

PERSPECTIVE

HUMANITARIAN AND INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS MAGAZINE 3/2015

NANSEN REFUGEE AWARD

Teaching Afghan refugee girls

PEACE OPERATIONS

UN fails at peace keeping

60 MILLION DISPLACED

Poor countries shoulder the burden

TIME TO ACT

**Millions of people are
displaced by disasters
and climate change.**



£3.50

03



9 771891 223007



Shaping the Future. Together.

Creates opportunities in a world of great challenges
We help the best and most ambitious companies in the world unlock insights and drive fundamental change to build lasting competitive advantage. We use those same skills to support society through our work with our global and local Social Impact partners. BCG worked on more than 270 Social Impact projects with ~160 organizations in 2013. In Norway we are proud of our strong relationship with The Norwegian Refugee Council.

Since our inception in 1963, we have grown from one man and a desk to more than 9,000 people, with offices in 43 countries and practices in all sectors of the economy. But our values and the aspiration for our clients remain unchanged. In collaboration with them, we chart new courses and mobilize the organization to create superior value and lasting change.

BCG

THE BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP

Content 0315

PERSPECTIVE – A HUMANITARIAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

28 TURKANA PEOPLE
Climate change makes nomadic life hard for the Turkana people in Kenya. Many have settled in the outskirts of the Kakuma refugee camp, home to 180,000 people.

34 PROFILE
Generations of Afghan girls grow up in exile, unable to go to school, and with bleak-looking futures. Aqeela Asifi wanted this to change. This year she was awarded with UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award.

46 THE VIETNAM WAR
30 April this year marked the 40th anniversary of the North Vietnamese forces and NLF units entering Saigon and thus ending the Vietnam War.

52 PEACE OPERATIONS
Ways of war and conflict are changing and the UN fails to keep up, concludes expert panel's report on UN peace operations. Lack of context analysis and resources, in addition to wide gaps between missions and headquarters, are among the panel's objections to UN peace operations.

56 THE WORLD'S REFUGEES
At the beginning of 2015, a record 59.5 million persons were displaced worldwide. Nine out of ten were displaced within, or had fled to, regions and countries considered economically less developed.



Photo: NTB/Scampix

10 DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2014 one person was displaced every second.

A FORESEEN DISASTER

■ Earlier this year, Perspective (1, 2015) criticised Europe's "ostrich" refugee politics in the editorial, and urged EU member states to "stop burying their heads in the sand while hundreds keep dying at sea." NRC Secretary General, Jan Egeland, warned in an op-ed about the deadly boat season ahead. He wrote: "Over the past 15 years, more than 22,000 people have lost their lives attempting to reach Europe by sea, making the Mediterranean the most dangerous border between non-warring countries. The situation is described as the biggest humanitarian crisis in this part of the world. Sitting still watching is not an option any longer. (...) NRC has good reason to be worried if a common European service of search and rescue is not established. The death toll increases every week, and we fear more people will find their grave in the Mediterranean this year."

■ We now know he was right to worry. During the year's first eight months, 351,000 refugees and migrants have risked their lives in the attempt to reach Europe by boat. At least 2,643 people have died at the Mediterranean. The accurate number is probably much higher.

■ On 2 September, the body of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi washed up on a beach in the Turkish city Bodrum. Aylan and his family were travelling to Greece when their inflatable boat capsized. Only his father, Abdullah, survived. The mother, Rihanna, and brother, Galip (5), suffered the same fate as Aylan.

■ Aylan and his family were refugees escaping the Syrian war. Over the past three years, they had lived at subsistence level in

Turkey, a country that has received more than 1.9 million Syrian refugees. Poverty and despair forced the family to head toward Europe.

■ The picture of the dead three-year-old on the beach has spread worldwide, and together with the pictures of desperate refugees travelling on foot through Europe, it has contributed to a change of mindset. It may seem as if Europe has awakened.

■ However, the wave of compassion must be followed by resolute and massive action: We cannot leave the responsibility to Syria's neighbouring countries any longer; together they have received more than four million war refugees. Nor can we continue hiding behind fences and paragraphs.

■ Aylan's father has said he hopes the family's loss has not been in vain; that the tragedy will open eyes and hearts to the desperate and hopeless situation the Syrian refugees find themselves in. Let us hope he is right. ■

■ ■ We cannot leave the responsibility to Syria's neighbouring countries any longer; together they have received more than four million war refugees.

PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE is on sale in the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, France, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, the UK, and the US.

Editor in Chief
Harriet K. Rudd

Editor
Roald Høvring

Journalist
Thale S. Jenssen

Writers and Contributors
Jan Egeland, Marianne Alfsen/Felix Media, Gustavo Montanez, Ida Sem Fossvik, Walter Kaelin, Lisbet Jære, Alfredo Durante, Codi Trigger, Linda Jeanette Gresslien, Sebastian Rich, Richard Skretteberg, Gry Tina Tinde, Tiril Skarstein, Hanne Eide Andersen, Øystein Mikalsen, Michael Diedring, Jon Magnus, Mohammed Omer and Adam Zyglis.

Circulation Services
Naweed Ahmed
Naweed.Ahmed@nrc.no

Sales
Pineapple Media Limited,
172 Northern Parade, Hilsa,
Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 9LT, UK

Design Teft

Printing Printall

Circulation 9000

Cover
Gustavo Montanez

Publisher
The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Last updated
14 September 2015

The views expressed in Perspective do not necessarily reflect the views of the NRC.

Norwegian Refugee Council
Box 148 Sentrum
0102 Oslo
Norway

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent, humanitarian non-governmental organisation which provides assistance, protection and durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide.

NRC FLYKTNINGHJELPEN
NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE



Miriam Azar works alongside UN colleagues to improve the lives of refugees seeking shelter in Lebanon. She is one of 840 NORCAP experts ready to deploy on short notice to strengthen the UN, regional institutions and national authorities in their response to ongoing and future humanitarian crises.

Since 1991, our experts have been on more than 8,500 missions globally. This makes NORCAP the most frequently used expert deployment system in the humanitarian world.



NORWEGIAN CAPACITY
OPERATED BY NRC

JAN EGELAND is Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council.



MILLIONS DISPLACED BY DISASTERS NO TIME TO LOSE

Disaster displacement is a large-scale, wide-spread global crisis. Since 2008, more than 26 million people per year have been displaced from their homes by sudden-onset disasters brought on by natural hazards. A human being displaced every second. Disaster displacement is on the rise and will get worse in coming decades.

62,000 DISPLACED EVERY DAY

It is not the natural hazard itself that determines the devastation and level of displacement it causes. In fact, much of it is driven by human made factors: how exposed and how vulnerable people are. Vulnerability and exposure are caused by rapid and unplanned urbanization, poverty, weak governance and state failure, population growth in hazard prone areas and more and more by climate change. Indeed, most of the current disaster displacement is related to the impact of climate or weather hazards - equivalent to 62,000 people every day.

Climate change will play an even stronger role in the future. By 2050, the +2 centigrade global increase in temperature, as outlined in the scenarios of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), will be the minimum even with a successful and strong new climate change convention agreed in Paris in December this year.

DEVASTATING SCENARIOS

Climate change will increase the frequency

and intensity of natural hazards and increased displacement in the next decades.

Research carried out by the Norwegian environmental organisation Fremtiden i våre hender (The Future in our hands - FIOH) using the +2 scenario, shows that one to two billion people may have to leave their homes by 2050 as a consequences of climate change. This could be up to 25 per cent of the global population. It is therefore critical that we already today prioritise climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction to prevent and reduce future displacement, and get in place protection mechanisms to secure the rights of disaster displaced people.

NRC, through our operations in the field, advocacy and deployment of experts, is committed to respond to climate change and displacement. Not only through working with and supporting those displaced or at risk of displacement, but also by strengthening resilience so that people have the option to remain in their place of residence.

TIME FOR ACTION

The number of disaster displaced people is already two to seven times as many every year as those displaced by war and conflict, but national, regional and international assistance to those affected is acutely inadequate. NRC is not calling for a new convention for "climate refugees", but the Nansen Initiative process on protection of

people displaced in the context of disasters and climate change, has proved it possible to advocate with states that the protection needs of disaster displaced people must be accepted and met.

Disaster displacement is a phenomenon with implications for major areas of global policy and action currently under discussion. Their success will depend on the extent to which they provide a coherent framework for comprehensive, integrated and long-term action for the most vulnerable. Their outcomes will also rely heavily on signatory governments' ability to measure and demonstrate concrete progress towards achieving their goals.

NO TIME TO LOSE

At the climate summit in Paris, NRC calls for a strong, legally binding agreement that includes human mobility. The Paris agreement should encourage countries to reduce the risk of displacement, facilitate responses when it does happen, and ensure that displaced people achieve durable solutions that remove them from cycles of ongoing and worsening risk.

During the three minutes you may have spent reading this, it is likely that 180 new people became displaced by disaster. Our message to Paris and relevant stakeholders is: It is time for action and we have no time to lose. ■

■ ■ **During the three minutes you may have spent reading this, it is likely that 180 new people became displaced by disaster.**

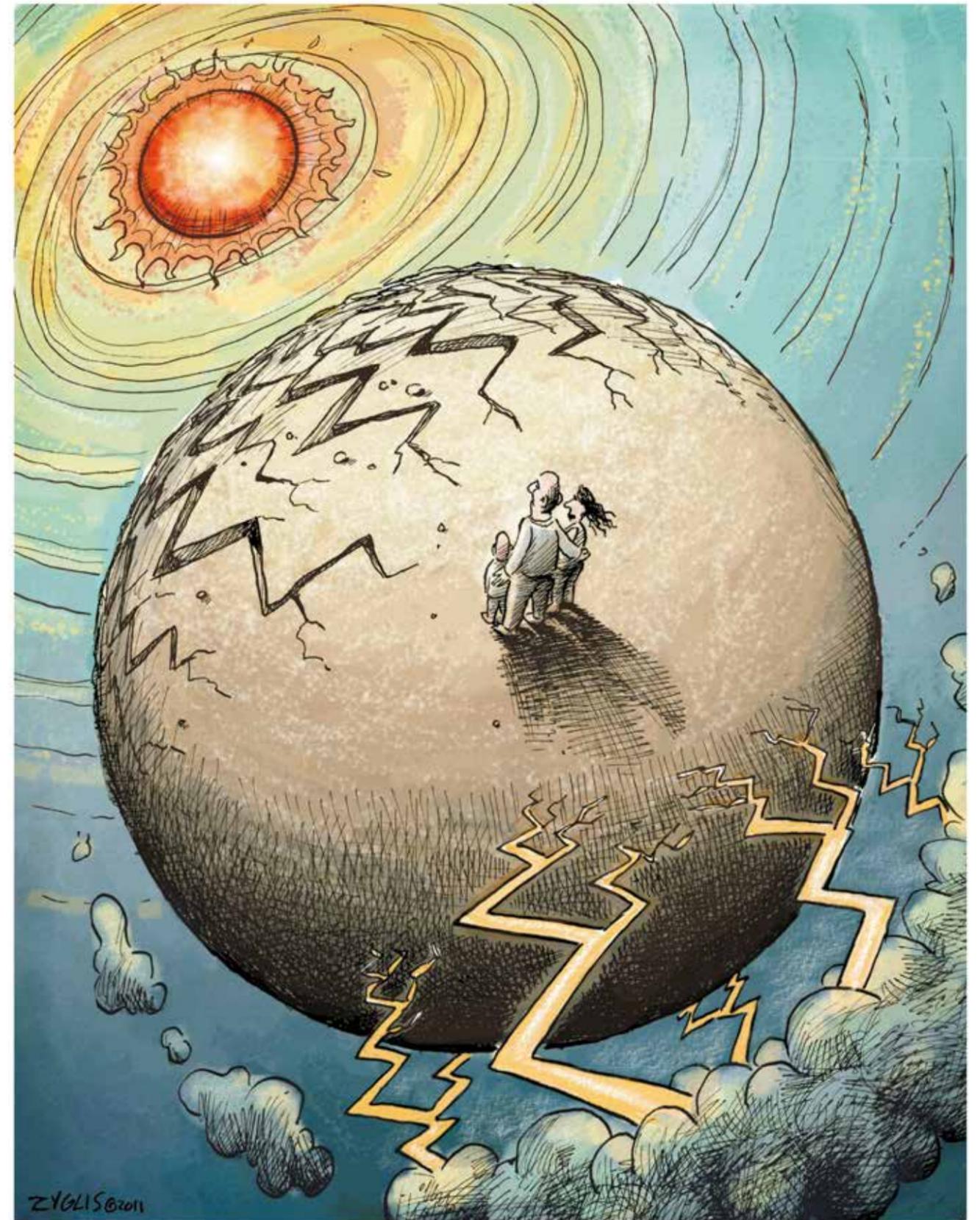
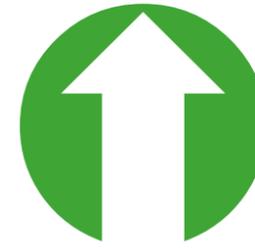
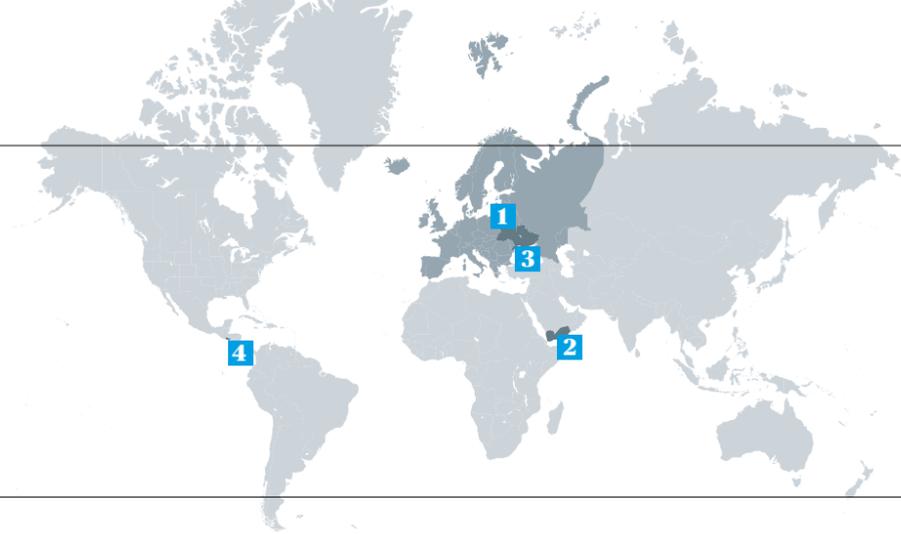


ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM ZYGLIS. Zyglis is the staff cartoonist of The Buffalo News. His cartoons are internationally syndicated and have appeared in many publications around the world, including The Washington Post, USA Today, The New York Times and Los Angeles Times. Zyglis won the Pulitzer Prize 2015 for Editorial Cartooning.

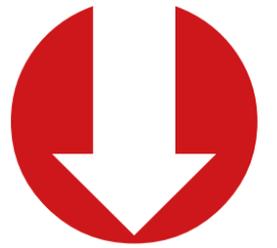
Hot Spots

- 1 EUROPE:** Influx of Refugees
- 2 YEMEN:** Humanitarian crisis
- 3 UKRAINE:** Violent protests
- 4 EL SALVADOR:** Wave of violence



CUBA

In July, Cuba and the US restored diplomatic relations for the first time in 50 years. Still, many obstacles remain. Only the Congress, where the Republicans have a majority, can repeal the economic sanctions.



EGYPT

In late August, the verdict in Egypt against three Al Jazeera journalists triggered strong reactions internationally. Several countries' governments have asked Egypt's government to overturn the verdict, which they believe undermines freedom of expression and prevents stability and development.



EUROPE Influx of refugees

A Syrian refugee family crosses under a fence as they enter Hungary at the border with Serbia on 28 August. During this year's first nine months, more than 430,000 refugees and migrants arrived to EU's external borders, an increase from 219,000 during the whole last year. More than 2,748 people have during that same period died in the attempt to get to Europe.

The EU asylum system is about to collapse: The registration of asylum seekers is inadequate, several countries respond by constructing border fences, and there have been several violent attacks on asylum seekers and reception centers. Meanwhile, EU countries quarrel among themselves on the allocation of responsibilities and burdens.

Photo: NTB/Scampix



Photo: NTB/Scampix

YEMEN Humanitarian crisis

Yemeni men stand amidst debris following an air strike on the capital Sanaa by the Saudi-led coalition on August 31. In March 2015, the fighting in Yemen escalated when Saudi Arabia and allied countries began a massive air campaign against the al-Houthi fighters who had conquered large parts of the impoverished country.

The war has cost more than 4,300 people their lives, many of whom were civilians. More than 1.3 million people have been displaced since March this year.

The UN has placed the Yemen crisis in the category of highest level humanitarian crises, together with the crises in South Sudan, Syria and Iraq.

Close to 21 million Yemeni, which constitute 80 per cent of the population, are in need of assistance. Among them, 13 million face acute danger. ■



Photo: NTB/Scampix

EL SALVADOR Wave of violence

On 30 July, the fourth day of a transport strike over the lack of security in the violence-ravaged country, soldiers of the Reaction Special Forces stand guard near one of the few buses that circulates in San Salvador.

In August, violence involving street gangs in El Salvador left 907 people dead, representing a level of bloodshed unseen since the civil war of the 1980s.

The high numbers are due to an increase in clashes between street gangs and the security forces, and rival gangs fighting each other. ■



Photo: NTB/Scampix

UKRAINE Violent protests

In recent months, paramilitaries and supporters from the country's extreme right and nationalist parties have been involved in a number of violent clashes with police. The opposition accuses President Petro Poroshenko for being too soft on the Russian-supported rebels.

On 31 August, two National Guard members were killed and more than 140 people wounded in a violent demonstration outside parliament in Ukraine's capital Kiev. The protesters tried to prevent the parliamentary vote in favor of amendments to the constitution that would give certain autonomous rights to the pro-Russian separatist east in the country. ■

It is time to act!

On average, more than 26 million people are displaced by disasters such as floods and storms every year. In 2014, one person was displaced every second. And it will only get worse, as the population in vulnerable areas grows and climate change makes extreme weather conditions more frequent and more intense.

We need to change the way we think. Disasters should no longer be perceived as 'natural' events, where nature strikes beyond the control of man, but rather as something on which we can exert influence, prevent and prepare for. It is high time the international community pulls its head out of the sand. It is time to act.

TEXT: Marianne Alfsen/Felix Media
ILLUSTRATION: Gustavo Montanez



25

years have passed since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated - in their First Assessment Report in 1990 - that the gravest effect of climate change might be on human mobility. Now we know they were right.

Every year, on average, more than 26 million people are displaced by disasters, and the trend is increasing.

Adjusted for population growth, the risk of becoming displaced by a disaster has doubled since the 1970s. People in Asia are most at risk of being displaced, as they have the highest numbers of vulnerable populations exposed to multiple natural hazards.

In addition, unknown numbers are displaced by changes to the physical environment, evolving progressively over time - so called slow-onset disasters. For instance, in parts of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, pastoralists are at risk of becoming permanently displaced by recurring and increasingly severe droughts.

"We need to reverse this trend while it is still possible," says Nina M. Birkeland, Senior Adviser on Disaster and Climate Change in the Norwegian Refugee Council.

MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

We have yet far to go. As the world came to grips with what we were facing, the issue of displacement was for a long time not even part of the discussion.

