

Working in partnership with others

While UNHCR's work is guided by various General Assembly Resolutions, no single document captures the extent to which UNHCR cooperates with other actors in fulfilling its functions. With a mandate to protect across the world, 19.1 million refugees and other persons of concern, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees needs to work with a wide variety of donors and partners to adequately fulfil its role. These range from governments to non-governmental organizations; UN sister agencies; international and intergovernmental organizations; international financial institutions; the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement; the private sector; civil society and refugees and their host communities.

The concept of inter-agency cooperation and partnership has evolved over time, from cooperating with NGOs and some government agencies as implementing partners, to a collaborative mode of work which recognizes the enormous contributions other agencies and organizations, as well as host and donor governments, make to the refugee cause, complementing and improving on UNHCR's efforts to provide international protection, assistance and durable solutions to those who need them most. Partnerships allow UNHCR to ensure that refugees have their needs addressed; that violence against them is contained; and that initial rehabilitation translates into longer-term development. UNHCR places a high premium on working collaboratively with partners and in recent years has made significant changes in its programme planning process so that assessments of the overall needs of refugees are conducted with all key partners through participatory planning exercises. Likewise, the Office works closely with UN Country Teams and other members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC, which includes UN agencies and, as "standing invitees," IOM, the Red Cross movement and representatives of NGO consortia) in the Consolidated Appeals Process, which

provides a framework for common humanitarian action in complex emergencies.

Many examples of partnership initiatives are described elsewhere in this Global Appeal; this chapter will simply highlight key examples that show UNHCR's commitment to building partnerships.

United Nations system initiatives

Through its office in New York, UNHCR has established close cooperation and coordination on issues of strategic importance to UNHCR with the larger UN system based in New York: the UN Secretariat and other agencies, programmes and funds, as well as the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other entities accredited to the United Nations. In 2006, the New York Office will ensure that the issue of forced displacement remains at the forefront of the UN agenda.

During 2006, the New York office will follow the implementation of the Outcome Document agreed to at the World Summit in September 2005. One outcome of particular interest to UNHCR is the establishment of a Peace-Building Commission and a Peace-Building Support Office, both due to be operational in early 2006. The Office will follow these developments closely to ensure that durable solutions for displaced populations, and particularly efforts to sustain refugee returns, are supported and integrated into the Commission's work as it relates to relief, rehabilitation and recovery in countries emerging from conflict.

A related issue is the ongoing partnership between UNHCR and the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations. Cooperation with both departments is critical to the building of confidence and stabilization and will help

create better conditions for the safe return of displaced populations in integrated peacekeeping missions. Strong liaison and effective coordination with the new United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) has been established in order to ensure the safest and most efficient field operations.

UNHCR will continue to participate in the proceedings and activities of the Executive Committees on Peace and Security (ECPS) and on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA). Under the auspices of ECPS, UNHCR will support ongoing efforts related to the rule of law in post-conflict situations and participate in the team for conflict

prevention. Within ECHA, the Office will be engaged in the implementation group on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

As a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), UNHCR will continue to participate in its proceedings to ensure that the needs of refugees, internally displaced people and returnees are included in development programmes and planning.

On migration-related issues, UNHCR has noted with interest the recent report of the Global Commission on International Migration and will actively participate in the preparatory discussions



Benin: Registration of newly arrived Togolese refugees by UNHCR and the Benin Red Cross. *UNHCR / J. Björgvinsson*

for the debate on migration and development scheduled for 2006 at the UN General Assembly. The Office also remains an active participant in the Geneva Migration Group (GMG), which provides a platform for the executive heads of UN bodies concerned with migration issues, UNHCR; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC); and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to meet on a regular basis and exchange information on migration-related developments as they impact on the specific mandate of each of the participating organizations.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, UNHCR has participated in the development of the UNAIDS Unified Budget Workplan for 2006/2007, which includes, for the first time, conflict, refugees and the internally displaced in various global initiatives to be carried out in the next two years.

Bilateral initiatives with other UN agencies include stronger collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Following a joint Letter of Understanding signed in February 2005, country specific agreements in Burundi, Chad and Liberia aim to enhance the productive capacity of persons of concern to UNHCR in the area of agriculture and other rural livelihood sectors. A joint statement by the High Commissioner and the Director-General of ILO in November 2004 reflects the practical dimensions of the operational partnership and seeks to encourage proactive collaboration on the ground. The main goal of the joint statement is to achieve durable solutions for displaced populations by promoting sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance through the implementation of employment-oriented strategies. Also, as part of UNHCR's Afghanistan Plus Initiative, ILO is currently conducting Afghan labour market studies in Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, and will second a technical expert to the Afghan Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to assist the Government in strengthening its labour migration management capacity. UNHCR will also continue to cooperate with the International Maritime Organization

(IMO) on issues which are relevant to its mandate responsibilities, such as stowaways.

The strong collaboration between UNHCR and WFP is highlighted in a separate box in this chapter.

