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# Overview of global developments in the field of asylum in 2022

## Overview of global developments in the field of asylum in 2022

Millions of people across the world experience forced displacement as a result of violent conflict, persecution, abuse of human rights, natural disasters and deteriorating ecosystems. Recurrent cycles of displacement are frequently explained by the intricate interaction of several underlying causes. Displaced persons may seek refuge for themselves and their families within their home country (internally displaced persons) or by crossing international borders (refugees).

### Box 1. Definitions of displaced persons

**Refugee**: An individual who has fled a country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.[4]

**Internally displaced persons (IDPs)**: Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally-recognised state border.[5]

Increased levels of conflict and human rights violations continued in 2022. Local and internationalised conflicts, political instability, intercommunal disputes over land and access to resources – compounded by the effects of climate change – persisted in several parts of the world. Grave effects on civilian populations were seen in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nicaragua, the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras), the Sahel region, Syria and Venezuela.[6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14] In addition, in February 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine forced millions to flee the country and seek refuge in European countries.[15]

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), just six countries accounted for 76% of all refugees and other people in need of protection in 2022: Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar (in descending order).[16] The majority of people who are displaced globally continued to be hosted in low-income and middle-

income countries, which bear a disproportionate share of the burden considering the resources they have at their disposal.[17]

World map showing the 5 main regions of displaced persons, Venezuela, Central America, Sub-Saharan

In 2022, refugees and host communities across the world continued to feel the after-effect of the COVID-19 pandemic as the cost-of-living crisis struck. Many refugees and internally displaced people struggled to meet their daily needs due to inflated prices and limited humanitarian assistance, precipitated by disrupted supply chains.[18] Nevertheless, the number of people attempting perilous crossings in search of safety, exposing themselves to grave risks, increased dramatically in 2022.[19],[20],[21],[22]

Against this background, the international community continued efforts in developing solutions for people in need of protection. Through multi-stakeholder cooperation, effective protection responses were provided to persons fleeing Ukraine within short timeframes. With regard to international protection, under the framework of the Global Compact on Refugees, the international community continued to design and implement initiatives toward: i) easing the pressure on host countries; ii) enhancing refugee self-reliance; iii) expanding access to solutions in third countries; and iv) supporting conditions in countries of origin for safe and dignified returns. Initiatives in the frames of the compact focused on a range of protection-related areas, including:

- child protection in humanitarian contexts;
- increasing capacity of national asylum systems through the Asylum Capacity Support Group;
- ensuring that settlements of forcibly displaced people have access to affordable, modern and clean energy
- offering sustainable resettlement and complementary pathways, including through education;
- inclusive, quality education for refugee and host community child and youth;
- synergistic research on forced displacement and statelessness;
- efforts toward ending statelessness;
- initiatives focused on family reunification in the context of forced displacement;
- providing pro bono legal assistance to displaced people;
- alleviating poverty and fostering the financial independence of refugees; and
- enhancing the meaningful participation of displaced people in peace-building efforts.[23]

Three regional support platforms, focusing on Afghanistan (SSAR), Central America and Mexico (MIRPS), and East Africa (IGAD), provide the fora for situation-specific support from the international community. They aim to ensure comprehensive responses to specific refugee situations.[24]

The Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways 2019-2022, meant to increase durable solutions for refugees in third countries, managed to achieve significant foundation-laying work amidst challenging circumstances. The objectives for growth in UNHCR-

referred resettlement for those most at risk were met in 2019, but not in 2020 and 2021. While the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly inhibited mobility, was the primary reason for the shortfall, insufficient resettlement pledges by resettlement countries also played a role. Innovative solutions in processing modalities allowed for an increase in resettlement numbers in 2021 compared to the year before, while the positive dynamic seemed to persist in 2022.[25] To assist asylum authorities, UNHCR published a paper in March 2022 with an overview of national practices to increase productivity in processing asylum applications. It also proposed systematic changes and the building of resilience to the benefit of both countries of asylum and individuals in need of international protection.[26]

Comparable data play a key role in understanding displacement and informing sound policymaking. Data gaps in a range of areas related to displacement (for example on gender-based violence, refugee health and statelessness) are common challenges that have been highlighted by researchers, professionals and policymakers alike.[27,28,29,30,31] To improve the reliability, comparability and validity of assessments, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) developed a revised, predominantly qualitative, methodology using a combination of expertise and desk research. The methodology includes 18 questions grouped into four categories: safety and security; standards of living; basic services; and civic and social rights. The questions are phrased in a way that, in the absence of quantitative information, qualitative information could be used and grouped into five standardised response options.[32] In addition, in December 2022, UNHCR published the second edition of the Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Framework, which includes technical refinements based on collaboration and extensive consultations with multiple stakeholders.[33]

The second Global Refugee Forum, which will be organised in 2023, will review the progress made on initiatives that were announced in the first forum of 2019. Participating governments and other stakeholders will announce new initiatives, share good practices and take stock of the challenges and opportunities ahead.[34] A common theme among stakeholders has been the meaningful participation of refugees in decision-making procedures that concern them directly and in the development of protection solutions. This has been one of the overarching principles of the Global Compact on Refugees, that is, to develop actions underpinned by a strong partnership and participatory approach, involving refugees and host communities, as well as incorporating age, gender and diversity considerations.[35] The fundamental premise informing this approach is that protection responses are more likely to be effective when there is meaningful engagement from those that such responses are intended to protect and assist.

To improve the theorisation of 'meaningful refugee participation' in decision-making processes that affect their lives, in March 2022, the Global Refugee-Led Network, the European Coalition of Migrants and Refugees, and the New Women Connectors published a reflection paper unpacking the most essential components of meaningful participation by refugee leaders. Placing an emphasis on the elements of agency and empowerment, the paper analyses the ‘layered’ experiences and reflections of refugee advocates and refugee-led organisations on meaningful refugee participation and concludes with a set of actionable recommendations for improving practices on refugee governance.[36]

To the same end, in January 2023, the second edition of the European Summit of Refugees and Migrants took place with the participation of advocates, practitioners and activists of refugee and migrant backgrounds from European countries. The objective of the summit was to start building alliances and coordinate activities for refugee-led and migrant-led advocacy, thus strengthening capacity to influence the European agenda and policies on asylum and migration. The event also served as a platform for participants to share experiences, concerns and interests.37

As the international community continues to address complex aspects of ever-changing patterns of displacement, the discourse and praxis of international protection evolve to accommodate emerging needs. This section provides a brief overview of key issues that remained at the centre of attention in the area of asylum over the past year.

## Key issues in the field of asylum in 2022

A horizontal line displaying displaced children, women and girls, applicants with special needs, cli

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