

Emergency Preparedness and Response in 2023

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Executive Summary

In 2023, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, responded to multiple crises globally, aiding millions affected by earthquakes in Türkiye, Türkiye, and Afghanistan, a new conflict in Sudan and flare-ups of old conflicts in Karabakh and Somalia, a protracted but deteriorating crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), increasing mixed movements of refugees and migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean, and floods in Libya and the Horn of Africa.

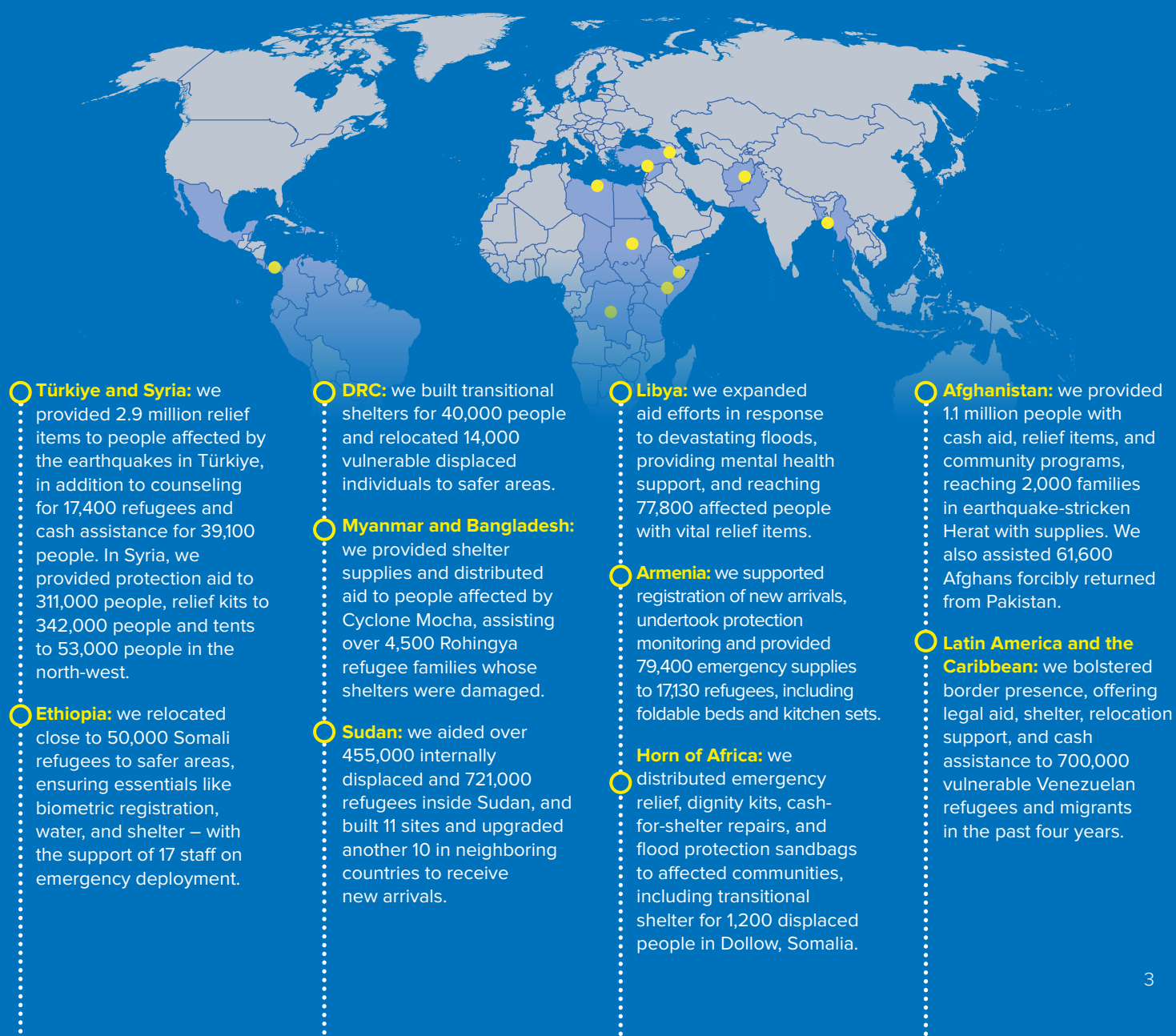
UNHCR issued 43 emergency declarations in 29 countries – the highest number in decades – and deployed 339 emergency staff. Despite raising over \$5 billion, including \$4.6 billion for emergencies and protracted crises, a \$400 million shortfall by year-end hindered aid delivery to the record 114 million forcibly displaced people worldwide.

To stay ready to respond, UNHCR strengthened proactive emergency preparedness, conducting risk assessments,

monitoring global developments, and planning for 28 countries at high risk of emergency. We doubled emergency training events, trained 393 emergency experts, and centrally procured \$302 million worth of goods and services, enabling swift shipping of emergency supplies to serve up to 16.7 million people.

Thanks to the generous support from public and private donors in 2023, UNHCR could timely provide life-saving assistance and protection services to those most affected by crises. The map below shows some of the countries and regions where your support helped us make an impact in 10 new and deteriorating emergencies.

Thanks to all our partners and donors, our emergency preparedness and response remained fast and effective throughout 2023. Your support continues to reach the people who needed it most, at the time they needed it most, wherever crises hit.



Foreword



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Over the past year, we have borne witness to a staggering increase in emergencies, with new crises unfolding and unresolved ones deteriorating, pushing the boundaries of our capacity to respond. Whether sparked by conflict, human rights violations, natural disasters or extreme weather events, these emergencies have resulted in a surge of displacement, leaving countless individuals and families in desperate need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

The scale of human suffering is unmeasurable and a stark reminder of the imperative for collective action and solidarity.

In the face of such adversity, UNHCR's commitment to serving those forced to flee remains unwavering, fueled by the solidarity, generosity and cooperation of supporters, donors, and partners like you.

Your contributions and engagement have made a tangible impact on the ground, providing a lifeline for those in desperate circumstances. Your support has enabled us to reach further, respond faster, and make a difference in the lives of the displaced – a difference between life and death, between hope and despair.

However, the demands on our organization have grown exponentially, and regrettably, the needs are outpacing our resources. This reality underscores the critical importance of your continued support and the urgency of mobilizing resources to address current and emerging crises.

As we embark on a new year, the challenges are immense as the potential for new humanitarian emergencies looms large. But hope and global commitment to share responsibility for refugees persist – and the Global Refugee Forum 2023, which concluded in December, proved a global moment of unity to work towards real solutions for people forced to flee.

Together, we can continue to save lives and make a lasting impact on the most vulnerable, inspired by the resilience and strength of the individuals and communities we serve.