To begin with, all focus was on mitigation - how to stem the tide of climate change by cutting emissions. As it became increasingly clear that the effects of climate change were already felt around the world, worsening by the year, the issue of adaptation became equally important - enabling affected societies to better withstand what is inevitable, despite our best efforts to cut emissions.

Adaptation came on the agenda for real during the negotiations between the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali in 2007.

RELUCTANCE

The developing world bears the brunt of climate change, while the industrialised world has contributed most of the climate-altering emissions. To put it simply, adap-

tation negotiations have thus spun around how much rich countries should pay poor countries to deal with the damages.

"The reluctance to include yet another adaptation issue - that adds to the rich countries' bill - has been a major obstacle to getting displacement included on the adaptation agenda, says Birkeland.

As a result, it was not until the 2010-negotiations in Cancun that displacement was addressed as an adaptation issue. The parties to the convention agreed to assess the impact of climate change and disasters on human mobility and to plan accordingly.

A SOCIAL ISSUE

Five years on, addressing disaster displacement has become something much more than 'simply' mitigate and adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change - as awareness has emerged that climate change in itself is only one of several drivers of climate and disaster-related displacement.

"We need to address disasters as primarily social and political, rather than 'natural' phenomena", says Alexandra Bilak, Head of Policy and Research at NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in Geneva.

Since 2008, IDMC has monitored and compiled data on displacement in the wake of sudden, onset disasters, which is presented in its annual report *Global Estimates - People Displaced by Disasters*.

IDMC has identified four drivers of disaster related displacement - in addition to climate change: Population growth in hazard-prone areas, rapid and unplanned urbanisation, weak governance and poverty.

"Because of these factors, more people risk being displaced today than ever before," explains Bilak, adding that disasters can and should be prevented and prepared for.

"Now more than ever is the time for governments to adopt national, regional and global plans to address these main drivers of disaster displacement. It is time this knowledge is translated into action", adds Nina M. Birkeland.

TIME TO ACT

In 2015, several major international policy processes are culminating - setting the

pace for decades to come. The opportunity is unprecedented.

In March, 187 countries endorsed the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* - staking out the course for how the world should identify risks, implement measures and thus reduce the impact on people's lives when disasters strikes.

In September, the UN will adopt new Sustainable Development Goals - defining targets to be met by 2030. The new goals will replace the Millennium Development Goals, which have guided efforts since 2000.

In December, the parties to the global climate convention meet again in Paris for the COP21 summit - to negotiate a new legally binding climate agreement, which includes adaptation measures.

In May next year, the first ever World Humanitarian Summit will convene in Istanbul, to "set an agenda for change to make humanitarian action fit for the great challenges we face now and in the future".

CRUCIAL DECADE

Given the magnitude of the problems that are in front of us, one policy alone will not solve everything.

"We need to ensure that all these global policy processes pull together to address the various drivers of disaster-related displacement," says Alexandra Bilak.

Although stressing the importance of commitment on an international level, she is clear about one thing:

"It will amount to nothing if what has been agreed is not translated into actual policies at the national and local level. The next 10 to 15 years will be crucial in determining whether a reversal of this displacement trend is possible." ■

■ ■ Every second, one person is displaced by disaster.

IDMC, *Global Estimates 2015*

WHY NOT "NATURAL"?

We need to change the way we think. Disasters should no longer be perceived as "natural" events - i.e. nature striking, beyond the control of man. Disasters should be perceived as something on which humans can exert influence, prevent and prepare for. That is why the Norwegian Refugee Council, along with many others in the humanitarian, development and disaster sectors, no longer talks about "natural disasters", but simply "disasters".

10 CHALLENGES

10 challenges related to climate and disaster displacement, as defined by Norwegian Refugee Council:



WE MUST RECOGNISE THE FACTS

The humanitarian sector must recognise the facts: Climate change and disasters are huge and increasingly potent drivers of displacement.

The sector must also stop considering those displaced by natural hazards as something other than the “traditional” displaced people fleeing bullets and bombs. Essentially, their needs are the same.

More people are actually displaced by disasters than by war and conflict each year. Although developing countries are

hit the hardest, disaster displacement also happens in the industrialised world.

The humanitarian sector must also recognise that slow-onset disasters in the wake of climate change, such as recurring droughts that slowly deplete the soil until it is rendered infertile, will probably cause greater displacement in the future.

Last, but not least, we must rid ourselves of the notion that disaster displacement is something temporary. The Internal Development Monitoring Centre - in its *Global*

Estimates 2015 report - has for the first time analysed displacement over time, rather than just presenting data on newly displaced people in a given year. The report documents that disaster displacement is often protracted.

It is high time that the humanitarian sector adjusts its thinking, its programmes, and its policies to include the climate and disaster displaced - on equal terms to those displaced by war and conflict.

■ ■ **Conflicts are not the only drivers of forced displacement in the modern world. A number of global trends, such as population growth, urbanisation, poverty, food insecurity and water scarcity, together push hundreds of thousands of people to move. Climate change is the main force multiplying the impact of all these trends.**

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, UN High Commissioner for Refugees



WE MUST RECOGNISE THAT PEOPLE RARELY FLEE FOR JUST ONE REASON

Our collective understanding of displacement used to be clear and defined. People fled bullets, bombs and persecution in the wake of conflict and rogue regimes. Period. It was a nicely boxed concept.

However, today's world is far more complex. People leave their homes for a wide range of - often - converging reasons. Climate change and disasters are increasingly drivers of forced displacement, which often coincide with, or are aggravated by, other drivers, such as war and conflict.

Added to the muddled mix of reasons, is the time-old driver of voluntary migration: the search for better opportunities in life.

So, we are not only talking about a “mixed flow” of economic migrants and displaced people with internationally recognised protection needs. Each individual in “the flow” might have a host of reasons for fleeing their home. They rarely flee for one reason alone.

Thus, trying to determine their needs and rights, we must dig deeper. For instance, the main reason for fleeing stated by an individual might not give him or her the right to protection under existing international law or regional and national instruments. However, converging reasons might.



WE MUST FIND OUT WHO ARE THE DISPLACED

In most cases, we only know the number of people affected after a disaster. Governments, humanitarian organisations or UN agencies rarely collect data on how many of them have become displaced.

Identifying the displaced is important, as they may have other needs than those who are “merely” affected - especially in situations where displacement is protracted or return impossible.

Displaced people might for instance need help to recover personal documentation - such as identity papers, property deeds or education diplomas - or they might need access to education and health services while on the run.

We also need to identify vulnerable groups - children, older people, the disabled etc. Only when we know who are the displaced, will we be able to tailor the right assistance.

The total number of people displaced by climate change or disasters is actually unknown. Since 2008, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has monitored and collected data in the wake of sudden-onset disasters. However, we know little about how many flee slow-onset disasters that evolve over time, changing the natural environment to a point where people lose their livelihoods or traditional way of life.

95%

Developing countries accounted for 95 per cent of people displaced by disaster between 2008 and 2014.

IDMC, *Global Estimates 2015*

WE MUST PREVENT DISPLACEMENT

Traditionally, the humanitarian focus has been on relief after a disaster has struck. As the floods and storms, mudslides and earthquakes have swept lives and livelihoods away, the national and international humanitarian sector have come to the rescue.

When it comes to disaster displacement, however, the most efficient assistance we can give is to prevent that people have to flee in the first place.

We are not just talking about the big issue of reversing the trend of climate change, but the implementation of a broad spectrum of measures to reduce the im-

pact of a disaster on people's lives and to adjust to changing circumstances.

The technical term is Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). The concept is not new, but has traditionally been focused on reducing deaths and economic loss. Now, reducing the risk of displacement must be explicitly included.

Measures range from developing flood resistant crops to building houses that can withstand a storm. Measures can also include planned relocation or voluntary migration, in order to avoid people having to flee head over heel.

The *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, adopted in March 2015, is a good start. Its predecessor, the *Hyogo Framework for Action*, only made passing reference to displacement issues. In the new framework - which according to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon represents the “first step of our journey to a new future” - displacement is well positioned.

A huge remaining question is how to finance DRR. Governments and donors must reassess their thinking, and put money into prevention - not just relief.

MAIN DRIVERS OF DISPLACEMENT:



Population growth in hazard-prone areas



Rapid and unplanned urbanisation



Unequal distribution of wealth

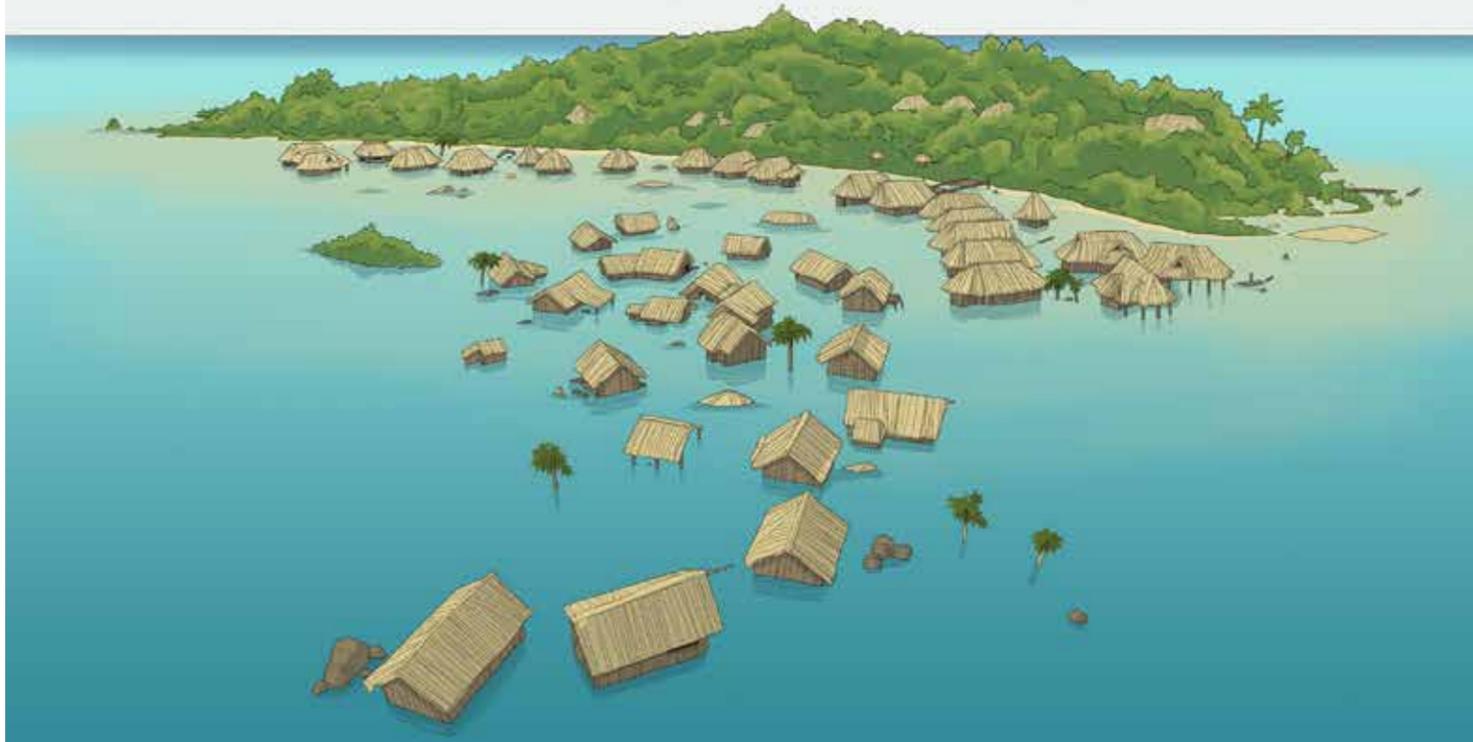


Weak governance and state failure



Climate change





WE MUST COMPILE BETTER DATA AND ANALYSE RISKS

Modern meteorological models can forecast the weather increasingly accurate, and historical information tells us a lot about where disasters are most likely to strike.

In order to provide effective early warning and early action systems, the humanitarian sector, national authorities and regional institutions need to use available data to predict where the next disaster will strike and to analyse the displacement risk, in order to secure advance financing, prepare a targeted response and prioritise resources - instead of mobilising after the disaster has happened.

Apart from being able to act quicker and more targeted, this will enable the humanitarian sector to adhere to the principle of local involvement to a greater extent.

To be able to prepare, we need better data about the displaced. "A disasters data revolution is needed," states the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in its recommendations for the post-2015 international policy framework.

"Access to information is critical to successful disaster risk management. You cannot manage what you cannot measure," Margareta Wahlström has stated on numerous occasions. Wahlström is the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

For instance, there is no system in place to monitor disaster displacement over time. The only figures available are annual numbers of newly displaced. Thus,

we know little about protracted disaster displacement.

The international community must establish a common framework for the collection of disaster displacement data, and governments and their partners must systematically collect and report relevant data.

Special attention should be paid to collecting data disaggregated by gender, age, specific vulnerabilities and location, and to monitoring the situation of people caught in long lasting or chronic displacement situations.

A huge remaining question is how to finance DRR. Governments and donors must reassess their thinking, and put money into prevention - not just relief.

WE MUST PREVENT PEOPLE BECOMING POORER

"Disasters, climate change and development are inextricably linked: not only do disasters disproportionately affect the poorest and most marginalised people, but also they exacerbate vulnerabilities and economic growth. "Natural" disasters can reverse years of development gains, and threaten efforts to eliminate poverty by 2030," states the Overseas Development Institute in its 2014 report on recommendations for the post-2015 international policy agenda.

This is even truer when disasters lead to displacement. We must ensure that displacement in the wake of climate change and disasters does not cause people to fall back into poverty, reversing developmental gains.

However, we should not be content just to make sure they get back to "square one". We must ensure that people benefit from developmental progress also while being displaced. Bridges need to be built between longterm development and hu-

manitarian aid, merging the gap between these two sectors.

This is particularly important when people are displaced for a long time. It is expected that climate and disaster induced displacement will become increasingly protracted, as repeated extreme weather events will make it harder and harder to return and resume livelihoods in affected areas.



WE MUST ENSURE FORMAL PROTECTION

Many of those displaced by disasters will have to cross an international border to find safety. If they do, they are on their own. Currently, they have no rights to protection or assistance, let alone durable solutions.

That needs to change, but not through amending the 1951 UN Refugee Convention - which caters to those fleeing conflict and rouge regimes, and where persecution is a central notion. This is not applicable to disaster displacement.

In addition, many believe it is best not to rock that particular boat, as the Convention is already under pressure and any tampering might only result in an erosion of existing rights. Thus, adjusting the Refugee Convention to accommodate a new

and potentially large group of people in need of protection has never been a viable option.

The will lacking on an international level, however, can be found on a regional level - where the urgency is more tangible and a neighbourly spirit exists. The most promising effort in the past couple of years has been The Nansen Initiative - initiated by the Norwegian and Swiss governments in 2012.

Through a series of consultations in affected regions, The Nansen Initiative has aimed to build consensus on what each region is facing and identify possible solutions. Rather than inventing the wheel all over, they have sought to build upon and strengthen existing laws and mecha-

nisms, taking varying local priorities into account.

The result is a useful "toolbox" of policy options - such as bilateral and regional arrangements for free movement of people, temporary humanitarian visas and work permits. As the current Nansen Initiative is coming to an end, the priority must now be to ensure that the participating countries make appropriate elements of the "toolbox" into actual law and practice.

The regional process has so far been conducted outside the framework of the UN. Walter Kaelin, Envoy of the Chairmanship of the Nansen Initiative, has stated that the continued process must become UN-led at some point. (Read more about The Nansen Initiative on page 26)



WE MUST ENSURE PROTECTION IN PRACTICE

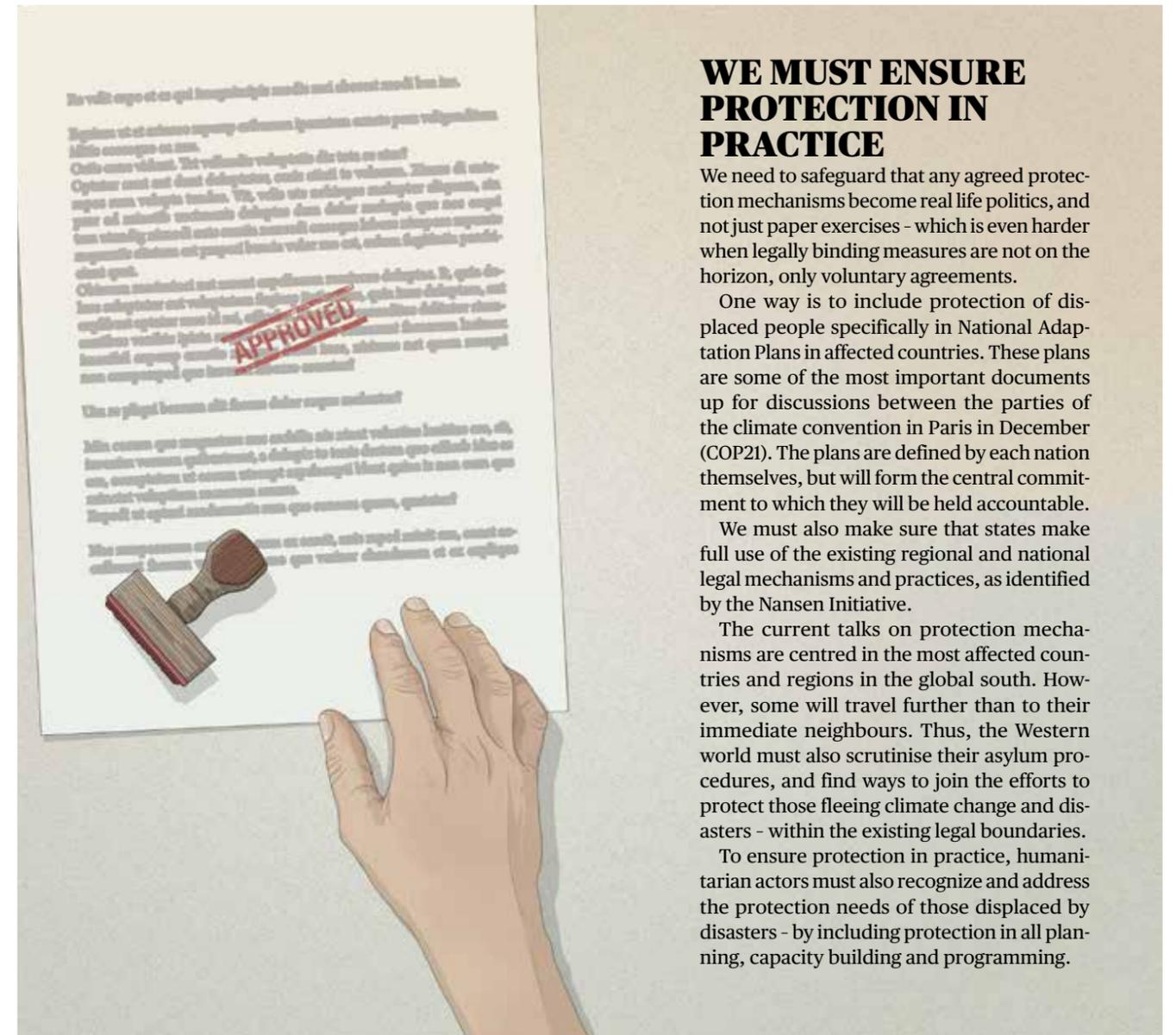
We need to safeguard that any agreed protection mechanisms become real life politics, and not just paper exercises - which is even harder when legally binding measures are not on the horizon, only voluntary agreements.

