Asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons

Mixed migratory movements continue to be a defining feature within South and South-West Asia. Some people move in search of better livelihood opportunities, while others flee persecution or conflict. The subregion also witnesses movements that are even more complex and caused by a combination of different motivations. For example, people may have some economic reasons for departing their home countries, which are triggered by underlying human rights violations or persecution. In addressing mixed movements, States have a legitimate and sovereign right to define their own migration policies and to protect their borders as a matter of national security. Every State has the sovereign power to regulate the admission and stay of non-citizens within its territory and a valid interest in resisting irregular migration, as well as combating smuggling and trafficking in persons. However, these concerns need to go hand in hand with the protection of those in need of it in accordance with humanitarian principles and international law.

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With this in mind, the main responsibility for safeguarding the rights of refugees and stateless people lies with States. The role of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is to ensure that Governments take the necessary action to protect refugees and stateless people within their territories or seeking to enter their territories. This starts with admission and ends with the realization of durable solutions. For refugees and asylum-seekers, the key international instruments are the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter referred to as 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol). The cornerstone of protection is the fundamental principle of non-refoulement found in the Article 33 of the 1951 Convention, which obliges States not to return a refugee to any country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened.\(^2\) Regarding statelessness, the two key international instruments the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (hereafter referred to as 1954 Convention and the 1961 Convention), provide special measures to protect stateless people, such as the right to identity and travel documents, as well as safeguards to ensure against the threat of statelessness. Increasingly, especially in situations of large-scale influx of people in need of protection, the international community’s capacity to support and assist particularly affected States, including through UNHCR, has become an important element in enhancing the protection of refugees and stateless persons.

The South and South-West Asian subregion is characterized by a weak international legal framework for protecting refugees and asylum-seekers. Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey are the only States that have signed the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. In the case of Turkey, it limits the geographical coverage of its obligations under the 1951 Convention by providing protection to European refugees only. No other countries covered by this report have acceded to either of these international refugee instruments.

Yet, there is a generous tradition of hosting refugees. Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been hosting and continue to host one of the largest and most protracted refugee situations in the world. More than 1.9 million registered Afghans are in Pakistan and more than one million in the Islamic Republic of Iran (UNHCR 2011). Many have been in these countries for some three decades. There is also a large number of unregistered Afghans in both these countries, and recently the Islamic Republic of Iran indicated the possibility of deporting some 1.4 million unregistered Afghans who do not possess residential permits. Currently, the average number being deported among this group ranges from 10,000 to 20,000 people per month. However, if the Islamic Republic of Iran should put into effect its plan to deport up to 50,000 unregistered Afghans per month, this could create re-integration problems for the Government of Afghanistan and would necessitate additional support from donors. India, despite not having acceded to the refugee instruments, has registered and provided protection to some 70,000 Sri Lankans and a significant number of people originating from Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Nepal has hosted 110,000 refugees from Bhutan for almost two decades, and Bangladesh has registered

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\(^2\) Art. 33 (1), 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, enter into force 22 April 1954 reads, “No Contracting State shall expel or return (‘refoule’) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”
and acknowledged the protection needs of some 29,000 Muslims from northern Rakhine State in Myanmar since the early 1990s. These and other populations in this region are allowed to remain and are provided different levels of protection according to ad hoc mechanisms established in each country (UNHCR 2011a). Aside from these ad hoc arrangements, States in South and South-West Asia rely primarily on UNHCR to determine refugee status, assist refugees, and identify durable solutions for them (see table below).

