



**UNHCR tents** being delivered for communities displaced by the August 2011 floods in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

# Responding to Emergencies

**W**ITH THE ADOPTION of the Global Strategic Priorities for 2010–2011, the High Commissioner tasked UNHCR's newly established Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) with strengthening the organization's emergency response performance. Significant and measurable progress has been made with the reform of the Emergency Capacity Management Service, the Field Safety Section (FSS) and the Supply Management Service (SMS). At the heart of the improved emergency capacity is an "organizational approach", adopted in 2011. This consists of a strong centralized management and coordination mechanism within DESS, able to draw upon the entire range of organizational capacities, resources and expertise to support Bureaux and operations in responding to the specific needs of each emergency situation.

This new approach was repeatedly tested in 2011 when many large-scale crises required emergency action simultaneously. These included the displacement related to the Arab Spring, the post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire, the famine in the Horn of Africa coupled with the ongoing conflict in Somalia, and forced displacement in the Sudan and South Sudan. In the face of these challenges,

the value of having reformed the core elements of UNHCR's emergency capacity was demonstrated by the rapid and effective responses to these crises, underpinned by sound security support and supply management.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN 2011

BY APPLYING AN ORGANIZATION-WIDE approach to emergency response, UNHCR was able to deploy some 620 staff members and standby partner staff (of whom 42 per cent were women) to emergency operations in over 40 countries. This was a dramatic increase, almost tripling the numbers deployed in previous years (236 in 2010 and 248 in 2009). The deployments were mainly to refugee operations (78 per cent) but also to IDP and mixed operations containing both IDP and refugee components.

As in previous years, a majority of the profiles requested for emergency deployment were protection-related. However, with the Libya crisis, 2011 saw the need for many more refugee status determination (RSD) and resettlement officers. Registration and information management officers were also in high demand. With the increase in specialist profiles required for emergencies, the organization-wide approach enabled UNHCR to tap into expertise beyond the Emergency Response Team (ERT) roster, thereby ensuring that staff with specific skills, profiles

or knowledge were available for emergency deployment as required by each situation.

UNHCR benefited from generous standby partnership arrangements to complement its internal capacity for emergency deployments, particularly in technical fields. In total, 246 persons from nine standby partners were deployed to emergency operations in 2011, constituting around 40 per cent of the overall deployments.

Also among those deployed to emergencies were Field Safety Advisers (FSAs) who provided security support and assistances, thereby facilitating staff security and, in turn, enabling better access to persons of concern in the face of threats. A total of 64 field safety missions were conducted in 2011 to support new emergency operations or assist in security management. The missions served in Afghanistan, Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia (Dollo Ado), Iraq, Kazakhstan/Tajikistan, Kenya (Dadaab), Libya, the Sudan and South Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara. During these missions, field safety officers engaged in critical-incident management, established new field offices in compliance with the Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), developed security management mechanisms, and provided advice and support through extensive engagement with security actors and stakeholders.



As a new standard of emergency response, supply officers were also deployed to major emergencies along with the dispatch of core relief items to ensure the necessary expertise for proper delivery of goods at the receiving end.

The restructured SMS played a central role in UNHCR's emergency response in 2011, dispatching 53 airlifts with a total of 2,994 metric tons of relief items, such as blankets, buckets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, sleeping mats, plastic sheeting and family tents. Equipment necessary for the delivery of protection and assistance was also dispatched, including trucks to bolster local distribution fleets, light and armoured vehicles to enable staff to reach people of concern, and communications equipment.

Seventeen airlifts to Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia were carried out simultaneously over two months in 2011 in response to the displacement of Somalis in the Horn of Africa. In addition, UNHCR organized its first airlift in more than five years to Mogadishu, providing critical goods for displaced people. In another major emergency, UNHCR dispatched 13 flights with core relief items and tents in response to the deteriorating food security situation and forced displacement in South Sudan. This airlift, which continued into 2012, comprised a total of 60 flights carrying 10,000 tents and 290 metric tons of core relief items.

