

# Strengthening emergency response

Given the magnitude of some recent emergencies, one of the principal commitments made by the High Commissioner upon taking office in 2005 was to ensure that UNHCR would be better equipped to respond to emergencies in the future. Accordingly, in late 2005, UNHCR developed a plan of action to strengthen its capacity to respond to emergencies of up to 500,000 people. The plan reflects UNHCR's new inter-agency commitments and responsibilities vis-à-vis internally displaced people. It also foresees an increase in the number of staff working on emergency preparedness and response; information technologies; and telecommunications and logistics; and anticipates changes in internal rules to make emergency response more flexible. Throughout 2006, UNHCR took numerous steps to strengthen its emergency preparedness capacity in terms of staffing, training, stockpiling and material support. As per the provisions of the action plan, both the number of staff on standby and the Central Emergency Stockpile (CES) were increased. In addition, support was provided to field operations through the emergency deployment of staff, humanitarian relief goods and equipment. The *Handbook for Emergencies* was revised and updated, and re-issued in early 2007. The following gives an overview of UNHCR's efforts to strengthen its emergency response.

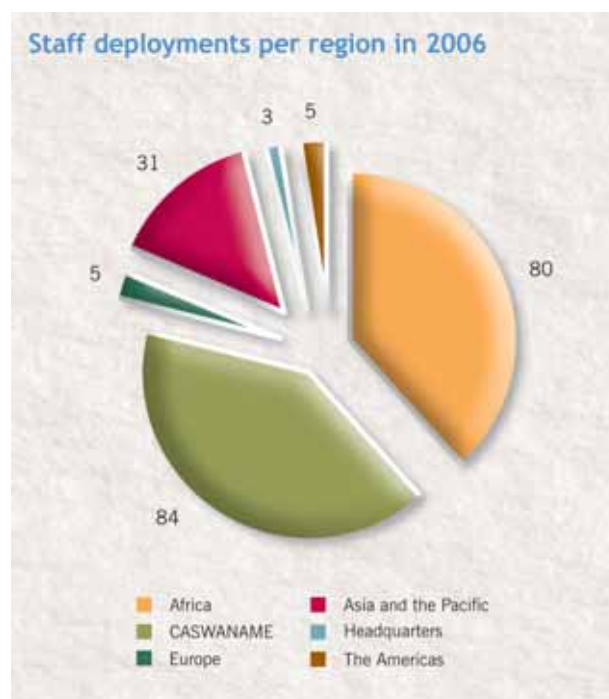
## Staff deployment

UNHCR established three Emergency Response Team (ERT) rosters in 2006, making available a large number of trained staff for deployment within 72 hours. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (EPRS) organized three sessions of the Workshop on Emergency Management for staff from UNHCR and its partners. Following the workshops, the participants were added to the ERT rosters. EPRS also held three inter-agency workshops in the context of the Emergency Training on Leadership Programme, in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. This new programme aims to strengthen the quality of leadership in humanitarian operations, improve coordination among agencies and foster the development of best practices in emergency management. In 2006, more than 200 staff were deployed to 27 countries affected by emergency situations, spending over 17,300 days in deployment.

During the year, UNHCR's largest deployments were in response to the crisis in Lebanon; the earthquake in

Pakistan; renewed displacements in Timor-Leste; protection needs in Sudan; and to address the influx of Somali refugees and flooding in Kenya. Emergency teams were also sent to Burundi, Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, as well as to Algeria, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cyprus, Georgia, Colombia and Mexico. Please see the relevant country and subregional chapters for detailed information about these operations.

In addition to an improved response in terms of numbers of deployments, efforts have been made to cover a wider selection of profiles and to broaden the pool of deployees. All standby partners made considerable efforts to increase the numbers of protection officers on their rosters and, compared to 2005, the number of protection officers deployed increased by over eight per cent, and the number of community and gender officers by six per cent. Furthermore, ERT members have been better prepared to respond to IDP situations following the updating of the various training efforts to cover this group. Deployments to IDP operations, 57 in all, have included mostly protection officers, field officers and community services and gender officers.



## Standby arrangements

In order to increase its staffing and logistics capacity, UNHCR worked on strengthening the standby agreements with its existing partners (the Norwegian and Danish Refugee Councils and UN Volunteers) in terms of recruitment and rosters. It also reviewed all current technical standby agreements, such as those with Save the Children, RedR and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, and started developing additional in-house standby capacity for technical expertise, in particular in shelter and camp coordination, but also for water, sanitation and health. In July 2006, an emergency standby agreement was concluded with AUSTCARE to strengthen technical standby staffing capacity in emergencies, and in October a memorandum of understanding was signed with OXFAM relating to the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene education to cover the needs of up to 100,000 refugees in a large-scale emergency. A review of the agreement with the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of natural Disasters (EMERCOM) was launched and the High Commissioner and EMERCOM signed a joint declaration of intent in April 2006. In addition, consultations between UNHCR and France, as well as China, were under way by the end of the year.

## Action Alert System

The Action Alert System introduced in 2005 aims to define the 'trigger point' for action and ensure that the operational arm of UNHCR plays a key role in deciding when action should start. In 2006, the system was improved to provide a more differentiated type of analysis for emergency preparedness. In reaction to user feedback, UNHCR started a review of the system to include colour classification (red, orange, yellow and blue) aimed to activate a category-specific list of emergency activities.

