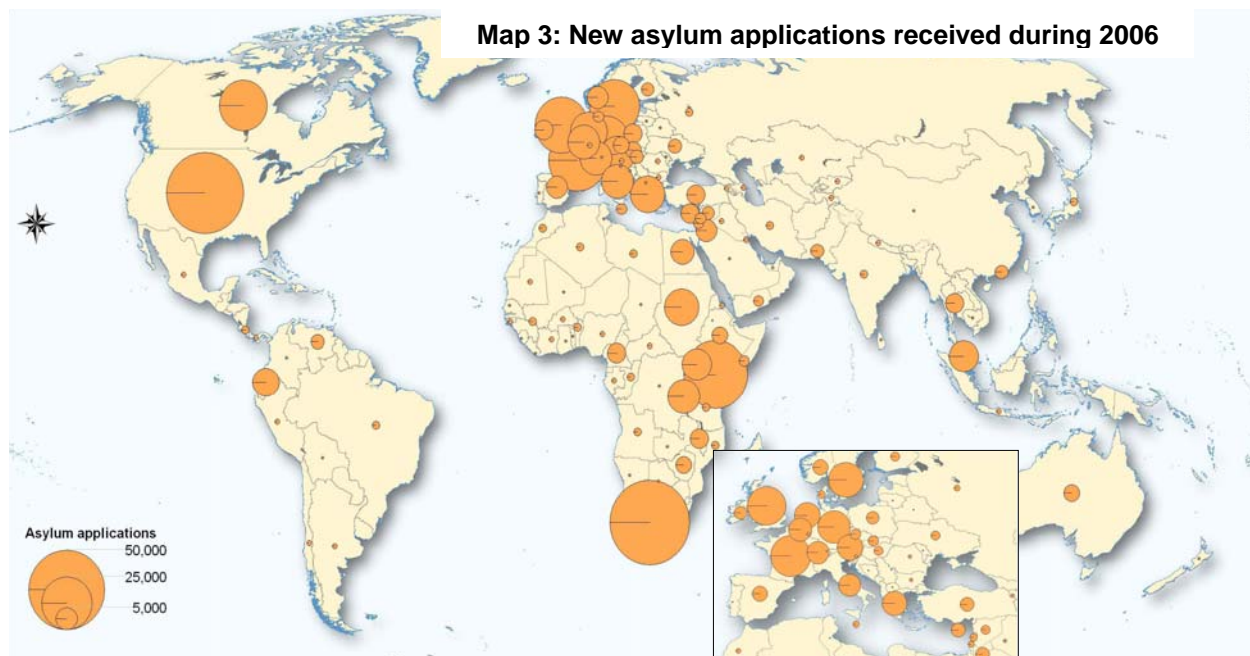
Table 3: Substantive decisions taken				
	2003	2004	2005	2006
Government	676,100	579,400	505,200	426,100
UNHCR	39,900	45,400	60,100	56,400
Jointly*	2,500	500	5,200	16,800
% UNHCR	6%	7%	11%	11%

* Refers to refugee status determination conducted jointly between UNHCR and the Government.

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of asylum trends in industrialized countries, see *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries, 2006*, UNHCR Geneva, March 2007, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics>.

¹⁵ This section does not include mass refugee inflows.

192,000 cases which were closed for administrative reasons¹⁶, without taking a decision on the substance itself. The overall decrease may in part be explained by the globally lower numbers of new asylum claims lodged during the year. Out of the 499,300 substantive decisions in 2006, UNHCR staff adjudicated more than 56,000, or 11 per cent, the same relative share as in 2005. In seven countries, including Ecuador, Burundi and Israel, another 16,700 substantive decisions were taken jointly by UNHCR and the Government concerned.



Some 196,000 asylum-seekers were recognized as refugees or given a complementary form of protection in the course of 2006. In Europe, 33,200 asylum-seekers were granted individual refugee status under the 1951 Convention and another 37,500 a complementary form of protection (humanitarian status or subsidiary protection). While the latter figure was almost identical with that in 2005, the former decreased by a striking 34 per cent compared to the year before. It is believed that stricter asylum policies across Europe in combination with fewer asylum applications being lodged are the main reasons for this decrease. Africa was the second largest region in terms of the number of asylum-seekers being recognized in 2006 (53,800), followed by Asia (34,900), and North America (32,500).

The cumulative number of asylum claims not yet adjudicated (“pending cases”), at both the first instance and on appeal, has decreased over the past few years, reaching an estimated 740,000 by the end of 2006, the lowest level in at least a decade. In fact, the number of asylum-seekers awaiting a decision globally has gone down by one third since 2002. This fall might indicate that asylum procedures have become more efficient, but may also coincide with a decrease in the number of new asylum applications submitted, as is indeed the case in many of the countries of Europe.