The “collaborative approach” to situations of internal displacement

Although no single agency has a comprehensive mandate for protection and assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), for a large part of its history UNHCR became involved in the response to internal displacement in an *ad hoc* manner, focusing especially on those situations where IDPs were mixed with or in close proximity to refugees or returnees and shared much the same needs. While primary responsibility for addressing situations rests with the concerned States, it is recognized that in many cases, States are unable or unwilling to do so. In the 1990s, a consensus emerged within the IASC that a “collaborative approach” to responding to internal displacement situations was the most appropriate response mechanism. Despite agreements on putting the “collaborative approach” into practice, the results failed to match expectations, and several efforts were made to improve it.

Following what was perceived to be a slow and inadequate humanitarian response to the crisis in Darfur, the Emergency Relief Coordinator commissioned an independent review of the humanitarian response to assess what the main problems and gaps were in the system's ability to respond to emergencies. Recommendations from the review report cover areas such as more predictable funding, strengthened coordination mechanisms, better preparedness measures and improved common services. The humanitarian response review also addressed the “gaps” issue by proposing that, in each functional sector, or “cluster”, where the combined response of the humanitarian agencies could not meet the needs, such as water and sanitation and the protection of IDPs, a “lead agency” be designated to

coordinate the efforts of all organizations active in the sector, to assess needs and improve global response capacity. The “cluster lead” would be accountable at the country level to the Humanitarian Coordinator for ensuring the system’s overall delivery within its sector. At a meeting of IASC principals in September 2005, UNHCR was designated as “cluster lead” in protection, camp coordination and emergency shelter.

UNHCR is fully committed to collaborating with all members of the IASC to address situations of internal displacement, at the request of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, when States are unable or unwilling to do so. However, the Office’s involvement with internally displaced people will be dependent upon two conditions: that the right of the affected populations to seek and enjoy asylum is preserved, and that any funds required for this endeavour are considered additional and are not diverted from refugee work.

Working with NGOs

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are the single largest group of UNHCR’s partners, through which one quarter of the organization’s budget is channelled. The over 600 NGO partners around the world bring valuable expertise to refugee situations, and UNHCR will continue its policy to forge effective partnerships with NGOs in order to achieve the Office’s core priorities of advocacy, providing protection and assistance, and finding durable solutions. Strengthened collaboration remains one of the best means to ensure that the basic needs of refugees are met. In a move to examine the implications of shifting from a resource-based to a more needs-oriented and results-based planning and programming exercise, the Office has been engaged in consultations with NGOs with the aim of establishing strategic operational partnerships, as NGOs increasingly bring their own resources and expertise to refugee assistance, protection, and resettlement operations. This should help to improve coordination, avoid duplication of efforts and better target humanitarian assistance and protection.

UNHCR also works closely with numerous NGOs and NGO umbrella groups on advocacy and policy formulation. NGOs play a pivotal role in UNHCR’s Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement which each year bring together States, NGOs and UNHCR to review ongoing programmes and policies. NGOs have also participated actively in the discussions of the Core Groups of the High Commissioner’s Forum on the three strands of Convention Plus: the strategic use of resettlement; irregular secondary movement of refugees and asylum-seekers; and targeting development assistance to achieve durable solutions.

Every year for the past 20 years, UNHCR has been holding annual consultations with NGOs the week preceding ExCom. This event has evolved significantly, from a one-day meeting where NGOs strategized over their interventions for ExCom, to a three-day event which provides an important forum for NGOs to raise issues, network, and exchange views with UNHCR. Following an ExCom decision in 2004, NGOs have a greater role in the consultative process in which member States prepare ExCom conclusions and decisions by providing comments to drafts through the Rapporteur.

At UNHCR’s governance meetings, NGOs bring their field experience and special expertise, notably through the joint NGO statements delivered at the Executive Committee and its Standing Committees throughout the year. In 2006, UNHCR will work closely with the ExCom Secretariat to enlarge the criteria established for NGO participation in UNHCR’s governance meetings to include implementing and operational NGO partners.

As protection partners, NGOs are involved in numerous activities ranging from the provision of legal advice and participation with UNHCR in the refugee status determination process to field protection monitoring and support. UNHCR’s standby arrangements with NGOs, some existing for up to ten years, enhance the Office’s capacity to respond to emergencies through deployment of qualified staff in the areas of refugee protection, resettlement, community services, field security, child protection, engineering, telecommunications and other vital sectors.

Working with the World Food Programme

In the past year UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) have intensified their collaboration, from high-level meetings to regional and country-level initiatives.

Both organizations work on a clear division of labour and responsibilities, which is set out in a Memorandum of Understanding. When the refugee population in a developing country exceeds 5,000 people, WFP assumes responsibility for the provision of basic food rations – cereals, vegetable oil, pulses, sugar, salt, high-energy biscuits and nutritionally-fortified blended foods. UNHCR or the host government provide food assistance to smaller refugee groups, and for the provision of complementary foods – including fresh food and therapeutic milk when necessary. WFP stores and transports food to distribution points, where partners manage final distribution to refugees and others of concern.