One way is to include protection of displaced people specifically in National Adaptation Plans in affected countries. These plans are some of the most important documents up for discussions between the parties of the climate convention in Paris in December (COP21). The plans are defined by each nation themselves, but will form the central commitment to which they will be held accountable.

We must also make sure that states make full use of the existing regional and national legal mechanisms and practices, as identified by the Nansen Initiative.

The current talks on protection mechanisms are centred in the most affected countries and regions in the global south. However, some will travel further than to their immediate neighbours. Thus, the Western world must also scrutinise their asylum procedures, and find ways to join the efforts to protect those fleeing climate change and disasters - within the existing legal boundaries.

To ensure protection in practice, humanitarian actors must also recognize and address the protection needs of those displaced by disasters - by including protection in all planning, capacity building and programming.



Now it is time to turn theory into action. It is time for the real work to start, such as by appropriately integrating disaster displacement into national disaster risk reduction strategies and climate change adaptation plans, and building the resilience of communities so they can withstand the impacts of disasters and climate change, and remain safely at home.

WALTER KAELIN, Envoy of the Chairmanship of the Nansen Initiative.

WE MUST COMMIT

International agreements guide our common efforts to improve people's lives. In 2015, several important policy processes will culminate, setting the pace for the next couple of decades.

It is vital that the international community commits - preferably legally - to take action, and that the commitments include the plight of those displaced by disasters and climate change.

The first process culminated in March, 187 countries endorsed the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* - staking out the course for how the world should identify risks, implement measures and thus reduce the impact on people's lives when disasters strikes. For the first time, displacement is well positioned.

In September, the UN will adopt new Sustainable Development Goals - defining

targets to be met by 2030. The new goals will replace the Millennium Development Goals, which have guided efforts since 2000. Disappointingly, the draft does not include a specific indicator on displacement - against which countries will be measured - but some sections touch on displacement.

In December the parties to the climate convention meet again in Paris for the COP21 summit - to agree on a new legally binding climate agreement. The main flaw with the current proposal, is that it addresses displacement exclusively as an issue of 'loss and damage' and ignores the fact that there are many ways in which the risk of it can be reduced through adaptation measures that prevent displacement from happening in the first place.

87%

87 per cent of those displaced by disasters in 2014 lived in ASIA.

IDMC, Global Estimates 2015

WE MUST WORK TOGETHER

"Everything is connected to everything", the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland is famous for saying - after she inspired and led the first ever "climate summit" in Rio in 1992. The phrase rings truer than ever.

The fact that climate and disaster displacement is so closely linked to a host of environmental and developmental issues,

makes cooperation across sectors, fields and borders vital.

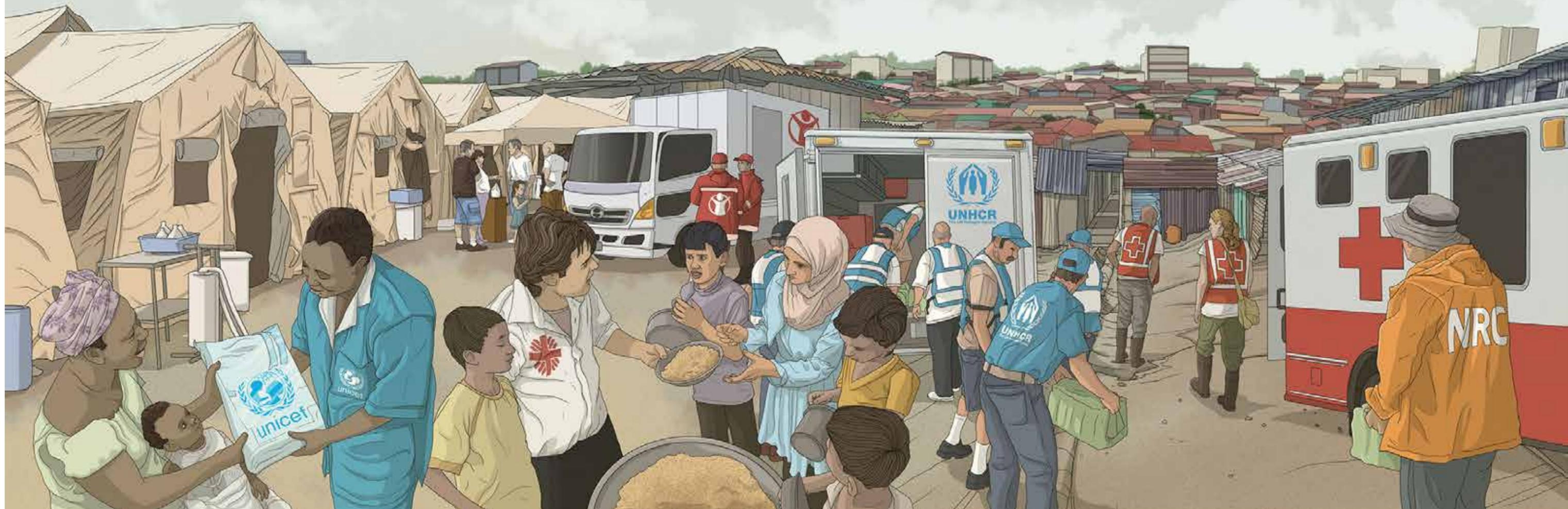
First of all, the climate experts and the humanitarian sector must communicate more, acknowledging the linkages between their agendas and establishing common ground. By joining forces, creating a space where very different mind-sets can meet, new solutions may emerge.

This is equally true within the humanitarian sector itself. The experts on humanitarian disaster relief must join forces with the experts on displacement. There is no need to invent the wheel all over, but rather integrate classic displacement knowledge with classic disaster knowledge.

26,000,000

An average of 26,000,000 people are displaced every year by disasters.

IDMC, Global Estimates 2015





KHARTOUM. A gigantic cloud of dust known as "Haboob" advances over Khartoum, Sudan. These seasonal type of monsoons can reach a height of 3000 feet and can destroy the crops and live stock. PHOTO: NTB Scanpix.

AFRICA

Strengthening climate capacity

More accurate information on weather and climate may prevent displacement and save lives.

TEXT: Ida Sem Fossvik

Modern meteorological models can forecast the weather increasingly accurate. This information is of vital importance for communities and individuals who are dependent on the weather for their livelihoods.

Although many African countries are especially vulnerable to extreme weather events, they are lagging behind when it comes to providing weather and climate information to the appropriate recipients. Those who are most vulnerable have often had little or no access to this information, and is thus unable to prepare - for instance by slaughtering the cattle be-

fore the drought or harvesting the crop before the storm devastates it. Reaching more vulnerable populations with climate services can thus be an important measure to reduce the impact of disasters - including displacement.

VULNERABLE PEOPLE

"Millions of people in the Sahel and on the Horn of Africa are vulnerable to drought, floods and extreme weather which can lead to failed crops. Food insecurity is frequently the reason why people are forced to leave their homes and become displaced. This also increases the risk of poverty and humanitarian crisis," says Benedicte Giæver, Director of NRC Expert Deployment, NORCAP.

More capacity is needed, not only to improve the production of science-based climate information in Africa. There is a great need for capacity and knowledge in how to tailor climate information, products and services to the needs of the many climate sensitive sectors in these countries. Through appropriate communication measures and channels, individuals and societies can plan for and avoid the effects of extreme weather conditions, saving communities and vulnerable population groups the often enormous costs of additional shocks.

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK

The Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS), a UN initiative lead by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), works to address these challenges,

Facts

GFCS

The Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS), a UN initiative lead by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), works on tailoring climate information, products and services to the needs of the many climate sensitive sectors in Africa:

GFCS is focusing on five areas of disaster risk reduction:

- Agriculture
- Food security
- Water management
- Health
- Energy



■ ■ It makes an essential difference for people that they are able to plan and prepare for possible climate extremes.

BENEDICTE GIÆVER, Director of NRC Expert Deployment, NORCAP

focusing on five areas of disaster risk reduction; agriculture, food security; water management, health and energy. NRC is one of the most recent partners to GFCS, and provides capacity development support from NRC Expert Deployment, NORCAP.

NORCAP-experts within the fields such as meteorology, food security and hydrology support national authorities and regional institutions to strengthen systems for collecting information and producing products about extreme weather and climate change. They also work to improve appropriate communication of such climate information and products, to make sure it reaches farmers and local communities who are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

STRENGTHENED CLIMATE SERVICES

"It makes an essential difference for people that they are able to plan and prepare for possible climate extremes. This can reduce their food insecurity, poverty and displacement in the long term. It is a NORCAP priority to contribute to strengthened climate services to decision-makers and vulnerable population groups in Africa," says Benedicte Giæver.

A pilot, funded by Norway, has started in the Sahel, where NORCAP experts support GFCS in bringing together the different sectors to develop and endorse national climate service frameworks in five countries; Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Chad.

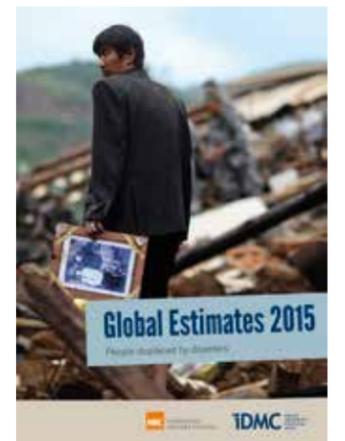
"It is key to develop coordinated climate

service frameworks in these countries and to enable tailored climate information for farmers and vulnerable communities in the country, says Arame Tall, a NORCAP-expert who recently started working with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Dakar, Senegal.

CLIMATE SERVICES CENTRES

While the establishment of national climate service frameworks is important, it is equally vital that these countries are supported by effective regional climate services centres. Since June, WMO and NRC has undertaken a joint capacity needs assessment of such regional climate service centres in both East Africa and the Sahel.

"The findings from these assessments will be the basis of future recruitment to and deployments from NORCAP when it comes to strengthening climate services through GFCS and its partners in Africa. The preliminary results indicate great needs in a number of areas. Offering long term sustainable capacity support is key to make GFCS work on the ground," says Giæver. ■



Find more facts and figures on people displaced by disasters in the report "Global Estimates 2015" published by IDMC: www.internal-displacement.org

Analysis

Professor **WALTER KÄLIN** is Envoy of the Chairmanship of the Nansen Initiative.



WHAT STATES CAN DO TO PROTECT DISASTER DISPLACED PERSONS A BLUNT REALITY

Rewind to 2010. Do you remember the media's images of the Haiti earthquake? Over 1.5 million people were left homeless - more than twice the population of the Norwegian capital, Oslo. Do you remember the impact of the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004? An estimated 2.2 million people lost their homes, forced to live in camps, collective shelters or with host families. In 2013, Cyclone Haiyan in the Philippines also displaced four million people. More recently in Nepal, half a million people fled after the devastating earthquake.

While the global number of people displaced by slow-onset disasters like drought is not known, in 2011 some 1.3 million Somalis were internally displaced, with 290,000 people seeking refuge across international borders in the context of the Horn of Africa drought crisis and instability within Somalia.

Disaster displacement is large-scale, has devastating impacts on people and their communities, raises multiple protection concerns and dramatically undercuts hard-won development gains. In such catastrophic contexts, many people find refuge within their own country, some will be able to return home, but others may have to go abroad. All will need protection and assistance to find durable solutions and end their long, uncertain journey.

Climate change has introduced new pressures that are likely to increase such

displacement. Voluntary migration will also become an important response to both extreme weather events and longer-term climate variability.

In the context of worldwide migration crises, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Andaman Sea, from Italy to Greece, France or the Americas, what can states and the international community do today to address the growing challenge of disaster displacement beyond borders?

A PROTECTION AGENDA: AN ACTION PLAN FOR DISASTER DISPLACED PERSONS

During a Ministerial Meeting of United Nations Member States facilitated by UNHCR in 2011, Norway and Switzerland pledged to “cooperate with interested states, UNHCR and other relevant actors with the aim of obtaining a better understanding of such cross border movements at relevant regional and sub-regional levels, identifying best practices and developing consensus on how to assist and protect the affected people.”

Based on this pledge, the Nansen Initiative was launched in 2012 with the objective of building consensus on key principles and elements to address the protection and assistance needs of persons displaced across borders in the context of disasters, including the effects of climate change.

Over three years, the Nansen Initiative held regional consultations with governments as well as the civil society from the

Pacific, Central America, South America, the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, South-east Asia and South Asia to build a thorough knowledge base on disaster displacement.

The results of the regional consultations are consolidated in the *Protection Agenda*, an action plan for disaster displaced persons. The Agenda offers States a toolbox to better prevent and prepare for displacement before disaster strikes, but also to better respond to situations when children, women, men, and sometimes entire communities are forced to leave their homes and cross an international border.

The Agenda does not seek to reinvent the wheel, but rather to highlight a set of existing effective practices used by States and other actors in different regions of the world that could be systematised and mainstreamed by States, international and regional organisations, non-governmental organisations, and civil society.

The Agenda identifies, in particular, five priority areas for immediate action:

1 Enhancing knowledge - if you can't measure it, you can't improve it. Comprehensive and systematic data collection on why, where, when, and how people move in the context of disasters is lacking, particularly when people cross international borders. A family fleeing from their country because their house, or even their village, was destroyed by an

earthquake, windstorms or flooding will not usually be recognised and registered under existing immigration categories at the border control. Therefore, tools need to be developed that can accurately measure displacement and human mobility more generally, in disaster contexts to inform the development of public policy and operational responses for disaster displacement.

2 Turning theory into action - let's not leave books on bookshelves.

In Japan in March 2015, after months and hours of strenuous negotiations, 187 UN Member States adopted the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, a new global plan laying out actions to reduce the impact of disasters on people's lives. For the first time in such an international framework, the Sendai Framework prominently addresses the needs of disaster displaced persons. But now it is time to turn theory into action. It is time for the real work to start, such as by appropriately integrating disaster displacement into national disaster risk reduction strategies and climate change adaptation plans, and building the resilience of communities so they can withstand the impacts of disasters and climate change, and remain safely at home.

3 Migrating with dignity - a positive way to cope with natural hazards and climate change impacts.

When living conditions deteriorate, individuals and families commonly use migration as a way to seek alternative opportunities within their country or abroad, rather than waiting until a crisis knocks at the door. Pastoralists in the Horn of Africa have long used migration as a traditional coping method to access water and grazing land in times of environmental stress. Communities living on low-lying atoll islands know that sea level rise is a reality, with many preferring to migrate abroad based on their own choice before being forced to leave. Managed properly, migration has the potential to be a positive adaptation measure that can create new livelihood opportunities, support economic development, and build the resilience of communities by allowing migrants to send back remittances and return home with new knowledge and skills.

4 Improving the way we help communities move to safer areas, before or after a disaster strikes.

For indigenous and vulnerable communities in Alaska, where Arctic sea ice is melting, or for people in low-lying Kiribati facing catastrophic flooding, it might soon be time to relocate. The risks of disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation have led many governments around the world to help people living in vulnerable areas move to safer areas. However, because of the many negative effects associated with past relocation processes, planned relocation is generally considered a last resort. Planned relocation should be carried out in a way that directly involves affected communities in decision making, respects their human rights, and builds on the lessons learned from other experiences.

5 Protecting people beyond borders.

People move. And when it is the only choice left, they move across a border, leaving behind their relatives, their friends, their neighbourhoods, their homes. They cross a border into a new country, a new culture, a new language, looking for a new roof, food for their children, and sometimes medical assistance. They have limited protection as they will likely not be considered refugees under international refugee law, and human rights law does not address critical issues such as their admission or rights during stay. Rather than calling for a new binding international convention on cross-border disaster-displacement, the Protection Agenda promotes the integration of existing effective practices by states and regional organisations into their own normative frameworks, adapted to their specific situations

and challenges. For example, after the earthquake in Haiti, 200,000 people were admitted in the Dominican Republic and neighbouring Caribbean countries. Others were admitted in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, the United States, and Canada. Similarly, back in 2011/12, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti gave access to the 290,000 persons displaced by famine in Somalia to its refugee camps. Earlier this year, Malawi opened its borders to people fleeing life-threatening floods in Mozambique. Due to the fact that Nepali citizens can freely move to India and work there, survivors of the 2015 Nepal earthquake were able to find livelihood opportunities abroad after they had lost everything. Knowledge and experience exist. Let's draw from it, work together to harmonize it, and replicate it wherever it is needed.

THE TIME IS NOW

States from around the world will gather from 12-13 October 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland for the Nansen Initiative Global Consultation to validate the Protection Agenda and give a green light to turn theory into practice by applying its recommendations on the ground.

If everyone does their part, we can ensure together that children, women, and men who are forced to flee the impacts of disasters and the growing effects of climate change can do so with as much safety and dignity as possible. And we can give them the future they deserve.

The time is now. Let's not waste it.

NEPAL. A man rests under a temporary shelter in Sankhu on the outskirts of Kathmandu, 15 August 2015. After the devastating earthquake 25 April, many Nepalese people are homeless and compelled to stay in tents made of tarpaulins. Photo: NTB Scanpix.



Turkana People

Changing Climate, Changing Lives

KENYA/Turkana: Climate change is threatening the Turkana people's traditional nomadic lifestyle and failed development projects aggravate the situation further.

TEXT: Lisbet Jære **PHOTO:** Alfredo Durante

Finally, after a long-lasting drought, the rains have come to Kenya's Turkana region. But the rains are no longer the unequivocal blessing they used to be. In days gone by, the water would fall softly to the ground, gently nourishing the dry landscape back to life. Now, the sky releases enormous amounts of water, it is as if someone is using a high pressure hose up there. Where a few hours ago, the land was dry and dust-covered, the rain has gathered in brown-coloured rivers, burrowing its way deep into the soil, uprooting entire trees, overflowing roads and creating roadblocks. In no time, the landscape is transformed. Some people find they have become islanders, surrounded by water on every side and cut off from the world.

The Turkana region is situated in north-west Kenya. The region houses close to

REFUGEE CAMP. The Turkana people live close by the Kakuma camp, home to refugees from a range of countries, including South Sudan and Somalia.



one million inhabitants, a majority of whom belong to an ethnic group of nomadic pastoralists, the Turkana people.

THREATNING NOMADIC LIFE

"We have lived in the outskirts of the Kakuma refugee camp for seven years now. Our life has changed; we used to live as nomads in the border areas near Uganda. Our livestock is dead, mostly because of drought," says Veronika Ekoru.

The Kakuma refugee camp is home to approximately 180,000 refugees from a range of countries, including South Sudan and Somalia.

Veronika's neck is covered with brightly coloured traditional jewellery; in her arms she carries her youngest child. We stand talking among the huts that make up the families' small farmstead, several of which are covered in plastic sheeting labelled "UNHCR". Some of the family's goats are grazing between the huts. The violent rains ceased after a day, and the usual hot sun is again beating down on the land.

"Today, we have only nine goats, but we cannot live on that, and we have to find alternative livelihoods," Ekoru continues.

Ekoru is one of the few Turkana I talk with who have heard of climate change, which she believes is the reason they had to leave their nomadic life behind.

"Today, there is scarcely any food. We used to have camels, donkeys and cows, and we had enough milk, meat and blood. I prefer the nomadic lifestyle; living at one place permanently is very different. Our

traditions go hand in hand with nomadic life, and without a livestock, we lose our traditions," she says.

