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Update on UNHCR's global programmes and partnerships - 2011

This update presents some examples of challenges, progress and new developments in global programmes and partnerships since the last strategic overview presented to the 50th meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2011. A more comprehensive report will be provided in the forthcoming Global Appeal 2012-2013.

Shelter and physical planning

In 2011 UNHCR provided shelter and physical planning support for several emergencies which broke out simultaneously, including massive displacement in Côte d'Ivoire and surrounding countries, and from Libya to Tunisia and Egypt. Also in Africa, Somali refugees have continue to flee conflict and famine, with new arrivals in Kenya and Ethiopia since January 2011 swelling the large numbers of refugees already living in camps in the two countries. In September 2011, the situation in Blue Nile State in Sudan has resulted in an influx of refugees into Ethiopia. UNHCR has also supported displaced populations in flood-ravaged areas in Pakistan.

In 2010-2011, UNHCR has led the efforts of the Emergency Shelter Cluster in providing emergency shelter and adequate living conditions in ten countries: four were newly activated following conflict and the other six are protracted displacement situations which frequently face new challenges in the form of natural disasters or renewed conflict. Despite the scale and geographical spread of the population movements and the often insecure operational environment, hundreds of thousands of families seeking refuge in host communities or squatting in public buildings have been provided with shelter relief items. In collaboration with many governmental and NGO partners, as well as with the private sector and academic institutions, UNHCR continues to work on developing appropriate shelter solutions.

UNHCR is currently working on its 2012-2014 shelter strategy with emphasis on further strengthening in-house capacity, preparedness, predictability and effectiveness of response.

Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH)

In 2011, the WASH sector was provided with an additional US\$ 25 million to help address unmet needs for water supplies and sanitation. Eleven operations benefited from this increased funding allowing for the building of new water supply systems and latrines and the rehabilitation of old infrastructure.

A project monitoring the aquifer at Dadaab in Kenya (hosting 450,000 refugees) is being pursued to ensure that the aquifer, which is currently used by the host community, is not depleted. The new WASH monitoring system is being piloted in eight operations to help identify trends and enable evidence-based and proactive decisions.

Relations with standby partner organizations are being strengthened to build expertise and create surge capacity of WASH experts for emergencies.

Nutrition and food security

Responding to the nutritional crisis in the Horn of Africa has been a major feature of UNHCR's nutrition and food security activities in the second quarter of 2011. The massive influx of Somali refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya with critical levels of malnutrition and ill health have challenged existing mechanisms and at times overwhelmed existing structures. The emergency response to the nutrition situation has been strengthened through adjusted programming measures and additional staff deployments, with the aim of preventing deaths from malnutrition and stabilizing and improving the nutritional status of the children arriving in the camps. Several guidance tools on nutrition and public health have been produced and related training undertaken for UNHCR and partner staff in key countries in the Africa, MENA and Asia regions.

Additional staffing will now help UNHCR extend its options for food security assistance measures, such as through cash-based initiatives for essential needs and reinforced linkages and partnerships between nutrition and food security activities.

Health and HIV

In 2011, UNHCR's efforts have been focused on establishing a strong public health field presence from the very beginning of an emergency, in order to ensure adequate response and coordination. Public health experts have been deployed to a number of countries in Africa during the second half of 2011, and the roll-out of UNHCR's WebHIS (<http://his.unhcr.org/>) has been extended to Liberia and Ethiopia as new camps were set up.

Initiatives have been taken, or are in progress, to improve technical guidance and support in areas such as urban public health; essential medicines management: clinical labs; epidemic preparedness; health facilities; surveillance for dispersed urban caseloads; chronic and communicable diseases. All of this will help substantially improve the overall quality of public health programming, including in protracted and urban refugee situations. UNHCR's subsidized health insurance programme for refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran has begun very well, with 45 per cent of refugees who hold updated work permit cards (Amayesh VII) having already subscribed to the insurance policy.

Advocacy and collaborative work with governmental and other partners is being pursued in a number of areas related to HIV prevention, treatment and care, including for safe motherhood services and quality family planning services. In other partnership initiatives, Novartis has provided UNHCR with anti-malarial medications and a cash grant for insecticide-treated bed nets and hospital tents. In 2012, UNHCR and WFP will co-lead the UNAIDS Division of Labour area entitled "Addressing HIV in Emergency Situations."

Refugee women, children and adolescents

Children represent 47 per cent, and women 49 per cent, of UNHCR's population of concern. One of UNHCR's key goals is to provide protection for refugee women, children and adolescents by actively promoting gender equality through targeted interventions in areas such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), participation in decision-making and leadership, economic self-reliance, education, and access to sanitary materials. In June 2011, UNHCR launched its updated strategy, *Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*, and began implementing this in ten pilot countries.

Thanks to efforts to support the equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making bodies, women are increasingly assuming responsibilities in the public sphere. On average, women now account for 40 per cent of refugee camp committee members, and UNHCR continues to promote opportunities for greater economic empowerment and self-reliance for women.

Girls and boys of concern face increased risks during displacement, including violence, child recruitment, trafficking, harmful traditional practices, family separation, sexual and gender based violence. To strengthen the child protection response, UNHCR has initiated a multi-year protection strategy for children to build on existing policies on Best Interests

Determination (BID) and child protection systems and provide a framework for strategic planning.

