

STANDBY PARTNERSHIPS REPORT 2025



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
Sudan. UNHCR and partner Distribute Plastic Sheets in Tawila to Address Immediate Needs
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Foreword Ayaki Ito, Director, Division of Emergency, and Programme Support

When UNHCR first called for external surge personnel in 1991, few could have foreseen how significantly the resulting partnerships would shape the next 35 years of its emergency capacity. Today, with rapidly changing operational contexts and growing demands, the need exceeds what UNHCR can address alone, echoing that pivotal moment.

In 2025, an estimated 117.3 million people were forced to flee their homes. New or ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises drove displacement worldwide, pushing many into dangerous journeys and compelling others to return home under adverse conditions.

As needs grow, UNHCR continues to reaffirm the value and resilience that collaboration brings to even the most difficult of operational contexts. Standby Partnerships are pivotal to UNHCR's preparedness and response capacity, providing operations with critical resources and expertise through the deployment of experts and service packages.

Nearly half of all 2025 deployments supported emergency operations, including responses to crises in Afghanistan, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan, and Sudan. Standby Partners also provided strategic support in areas such as protection, energy, solutions, and mental health and psychosocial support, while experts at the Geneva Technical Hub delivered technical assistance to operations worldwide.

UNHCR's emergency response increasingly aims to support inclusive and sustainable approaches. Through an inclusion from the start approach, we work to empower local and national actors,



@UNHCR/ Alexandre St-Denis

strengthen existing systems, and promote effective, context-appropriate responses. Our role is to bring all actors together to meet the needs of refugees, internally displaced people, and host communities.

Standby Partnerships are essential to this effort. By providing surge capacity and specialized knowledge, our partners help ensure that people forced to flee receive the protection and assistance they need.

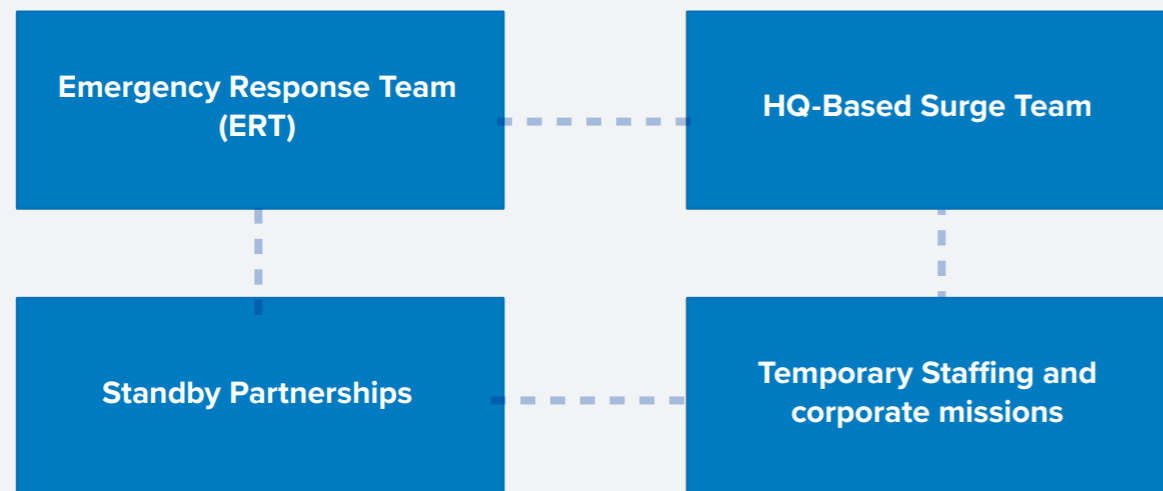
UNHCR's mandate positions it as an organization uniquely suited to addressing displacement challenges, ensuring that protection is the cornerstone of our work. As global humanitarian needs rise and funding constraints challenge response efforts worldwide, the collaboration and commitment of our Standby Partners remain vital to our mission.

Thank you to all our partners and their donors for your continued support.

Ayaki Ito
Director, Division of Emergency, and Programme Support

Emergency deployment mechanisms

4 deployment schemes used in emergencies



A two-pronged approach of an internal roster capacity and standby partnerships enables UNHCR to respond to diverse needs within multi-faceted operations. In 2025, UNHCR maintained an internal roster of 110 active members.

UNHCR facilitated a total of 198 deployments throughout 2025. Of these, 47 deployments were via internal surge mechanisms, and 151 deployments were through standby partners.

Members of UNHCR's internal roster are trained through the Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM), hosted by Germany or Norway. The continuous investment in a sustainable internal roster is an important part of UNHCR's emergency response.

UNHCR is grateful for the support provided by Technisches Hilfswerk (THW) to the 2025 WEM in Germany and the Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB) for their continuous support to UNHCR's emergency capacity.

Standby Partner deployments in 2025

Description

Our standby partners are organizations or entities that support UNHCR through the deployment of personnel or through the Standby Partnership mechanism to enhance UNHCR's response to humanitarian crises.

Overview

Standby partners provide emergency surge capacity including service packages such as base camps or internet connectivity. They also provide support to strategic areas with technical expertise. Of the 151 standby partner deployments in 2025,

- 37% addressed declared emergencies;
- 41% filled strategic gaps;
- 13% provided specialized technical expertise;
- 9% supported service packages.

These deployments supported operations in 38 countries, including UNHCR headquarter functions, with a total of 23,450 working days, the equivalent of 771 months of support.

Deployment trends

In 2025, 48% of deployments supported refugee responses, 34% IDP responses while the remaining 21% supported mixed or return situations.

The main deployment profiles for 2025:

- Protection (28%)
- Shelter/Site Planning (15%)
- Energy & Environment (15%)
- Information Management (8%)

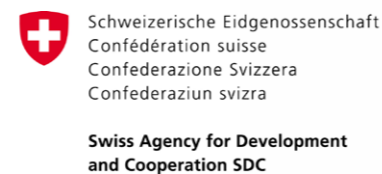
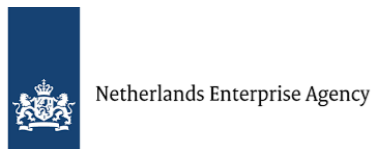
NORCAP, SDC, MCF, DRC, and CANADEM deployed the highest number of experts to UNHCR operations in 2025. Several partners increased deployments compared to the previous year, compared to the previous year: DRC and MCF both doubled their deployments between 2024 and 2025.

Partnership Updates

UNHCR maintains 21 emergency standby partnerships of which 15 were active in 2025. One new partnership was formalized with Australia's contractor Tetra Tech International Development implementing the second phase of Australia's humanitarian civilian deployment programme (Assists Phase II mechanism).