Table 1.
Number of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people by country, 2009 and 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY OF ASYLUM</th>
<th>REFUGEES</th>
<th>ASYLUM-SEEKERS</th>
<th>STATELESS PERSONS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1 740 711</td>
<td>1 900 621</td>
<td>2 430</td>
<td>2 095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran, Islamic Republic of</td>
<td>1 070 488</td>
<td>1 073 366</td>
<td>1 858</td>
<td>1 775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>108 461</td>
<td>89 808</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>228 586</td>
<td>229 253</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>185 323</td>
<td>184 021</td>
<td>5 441</td>
<td>3 746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>10 350</td>
<td>10 032</td>
<td>5 987</td>
<td>6 715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6 434</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3 344 207</td>
<td>3 494 558</td>
<td>17 044</td>
<td>15 437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR (2010).

Note: A dash indicates that value is zero, not available or not applicable.

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3 Muslim residents of northern Rakhine State in Myanmar are commonly referred to as ‘Rohingya’.

4 ‘Refugees’ are persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statue, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection. “People in refugee-like situations” is descriptive in nature and includes groups of persons who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained. In Bangladesh, there were 29,253 refugees and 200,000 people in refugee-like situations in 2010. “Stateless persons” refers to persons who are not considered nationals by any State under the operation of its law.
Statelessness

The legal framework regarding statelessness is weak, as no country covered by this report has acceded to either the 1954 Convention or the 1961 Convention. However, several States in South and South-West Asia have taken significant steps to address and resolve statelessness within their territories through legislative reforms and other initiatives. As a result of these important measures, several protracted situations of statelessness in the subregion have been resolved in recent years.

In Sri Lanka, the Government amended national legislation governing nationality in 2003 to grant immediate citizenship to a population of Indian origin, commonly referred to as the ‘Hill Tamils’ or ‘Estate Tamils’, who have lived in Sri Lanka since October 1964 and their descendants. Hundreds of thousands of this population benefited from this ground-breaking law. In 2009, Sri Lanka granted eligibility for nationality to members of the same population returning from India after having been displaced by Sri Lanka’s internal conflict.

The situation of the Urdu-speaking minority in Bangladesh originated primarily from the pre-partition Indian province of Bihar. It was resolved by a landmark decision by the High Court in Dhaka in 2007, which reconfirmed their status as Bangladeshi citizens. On the basis of this decision, the Government of Bangladesh conducted widespread voter registration for this group and issued them identity cards, which allowed them to vote in the country’s general elections for the first time in December 2008. Bangladesh also amended its Citizenship Act in 2009 to allow women to convey nationality by descent to children independently and on an equivalent basis as men, a measure commended by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee in its 2011 State Party Report on Bangladesh.

In 2007, Nepal successfully completed a massive initiative to reduce statelessness in the country by distributing 2.6 million citizenship certificates to qualifying Nepalis who had previously been unable to acquire this key document due to poverty, illiteracy, geographic isolation, and other factors (UNHCR 2011a).

Detention

The detention of refugees and asylum-seekers takes place throughout South and South-West Asia, although the situation varies from country to country, as does the respective governments’ practices. In Bangladesh, unregistered Muslims from the northern Myanmar state Rakhine and registered refugees who leave their refugee camp seeking employment outside without a permit are particularly vulnerable to arrests and detention. Markedly poor detention conditions, limited

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5 This term was acquired in connection with the British having brought this population to Sri Lanka during the colonial period to serve as labourers on tea plantations, also known as estates. (UNHCR 2007).

6 While this population has commonly been referred to as the “Biharis,” it is preferable and more accurate to describe them as an Urdu-speaking minority within Bangladesh. The term “Bihari” has sometimes been used pejoratively, as certain segments of this population did not actually originate from Bihar, but rather from the states of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

