

**At the border,** UNHCR staff distribute water and food to a truck full of Egyptian migrant workers who fled violence in Libya. Saloum, Egypt.



# Responding to Emergencies

## *A new approach to emergencies*

**U**NHCR DEFINES an emergency as any situation in which the life or well-being of refugees and people of concern to UNHCR, will be threatened unless immediate and appropriate action is taken, and which demands an extraordinary response and exceptional measures.

The years 2011-2012 look set to go down as a period of unusually intense activity for UNHCR, with successive and simultaneous humanitarian emergencies caused by conflict and natural disasters in North Africa and the Middle East, in West Africa and in the Horn of Africa.

In the first eight months of 2011, UNHCR has deployed almost 600 emergency staff to major operations in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, following the upheavals in these countries; in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, to deal with the Ivorian displacement situation; and Ethiopia and Kenya, to assist with programmes respectively for Somali and for Sudanese refugees.

Emergency deployments were also effected in Pakistan and Sudan. The number of such deployments so far in 2011 is already more than double that in 2010, which reached 236.

UNHCR has also delivered core relief items to those affected by these emergencies, from a network of strategically located, regional warehouses. By September 2011, UNHCR had dispatched 32 airlifts of relief items—three times as many as in all of 2010. Another eight shipments were sent by sea and 12 by road.

In light of the significant increase in the number of emergency operations, the High Commissioner has defined emergency preparedness and response as one of UNHCR's two core priorities – the other being protection capacity. The objectives are to be prepared for sudden, large-scale and simultaneous humanitarian emergencies; to be able to deliver an initial life-saving response within the first 72 hours of an emergency being declared; and to have the capacity to assist up to 600,000 people of concern at any given time.

### **A CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY**

TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN THIS LEVEL of readiness, UNHCR has established a corporate response mechanism that optimizes the institutional capacity to prepare for and respond to humanitarian emergencies. Emergency operations are now able to draw more easily on resources throughout the organization, thereby ensuring that the right staff and the right assistance are sent at the right time to the populations in need.

The Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) plays the principal coordination role in terms of UNHCR's emergency preparedness, through a combination of its three core functions: efficient operational support, appropriate security strategies and effective emergency management. Its Emergency Capacity Management Section, which has replaced the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section in October 2011, acts as the key support service for contingency planning and preparedness efforts, as well as during emergency operations.

## EMERGENCY STAFFING

THE IMMEDIATE AVAILABILITY OF individuals with leadership profiles is critical to any emergency response. UNHCR has therefore established a Senior Corporate Emergency Roster, consisting of 20-25 senior professional staff with proven emergency management experience. The members are on standby for a 12-month period and can be deployed once during this time for a two-month mission. In 2012 and 2013, UNHCR will update the roster and the related Senior Emergency Leadership Training programme. The management of the roster and the deployment of staff will be reviewed to ensure continued improvement.

UNHCR also aims to strengthen its internal technical capacity and its emergency standby arrangements with partners who possess particular expertise. This will ensure the availability of specialists for rapid deployment, thereby reinforcing UNHCR's capacity to respond to any new humanitarian crisis.

These arrangements will serve to complement deployments from the Emergency Response Team (ERT) roster and standby partners, which constitute the majority of UNHCR's deployments. UNHCR keeps up to 100 staff members on the ERT roster each year. In particular, the additional body of readily available senior and technical staff will allow UNHCR to better identify the specific competencies and profiles required for each emergency, such as cluster coordinators for protection; shelter and camp management; information management; and overall inter-agency coordination.

## PARTNERSHIPS IN EMERGENCIES

UNHCR AIMS TO STRENGTHEN and expand cooperation with its partners, not only to diversify its emergency-deployment capacity, but also to develop more strategic access to partners' operational support capacities. These include emergency office and field accommodation, logistical support, and engineering and telecommunications expertise.

UNHCR is also expanding partnerships with private sector

corporations, building on its links with private entities currently providing support to field operations. The IKEA Foundation has shared knowledge on supply chain management and made in-kind donations to UNHCR for emergencies in Kyrgyzstan and Tunisia. In-kind support for emergency preparedness and response has also been received from Icom Inc. and United Parcel Service. UNHCR continues its close collaboration with Kuehne and Nagel as regards, for example, the transportation of core relief items to field operations.

## THE IMMEDIATE AVAILABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH LEADERSHIP PROFILES IS CRITICAL TO ANY EMERGENCY RESPONSE

### CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TRAINING

IN CONJUNCTION WITH UNHCR's Global Learning Centre, DESS will continue to provide capacity-building and training programmes for emergency management, including:

- The Workshop on Emergency Management, which is held up to four times a year to prepare staff for emergency deployments and participation in the ERT roster;
- The Senior Emergency Leadership Training, piloted in 2011, will be held once a year to prepare staff at the P-5 to D-2 level to lead and coordinate emergency operations;
- The Situational Emergency Training scheme will continue to assist regions and country operations to prepare for and respond to emergencies in their specific contexts; and
- The Emergency Team Leadership Programme, an inter-agency training scheme, will continue to be offered, as required.