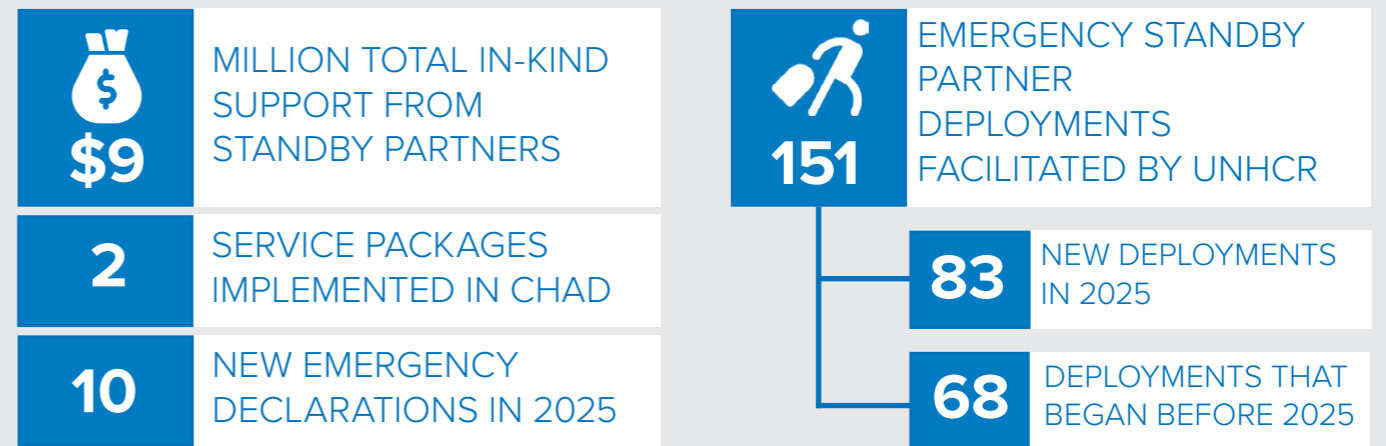
UNHCR is an active participant in the [Standby Partnership Network](#) and the [International Humanitarian Partnership \(IHP\)](#).

Thank you to our 2025 active Standby Partners



2025 in review

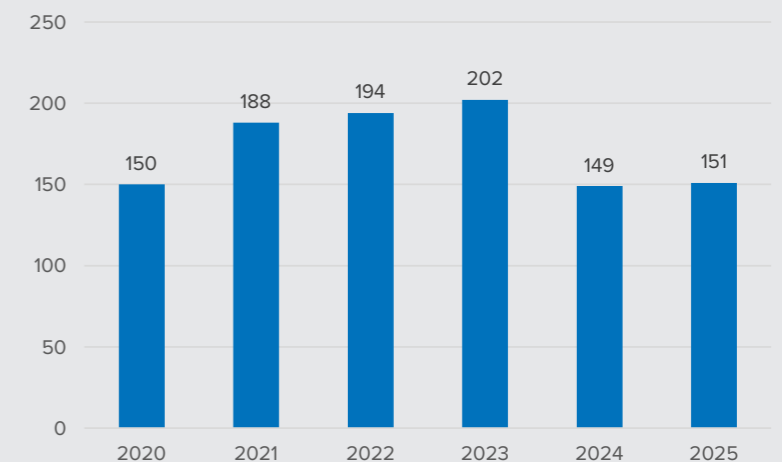
Overview



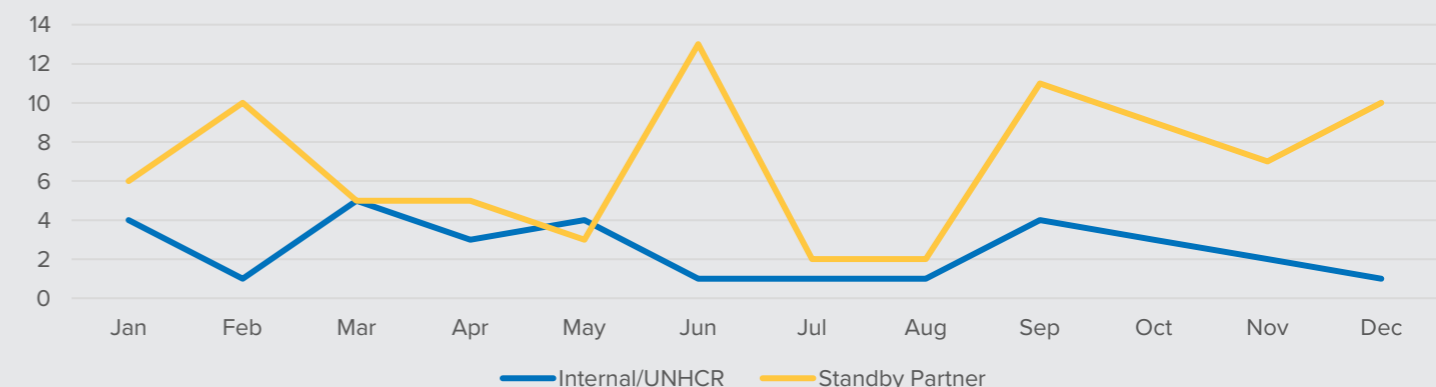
Emergency Declarations in 2025

- UNHCR responded to 25 emergencies in 17 countries including the IASC System-wide Scale up for Sudan.
- Of new declarations, 80% were related to emergencies in Africa and 20% in Asia and the Pacific.
- New Level 2 emergencies were issued linked to the escalating conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Sudan.

