

## UNHCR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN 2009 AND 2010

1. This paper provides an update on UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response activities for 2009 and 2010 and presents the Office's revised direction and strategic framework concerning emergency management.

2. In July 2009, the decision was taken to establish the new Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS), which was tasked with enhancing UNHCR's emergency capacity through, *inter alia*, reinforcing and integrating supply chain management and logistics, and ensuring the timely and reliable provision of shelter and relief items to field operations with the necessary staff security coverage. The new structure aims to maximize the synergies between its three components, namely emergency preparedness and response, supply, and staff and beneficiary security, in order to strengthen the support provided to Field operations. During 2009 and into 2010, UNHCR has thus continued to enhance its emergency preparedness capacity, building on progress achieved in the core areas outlined below.

### A. Review of UNHCR's Emergency Management Capacity

3. The year 2009 was pivotal for UNHCR in achieving progress towards the Office's Global Strategic Priority of enhancing emergency preparedness and response. UNHCR undertook organizational restructuring, and engaged in critical self-reflection and policy analysis concerning its emergency management system and procedures, in order to ensure its readiness and ability to respond to emergencies within 72 hours, delivering protection and assistance for up to 500,000 persons of concern. In addition, the Organization's Global Stock Management is being improved to respond to the requirements of non-emergency operations in a speedy and efficient manner.

4. Prevailing over the many challenges of today's complex operational environment and ensuring the effective delivery of its protection mandate and designated responsibilities has obliged UNHCR to adjust its strategic approach to emergency preparedness and response management. To that end, DESS initiated a review of the Office's emergency preparedness and response mechanism and global capacity in October 2009, which resulted in a new plan of action that will serve as a framework for attaining the Global Strategic Priority.

5. The review highlighted the need to strengthen the protection role in contingency planning, preparedness and response so that a rights-based approach, community participation and comprehensive assessment methodologies are in place from the outset.

6. A further priority emerging from the review was the importance of strengthening the linkages and ensuring synergies within the new Division but also with the Regional Bureaux and other entities at Headquarters, in order to effectively support operations in the Field. The Regional Bureaux remain responsible for guiding and supporting operations and for initiating Headquarters support, including requests for assistance from the various support Divisions. Whereas DESS, and in particular the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (EPRS), oversees and is accountable for maintaining high standards in technical guidance and advice, and is responsible for providing support to the Field through the Bureaux or at the country level, if requested.

7. The review underlined that strengthening the research, analysis and policy support function of the Division is central to reinforcing its ability to evaluate and learn from emergency operations in order to further improve the development of emergency management policies and operational strategies. For EPRS, a key aspect will be to catalogue experiences, draw lessons and derive best practices to provide improved analysis and guidance in collaboration with others including the Division of Programme Support and Management, the Division of International Protection, and the Policy Development and Evaluation Service.

8. The review reiterated that the Office must ensure the development and deployment of adequate staffing profiles with the appropriate skills, level of seniority and experience to effectively deliver on UNHCR's mandate in emergencies, requiring technical, coordination and leadership capacity. Another area the review identified was the need for UNHCR to further strengthen and develop strategic partnerships, including with local and regional partners, in order to operate and respond effectively to the protection and assistance needs in complex environments.

#### B. Emergency Standby Capacities and Deployments

9. Together with its standby partners, the Office has reviewed and will reinforce existing agreements in terms of recruitment, deployment, and the use of technical expertise and operational assets. DESS, in collaboration with other Divisions, is reviewing all technical agreements to help the Office develop the required technical expertise, particularly in the areas of emergency shelter, site planning, camp coordination, water, sanitation and health. With these revised and additional agreements, UNHCR and its partners will be better placed to respond to humanitarian emergencies. Meanwhile, and despite progress, further effort is required to secure more French, Spanish and Arabic speaking staff on the standby rosters.

10. Furthermore, the need to fully consider and better utilize the operational presence and capacities of local partners is imperative, as they are often in a position to ensure the delivery of protection and assistance in challenging environments. To that end, the Office will support efforts in revitalizing the approach towards enhancing partnerships with local organizations.

11. In 2010, UNHCR will continue a three-tiered approach to ensure emergency staffing requirements, which includes: the permanent emergency preparedness and response capacity at Headquarters; the Emergency Response Team (ERT) roster; and the external standby capacity, mostly from NGO partners. This combination provides UNHCR with the ability to mobilize up to 300 trained professionals for emergency deployments within 72 hours.

