

# *Responding to* Emergencies



Syrian Kurdish refugees escaping into Turkey near the town of Kobane.



**W**hen people flee conflict and strife, emergency preparedness and a swift emergency response help them survive by providing protection, security and helping to meet basic needs.

These needs may take different forms. For example, besides basic life-saving support, children in particular need their family, schooling and health care.

UNHCR's priority is to maintain the capacity to respond to emergencies, and to initiate the delivery of core relief items for at least 600,000 people within 72 hours from the onset of an emergency. ●●●



With several of the current complex emergencies likely to continue in 2015 and beyond, UNHCR's emergency response capacity is constantly being strengthened to meet the multiple challenges that this will involve.

Details of this ongoing work and the new ways in which UNHCR will approach the many tasks ahead are presented in this chapter, in short articles, as well as a matrix showing the main areas of intervention envisaged in 2015.

## Responding to simultaneous emergencies

In 2013, an estimated 10.7 million people were forcibly displaced due to conflict or persecution. This relentless trend has continued in 2014 with no prospect of a reprieve, while past crises that have displaced millions of people have yet to be resolved. Displaced populations will face much uncertainty, and the risk of secondary and tertiary displacements. Each new displacement requires a further emergency response. In 2014, UNHCR and its humanitarian partners have faced simultaneous Level-3 emergencies in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and northern Iraq with internal displacement and refugee outflows to neighbouring countries.

By their very nature, emergencies often occur in areas where conditions are challenging: in volatile and complex political environments with ongoing conflict, and in remote areas with insufficient infrastructure. Floods or droughts often compound the situation. All these factors have contributed to making the emergency responses to the crises in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and

northern Iraq remarkably difficult, straining the capacities of UNHCR's teams on the ground, and stretching inter-agency response mechanisms to the limit. Populations who had initially found security were frequently forced to flee again due to violence or other factors, just as they thought they had found safety. In Ethiopia, for example, South Sudanese refugees began arriving exhausted and undernourished in the Gambella region early in 2014. Having finally found some stability, the rainy season brought heavy floods forcing their relocation. Here as elsewhere, as people move to new makeshift conditions, medical services need to be re-established, while work with the Government begins to find new sites, and shelter and core relief items distribution starts again. Similarly, camps in northern Iraq are full one day and empty the next, as fighting close to the camps forces people to move again. UNHCR and its partners bear witness daily to the remarkable resilience of the refugee and displaced populations to cope with these challenges.

Clearly no one agency can respond to these realities, and partnership is a priority. UNHCR is an active member of the IASC in implementing the Transformative Agenda. In 2014, UNHCR has disseminated its coordination modalities in refugee settings to facilitate work with other UN agencies and international and national partners. Clarity in roles and responsibilities is essential to an effective emergency response.

In 2014, to respond to simultaneous emergencies and enhance its partnerships, UNHCR has taken measures to strengthen its leadership, coordination, delivery and accountability to people of concern in its emergency response, particularly for Level-3 emergencies. Emergency standby teams, led by senior staff, are being created to strengthen and support coordination and delivery in refugee emergencies, and fulfill the Office's cluster responsibilities in internal displacement settings. These teams will provide an immediate boost to UNHCR's operational capacity, ensure a regular flow of communication with partners and donors, and most importantly, engage actively with displaced communities in urban, rural, camp and out-of-camp settings, as from the outset of the emergency. UNHCR and partner rosters will continue to provide critical technical support through deployments of experts to fill identified gaps, such as action in prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence.

For an effective emergency response, participatory and community-based approaches will be promoted from the outset. UNHCR and partners will identify what people need by speaking with affected individuals of all ages and backgrounds and will

monitor the outcomes with the displaced communities, as part of accountability measures to people of concern. Working with their capacities, resilience, resources and community structures will help promote a response that is led by the community rather than organized by external actors only. Participation will enhance urgent assistance and enable targeted follow-up.

## CLARITY IN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IS ESSENTIAL TO AN EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

UNHCR will further strengthen its global supply network with its seven global stockpiles and regional warehouses of core relief items (tents, plastic sheeting, solar lanterns, sleeping mats, blankets and household items) for delivery in emergencies. In addition to material assistance, cash-based assistance will play a bigger role, local and regional procurement will be promoted to reduce costs through shorter transport distances, use local economies and provide regional materials.

A network of UNHCR security advisors supports operations with critical security advice based on up-to-date information, and security measures that facilitate staying and delivering in high-risk areas.

In 2015, the implementation of these measures will assist UNHCR to respond quickly and effectively to simultaneous emergencies.

# The UNHCR Emergency Lab: innovation in emergency response

Operating in some of the world's most challenging contexts, and with populations in dire situations, UNHCR constantly adapts to new challenges and an evolving humanitarian environment. Initiatives across the organization which enhance UNHCR's emergency response are brought together in an "Emergency Lab" to facilitate development, testing and improvement.

