



Emergency res

IN 2008 UNHCR strengthened and consolidated its emergency preparedness and response capacities as well as its early warning mechanisms.

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (EPRS) continued the implementation of its Action Plan developed in 2005, particularly with regard to staffing surge capacity and the level of the Central Emergency Stockpile

(CES) of non-food items and operational support items in warehouses located in Dubai and Copenhagen. The Office was also able to provide advance resources to support field operations responding to emergencies.

CENTRAL EMERGENCY STOCKPILE

THE PROCUREMENT OF NON-FOOD items and the systematic replenishment of the CES proved an ongoing challenge



UNHCR / P. TAGGART / COP-2008

Vulnerable internally displaced persons are transferred from the Kibati site to the Mugunga site, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

shorter shelf-life and higher cost of tents, it was agreed that only enough of them to house 250,000 people would be kept in-stock.

For the Zimbabwe Contingency Plan, non-food items for 50,000 people were pre-positioned in Durban, South Africa. At the end of the year, preparations were underway to pre-position supplies in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen in order to cope with potential emergencies in eastern Africa.

**UNHCR AND NATURAL DISASTERS:
A SIGNIFICANT INVOLVEMENT
IN RELIEF EFFORTS**

UNHCR's involvement in providing relief to people displaced within their own country as a result of natural disasters has traditionally been determined on a case-by-case basis. When UNHCR has an established presence and operation in a country that has been struck by a natural disaster, the High Commissioner has offered support to the Government and local authorities in response to the human imperative and as a contribution to the broader international and UN relief efforts. UNHCR's presence in deep-field locations and its strategically located emergency stockpiles allow the organization to provide immediate humanitarian assistance.

UNHCR also participated in UN and Humanitarian Country Team contingency planning for natural disasters, and committed to working with systems for disaster management, particularly with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster leads in natural disasters.

Some notable examples of UNHCR's emergency interventions in the past include the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami,

the 2005 South-Asian earthquake, the 2006 floods in Somalia and the 2007 floods in Pakistan. In 2008 UNHCR provided emergency assistance in the floods in Yemen, the earthquake in China and cyclone-related flooding in Myanmar.

UNHCR provided a significant contribution to the inter-agency and international response in assisting those affected by cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. UNHCR - in only a few days - identified and deployed a nine-member Emergency Response Team (ERT) to support the UNHCR country representation in Yangon. Initial tasks of the ERT included critical needs assessments, managing non-food item (NFI) distributions, establishing an operational presence in the affected areas, and liaison and coordination with all actors and partners.

UNHCR dispatched over 90,000 plastic sheets, 3,000 plastic rolls, 120,000 blankets, 52,000 kitchen sets, 120,000 mosquito nets, and 100,000 jerry cans to Myanmar. During the initial phase of the relief operation, UNHCR assumed leadership of the emergency shelter and NFI cluster, later handing over to the IFRC. In Yangon and in the field, UNHCR contributed significantly to coordination of the protection cluster.

**EMERGENCY DEPLOYMENTS AND
RELATED TRAINING**

With the establishment of three Emergency Response Team (ERT) rosters, UNHCR brought its standby capacity of deployable staff up to 300, of whom 190 were UNHCR employees. These teams can be called upon in the case of an "exceptional state of mobilization for a large-scale emergency" and are ready for deployment within 72 hours.

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during 2008. EPRS was, however, able to meet all the urgent demands arising from emergency situations and the CES had the capacity to provide emergency shelter and domestic items for up to 500,000 beneficiaries. Due to the high number of emergencies and the time necessary to replenish stocks - an average of three months - in the warehouses, some items were not at the agreed level at all times. Given the

● UNHCR's response to the humanitarian crisis in Georgia

The conflict in Georgia caused large population movements. People fled in all directions to find shelter with relatives or settled spontaneously in schools, kindergartens and hospitals.

The main challenge for UNHCR was to identify those people most in need of assistance. UNHCR's emergency team members and local staff - who were heavily affected by the conflict themselves - worked around the clock. The rapid developments in the conflict presented a major challenge and its complexity required the emergency team to work simultaneously on different fronts.

Western Georgia was not accessible by land. UNHCR, therefore, organized an airlift to bring in much-needed relief items, established warehouses and set up a distribution system over an

extended area. This was only possible because of the close collaboration of local aid organizations and the authorities.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) were dispersed in hundreds of villages throughout the country. Large groups continued to relocate spontaneously, moving from one host family to another. As host families became overwhelmed, people began moving into shelters and then from shelter to shelter looking for family members.

On 23 August, a voluntary return movement towards the so-called buffer zone north of Gori started. However, this return ended quickly when returnees encountered

villagers leaving the buffer zone because of security threats. This sudden influx into Gori from both directions required UNHCR to establish—in less than 48 hours—a tented camp in Gori with water, electricity, sanitation, distribution of food and non-food items and a field kitchen.