The objective of the intensified cooperation between WFP and UNHCR is to guarantee complete food rations for refugees, without delay or disruption, for more than two million refugees, seven million internally displaced people and one million returnees in 32 countries. The heads of the two agencies have repeatedly highlighted the importance of maintaining food assistance for refugees, internally displaced people and returnees. “Refugees in camps and remote settlements are extremely vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, as they rely upon the generosity of their hosts and the international community for the most basic food and other items”, according to James Morris, WFP’s Executive Director, in a joint UNHCR/WFP press release in September. This was echoed by the High Commissioner who commented: “When food becomes scarce, refugees often turn to desperate measures to feed themselves and their families. We are particularly worried about the health of the refugee population, domestic violence and refugees resorting to illegal employment or even to prostitution, just to put enough food on the table”.

Thus, in several countries, WFP and UNHCR have launched joint advocacy actions to avert major disruptions in the supply of food. For example, in the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP produce a monthly report giving donors and other organizations an up-to-date picture of the refugees’ situation, political environment and potential problems in the supply of food and other items. Joint UNHCR/WFP press releases and media briefings served to draw attention to further ration cuts, which were avoided when donors came forward with significant cash donations soon after.

However, such efforts have not always been successful. Despite increased advocacy, consultations with donor governments, speeches, press releases and editorials, several operations were still forced to cut rations or suspend distribution of basic food items. During 2005, a shortage of donations forced ration cuts not only in Tanzania, but also in Chad, Sierra Leone, Kenya and other places. Insufficient food was available to refugees returning to Rwanda and Angola, making it difficult for people who had been in exile for long periods to survive until they could reap their first harvest back home.

WFP shares UNHCR’s commitment to finding durable solutions for the world’s displaced. Its assistance is not only for refugees and internally displaced people living in camps and settlements but for the communities that host them. Repatriation food packages are available for refugees who go home as well as for the communities they return to, which are often suffering from precarious food security themselves. Special attention is also given to supporting schools, adult training programmes and income-generating activities with food, in the hope that refugees and returnees

can lessen their reliance on international assistance. School feeding in areas surrounding refugee camps and receiving returnees has fostered integration and helped reduce tensions between refugees and host communities.

The two organizations work together to assess food needs and have designed distribution networks that address the concerns of refugee women and groups with special needs. Successful close collaboration between WFP and UNHCR in repatriation operations is exemplified in the organized return of some 38,000 refugees from camps in Tanzania to Burundi in the first eight months of 2005. The repatriation was carried out in close coordination with the Governments of the United Republic of Tanzania and of Burundi. Registration and administrative arrangements for the transfer were handled by UNHCR, while WFP provided a repatriation package of three months' rations at the return points. UNHCR and WFP are currently preparing for the repatriation of refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from their camps in Tanzania. Some 35,000 out of 142,000 Congolese refugees are expected to repatriate in 2006 to areas in South Kivu where the security situation has improved.

Until durable solutions for refugees can be found, WFP and UNHCR will continue to collaborate to minimize the impact that forced displacement has on the nutrition, education and health of some of the world's most vulnerable people.



Namibia: WFP and UNHCR staff supervising food distribution at a refugee camp. WFP / M. Spina

Collaboration with NGOs is also seen throughout UNHCR's extensive field operations, as reflected in the relevant operations chapters.

Corporate partnerships

Over the past years, UNHCR has paid increasing attention to the role the private sector can play in helping to address the plight of refugees and to support returnee families, thus contributing to the development of more stable societies. Many companies have supported UNHCR's programmes throughout the world. Corporate supporters have provided much-needed funding for a specific situation or for a region or particular interest according to their business priorities. Increasingly, UNHCR has sought to develop this support and engage companies on a more sustainable basis, on the fundamental belief that the actions of corporations, as prime movers of capital, goods and services, have a significant impact on the lives of refugees and the societies around them. Corporations are helping UNHCR with financial support through employee-driven programmes (donations, employee giving, salary round-up, matching gifts), logistical support and companies' expertise in key areas to enhance UNHCR's operations. In

addition, by helping the Office, corporations can actively engage their employees, customers and other stakeholders to support UNHCR's operations around the world.

In a major new initiative to rally corporate support and boost private sector involvement in refugee work, in January 2005, the Office and its main corporate partners set up UNHCR's Council of Business Leaders, made up of top executives from five major corporations that have been working with UNHCR for several years to improve opportunities for refugees: Merck and Co, Inc., Microsoft, Nestlé, Nike and PricewaterhouseCoopers. The Council of Business Leaders will advise UNHCR on its strategy to engage with the corporate sector; conduct outreach and build networks to assist UNHCR in maximizing sources of financial and other support; champion UNHCR within corporations and in the business community and raise public awareness of UNHCR and the refugee cause, particularly among sectors and individuals not traditionally acquainted with UNHCR's work.

More details on UNHCR's work with its partners can be found throughout the Global Appeal, in particular in the Coordination section of the operations chapters.