Trend of Standby Partner deployments

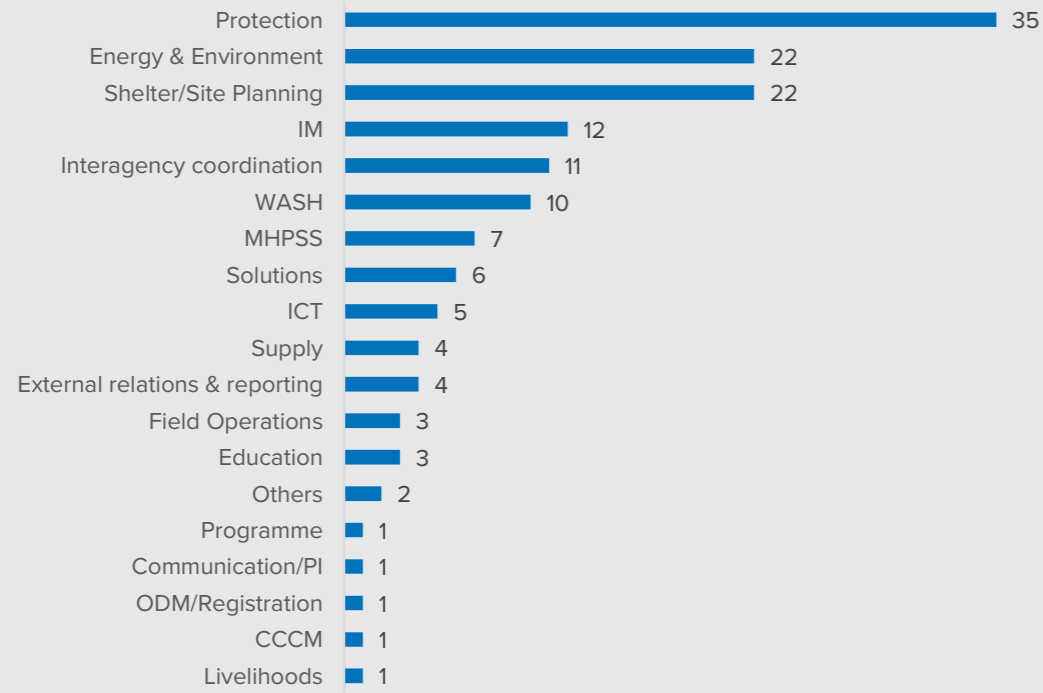


Monthly trends of new deployments in 2025

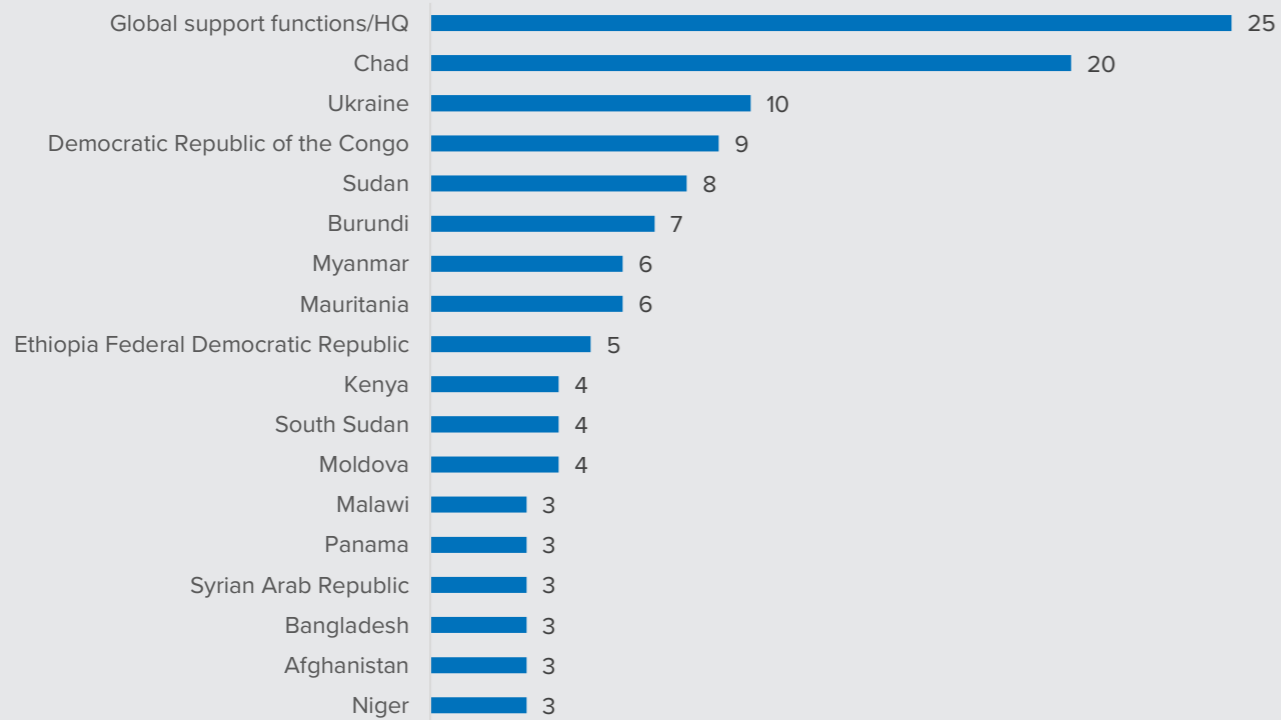


2025 Standby Partner deployments

Job Profiles



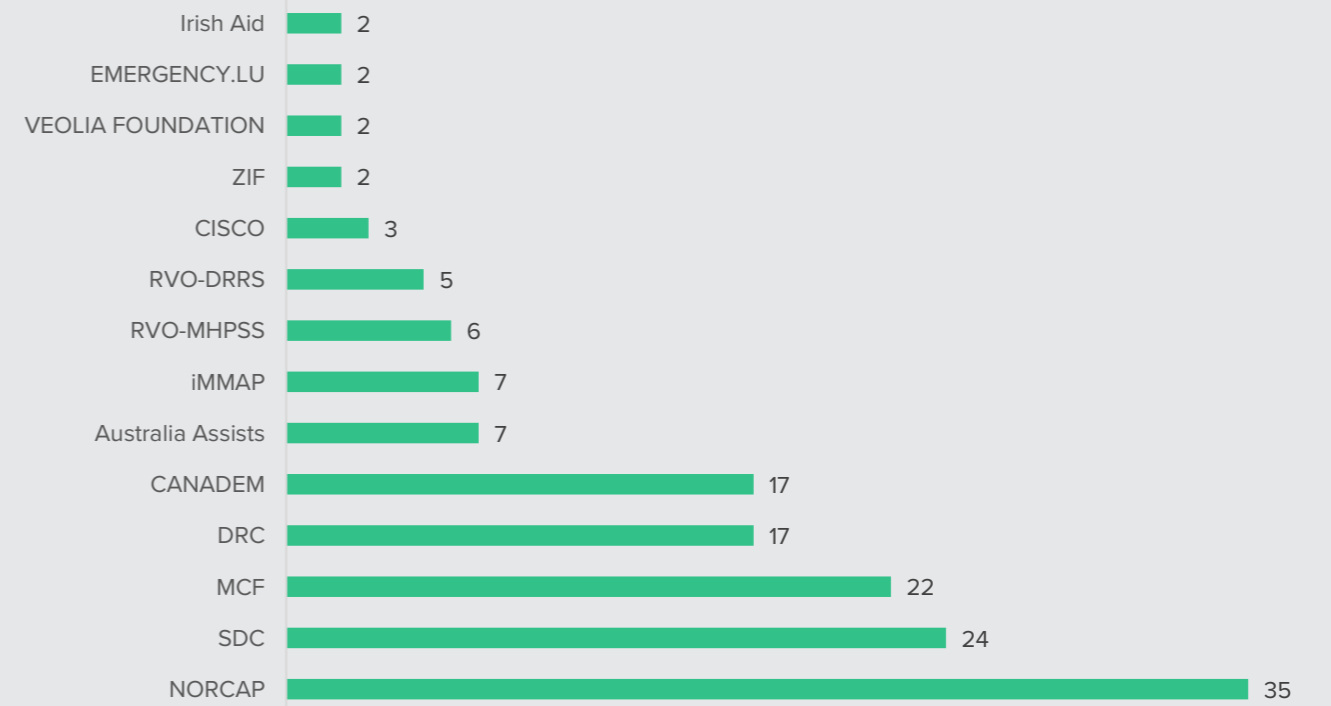
Country operations with the most deployments



