

# Working with the internally displaced

UNHCR has long protected and assisted internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, as IDPs were never a formal part of UNHCR's mandate – or the mandate of any other UN agency – many situations of internal displacement did not receive the focused attention of the international community. In the 1990s a consensus emerged within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) that a collaborative approach was the most appropriate response to the plight of the internally displaced.

In late 2004, the collaborative approach was assessed as part of a broader review of international humanitarian efforts commissioned by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator. This resulted in a set of initiatives that aimed for a more effective and accountable humanitarian response by improving coordination, funding and leadership.

Consequently, in December 2005 the IASC agreed to establish the “cluster leadership approach”. This marked out ten specific areas of humanitarian intervention by “clusters” of UN agencies, NGOs and other organizations. Within this system, at the global level, UNHCR accepted leadership of the Protection Cluster, as well as of the Camp Coordination and Camp Management, and Emergency Shelter Clusters for situations of conflict-generated internal displacement. The Office co-chairs the global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster with IOM, and the global Emergency Shelter Cluster with IFRC, as these two agencies are cluster leads in natural disasters. In the case of natural disasters at the country level, UNHCR shares a leadership role of the Protection Cluster with OHCHR and UNICEF.

The IASC agreed to apply the cluster approach initially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Uganda and Somalia. The approach was also applied in major new emergencies such as Lebanon, where UNHCR led the protection and emergency-shelter clusters, and in other ongoing emergencies such as Côte d'Ivoire, where UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster.

Overall, the cluster approach has had a positive impact. It has increased the predictability of leadership and helped to clarify various agencies' roles in emergencies. It has also improved strategic planning and partnerships, particularly with NGOs.

In 2006, UNHCR also continued to work in situations of internal displacement which were not included in the cluster approach. In Colombia, for instance, UNHCR supported programmes to develop legal institutions to protect the rights of IDPs. It also assisted and raised international awareness of the plight of thousands of people displaced in the Nariño region by fighting between the Colombian army and rebel groups, and highlighted the particular concerns of indigenous people displaced within Colombia.

In Chad, UNHCR monitored the situation of IDPs (presently around 150,000) displaced by inter-ethnic fighting and provided them with emergency shelter and non-food items. In Darfur, the Office worked in a challenging security environment to provide relief and coordinate the protection response, which gave priority to reducing sexual and gender-based violence. In particular, UNHCR helped IDPs with legal representation and counselling, and used women's centres for skills training, livelihood projects and health services.

In Timor-Leste, between June and October 2006 UNHCR helped NGOs and the country's national human rights institution to set up a protection monitoring system for IDPs. It also provided more than 2,600 emergency tents to some 31,000 people in 45 locations.

## UNHCR's IDP policy and implementation initiatives

### IDP policy framework and implementation strategy

In 2006, UNHCR consulted partner agencies, NGOs, and members of its Executive Committee in order to develop an IDP policy framework and implementation strategy to cover the Office's expanded role in situations of internal displacement. This was done within the context of both UNHCR's commitment to the wider humanitarian reform process and the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence. The resulting framework and strategy were issued in January 2007.

UNHCR also improved its internal communications and staffing for work in situations of internal displacement. An IDP Support Team was set up to serve as an internal coordination mechanism and to deal with key issues related to IDP operations.

To ensure that its personnel in IDP operations had the appropriate skills, in September 2006 UNHCR called for staff members to be trained and available for emergency deployment. At the time of writing, staff had been chosen for training in UNHCR's cluster responsibilities at the field level. Meanwhile, 2006 saw emergency teams deployed to a number of IDP emergencies, including Lebanon, Timor-Leste, Chad, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. UNHCR's general learning programmes now include work with IDPs.

The Office developed policy and coordination at the inter-agency level for field operations, training and evaluation. Recognizing that security is a major concern in IDP situations, given that displaced populations often remain close to conflict areas, UNHCR began discussions with other UN agencies and international organizations on ways to optimize security.

As the lead agency for HIV and AIDS for refugees and IDPs within UNAIDS, UNHCR participated in inter-agency IDP and HIV assessment missions to Nepal and Eastern Europe, and provided technical support to numerous countries. In 2007, the Office will expand this support and host the first global consultations on IDPs and HIV.

UNHCR has also begun to evaluate and measure its performance within the cluster approach and in IDP situations generally. For example, in October 2006 the Office held a workshop on lessons learned from its expanded role in situations of internal displacement. Measurable performance indicators were incorporated in programme planning.

