



A UNHCR report released today June 20, World Refugee Day, reveals deep imbalance in international support for the world's forcibly displaced, with a full four-fifths of the world's refugees being hosted by developing countries – and at a time of rising anti-refugee sentiment in many industrialized ones.

“The burden of helping the world’s forcibly displaced people is starkly uneven.,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his message on World Refugee Day. “Poor countries host vastly more displaced people than wealthier ones. While anti-refugee sentiment is heard loudest in industrialized countries, developing nations host 80 per cent of the world’s refugees. This situation demands an equitable solution.”

UNHCR's 2010 Global Trends report shows that many of the world's poorest countries are hosting huge refugee populations, both in absolute terms and in relation to the size of their economies. Pakistan, Iran and Syria have the largest refugee populations at 1.9 million, 1.1 million and 1 million respectively.

Pakistan also has the biggest economic impact with 710 refugees for each US dollar of its per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Product), followed by Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya with 475 and 247 refugees respectively. By comparison, Germany, the industrialized country with the largest refugee population (594,000 people), has 17 refugees for each dollar of per capita GDP.

Overall, the picture presented by the 2010 report is of a drastically changed protection environment to that of 60 years ago when the UN refugee agency was founded. At that time UNHCR's caseload was 2.1 million Europeans, uprooted by World War Two.

Today, UNHCR's work extends to more than 120 countries and encompasses people forced to flee across borders as well as those in flight within their own countries.

The 2010 Global Trends report shows that 43.7 million people are now displaced worldwide – roughly equalling the entire populations of Colombia or South Korea, or of Scandinavia and Sri Lanka combined.

Within this total are 15.4 million refugees (10.55 million under UNHCR's care and 4.82 million registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees), 27.5 million people displaced within their own country by conflict, and nearly 850,000 asylum-seekers, nearly one fifth of them in South Africa alone.

Particularly distressing are the 15,500 asylum applications by unaccompanied or separated children, most of them Somali or Afghan. The report does not cover displacement seen during 2011, including from Libya, Côte d'Ivoire and Syria.

"In today's world there are worrying misperceptions about refugee movements and the international protection paradigm," said António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees. "Fears about supposed floods of refugees in industrialized countries are being vastly overblown or mistakenly conflated with issues of migration. Meanwhile, it's poorer countries that are left having to pick up the burden."