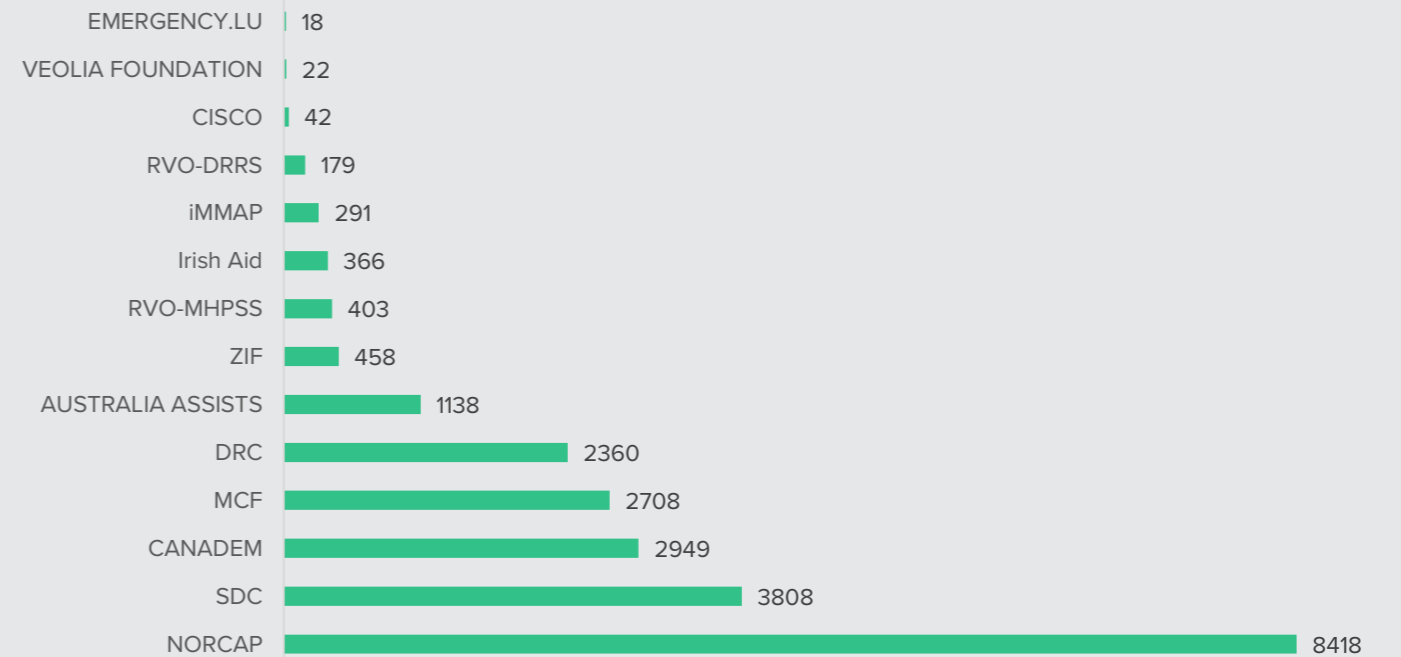
Percentage of met requests



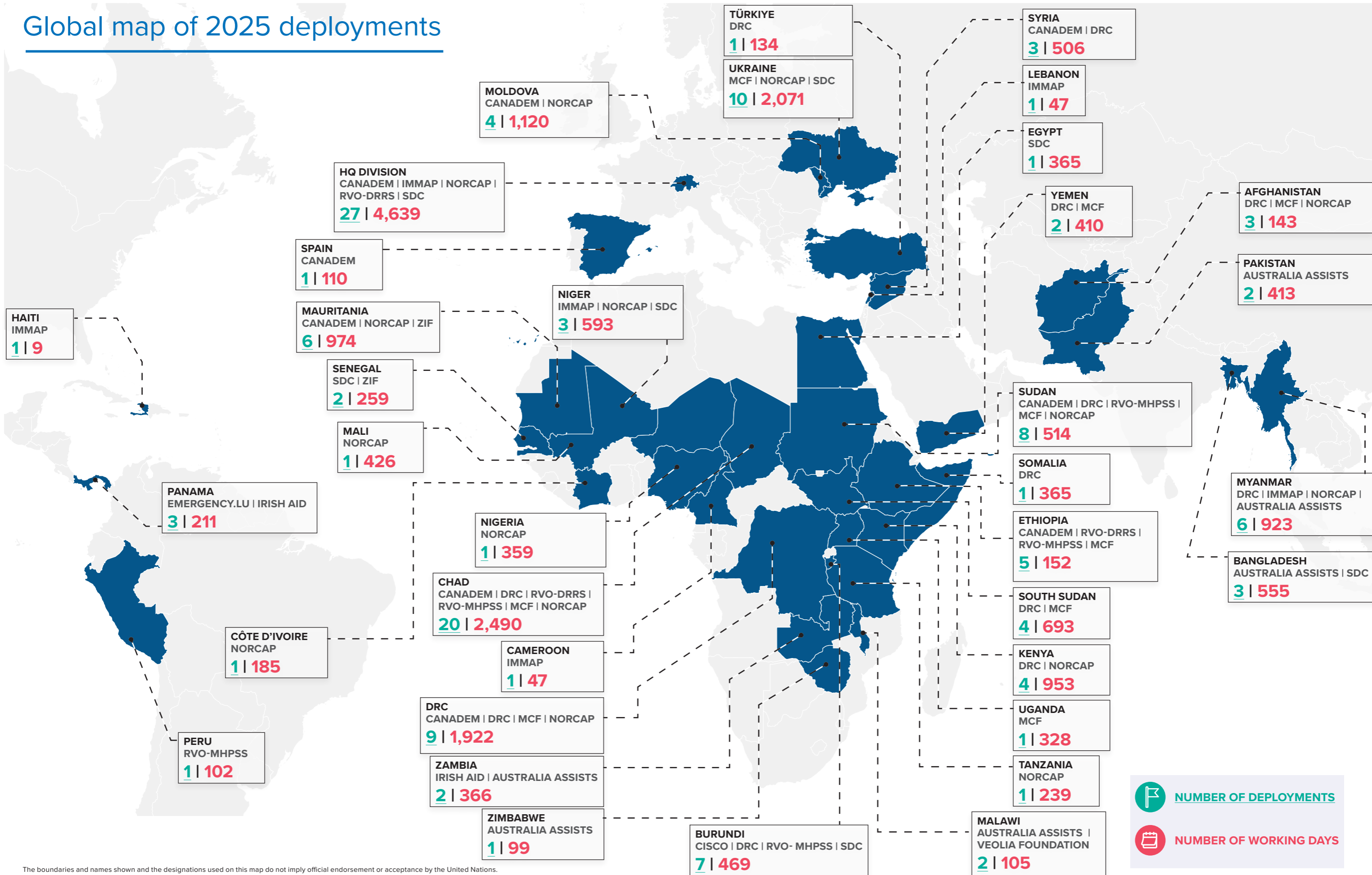
Breakdown of deployments by standby partner