AN IMPOVERISHED PLACE

Turkana is among Kenya's poorest regions, with a poverty rate of 94,3 per cent. According to 2005/2006 statistics from the national Kenyan statistical bureau, less than one third of the men and below ten per cent of the women living in the region's rural areas knew how to read and write. One out of three children had never attended school. These statistics are underpinned by Bernard Chamoux, head of the UN Refugee Agency in Kakuma.

"I have worked in Africa for more than 20 years, but I have never seen poverty as shocking as the poverty of the Turkana," says Chamoux.

He admits there is a lack of competence regarding the best way to protect and develop this vulnerable area, and he criticises his own organisation for not having the needed expertise.

"The erosion here is like a tsunami, and we have to dig deeper by the day in order to find water. We have been here for 20 years, but none of us are experts on environment and climate. It is embarrassing, we are not very good on development," says Chamoux.

The need to focus on expertise regarding climate change is also stressed by Eric Mativo, who up to January this year led the Norwegian Refugee Council's environment program in Kakuma refugee camp.



WATER. When the rains come to Kenya's Turkana region, the large amount of water completely transforms the landscape in no time.

■ ■ **The erosion here is like a tsunami, and we have to dig deeper by the day in order to find water.**

BERNARD CHAMOUX,
UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

"The problems linked to climate changes are discussed in Nairobi, but the knowledge does not reach us. Here in Turkana we often say that the government has forgotten us, as if we do not belong to Kenya," says Mativo.

CONFLICTS LINING UP

The Turkana people feel that their way of life and livelihoods are under pressure from multiple sides: firstly there is fear that the plans to dam the Omo river, which flows from Ethiopia, will threaten the Turkana's access to water as the river is the source of 90 per cent of the Lake Turkana water supply.

In addition, there is an on-going discussion about oil extraction. Some years ago,

oil reserves were found in the area. Many among the Turkana are against extraction, mainly because it will occupy pasture land. They have little trust that the government will use potential oil revenue to improve the lives of the people here. There are already examples of corruption including Turkana land being sold off as oil blocs for extraction.

Another bitter conflict is the dispute about land rights in the Ilemi triangle, which comprises parts of Turkana, South Sudan and Ethiopia. In part, the dispute is traced back to a vague wording in a 1914 treaty aiming to secure free movement across the borders for the nomadic Turkana pastoralists.

Climate change and environmental

Facts

Turkana people



Climate change is increasingly forcing the Turkana people to give up their traditional nomadic life style. Many have settled on the outskirts of the Kakuma refugee camp, which houses 180,000 refugees, mainly from South Sudan and Somalia.

The Turkana are a Nilotic people. It is estimated that the Turkana number close to one million individuals, but the number is uncertain. Traditionally they are semi-nomadic pastoralists who herded their animals across northwestern Kenya and parts of Uganda. They speak a Nilotic language. The groups staying by Turkana Lake also live off fish.

Internationally known Turkana, are Paul Ergen, who won the 1988, 800 meter relay in the Olympic Games in Seoul, long distance runner Joseph Ebuya and the super model Ajuma Nasenyana.

From 1969 onward, Norwegian development aid engaged in the development of the fishing industry based around Turkana Lake. The project was highly controversial, and after big investments and many years of work, the project was terminated in 1991. Norway has additionally funded road projects and district development projects in Turkana.

My father was rich; he had many camels, cows, goats and donkeys.

ATUKO EKERU EBUUM of the Turkana people

damage have also contributed to increasing the level of conflict in the region. A study conducted by the University of Colorado shows that there is a connection between climate change and the risk of armed conflict in the so-called Sahel belt south of Sahara.

“MY FATHER WAS RICH”

Atuko Ekeru Ebuum, an elderly man, introduces himself by presenting his ID card with his name printed on it. Ebuum functions as the informal spokesperson for a small community of hut dwellers living just outside the refugee camp.

“My father was rich; he had many camels, cows, goats and donkeys,” he says, and tells me that his family no longer have any animals at all. Today, the main income of the Turkana people living in this area is either selling driftwood or exchanging it for refugees’ food rations.

Ebuum has never heard about climate change, but, like everyone else, he speaks of the problems linked to drought and too little rain.

“Life used to be good then, we had a lot of food. Now it is difficult. Also, we had no church at the time, but our own traditional way of praying,” he explains. Originally, the Turkana are animists, which means they believe that everything, living and dead, has a soul.

Ebuum gladly reminisces about the good old days. He sits down on the characteristic small wooden stool the shepherds always carry with them, and tells us about the times when the rainy season was predictable and there was enough pasture for the livestock and the trees were full of fruits. He talks about rituals led by sages and sacrificing goats, and about how a man would have to pay several hundred heads of cattle in order to get married.

“Another problem is that this plant is ruining the goats’ teeth.” He points to a bushy tree with sharp thorns, the Prosopis Juliflora. This viable plant behaves as a kind of predator spreading out over the entire area.

Colloquially, this foreign species is called “Msumari wa norad” or “NORAD’s nails” in the Turkana language.

NORAD’S NAILS

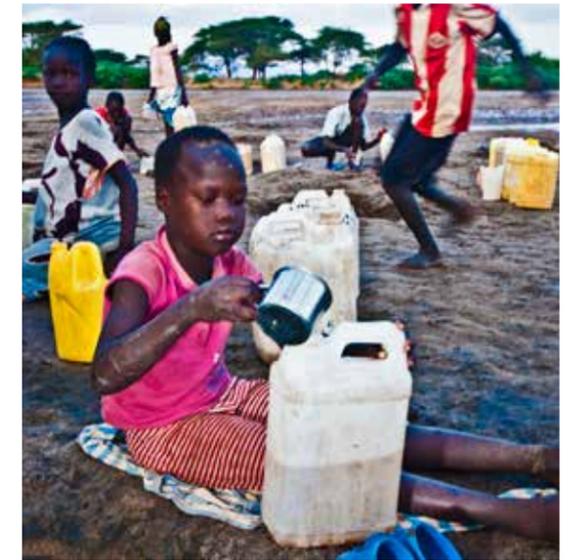
The roots to the Prosopis problem, goes back to the 1980s. NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) was heavily involved in the Turkana dis-

trict, and according to the book *The History of Norwegian Development Aid* (2003), NORAD at some point funded 80 per cent of all businesses in Turkana, including tree planting. The organisation spent more than 16 million US dollars on tree planting projects. According to the Norwegian environmental organisation “Future in our hands”, a few local species were planted, but because of its resistance to drought, most of the projects focused on Prosopis. With its deep roots, Prosopis is able to find water where no other plant does, and thus it ousts traditional species and is a plant that would never naturally exist in Turkana.

The Kenyan newspaper *Daily Nation* has over many years written about how the toxic plant has turned life in the district into a nightmare. The poisonous sap



POVERTY. Turkana is among Kenya’s poorest regions, with a poverty rate of 94,3 per cent. The Turkana people are an ethnic group of nomadic pastoralists, but climate change has forced them to leave their nomadic life behind.



LACK OF WATER. Children collecting muddy rain water. Water shortage constitutes a big challenge for the Turkana people.

makes teeth rot in goats’ mouths and the toxic thorns have mutilated many villagers.

“Nobody wants to take responsibility for planting the Prosopis. Once, a shepherd brought a goat to court to show how Prosopis had damaged the goat’s teeth. The pods contain a lot of sugar,” says Mativo. There are now on-going attempts to plant local tree-species in the area surrounding the refugee camp where the deforestation is particularly large.

According to Mativo, the Prosopis planting is not the only failed development project in Turkana. Another horror example is NORAD’s funding, at the end of the 1970s and beginning of 1980s of a huge cold storage for fish on the shore of Turkana Lake. Nobody had asked the Turkana, who traditionally live off meat, whether they needed

a cold storage for fish. The storage soon proved to be too expensive and energy consuming to run and was left empty.

“WHEN WILL YOU DISCOVER WATER?”

The list of problems caused by climatic change and environmental damage is long. Paal Lokone, Minister of Agriculture in Turkana West District, describes how cattle diseases, erosion and huge swarms of grasshoppers now follow in the wake of the rainy season and much more often than they used to.

“We have huge problems with food supply in Turkana. During the past ten years, we have not been able to grow corn, and importing is expensive. We urge people to grow plants that resist drought, like durra, says Lokone.

They have to dig constantly deeper in

order to find water; it is not unusual to drill 200 meters into the ground.

A while after the rain stops, when the water has sunk, children dressed in bright colours play on a muddy field, digging their hands deep into the mud, making small wells and rivers, and running around. But it is not all play: they have brought cans to fill with the brown water.

The sight of the children gathering water with such enthusiasm gives associations to a cartoon in *African Geographical Review* by the cartoonist Gado: The illustration shows an area littered with human bones – the remains of people who have starved to death. Fat men in suits and broad grins say to the lean, half naked Turkana people: “Rejoice, we have discovered oil..” whereupon the Turkana people answers: “And when will you discover water..!?”

Global Review

■ ■ I regret to inform you that we have a deficit now of 1.2 million euros just to cover the sessions you have in your calendar.

As climate negotiations opened in Bonn 31 August, UN climate chief **CHRISTIANA FIGUERES** had to urge the delegates to increase the economic contributions for the forthcoming meetings and the critical Paris conference opening 30 November.



Photo: Flickr

180,000

A TOTAL OF 180,000 PEOPLE LOST THEIR LIVES IN WAR AND CONFLICT LAST YEAR, a dramatic increase from 2008, when 56,000 people were killed.

Source: *The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) i London*



GREECE. A Syrian family arrives in Kos on 30 August. The short journey from Turkey is only three miles long, and the Greek island has become a destination for refugees from, among other countries, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iraq. Photo: NTB Scanpix

EUROPE

More refugees - new routes of escape

During the year's first nine months, 430,000 refugees and migrants have risked their lives in the attempt to reach Europe by sea, according to figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This is a dramatic increase from 2014, when 219,000 refugees arrived to Europe by boat throughout the whole year.

The death figures are high: Between January and September 2015, at least 2,748 people have lost their lives during the perilous journey across the Mediterranean.

In addition to the dramatic increase in numbers, the routes of escape have changed. The number of refugees and migrants travelling the eastern route is more than fourfold last year's number. In 2014, slightly more than 50,000 people came to Europe via this route, which is mainly composed of shorter distances between Turkey and Greece. During the year's first nine months, Greece has received 309,356 boat refugees. Almost half of them come from Syria and Afghanistan. Syrian refugees are lacking alternatives, and accordingly they choose the safest, cheapest and shortest way to Europe. ■



SYRIA. A man carries a wounded baby through the streets of a rebel-controlled quarter of Damascus, just after an air strike. Photo: NTB Scanpix.

CONFLICTS

Fewer wars, more victims

While the number of wars and armed conflicts in the world is declining, the number of victims of war and conflict increases. Last year, there were 42 on-going armed conflicts in the world, 21 less than in the peak year of 2008, according to a report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. Last year's conflicts, however, cost 180,000 people their lives, and this was a dramatic increase from 2008, when 56,000 were killed.

The large majority of last year's war victims lived in Syria, where an estimated 70,000 people were killed.

The Syrian civil war has over the past four years cost 200,000 people their lives, IISS

concludes, while other sources estimate that more than 220,000 people have been killed in the war.

In Iraq, where over the past year the Islamic State (IS) has taken control of large areas, 18,000 people were killed.

In addition, the number of refugees from wars and conflicts is increasing, and the large increase in number of internally displaced people is of particular concern. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), close to 60 million people are displaced worldwide because of war, and this constitutes the largest number since World War Two. ■

FOOD SECURITY

Less people starve

The number of undernourished people has decreased from close to 1 billion 25 years ago, to nearly 800 million people today, according to the report *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015* from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO). During the same period, the world population increased with about 1,9 million people.

In the world's developing countries alone, there has been a reduction in the number of undernourished people from 991 million people in 1990, to 780 million people today. In 1990, 23,3 per cent of the population in developing countries lacked food, while today, the number has declined to 12,9 per cent.

Despite the 800 million people still living without sufficient access to food, the report emphasises the positive development of the past 25 years. ■

430,000 BOAT REFUGEES TO EUROPE

During this year's first nine months, 430,000 refugees and migrants have risked their lives by attempting to reach Europe by boat.

Source: IOM figures per 11 September 2015.

At least **2,748** boat refugees have **LOST THEIR LIVES** in the attempt to cross the Mediterranean. The accurate number is probably much higher.



309,356

GREECE has received 309,356 boat refugees and migrants. Half of them come from Syria and Afghanistan.



121,139

ITALY has received 121,139. Most come from Eritrea and Nigeria.



2,166

SPAIN has received 2,166.



100

MALTA has received 100.

PROFILE

Generations of Afghan girls were growing up in exile. Unable to go to school, their futures were bleak. Until one teacher made it her mission to empower them against the odds. [This year Aqeela Asifi was awarded with UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award.](#)

TEXT: Codi Trigger and Linda Jeanette Gresslien PHOTO: Sebastian Rich

The Girls' Teacher

Beneath the brazen sun, a long line of girls, 6 to 13 years old, step into a dusty school courtyard. They neatly align themselves single file into rows youngest to oldest in front of a brown brick building. Under the bright blue skies that match their school uniforms, fifty pairs of eyes are following Ms. Aqeela Asifi as she walks among them, encouraging them to pursue their studies diligently. "Wherever you go, you should have one goal: to obtain education and gain knowledge. Without, we are nothing," she declares in a steady, clear voice. On her signal, a few students disengage from their rows and walk to the front to lead the morning assembly. They perform a concert of sorts - several chants, poems and songs. "May I be the light that brightens everything," they say in unison before Aqeela claps her hands. It is time to find their seats inside.

The girls' school in the Camp No. 6 neighbourhood of Kot Chandana refugee village is nestled along the base of the Salt mountain range on the outskirts of the remote town of Mianwali in Punjab province, Pakistan. The young students are second and third generation Afghan refugees. Born and raised in a rigid community entrenched in conservative values and extreme poverty, education is not a matter of course for these girls. But thanks to the dedicated work of their Afghan teacher Aqeela Asifi, the 2015 winner of UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award, a ray of hope has been given to these girls and hundreds of refugee children like them.

FORCED TO FLEE

Aqeela came to Pakistan as a refugee in the early 1990s. She fled Afghanistan together with her husband and two young sons during the Mujahedeen takeover of Kabul. "Initially, I thought I was going to be in this camp for two months, but the situation in Afghanistan was getting worse every day," Aqeela recalls.

Waking up at 4.30 a.m. for morning prayer, preparing the family breakfast, heading to school to teach, returning home and

Facts

Aqeela Asifi

■ **Background:** She is an Afghan refugee living together with her husband and five children in a refugee settlement in Mianwali town in Punjab province, Pakistan, where she has been teaching Afghan refugee children the past 23 years.

■ **Currently:** She is the 2015 winner of UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award, which recognises extraordinary humanitarian work on behalf of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people. The Award includes a commemorative medal and a US\$100,000 monetary prize. In close consultation with UNHCR, the laureate uses the monetary prize to fund a project that complements their existing work.

ensure the fabric has not slipped. More than 20 years of living among one of Afghanistan's most conservative communities has taken effect.

A CULTURAL CHALLENGE

Far away from her cherished classrooms of Kabul, Aqeela was quickly confronted with the harsh reality of daily life in a tribal refugee settlement where education - if not a taboo entirely - was at the very bottom of the community's priorities. Due to cultural sensitivities and poverty, parents opted to send their children to work rather than to school.

Growing up in an educated, liberal middleclass family herself, ►

preparing lessons - this has been Aqeela's daily routine for the past twenty-three years. It may seem mundane to some, including herself, but this very pattern has proven to the community and her students that a woman can hold a job and still be a respected mother and mentor. "I remember wondering how I could start teaching in a society that was so cultural and tradition-bound," Aqeela remarks, sitting crossed-legged on the floor inside her simple house alongside her husband and three of their children.

She is dressed completely in black head to toe, only her face showing. She nervously tugs and readjusts her headscarf to

■ ■ For me every day is a reward.





AT SCHOOL. Aqeela as she walks among the girls at the school in Camp No. 6 and encourages them to pursue their studies.



HOME. Aqeela bakes bread together with her daughter Sawera. Giant patterned cushions and thick red Afghan carpets line the floor in her house. The home is only a stone's throw away from her school.



HUSBAND. Aqeela's husband, Sher Mohammed, understands his important role in her story. Always patient in the background, he is clearly a steadfast pillar of support for Aqeela as well as a messenger and co-advocate.

◀ Aqeela was especially struck by the complete absence of schools for girls in the village. “There was no thinking that girls could be something else, other than a wife. This sort of mentality was transferred from one generation to another. No one would think that a girl should have a notebook.”

“I didn’t want to challenge traditions, but I felt girls had the right to learn,” Aqeela says and glances at her husband, Sher Mohammed. One immediately understands his important role in her story. Always patient in the background, he is clearly a steadfast pillar of support for Aqeela, as well as a messenger and co-advocate. Cultural sensitivities dictated that Aqeela was unable to approach the community elders directly. But Sher Mohammed gives all credit to Aqeela in convincing the village’s twenty tribe leaders to establish an education initiative for girls.

CHANGING LIVES

They granted her permission to establish the very first tented school for girls. In the beginning, the obstacles were omnipresent. Only few girls were coming to her tent; families were still highly suspicious. The elders first sent their daughters on a trial basis to test her teaching methods. Aqeela started teaching Islamic studies, which turned out to be a new level of discovery to both the students and the elders, as they realized they never knew the meaning of the words they would repeat during prayers. By making this meaningful link between education and religion Aqeela was able to earn their trust.

To encourage further enrolment in her school, Aqeela set off on her very own lobbying campaign, walking door to door to convince the most conservative parents of the benefits of sending their daughters to school. She also started introducing her students to personal hygiene and home management skills such as cookery and how to serve guests. This innovative approach and boundless resolve paid off, the word of her relevant lessons started spreading across the community. Within a few months more and more parents sent their girls to her tent.

STARTED FROM SCRATCH

The girls had neither paper nor pencils, so Aqeela would meticulously set aside small sum of her own money to buy them. She literally had to start from scratch; her students not even knowing the word for teacher. She spent many nights creating her own booklets and making copies by hand. “I had no other choice,” she says.

Aqeela taught her pupils basic literacy, Afghan cultural and religious traditions, foreign languages and mathematics. She brought children from the fields to the classroom and filled their free time with meaningful activities, while respecting the community’s habits and cultural norms. More and more girls continued to join until the tent expanded to six.

Two decades later, the tents are long gone; in their place are permanent school rooms, chalk boards and desks. The village has become supportive, helping her to build the school rooms and

■ ■ I will keep going until I feel I have reached a point where every member of the community is able to contribute to the betterment of the society.

hire teachers. Inspired by Aqeela’s success, other schools have opened throughout the village, for boys and girls. To date, more than one thousand students have completed their studies with Ms Asifi. Today, 1500 boys and girls attend class - yet there is still a long way to go. An estimated 3000 children aged 6-15 are still out of school; 70 per cent of them are girls.

AN ON-GOING BATTLE

Socio-cultural barriers to education for women and girls are common within the Afghan refugee community. While many families speak convincingly of the benefits of education for their sons, the majority do not see the same benefit in sending their daughters to school. Aqeela was concerned to see so many girls not attending and after a few days she approached and asked them directly. “We don’t go to school, we are girls, school is not for us,” they told her.