Thank you for standing with us, for your compassion, and for being a beacon of hope in the lives of those who need it most.

With gratitude,



Dominique Hyde

Director, Division of External Relations
UNHCR

Introduction

“Figures do not tell real stories. But there is one figure — 114 million — which is important to begin our reflection: 114 million represents the number of refugees and displaced people whom persecution, human rights violations, violence, armed conflict, serious public disorder have forced from their homes: 114 million shattered dreams, disrupted lives, interrupted hopes. It is a figure that reflects a crisis — in fact many crises — of humanity. However, it also represents the generosity and hospitality of the people who open their hearts and homes to those fleeing.”

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, at the [Global Refugee Forum 2023](#)

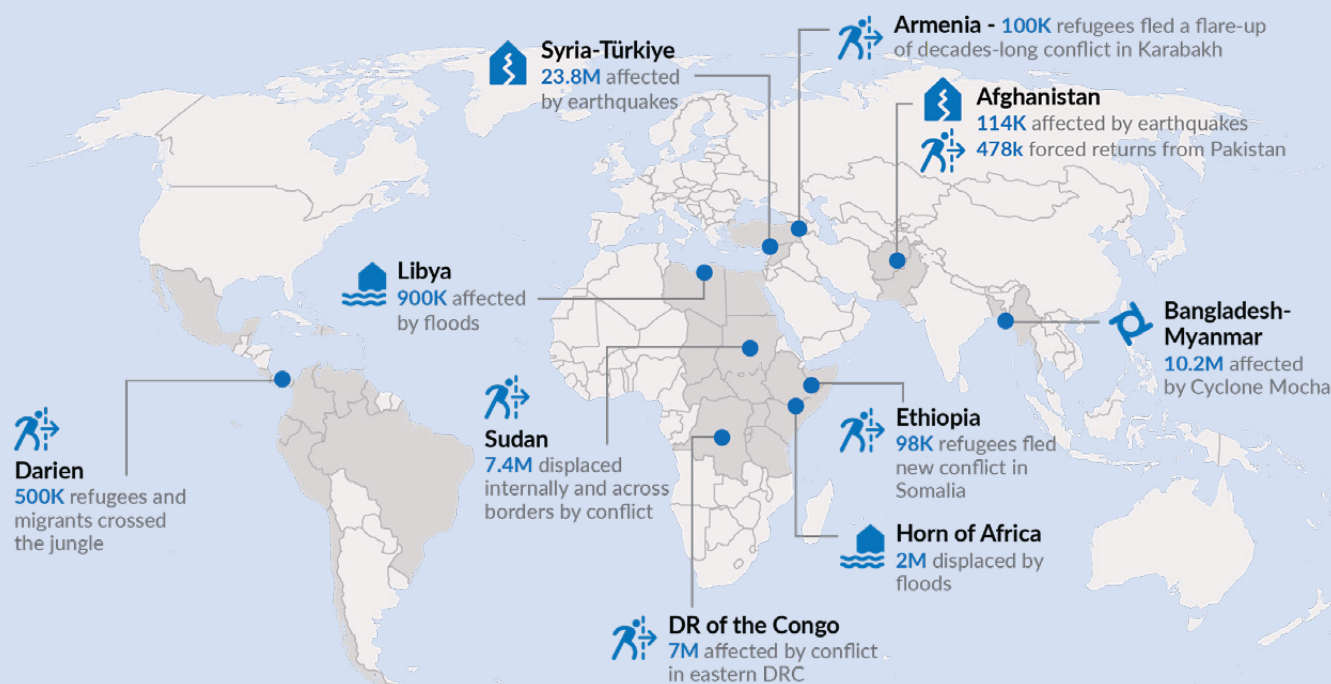
In 2023, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, responded to new humanitarian emergencies that displaced millions worldwide, whilst continuing to stay and deliver in ever-deepening crises that began in recent years as well as more protracted displacement situations.

From rushing aid to people affected by the earthquakes in Syria, Türkiye and Afghanistan to providing protection and support to people displaced by the conflict in Sudan and renewed hostilities in Karabakh and Somalia, as well as a deteriorating crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and increasing mixed movements of refugees and migrants in Latin America and the

Caribbean, to delivering life-saving assistance to communities devastated by the Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar and Bangladesh, and the floods in Libya and the Horn of Africa – UNHCR leveraged its strong field presence to respond swiftly to save lives and meet people’s most basic needs.

To help operations prepare for and respond to a crisis, in 2023 we issued 43 new emergency declarations¹ in 29 different countries – the highest number in decades – and deployed 339 staff to help scale up emergency responses globally.

Major emergencies UNHCR responded to in 2023



¹ Emergency declarations are a time-limited internal mechanism used by UNHCR to enhance preparedness and scale up support, based on analysis of the scale of the emergency and capacity on the ground. UNHCR can declare one of three emergency levels: Level 1 to support proactive preparedness and an initial response at the country level; Level 2 to activate stepped-up regional support; and Level 3 to trigger a whole-of-UNHCR response. If our existing operations have immediate capacity to respond, UNHCR may not declare an emergency but still launch or scale up our response, further enabled by timely support from donors. This was the case in 2023 for the floods in Libya and in the Horn of Africa and the new refugee influx in Armenia. Additionally, when a declaration expires, it does not mean that we consider an emergency to be over, as dire humanitarian needs can persist for months, years or longer.

In parallel, we continued to work with partners to protect and seek long-lasting solutions for millions of displaced people who have endured years of hardships due to protracted crises in Ukraine, Yemen and the Sahel, among others.

Overall, in 2023 donors – governments, inter-governmental organizations, foundations and private donors – contributed over \$5 billion to support UNHCR's work, including \$4.6 billion to respond to breaking and deteriorating emergencies, as well as as protracted crises.

While the number of forcibly displaced people reached a record high of 114 million in 2023, UNHCR closed the year with a gap of \$400 million – “[a shortfall we have not experienced in years](#),” according to UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi.

With the upward trajectory of 2023 emergencies poised to persist in 2024 and [the number of forcibly displaced people expected to rise to 130 million](#) by the end of the year (as indicated in the UNHCR Global Appeal 2024), the need for solidarity and support for people forced to flee has never been as important as it is today.