Breakdown of working days by standby partner



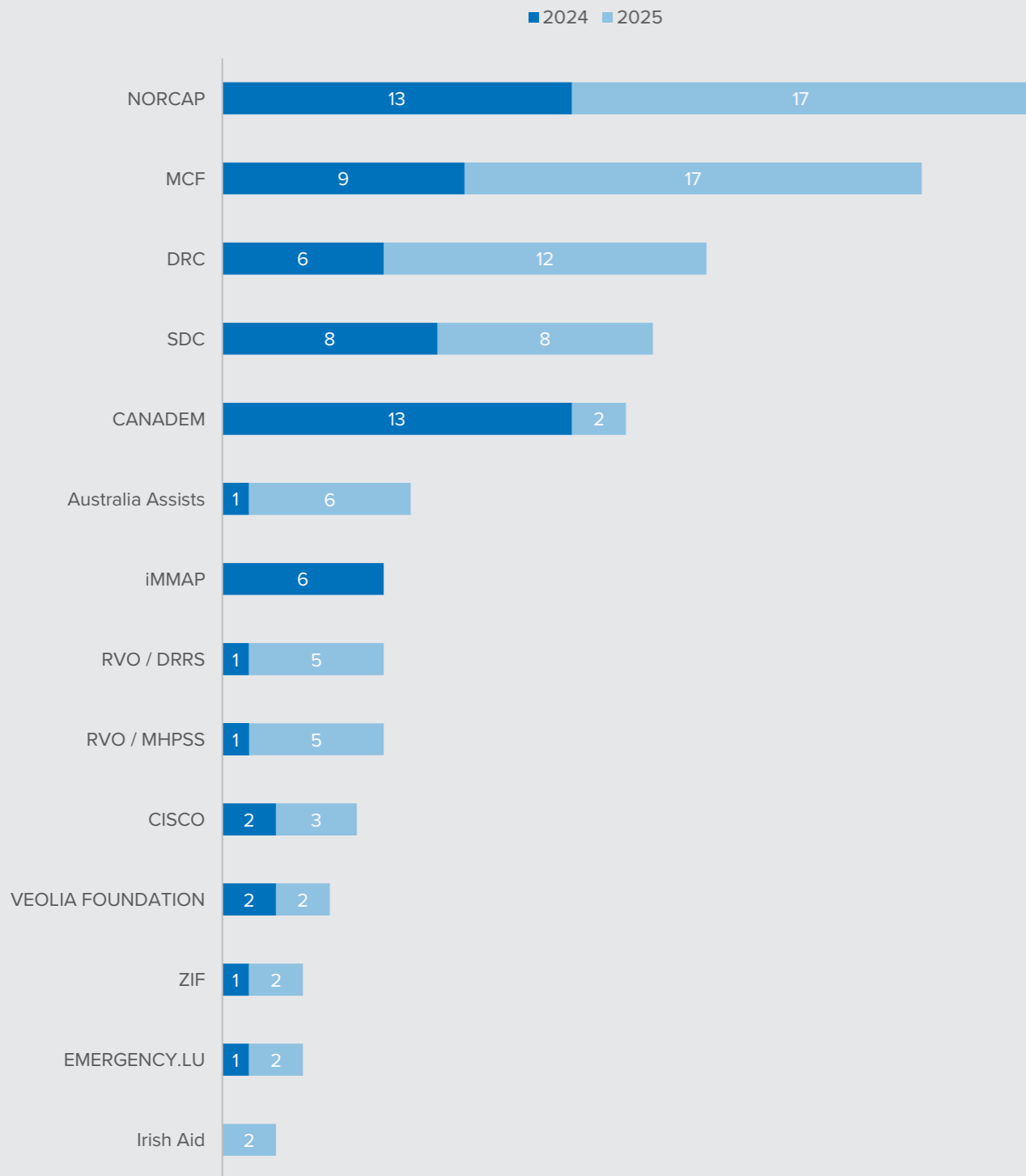
Global map of 2025 deployments



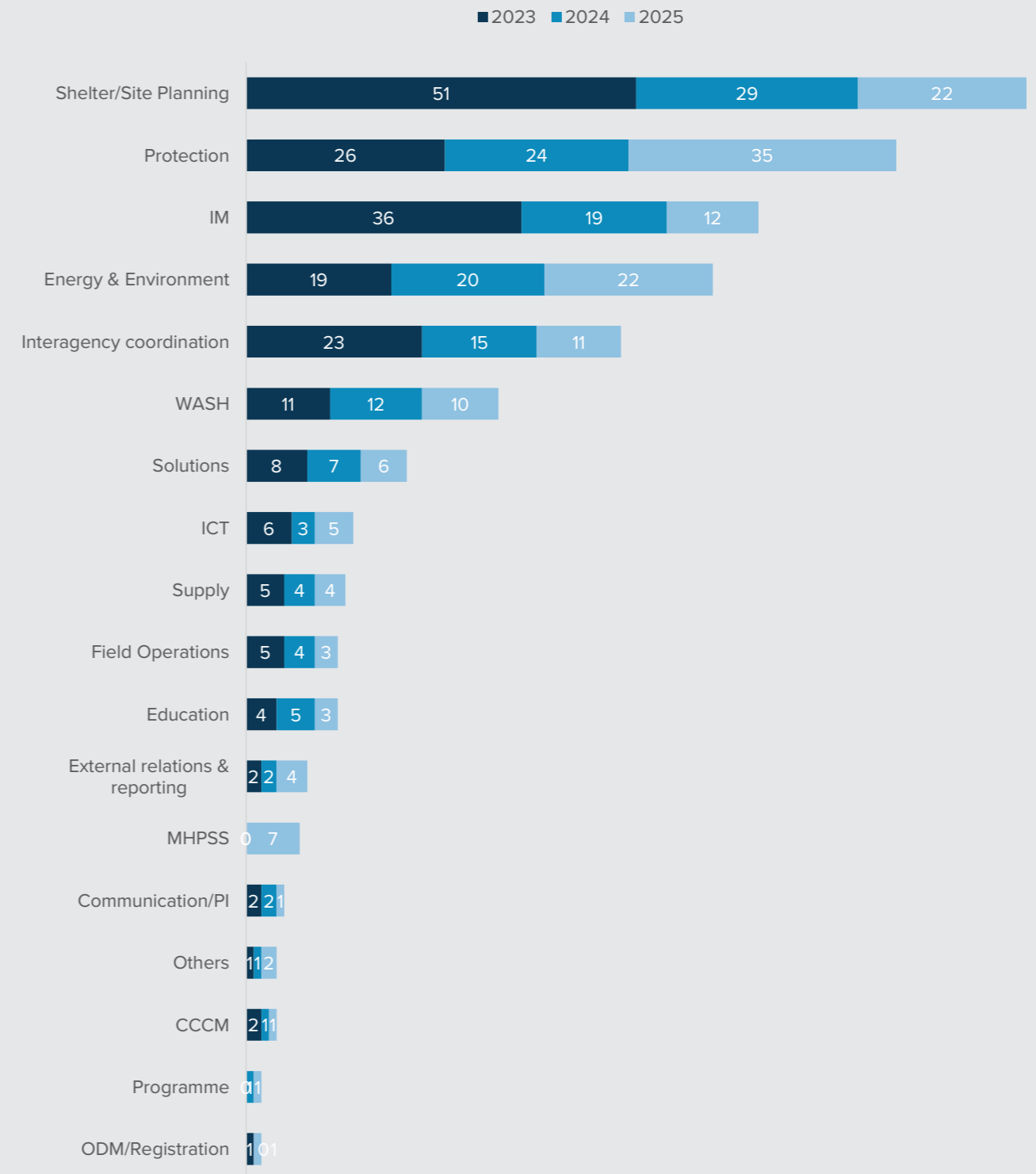
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Standby Partner deployments over time

Deployments by partners 2024 - 2025



Deployment - job profile 2023 - 2025






Deployment stories

© UNHCR/HAMEED MAAROUF

Syria. UNHCR installs shelter packages to help returnee families live in safety and dignity. Shahada Al-Daais, 65, sits with his wife and son outside their rehabilitated home in southern rural Aleppo. The family smiles with joy after receiving shelter support from UNHCR, which helped restore safety and dignity to their everyday life.



Refugees return to Syria with hopes and challenges

 **Hamad Khan:**
Return and Reintegration Officer, Syria

In December 2024, the formation of a new transitional government in Syria marked a significant political shift after more than a decade of conflict, bringing a cautious sense of optimism among millions who had been uprooted by violence. Since 2011, more than half of Syria’s population has been forcibly displaced, with an estimated 5 million refugees seeking safety in other countries – primarily Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.

While many are eager to go home, the situation they return to is often drastically different from the one they left behind. The remnants of conflict have left infrastructure and civil society in disrepair. Destroyed buildings and the breakdown of public services mean that many refugees require support to reintegrate effectively. To aid the Syria operation in supporting refugee and IDP returnees as they rebuild their lives in Syria, Hamad Khan was deployed as a Return and Reintegration Officer through a partnership with FCDO and CANADEM.