7 This section only covers countries in the subregion in which UNHCR has access to information pertaining to detention.
access by UNHCR and the non-segregation of those detained for immigration offenses from common criminals are noted (UNHCR 2011b). In India, notably, the police in New Delhi generally respect UNHCR refugee and asylum-seeker documents and do not arrest holders of these documents. However, in the past years, there have been a few reports from other parts of the country of UNHCR registered asylum-seekers and refugees being arrested and detained for offenses related primarily to immigration violations or other national law violations. In addition, limited opportunities to access detention facilities outside New Delhi hamper the Office’s ability to obtain timely and accurate information about arrest and detention cases, or to intervene in this regard (UNHCR 2011c). In Sri Lanka, the authorities commonly do not arrest those holding UNHCR documents. At the end of 2010, there were no reports of refugees or asylum-seekers being detained for immigration violations in Sri Lanka (UNHCR 2011d). In Nepal, there have been instances in the past few years in which urban refugees and asylum-seekers were detained or prosecuted on immigration charges in the past years. Obtaining the release from detention of these individuals following intervention by UNHCR has proven successful (UNHCR 2011a).

Natural disasters

UNHCR has become increasingly involved in responding to natural disasters since 2005 when the United Nations adopted a mechanism formulated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) known as the ‘cluster approach’. Under this arrangement, agencies are designated to lead global clusters in eleven specific sectors to coordinate humanitarian action needed in any United Nations response; UNHCR is the lead agency of the Global Protection Cluster.

In South and South-West Asia, one of the most comprehensive responses to natural disaster undertaken by UNHCR was in July 2005 when massive flooding in Pakistan displaced an estimated 20 million Pakistanis. The Office assumed the lead role for protection cluster at the field level, and led the camp coordination and camp management cluster at national level and the shelter/non-food items cluster at provincial level. Through its seven field units established in the affected areas, UNHCR reached approximately two million people with relief items and emergency shelters. The Office has launched 16 quick impact projects to help returning communities of up to three million people rehabilitate badly damaged infrastructure (UNHCR 2011e). In addition, though to a smaller extent, UNHCR took part in the United Nations efforts to provide necessary assistance for affected people in Sri Lanka following the floods in October 2010.

Country situations

In Afghanistan, worsening security since 2007 has increasingly hampered humanitarian workers from reaching more than half the country. The security situation and associated political uncertainties have eroded public confidence in the Government’s ability to implement much needed reconstruction and development plans. This has an impact on the prospects of large-scale voluntary

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8 Bhutan and the Maldives are not included in this section as UNHCR reports no statistics available for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people in either of these countries, and UNHCR has no operations there.
repatriation, especially in the case of families who have been in exile for almost three decades. With rising numbers of civilians caught up in the conflict, displacement is likely to continue, mostly towards urban areas. The stability of the country is further compromised because an estimated 20 per cent of its population is not (re)integrated into society, more than 40 per cent of about 5.6 million returnees and almost half a million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Limited livelihood opportunities and poverty also continue to drive internal and external migration movements, with Afghans moving in search of both protection and better living standards to many countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In the difficult operational environment in Afghanistan, UNHCR is actively working to bridge the gap between short-term humanitarian relief and long-term sustainable development for returnees, IDPs and local communities. This Transition Solutions Initiative, in line with the Government’s National Development Strategy, will benefit from partnerships with United Nations agencies, such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), line ministries and operational partners to deliver holistic assistance programmes that are comprehensive and targeted; rehabilitate infrastructure; mainstream families into national development programmes, and support access to national services. Socio-economic opportunities, which enable communities to become self-reliant, will be a key component. Donor support to address irregular and seasonal migration and population movements will also be important (UNHCR 2011f).

Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran host the largest and longest-staying refugee populations in the world. Some 1.9 million Afghans remain in Pakistan (UNHCR 2011e) and a further 1 million in the Islamic Republic of Iran (UNHCR 2011g). The number of registered Afghan refugees who opted for voluntary return in 2010 doubled from the previous year’s total, with some 100,000 repatriated. Yet there is an overall decline in the trend of returns since 2008, which can be attributed to the following: the profile of the remaining Afghans; the deterioration in security; and the prevailing poverty in Afghanistan (UNHCR 2011f).