In addition, the eCentre in Tokyo plays an integral part in UNHCR's emergency preparedness activities in Asia and the Pacific, working closely

with governments, civil society, the UN and regional partners. The eCentre organizes field-based training programmes, provides tailored technical support to partners, and promotes building networks of emergency actors. The eCentre will continue these activities in 2012-2013, with a special focus on protection in emergencies, natural disasters, contingency planning and strengthening the network of eCentre partners.

### POLICY, COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

UNHCR WILL CONTINUE TO develop its policies and guidance for emergencies, updating its tools to reflect today's changing operational environment. *The Handbook for Emergencies*, last published in 2009, is currently being revised. The *Emergency Response Catalogue, Guide to Standby Partners* and the *Core Relief Items Catalogue* (published in April 2011) will be continuously updated. UNHCR is also aiming to finalize a manual containing its long-standing procedures for the declaration of an emergency and activating and deactivating its emergency mechanisms.

### A STRENGTHENED LOGISTICAL NETWORK

UNHCR'S SUPPLY MANAGEMENT Service (SMS) plays a critical role in the organization's emergency response, as it ensures that the tools needed in emergencies are available and delivered to the right place at the right time. SMS also makes sure that a sustainable pipeline for the supply of shelter and core relief items, as well as vehicles, fuel and operational equipment, is swiftly established.

At the onset of an emergency, UNHCR can employ a three-pronged supply chain strategy, using airlifts, regional road and sea transport, and "white stocks" – goods that remain in the supplier's warehouse or in the production line, but which are available to UNHCR at any time, based on Global Frame Agreements. This flexible supply chain allows UNHCR to deliver emergency shelter and core relief items for up to 600,000 beneficiaries within 72 hours, and to serve two or three

large-scale emergencies in parallel, while continuing to meet the needs of its ongoing operations in a timely and efficient manner.

In order to bolster the supply chain, UNHCR has expanded its logistical network to seven supply hubs worldwide: in Europe (Copenhagen), Africa (Accra, Douala, Isaka and Nairobi) and the Middle East (Amman and Dubai). UNHCR has also pre-positioned tents in strategic regional locations to facilitate timely delivery by road or sea and complement emergency airlift operations. This increases the speed of delivery, while at the same time, reducing the costs of transportation. In addition, operations are encouraged to develop local frame agreements and build local stocks to give them additional flexibility in case of an emergency. Global suppliers are mobilized to replenish emergency stocks and be prepared for additional requests.

UNHCR is building a world class supply chain for shelter and core relief items in the context of humanitarian emergencies, as well as care and maintenance operations. Key performance indicators have been identified so that progress toward this goal can be monitored. In another measure to increase accountability, major changes are being implemented to the management and accounting of inventories and Property, Plant and Equipment, as part of the Office's implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards by 1 January 2012. This is expected to improve services to people of concern, in emergencies and in ongoing operations.

**FACILITATING SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN EMERGENCIES AND INSECURE ENVIRONMENTS**

ACCESS TO PEOPLE OF CONCERN is essential for UNHCR if it is to provide protection and assistance both in emergencies and in ongoing operations. In 2012-2013, in line

with revised policies within the UN Security Management System, UNHCR will continue to enhance and adapt its approach to security to enable operations to remain in high-risk environments and function more effectively while mitigating existing risks to the extent possible.

The Field Safety Section (FSS) supports all UNHCR operations. This support is often most critical during emergency operations. The deployment of Field Safety Advisers during emergencies and in other high-risk operations provides qualified and up-to-date guidance on security and safety, both preventively and in response to incidents, reports and queries. In 2011, Field Safety Advisers has provided direct or indirect support through 40 missions to emergency and other operations, in addition to the support provided by Field Safety Advisers already in place in operations. This pace is expected to continue in 2012 and 2013.

**ACCESS TO PEOPLE OF CONCERN IS ESSENTIAL FOR UNHCR IF IT IS TO PROVIDE PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE BOTH IN EMERGENCIES AND IN ONGOING OPERATIONS**

UNHCR is currently strengthening its network of Field Safety Advisers by bringing in more analytical skills and expert capacity, such as blast engineers and hostage negotiators. This will make the organization better equipped to gather, analyse and interpret security-related information to inform decision-making at headquarters and in the field. FSS will also continue to provide guidance on security budgeting and oversight, so that operations achieve full compliance with the UN's Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS). Eighty-seven per cent of UNHCR's offices are already MOSS compliant.

The comprehensive security training programme for staff will continue to target their specific needs, according to the contexts in which they work, particularly in emergencies. In cooperation with the Global Learning Centre in Budapest, the following programmes are made available: a Security Management Exercise focused on security risk assessment and management; a Security Management Learning Programme helping managers in the field to handle the difficult challenge of balancing operational imperatives and the safety of staff; communication skills helping Field Safety Advisers to present their security strategies, particularly to senior managers; and information analysis to improve the organization's capacity to analyse security information and build information processing systems in operations. More than 750 staff members have already been trained in these various areas in 2010-2011.

UNHCR is also in the process of finalizing a manual on the security of people of concern, which provides best practices for dealing with recurring security threats against refugees, internally displaced and stateless people. The manual is based on the wealth of experience found in UNHCR's operations in the field, combined with the security expertise of FSS, and is expected to forge closer cooperation between protection staff and Field Safety Advisers in the field, improving the safety of UNHCR's beneficiaries. The first edition of the manual will be launched in 2011, with a roll-out and associated training schemes in 2012. ■