Hamad’s role in this evolving context is to support communities returning to Syria and to help advance progressive solutions to ongoing challenges. His work spanned several key areas, including monitoring and reporting of cross-border movement, engagement with the returnee community, and contributing to UNHCR protection assessments.

One solution developed by UNHCR Syria which Hamad supported is the [SyrialsHome](#) website. The platform helps returnees navigate essential information on documentation requirements, available services, and community updates in areas of return, allowing Syrians to make informed decisions about voluntary repatriation. Hamad assisted in collecting and organizing information on areas of high return to update the website, working in close coordination with technical colleagues, local actors, and other humanitarian agencies.

Additionally, Hamad supported UNHCR’s efforts with the authorities to help returnees overcome administrative obstacles when crossing the border back into Syria. After supporting voluntary returns, he would witness the relief and appreciation returnee families experienced when they reunited with their relatives after years of displacement. He described such moments as a special part of UNHCR’s work and noted that this deployment feels unique compared to previous ones because, despite the challenges, there is a sense of hope among those returning home.

Reflecting on his time in country, Hamad says: “Syria has undergone a very difficult situation that has impacted the whole region. One thing that I have seen is that the people returning are very positive. Both the people returning and the existing community are looking on the bright side despite the support that they need.”



Swedish Civil Defence
and Resilience Agency

MCF deployment brings light to Yemen

 **Nanga Kaldjob, Paul Desire:**
Shelter Cluster Energy Advisor, Yemen

For more than seven years, Yemen has endured humanitarian crisis with civilians facing the consequences of both conflict and natural disasters. An estimated four million people have been displaced within Yemen, making it the fourth largest internal displacement crisis globally. Many are forced to flee their homes without alternative housing options, resulting in nearly 35% of IDPs living in spontaneous sites, often without access to proper shelter, heating or electricity. In this context, energy is not just a service; it is a lifeline for people living in overcrowded and exposed conditions.

To address these large-scale needs, the Swedish Civil Defense and Resilience Agency (MCF) deployed Paul Désiré Nanga Kaldjob as a Shelter Cluster Energy Advisor to UNHCR. His mission was clear: “to make sure that safe and sustainable energy solutions is included in the shelter response.” Prior to his deployment, many shelters lacked meaningful energy sources, leaving families to rely on potentially dangerous alternatives such as kerosene lamps. Paul’s role involved assessing energy needs and advising humanitarian actors on how to build capacity and implement energy systems safely and effectively.

Due to the rapidly evolving security situation, field movements could be cancelled at any time. “You can plan something but most of the time it will be delayed or cancelled because of security concerns,” Paul explained. These restrictions are part of daily life in Yemen, he noted.

Still, Paul found ways to visit IDP sites and assess the needs of their residents. During one visit, a woman told him: “We are even afraid to sleep inside our shelter because we are using a kerosene lamp.” Her family often slept outside of their already limited shelter to avoid the risk of fire or suffocation. Months later, when the team installed solar systems in the settlement, Paul was able to see the tangible impact his work had on this woman and her family. For him, the moment underscored a basic truth: “Sometimes a simple change can restore someone’s life.”

By the end of his deployment, progress was visible. With a drafted comprehensive energy strategy for the Shelter Cluster, on-site training for local actors, and 1,300 solar systems installed in homes, schools, clinics, and offices, Paul’s work quite literally brought light to the community.

Although the impact was notable, Paul’s reflection after his deployment was his wish that he could do more. He said, while important, “technical expertise alone is not enough.” Successful humanitarian work, he concluded, depends on understanding the environment and navigating it, adapting to local security and culture, and identifying solutions that meet community needs.




Yemen. Two siblings at Sha'ab site for internally displaced people.



OPERATED BY NRC

NORCAP reinforces Ukrainian protection systems

 **Marianna Kritikou:**
Protection Officer (Protection Monitoring), Ukraine

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has triggered the largest displacement crisis in Europe for decades. Nearly 6 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded globally, and an estimated 3.7 million people remain internally displaced. Supporting Ukrainian authorities to safeguard affected populations remains a core UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) priority, with the operation focused on protection, emergency assistance, and coordination of humanitarian efforts.

Widespread damage to infrastructure and systems has left many displaced people without access to essential services such as electricity, water, healthcare, education, housing, and employment. While the Government of Ukraine leads efforts to support its citizens, UNHCR and other partners are complementing the government-led response. The scale of displacement places immense pressure on public systems, making it challenging for vulnerable groups to access adequate support.

To address these access challenges and identify emerging protection risks, strengthened protection monitoring became essential. In support of these efforts, NORCAP deployed Protection & Monitoring Officer Marianna Kritikou to support the Protection Cluster alignment with global standards of Protection Risk Monitoring Systems. Working closely with protection actors and UNHCR teams on the ground, her deployment has focused on strengthening coordinated and harmonized protection monitoring approaches that generate evidence-based analysis, enabling common

advocacy and programmatic measures to mitigate and address emerging protection risks and human rights violations. Marianna promotes a harmonized system of tools and coordinated efforts to better support field operations. Her work helps capture community priorities, humanitarian and protection needs and enhance current systems to develop long-term solutions.

Marianna's previous experience working directly with vulnerable populations equips her with insight into the needs of both displaced communities and the staff who assist them. "War, displacement, and loss of loved ones place people in situations of heightened vulnerability, often creating multiple and overlapping layers of risk. In Ukraine, some people are forced to leave for a second or third time while there are a huge number of older people or people with disabilities who need care," she explains. "They have lost the social environment that supports them; they are cut off from their normal lives." This understanding of displacement shapes the technical systems she designs, helping to ensure that they are practical within field realities.

Reflecting on her deployment, Marianna underscores the importance of Standby Partnerships as bringing vital technical expertise along with renewed energy to their teams, positivity, and additional capacity to take on specific tasks. Despite working in the midst of an active war, Marianna has found a sense of purpose, human connection, and moments of camaraderie in her office.



Ukraine. UNHCR supports war-affected in Donetsk region with house repairs.

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Danish Refugee Council advances site management solutions in the DRC

Emmanuel Gay:
CCCM Cluster Coordination Officer, the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Due to ongoing conflict, nearly 7 million people have been displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the majority living outside formal camps or settlements. While UNHCR works closely with the government to advance long-term, durable solutions, displacement remains a protracted crisis requiring sustained, coordinated support.

To help address these needs, UNHCR's standby partner, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), deployed Emmanuel Gay as a CCCM Cluster Coordination Officer to support the delivery of services to widely dispersed internally displaced people (IDPs).

Based in Ituri, Emmanuel encountered a complex operational environment, with large numbers of IDPs living in camps and camp-like settings. Of more than 100 displacement sites, only about 70% had on-the-ground site managers – roles that are difficult to fulfil in contexts of limited resources and challenging operating environments.

Emmanuel was compelled to develop creative solutions and workarounds for complex problems in camps with and without site managers. He began by organizing camp councils in sites that lacked formal management. He also worked with local authorities to visit camps and develop specific strategies to address challenges related to shelter and resource distribution. These initial steps helped strengthen relationships with site committees, local government counterparts, and regional partners who had been supporting IDPs before his deployment, laying a stronger foundation for improved coordination.

Recognizing the need and the importance of capacity-building, Emmanuel regularly convened ad hoc coordination and problem-solving meetings, creating opportunities for real-time learning and collaboration. “I really believe in ‘on the job’ training,” Emmanuel explains. “When challenges arise, bringing people together to work through them collectively helps build skills, confidence, and shared responsibility.”