## The eCentre

The eCentre secretariat is based at UNHCR's Representation in Tokyo, Japan. Primarily it is a network of resource persons and institutions to support building capacity for emergency preparedness and response throughout the Asia-Pacific region. In keeping with its name, the eCentre seeks to maximize the use of electronic communication and avoid a centralized structure. In 2006, the eCentre organised seven training sessions and over 100 collaborative events in the region (see box), and provided expertise and support for training activities conducted by UNHCR as well as other agencies and partners.

## Emergency management training in South Asia

In November 2006, the eCentre worked together with India's *National Institute on Disaster Management* (NIDM) in organizing a regional workshop on emergency and disaster management - the first of its kind for UNHCR in South Asia.

The workshop gathered together senior emergency response and disaster managers from India and member countries of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The aim of the workshop was to share information and explore commonalities between UNHCR's experience and capabilities in international refugee emergencies and that of the natural disaster management community in India and the region. Most of the participants were senior government officials with responsibilities for disaster

response in their respective countries - India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. Representatives of various international and local NGOs, international organizations and India's armed forces also attended.

Workshop themes included contingency planning, coordination, population displacement, logistics, planning for vulnerable groups, civil-military relations and information management, as well as strategies for long-term recovery. Presentations were made by experts from the international humanitarian community and India's highly experienced disaster management community, enabling participants to discuss experiences and best practices. Participants acquired a greater awareness of

effectively managing emergencies and a broader understanding of the roles of their counterparts. It is expected that the workshop will strengthen cooperation and lead to improved joint action during emergencies as a result of mutual understanding.

Following the workshop, UNHCR's Regional Office in India expressed its appreciation to the NIDM for joining forces with UNHCR to coordinate this first-ever collaborative workshop and heralded it as a crucial first step towards broader cooperation within the South Asia region. This is all the more relevant considering that the SAARC Secretariat for Disaster Management will be housed in New Delhi at NIDM. At the end of 2006 discussions were being held for a follow-up event in 2007.

## Central Emergency Stockpile

In 2006, UNHCR increased its Central Emergency Stockpile of non-food items in Copenhagen and Dubai to cover some 327,000 beneficiaries (66 per cent of the target of 500,000). Target quantities were reached for plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, prefabricated warehouses, blankets and plastic rolls. Additional mobilization is required for mosquito nets, jerry cans, buckets, and generators. Lightweight emergency tents are urgently required, as the stock at the end of the year could only provide for the shelter needs of 100,000 people.

UNHCR continued to promote inter-operability of stockpile and relief items with key partners among UN agencies, donor governments, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement, as well as harmonization of standards, specifications and modalities of exchange. Framework

agreements with suppliers of key relief items were maintained in order to respond to emergencies affecting more than 500,000 people and to speedily replenish the CES. Additionally, regional contingency stockpiles were being reviewed for consolidation with the CES.

In emergencies such as Lebanon, Timor-Leste and Sri Lanka, UNHCR supplemented items shipped from the CES with local procurement and existing operational or regional stocks.

In 2006, UNHCR's initiatives in emergency management ranged from the traditional emergency response mechanisms to more forward looking initiatives. More than ever before, a core challenge for UNHCR remained the continued development of effective, predictable and yet flexible emergency preparedness and response mechanisms.

**Items distributed from the Central Emergency Stockpiles in 2006**

Country	Plastic sheeting	Plastic rolls	Tents	Blankets	Kitchen sets	Jerry cans	Mosquito nets	Trucks
Lebanon		150	1,200	47,625	6,440	20,000		
Eritrea	3,000			4,500				
Timor-Leste			1,530					
Kenya	6,000							
Chad	4,000							
Sri Lanka	30,000				28,000		30,000	10
Pakistan		1100						
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,000</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>2,730</b>	<b>52,125</b>	<b>34,440</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>10</b>

**Central Emergency Stockpile capacity in Copenhagen and Dubai at the end of 2006**

Item	Items needed per person in emergency	Target stock		Stock at end of 2006 (including pipeline)		Monetary value of closing stock (USD)
		Quantity of items	People covered	Quantity of items	People covered	
Plastic sheeting	0.2	100,000	500,000	82,690	413,450	591,234
Kitchen sets (Type B)	0.2	100,000	500,000	60,076	300,380	600,760
Prefabricated warehouses	0.00004	20	500,000	27	675,000	389,745
Blankets (fleece & A1)	1	500,000	500,000	248,310	248,310	844,254
Jerry cans	0.4	200,000	500,000	164,100	410,250	196,920
Toyotas	0.000124	62	500,000	45	362,903	1,282,500
Plastic rolls	0.02	6,000	300,000	3,566	178,300	235,356
Lightweight emergency tents	0.2	50,000	250,000	14,923	74,615	2,984,600
Trucks	0.0001	50	500,000	20	200,000	652,720
Mosquito nets	0.4	200,000	500,000	25,000	62,500	106,500
Buckets (20 l)	0.2	100,000	500,000	56,974	284,870	102,553
Generators (40 KVA)	0.000048	24	500,000	13	270,833	182,000
<b>Total</b>						<b>8,169,142</b>