Low levels of access to education and training for Afghan refugee girls over the past 35 years has not only led to a shortage of female teachers but also a shortage of female doctors, particularly in rural areas. Cutting Afghan refugee girls’ education short thus not only impacts future generations’ education opportunities and denies girls important role models, but it also has a negative effect upon women’s and girls’ health.

Even in cases where families are willing to send their younger girls to primary school, parents often remove them before they are able to complete. Approximately 80 per cent of those enrolled drop out before grade three when deemed old enough to carry out domestic work and care for younger siblings. In Kot Chandana strict cultural traditions prohibit women from walking

unescorted in the streets, meaning that most girls are married off before their 12th birthday. This often quickly leads to early pregnancy, at which point the girls’ hopes for continuing their studies slip even further out of reach.

“When a very bright student drops out I try my best to find the real reason behind it. If the family cannot afford books or uniforms I will buy it for them, if it is not an issue that can be solved with the mother, I ask my husband to talk to her husband or even the elders,” she says.

DESPITE THE BARRIERS

Despite the barriers, Aqeela does not hesitate for a second in ensuring that her mission to empower young girls will continue for life. “My desire for a positive change is still there,” Aqeela says. “I will keep going until I feel I have reached a point where every member of the community is able to contribute to the betterment of the society.” She admits that every day brings a new challenge, but adds that the very same day also brings a victory. “Education is a wealth, you get more by giving through education - share knowledge and it spreads,” she declares. Several of her former students have already returned to Afghanistan and become teachers themselves.

Aqeela will not take all the credit for the Nansen Refugee Award. “The Award is not just mine. This is for every girl who received an education from this school, and whose lives have been changed with this school. My biggest reward is seeing a student learning to write and read, so for me every day is a reward day,” Aqeela says before moving to the back of the room where one of her students eagerly claims her attention. ■

An education, multiplied

Two generations of Afghan girls have never seen Afghanistan. But thanks to one teacher, their lives have transformed in very different ways.

TEXT: Linda Jeanette Gresslien og Codi Trigger **PHOTOS:** Sebastian Rich



PAKISTAN/Mianwali: We have travelled to Kot Chandana refugee village, a six hour drive south-west of Islamabad. We wanted to see first-hand the impact of the 2015 winner of UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award, Ms Aqeela Asifi, an Afghan refugee teacher living in the village for more than 20 years. Aqeela has been recognised for her indefatigable efforts to help refugee girls receive an education. Sensitive to the traditional role of women in this culture, we were nonetheless surprised to see the immense level of fear to speak openly. All women and girls over the age of thirteen refused to be filmed, photographed, or give audio recordings. In a private setting however, with men nowhere to be found, these women were some of the most vivacious and eloquent people we have encountered. And what struck us the most? The powerful imprint made by this one teacher's tenacious grit to equip them with the most powerful tool they could own - knowledge.

THE TEACHER'S DAUGHTER

Sawera looks up and greets us with a big grin as we meet for the seventh day in a row. Over the week, we have watched her evolve from a shy, silent observer into a playful shadow darting about our meetings. At 11 years old, she is the youngest daughter of Aqeela Asifi.

It is 8:00 a.m. and Sawera is seated in the courtyard outside her house, studiously completing her homework before the sweltering heat distracts her thoughts. The birds' faint chirping and the cicadas' constant buzz provide a backdrop to her concentration. Aqeela emerges from the kitchen to check in on her. She skims over the worksheet and points out a mistake, gently making the correction. Sawera makes the edit and then hurries off to don her school uniform.

We follow Sawera and her mother to school, where a special summer session is to take place. This takes approximately 20 paces from door to door. Whether she likes it or not, Sawera cannot escape her school life. She seems to like it.

GIRLS STAY AT HOME

And she is fortunate. In Kot Chandana, only half of school-aged children are able

to learn; girls in particular suffer. Traditional culture dictates that girls stay at home and tend to the family, often married off in pre-pubescence and denied the opportunity for higher pursuits.

As the morning assembly finishes and the students disperse into their respective classrooms, we follow Sawera into hers. She seats herself in the second row off centre, but is so engrossed in the lesson she can barely stay in her seat, leaning forward over her desk and with pencil in hand. She shyly but firmly offers answers to every single one of Aqeela's questions; although her voice does not necessarily stand out from the others, it holds its place. She is usually correct.

A LIFE IN EXILE

After school ends and the students are dismissed, we sit down with Sawera to speak a bit more. Generations of Afghans have been born and grown up in exile, with few prospects for their future. We want to know what life is like for a young girl in Kot Chandana refugee village, what her education means to her.

First and foremost, she says, she only surrounds herself with educated people. She does not have any friends out of school, preferring to socialise with those who share curious, open minds and similar values. Sawera takes a moment to imagine school in Afghanistan. "I have no idea," she concludes, "but I believe they are doing well. Perhaps they are teaching better." Regardless, she is excited at the thought of one day moving to her country that she has never seen. "I like everything there," she says proudly, "because it is our country."

EDUCATION FIRST

Having spent her entire life in exile, Sawera wishes to plant permanent roots in Afghanistan. As for her scholarly pursuits - she will become a doctor. What kind of doctor? After a full minute of prodding and another of reflection, Sawera finally answers. "I want to be an eye specialist so

I can give light to people who cannot see." We exchange glances. If Afghanistan's future lay in the hands of those like Sawera, its future is indeed very bright.

We ask Sawera what message she wants to give to parents who are reluctant to send their girls to school. She does not hesitate for a second. "Education is equally important to your boys, girls, sisters, children, everyone. Once your children receive an education, they get to know what is right or wrong. Education gives you knowledge and understanding," she says. We find it incredible that at just eleven years old she is able to grasp this importance. Growing up in such a culturally conservative environment clearly has had an impact.

■ ■ I always wanted to be a teacher - like Aqeela. And I want the same for my daughters.

SALMA (30), former student of Aqeela and mother of six

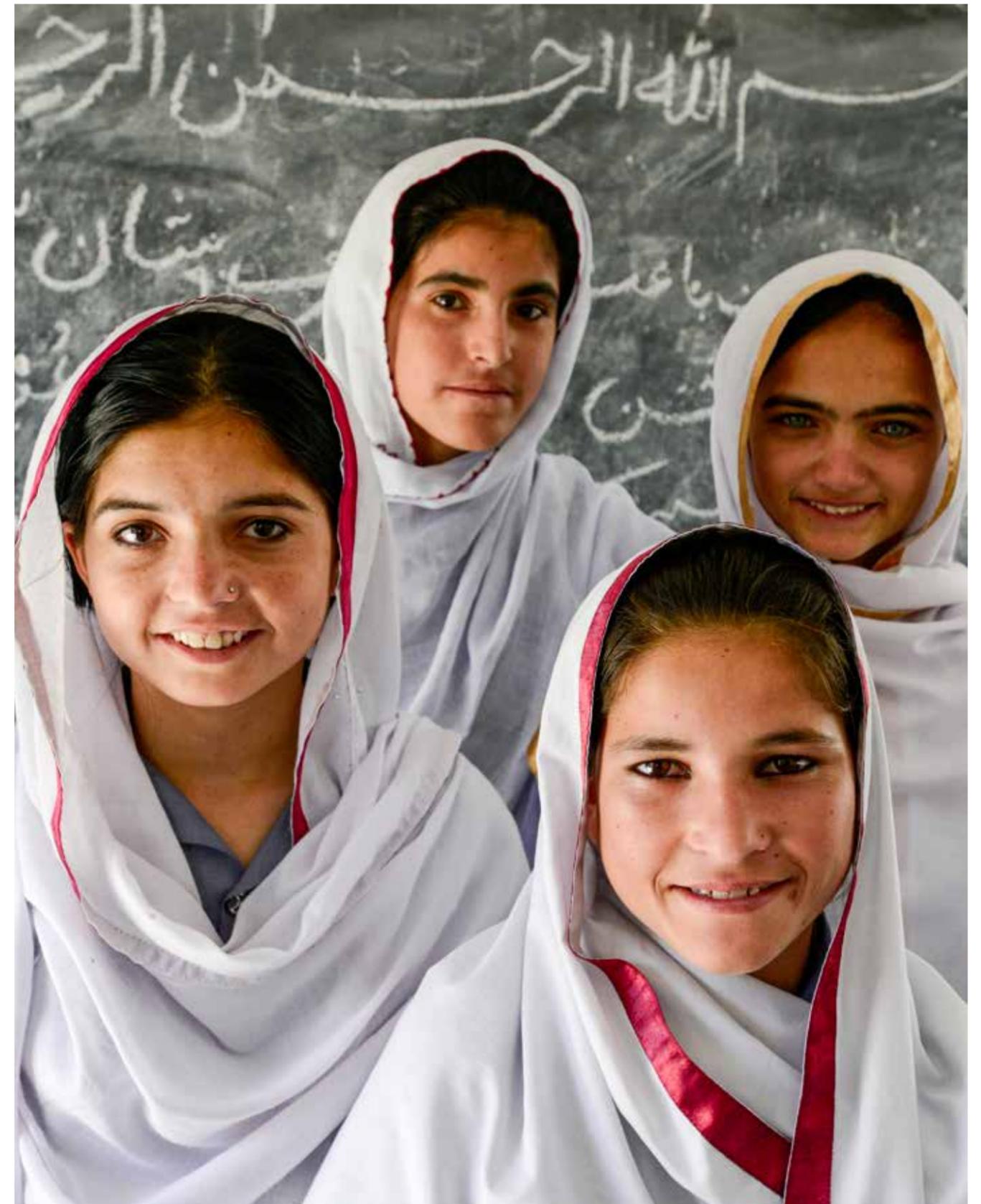
TREATED THE SAME

We return to her current life as a student and ask her how she finds having her mother as her teacher. Sawera smiles. At school she is treated the same as the other children. "If I have not done my homework, I get scolded," she says. But the moment Aqeela steps through the threshold of their home, she is only Sawera's mother. Watching Sawera and Aqeela interact in the classroom is a bit surreal - one would not be able to distinguish them as mother and daughter. We remember earlier in the morning back in the courtyard. The scene is clearly a mother helping her daughter; all vestiges of professionalism gone.

The classroom boasts colourful pictures hanging on the walls, bright and airy despite the gloomy exterior. There we are introduced to several of Sawera's classmates: Nadia, 12 years old and Haseena, 9 years old. Although years apart they are nearly identical in their school uniforms, cheery sky blue dresses and snowy white headscarves.

TWO GENERATIONS

Nadia and Haseena hang onto Aqeela's every word as she begins her lesson. School is out for the summer, and this is clearly a treat for the students. Their eye-



EVERYONE IS WELCOME. Aqeela makes no distinction between the Afghan refugee girls and the Pakistani girls in the village (photo). Recently, she also started a school for boys.



THE ELDERS. Aqeela had to ask the elders of the village permission to teach girls.



PATIENCE. Through patience and cleverness, Aqeela was able to earn the elders trust.



LIFELONG MENTOR. To Aqeela, it is a privilege to teach girls. Once she takes a student, she assumes the role of a lifelong mentor.

brows furrow in concentration as they take notes. Setting her pupils to work on an assignment, Aqeela slowly weaves through the desks, gently correcting here, giving guidance there. The atmosphere is studious, yet relaxed and full of promise. The poem recited earlier in unison at the morning assembly seems to summarize the ambience perfectly: "I want my life to be a light which brightens everything." They are much quieter than Sawera, and too timid to talk to us.

So Aqeela arranges for us to meet their

mother, Salma, who was one of Aqeela's original students. She accompanies us to Salma's house and greets her warmly, settling in comfortably; she is clearly a regular visitor.

MEETING WITH SALMA

The ceiling fan cuts through the 47-degree celsius air with ease, clearly practiced at the art of circulation. We crowd into the cozy guestroom of the mud-straw house along with three generations of the women hosting us.

Salma perches on a pillow in the corner.

Her dark almond-shaped eyes are bright; her lips constantly twitch with the hint of a mischievous smile. Despite the extreme weather, she wears a long turquoise-blue velvet dress, with pink stars and silver moons embroidered on the edge of the fabric. She constantly adjusts her emerald green headscarf embedded with gold beads. A subtle gold nose piercing and faded henna tattoo on her chin give her a proud, fierce look. She commands the room - her voice fills every corner. Her hand gestures are very quick. Short flicks

of the wrists send her bangle bracelets clinking, similar to the bells that famously adorn Afghan and Pakistani trucks.

NO RECORDER

Despite her easy-going demeanour, teasing and laughter - Salma quiets when we ask her to tell us her story anonymously on a tape recorder. We have never seen somebody so thoroughly and completely conflicted to her very core. It is heartbreaking to watch. She hesitates, visibly distraught. She glances wordlessly from face to face of the women

around her - her mother, her sister, her sister-in-law. Each one takes a turn to convince her to agree. They try a variety of approaches: from gentle coaxing, to humour, to promises of protection. Salma rocks back and forth slowly as if the words are about to erupt out of her, and her eyes fill with tears. After a minute of silence, she shakes her head and sighs. The fear of backlash is too great. She regains her composure. She is, at least, keen to talk to us with our poised pens, the recorders and cameras carefully tucked away.

SALMA'S STORY

Salma's family were nomadic livestock herders who fled from Kunduz, Afghanistan in the late 1980s. Salma was just two months old at the time; her mother was still breastfeeding. It was a slow and painful voyage to reach the Pakistani border. As their caravan inched furtively across the country, they encountered obstacle after obstacle - treacherous terrain, extreme weather conditions, robberies and, at the lowest point, a vicious attack that left twelve of their family members dead. They

left them there, buried in shallow graves, before moving on. Salma and her family arrived in Pakistan exhausted, penniless and traumatized. Her mother's feet were covered in blisters from carrying her long distances. Their skin severely burned under the relentless sun.

Eventually, the family retreated further into their host country, finding refuge in Kot Chandana refugee village in Mianwali, central Pakistan. Today, approximately 14,000 Afghans live in the village. It is here Salma grew up and has remained ever since. She has never left the district of Mianwali. Her articulation, choice of words, storytelling - Salma is clearly one of those people who is inherently intelligent. But she attributes all her savvy to the woman seated on her right; Aqeela Asifi. Aqeela started the first school for girls in the village during the early 1990s.

Salma recalls these early days, when Aqeela first knocked on her family's door and spent weeks persuading her parents to let her tutor Salma. Salma's father acquiesced, but it was her mother who was reluctant - she didn't want to lose a hand at the household chores. But in the end they allowed her to attend the classes.

TEACHING IN TENT

Salma vividly remembers the tent classroom, despite the decades-long time lapse. They had no drinking water, no rugs or pillows to sit on, no fans, no textbooks. Aqeela would spend her evenings laboriously copying lessons for her students, handing them out on individual sheets of paper the next day. A pause: Aqeela nudges Salma and says something in her ear; Salma chuckles and rolls her eyes, playfully slapping Aqeela on the shoulder. Aqeela interjects with an anecdote. One particular day, she tells us, she managed to secure pencils and erasers for the students. She moved through the rows of girls handing out the materials. Behind

her back she heard a hoarse whisper, "don't ask questions - it's free, just eat it!" Fooled by the sweet, artificial scents of the erasers, Salma had taken a bite; Aqeela turned around in time to witness the confused, slightly expression turn to defiant stubbornness as she forced herself to swallow. Salma interrupts to take over the story. She still recalls the scent and taste of the eraser, she says. "It reminded me of bubble gum. Halfway through [eating] I realized it did not taste good, but I finished it anyway. If I had another eraser like that again, I would still eat it!" Her laughter shakes her whole body and the dimples on either side of her smile stretch wide. We join in, but are nonetheless pained by this memory. The children really started from nothing; they could not even recognise a basic writing utensil.

MARRIED AT AGE 12

Engaged at age 8, married at age 12 and pregnant by age 13, Salma still managed to finish the final level and receive her certificate. She would awaken early and return home during lunch to finish all her chores. She would stay up late to finish her homework. Salma loved the social aspect of the school, she tells us, but does not consider herself to have been a good student. She

says that by the time she understood the importance of her education, she was already married.

Salma has seven children now - five girls and two boys. Her three oldest girls are enrolled in Aqeela's school. The school has now

grown from a tent into proper grounds with several buildings. Salma wishes she could continue her studies, but instead she focuses on her daughters' education. She aches for her daughters to become doctors, teachers, whatever they may aspire. So they can have their own income and freedom, something she has always longed for. And so, she tells us with a steely look in her eyes, she will do everything in her power

to resist early marriages for her daughters.

Salma's mother sits quietly whilst she describes this part of her life. She doesn't deny anything, nor seem to have any regrets, but she clearly appreciates her daughter's words in hindsight.

Salma continues, explaining how finishing her education and graduating have changed her life. And how she continues to use her education every day.

THE ONLY LITERATE IN THE FAMILY

The only literate person in her family, it is Salma who takes her husband to the doctor - he cannot read or write. When her children are ill, she can take them to the hospital and fill out the necessary forms. As she is able to read the expiration dates, she does not give her children expired vaccines and medications. At night she helps her children with their homework. She tells us this matter-of-factly, but a hint of pride shines through. Culturally, Salma notes, she grew to appreciate the importance of dignity and hospitality. This has allowed her to develop her family relationships with a grace that lets her be a better mother and daughter. This is an extremely important way to uphold her and her family's honour. "Aqeela transformed my life," Salma says.

Her unshakable admiration for Aqeela fills the room; and the respect is decidedly mutual. Speaking with Salma and her peers has made it clear that once Aqeela takes in a student, she assumes the role of a lifelong mentor. And the pride she takes as she watches her pupils flourish and prosper in a variety of ways, is evident. It is a rare privilege to teach parents and children, and to maintain such a close relationship all the while.

We inquire after Salma's hopes and dreams nowadays. The right side of her mouth curls upwards as she considers them. "I had dreams," she says softly. Her voice becomes stronger as she repeats her old ambition to finish her education, to become a teacher. "I always wanted to be like Aqeela. To speak wisdom." And now she wants the same for her daughters. ■

The name of Salma has been changed for privacy reasons.

