



FACTS/FIGURES, GLOBAL PICTURE AND KEY TERMS

Refugees are persons who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion," are outside the country of their nationality and are unable to, or owing to such fear unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

Resettled refugees have accepted a host country's offer of a permanent home. The governments of the United States, Canada and Australia, along with several European and Latin American countries, have refugee resettlement programs. Candidates for resettlement are referred by the UNHCR, an embassy or a nongovernmental organization.

Asylum seekers are persons who have left their country of origin, have applied for recognition as refugees in another country, and are awaiting a decision on their application. Those granted recognition are **asylees**.

Internally displaced persons have been forced to flee their homes for the same reasons as refugees, but have not crossed an internationally recognized border. Many IDPs are in refugee-like situations and face the same problems as refugees.

Responsibility to protect is the principal international policy issue of concern for refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs. It is grounded in the principle that sovereign states have the primary obligation to protect their citizens against harm, but when states are unable or unwilling to do so, that responsibility falls to the international community.

Migrants make a conscious choice to leave their country of origin and can return there without a problem. **Migrant workers** move from one region or country to another in search of employment. **Economic migrants** leave their country or place of residence to seek a better life. Migrants may be documented or undocumented.

Immigrants ("Lawful Permanent Residents") are non-U.S. nationals who have been granted the right by the

U.S. government to reside permanently and work without restriction in the United States. **Nonimmigrants** have been granted the right to reside temporarily in the United States; for example, to study or work.

Undocumented ("illegal") immigrants are people who enter a country without meeting legal requirements for entry or residence.

Environmentally displaced persons are fleeing places that no longer sustain life due to environmental degradation. This may result from climate change or from natural or human-caused disasters such as storms or toxic spills. People may be displaced by reduction in water availability, desertification, submergence of low-lying islands, and salinization of coastal zones; such private or government-sponsored development projects as dams and mines, and by armed conflict triggered by a decrease of food, water and other essential resources.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, a public-private partnership between the U.S. government and the voluntary sector, admits a number of refugees each year (74,654 in FY 2009) after a rigorous screening process. The program considers persons of special humanitarian concern, determining candidates' eligibility on a case-by-case basis through personal interviews of all applicants. Final approval depends on the result of medical examinations and security checks. Each refugee is assigned to an American private voluntary agency that, working under a cooperative agreement with the Department of State, provides sponsorship and initial resettlement services, including housing, essential furnishings, food and other basic necessities, clothing and additional orientation.