Education

Ensuring access to quality education for persons of concern in protective environments is a major challenge, even at primary school level. Around 30 per cent of refugee children still have no access to primary education and only one out of five young refugees is enrolled in secondary school.

Educated women and girls can bring positive changes to their families, economies and societies. UNHCR is therefore supporting targeted education programmes in many countries, including through initiatives to enhance the learning environment and promote female teachers. Collaboration with the World Food Programme on school feeding programmes has provided incentives encouraging enrolment, facilitating attendance and retention rates, and improving learning. In other locations, UNHCR efforts to reduce disincentives have led to an increase in enrolment levels through the waiving of school fees or girls' hostel programmes.

The Ninemillion.org campaign, which reached more than 460,000 persons of concern in 20 countries in 2010, will enhance access for girls to education and sports activities. The DAFI programme provided 1800 refugee students in 37 countries with university scholarships in 2010 and will continue equipping young refugees with skills central to leadership, reconstruction and nation building. UNHCR's education programmes depend on collaboration with over 200 implementing partners worldwide.

Livelihoods

Over 70 UNHCR operations are currently supporting livelihood interventions. Enhancing self-reliance is particularly critical in urban refugee operations such as in Nairobi, New Delhi or Cairo, and in protracted situations like in southern Chad or Ecuador. IDP and/returnee situations are also receiving specific attention (e.g. in Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Afghanistan or Georgia). Based on socio-economic assessments in several refugee operations in Africa and Asia, the Office has mobilized additional resources for creative interventions with the private and public sector, as well as with development partners, that support national or local development plans.

In Yemen and in eastern Sudan, UNHCR is piloting a programme model developed by the World Bank's Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, which aims to "graduate" rural or urban dwellers out of poverty through a sequence of grant-based, capacity-building, and microfinance interventions. In Tunisia, UNHCR has developed new partnerships to boost employment opportunities and private sector investments in refugee-hosting areas. In Uganda, Cameroon, and Senegal, UNHCR is working with local Entrepreneurship Training providers (business development services) to enable refugee youth and women to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

The Community Technology Access project [CTA] provides access to computer skills for school children, youth and adults from refugee and host communities, helping support UNHCR's global livelihoods strategy. By the end of 2011, the CTA will be operating in 13 countries across the globe, and in 2012, additional CTAs will be opening.

A practical guide for livelihood programming in both rural/camp and in urban settings (updating and replacing the 2005 *Handbook for self-reliance*) is being developed, and new training in this area will be carried out in collaboration with partners, notably the Women's Refugee Commission, UNDP and ILO..

Environment

Sound environmental management is central to the protection and livelihoods of persons of concern. In 2011, UNHCR has focused on the promotion of renewable energy and fuel efficiency; environmental impact assessment and monitoring; awareness-raising and training; sustainable land use and agriculture; and community-based environmental plans.

The use of innovative technology to improve access to renewable energy and increase cooking-fuel efficiency is particularly important because of the close link between domestic energy and the protection of people, especially women and children. So far, solar lighting and fuel-efficient stoves have been promoted in refugee camps in nine African countries. In 2011, a four-year private sector fundraising campaign has been launched to expand the use of this technology to assist 450,000 refugees.

UNHCR has strengthened its partnership with UN coordination mechanisms, including the IASC Task Force on Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy in Humanitarian Settings (SAFE). The Office continues to work in partnership with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to support the development of community environmental action plans; and with domestic energy platforms such as the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves.

Linking relief to development

The Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) aims to include the needs of refugees and IDPs, as well as local communities, on the development agenda of governments, international development donors and other actors. Since October 2010, UNHCR and UNDP have been working together to identify potential countries for TSI intervention, and progress has been made in eastern Sudan and Colombia, and in the Community-Based Development Programme (CBDP) in Nepal.

In eastern Sudan, the TSI is targeting solutions for the protracted refugee situation together with a number of partners. The aim is to consolidate camps and to convert them into viable local villages, finding solutions in the process for the protracted refugee situation.

In Colombia, the objective of the UNDP/UNHCR TSI is to achieve solutions for IDPs, in order to encourage the consolidation of a comprehensive strategy including options for return, relocation or local reintegration. UNDP and UNHCR in Colombia are pursuing the TSI in accordance with the Government's National Development Plan, as well as the main areas of cooperation included in the United Nations Development Assistance Fund for Colombia.

In Nepal, the aim of the CBDP, developed within the framework of the TSI, is to facilitate solutions through addressing protection and development needs. The CBDP will be implemented in the context of the ongoing resettlement programme for refugees from Bhutan, under which over 50,000 individuals have been resettled. The CBDP will focus on the needs of the remaining refugee population (currently 63,000 refugees), who reside in four refugee camps in south-eastern Nepal, as well as those of host communities in refugee-impacted and hosting areas through: promoting greater social cohesion and empowerment through community development; improving livelihoods and local economies; improving and integrating social services and infrastructure; and promoting peaceful coexistence between the refugees from Bhutan and nearby hosting communities.

UNHCR and UNDP undertook joint missions to the United Republic of Tanzania and Colombia in relation to their collaboration on TSI. In September 2011, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and UNHCR undertook a joint mission to Tunisia to initiate a development programme to support refugee hosting communities.