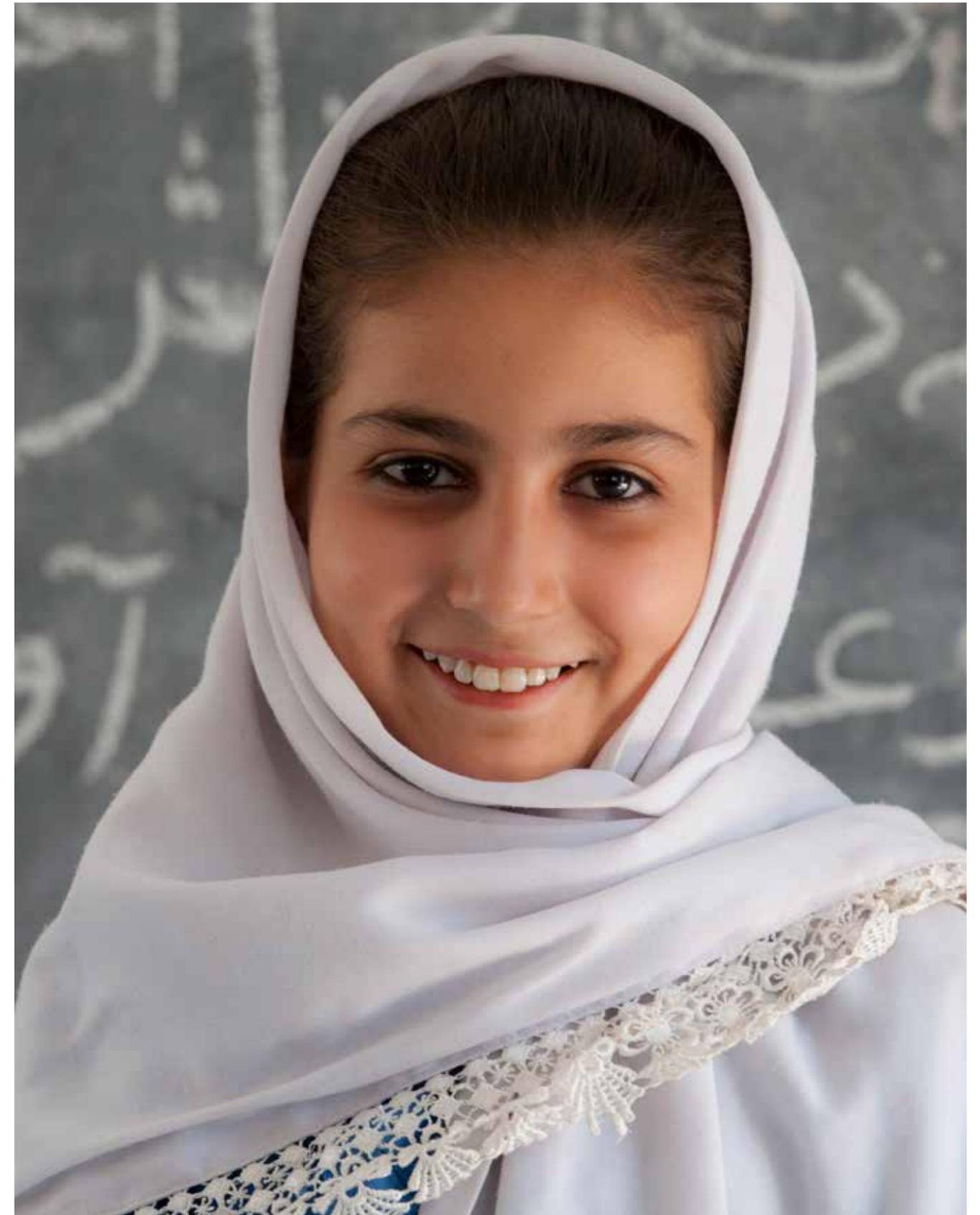


Only one in every two refugee children attend primary school.

Source: UNHCR

■ ■ **I want to be an eye specialist so I can give light to people who cannot see.**

SAWERA (11), the youngest daughter of Aqeela Asifi



EAGER STUDENT. Having spent her entire life in exile, Sawera wishes to become a doctor and plant permanent roots in Afghanistan.

RICHARD SKRETTEBERG is Senior Adviser at the Norwegian Refugee Council.



The Vietnam War

30 April marked the **40th anniversary** of the North Vietnamese forces and NLF units entering Saigon and thus ending the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War, or rather the Second Indochina War, was over. Left behind were a traumatised and humiliated USA and an impoverished, bombed and ruined Vietnam.

Many column inches have been dedicated to how different political groups in the West attempted to gain political capital on the war, and how it vitalised the political commitment in large youth groups. But what happened in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia? How could David beat Goliath, and why did the Red Brotherhood collapse?

What we call the Vietnam War, was in fact the Second Indochina War. The French merged the culturally and nationally diverse areas that included Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia into a political entity, called the Indochinese Federation. Aside from the French colonial rule, the areas had little in common, and it was only in Vietnam that the colonial rule led to major changes. This would prove to be decisive for the further political development.

1: THE FIRST INDOCHINA WAR

Already on 2 September 1945, Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the resistance movement Viet Minh and the Indochinese Communist Party (as it was called until the 1950s), declared Vietnam an independent state. The Japanese were defeated, but the French returned and the First Indochina War began.

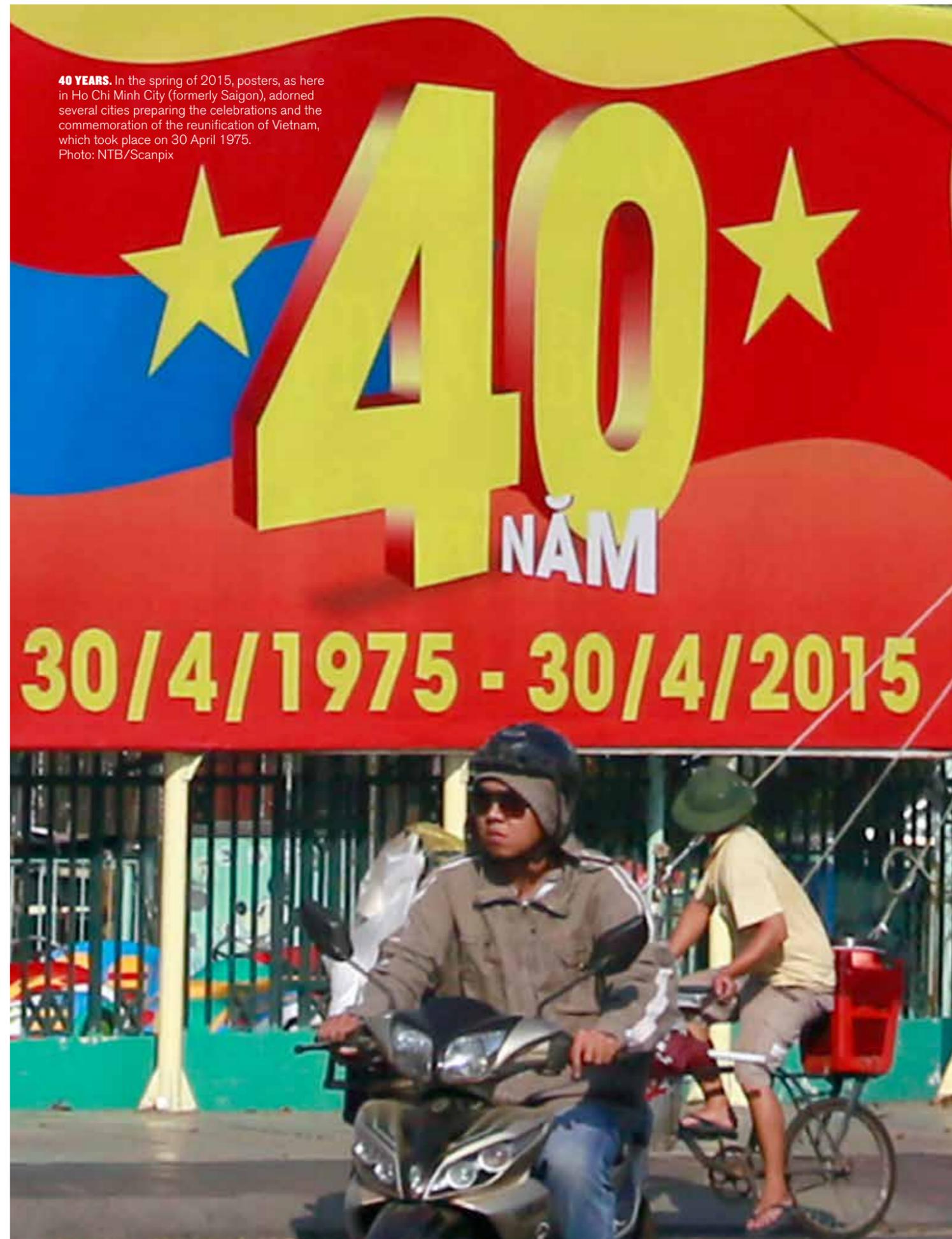
Because the effects of colonialism were strongest in Vietnam, this was where the political alternative ideas gained a foothold fastest. The modern nationalism that developed in different varieties marked the post-war era and the independence movements around the world. In Vietnam, it was the “red” nationalism that emerged the strongest.

COLONIALISM

Vietnam was important to France. Their colonial administration consisted of several tens of thousands of people, while in

Laos they had around 100 officers. Laos and Cambodia were important for strategic reasons, but there was little economic development. In Vietnam, however, they developed an educational system that was inspired by the West and that competed with the traditional Confucian values. In addition, they developed large plantations, mining and commercialisation of agriculture to a certain degree. A relatively large middle class emerged in the cities, but the vast majority of the population was still farmers.

The land owners and the middle class in the cities developed a certain nationalism early on, but it remained an urban phenomenon and lacked a unifying ideology and organisational discipline. The Communist Party and Viet Minh on the other hand, stood for a clear ideology and prioritised the organisation of the farmers. Besides, their parole of lib-



40 YEARS. In the spring of 2015, posters, as here in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), adorned several cities preparing the celebrations and the commemoration of the reunification of Vietnam, which took place on 30 April 1975. Photo: NTB/Scanpix

eration from both Japan and France after World War II remained steadfast. When the French returned, the conservative nationalists became increasingly compelled to support the French in order to prevent a communist takeover of power. In this way, they discredited themselves and left the way open for the radical wing of nationalism, led by the Communist Party.

FRENCH DEFEAT

The French defeat in the battle of Dien Bien Phu (Vietnam) in May 1954, came as a shock in France. It was the beginning of the end as a colonial power, and a forerunner to Algeria and the fall of the Fourth Republic.

Shortly after, a peace agreement was signed at the Geneva Conference. Vietnam was temporarily divided at the 17th parallel, and it was agreed to hold elections with the purpose of reunification by July 1956.

Elections were never held due to the Americans' fear of a communist victory. The Cold War was at its coldest, and the Americans took it upon themselves to restrain what they saw as communist expansion. The seeds of the Second Indochina War, or what we call the Vietnam War, were sown. Laos was quickly drawn into the conflict, while Cambodia desperately tried to avoid this. They did not succeed.

LAOS AND CAMBODIA

Similarly, in Laos, the Japanese reign gave nourishment to nationalism. The country obtained partial independence in 1949, but the revolutionary forces gathered inspiration from Viet Minh in Vietnam and demanded full independence. After the Geneva Accords of 1954, the eyes of the world were on this secluded and landlocked, but strategically important nation. Laos was to become a battlefield during the Cold War.

The first neutral government was soon followed by a pro-American right-wing government, and it quickly developed into a conflict between traditional royalists and communist nationalists, led by Pathet Lao (Laos' equivalent to Viet Minh).

Pathet Lao collaborated closely with North Vietnam in the 1960s. They were in need of weapons and training of cadres while North Vietnam needed to secure a safe passage on the vital Ho Chi Minh trail to South Vietnam. Parts of which were controlled by Pathet Lao.

"GUNS IN, DRUGS OUT"

Laos became an important piece of the

puzzle when the decisive battle of Indochina intensified during the 1960s. The CIA started collaboration with the Hmong, a mountain tribe known as the biggest opium growers in Southeast Asia. The CIA used the airline Air America, on paper a commercial enterprise, for their GIDO operations (guns in, drugs out).

The leadership of Pathet Lao was dominated by Lao from the lowlands, but the majority of the soldiers had been recruited from minority groups such as the mountain tribe Kha. Traditionally, they had been treated as slaves by the Lao and were drawn to the communist egalitarian ideology.

In Cambodia, there were close links between the monarchy and the French, and when Norodom Sihanouk in 1953 de-

clared himself the leader of the "Royal Crusade for Independence", the French gave in and the Sihanouk administration was recognised by the Geneva Conference. Through skillful diplomacy he gained a national halo for himself, something the leaders in South Vietnam were utterly lacking. Sihanouk's virtually enlightened autocracy was built on traditional Theravada Buddhist values, and although he resigned the throne, he kept his unique status. But he is best remembered for his maneuvers to keep Cambodia out of the Second Indochina War. He succeeded until the pro-US military coup in 1970, that drew Cambodia into the war and acted as a midwife for the Khmer Rouge, the armed forces of the Cambodian Communist Party.

STRUGGLE FOR COLONIES. A soldier from the French Foreign Legion during a move between Haiphong and Hanoi. A tank follows in the background, supplied by the US to the French. The year is probably 1954. Photo: Wikipedia



CIVILIANS AFFECTED. A US soldier detaining a civilian suspected of collaborating with "the enemy". Photo: Wikimedia Commons/ US Marine Corps /PFC G. Durbin

2: THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR

In Vietnam, the US attempted to sustain the conservative nationalists by replacing the former emperor Bao Dai, installed by the Japanese, with Prime Minister Diem. He held a certain status with the urban catholic middle class, but stood far from the predominantly Buddhist farmers. As the American military buildup increased in the early 1960s, many Vietnamese felt the American presence was threatening their traditional values through prostitution, corruption and organised crime. Diem saw the signs of danger and attempted to distance himself from the Americans by indirect contact with the North Vietnamese. Thus his days were over.

President Kennedy was directly responsible when the CIA overthrew and assassinated

Diem in 1963. The last layer of the elite's nationalism was removed and the coming generals who took over in South Vietnam never managed to fill the power vacuum left by Diem. Politically, the USA had already lost. But the war would still continue for another 12 years, and it would cost the lives of between two and three million Vietnamese and 59,000 Americans.

CIVILIANS AFFECTED

Napalm, chemicals, massacres and confinement of fleeing people in so-called strategic villages did not help. Undoubtedly the US managed to a certain degree to break the back of the NLF, the National Liberation Front of the South, through systematic assassinations, in so-called

"search and destroy" operations during the aftermath of the Tet Offensive in 1968. But the local leaders of the liberation front were soon replaced by North Vietnamese cadre. The North Vietnamese and the NLF retorted by killing those who sympathised with the US. All of a sudden, the civilians were caught in the middle.

In European cities, right-wing youth wrote "Bomb Hanoi" on walls. The US and the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Henry Kissinger accepted this appeal at Christmas 1972. The last remaining coat of moral vanished. There was an international outcry. The following year, the United States withdrew their armed forces. On 30 April 1975, the regime of the South Vietnamese generals fell.

THE RED BROTHERHOOD UNRAVELS

A few weeks prior to the fall of Saigon, however, the Khmer Rouge had captured Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Under the leadership of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge attempted to conduct one of the most drastic revolutions the world had ever seen. The aim was a Maoist agrarian society, free from any Western influence. The entire urban population was gathered in labour camps in the countryside. Forced labour and undernourishment led to mass

deaths. Intellectuals and those with connections to the old regime were systematically killed. Probably between 1.5 and 2 million people died during the 44 months long rule of the Khmer Rouge.

The leaders belonged to a younger generation than the Vietnamese and Laos communist leaders, and were more influenced by the Cultural Revolution in China than the Comintern tradition. Old historical and cultural contradictions meant that Ho Chi Minh's version

of communism never got a foothold in Cambodia. It soon became apparent that the notion of the red brotherhood, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia having a common goal was an illusion.

An extreme form of nationalism, and not communism, was the ideological principle of the Khmer Rouge. The flag of Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) was red, but with no stars, hammer, sickle or other international communist symbols. However, you could see their national pride: the temple ruins of Angkor Wat. It was obvious that a Western inspired ideology, such as Marxism presented in Asian agrarian society, did not necessarily develop as expected in the West. In 1978, the Pol Pot regime published the book "Black Paper" which describes the conflict with Vietnam as a culmination of 500 years of struggle against Vietnamese expansion. The fact that in 1975 they had rid themselves of a common enemy, did not mean that peace was around the corner.

CHINA IS DRAWN IN

The historical contradictions between Vietnam and China also became more apparent. In the last phase of the Second Indochina War, the Chinese forces went to action in the disputed Paracel Islands and drove out the South Vietnamese forces. As the Cambodians had conjured the Vietnamese ghost, the Vietnamese spoke increasingly more often about their two thousand year long struggle against Chinese aggression. In the spring of 1975, when the North Vietnamese forces entered into Cholon by a Chinese dominated neighbourhood in Saigon, they were met by portraits of Mao. The predominantly Chinese population there did not know that the Red Brotherhood no longer existed.

When Phnom Penh and Saigon fell, panic erupted on the political right in Laos. The humiliating US withdrawal from Vietnam signaled that their days were numbered. The Army disintegrated and in December 1975, King Savang Vatthana abdicated and Pathet Lao took over in effect. The country quickly came under pressure from China due to their pro-Vietnamese politics, and Thailand, their pro-American neighbour in the west, enforced trade restrictions. Given the prevalent conspiracy theories in the West, Thailand would be the next target for communist expansion, even though it was now obvious that a unified communist block did not exist.



CHINESE FLEEING. June 1978: Thousands of Chinese, who have lived all their lives in Vietnam, are returning to China as they say they are being treated as second class citizens by the Vietnamese. Photo: NTB/Scanpix

3: THE THIRD INDOCHINA WAR

Vietnam was facing enormous challenges. How were they going to unite the country to form a strong national, political and economic entity? The country was subjected to strong political pressure and financial sanctions from the West. The domino theory, the belief in the West that one country after another would fall into Communist influence, was still strong, particularly in military circles. Politically, the theory had already been thrown on the scrapyard of history.

The power struggle between China, the West and the Soviet Union triggered the Third Indochina War in 1978, when Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia and removed the Pol Pot regime. It was clearly political motivations, rather than a desire to save the population from the Pol Pot regime, that prompted the invasion. Vietnam did not want an erratic pro-Chinese government as their closest neighbour.

This proved to be more than what China would tolerate. 200,000 Chinese soldiers

entered into Northern Vietnam in February 1979, as a punishment for the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. The Chinese withdrew a month later.

In retrospect, many Vietnamese highlight that they were unfairly subjected to Western sanctions and double standards while they were fighting against China and simultaneously defeating Pol Pot's forces. At the same time, the media in the West described Khmer Rouge as communism in practice, despite the fact that it was the communist Vietnam that removed them. In addition, the West voted for the Khmer Rouge to retain their place in the UN throughout the 1980s.

After the Third Indochina War, the domino theory could be buried, and so could the concept of the Red Brotherhood. Double standards always have, and always will, be part of international politics. In the history of Indochina, it appears that the task of the politician simply was to make it as inconspicuous as possible. ■

Facts

Indochina wars



THE FIRST INDOCHINA WAR took place between 1946 and 1954 and was fought by the resistance Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, and France. The war ended by France leaving French Indochina, the French colonies in today's Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The war led to the division of Vietnam, and continued a few years later as the Vietnam War.

THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR, or what is also known as the Vietnam War, was the armed conflict between North Vietnam (with the NLF from 1960) and South Vietnam from the mid-1950s until 1975; particularly in the period between 1963 and 1973, when the US were actively fighting the war alongside the South Vietnamese.

The Vietnam War began as a rebellion against Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, developed into a civil war between North and South Vietnam and then became a US war of intervention. The border areas in Laos and Cambodia were early drawn into the conflict. China and the Soviet Union became involved with comprehensive assistance to North Vietnam.

THE THIRD INDOCHINA WAR, also called the Sino-Vietnamese war, was a war between the People's Republic of China and Vietnam in 1979. Leading up to the war, Vietnam had invaded Cambodia and overthrown the Khmer Rouge. China invaded Vietnam and threatened to take the capital Hanoi. They were met by fierce resistance by the Vietnamese forces, and the Chinese retreated after a few weeks of battle. The official explanation from China was that they had intended to "teach Vietnam a lesson". The Soviet Union and the majority of the Warsaw Pact countries expressed their support to Vietnam, but without interfering.

LAOS. Young Pathet Lao guerilla fighters posing for a French photographer near their headquarters in Luang Prabang, 1973. Photo: NTB Scanpix.