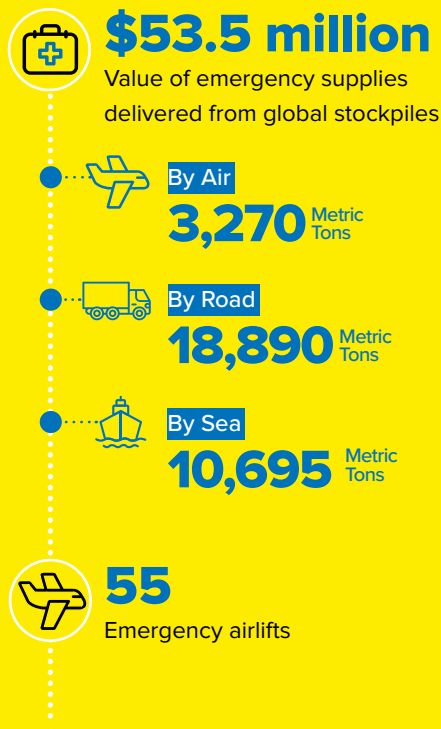
KEY FIGURES

Total number of forcibly displaced
114 million*

Increase of forcibly displaced in 2023 compared to end-2022
5.6 million

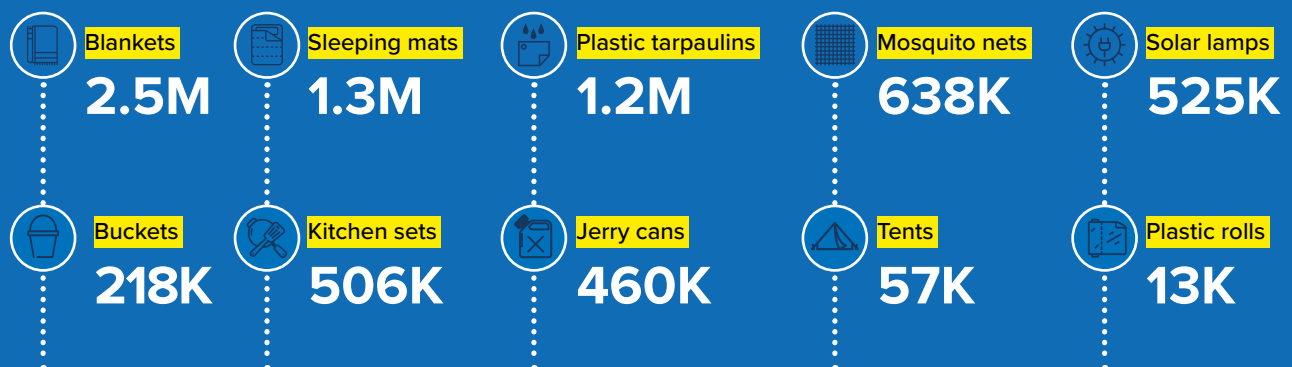
(both estimated as of 30 September 2023)

**Sources: UNHCR [nowcasting of refugees and asylum-seekers](#), operational data on internal displacement and the number of Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate at end-September.*



7.4M CORE RELIEF ITEMS SUPPLIED IN 2023

(PROCUREMENT & GLOBAL STOCKPILES)



Up to **16.7M** people served

Emergency preparedness: the foundation of our response

Throughout 2023, **proactive emergency preparedness has been as critical as ever**. To ensure we stayed ready to respond, UNHCR continued to make thorough **risk assessments**, monitor global developments, including political unrest, conflicts, and climate-related threats, and actively formulate preparedness and contingency plans for **countries at high risk of emergency** – which included 28 countries as of the end of 2023.

To ensure we always have the right skills on hand, we strengthened capacity development and organized **11 emergency training events** to maintain our Emergency Response Team roster of experts, as well as other senior and regional rosters. We doubled the number of annual Workshops on Emergency Management and trained **393 UNHCR and partner staff to be deployed to emergencies at any given moment**, including specialists in protection and shelter, site management and health, data, logistics, and more.

To ensure we remained ready to ship support by land, air, or sea within 72 hours to people affected by emergencies in 2023, we also maintained **global stockpiles of emergency supplies** in seven strategic hubs around the world – Accra, Amman, Copenhagen, Douala, Dubai, Nairobi, and Panama City. Emergency supplies included tents, blankets, water containers, kitchen sets and mattresses, among others. The **cumulative value of our centrally procured goods and services in 2023 amounted to \$302 million**, and we dispatched \$53.5 million worth of core relief items from our global stockpiles, while many more people have been assisted through regional and local stockpiles of supplies. Overall, we dispatched over 7.4 million relief items to new emergencies and ongoing operations around the world, serving up to 16.7 million people.

To ensure timely information on life-saving services, especially vital in emergencies, UNHCR set up a multi-channel feedback and response system based on consultations with displaced people in 70% of the countries where we operate.

Q&A: Yukiko Iriyama, Chief of Emergency Preparedness, UNHCR

Yukiko Iriyama works in the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply, as the Chief of Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnerships Section. She has been working with UNHCR for more than 20 years all over the world, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, Myanmar and currently, at our headquarters in Geneva.



© UNHCR/Vincent Treméau

How does UNHCR prepare and respond to emergencies around the world?

UNHCR's Division of Emergency, Security and Supply – which I am part of – works to ensure a safe and rapid response to emergencies, wherever they happen in the world. The Division is responsible for ensuring solid emergency preparedness, timely supply of core relief items such as blankets and tents, effective management of emergency deployments, and the safety of our staff especially in remote and high-risk areas.

UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response system was initially established by Sadako Ogata, the 8th UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in the early 1990s. Since then, it has grown into a robust mechanism incorporating the knowledge and experience UNHCR has developed since being founded over 70 years ago. The better prepared we are, the sooner we can respond.

What are some of UNHCR's concrete emergency preparedness and response mechanisms?

One mechanism is the Emergency Response Team – a roster of staff ready to mobilize to the field within 72 hours. For instance, to respond to the Sudan emergency, we have deployed experts in specific areas like child protection, shelter, and gender. At any moment, 100 to 150 staff are on this roster, each of whom are thoroughly trained via our Workshop on Emergency Management to effectively respond to emergencies. This workshop brings together around 40 participants per session, via online courses as well as 7 days of intensive in-person training, where participants face simulations, such as conducting rapid needs assessments of refugees and developing a response plan. These workshops have typically been held three times a year – but in 2023, we doubled the number to six to address the increasing number of emergencies and growing needs for emergency deployments.

I truly believe that one of UNHCR's strengths is our dedicated staff who are ready and willing to serve in very difficult field locations. You could say it's in our DNA. Our constant presence in the field - often in remote and challenging places - enables us to build trusted partnerships with local communities, which also contributes to a better analysis of the situation.

You have worked in several emergencies before moving to your current global role. Is there a memory from your experiences in the field that stays with you?