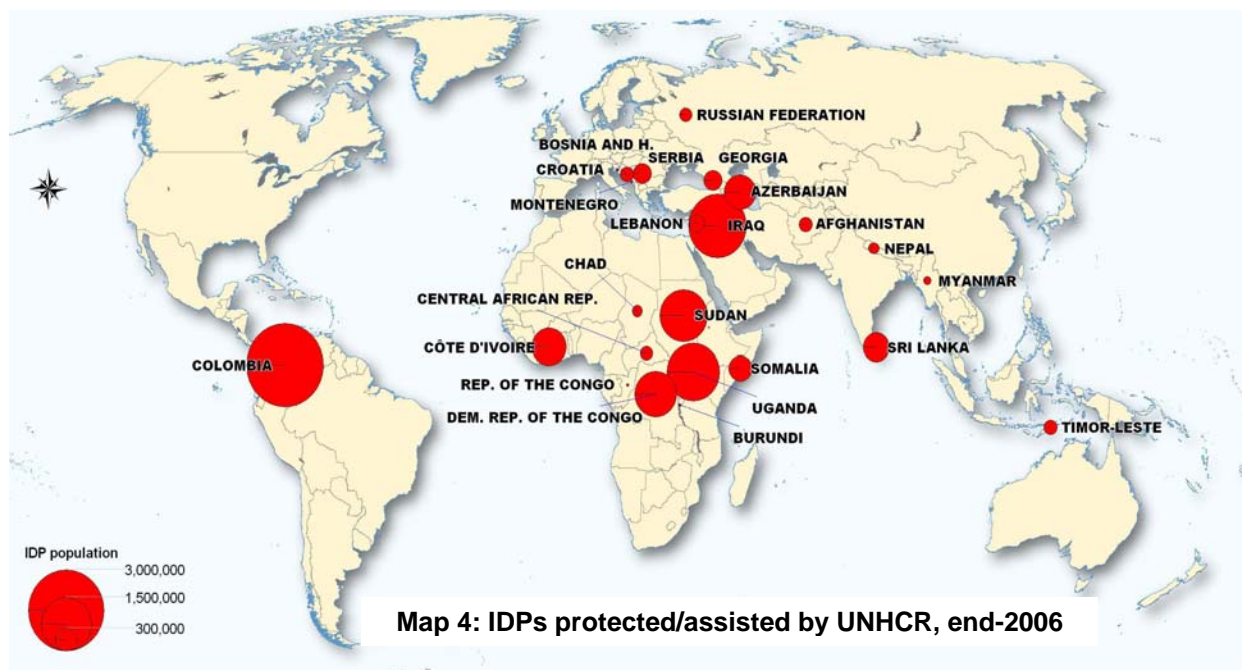
At the end of 2006, the largest number of undecided cases at the first instance and on appeal was reported by South Africa (131,000). A Ministerial Initiative incorporating special measures to clear the backlog was being implemented by the close of the reporting period. In the United States of America, the number of pending cases at the end of (its fiscal) year totalled 124,000. Other countries with high numbers of pending cases included Germany (52,800), Austria (42,400), and France (39,600). With the number of new asylum-seekers arriving in industrialized countries generally on the decline, many of these countries were able to reduce the number of

¹⁶ Also labeled as “non-substantive” decisions which might result from, among others, the death of the applicant, no-show for interview, withdrawal of the application, or abandonment of the claim.

undecided cases during 2006, including the United States (by 46,600), Germany (by 18,800), and Belgium (by 3,200). The strong reduction in the backlog in the United States refers by and large to asylum-seekers from El Salvador (by 28,500) and Guatemala (by 20,300), the majority of whose applications were closed for administrative reasons. On the other hand, significant increases in the backlog were reported by Sweden (by 8,400), Egypt (by 5,300), Greece (by 4,600), and Canada (by 3,000).

Internally Displaced Persons

The IDPs included in this report refer to those benefiting either directly or indirectly from UNHCR's protection and assistance activities, ranging from individual or community-based humanitarian assistance to capacity building to enhance authorities' capacity for providing protection and other responses. As explained above, UNHCR is increasingly involved with IDPs as part of a broader engagement by the United Nations and other agencies through the cluster approach. The Office has also continued its programmes for IDPs to whom it was already providing protection and assistance prior to the cluster approach.



