



Role: Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Goal: Distribute funds to address the refugee crisis in one of four countries

Welcome to the 2009 meeting of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.

ExCom meets each year in Geneva to decide which refugee situations to address during that year. As part of this decision-making process, the UNHCR has a Global Needs Assessment (GNA) that identifies the biggest needs of refugees in countries around the world and how much it would cost to solve them.

As members of the ExCom, it is your job to choose the country that will receive funding from the UNHCR in 2009 based on the GNA case studies provided to you. You have \$5 million remaining and you can only spend it on one country. You must take into consideration not only where the need is greatest, but also where the investment can make the most impact.

Instructions:

- You should have read the country profiles given to you in advance of this meeting. Take a minute to review these profiles, making note of the most important aspects of each situation that should be discussed with your ExCom committee.
- As a group, discuss the situations in each country and complete the “Thinking Organizer”.
- Each person should offer his or her opinion, then discuss the options as a group, and choose one country that your group will support. The group should be prepared to agree on one country.
- Decide which country your group will support, and be prepared to explain why your group chose that country.

Helpful Hint: There is no right answer. The choice of which country to fund rests with your group. When making your decision, weigh the pros and cons of supporting one situation vs. another. For example, does a country with a supportive government and a plan in place to help refugees need your money more because it could help solve the refugee crisis permanently? Or do the countries with the most refugees need the money more, even if those countries do not have a plan in place to help refugees?

Refugee Needs Assessment Thinking Organizer

Discuss the key issues facing each country, the best strategy to address those issues and how you plan to allocate funds.

	Yemen	Georgia	Zambia	Thailand
# of People In Need	166,500	279,408	77,840	123,360
Program to be Funded	Basic Needs	Local Integration	Voluntary Repatriation	Security & Resettlement
Key Issues				
Pros – what are the benefits of this program?				
Cons – what are the drawbacks to funding this program?				
Your ranking - rank each country/ strategy in order of importance				

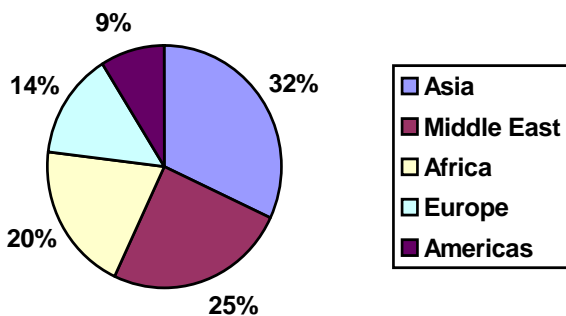
Background

There are over 67 million people around the world who have been forced to flee from their homes. These individuals fled to escape violence, persecution, exploitation, environmental destruction, and death. Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) rarely find comfortable living conditions once they leave home. Many remain in refugee camps without water, electricity or healthcare. Others manage to reach larger cities where they are forced to live in urban slums.



Refugees from Rwanda arrive in Tanzania

The global refugee crisis affects every continent and almost every country. In 2007, about one third of all refugees were living in Asia. 80% of these refugees were from Afghanistan. The Middle East and North Africa were home to 25% of all refugees, most of which are from Iraq. Sub-Saharan Africa was home to 20% and Europe hosted 14% of the world's refugees. The Americas (including North and South America) had only 9% of the world's refugees and IDPs, with Colombians constituting the largest number. UNHCR provides funding and support to help refugees in all these regions.



Percentage of World Refugees by Region, 2008.

Fast Facts

- 200 million people in the world live outside the country in which they were born
- In 2007, 11.4 million refugees are under the care of the UNHCR
- 67 million people worldwide have been displaced from their homes by war, conflict or environmental disasters; 16 million of these people have fled as refugees into another country, while 51 million are displaced within their home country and live as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- 80% of refugees are thought to be women and children



Glossary of Terms

- Asylum** When a state or country allows a refugee to stay there instead of making them go back to their country of origin. An **asylum seeker** enters a country asking for protection, without having already received official refugee status.
- IDP** Internally Displaced Person—a refugee who has not crossed an international border. For example, people who have fled their village in Darfur due to violence and are living temporarily in another region of Sudan that is safer.
- Local Integration** People settle permanently in the country of asylum (the country to which they fled), often achieving citizenship.
- Refugee** A person who leaves his/her country because of a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or having a particular political opinion.
- Resettlement** People are relocated permanently to a third country that is willing to accept them. For example, a refugee from Iraq, living temporarily in Jordan, who gets relocated permanently to the United States.
- UNHCR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; established in 1950, it is the agency to protect and support refugees around the world. Also referred to as the UN Refugee Agency.
- Voluntary Repatriation** People return and are integrated back into their countries of origin once it is safe to do so. For example, many of those who fled the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and were refugees in other African countries are now repatriating back to Rwanda.



Yemen is an Arab country located in Southwest Asia with an estimated population of 23 million people.