Before my current role, I served in Myanmar as UNHCR's Deputy Representative. At that time, armed conflict intensified following the military takeover in 2021 and as UNHCR we needed to explore ways to provide assistance to people in need where humanitarian access was very limited. I was so impressed by the solidarity, resilience, and generosity that the people of Myanmar demonstrated in extremely difficult circumstances – they lost almost everything, yet they were trying to share whatever they had with others.

I recall meeting Aye, 22, who lived in Kayah State, then at the epicentre of the armed conflict. She was forced to flee while pregnant – and just one day after giving birth, mortar shells landed in the town where she had sought safety. She fled again with her 1-day-old baby in her arms and told us: “I thought we were going to die while fleeing as mortar shells were landing all over the town. I was so scared.” In the chaos, Aye became separated from her husband. She fled with her sister and her

sister's husband to Shan State – a journey which took them eight hours. “I was in severe pain after the operation. But I was more worried about my baby. I thought that she could die at any moment.” When Aye and her family finally reached safety, they received blankets and other relief items from UNHCR and were able to rent a house.

Like in Myanmar, many displaced people are living in neglected emergencies rarely covered in the press, suffering in dire conditions and in need of urgent assistance. Regardless of the media spotlight, “stay and deliver” is UNHCR's commitment to people forced to flee their homes. For us, it is vital to be on the ground—our constant presence in the field enables us to identify urgent needs, provide timely assistance, and build networks with local communities.

Working in emergencies can feel grim at times. What gives you hope?

Through my work with UNHCR, I have been encouraged by the resilience and strength that displaced people like Aye demonstrate, even in extremely challenging circumstances. I always feel that our contribution falls short compared to the overwhelming humanitarian needs. Yet, there are also moments when I know that our activities have helped restore hope – and this is a huge motivation for me. I am also heartened by the generous support received from public and private donors at times of crisis – including in many emergencies happening out of the spotlight – which in 2023 allowed us to deliver life-saving assistance to millions of people in need, wherever they were.



© UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

UNHCR's response to major emergencies in 2023

Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria



High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, along with a UNHCR colleague, views the destruction in Jableh city, Latakia Governorate, Syria, following the devastating earthquakes that struck south-eastern Türkiye and northern Syria on 6 February 2023. © UNHCR/Emad Kabbas

Overview

On 6 February, two powerful earthquakes of 7.7 and 7.5 magnitude struck Kahramanmaraş province in south-east Türkiye. The earthquakes hit early in the morning while most people were in their beds sleeping, leaving many trapped as buildings collapsed. Heroic search and rescue efforts were launched immediately, but the devastation has been vast.

The earthquakes – which struck in the peak of winter – impacted **15 million people over the 11 hardest-hit provinces in Türkiye**, which hosts the largest refugee population in the world. More than **1.7 million refugees**, mostly Syrians, reside in the affected provinces. **In Syria, an estimated 8.8 million people were affected** by the earthquakes, including in north-west Syria where over 4.1 million people were already dependent on aid, compounding the devastation of 12 years of crisis. Over 57,000 people lost their lives across both countries, and tens of thousands were injured. Immediate shelter assistance, winter items, and basic supplies were urgently needed, as well as protection services to support the most vulnerable people.

Response

From day one, [UNHCR supported earthquake response efforts](#) by quickly mobilising life-saving assistance and protection services. In Türkiye, 2.9 million **core relief items** were delivered to support national and local authorities to respond to the needs of affected people, including for equipping temporary accommodation centres. Nearly 17,400 refugees were assessed by UNHCR and received **comprehensive counselling**, while an additional 3,000 people received **legal counselling** through legal clinics in five provinces in the south-east region. Furthermore, 39,100 people received UNHCR's Specific Needs Fund **cash assistance**.

In the whole of Syria, UNHCR reached over 311,000 people with **protection interventions** and assisted more than 342,000 people with 68,547 **core relief item kits**, as well as 53,000 people with **tents** in north-west Syria. The UNHCR-led Protection Cluster provided **psychosocial support** and **psychological first aid** to more than 117,000 individuals, and **awareness sessions** for some 107,000 people in north-west Syria.

UNHCR Help websites on [Türkiye](#) and [Syria](#) were the most visited Help sites in 2023 and allowed nearly 2 million people to access timely information about relief services in the aftermath of the earthquakes.

Coordination

Humanitarian actors in Syria leveraged the existing coordination structures, under which UNHCR leads the Protection, Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Clusters in north-west Syria, and the Protection and Community Services and Shelter/NFI sectors in the rest of the country. In Türkiye, the emergency response was led by the Government of Türkiye and supported by the UN inter-sector coordination mechanism operating out of Gaziantep from March to August. Under this mechanism and in coordination with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNHCR leads the Protection

Sector, co-leads the Cash-Based Intervention Technical Working Group, and contributes to other sectors, including the cross-cutting Accountability to Affected Populations coordination.

Funding

UNHCR issued a [Syria and Türkiye Earthquake Emergency Supplementary Appeal](#) in February 2023, in line with the inter-agency [Flash Appeals for Türkiye](#) and [Syria](#). By December 2023, thanks to the generous and timely support from donors, UNHCR's response was [94% funded](#), with \$205 million received against the financial requirements of \$218.6 million. Further support for people affected by the earthquake in 2024 will be mainstreamed into UNHCR's regular programmes in Türkiye and Syria, under the UNHCR's total requirements for the [Syria Situation](#).

“We came here, and thankfully they gave us a place to stay, clothes, food, and a place to sleep.”

[Ahmet Erkan](#), his wife and three children managed to escape their apartment block in Hatay, in southern Türkiye, moments before it collapsed in the early hours of 6 February. But his brother and his 11-year-old nephew were not so fortunate. A month later, Ahmet and his family were staying in one of the temporary accommodation centres originally built to host Syrian refugees but now being used to shelter both Turkish and Syrian earthquake survivors. UNHCR supported the government's earthquake response with emergency supplies of tents, mattresses, blankets and heaters.



A UNHCR staff member talks to Ahmet's mother, daughter and wife at the temporary accommodation centre where they are staying in Hatay. © UNHCR/Emrah Gürel

Refugee influx from Somalia to Ethiopia



Refugees - mostly women and children - arrive in Ethiopia in early 2023, fleeing recent clashes in Somalia. © UNHCR/Reath Riek

Overview

In February 2023, fighting from a political dispute in Laascaanood, Somalia, forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee within Somalia. Close to **100,000 refugees** crossed the border into the Doolo zone in the Somali region of Ethiopia. Most were women, children – many of them unaccompanied – or older people, arriving with nothing to an extremely remote and drought-affected area. It takes UNHCR staff two days of travel by car to reach Doolo – an area where the drought caused many Ethiopians to lose their livestock and livelihoods and contributed to disease outbreaks. With the arrival of Somali refugees, the need for humanitarian assistance in the area significantly increased.

