

“One person was forced to flee from his or her home every three seconds in 2016,” says the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the organization’s “Global Trends” report. In 2016, 65.6 million people were uprooted from their homes, about 300,000 more than in the previous year. The figure includes 22.5 million refugees, 40.3 million internally displaced persons, and 2.8 million asylum seekers.

One factor behind the record number of refugees and displaced people is the protracted conflict in Syria, which has caused more than 5 million Syrians to seek asylum in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, as well as in Europe. In Africa, the number of refugees escaping the conflict in South Sudan surpassed one million. In Asia, in addition to the well-known and significant number of refugees from Afghanistan living in Iran and Pakistan, there are lesser-known but equally long-standing refugee populations, such as

the Rohingya refugees in Myanmar.

In the past years, the international community has been tirelessly assisting refugees. However, there are signs that this generosity may be running out as indicated by a growing reluctance of some European countries to accept refugees. One reason for this reluctance is the sheer number of refugees, which places a considerable strain on the receiving countries’ reception capacity and resources. Additionally, prejudice is spreading in some areas, fueled by the repeated terrorist attacks in some countries. Despite the fact that refugees themselves are, in fact, the victims of terrorism, the refugees are being mistakenly viewed as terrorists.

Faced with the world’s largest post-war refugee crisis, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated during the UN Summit in September 2016, “Japan will play a leading role in bringing solutions to the refugee and migrant problems by collaborating closely with the international community.” Japan’s approach

to refugee assistance is characterized by the seamlessness of assistance: Japan provides urgently needed humanitarian aid while at the same time supporting host communities through development aid. For instance, JICA provided electrical training for Syrian refugees to support their daily life in a refugee camp, as well as addressed Jordan’s lack of financial resources by extending Jordan a loan from Japanese official development assistance (ODA).

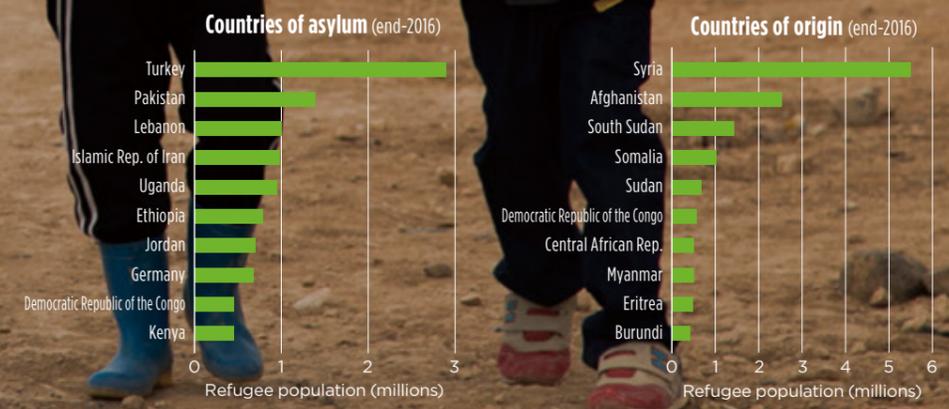
Many refugees have been living as refugees for significant lengths of time. For example, in 2016, around 67% of all refugees have lived in exile for more than five years and some Afghan refugees remain uprooted for as long as 30 years or more. 14.5 million of the world’s refugees live in developing countries, of which 4.9 million are hosted by the least-developed countries. Given these circumstances, JICA believes that in order to assist refugees, it is important to assist the host countries and communities with development aid so as to en-

hance their reception capacity. Indeed, this is precisely the area where JICA, with its long experience and accumulated know-how as the executing agency for Japanese ODA, can effectively contribute.

In 2016, aiming to strengthen the self-resilience of refugees through education, JICA initiated a scholarship program for Syrian refugees to study in Japanese universities. Under this program, 100 Syrian refugees will have an opportunity to become graduate students in Japan. In addition, some Japanese organizations in the private sector as well as NGOs have begun providing private sponsorships for Syrian refugees to study in Japan.

Solving the refugee problem will not be easy, but JICA will keep collaborating with the relevant governments, the UN, NGOs, civil society, and the private sector as well as utilizing its expertise and experience to deliver development assistance to refugees.

Refugees and Displaced People Rebuilding the Lives of the Displaced



Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2016