12. During 2009, some 237 emergency staff members were deployed to 37 countries, the majority to operations on the African continent (45 per cent). In terms of profiles, protection staff remains the most frequently required, followed by technical staff (e.g. registration and profiling, shelter and site planning, water and sanitation, health, and supply and logistics), and increasingly, senior colleagues capable of leading the clusters under UNHCR's responsibility.

13. The Office must also address the need for more experienced senior staff on the roster. In response to this need, the first Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM) designed specifically for senior staff, will take place in Sweden in March 2010. This initiative will complement the efforts of the Division of Human Resources Management and will be assessed to ensure its further development.

### C. Emergency Management Training and Capacity Building

14. Taking into account the above, UNHCR's Global Learning Centre, in support of EPRS, is working to build internal and external institutional capacities in emergency preparedness and response. All trainings include updated materials and information on effective practices and lessons learned during deployments. The three principal workshops include:

(a) *The Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM)* that prepares members of UNHCR's ERT roster for deployment to emergency operations. In 2009, UNHCR also held its first regional WEM for Latin America in Ecuador, complementing the global roster.

(b) *The Situational Emergency Training (SET)* is offered to mid-level managers and support staff. The Global Learning Centre and EPRS delivered one Situation Emergency Training in 2009 to staff in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

(c) *The Emergency Team Leadership Programme (ETLP)* is organized twice a year by UNHCR on behalf of the IASC, involving a wide range of agencies and organizations.

15. DESS also continues to provide administrative oversight and support to the *eCentre* in Tokyo, which was established in 2000 with the collaboration of the Government of Japan. The aim of the *eCentre* is to improve emergency response capability in the Asia-Pacific region through targeted training and other forms of capacity-building. In 2009, the *eCentre* organized training events throughout the region, covering emergency response topics such as emergency management, contingency planning and coordination, humanitarian negotiation, dealing with natural disasters, security risk management and safety in the field.

### D. Emergency Relief Items

16. The rapid provision of humanitarian relief and life-saving assistance is often the most critical factor when responding to a sudden and/or large-scale emergency, and is a vital component of UNHCR's emergency management policy and response strategy. The Supply Management Service (SMS) within DESS has therefore established a Global Stock Management system that consolidates and streamlines the management and maintenance of regional stockpiles and the Central Emergency Stockpile (CES). The aim is to bring improved efficiency, cost-savings and strengthened delivery to operations in an integrated manner.

#### E. Emergency Financial Procedures: Access to the Operational Reserve for Emergencies

17. Large-scale and fast evolving emergencies require a dedicated financial mobilization capacity to ensure that emergency teams can be sent out within 72 hours and an initial provision of emergency relief items and operations support equipment can be deployed without delay. UNHCR's "Revised Framework for Resource Allocation and Management" allows for the provision of up to US\$ 10 million - from the Operational Reserve - for the initial response. Allowing rapid access to the Operational Reserve, the Revised Framework for Resource Allocation significantly facilitates the mobilization, deployment and response in emergencies.

#### F. Emergency Preparedness and Contingency Planning

18. Excellence in emergency preparedness remains essential to UNHCR's emergency management policy and DESS has placed additional emphasis on supporting the Field and the Regional Bureaux in contingency planning and situational analysis. In line with the review, EPRS works with the Supply Management Service and the Field Safety Section (FSS), ensuring synergies in this key area. Meanwhile, UNHCR's Action Alert system has been replaced by an inter-agency effort<sup>1</sup> called the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS II). UNHCR also provided an important contribution to the new Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Contingency Planning Guidelines launched in 2009. In addition to these efforts, UNHCR has also worked to further improve collaborative links with the early warning mechanisms within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the European Union; and the Office regularly invites ECOWAS and other strategic partners to the WEMs.

19. Finally, "rethinking the operational model" requires a number of important changes to the current UNHCR emergency response architecture and approach. Delivering quality protection and assistance requires flexibility and the ability to rapidly adjust to fast-evolving situations and the operational challenges encountered in complex environments; and as such protection strategies will be strengthened within the emergency preparedness and response mechanism. The new Division will strive towards "excellence" in emergency operational support to the Field, ensuring the continuous development and delivery of the highest standards in order to enable UNHCR to deliver on its mandated responsibilities.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS II), hosted by the IASC, involves the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNHCR, the World Food Programme, and the World Health Organization.