Response

Since the onset of the emergency, UNHCR deployed 17 emergency staff and [rushed to provide life-saving assistance](#) together with partners in support of the Ethiopian government. **Medicine, water and other basic items** were delivered to local clinics around the area to ensure they could assist host communities and refugees alike. Despite scarce local resources, host communities across the area opened their doors to around 80% of the entire displaced population. Close to **50,000 Somali refugees were relocated** by the Ethiopian government and UNHCR with the support of partners to a new site in Mirqaan, where services including water distribution, emergency shelter

and sanitation are being provided. UNHCR also supported the Ethiopian government's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) to conduct individual biometric registration for better delivery of basic services.

Coordination

The response to this new emergency in Ethiopia was coordinated by UNHCR with UN partners, NGOs, and local actors, supporting the Government of Ethiopia to meet its international obligations to protect refugees. This is in line with the Refugee Coordination Model and the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees to include refugees in national services. A coordination platform was set up in Jijiga to help with the response, co-chaired by the RRS and UNHCR and including sector working groups on protection, child protection and gender-based violence.

Funding

UNHCR [appealed for \\$41.7 million](#) to cover UNHCR's response to the unexpected arrival of Somali refugees in Ethiopia in 2023, and coordinated an [inter-agency refugee response appeal](#). Both the UNHCR and the inter-agency appeals remained severely underfunded, hindering the response to the critical needs of Somali refugees in Ethiopia.

Conflict in the eastern DR Congo



Deaf and mute, Machozi Kanake, 64 years old and mother of 6 children has found refuge in this site of Rusayo, DR Congo where she hopes to live far from the shooting and bombing. © UNHCR/Blaise Sanyila

Overview

In 2023, violent clashes between non-state groups and government forces drove hundreds thousands to flee their homes in [eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) (DRC), adding to the suffering of millions of vulnerable people subjected to the violence of militia groups active in the area.

The situation [further deteriorated since October](#), and ongoing fighting between the Congolese army and non-state armed groups in the eastern DRC continues to displace populations in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, where over **7 million people are affected** by the conflict and 5.8 million were forced to flee. [Displaced people](#) spoke to UNHCR's protection monitors of making harrowing choices, including men risking death to feed starving children and women risking rape to collect firewood.

Faced with dire circumstances, displaced families, who would prefer to remain close to their extended family networks and livelihoods, continued to be forced to cross international borders. From January to August 2023, approximately **45,000 new refugees from the DRC** arrived in neighbouring countries including Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda. In these countries, shelter and protection needs for the new arrivals remained acute as of year-end.

With **at least 6 million internally displaced people**, and **more than 1 million Congolese refugees** who sought refuge in other countries in Africa, the DRC remains the largest internal displacement crisis in Africa and one of the world's most complex and long-standing humanitarian emergencies.

Response

To respond to the growing emergency in the DRC, UNHCR scaled up its shelter, site management and protection response, and increased preparedness, protection, and operational capacities to respond to the needs of new arrivals in neighbouring countries like Rwanda. Tackling urgent needs stemming from overcrowding and inadequate shelter in spontaneous internal displacement sites, as well as limited access to food and clean water, UNHCR and partners relocated more than 14,000 vulnerable, displaced people to Buchagara displacement site, 5 kilometres from Goma, North Kivu's provincial capital. Here they received **emergency shelter** and kits containing **blankets and jerrycans** for water. In North Kivu, UNHCR built **transitional shelters** to accommodate over 40,000 people since the start of the year, in sites around Goma.

Coordination

In the DRC, in line with the internal displacement cluster system coordination arrangements, UNHCR leads and coordinates the provision of services for the Protection, Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Clusters, in collaboration with UN agencies, international and local NGOs, and government partners.

Funding

The DRC remained one of the most underfunded humanitarian situations globally as of December 2023. UNHCR asked for \$298.9 million to respond to the needs of displaced people in the DRC and Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries in 2023 but [only received 41%](#) as of December 2023.

Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar and Bangladesh



Ma Phyu Ma, a 37-year-old internally displaced Rohingya woman, stands amidst debris left behind by Cyclone Mocha in her village in Myanmar. © UNHCR/Reuben Lim Wende

Overview

On 14 May, Cyclone Mocha made landfall near Sittwe, in Myanmar's Rakhine State, with heavy rains and strong winds that had a [devastating impact on homes and infrastructure](#). In **Myanmar**, an estimated **7.9 million people** were impacted, with 3.4 million considered to be the most vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance. In **Bangladesh**, some **2.3 million people** were residing in areas affected by the cyclone, including some **930,000 Rohingya refugees** in Cox's Bazar. While the worst of the cyclone spared the refugee camps, widespread damage was reported to over 4,600 shelters, over 200 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities and various infrastructure such as registration sites in UNHCR-managed camps. The most pressing needs for all affected communities included shelter, food, water, sanitation, basic items, and healthcare.

Response

In Myanmar, UNHCR transported **emergency shelter supplies** from Yangon to Rakhine State to support families in need and disseminated messaging around provision of aid through the UNHCR-led Protection Cluster. UNHCR also circulated safety messages about landmine risks, which posed serious hazards in areas where flooding and landslides can dislodge and carry devices to locations previously deemed safe.

In Bangladesh, UNHCR and partners prioritized support to over 4,500 households whose shelters were severely damaged, as well as labour support for extremely vulnerable households. **Protection services** such as gender-based violence prevention and response, child protection, psychological first aid, legal services, and awareness sessions continued to be provided to communities despite disruptions to some community-based centres, and damaged water and sanitation facilities were repaired across all camps.

Coordination

In Myanmar, UNHCR is part of the UN Humanitarian Country Team and leads the Protection and Shelter/Non-Food Items and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Clusters. In Bangladesh, UNHCR co-leads the Inter-Sector Coordination Group, which supported the government-led response, working closely with displaced and host communities, as well as community leaders and volunteers.

Funding

Inter-agency Flash Appeals were issued for both [Myanmar](#) and [Bangladesh](#) on 23 May, building on the existing Humanitarian Response Plan for Myanmar and the Joint Response Plan for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, which have been severely underfunded for both countries. UNHCR called for some \$34 million to urgently respond to the Cyclone Mocha emergency.

Conflict in Sudan



UNHCR staff hands over core relief items, including blankets, mats and a bucket, to Achan, a mother-of-six who fled conflict in Sudan and returned to her home country, at her shelter near the UNHCR transit centre in Renk, South Sudan © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

Overview

Fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, ongoing since 15 April 2023, **forced nearly 7.2 million people from their homes** by the end of the year, exacerbating an already grave humanitarian crisis. Mid-December clashes in Wad Madani, capital of Sudan's Al Jazirah State, caused the swift displacement of 300,000 people in this area previously considered safe. [More than 12,190 casualties were reported](#) since the eruption of the conflict.