The number of internally displaced persons receiving protection and assistance from UNHCR under the inter-agency mechanisms was 12.8 million. In 2005, before the activation of the cluster approach, UNHCR looked after 6.6 million. Three main reasons are responsible for this substantial increase. First, hundreds of thousands of persons became newly displaced, notably in Colombia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste. Secondly, with the cluster approach becoming effective as of 1 January 2006, UNHCR has taken up lead roles for the clusters of protection, emergency shelter, and camp coordination and management. As a result, it expanded its activities in these areas in a number of countries, most notably the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. In all, UNHCR statistics now include IDP populations in 24 countries, as compared with 16 as of the end of 2005. Thirdly, in certain countries, IDP estimates were revised upwards in the course of the year, in particular in Colombia which thus saw the figure change from two to three million. In Côte d'Ivoire, the estimates increased from 38,000 to 709,000 as a result of a survey undertaken in the country and UNHCR's expanded involvement as protection cluster lead.

The UNHCR Office in Colombia reported the largest number of IDPs¹⁷, some three million, by the end of 2006. With more than 660,000 of them newly displaced during 2006, the number of Iraqi internally displaced persons rose to more than 1.8 million by the end of the year. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, as part of its responsibility under the cluster approach, UNHCR continued to play a crucial role in protecting and assisting the internally displaced population, estimated at 1.1 million and 1.6 million respectively. There were however significant decreases during the course of the year, with 490,000 of the Congolese (from the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and 300,000 of the Ugandan IDPs having returned to their homes. In Sudan, the number of internally displaced persons benefiting from UNHCR's protection and assistance activities was estimated at around 1.3 million as of the end of the year.

At the peak of the armed conflict in Lebanon, some 750,000 of its citizens were estimated to have been displaced internally. Due to large-scale returns shortly afterwards, the number of these IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR had decreased to 200,000 by the end of the year. Close to 300,000 persons were reported to have been newly displaced in Sri Lanka, some of them multiple times, due to renewed fighting between the Government and the Tamil Tiger armed opposition. As result, the country's IDP population saw an increase from 325,000 to an estimated 469,000 persons. Timor-Leste, the Central African Republic and Chad also reported high numbers of newly displaced persons ranging between 93,000 and 150,000.

Stateless persons

UNHCR has been tasked by the United Nations General Assembly, through various resolutions, to contribute to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and ensure the protection of stateless persons. The Office has also been called upon to regularly inform the international community on the magnitude of the problem of statelessness¹⁸. The identification of stateless persons is thus fundamental to the discharge of the responsibility entrusted upon UNHCR. Statistics on the phenomenon of statelessness serve as a vital tool for indicating where States' efforts are required to reduce the number of stateless persons on their territory.

During 2006, some countries reported a reduction in the number of stateless persons, including Estonia, Latvia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine. As such, although significant numbers of persons remained stateless in these countries, the data shows their ongoing efforts to integrate stateless persons by granting, confirming or restoring their citizenship.

A UNHCR survey¹⁹ conducted in 2003 on the steps taken by States to reduce statelessness and meet the protection needs of stateless persons confirmed, however, that identification of, and agreement on, the phenomenon of statelessness remained critical challenges. UNHCR has thus continued to improve and expand its data collection capabilities. In October 2006, the Executive Committee (ExCom) encouraged States in possession of statistics on stateless persons or individuals with undetermined nationality to share them with UNHCR. UNHCR itself was called upon to continue working with concerned governments in identifying these persons in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, in particular UNICEF and UNFPA. In addition,

¹⁷ The difficulties associated with accuracy in IDP statistics in Colombia have been highlighted in a landmark judgment by the Constitutional Court of that country, which pointed to serious discrepancies between the real magnitude of the situation and the figures of the national registration system. In its Order of Compliance to the Landmark Judgment on Displacement, the Court cites the Director of the *Agencia Presidencial de Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional* as having acknowledged in public statements that IDP figures in Colombia are close to 3 million (Order of Compliance 218, dated 11 August 2006, related to the Landmark Judgment T-025).

¹⁸ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/152 of 9 February 1996 (A/RES/50/152).

¹⁹ Final Report concerning the Questionnaire on Statelessness pursuant to the Agenda for Protection (addressed to 191 States), UNHCR, March 2004.

UNHCR was asked to establish a more formal, systematic methodology for information gathering, updating and sharing of statistics on stateless persons. As these efforts bear fruit, the phenomenon of statelessness should become better known, and the global figure of stateless persons could well rise.

Initially, the Office identified 30 countries with reliable estimates of stateless persons, a total of 1.5 million as of the end of 2004. This number rose to 48 in 2005 and the estimated total to 2.4 million. For 2006, the number of countries with reliable estimates increased marginally to 49. However, the number of identified stateless populations more than doubled to 5.8 million. This is not necessarily due to new situations of statelessness but, rather, the result of improved data coverage. In fact, the bulk of the increase can be attributed to the revision of Government figures in Nepal, which resulted in a rise in the reported number of stateless persons from 400,000 in 2005 to 3.4 million in 2006. The figures for stateless persons in Myanmar have also been revised from 236,500 to 669,500, the latter now including not only the previously reported Muslim returnees in northern Rakhine State, but the entire stateless population there as well.