Meanwhile, other displaced persons needed to move because schools, used as shelters, were vacated in order to start the academic year. The evicted families also went to the Gori camp which was already at full capacity.

UNHCR provided relief items, coordinated food distribution with WFP, supported voluntary return and

planned for winterization and rehabilitation of shelters. The Office focused its activities on the physical well-being of IDPs, in particular the protection of vulnerable individuals, visiting remote areas to evaluate the situation and conducting interviews to identify traumatized people and those in need of protection interventions.

The emergency response in Georgia was UNHCR's largest humanitarian operation in Europe since the war in the former Yugoslavia. The speed with which the crisis unfolded and the complexity of the operation, tested the capacity and efficiency of the Office's emergency preparedness system. □



EPRS organised four Workshops on Emergency Management for new roster staff in Germany, Norway and Sweden. Participants came from UNHCR, standby partners and supporting organizations. EPRS also took part in the IASC Emergency Training on Leadership Programme organized by UNHCR.

In 2007, EPRS centralized its standby arrangements for staff deployments to ensure better coordination and harmonization. This capacity was

review response mechanisms at all levels. As part of its effort to obtain and share information on potential crisis situations, EPRS commissioned situation reports on potential emergency hotspots, as well as more detailed regional reports that were made available on UNHCR's intranet. The third edition of the UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies was also translated into French.

Crisis scanning (Action Alerts) was discontinued in June 2008 and its evaluation was transferred to the IASC

UNHCR'S PRESENCE IN DEEP-FIELD LOCATIONS AND ITS STRATEGICALLY LOCATED EMERGENCY STOCKPILES ALLOW THE ORGANIZATION TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

further enhanced by new partnership agreements in 2008 with the Government of France, the Icelandic Crises Response Unit and two NGOs, CANADEM and GOAL. To facilitate deployments, EPRS produced an information guide on the various partnership agreements for field offices, as well as ERT and other staff deployed to emergencies.

With the support of the relevant technical units at Headquarters, EPRS provided guidance and support to field operations on UN Volunteers (UNV) deployments. A total of 1,064 UNVs were deployed to 75 UNHCR country operations in 2008, a 12 per cent increase over 2007.

Protection-related functions (including community services and durable solutions) accounted for 53 per cent of the deployments.

The UNV database was improved and provided statistics on deployments and budgetary information. UNHCR consulted regularly with UNV Headquarters on deployments to the Field.

EARLY WARNING

EPRS ASSISTED REGIONAL BUREAUX and field offices in developing their capacity for situational preparedness, including the contingency planning process. It conducted exercises with the bureaux to simulate emergencies and

Sub-Working Group on Contingency Planning and Preparedness. The information will be used in the further development of the Hews Web mechanism, a web-based early warning and monitoring system. Working with OCHA, WFP, UNICEF and WHO, and with the support of the European Commission, EPRS strongly advocated for and assisted in the design of Hews Web (Phase II).

UNHCR ECENTRE

THROUGH ITS REGIONAL CENTRE for Emergency Training in International Humanitarian Response (eCentre) in Japan, UNHCR increased emergency response capacity in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2008, the eCentre trained 272 staff from NGOs, governments, UNHCR and other UN agencies. It also provided expertise for training sessions organized by UNHCR, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Japanese Red Cross Society and RedR Australia.

The Centre helped raise UNHCR's profile and open dialogue with important regional partners. In 2008 this resulted in activities with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Myanmar. These activities have improved UNHCR's relationships with several governments and will hopefully lead to more engagement with partners on issues that have a direct impact on people of concern. ■

Emergency deployments

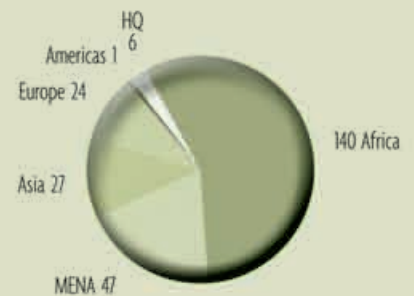
In 2008 UNHCR managed and deployed a total of 245 staff to 41 countries affected by emergencies, namely Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq,

Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Yemen.

More than 60 per cent of deployed staff came from standby partners.

2008 Emergency staff deployments Total 245

by region



by area of expertise

Protection officers	65
Supply / Logistics	34
Technical (water, shelter, education, health, mine clearance)	32
Cluster lead	22
Community service, gender and education	20
Senior emergency team leaders	17
Field, protection and camp management	16
Administration, finance and human resources	14
External relations and public information	10
Programme officers	10
Others (IT, early warning, research, safety, etc)	5

by organization