Severe criticism from expert panel:

UN FAILING TO KEEP THE PEACE

Ways of war and conflict are changing and the UN fails to keep up, concludes expert panel's report on UN peace operations.

TEXT: Thale S. Jenssen

Since October last year, UN peace operations have been thoroughly evaluated by an expert panel appointed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Launched this summer, the panel's report severely criticises the UN of not keeping up with today's landscape of war and conflict.

"UN peace operations are initiated without first conducting adequate analysis of local conditions, conflict dynamics and political processes that can contribute to establish peace in the short and long terms. Also, the operations are excessively controlled

from New York. If the operations do not adapt to the context from the beginning, it becomes very difficult to correct mistakes later. These are the issues highlighted by the panel," says Hilde Johnson, expert panel member and former head of the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

POLICY SHOULD GUIDE

In Johnson's view, the report's main objection is that policy should guide the formulation of the mandate, the UN mission and priorities from beginning to end.

"Other key objections are that peace operations do not receive enough resources to carry out their mandate, and that UN regulations and bureaucracy prevent field operations from recruiting the staff they need to do the job," says Johnson.

Nearly 70 years after the first UN peacekeeping mission was deployed in 1948, more than 128,000 women and men serve in almost 40 UN peacekeeping missions across four continents. Their task is a difficult one: "prevent conflicts, help mediate peace processes, protect civilians and



FUNERAL. Former head of the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Hilde Johnson, attends a funeral in Juba 10 April 2013. Five Indian peacekeepers were killed in an ambush 9 April in the eastern region Jonglei, South Sudan. Photo: NTB/Scanpix

which requires change in legislation and procedures.

The report emphasises "political primacy" and the need for "more realistic and contextualized political strategies" in order to address the root causes, and not only the symptoms, of conflict. At the core of UN peace operations, there should be a thorough political process striving to obtain viable political solutions. This entails addressing the root causes of conflicts and engaging early in emerging crises, both of which the UN and the Security Council have failed to do, according to the report.

FROM WORDS TO ACTION

The expert panel's consistent criticism and recommendations provide guidelines for comprehensive changes in structure and attitude in the big UN machinery.

Do they believe that their recommendations will be acted upon?

The issues addressed by the panel are major, according to Johnson, and implementing the recommendations will take time.

"So far, the report has been received quite positively in several UN member states, and the Secretary General has through informal statements demonstrated a willingness to instigate change. This, however, must be translated into action. How the UN Secretary General will recommend the further process, is an open question which will be answered when the report on the implementation of the panel's recommendations is published, probably in September," she says.

She believes it is likely that some changes could be implemented by the current Secretary General, whereas other issues will have to be left to the next UN Secretary General who will take up the position on 1 January 2017.

"Such reform is necessary for the United Nations flagship, the peace operations, to be able to meet future challenges, says Johnson. ■

sustain fragile peace processes", as formulated in the report *Uniting our Strengths for Peace - Politics, Partnership and People*.

One serious consequence of this lack of correspondence, is that missions fail to be flexible and rapidly adapt to the context.

200 RECOMMENDATIONS

Providing nearly 200 specific recommendations on how to improve UN peace operations, the report argues that change is required for the UN to be able to adapt to the "altering environment." According to Johnson, none of these recommendations will be implemented without three fundamental reforms:

"Firstly, the design of the UN Security Council mandates has to be adapted to local conditions and the political process. Secondly, mandate and resources must correspond, and where there is not willingness to contribute the necessary resources to the individual UN operation, the mandate should be amended accordingly. Thirdly, the United Nations headquarters need restructuring, to make sure it is the results in the field, not the different interests of headquarters, that govern. The legislation must be amended in order to become more oriented towards operations in the field."

BIG GAPS

The overarching problem seems to be the lack of connection between what is expected of the peace operations and their capabilities. Also, conducting peace operations where the war is still on-going, represents a not uncommon challenge for the UN. Today, many blue helmets find themselves in contexts where there is no peace to keep, and where unrealistic mandates, lack of resources and the complexity of the conflict hamper their capability to carry out their mission.

"Many UN operations have too little resources and capacity, which I experienced in South Sudan. A major problem is the lack of a contingency plan that allows deployment of more military assets in emergencies," says Johnson. She emphasises the strong wording used by the panel,

■ ■ **Reform is necessary for the United Nations flagship, the peace operations, to be able to meet future challenges.**

Facts

UN peace operations

■ Since 1984, around 130 nations have contributed with military and civilian personnel to the different peace operations.

■ More than 1 million people have served under the UN flag.

■ More than 2,600 people have lost their lives serving the UN.

■ The total budget for UN peace keeping forces is 7.3 billion dollars – less than 0,5 per cent of the world's total military budgets.

■ Today, more than 128,000 women and men serve in almost 40 peacekeeping missions across four continents.

Source: UN



PROTECTING CIVILIANS. A UN soldier guards internally displaced people sheltered outside the UNAMID (United Nations Assistance Mission in Darfur) team site in Kor Abeche, South Darfur in January 2011. Photo: NTB/Scanpix

GRY TINA TINDE is a senior adviser at the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). She has served as Diversity Advisor at the Inter-American Development Bank and as Special Advisor on Gender Issues to the UNHCR. Follow @TinaTinde on Twitter.



Recent stories about peacekeepers abusing children and failure to investigate rapes, reveal how the UN is not following its own gender equality policies.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND INEQUALITY IT'S TIME THE UN GOT ITS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER

How does a displaced boy being raped by an international civil servant in a war-torn country benefit from the UN resolution to end violence against children? Does a humanitarian worker who is sexually harassed or assaulted by a peacekeeper or contractor know where to turn for help? Who investigates and punishes the perpetrators? It's high time for the UN to take action on how these matters are resolved in a way that respects the human rights of everyone affected.

MORE TO DO

When aid worker Megan Nobert went public in July 2015 about the lack of UN investigation into her rape in a UN compound in South Sudan, the Guardian's Secret Aid Worker series received many testimonies about similar incidents. The UN may have sacked Babacar Gaye, the envoy to Central African Republic (CAR) in connection with the child sex abuse claims against peacekeepers, but there's so much more to do.

A recent report on sexual exploitation and abuse from the UN's own Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was damning. "Each part of the enforcement architecture, with distributed roles and partial responsibility, tends to see the others as responsible for performance shortfalls," it said.

REFUSED TO CONTRIBUTE

In 2007, I was working at the UN high

commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) and helped to write a strategy on tackling this issue. I heard through the grapevine that UN member states refused to contribute even a few thousand US dollars to a victims' fund for legal help and healthcare. We had proposed to pool donations from willing countries, in order to strengthen the strategy's impact.

In the years since, I have searched for clues on UN websites that the strategy was being implemented, but it's been difficult to find updates. Tragically, the OIOS report mentioned above illustrates how little attention has been paid to ensure justice and restitution for victims of abuse by UN staff and related personnel.

A report on UN peace operations recently launched by an expert panel appointed by the UN Secretary General, gives surprisingly little attention to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations. According to the report, "[t]he United Nations should ensure that individual victims of sexual exploitation and abuse are compensated for the harm they suffer from UN personnel." This corresponds well with recommendations in the OIOS report and the 2007 strategy. Yet, to date implementation is lacking.

THE TONE AT THE TOP

Having worked around 20 years in international organizations, my experience is that peoples' careers thrive even if they don't hold themselves or managers accountable for implementing adopted gender policy. A

UN staff engagement survey some 10 years ago, found a problematic "tone at the top". Meanwhile, it is top executives - and the UN General Assembly - who decide and approve major changes.

UN policies in this area have clearly failed, including the supposed "zero tolerance" for sexual exploitation and abuse. One part of the problem is that the UN addresses sexualised violence in field missions differently based on whether the perpetrators or victims are local aid beneficiaries, international staff, street children, soldiers or others. Why? That is discrimination.

In my view, the sloppy approach of international organisations and their partners is rooted in a lack of accountability for human rights, including gender equality. This is due to the failure of member countries and donors to demand concrete results. If the UN was serious about enacting its own universal human rights in peacekeeping operations, a child's risk of being raped with impunity would be greatly reduced, and aggressors would know that they would face justice.

TOO MANY MEN

Male over-representation in political leadership is a serious problem. It matters greatly who decides on policies and budgets. They must represent the people they serve, or at least be aware of their challenges.

The UN has adopted countless resolutions calling for gender equality globally



UN WOMEN. UN general secretary Ban Ki Moon and actress Emma Watson attend UN Women press conference at World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2015 in Davos, Switzerland. Photo: NTB Scanpix

and gender parity among its own leaders and staff. However, the issue is not crucial enough for the UN or governments to put sanctions in place when implementation is lacking. With gender equality enshrined in its 1945 Charter, the UN has, for example, set gender targets among employees and management since 1986.

Back in 1995, the Beijing conference reaffirmed a target of women holding 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000. Decades and numerous resolutions later there is no gender parity in sight. I'm not aware of a single UN, development bank or other international organisation manager's career going down the drain for not executing official policy in this area. Unless member states mandate the UN and other entities to hold management accountable, it is doubtful

if the share of men in UN senior positions will move from 70 per cent in 2011 to 50 per cent by 2030, which is the next target date.

NEED FOR A CHANGE

Today at the UN, some 85 per cent of the ambassadors are men. They exert major influence on what activities the UN should carry out and how much funding their country should contribute. Of the world's defence ministers, 90 per cent are male, while men make up 80 per cent of finance ministers. Nigeria's former finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, launched a Gender Equality Community of Practice for Finance Ministers in 2013 that meets every six months. This group could improve the funding and financial accountability for gender equality policies.

This is not just about numbers. Leaders on taxpayers' money should be selected in open and inclusive processes. Project Implicit at Harvard University has found that people's unconscious biases influence whom they trust or hire. Targets and quotas for under-represented groups such as indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities and sexual minorities should be set and acted on as well. In terms of long-standing international and national goals on gender equality and parity, it will be business as usual in the coming years unless governments demand that their own policies result in visible change. ■

The text is based on a commentary by Gry Tina Tinde published on theguardian.com 21 August 2015.

60 MILLION DISPLACED:

POOR COUNTRIES SHOULDERING GLOBAL DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

At the beginning of 2015, a record 59.5 million persons were displaced worldwide. Nine out of ten were displaced within, or had fled to, regions and countries considered economically less developed.

TEXT: Tiril Skarstein og Hanne Eide Andersen

“Far too many of the world’s richest and most peaceful countries are ignoring their global responsibility to provide assistance and protection. They are hiding behind closed borders. Stronger international responsibility sharing is crucial,” Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Jan Egeland, said recently at the organisation’s launch of their annual overview of global displacement figures and trends, *Flyktningregnskapet*.

According to figures from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and NRC’s Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the number of displaced persons has not been higher since the aftermath of World War Two.

■ ■ **Far too many of the world’s richest and most peaceful countries are ignoring their global responsibility to provide assistance and protection.**

“Never before have we seen more disheartening displacement statistics. In 2014, a new person was displaced every other second,” Egeland said.

FEW COME TO EUROPE

The war in Syria is the main driver behind the increase in displacement figures. Close to 12 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes; most of them displaced within Syria. Only six per cent of the Syr-

ian refugees have applied for asylum in Europe.

“Europe is not shouldering its share of the current displacement crisis. The world’s poorest countries and communities host the vast majority of displaced persons. Europe and other developed countries must step up their support,” said Egeland.

The living conditions of millions of Syrian refugees are worsening across the region, driving thousands to desperate measures including taking the deadly journey by sea to Europe or considering a return to their war-torn country, according to a recent report by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

“Reduced international assistance, rising debt and heavy restrictions on livelihoods, mean that paying rent for even very basic accommodation has become a daily struggle,” said NRC’s Regional Director in the Middle East Carsten Hansen. “Unless more support can be given to refugees and the countries that host them, many more could find themselves forced to return to Syria or to undertake the perilous journey to Europe, as tens of thousands have already done.”



TURN THE TREND

For many it is impossible to seek asylum and protection in accordance with the Refugee Convention without resorting to people smugglers.

“Tens of thousands of refugees are risking their lives on overcrowded boats hoping to cross the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean. It is a very clear signal that the international system is not working,” said Egeland.

He appeals for stronger international commitment to action: “It is possible to turn the negative trend”, said Egeland.

“Through peace mediation and diplomacy conflicts can be avoided or settled. Increased financial support can help more people return home. Political commitment can make it possible for displaced people to integrate and find a new life where they have settled. Currently we are failing on all counts. As a result, millions of young people are denied the hope of a better future,” warned Egeland.

ON-GOING CONFLICTS

In addition to the Syria crisis, the conflicts in South Sudan, Iraq and Ukraine contributed to the sharp escalation in displacement figures in 2014. In all of these countries, on-going violence has led to further displacement in 2015.

“Sadly, in several of the on-going conflicts around the world, regional and international powers continue to add fuel to the fire by providing the warring parties with weapons and money. Hopefully, as the world becomes aware of the fact that a staggering 60 million people are now displaced, it will trigger the international community to take action,” said Egeland.

30 MILLION CHILDREN DISPLACED

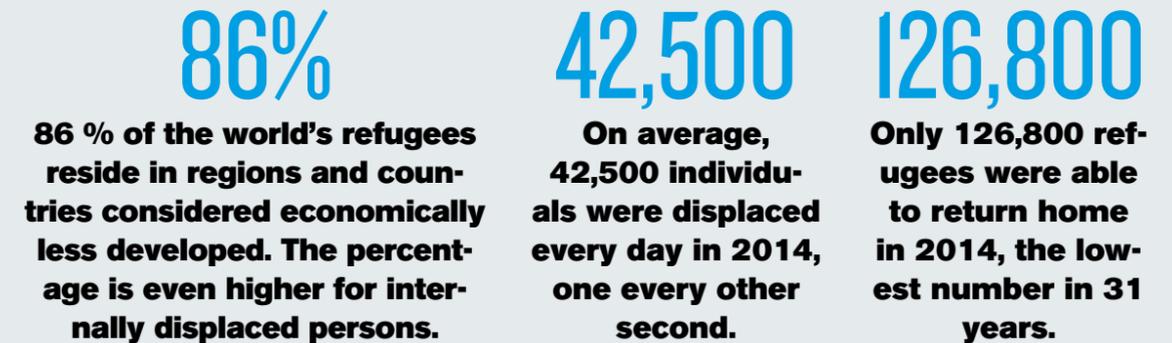
Children make up 52 percent of the 59.5 million people displaced by war today, according to the *Global Trends Report* from UNHCR, which was launched this summer.

“Millions of children are attacked, displaced and let down by the international community. We are failing in protecting them from violence and abuse, and we do not provide them with the assistance they need to cope in some of the world’s most hazardous conflict areas”, said Jan Egeland.

He urged for humanitarian access to reach more and increased support to scale up humanitarian operations targeting displaced children.

“This is not only against our most basic values of compassion and solidarity. It is also dangerous for us and for our children’s safety because it will lead to a more unstable world,” said Egeland.

“When children lose their faith in a better future, we are all getting more vulnerable. The consequences of abandoning millions of young people in despair will haunt us for generations”. ■



MAJOR REFUGEE HOSTING COUNTRIES

Jordan 2.7 mill	Palestine 2 mill	Turkey 1.7 mill	Lebanon 1.6 mill	Pakistan 1.5 mill
---------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------

MAJOR SOURCE COUNTRIES FOR REFUGEES

Palestine 5.2 mill	Syria 4 mill	Afghanistan 2.7 mill	Somalia 1.2 mill	Sudan 0.7 mill
------------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------	--------------------------

COUNTRIES WITH LARGES INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION

Syria 7.6 mill	Colombia 6 mill	Iraq 3.3 mill	Sudan 3.1 mill	DR Congo 2.8 mill
--------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------

Source: NRC, UNHCR, IDMC – Numbers as of June 2015



■ ■ Walking the streets in search of money every night is exhausting. We rarely allow ourselves something to eat.

MUHAMMED (11)

BREADWINNERS. Muhammed (11) and Walid (12) work in the streets of Beirut to earn money for their family.

THE SHOESHINE BOYS OF BEIRUT

Every evening after school, on the streets of Beirut, Muhammed (11) and Walid (12) polish shoes and beg for money late into the night. The Syrian brothers know their family will starve if they do not earn enough money.

TEXT AND PHOTO: Øystein Mikalsen

Darkness has descended on Beirut, but the high level of activity stays the same in the streets of the Lebanese capital. Walid and Muhammed still have a few hours of polishing shoes a head of them.

“As long as there are people in the city, there is money to earn,” Muhammed explains - he is the youngest, but also the most precocious of the two.

Together with their family, the brothers escaped from Deraa in Syria a year and a half ago. The huge influx of refugees from Syria has made Lebanon, Syria’s smallest and most densely populated neighbour, the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that

366,000 Syrian refugee children between the ages of 6 and 17 currently live in Lebanon. According to UNICEF, around 10 per cent of the children are forced to work, but nobody knows the exact number.

IN THE SHADOW

Syrian refugee children are all over Beirut. They polish shoes, beg, sell flowers, and wash car windows. I meet Muhammed and Walid in Bliss Street. It is a pleasant street; on the one side, buildings and sidewalks are dominated by cafés, on the other side, lies the American University. The two boys keep in the shadows along the university fence, and they carefully consider their customers before offering their shoe pol-

ishing services. They want to avoid civilian police whose mission is to reduce the number of beggars.

“Would you like us to polish your shoes?” Muhammed asks. I decline politely, and explain my errand.

“You can interview us if you pay what we would earn by polishing five pair of shoes,” Muhammed says, holding my gaze. “We cannot work while talking to you, so either you pay or we leave. Get it?”

I get it - and pony up. They would never have had the time to polish five pair of shoes during the time of our conversation, but the young businessman has a valid point when he claims an interview will mean lost earnings.

“There are always people here. Usually, we polish shoes, but sometimes we just reach out our hands and beg,” says Muhammed. He is the one doing the talking. Walid follows the conversation while pressing his arms around his body.

“He is cold,” says his little brother.

NIGHT SHIFT

The large influx of refugees is having a significant impact on Lebanese everyday life; the country had economic problems even before the Syrian crisis. Today, the economy and infrastructure are at breaking point, and this is particularly apparent in areas where the population has tripled. Eighty per cent of the refugees are living under severe conditions without access to basic services such as health, education, food and shelter. Only one in four refugee children has access to education.

The brothers are lucky to have been admitted to one of the few Beirut schools that facilitate education for Syrian refugees during daytime. After school, they head straight to the city centre to earn money. On a good day, they can make 20,000 Lebanese pounds, equivalent to around 12 US dollars.

“Walking the streets in search of money every night is exhausting,” Muhammed admits. “We rarely allow ourselves something to eat. The food here in the city centre is too expensive. And on nights with bad earnings, we have to keep on working for several hours, and we become very tired.”

“And, there is the police as well,” Walid adds meekly.

“THE POLICE?”

Walid looks at Muhammed - he wants his brother to answer.

Facts

Lebanon



■ **Population:** 5 million

■ **Refugees in Lebanon from other countries:** 1.6 million

■ Lebanon is the world’s country with the highest number of refugees per capita, refugees constitute one third of the country’s population.

■ There are 1.2 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In addition, there are an estimated 200,000 unregistered refugees.

■ Out of close to 366,000 school-aged refugee children registered in Lebanon, many have been out of school for over three years.