By the end of December, the situation inside Sudan remained dire, with half of Sudan's population – 24 million people – in need of humanitarian assistance and on the brink of famine. Health services continued to be severely affected, with up to 80% of conflict-affected hospitals no longer operational and 60% of the population unable to access healthcare. Between May and October, nearly 1,900 people – most of them children – died in refugee camps in White Nile State due to a combination of measles and high malnutrition. Other infectious diseases such as dengue, malaria and cholera killed hundreds.

Continued atrocities such as sexual violence, torture, arbitrary killings, and ethnic targeting in Darfur reignited fears of a return to past horrors, prompting additional displacements to Chad and South Sudan since October.

By the end of the year, [nearly 1.4 million people fled to neighboring countries](#), predominantly women and children, bringing the number of forcibly displaced people across the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan

and Sudan to over 17.4 million. Many had faced displacement even before the onset of the current conflict.

Response

Across Sudan, UNHCR and partners assisted [over 455,000 internally displaced people](#) and aided 721,000 refugees – including 195,000 who were forced to flee from Khartoum due to the conflict – by providing critical **protection services, cash assistance, core relief items and emergency shelter**.

In neighboring countries, UNHCR supported new arrivals with basic care in transit facilities near borders and established 11 additional sites as well as upgraded another 10 across the region to accommodate the refugee influx from Sudan. We also launched the Help [Sudan](#) website to offer updated information about relief services, including 19 hotlines and family tracing support. However, severe underfunding resulted in poor-quality services in refugee camps, failing to meet essential humanitarian standards, leaving over 376,000 individuals stranded near border areas by December.

Coordination

In Sudan, UNHCR supports the UN response to the needs of internally displaced people in line with the [2023 Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan](#), leading three clusters: Camp Coordination and Camp Management, Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items, and Protection. The Sudan Commission for

Refugees and UNHCR co-lead the multi-sectoral response to nearly 1 million refugees and asylum seekers.

In the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan, UNHCR and host governments co-lead the response to refugees and returnees affected by the Sudan's conflict through the [2023 Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan](#), with the participation of 64 organizations.

Funding

The [2023 Supplementary Appeal for the Sudan emergency](#), which outlines UNHCR's needs within the Humanitarian Response Plan for Sudan and Regional Refugee Response Plan for neighbouring countries, was [funded only at 36%](#) by December 2023, with \$186.9 million received against the financial requirements of \$506.5 million.

“ I'm very grateful to the humanitarian workers who brought us here. Before that, we had no shelter, no mats to sleep on, and no toilets. Now, they've given me a house, mats, blankets, and mosquito nets, and I'm quite comfortable. ”

[Zeinab](#), 22, fled El Geneina, capital of Sudan's West Darfur State, with her two children after gunmen shot and killed her husband and burned down their house. By the time they arrived in Adré, on Chad's border, they had not eaten for several days. Local people gave them food but conditions in Adré were dire and overcrowded and after a few weeks Zeinab and her children were moved to Farchana camp, one of several pre-existing refugee camps where new arrivals have been relocated to relieve pressure on the border.



Zeinab prepares coffee in front of her new shelter in Farchana Refugee Camp in Chad's Ouaddai province. © UNHCR/Insa Wawa Diatta

Floods in Libya



UNHCR teams distribute hygiene kits, blankets, and other relief items to families displaced by the floods in Al Marj, eastern Libya. © UNHCR/Ziyad Alhamadi

Overview

On 10 September 2023, Storm Daniel made landfall in the eastern coast of Libya, causing intense winds, torrential rains and flash floods. The worst-affected city was Derna in the north-east, where the bursting of upstream dams led to mud slides which washed away entire neighbourhoods. At least 40,000 people were displaced by the floods – 30,000 in Derna alone – while close to **900,000 people in five provinces were directly affected** by the storm and flash floods in Libya and in need of aid. Damage to roads and telecommunications networks complicated rescue and relief efforts, while essential communal infrastructure like hospitals were left out of service or only partially functioning. The human toll was significant, with over 4,000 fatalities confirmed.

Prior to the floods, 300,000 people in Libya were assessed to require humanitarian assistance. Some 50,000 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR in Libya, including more than 1,000 who were living in flood affected areas in eastern Libya, on top of 46,000 internally displaced people hosted in eastern Libya.

Response

UNHCR quickly scaled up its capacity in eastern Libya to assist refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, and those newly displaced by the devastating storm. UNHCR and partners were on the ground to determine the main protection needs among people affected by the floods, including protection of separated and unaccompanied children, prevention and response to violence against women, information on replacement of housing, land and property and

essential documentation and addressing mental health and psychosocial needs. UNHCR also reached out to refugees and asylum-seekers in the affected areas with **counselling** over the phone and expanded its hotline to refer people to suitable support services.

UNHCR quickly distributed emergency relief items from local warehouses and [sent two airlifts](#) from UNHCR's warehouse in Dubai carrying 88 metric tons of humanitarian supplies. Since the start of the flood response, UNHCR worked with LibAid to reach more than 77,800 affected people (the majority in Derna) with core relief items like kitchen sets, tarpaulins and solar lamps, hygiene kits and medical supplies. UNHCR also provided working spaces and office supplies to health authorities in Derna, helping people affected by the storms receive mental health support. In the months following the disaster, UNHCR has continued to provide people affected by the storms in the eastern region with supplies such as mattresses, blankets, and school kits.

Coordination

In Libya, UNHCR worked closely with national and international partners to respond to the situation as part of a broader UN response. UNHCR leads the UN coordination for Shelter/Non-Food Items and a Cash and Markets Working Group and is co-lead for Protection.

Funding

UNHCR appealed for \$5.5 million to support its emergency response to the floods in Libya. The emergency appeal was fully funded, thanks to timely contributions from donors.

Refugee influx from Karabakh to Armenia



A UNHCR staff member comforts an older person who has arrived in the small border town of Goris in south-east Armenia. © UNHCR/Karen Minasyan

Overview

Following a flare-up of decades-long conflict in Karabakh in the last week of September, **over 100,000 people fled to Armenia** within a week – with an average of 15,000 arrivals per day.

While Armenian authorities reported that the flow into Armenia largely ceased after 30 September, immediate humanitarian needs remained dire: refugees arrived exhausted and distressed, having fled their home in haste and following the nine-month closure of the Lachin road. The lack of access to food, medicines, and other essential items during that time exacerbated their medical and psychological needs. Among them were many vulnerable individuals, including older people, women, pregnant women, people with disabilities and others with chronic health conditions. Some 30,000 were children.