In March 2011, UNHCR worked with IOM on the humanitarian evacuation of third-country nationals who had fled the conflict in Libya into Tunisia and Egypt, creating a potential humanitarian crisis on those borders. The two organizations formed a Humanitarian Evacuation Cell which organized 404 flights in one month, of which 38 per cent (151 flights) were contracted by UNHCR. These 151 UNHCR flights carried more than 29,500 passengers. As the humanitarian situation at the borders came under control, UNHCR phased out its participation in the evacuation, with IOM taking over fully at the beginning of April 2011.

## PARTNERSHIPS

UNHCR CONTINUES TO REINFORCE and expand its standby agreements with its 18 key partners. Two annual standby partner consultations, held in Jordan and Geneva in 2011, followed by bilateral meetings, aimed at developing more strategic access to, and utilization of, partners' operational support capacities. These include offices and accommodation, site planning, camp coordination, telecommunications, water, sanitation and public health. UNHCR welcomed the support of the standby "White Helmets" of Argentina who deployed technical experts to Tunisia. This positive experience led to the signing of a standby agreement with the group in October 2011. Partnership with ICOM Inc., a leading Japanese manufacturer of telecommunications equipment, was maintained and provided in-kind technical support to field operations. Collaboration with the International Humanitarian Partnership was also strengthened.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

AS PART OF ITS STRATEGY TO BUILD a response capacity with diverse staff profiles, UNHCR expanded its emergency training beyond the Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM) to include specialized training for technical experts and senior management.

During 2011, UNHCR organized three WEMs, training 118 participants, who then formed the Emergency Response Team (ERT) roster and were among the first of the 617 staff to be deployed to emergencies. The majority of the WEM participants were UNHCR staff, but also included standby partners, UN Agencies and donor representatives. To improve and update the long-standing WEM curriculum and in view of the high number of ERT deployments to Dollo Ado, Ethiopia, UNHCR assessed the impact of the training on employee performance in this location. While some specific areas of the WEM required adjustment, the assessment found that it was effective in preparing deployees for emergency missions. The findings will be incorporated into the design of future WEMs.

Recognizing the need for senior-level leadership in large-scale emergency operations, UNHCR established the Senior Corporate Emergency Roster in 2011. This roster is composed of 23 senior staff members available for a two-month emergency deployment to provide leadership in emergency operations. Staff on the roster participated in a pilot training programme on senior emergency leadership in March 2011. Feedback from this first workshop and experiences gathered from those deployed fed into the development of a Senior Emergency Leadership Programme held in March 2012 to prepare the next group of senior staff for emergency deployment.

To ensure predictable capacity for UNHCR operations, a workshop on information management in emergencies was held in December 2011. It brought together specialists from UNHCR, standby partners and sister UN Agencies, building a technical roster of information management officers trained for emergency operations.

In addition, two regional Situational Emergency Training (SET) sessions were held in Nairobi (for South Sudan) and Almaty (for the Ferghana Valley), and an Emergency Response Team workshop was conducted in Pakistan in the context of the response to the floods in the country. The SETs are designed to bolster local emergency response capacity in crisis-prone areas. This enables operations to deal with smaller crises, while at the same time increasing the number and profile of staff available globally for emergency response.

The reform of supply management was critical to ensuring that assistance and equipment arrived when and where needed during emergencies. In the course of 2011, UNHCR's emergency stock capability was increased; it is now able to meet the needs of more than 500,000 beneficiaries worldwide, within 72 hours, by releasing stock from seven strategically located warehouses. SMS has improved the responsiveness, speed and efficiency of core relief item delivery in emergencies through a

“three-pronged” supply chain strategy. This consists of the dispatch of relief items by air within the first 72 hours; the simultaneous dispatch of supplies by road and sea; and direct dispatch from suppliers where needed.

#### FIELD SAFETY AND SECURITY

IN STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY capacity, the reorientation of UNHCR's approach to security is an important component in improving the organization's overall security posture. This is particularly critical in high-risk and emergency operations where all staff must be involved in ensuring security.