■ The regional crisis has worsened Lebanon’s economic problems and escalated the already polarised political debate.

■ Refugees cannot legally work.

■ Lebanon has not signed the Refugee Convention of 1951, and has chosen not to establish official refugee camps for Syrian refugees.

■ Eighty per cent of the country’s refugees live under difficult conditions alongside the poorest of the local population.

Source: Norwegian Refugee Council and UNHCR

“Yes, working in the streets like we do is not allowed, and if the police catches us, we will be arrested. We have both been caught, and we know what it means,” says Muhammed, and strikes the air with a flat hand.

“Once I sat for ten days before they let me out. Ten days in prison means as many days without earning money. When I was finally released, my family was starving.

Walid interrupts Muhammed, poking his brother’s side - he has seen a civilian police officer on the other side of the street.

“The money. Quick,” says Muhammed while gathering his shoe polish equipment. Some crumpled bills change owner before the brothers hurry away. ■

THE NEGLECTED REFUGEES

The Rohingya are among the world's most neglected and vulnerable people. They have no protection, no legal status and they lack international spokespersons.

TEXT: Thale S. Jenssen

Senior Adviser Richard Skretteberg at the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has recently returned from Bangladesh, where he spent a week visiting Rohingya refugees. He explains what the reality looks like for one of the world's most persecuted people.

"We are talking about vulnerable people left completely without protection," he says.

The people of the Muslim minority Rohingya find themselves in an extremely difficult situation in their areas of origin in Myanmar and Bangladesh. In desperation, thousands have embarked on sea journeys toward Thailand, Malaysia or Indonesia.

THE NEGLECTED REFUGEES

Every year, the NRC launches a list over the world's most neglected refugee crises.

"There is a tragic logic to the fact that the biggest humanitarian crises end up overshadowing the neglected refugee crises," says Skretteberg. He is editor of NRC's annual report on global displacement figures and trends, *Flyktningregnskapet*.

"The paradox feels even bigger when

■ ■ **There is a tragic logic to the fact that the biggest humanitarian crises end up overshadowing the neglected refugee crises.**

RICHARD SKRETTEBERG, NRC

the media, on the one hand, tells us that the state of the world's population has improved; more people are out of poverty, infant mortality declines and life expectancy increases, while on the other hand, we hear that we are facing the worst humanitarian crisis since World War Two," he continues.

The neglected refugee crises are characterised by little media visibility, lack of financing, small humanitarian presence and difficulties in accessing victims of the conflict, either because of the security situation or because actors, such as national authorities or superpowers, deliberately ignore the situation.

A PERSECUTED PEOPLE

UN refers to the Rohingya as one of the world's most persecuted people, because of their statelessness and decades of neglect. During the spring 2015, however, the Rohingya appeared more frequently in international media, as country after country in Southeast Asia long refrained from accepting thousands of Rohingya escaping at sea in rickety vessels. During the year's first three months, 25,000 Rohingya escaped and hundreds lost their lives at sea.

"I hope the tragic spring of 2015 will be the end of this crisis, and not mark the beginning of a new one," says Skretteberg.

BUDDHISTS AND MUSLIMS

The Rohingya have faced a number of challenges in exercising their fundamental rights. Many live in Rakhine State near the

Myanmar border with Bangladesh, where 140,000 were displaced after clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in 2012.

"It is important for Myanmar to continue the democratic reform process and conduct a free and peaceful election in November 2015. In order to prevent abuse and discrimination, it is necessary that the existing legislation applies equally to all, and is not utilized to treat some groups differently than others. Elements in society that encourages and disseminates hate speech must be dealt with, the situation of the 140,000 internally displaced people in Rakhine State must be improved, and there is a need to find acceptable solutions in line with international standards," says Skretteberg.

HAVE WAITED A LONG TIME

There are between 200,000 and 500,000 Rohingya (figures are uncertain) in Bangladesh. Around 33,000 are registered refugees who live in two camps run by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). In addition, there are two unofficial camps hosting between 45,000 and 50,000 Rohingya. These receive some support from charities. The rest live in communities near the border with Myanmar, and have to do without assistance. The government of Bangladesh has put forward a national strategy that aims to record all Rohingya people and meet the basic needs of both registered and unregistered refugees. This means that the authorities at least acknowledge their presence.

"This is positive, but it remains to be seen how it is implemented," says Skretteberg, who has been to almost all the coun-



INDONESIA. Rohingya refugees carrying their belongings, relocating to a refugee camp with more facilities. Photo: NTB/Scanpix.

tries on this year's list of neglected refugee crises, including Bangladesh.

"According to Bangladeshi immigration law, the Rohingya are criminals because they are residing illegally in the country, which is punishable up to five years. They do not obtain refugee status and legal protection. Without papers and access to public services, many are exploited as cheap labour or become victims of assault, robbery, human trafficking, prostitution and criminal networks," he says.

DEADLOCK

Skretteberg visited Kutupalong camp, an official camp hosting 13,200 refugees. Half of the refugees were born in the camp, which is in poor condition; water supply is scarce and education opportunities for children are very limited. As a result of their situation and lack of improvement prospects, Skretteberg believes frustration among the refugees is increasing.

He also visited an unofficial camp lo-

cated next to the official one, and operated by several international and local organisations.

"Here, the protection needs are enormous; there is a lot of violence, rape and trafficking. The camp has water pumps and latrines, but there is no food or health care, no proper shelter and no educational opportunities," says Skretteberg.

According to him, the completely different approaches of Bangladesh and Myanmar to the issue pose a major challenge. In Myanmar, they see the Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh or descendants of immigrants, while the Bangladeshi authorities' attitude has been that all Rohingya without formal residence permit shall be returned to Myanmar.

"The international community, and especially the neighbouring countries and member states of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), must contribute if the parties are to make progress. The Rohingya have waited long enough," Skretteberg says. ■

Facts

The 10 most neglected refugee crises:

1. THE ROHINGYA (Myanmar and Bangladesh)
2. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
3. IRAQ
4. SUDAN
5. YEMEN
6. ERITREA
7. LIBYA
8. WESTERN SAHARA
9. NORTH KOREA
10. INDONESIA (WEST PAPUA)

Source: NRC

MICHAEL DIEDRING is Secretary General of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles.



Government officials at the European and Member State level must accept their responsibility and act with the solidarity upon which Europe was built.

A CALL FOR RESPONSIBILITY AND SOLIDARITY

In August, I stood in the hot sun in the Kara Tepe temporary camp on the Greek island of Lesbos. I met a young family pleading for a plastic baby bottle as theirs had been broken during the journey and they had no way of feeding their crying child. I saw young people lying in heaps in the shade utterly exhausted by a dangerous journey that ended with a 13 hour walk from the northern end of Lesbos to Kara Tepe. I met the elderly assisted by fellow travelers and spoke with teenagers travelling without apparent adult supervision. I saw a group of men, anxiously crowded around the single power source that charged their mobile telephone (the only way they could inform loved ones they were still alive, and a crucial communications tool necessary for their survival on the remainder of their journey). Without exception, they were from Syria or Afghanistan.

“SIMPLE PEOPLE”

I met Emily, a dedicated humanitarian professional with the NGO International Rescue Committee, and her Syrian-born colleague Ahmad helping with the most urgent humanitarian needs, from arranging necessary medicine for a young man highly sensitive to the sun, to helping a Syrian who had given his transit paper to another person he felt needed to travel on sooner, and

who now found himself without permission to travel. I met medical professionals from the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), providing professional medical assistance and first aid. I visited the PIKPA camp in another area of the island, run completely by a Greek NGO and local volunteers, in which a small group of the most vulnerable refugees was living. I saw evidence of the citizens’ organisations, local residents and tourists who provided food, diapers, clothing and the like, on a daily basis. There are many stories on social media of volunteers who clean the clogged toilets in these camps, as they are insufficient for the numbers of people who utilise them. The help provided by civil society and “simple people” was inspirational, but also absolutely necessary to ensure the health and well-being of these refugees.

For while I saw many, many people in the camps and representatives of civil society, except for police registering refugees at the port and in the Moria “First Reception” Centre, I saw no officials of the Greek government or European Union during my visit. These temporary camps are run solely by civil society organisations and citizens. On Lesbos, the local authorities have been mostly supportive and helpful,

but that has not been the case on all the Greek islands.

EUROPEAN VALUES

Thus, while Europe can truly be a community of values, as evidenced by the actions of civil society organisations, citizens and tourists on Lesbos and throughout Europe, government officials at the European and Member State level must accept their responsibility and act with the solidarity upon which Europe was built to respond quickly to the growing numbers of people reaching our shores. As German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière recently said at a news conference: “It’s a challenge for all of us at state, federal and local lev-

■ ■ **While European leaders hesitate, we work to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are treated with dignity and respect.**

els. We can master this challenge. I don’t think this will overwhelm Germany. We can handle this.”

We need to see Europe as part of the global community and show compassion and leadership when responding to a world in which 60 million have been displaced. What some officials cannot accept is that this global phenomenon is touching Europe. The needs of these large numbers of people fleeing war, violence and persecution will not be solved automatically. In fact, the flows of people will continue



A CRY FOR HELP. Syrian and Afghan refugees outside the train station in Budapest ask for a free passage through Europe, and that they shall be treated with dignity and respect. Photo: NTB Scanpix

for years to come until these conflicts are resolved and persecution ended. As an example, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan continue to host 4 million refugees from Syria, while much, much smaller numbers have made their way to Europe to reunite with family or seek stability and hope in their lives. Further resources at a significant scale will need to be put into place as well as long-term plans and emergency assistance.

RESPONSIBILITY AND SOLIDARITY

How can Europe better respond with responsibility and solidarity?

First, the Greek government needs to take responsibility for the people landing on Greek shores, and Europe needs to act in solidarity to support Greece, its people and refugees with an immediate and substantial increase in emergency support, addressing the humanitarian needs and the need for accurate information and counselling.

Second, the effort to relocate those already in Greece and Italy must be revisited. In light of the dramatic increase in

numbers in Greece alone, the decision to voluntarily relocate 32,256 is insufficient. As an initial step, the number for Greece should be increased to at least 70,000 places within a year, and efforts to relocate more from Italy should be intensified. To make relocation successful, the procedure needs to be swift and with a minimum of bureaucracy, while also balancing the best interests and needs of asylum seekers. Substantial integration programmes, with the assistance of civil society, and measures to facilitate access to work must be created in receiving member states.

SAFE AND LEGAL CHANNELS

Third, as part of a longer term solution the European Union needs to open safe and legal channels for refugees to come to Europe so they are not forced to risk their lives or use unscrupulous smugglers for irregular journeys. Safe and legal channels will allow Europe to organise the reception of people in a planned, humane and dignified manner. Resettlement of the vulnerable from countries outside Europe must be dramatically increased in line with current needs.

Family reunification must be applied in a full and robust manner while adopting a more flexible approach to the many practical obstacles refugees face in fulfilling administrative requirements. The possibility of utilizing humanitarian visa provisions, including under the EU Visa Code, must be more fully examined. We cannot forget we are responding to the real needs of fellow human beings.

POLITICAL DISINGENUOUSNESS

What we do not need is a strengthening of Fortress Europe, an aggressive response such as that seen in Macedonia and Hungary, or a European list of “safe” countries, which might become the height of political disingenuousness.

Europe’s welcome to refugees and asylum seekers is led by civil society and European volunteers. While European leaders hesitate, we work to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are treated with dignity and respect, as our European values and laws demand. If European leaders act with responsibility and solidarity, it will allow us to do even more. ■



THANKS FOR
ALL YOU DO

- your friends at TOMS

TOMS

With every product you purchase, TOMS will help a person in need. One for One®.

The Slugger

JON MAGNUS is retired foreign correspondent in the Norwegian daily *Verdens Gang*.



A STROLL INTO THE PAST

After 40 years as a foreign correspondent, I have long since left the newsroom. However, that does not mean I have bitten the dust, far from it; once in the field, always in the field.

The only difference is: Now I can decide for myself how I wish to spend my time. And, of course, from now on, I have to pay for all the fun out of my own pocket.

I HAVE HAD MORE THAN 11,000 ARTICLES PUBLISHED over those four decades; stories from close to 150 countries and territories, from war and conflict, from earthquakes and tsunamis, from volcano catastrophes and from the circus arenas of foreign politics. It has been a wonderful life, and I feel eternal gratitude toward my employer who has given me free reins and a unique opportunity to experience world history at close range.

Waiting lies, in a way, in the nature of journalism: for the next election, the next earthquake, the next conflict and the next crisis. Or, for the next assault against society's weak. And when it happens, we send off the journalists, cover the incident for a short while, communicate, comment, explain or talk with victims or experts who might add a new perspective. Or not.

But we never stay. We go back home - where we wait for the next drama...

I HAVE OFTEN LONGED for the possibility to go back, to know what really happened, what the long-term result was. How did it go with those who lost their loved ones, or

with those who, for some reason, had to flee their homes?

Or, what happened to all those who were small, insignificant pieces in the big political power struggle? And how did it go with those individuals I met throughout my journalist life?

And that - the stroll into the past and the search for answers - has been my project for the past 18 months. At my own risk and expense. I have returned - and seen. And met.

I have rid myself of some tiny traumas, met with people who in the past helped me in a period that was much more difficult for them. But, I have also searched in vain for souls from a journalist past.

My project has been a matter of people I have met, in nice surroundings or painful moments. And now, my long walks through dousin countries are being published as a book.

"The butterflies of Armero" is the book's title. Some of you might remember that November day in 1985, when the volcano Nevado del Ruiz in Colombia exploded and the city Armero was buried in a tsunami of mud, killing 25,000 of the city's 28,000 citizens.

I HAVE NEVER RETURNED to Armero - until now. And now, 30 years later, nature has done penance and spread meter long, lush grass

and tall, shady trees over the landscape that, during those few months, was hell on earth.

And the few who survived, those who were lucky enough to escape the yellowish brown Death that came gushing and roaring down the hill, they have found peace. Many still mourn what happened, but most have reconciled themselves to their fate.

I have travelled back to Croatia and Bosnia, which in the 1990s also were hell on earth. Today, people live side by side, but often in a kind of involuntary "castle peace". Hatred, hostility and bitterness still stick deep with many, although the wounds in the landscape have healed since then.

MY SERBIAN FRIEND VUK, who always helped me when I was moving on the Serbian side of the conflict, was murdered by a Croatian

sniper. And forgotten by his contemporaries. His beloved Croatian wife was raped and killed by Serbs.

And, on a house wall in Mostar I read the words "War is NOT over" in fresh, blood red writing.

From the ruins after the earthquake in Mexico City, precisely where I held young Ana's hand until she died, new skyscrapers of glass and brushed steel have grown, and the city's millions again rush to and from the buildings.

Life goes on... ■

■ ■ I have often longed for the possibility to go back, to know what really happened, what the long-term result was.

Working in high risk areas?

When in danger,
– how do you act?



Photo: NRC/Hanne Elos Andersen

HEAT gives you the necessary tools and training to manage stress in hostile situations. It can make the difference!

UPCOMING TRAININGS:

Oslo, Norway
5–9 October

Swellendam, South Africa
25–30 October



For information and to register:
www.nrc.no/HEAT

APPLY TODAY!

HEAT (Hostile Environment Awareness Training) is NRC's course in personal safety and security in hostile environments. The HEAT course is for people who work in, or frequently travel to medium and high risk countries, or even areas with higher than usual crime rates.

www.nrc.no

FLYKTNINGHJELPEN
NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

NRC

Outside Voices

MOHAMMED OMER is an award winning Palestinian-Dutch journalist, based in Gaza.



WE ARE STILL HERE

Often, I wake up thinking, this can't be true - did we really survive it? How did we make it through the 51 days of bombs and missiles dropped by Israel on Gaza last year?

Then I think, if only these thoughts were nightmares and not the reality of long hot summer days spent in Gaza, where F16s roar overhead, drones buzz above us and tank shells crash into buildings nearby.

For the 1.8 million survivors living in blockaded Gaza, dreams of freedom and days of peace are not yet here. Palestinians are trapped, both by Israel's military occupation and the painful memories of loved ones killed last year.

ON THE ANNIVERSARY of Israel's war earlier this summer, fellow Gazans are reflecting on what happened 14 months ago. It was not an earthquake or tsunami that flattened the coastal enclave - though sometimes I wish it had been, so we could rebuild it with the compassionate aid from abroad, like in other disaster zones.

But it wasn't a natural disaster. It was Israel, again, inflicting \$6bn worth of damage on a people under siege. More than one year on, we face a grim reality: homes have not been rebuilt, people are hungry, health and sanitation is falling apart, and unemployment among youth (half of Gaza) is expected to reach 60 per cent by the end of 2015.

The homeless still depend on friends and relatives, renting apartments if they have access to money, or living in cramped huts after sheltering for more than a year in UN schools. In Khuzaa, people are reminded constantly of the war by the odour of sewage that leaks under the walls into their rooms, through pipes blown up in Israeli attacks.

Many of Gaza's internally displaced used to run farms. Rearing livestock, harvesting crops and living in houses with well-tended gardens on land they owned; they were better off than most people here. Now, those who used to give charity to others are desperately in need of it themselves. They have little left but their dignity.

FOR THOSE OUTSIDE, the war is recorded history. For the people of Gaza it's an on-going experience, a trauma

that will endure for years, and likely be passed to our children's children.

A seven-year-old child in Gaza today has lived through three wars, and never known a "normal" healthy life. Violence and trauma are the norm.

The survivors of eastern Gaza that are close to the fenced-off military zone near Israel, are in particularly dire straits and are still trying to piece their lives back together.

The reality is that no one and nowhere is truly safe in Gaza. Israel has weapons that can target every compass point: hospitals, schools, high-rise residential buildings, churches, mosques and water tanks.

A year on I can only ponder, again, why it is impossible for Israel to befriend Palestine and realise a mutually secure and peaceful future for all our children? Prior to 1947, Muslims, Christians and Jews lived side by side, worked together, shared tea and family stories.

I reported on the war in Gaza last year and interviewed victims who are still asking the same questions: why is the world ignoring their cries for help? Will world powers hold those responsible for war crimes in Gaza to account? Will the people who killed my cousins, friends and neighbours be punished?

THERE IS ONE THING I know for sure and that is that social media is bringing change. People around the world know more about the punishment of Gaza. While most large media outlets still censor the truth and are complicit in silence, the voices of people on social media grow louder and become harder to ignore.

Missiles may destroy our homes, crush our dreams and suck the life out from our lungs, but Palestinians will not be erased. We have steadfastness, an identity, and a love of life.

A people who can turn spent tear-gas canisters into plant pots, is one that carries a message of peace and life - despite the hell around them. We are still here, rebuilding as best we can, sleeping as best as we are allowed because we intend to stay, as much as others may want us gone.

This is our beloved ancestral home, and here we remain. Come and stay with us, you are welcome. ■

■ ■ Come and stay with us, you are welcome.



CELEBRATING THE PROUD TRADITION OF IMPERIALISM

FELICITATIONS

We've got to hand it to you, Morocco: You are setting a new standard of Imperialism. To occupy Western Sahara for 40 years, the last colony in Africa, is very nicely executed indeed. But teaming up with France to veto the UN Security Council, elegantly blocking the UN to report on your

human rights violations – now that is simply brilliant. While expanding your kingdom and making a fortune on the natural resources of Western Sahara, you are upholding an old, proud and almost forgotten tradition. We salute you, old chaps. *Congratulations!*