The Government of Pakistan completed a large UNHCR-funded project for the extension of the validity of individual identity cards for more than 1.9 million Afghans. The document enables all Afghans card holders to remain in the country until the end of 2012. A second major project forms part of the protection strategy in Pakistan. It entails a complete and in-depth verification and profiling and aims to generate a more accurate and detailed description of Afghans and Afghan communities in Pakistan by means of a comprehensive household survey. This will produce specific information about the vulnerabilities, living conditions, livelihoods, opportunities, movements and return intentions of Afghans. This baseline data will be used to address the needs and concerns of the vulnerable Afghan population in Pakistan and support those who are considering to return to Afghanistan as well as to identify relevant categories of Afghans who may be suitable to access Pakistani visa programmes. UNHCR also supports the Refugee-Affected and Hosting Areas Programme, which assists both Afghans and Pakistanis through development-related projects aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence (UNHCR 2011e).

Currently, there is no national legislation dedicated to addressing or preventing situations of statelessness in Pakistan. Stateless populations in the country are primarily comprised of individuals with links to Bangladesh. While reliable and current data are not available, various sources estimate that affected persons may number in the thousands. With the aid of a study to be completed in 2011
that will highlight the causes and extent of statelessness in Pakistan, UNHCR and the Government will work in collaboration to develop a strategy to address this issue (UNHCR 2011e). In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the authorities have conducted several registration and documentation programmes for Afghans living in Iran in the last decade. In July 2010, the Government conducted a census of undocumented Afghan nationals irregularly residing in the country as part of a comprehensive report. More than 1.5 million people were registered in this process. During 2011, the Government is undertaking a re-registration of Afghan refugees to provide registration cards, which permits their legal stay and access to basic services, such as health care and education. These cards are valid for one year, which is a longer period than the validity of previously issued cards. A small group of vulnerable or financially destitute people is granted exemption from payment of municipality taxes, which are otherwise mandatory for registered Afghan refugees residing in urban areas. Some 300,000 temporary work permits were distributed in 2009, enabling registered Afghan refugees to work legally in the country and receive benefits. However, the procedures for the re-issuance of work permits have yet to be put in place, and solutions to assist destitute Afghan refugees who cannot afford the high fees will need to be identified (UNHCR 2011g). In light of increasing economic difficulties for a high number of refugees, and in order to achieve a more predictable and sustainable stay in the country, UNHCR continues to advocate for a reduction in the multiple fees and charges that refugees need to pay to maintain their legal status in the country.

Sri Lanka faced a massive displacement and humanitarian emergency during the last months of the 26-year conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Government, and in the immediate aftermath following the end of the conflict in May 2009. In the following year, IDPs from government-run camps returned to their places of origin in large numbers. Of the original 270,000 people displaced at the end of the conflict, less than 18,000 remained in camps by March 2011. The overall improvement in the situation has also prompted more Sri Lankan refugees, mainly from Tamil Nadu in India, to begin returning home. In 2011, UNHCR expects an increase in the number of refugees voluntarily returning home (UNHCR 2011e).

UNHCR conducts registration and refugee status determination as well as tries to come up with solutions for a small number of urban asylum-seekers and refugees in need of protection in Sri Lanka. Although the Sri Lankan authorities commonly do not arrest and detain those holding UNHCR documents for immigration violations, the Office continues to advocate for legal safeguards to be put in place to prevent the arrests and detention of refugees and asylum-seekers (UNHCR 2011e).

With respect to statelessness in Sri Lanka, the Government has adopted several key legislative measures to redress the situation of known stateless populations and ensure more inclusive and equitable access to nationality. In 2003, Sri Lanka amended its Citizenship Act to grant women the right to convey nationality by descent to children independently, and on an equivalent basis as men. In 2008, a law was passed granting citizenship to early migrants of Chinese ethnicity and their descendants. In early 2009, the Government of Sri Lanka amended its citizenship laws to benefit more than 20,000 persons of Indian origin now living in refugee camps in India who may wish to obtain Sri Lankan citizenship but may not have been entitled to it under the previous laws. While these measures represent significant progress, several challenges remain. UNHCR is working with
the Government and relevant stakeholders in identifying and assisting remaining populations who may have fallen between the gaps in the country’s legal and procedural framework and therefore continue to lack access to citizenship documents and rights. UNHCR also plans to work with the Government and development agencies to ensure inclusion of former stateless persons in their poverty reduction programmes (UNHCR 2011d).