From an extensive field consultation through the "UNHCR Ideas" platform with UNHCR staff and refugees in 2014, mobile communication for displaced populations emerged as a central theme in emergencies. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, mobile communication is not a luxury but rather a basic need and an effective way to stay in touch with one's family and to access information and service providers. Pilot projects to provide free national calls, credit for airtime, mobile phones and/or SIM cards in the first weeks of an emergency to people of concern will guide the use of mobile communication for displaced populations in order to increase protection across the board. This is an important tool for accountability to affected populations.

Introducing bar codes into the supply chain will enhance the delivery of relief items to people of concern and facilitate inventory control. Using bar codes will enable tracking relief items at any time in any location. A two-year bar-coding project will analyse and test end-to-end delivery: from the company manufacturing a

relief item to the global stockpiles, to the warehouse in-country, and finally to the beneficiaries. Eventually, it is expected that such a system would support the replacement of paper ration cards used to track who has received what. Having an automated system should speed up the distribution process reducing waiting times in queues and the risk of fraud, while facilitating the merge of information from different distribution processes. Most importantly, it will help ensure that age, gender and diversity characteristics such as older persons or female-headed households, can be easily prioritized for assistance and the delivery monitored.

The new digital Emergency Handbook will provide answers at a click to critical questions such as: How many litres of water do people need per day to survive? What are good practices for an emergency response strategy in urban contexts? How to organize the distribution of relief items? What is the length of the runway needed for a C130 aircraft? In 2014, UNHCR developed its new Emergency Handbook, first published in 1982. Over the years, it has been used by many partner and UNHCR staff alike, and has been recognized as the go-to guide for humanitarian emergency management. This overhauled edition will be launched in early 2015, first in the form of a digital website, then as a mobile application. It has been designed with a user-centric approach and will work with and without internet connectivity.

# Standby Partners: reliable expertise in emergencies

**U**NHCR's standby agreements with a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make an important contribution to its overall emergency response capacity. These arrangements (see list of standby partners) allow UNHCR to benefit from invaluable technical and managerial expertise and speedy deployment. This increases the organization's flexibility and capacity to respond in many key areas, such as protection, child protection, education, resettlement, refugee status determination, registration, public health, logistics, site planning, engineering, water/sanitation, shelter and construction. Some standby partners also provide equipment or service modules for health, sanitation, office and accommodation facilities.

In 2015, UNHCR will seek to expand its partnership arrangements through new agreements with international NGOs for delivery in technical areas aimed at providing emergency packages for a specific sector (e.g. water, sanitation and hygiene) where no capacity exists on the ground. Arrangements with national NGO partners for emergency response and sustainable partnership will continue through participation in UNHCR's emergency training and deployments to emergencies. The 11 participating NGOs from Africa, the Middle East/Northern Africa and Asia have participated in capacity-building measures in recent years to further enhance their emergency capability and development as partners, both in their own countries and potentially elsewhere.

## *Standby partners*

- CANADEM
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States
- Department of International Development, United Kingdom
- Danish Refugee Council
- Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection
- Emergency.lu/Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- International Humanitarian Partnership
- Irish Aid
- Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- RedR Australia
- Save the Children Norway
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation/Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit
- German Federal Agency for Technical Relief
- Veolia Environment Foundation
- White Helmets Commission, Argentina
- Turkish Red Crescent Society ■

### AREAS OF INTERVENTION ANTICIPATED IN 2015

### EXAMPLES

#### Emergency response, security and supply

#### Capacities, skills and knowledge fostered and developed

Increase security awareness and skills of UNHCR and partner staff

- 90 security staff will be trained on specific security issues worldwide through workshops and 160 personnel will receive security training (SSAFE) as part of their emergency deployment training.
- Senior managers will be trained through dedicated security management learning programmes, security management exercises and incorporation of security management into training for Representatives and senior emergency leadership programmes.

Regional Centre for Emergency Preparedness ("eCentre"), Tokyo, Japan

- The eCentre will catalyse and implement technical support, capacity-building, information exchange and partnership initiatives to strengthen inter-agency preparedness and response in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Some 10-12 initiatives will be undertaken in 2015 reaching over 300 people, including eCentre-driven events and wider partnership schemes in the context of the Asia-Pacific Emergency Management (APEM) Platform.

Enhance preparedness, contingency planning and new tools

- Introductory workshops will be conducted on the Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE), introducing key actions for UNHCR offices and partner agencies for risk analysis, preparedness and contingency planning.
- Situational emergency trainings will offer a flexible programme, combining the development of a contingency plan for a specific situation or region with a simulation of that plan, resulting in better preparedness building on lessons learned.
- Targeted support will be delivered on UNHCR-led inter-agency refugee contingency planning in potential high-risk scenarios.
- The new digital Emergency Handbook, developed in 2014, will be rolled out to the field, supported by the development of mobile and tablet applications.

AREAS OF INTERVENTION  
ANTICIPATED IN 2015

EXAMPLES

Thematic training for emergencies

- More than 120 staff will be trained for emergencies through Workshops on Emergency Management (WEM) in English and French, as well as the Senior Emergency Leadership Programme (SELP).