## Global Cluster update

The cluster leadership approach has a number of achievements to show at both the global and field levels. At the global level, the clusters have clarified areas of responsibility and reviewed standards and existing capacities. They are now in the process of strengthening capacity and preparedness by expanding technical expertise, developing guidelines and handbooks, and creating stand-by rosters and stockpiles.

At the country level, interventions by the global clusters have helped operations to identify IDP needs, train workers to improve camp management, and set minimum shelter standards. An inter-agency assessment to measure the impact of the cluster approach will take

place at the end of 2007 and 2008. It is hoped that better coordination and training of staff will result in better assistance and protection for IDPs.

## Protection Cluster

UNHCR chairs the global Protection Cluster Working Group (PCWG), which comprises a wide range of UN agencies, NGOs and other international organizations. The PCWG has proved to be a valuable coordination mechanism, providing a comprehensive perspective on protection and offering technical advice and information to a variety of actors.

Significant advances have been made to raise protection capacity. The Protection Standby Capacity Project (ProCap) established a core team of experienced senior protection officers for deployment to the field as needed. For some rosters which supplement the capacity of UNHCR, such as that of the Danish Refugee Council, the number of protection personnel has already increased by some 50 per cent. In addition, the Protection Surge Capacity Project, established by UNHCR and the International Rescue Committee, has also supported IDP operations by deploying protection officers where needed.

The PCWG has also begun to provide additions to existing tools and guidelines on protection. UNHCR, in coordination with its partners, is producing an inter-agency *IDP Protection Handbook* which will be field-tested in 2007. In the meantime, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council has trained more than 300 field personnel in Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal and Lebanon in international legal standards relating to internal displacement. Besides making national authorities, NGOs and other actors more aware of protection standards, such training has helped the recipients reach a common understanding of key concepts and encouraged discussions to review national policies.

## Camp Management and Camp Coordination Cluster

UNHCR co-leads the Camp Management and Camp Coordination Cluster with IOM. The global cluster defined concepts and responsibilities for the three main areas of coordination, management and administration of IDP camps. The cluster was activated in countries with ongoing emergencies, such as Liberia and Uganda, as well as in new emergencies such as Pakistan.

Training and capacity building played a key role in the cluster's commitment to raising standards in humanitarian responses within camp settings. In 2006 the cluster compiled "best practices" in camp

management and coordination for humanitarian coordinators and country teams. Many field personnel from a variety of agencies were trained in camp management in 2006. Information management tools, including a CD-ROM on IDP resources, were shared with numerous partners.

To improve information sharing, the Global Cluster supported a pilot project in Uganda to help camp management agencies in northern Uganda. It also backed a project in Somalia to provide mapping services and track population movements and sent missions to Myanmar and the Central African Republic to support field offices.

## Emergency Shelter Cluster

Although UNHCR leads the Emergency Shelter Cluster in conflict situations, at the global level it is co-chaired by UNHCR and the IFRC. In 2006, the Emergency Shelter Cluster was activated in Lebanon, Indonesia and Somalia. Cluster members deployed shelter and coordination experts to three conflict-generated displacement situations (Lebanon, Timor-Leste and Somalia) and to two areas of displacement by natural disasters (Indonesia and Pakistan). This led to more timely and effective coordination of shelter interventions in these emergencies. For example, in Lebanon efforts to harmonize interventions by the humanitarian community led to the adoption of a common policy for rehabilitation. Both UNHCR and the IFRC established rosters of emergency shelter coordinators for future emergencies. Finally, lessons learned from the Pakistan earthquake were incorporated into guidance and training.

## Other clusters

UNHCR contributed to the development of the clusters on early recovery, logistics, nutrition, water/sanitation and hygiene, and health. Not only does UNHCR have expertise in these areas, but the activities of these clusters contribute in many cases to finding durable solutions. Furthermore, UNHCR's involvement ensures that protection is mainstreamed in all clusters so that IDPs are helped in the fastest and most cost-effective manner.

For example, UNHCR participated in the UNDP-led Early Recovery Cluster, and in particular the Post-Conflict Recovery Sub-Cluster. It did so to ensure that plans and interventions are consistent across clusters, and that protection

and other cross-cluster issues are part of early recovery planning. For UNHCR, the Early Recovery Cluster provides an opportunity to work with other UN agencies to reduce the gap between relief and development, consolidate the return and reintegration of displaced populations, engage development actors in assisting communities affected by conflict, and raise the contribution of displaced populations to peace-building and transition activities.