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In 2011, four UNHCR staff members lost their lives. A UNHCR driver was killed by a stray bullet during fighting in Malakal, Sudan, and three UNHCR guards died when the UNHCR office in Kandahar, Afghanistan, was attacked. These tragic events and other serious security challenges in a number of areas across the globe again demonstrated the need for continual adaptation and response to emerging security needs. UNHCR's *Security Management Plan of Action* continued to underpin efforts to reinforce security-related procedures and enhance security management structures within the organization.

The Field Safety Section (FSS) continued to provide direct assistance to managers of UNHCR's field operations through security-risk assessments, technical advice, training and inter-agency security management processes, as well as direct support and management in critical security incidents.

FSS and the Global Learning Centre (GLC) prepared staff by incorporating a security segment in the WEM as well as through the Security Management Learning Programme

(SMLP) which teaches staff to apply security-risk management tools and strategies. In 2011, FSS and the GLC also piloted an exercise focusing on security management within a specific operational context.

The challenging security situation in 2011 coincided with the introduction of significant changes within the UN Security Management System aimed at strengthening the ability of agencies on the ground to manage risk effectively. They include the introduction of the new Security Level System and changes in determining evacuation and relocation procedures through a Security Risk Assessment process.

On the ground, UNHCR FSAs interact continuously with the UN Department of Safety and Security and other stakeholders to ensure that security information is disseminated rapidly and effectively to all UNHCR staff.

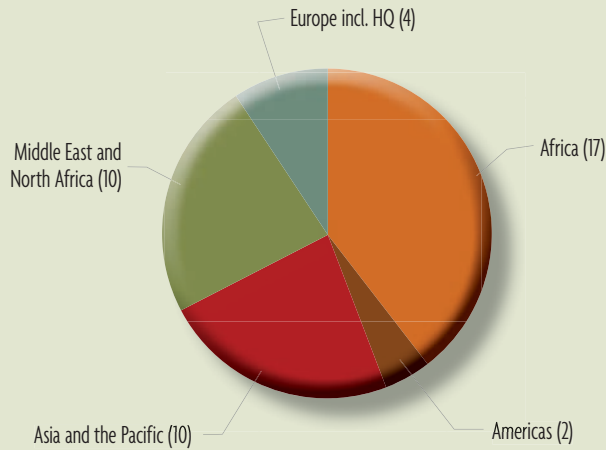
UNHCR continues to review its compliance with Minimum Operating Security Standards, in accordance with

its Global Strategic Priorities, with particular focus on field offices in high risk or deteriorating environments and new offices being established in order to ensure compliance within a six-month timeframe.

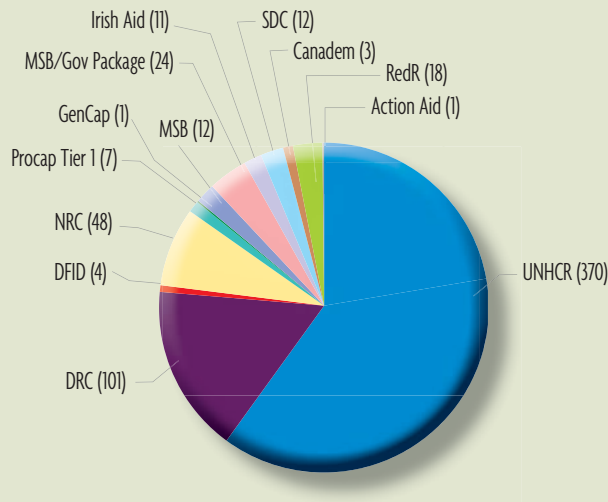
In 2011, UNHCR's *Manual on Security for Persons of Concern* was finalized, providing guidance and best practices for field staff and partners on how to respond to recurring security threats against persons of concern. Its roll-out will be accompanied by extensive training and capacity-building for UNHCR staff and partners in the Field.

UNHCR met the emergency-response challenges presented in 2011 by taking an organization-wide approach and strengthening all three components of DESS to provide operations with the tools they needed to respond to emerging crises. Work has already started on updating and modernizing policies and procedures, so that the organization can keep pace with rapidly evolving requirements in emergency response. ■

### 2011 Emergency deployment missions per region



### 2011 Emergency deployments by agency



### 2011 Emergency deployments by profile