Yemen is home to over 86,000 refugees, 77,000 IDPs and 3,500 asylum seekers. 96% of the refugees are from Somalia, while the rest are mostly Iraqi, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Palestinian. Refugees from Somalia are escaping political instability and conflict that has been going on for decades.

Yemen currently has an “open-door policy,” meaning there is no regulation on who can enter or exit. There is also no administrative office or specific law to address the increasing population of refugees arriving in the country. So, while the government does not deport refugees, it also does not have official programs to support them, which means they are reliant on international aid.

Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Arab world and scarce resources, poor living conditions and few jobs create a very unstable condition for the newly arrived refugees. These conditions also generate hostility toward refugees from Yemeni people who are also struggling to survive and find work.

Most refugees in Yemen live in cities rather than refugee camps. They face common urban problems such as crime, drug abuse and sexual and gender-based violence. International assistance is often the only support available to those seeking refuge in Yemen, yet food rations are insufficient, healthcare is limited, and people’s basic needs are far from met. Refugees living in camps and without documents rely heavily on the foreign aid that is provided and more is still desperately needed.

Investment of \$5 million in Yemen would allow UNHCR to address the basic needs of food, health care and security for at least 20,000 of the country’s refugees. However, additional funds would be required to address the long-term situation of refugees through local integration programs such as job training and education.



Georgia is a small country located in the Caucasus region at the dividing line between Europe and Asia. In 1991, people in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared independence from Georgia. Since that time, hundreds of thousands of people from these regions have fled their homes due to conflict.

In August 2008, the conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation forced 127,000 more people from their homes throughout Georgia. The UNHCR estimates that Georgia has 1,047 refugees and 277,000 IDPs, 21 asylum seekers, and 1,340 stateless individuals.

The long-term status of many IDPs still living in limbo has prompted Georgia to adopt the “Action Plan,” which commits the government to improving the living conditions of displaced people with particular emphasis on housing needs, social services and education. The plan asks for the assistance of foreign aid for funding, humanitarian aid, technical support, and expertise.

While most IDPs receive a monthly allowance, few are able to meet their basic needs. Many people who have been displaced for over 15 years are still living in temporary shelters that lack proper access to water, insulation, and sanitation. Education in these centers is poor and even those who are highly qualified remain unemployed.



Refugees also have similar issues. They don't have the right documents to get healthcare, insurance and social services. They live in very bad conditions and suffer from malnutrition. Due to the current conflict, resettlement of refugees is unlikely and so local integration is the most practical solution.

Investment of \$5 million would allow UNHCR to assist the government in providing job training and education for 20,000 IDPs and refugees in Georgia. However, additional funding would be required to address the basic needs of the thousands of refugees and IDPs remaining in the camps.



Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. After independence in 1964, Zambia became a destination for many people fleeing wars in nearby countries, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Angola.

In 2001, Zambia was home to over 280,000 refugees. As of 2008, this number was down to just 88,000. Over the past seven years, the government worked with UNHCR to help thousands return home to Angola, the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda through a voluntary repatriation program.



Those refugees that are not able to return home mostly live in camps and settlements, while a few live in cities, especially the capital of Lusaka. Most refugees in camps rely on food rations, however there is not usually enough food to go around. There is limited access to healthcare, medicine, and education in the camps. Those living in cities are unable to make enough money to support themselves and their families. Zambia has tried hard to meet the needs of its refugee population, but it lacks resources to address all of the problems they face.

With investment of \$5 million, UNHCR would be able to support the Government of Zambia to expand their voluntary repatriation to return an additional 20,000 refugees permanently to their home country. However additional funds would be required to continue meeting the basic needs of the remaining refugees still waiting to return home.



Thailand is a country in Southeast Asia. Thailand has more than 112,760 refugees and 9,600 asylum seekers living in 9 government-run camps. Most refugees in Thailand are fleeing from a brutal military dictatorship and deep poverty in Myanmar, also called Burma. Some have been living in camps in Thailand for more than 20 years.

Refugees in Thailand are considered to be illegal immigrants. They are not allowed to leave refugee camps, have no legal employment opportunities, and are completely dependent on humanitarian assistance. Due to camp restrictions, violence and abuse are widespread and lead many to try and escape to the cities. Once in cities, however, refugees are at great risk of arrest, detention, exploitation, sexual abuse, and trafficking.



Thailand puts most of its effort into resettling refugees. For the majority of refugees, voluntary repatriation is highly unlikely since returning to Myanmar is not a safe option. Integrating refugees into society is not pursued because of Thailand's view that refugees are illegal immigrants and have no rights outside of the camps. The only solution Thailand sees is resettlement. Thailand's resettlement program is one of the largest in the world. Since 2005, they have sent more than 30,000 refugees to third countries, those that are neither the home country nor the host country. Mainly, refugees in Thailand are sent to Australia, Canada and the United States.

With an investment of \$5 million, UNHCR could provide greater security from violence and exploitation to at least 15,000 camp dwellers and assist 5,000 more individuals in resettling in countries like the U.S., Canada, and Australia. However once these individuals arrive in the new country they would require additional financial support to integrate into the new community.