UNHCR also contributed to the WFP-led Logistics Cluster, which operates on the assumption that members of the other clusters will manage their own logistics as part of an integrated supply chain. UNHCR plans to strengthen its logistics capacity in the delivery of shelter, as well as non-food and other relief items.



UNHCR/A. Webster

UNHCR's income-generating projects provided livelihoods to some 7,400 IDPs throughout Somalia.

## The cluster approach in practice

During its first year as cluster lead at the country level, UNHCR sought to ensure the clusters it led were made up of a diverse group of humanitarian actors, particularly NGOs, as they undertook assessments, developed strategies and implemented responses. UNHCR also participated in and co-chaired other clusters, such as those created to address return and reintegration.

In **Chad**, where there are approximately 150,000 IDPs, UNHCR assumed a “cluster-like” leadership role for protection, site management and coordination, and emergency shelter. Despite the challenges in gaining humanitarian access to the IDPs, as cluster lead for site management UNHCR worked with IDP committees and local leaders to promote the integration of IDPs into local communities, rather than have them live in camps. Members of the Emergency Shelter Cluster provided plastic sheeting, family water kits and mosquito nets.

In **Colombia**, UNHCR worked with the Government and other institutions to meet the protection needs of IDPs, with particular focus on the most vulnerable groups (see *the chapter on Colombia in the attached CD-ROM*). The IASC country team in Colombia activated the cluster approach in the form of thematic groups in September 2006. At the end of 2006 UNHCR opened new offices to contribute to protection in areas that had previously been beyond the reach of humanitarian agencies. UNHCR also participated in a successful campaign to declare 2007 the year of the rights of displaced people in Colombia.

In the **DRC**, the Protection Cluster established monitoring systems in Katanga, South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri provinces. As a result of close cooperation and advocacy with the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), mobile teams of peacekeepers were deployed to sites where IDPs required protection in the eastern part of the country. In Gety, Ituri province, where IDPs had faced a two-kilometre restriction on their movements, the Protection Cluster convinced the authorities to allow them to venture as far as 20 km. UNHCR also co-leads the Early Recovery Cluster in the DRC with UNDP.

In **Liberia**, UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster and coordinates camp management and emergency shelter activities. As cluster lead for camp management, UNHCR implemented a camp closure strategy to ensure that legal, environmental and other issues resulting from the long-term presence of IDP camps were addressed. By the end of 2006, all 327,000 registered Liberian IDPs had received assistance to return home. The clusters also focused on IDPs’ return and reintegration needs. For example, protection partners provided logistical and technical support to the judiciary and police to strengthen their capacity to respond to human rights abuses. UNHCR is also an active member of the Early Recovery Cluster led by UNDP in Liberia.

UNHCR co-leads the Protection Cluster in **Somalia** with OCHA, while the Emergency Shelter Cluster was established with the assistance of UN-HABITAT. Given the limited humanitarian access

and poor security in the country, as well as the high mobility of IDP communities, UNHCR worked with partners to monitor protection and track population movements for the country team’s early warning system and strategic planning. In Bossaso (Puntland), the cluster approach helped to ensure the rapid delivery of relief and the construction of sanitation facilities for IDP settlements. The cluster also provided the Government with guidelines on international standards for relocation of IDPs.

In **Sri Lanka**, humanitarian access to IDPs was restricted by the upsurge in violence between the Government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Nonetheless, in 2006 UNHCR registered IDPs, conducted confidence-building activities between IDPs and host communities and initiated quick-impact projects. The Office also provided shelter and responded to the general emergency and protection needs generated by new displacement.

In **Uganda**, as lead for the Protection and Camp Management and Camp Coordination clusters, UNHCR advocated for freedom of movement outside IDP camps. In Lira, the Protection Cluster traced IDP return movements and developed a return plan for IDPs. The cluster continues to develop protection-monitoring systems with NGO partners within the camps. As cluster lead, UNHCR cooperated with UNICEF and UNDP help train newly deployed police forces, improve primary and secondary roads to facilitate IDP returns, and support community-based early recovery programmes in return areas.

One of the primary goals of the humanitarian reform process was to address the protection and assistance gaps for IDPs. UNHCR and other agencies have now committed themselves to building the capacity and expertise to address these gaps. The year 2006 was

primarily a time to develop tools and strategies; in 2007 UNHCR will work with governments and its inter-agency partners to translate the work of the global clusters into concrete action at the field level.