Funding cuts in 2025 reduced international support to displacement sites. Characteristically, Emmanuel saw this gap not only as a shortage of resources and personnel, but also as an opportunity to promote more sustainable, locally driven approaches. He actively engaged local organizations that could support IDPs. Having started his deployment with only one external camp partner, Emmanuel was pleased to establish four to five new operational local partnerships to support site management operations, thus strengthening continuity and local ownership.

Reflecting on the importance of partnerships at all levels, Emmanuel says “Being deployed as a Standby partner allows you to contribute technical expertise from day one. This helps strengthen coordination and supports constructive, solution-oriented dialogue with colleagues and local partners so that emerging challenges can be addressed effectively and collaboratively.”




Democratic Republic of the Congo. Between conflict and stability, UNHCR supports families in finding solutions despite the challenges of forced displacement.



OPERATED BY NRC

NORCAP addresses complex energy needs in Nigeria

 **Saddam Mohamed Zodi:**
Energy Officer, Nigeria

Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria, hosts more than 126,000 refugees and over 3.5 million Internally displaced people (IDPs). Refugees are allowed to work and move freely, attend local schools and access healthcare and are even allotted land to settle on, reflecting the generosity of host communities. Yet despite these inclusive policies, major obstacles remain. Nigeria has one of the largest energy access deficits in the world, with a failing national grid, recurring gas shortages, and mounting debt compounding the challenge.

Energy Officer, Saddam Mohamed Zodi, was deployed by NORCAP to address this critical issue. His work spans multiple departments and projects, often requiring creative solutions to interconnected energy, climate, and environmental needs. He has developed systems that can be implemented in diverse conditions, providing access to electricity in underserved communities.

Importantly, his work involves not only designing systems but also training local community members, helping to create job opportunities and livelihoods for refugees and Nigerians alike. Through needs assessments, priority groups are identified, so the most vulnerable receive opportunities for work, and through this protection and greater stability. Community engagement is a cornerstone of the approach, with training participants often travelling long distances to attend and benefit from workshops.

Security concerns linked to security threats and non-state armed groups, as well as natural hazards such as flooding, regularly disrupt work and require continuous adaptation. Saddam collaborates with field teams to redesign projects, adjust system specifications, and modify installation processes so that essential work can continue despite instability.

He notes that this deployment has broadened his experience not only by allowing him to apply and refine his energy solution expertise but also giving him insight into the roles of other units and how interdisciplinary cooperation can strengthen initiatives. He is no longer “just an energy expert”; he is fully part of the team. This interdisciplinary approach shapes how projects are developed and delivered. By working alongside protection, programme, shelter, and WASH teams, Saddam ensures that energy systems are embedded within broader humanitarian strategies rather than standing alone.

The benefits of multifunctional teams are evident in the field as well. By hosting meetings that bring together all stakeholders – including local government representatives and community leaders – he ensures that projects are planned with community needs and local resources in mind. “I bring the technical skills; they bring the reality,” Saddam says. Saddam's work illustrates how targeted expertise can bridge critical gaps in humanitarian responses and support both refugee and host communities as they build resilience in a complex social environment.




Nigeria. Aerial view of rooftop solar panels at UNHCR's Office in Ogoja.

© UNHCR/OWOICHE IGWUE



ZIF supports search for durable solutions in the Lake Chad Basin

 **Sebastian Frowein:**
Protection and Solutions Specialist, Senegal

The Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region is one of the world's most protracted conflict areas, affected by deep-seated tensions, violence by non-state armed groups (particularly factions linked to Boko Haram), limited governance, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups. Despite efforts by the four LCB governments – Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria – there has been limited progress towards stability. With an estimated 6 million people displaced across borders or within their own countries, the region has a pressing need for meaningful, sustainable solutions.

Solutions that bridge humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development approaches are being explored through the Nexus Funding Facility. The Facility aims to address regional challenges linked to armed group violence and to develop durable solutions for people who have been repeatedly displaced. Sebastian Frowein, who was deployed as a Protection and Solutions Specialist to UNHCR through a Standby Partnership Agreement with the German Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), provides insight into how protection considerations can be woven into the fund's design and implementation across the region.

Sebastian sees this work as an innovative attempt to address extremely complex, long-standing challenges. He cites former UNHCR High Commissioner Sadako Ogata: "there are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems." "We have to go beyond established ways of working," Sebastian continues. "Durable solutions

to forced displacement lie at the intersection of humanitarian action, development, and peace. This means addressing immediate needs while also strengthening livelihoods, governance, and security conditions. The fund is designed to support this integrated approach."

His role involves navigating a range of complex institutional environments, working across United Nations agencies, local civil society actors, and regional governance bodies such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as numerous local counterparts, all bringing their own perspectives, interests, and visions. Coordinating among these actors can be challenging, and at times frustrating, yet Sebastian emphasizes that success depends on remaining optimistic and maintaining open, frank and constructive communication. "Most people working in this sector are generally driven by a very humanistic desire to help other people, and so it is usually easy to find common ground."

As a deployee, Sebastian provides specialized support to move the Nexus Funding Facility from design to implementation. His technical know-how is as relevant as his expertise in coordinating and bringing partners together. "Humanitarian deployments are an effective way for the German Federal Foreign Office to provide targeted support to UN agencies," Sebastian notes, "while such deployments are at the same time a unique opportunity for humanitarian experts to strengthen their expertise and inform German humanitarian policy and practice. So, it's a win-win situation."



Chad. Thousands of Sudanese refugees continue to flee across border. Farchana refugee camp in eastern Chad, which is located less than 100km from Adré, near the Sudanese border.

© UNHCR/ALA KHEIR



MCF reinforces supply systems in South Sudan

 **Ulrika Aunes:**
Supply Officer, South Sudan

In South Sudan, where conflict, displacement, and seasonal flooding routinely cut off entire regions for months at a time, effective supply systems are nothing short of critical. With the country hosting nearly 550,000 refugees and 2.3 million internally displaced people, limited infrastructure and the impact of the rainy season make supplying refugee communities a complex logistical challenge. To address this challenge, the Swedish Civil Defense and Resilience Agency (MCF) deployed Ulrika Aunes as a Supply Officer.

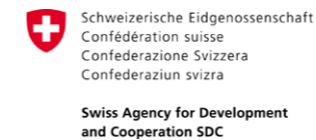
With only four to five months each year during which supplies can be easily purchased and transported, Ulrika and the local supply team had to assess camp needs and procure goods in advance for the remaining eight months. “When I arrived, I was obviously relying a lot on my team — they had been there for so many years, so they knew the context. I listened to them a lot, and to our logistics partner as well. That was how I got my feet on the ground,” Ulrika explained. Once she had a solid understanding of supply processes in Juba, she worked closely with other teams to map annual supply requirements and encourage units to think critically about their needs and plan proactively.

Supply, Ulrika noted, is often the most visible part of operations. When something goes wrong, it is often at the supply stage that issues first become apparent, so the team must be able to trace problems, adapt quickly and troubleshoot gaps. “Planning, capacity building, and cooperation —


really a dialogue between the different units — that was a lot of what we focused on. My team was already doing so much of the work; they were managing a lot of the day to day. But they still needed support,” she said.