Response

With 30 years' presence in Armenia, UNHCR and its partners deployed immediately to support the government-led response. [UNHCR teams](#) were on the ground at the border in Armenia from day one, via its field office in Goris, to observe refugee registration and provide technical expertise and equipment to the authorities, including laptops and tablets to help register and assess the needs of refugee families.

UNHCR also scaled up its presence at registration points to provide information and **counselling** to newly arrived refugees and identify people with specific needs for referral to appropriate services. It also mobilized a **protection monitoring team** to observe access to information and registration, as well as to identify the main protection concerns. Assessments revealed urgent needs among refugees, including for accommodation, winter clothing and footwear adequate for colder temperatures amid the harsh weather.

As of December, UNHCR carried out protection monitoring for over 7,300 refugees (more than 1,600 households) in Yerevan and ten provinces, identifying and referring the most vulnerable to specialized services. By December, over 3,000 refugees received information and assistance through UNHCR's hotline.

Directly and through its partners Mission Armenia and People in Need, UNHCR provided more than 79,400 **non-food items** to 17,130 refugees across the country, including bed linen, blankets, pillows, mattresses, folding beds, kitchen sets and hygiene kits.

Coordination

Under the leadership of the Government of Armenia, UNHCR is coordinating the inter-agency response of humanitarian organizations through the Refugee Coordination Model and with the support of the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office. The coordination structure set up for the Armenia emergency includes five sector working groups: Protection, Shelter/Non-Food Items, Health, Food and Nutrition, as well as Resilience to strengthen the resilience capacity of refugees and host communities. In addition to leading the Protection and Shelter/Non-Food Items sectors, UNHCR co-leads cross-sector working groups on Cash Assistance (with UNICEF) and Information Management.

Funding

UNHCR, with the support of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Armenia, led the development of the [Armenia Emergency Refugee Response Plan](#), with the participation of 60 partners, including UN agencies, NGOs, community-based and refugee-led organizations. The plan sought \$97 million to target 101,000 refugees and 95,000 people part of the host community from October 2023 to March 2024. Within this, UNHCR appealed for \$14.6 million to respond to urgent needs.

Earthquakes in Afghanistan and forced returns from Pakistan



UNHCR teams survey the aftermath of the earthquake in Seya Aab village, Zindajan District, western Herat Province, Afghanistan. © UNHCR/Tony Aseh

Overview

Afghanistan has now suffered over 40 years of conflict, natural disasters, chronic poverty, and food insecurity. More than two thirds of the population needed humanitarian aid by the end of the year – over **3.2 million people are internally displaced**, and more than **500,000 are Afghan refugee returnees**.

In early October, two powerful earthquakes struck Herat Province, killing more than 1,400 people, destroying 10,000 homes and placing **114,000 people in need** of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Also in October, the Government of Pakistan announced that it would deport all undocumented people residing inside the country by 1 November. Although registered refugees were officially exempted from this plan, UNHCR and other UN agencies received reports that they faced pressure from law enforcement authorities to leave Pakistan. More than **478,800 Afghans returned to Afghanistan** between mid-September and the end of December. Among them, over 29,000 people were deported by Pakistani authorities.

Response

In 2023, UNHCR supported over 1.1 million people across Afghanistan, through cash assistance, core relief items and **community-based programs**, including an estimated 600,000 people in areas where formerly displaced people and refugees have returned.

As part of its **emergency response to the tragic earthquakes**, UNHCR distributed **core relief items** to over 2,000 families from 77 villages in Herat. These included some 5,100 blankets, 3,600 family tents, 3,500 plastic tarpaulins, 3,600 metallic buckets, 1,900 gas cookers, 3,600 jerrycans, 3,500 solar lamps, 1,800 kitchen sets, 1,300 traditional heaters as well as 9,900 pieces of laundry soap and 3,600 sanitary materials. Furthermore, over 8,700 people were reached via awareness raising on the available assistance and services and 330 people received **psychosocial support**.

To support Afghans being forcefully returned from Pakistan, UNHCR deployed **teams to the border with Pakistan** to interview returnees, assess their needs and provide **cash assistance**. Since 15 September 2023, some 61,600 individuals returning from Pakistan were provided with cash assistance by the end of December, including some 41,700 refugees holding Proof of Registration cards. In Pakistan, UNHCR continued to engage with authorities to advocate against the eviction and arrest of both documented and undocumented Afghans and provided timely information on available support through the Help [Pakistan](#) website.

Coordination

In Afghanistan, as part of the inter-agency response to the earthquake, UNHCR is working with UN sister agencies, under the leadership of OCHA. In line with its prioritisation of localisation, in Herat UNHCR is working with eight local organizations to

implement the earthquake emergency response. In response to Pakistan's decision to enact an "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan", UNHCR is working with IOM to collate data on the arrest, detention, and deportation of documented and undocumented Afghan nationals as well as on the outflows of Afghan nationals at the Torkham and Chaman border crossing point, to better understand the protection environment and movements of Afghan nationals returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan.

Funding

In 2023, UNHCR appealed for \$230.3 million to support people forced to flee in Afghanistan and an additional [\\$14.4 million](#) to respond to the devastating earthquakes. As of December 2023, UNHCR's requirements for Afghanistan were [74% funded](#).

“With this new tent, it will be better. We'll have more space and be more comfortable.”

[Humaira](#), 32, had returned to her home with her newborn after giving birth only hours earlier when a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck Afghanistan's western Herat Province, partially destroying the roof and walls of her house in Rubat Perzada village in Injil District. In the weeks afterwards, she and her family were forced to sleep outdoors under a flimsy plastic sheet and some blankets. Now, they are among more than 300 households receiving emergency tents, blankets, solar lamps, plastic tarpaulin sheets and gas cylinders for cooking.



Mother of eight Humaira receives a tent and other relief items during a distribution in her village in Injil District supported by UNHCR and its partner ARAA (Ansari Rehabilitation for Afghanistan). © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

Floods in the Horn of Africa



Ongoing rains cause damage to refugee shelters and latrines in Dadaab camp, Kenya, forcing families to relocate to higher ground. © UNHCR/Mohamed Aden Maalim

Overview

The ongoing impacts of the climate crisis in the Horn of Africa continue to severely affect millions of refugees, internally displaced people and their host communities. Barely months after the longest and most severe drought on record – the effects of which are still being felt – [heavy rains and severe floods hit the Horn of Africa](#) throughout November, causing displacement and widespread destruction across a region already hard hit by conflict. More than **5.2 million people were affected, with nearly 2 million displaced** across the [broader Eastern Africa region](#). Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya were the most impacted countries.