**Emergency response capacity and effectiveness reinforced**

Optimize supply chain for shelter and core relief items in emergencies

- The capacity to organize core relief items for delivery to more than half a million people of concern within 72 hours in multiple emergencies will be further strengthened through a review of the supply chain system.
- Standard tools for emergency supply staff will be developed.
- The use of bar codes for core relief items will be introduced.

Standby emergency coordination, preparedness and response teams

- Three standby emergency teams led by senior staff will be available for immediate deployment to ensure leadership, coordination and delivery in refugee emergencies, and coordination and delivery in IDP emergencies in line with the IASC Transformative Agenda.
- Additional rapid deployment capacity to emergencies will be assured through the Emergency Response Team roster with some 100 staff members, the Senior Corporate Emergency roster with approximately 20 UNHCR senior managers, and standby partner rosters.
- The emergency deployment database will facilitate the analysis of deployment trends for better planning.

**Global supply management optimized for efficient delivery**

Global fleet management

- In 2015, UNHCR will continue to implement the internal rental scheme for light vehicles and 1,250 vehicles will be disposed of. A training module on vehicle tracking and rental will be launched, starting first with the 19 operations that possess 80 per cent of UNHCR's vehicle fleet.
- Enhanced policy and guidelines on fleet maintenance will be introduced.

Enhance supply chain through training of staff

- Training in logistics, procurement, inventory, and fleet and asset management will continue in the field and headquarters.

**Inter-agency and strategic partnerships strengthened**

Participate in the UN Security Management System

- UNHCR will continue to engage in inter-agency security forums at country and HQ levels to influence security policy decisions. Active participation will continue in UNDSS HQ-led missions in high-risk environments.

Implement the inter-agency Transformative Agenda

- UNHCR will continue to implement the Transformative Agenda and apply its Refugee Coordination Model and the joint UNHCR-OCHA note.
- UNHCR will continue to work with IASC partner agencies on preparedness and early warning/early action.

Strengthen partnerships for emergency preparedness

- In 2015, the emergency standby agreements with the existing 17 standby partners will be continued.
- An additional 5 predictable emergency response agreements with international NGOs are planned.
- The national NGO partners emergency response initiative will be further supported.

**Policy development strengthened**

Fully integrate revised UNHCR emergency policies and procedures into UNHCR operations

- Up-to-date policies, guidance, standard operating procedures and tools will be developed for emergency preparedness and response, taking into account operational needs, lessons learned and commitments under the IASC Transformative Agenda.
- These updated policies, guidance, standard operating procedures and tools will be incorporated into all emergency trainings.

**Security management reinforced as an organizational culture**

Implement the plan of action to strengthen a culture of security within UNHCR

- In 2015, efforts will continue to ensure a culture of security within UNHCR through the recently established Security Operations Section within the Field Security Service.

Strengthen governance and oversight mechanism to ensure appropriate accountability at all levels

- Policies and guidelines will be revised to ensure that security management accountabilities and responsibilities are articulated throughout.
- Good practices will be documented as lessons learned and guidance for other operations.

# UNHCR launches major aid push for Iraq with 100-ton airlift to Erbil

*This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story*

20 AUGUST 2014



The UNHCR-chartered Boeing 747 disgorges its vital cargo of aid after landing at Erbil in Iraq's Kurdistan region.

© UNHCR

**ERBIL, August 2014 |** *A cargo jet carrying 100 tons of emergency relief supplies landed at Erbil in Iraq's Kurdistan region on Wednesday afternoon, launching a massive UN refugee agency aid operation for hundreds of thousands of people caught in Iraq's worsening humanitarian crisis.*

Aboard the Boeing 747 from Amman, Jordan were 3,300 tents, 20,000 plastic sheets, 18,500 kitchen sets and 16,500 jerry cans – the first consignment in an operation that aims at bringing in 2,410 tons of aid between now and the start of September.

The aid will target living conditions for almost 500,000 displaced people in the region, many of whom are living rough in unfinished buildings, in parks or by the roadside.

Today's flight will be followed by three others from Jordan on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, carrying 100 tons each. Aid is also on its way by road and sea, with 175 trucks bringing tents, blankets, plastic tarpaulins, and household items across borders from Turkey, Jordan and Iran from UNHCR warehouses in the region and Europe.

"This is a massive logistics operation to bring in relief supplies by air, land and

sea to help the hundreds of thousands of desperate people who have fled suddenly with nothing but their lives, and are now struggling to survive in harsh conditions," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres.

"It's the largest single aid push we have mounted in more than a decade," Guterres said, adding that the combined volume of the emergency supplies on their way to Iraq was 11,306 cubic metres.

Across Iraq, an estimated 1.2 million people have been displaced so far this year, including more than 500,000 from fighting in the Anbar region which began in January, and more than 600,000 displaced from conflicts in and around Mosul (since June) and more recently Sinjar. The majority of the newly displaced are in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. ○