While concerns about national security have grown in India and have an impact on access to asylum, the country continues to host to a large number of refugees. India is non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention but it has nonetheless registered and provided protection to some 70,000 Sri Lankans and a significant number of people originating from Tibet Autonomous Province of China. In the absence of a national legal framework for asylum, UNHCR registers and conducts refugee status determination for asylum-seekers in New Delhi, who are primarily from Afghanistan and Myanmar. Holders of documentation provided by UNHCR, specifically Afghan and Myanmar refugees, may be able to obtain temporary residence permits from the Ministry of Home Affairs under certain conditions. Refugees and asylum-seekers without the said permits, nonetheless, continue to be protected against arrest and detention as the police in New Delhi, as noted earlier, generally respect UNHCR refugee and asylum-seeker documents. To strengthen the protection value of individual documentation, UNHCR will commence issuance of more secure asylum-seeker and refugee ID cards in June 2011. Several hundred Afghan Sikh and Hindu mandate refugees have been able to acquire Indian citizenship, and thousands of others are going through the process to obtain citizenship. Certain administrative requirements for obtaining Indian citizenship are relaxed in view of the specific circumstances of refugee applicants. These include, for example, the use of a simple affidavit as a proof of renunciation of the former nationality instead of a certificate issued by the respective embassy (UNHCR 2011d).

Although India is believed to host sizable stateless populations, accurate estimates are lacking regarding the number, distribution and characteristics of those affected. UNHCR is therefore working to identify and map stateless groups and those at risk of statelessness.

Nepal remains in transition, with frequent changes in the composition of the Government. The Constituent Assembly’s term has been extended until May 2012. Some provisions of the new constitution on citizenship and fundamental rights, now being drafted, carry the risk of significantly increasing the size of the stateless population in Nepal. UNHCR continues to closely monitor the drafting of this constitution and to advocate for the adoption of constitutional provisions that ensure non-discriminatory and effective access to citizenship (UNHCR 2011a).

Despite the advances made in 2007 in the prevention of statelessness in Nepal, recent research suggests that there may be large populations of qualifying Nepalis who remain without access to citizenship certificates and associated rights. These include impoverished and marginalized groups such as vulnerable women, internally-displaced and conflict-affected persons, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged caste groups (Nepal 2011a).

In accordance with its mandate to prevent and reduce statelessness, UNHCR will continue to raise awareness of statelessness in Nepal. In particular, the Office will persist with its legal advocacy to promote the adoption of appropriate citizenship
laws and policies, consistent with international standards, especially those embraced by Nepal as a State party to human rights treaties. Furthermore, it will implement a research-targeted project to identify segments of the population that are especially at risk of being deprived of their citizenship rights, and will provide legal and administrative assistance to these communities in securing proof of nationality in the form of citizenship certificates. UNHCR will continue to engage the Government of Nepal, other concerned United Nations agencies, academics, legislators, political parties and civil society groups in these efforts.

In spite of internal discord, marked by frequent general strikes and protests, UNHCR and its partners have continued to implement what is now the largest third-country resettlement programme in the world. Some 110,000 refugees originating from Bhutan had lived in seven refugees camps in eastern Nepal for close to twenty years. They were formally registered by the Government in a census conducted in 2005 and provided Refugee Identity Cards in 2007. UNHCR and its partners initiated a large-scale resettlement programme in 2007. Since then, over 40,000 refugees have departed and the cases of another 56,000 refugees are being processed for resettlement (UNHCR 2010d).