More than [1.1 million displacements](#) were recorded in Somalia in November alone. Homes were extensively damaged or destroyed and, in some locations, people took shelter under trees on higher ground. There were also tragic reports of drownings. By the end of the year, priority needs were food, emergency shelter, kitchen sets, blankets, clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

In Ethiopia's Somali Region, authorities estimated that over half a million people had been affected by flash floods. Around 240,000 people, including those seeking safety from ongoing conflict in Somalia, were displaced. Across five settlements, 213,000 refugees also suffered the effects of the flooding. By the end of the year, clean and safe drinking water remained scarce, with people facing challenges to access health services. Nearly 1,000 families lost their shelters. Despite such hardships, many refugees made generous contributions to support members of the host communities who were also impacted by the heavy rains.

Some 25,000 people in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camps were also affected by the floods, with many seeking refuge in schools within the camps as well as in nearby communities. Some refugees also opened their homes to host the newly displaced, leading to overcrowding in many households. Flooded roads

hindered the movement of people, making it particularly difficult for vulnerable people to access services, including for pregnant women to reach hospitals. In Kakuma camp, 100 families were forced to move to safer areas due to massive soil erosion from the rains.

Response

UNHCR and partners immediately began distributing **emergency relief items** to the newly displaced, as well as **dignity kits** to affected women and girls. Families also received **cash assistance** to buy local building materials to repair or reinforce shelters and meet other urgent needs. Sandbags were also distributed to help people protect themselves from flood waters. In Somalia, UNHCR, through its partner, supported nearly 1,200 people with **transitional shelters** in Dollow, distributed core relief item kits to meet the basic needs of 600 internally displaced people in Kismayo, and prepositioned 2,000 plastic sheets and 2,000 mosquito nets for coordinated response with other agencies in Baidoa.

Coordination

UNHCR remains fully committed to closely coordinate its drought and flood response for refugees and internally displaced people with authorities and partner agencies, aligned to Humanitarian Response Plans in Ethiopia and Somalia, and the Kenya Flash Appeal, and within the Refugee Coordination Model and Cluster Approach.

Funding

UNHCR's operations in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia – the three countries in the Horn of Africa most affected by the devastating floods – were all heavily underfunded as of December 2023, hampering the humanitarian response. The direst situation was in Somalia, where UNHCR's funding requirements were only [29% funded](#), followed by Ethiopia, which is [36% funded](#), and Kenya, [45% funded](#).

Darien and Venezuela situation



Refugees and migrants speak to UNHCR staff as they cross the Panama-Costa Rica border in search of safety. © UNHCR/Melissa Piniel

Overview

A humanitarian emergency continued to unfold in the Americas in 2023, with the Darien region of Panama being at the epicentre of a large and complex movement of people across the continent. As of December 2023, the number of **refugees and migrants crossing the Darien jungle reached an unprecedented 500,000** – more than double last year. People crossing the Darien and other borders irregularly continued to be exposed to grave dangers, such as natural hazards, sexual and gender-based violence, robbery, human trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping.

In the first nine months of 2023, more than 60% of those who moved towards Central and North America, crossing Panama's Darien Jungle, were from Venezuela. As of December, there were over **7.7 million Venezuelans outside their country**. More than 6.5 million reside in Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite ongoing support in the past years, 4 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the region still have [pressing humanitarian, protection and integration needs](#), according to the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V)'s [Regional Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis 2023](#). The assessment also revealed that one in three Venezuelans in the region do not have a regular status or the necessary documentation to access decent jobs, health-care services, housing, or education. Across the region, integration, protection and food security were identified as top priority needs.

Response

UNHCR further stepped up its presence in border areas across the region to support **reception facilities** for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, while ensuring access to territories and upholding non-refoulement and refugee laws and practices. UNHCR also provides **legal aid and counselling** on access to asylum and other forms of legal stay and supports internal relocation for family reunification and job opportunities. In 2023, UNHCR continued to work in close partnership with governments across the region to strengthen registration and national asylum systems and provides

technical and material support on regularization schemes for Venezuelans in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Peru. We reached over 2 million people in 2023 through our [TikTok](#) and [Facebook](#) pages called “Confía en el Tucán” (Trust the Toucan) to combat misinformation about the Darien jungle crossing.

UNHCR continued to support **temporary collective shelters** through building works and the development of shelter management capacities. UNHCR also continued to provide unconditional **cash transfers** to help Venezuelan refugees and migrants temporarily meet their immediate needs such as rent, food and utilities, as well as stimulate the local economy. Since 2019 until October 2023, UNHCR delivered cash assistance to [over 700,000 Venezuelans](#) across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Coordination

UNHCR co-leads with IOM the regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), coordinating with 228 organizations who are implementing the 2023-2024 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan across 17 countries. Both agencies also provide technical support to the regional intergovernmental coordination forum, the Quito Process, an initiative including several Latin American countries that seeks to harmonize domestic policies and responses to displacement in receiving countries.

Funding

The 2023-2024 [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan](#) coordinated by UNHCR and IOM, asked for \$1.72 billion to support the ongoing needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. One year after the launch of this biannual response plan, just 20% of the required funds were received, severely limiting assistance. UNHCR's specific appeal for the Venezuela Situation in 2023 was only [37% funded](#). The revised plan for 2024 appeals for at least \$1.59 billion to support access to asylum procedures, migratory regularization activities and socio-economic integration for 3 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela and their host communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Donor acknowledgment

UNHCR extends its thanks to our public and private donors who donated to specific emergencies and provided flexible funding for emergencies in 2023. Your support has been invaluable to help and protect millions of people forced to flee by new and deteriorating crises.

Donors that contributed \$500,000 or above to specific new and deteriorating emergencies and general emergency preparedness and response in 2023

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Flexible funding: a lifeline in emergencies

Flexible funds help UNHCR to prepare for the unpredictable, to kick-start an emergency response, and to bolster forgotten or under-resourced crises. They also enable UNHCR to plan and manage resources efficiently and effectively, contributing to the collective success in every life that is saved and transformed. Without flexible funding, we would not be able to properly prepare for any new emergency that may arise, and the first phase of our emergency responses, which usually requires thousands of emergency supplies, essential shelter and protection assistance delivered to families in need, would have struggled to get off the ground. Flexible funding also remains vital as the emergency response develops, especially for crises that fall out of the spotlight and remain largely neglected, while people affected are suffering the most. Timely donating to specific emergency situations, and especially giving flexibly to general emergency preparedness and response, are a lifeline for people forced to flee. We could not do our job without such invaluable support, and we count on donors' continued solidarity for people affected by emergencies in 2024.





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