UNHCR is not yet in a position to provide definitive statistics on the number of stateless persons worldwide, estimated to be around 15 million persons. This report however includes data on countries with reliable official statistics and those for which estimates of stateless populations exist. Annex table 14 also includes some countries (marked with an asterisk) which have significant stateless populations but where no reliable figures could be provided for 2006, including Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic and Thailand.

Other groups or persons of concern

“Other groups or persons of concern” refer to groups or individuals who may actually fall into one or another of the categories of persons of concern reported on in this report, but whose membership thereof has not yet been formally or definitively determined, or agreed with the State concerned. Nevertheless, they would benefit from UNHCR’s protection and assistance activities. Also included in this group are persons who may not fall directly within any of the categories of persons of concern, but to whom UNHCR extends its protection and/or assistance activities on humanitarian or other special grounds.

The number of persons in these groups increased from 960,000 at the beginning of 2006 to slightly more than 1, 000,000, or some 9 per cent, by the end. The increase arose primarily from the inclusion of some 61,000 persons in Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), most of whom are assisted by UNHCR; and a revised estimate of Colombians in the Brazilian-Colombian border region. Displaced Colombians in Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela constitute the single largest population among this category, with nearly half a million persons in need of international protection but who have not applied formally for asylum.

2006 Global Trends

Explanation of main changes in UNHCR's Total population of concern from end-2005 to end-2006

Source of main changes	Country	Population category	Change 2005-2006	Main reason for inclusion in UNHCR statistics
1. New displacement				
	Syria/Jordan/Lebanon	Refugees	+1.2 million	Inclusion of 1.2 million refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Rep. (end-2006)
	Iraq	IDPs	+660,000	New displacement during the year
	Lebanon*	IDPs and Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+550,000 (returned IDPs), +200,000 IDPs (end-year)	550,000 Returned IDPs who returned during 2006 after end of hostilities. Another 200,000 are still displaced within Lebanon by the end of the year.
	Sri Lanka	IDPs	+144,000	New displacement during the year
	Timor-Leste*	IDPs and Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+11,000 (returned IDPs); +155,000 IDPs (end-year)	New displacement during the year
2. Expanded mandate with regard to IDPs ("Cluster approach")				
	Côte d'Ivoire	IDPs	+671,000	Cluster approach. This figure includes all IDPs due to UNHCR's protection cluster-lead and has been derived from a UNFPA-led IDP survey.
	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	IDPs	+1.1 million	Cluster approach. This figure includes all IDPs irrespective of whether UNHCR is actively involved or not.
	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+490,000	Cluster approach. This figure includes all returned IDPs irrespective of whether UNHCR is actively involved in reintegration activities or not.
	Nepal	IDPs	+100,000	Cluster approach. Newly reported figure.
	Uganda	IDPs	+1.6 million	Cluster approach. This figure includes all IDPs irrespective of whether UNHCR is actively involved or not.
	Uganda	Returned IDPs (during 2006)	+300,000	Cluster approach. This figure includes all returned IDPs irrespective of whether UNHCR is actively involved in reintegration activities or not.
3. New methodology or change in source				
	Azerbaijan	IDPs	+108,000	New government estimates
	Colombia	IDPs	+1 million	According to the Constitutional Court of Colombia, there are serious discrepancies between the real magnitude of the situation and the figures of the national registration system. In a latest Order of Compliance to the Landmark Judgment on Displacement, the Court cites the Director of the <i>Agencia Presidencial de Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional</i> who acknowledged in public statements that IDP figures in Colombia are close to 3 million (Order of Compliance 218, dated 11 August 2006, related to the Landmark Judgment T-025). UNHCR's statistics thus include the figure of 3 million IDPs.
	Kenya	Stateless persons	+100,000	Newly included 100,000 Nubians in Kenya who are de facto stateless persons.
	Nepal	Stateless persons	+3 million	UNHCR adopted the Government estimate of an estimated 3.4 million stateless persons. Previously the figure of 400,000 was used as estimate.
	Sudan	IDPs	+485,000	Newly included IDPs in Khartoum (879,000) and Blue Nile State. Revised figure for Darfur (from 841,000 to 421,000)
	United States of America*	Refugees	+464,000	Refugee pop. estimated by UNHCR in the absence of a Government figure. Newly available data on naturalization of refugees indicates that the average waiting time for refugees to naturalize is at least 10 years. Previously it was estimated at 5 years. The UNHCR estimate for 2006 has been adjusted to reflect this change.

* Can also be included under the Cluster approach