In Kathmandu, UNHCR conducts registration and refugee status determination as well as searches for solutions under its mandate for a small number of urban asylum seekers and refugees in need of protection. Similar to other South Asian States, there is no domestic legal framework in Nepal to prevent the use of detention as a penalty for refugees and asylum-seekers entering the country without authorization or remaining in the country without a visa. There have been a few instances in which urban refugees and asylum-seekers were detained or prosecuted on immigration charges in the past few years. Obtaining the release of these individuals from detention through UNHCR interventions has, however, proved to be successful (UNHCR 2010d).

Bangladesh is host to refugees from an ethnic, linguistic and religious minority in Rakhine, a state in northern Myanmar, another protracted refugee situation. Some 29,000 registered refugees reside in two camps in the south-eastern district of Cox’s Bazaar. They were issued UNHCR refugee cards in 2008 and notably, for many of them, this was the first identity document they ever held. The registered refugees represent the residual population of the 250,000 refugees who arrived in 1991, most of whom subsequently repatriated. In addition, it is estimated that another 200,000 unregistered persons of concern from Myanmar live in Bangladesh without any legal status, in the greater area of Cox’s Bazar as well as in the villages outside the camps. Though positive government policies have ensured some improvements in the situation of registered refugees over the past few years, their quality of life remains very poor. Moreover, a 3 per cent annual increase in the poverty rate as well as high illiteracy and unemployment rates in the district, are contributing to increased hostility towards the refugees, affecting the unregistered population in particular. This has resulted in large settlement outside one of the official refugee camps, where the unregistered population faces serious protection problems, high rates of malnutrition and poor sanitary conditions. In addition, the unregistered people in refugee-like situations as well as registered refugees who leave the camp seeking employment outside without a permit are particularly vulnerable to arrests and detention. Markedly poor detention conditions, limited access by UNHCR and the non-segregation of those detained for immigration offences from common criminals are also noted (UNHCR 2011b).
The 2008 government-led citizenship campaign resolved the nationality issue of hundreds of thousands of persons belonging to the Urdu-speaking minority. Despite this accomplishment, the group remains a linguistic minority in need of better housing, employment opportunities and access to basic services. UNHCR is working with the Government and development agencies to ensure the inclusion of the Biharis in their programming, especially in the area of urban poverty reduction.

By virtue of its position on the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa, millions of people travel to or through Turkey for economic reasons, or to flee persecution in their home countries. Quite often, they transit through or reside in Turkey illegally. Turkey maintains a geographic reservation to the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, in accordance with the country’s status as a candidate for membership of the European Union (EU), the Government has committed itself to harmonizing its legislation with that of the EU on asylum and related areas, such as migration, border management and administrative and judicial reform. This commitment is the foundation for discussions concerning the potential lifting of the geographical limitation. For the time being, however, UNHCR continues to assess the claims of non-European asylum-seekers. For these individuals, UNHCR conducts registration and refugee status determination under its mandate, and pursues durable solutions, primarily resettlement, for those found to be in need of international protection.

Recommendations

- National migration management policies that are protection sensitive are needed. This would include national laws and procedures that identify people in need of international protection and do not compromise the right of asylum.

- Although the subregion hosts a large number of refugees, only three countries have ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Governments are encouraged to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and/or its 1967 Protocol and establish national asylum systems in their respective countries.

- To reduce the number of stateless persons in the subregion, it is important for Governments to adopt appropriate citizenship laws and policies that are consistent with international standards.


- By acceding to key conventions related to refugees and statelessness, Governments would be able to show that they comply with international standards to ensure a minimum threshold of fair treatment for these groups, which takes into account their stability and security.

- National mechanisms that meet international human rights standards need to be adopted to address situations of all children – particularly unaccompanied and separated children; victims of people smuggling and human trafficking; as well as other individuals with specific needs.
References