Ulrika’s task was not easy, given that supply operations in South Sudan are highly constrained by insecurity, seasonal flooding, and extremely poor infrastructure, which often render roads impassable and force reliance on costly air and river transport. Additionally, funding cuts also shaped Ulrika’s deployment. She reflected on the profound consequences this had in the field, watching friends and colleagues lose their positions. During an R&R trip, she initially assumed there must be an upcoming conference because the flight was full of humanitarian workers — only to learn that many had just been cut from their roles at other agencies. It was “surreal,” she said.

As an MCF deployed expert, these experiences underscored for Ulrika how vulnerable field operations can be to shifts in global funding. She saw in real time how reduced budgets affected staffing, continuity, and the ability to sustain essential services. Yet even in this challenging environment, MCF, she said, remained an agency that supports operations when others cannot. They “provide broad types of support” and have a rare flexibility that allows them to step in and stabilize operations when circumstances become difficult.



SDC deployee strengthens heartbeat of education in Niger

 **Dominique Barth:**
Education Officer, Niger

Niger, at the heart of turbulent West Africa, is one of the region’s main countries of asylum. In recent years, a rise in violent extremism and the 2023 government change have reshaped the operational landscape for humanitarian actors. These pressures are compounded by the growing impacts of climate change, which deepens rural poverty and adds strain an already overstretched public service system. Among the estimated 600,000 people supported by UNHCR in Niger, the majority are women and children, magnifying the need for safe learning spaces, psychosocial support, and accessible schooling.

Despite these challenges, Niger remains notably welcoming to displaced populations, allowing them to access services in a similar way to citizens — a generous policy that supports integration into host communities. At the same time, the increase in school-aged children and youth places enormous pressure on the national education system. To help address this gap, Dominique Barth was deployed as an Education Officer by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Working alongside local education groups, education cluster staff, and focal points in the Ministry of Education, Dominique worked on the revision of UNHCR’s education strategy for Niger and prepared the endorsement by the Government. Drafting a new five-year education strategy became her central task.

To understand the reality of the system she was entering, she needed to “take a step back, observe, and read between the lines” Dominique visited the Hamdallaye refugee camp, where she spoke with young people and families — the very people for whom she was drafting the strategy. The moment reaffirmed for her the importance of being reminded “who we are working for” when so much of her role was carried out behind a laptop.

Although her work was strategic, it directly supported operational needs. The strategy addresses how to navigate the complex educational demands of a diverse student population. It includes a partnership with the Mastercard Foundation to promote alternative pathways to education, including university access; strengthens inclusion for young people with physical disabilities; and identifies language-appropriate options for English-speaking refugees in a predominantly French-language school system.

Just 11 days before her final departure from Niger, the Minister of Education approved the new strategy on its first review. The strategy developed now serves as a roadmap for expanding opportunities and stability for displaced children and youth, helping to ensure that the heartbeat of protection continues even amid uncertainty.



Building connectivity in the Burundi refugee emergency

Matt Altman, Jozsef Fulajtar, Kevin Murphy:
IT Experts, Burundi

In areas where internet connectivity is erratic, UNHCR staff face significant logistical barriers in providing protection services and assistance. Reliable internet access is essential for core protection functions such as refugee registration, case management, community-based protection, and enabling partners to execute their services. But in some contexts, it is difficult to establish and maintain. To address this gap, Cisco Crisis Response deploys teams of IT and telecommunications experts to provide robust and reliable internet connection to refugee situations, supporting UNHCR and its partners.

In October 2025, Matt Altman, Jozsef Fulajtar and Kevin Murphy were deployed to Burundi as IT and telecommunications experts. Burundi hosts some 150,000 forcibly displaced people, most of whom live in refugee sites. The country continues to face economic challenges, yet it has maintained an open-door policy towards refugees since 2014.

Supported by UNHCR's IT team, they set out to build nine access sites across multiple refugee settlements— a challenging task on a month-long deployment. Their efforts often required long journeys between sites and local markets to purchase materials, limiting the number of hours they could dedicate to installations each day. While the travel posed logistical challenges, Kevin, Jozsef, and Matt also saw these trips as opportunities to meet members of the local

community and better understand the context in which displaced people live.

In settlements in Rutana and Musenyi, the team carried out assessments, developed plans and installed technical infrastructure to provide wireless connectivity. Their work meant that refugees and responders no longer had to commute between locations to access the internet. National staff and partners warmly welcomed their efforts and supported them in overcoming logistical hurdles during implementation. Although the team arrived with most of the supplies they expected to need, unexpected challenges still arose. In those moments, national staff and community members worked together to find the tools and materials required to keep the project on track. The team also trained local colleagues to maintain the connection sites, helping to ensure ongoing operation and sustainability.

Kevin Murphy, for whom Burundi marked his first international deployment, said that the experience highlighted how strong the need for connection is – and the sense of light it brings when refugees realize they once again have access to the outside world. Matt Altman described it this way: “The need is out there, it might not be in the news, but the CISCO connectivity piece allows UNHCR and its partners to do their job -- giving refugees a voice.”



Burundi. UNHCR scales up support for some 65,000 refugees fleeing DRC.

UNHCR staff help register Congolese refugees who have newly arrived in Rugombo, Burundi, after fleeing the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), at a UNHCR-supported reception centre, in March 2025, so they can access essential services.



Swedish Civil Defence
and Resilience Agency

MCF builds base camps in support of the refugee response in Chad

 **Ola Jonsson & Leif Englund:**
Camp Technicians, Chad

Home to more than 1 million refugees from Sudan, Chad hosts one of UNHCR's largest operations in Africa. During 2025, the number of Sudanese refugees seeking safety increased significantly. Arrivals spiked to nearly 20,000 in two weeks alone in May 2025 as violence flared across the border in Sudan's North Darfur region. The new arrivals added to the over 400,000 Sudanese refugees Chad was already hosting prior to April 2023, and the response remains severely constrained by funding shortfalls and rising humanitarian needs.

To maintain access and safety, UNHCR has relocated refugees farther from the Sudanese border – a shift made possible through the support of the Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency (MCF), whose base camp service packages provide UNHCR staff with the infrastructure needed to live and operate in remote environments.

These base camps offer safe, functional housing and office space, allowing staff to undertake the required protection and assistance activities. MCF Camp Technicians Ola Jonsson and Leif Englund were central to the construction of the base camps in Chad. Deployed only for a few weeks at a time, they ensured steady progress despite challenges related to security and the rainy season.

Navigating logistical challenges, the MCF team remained committed to ensuring that UNHCR had the facilities required to support refugee communities. When describing the experience, Ola

said, “You realize how far from everything you are. You understand how the increasing influx of refugees is actually affecting the eastern border of Chad. It took a few days to take it all in, because when you see the trucks and people crossing the border, you really realize how big this operation is for UNHCR.” Leif added, “I don't think most people know much about what's happening ... It doesn't get headlines, but it needs to be lifted up more”.

While the scale of the need was difficult to ignore, quiet moments on the ground offered a different perspective. Ola and Leif frequently purchased materials in nearby markets, bringing them into regular contact with Chadian traders. Their experiences highlight not only the logistical complexity of construction in such settings, but also the human connections formed along the way.

The partnership between UNHCR and MCF helps ensure that, even in the most complex settings, essential protection and support can continue.



Chad. Rapid Influx of Sudanese refugees leaves thousands in desperate need.

Refugees wait for food from a community-led kitchen. With limited international presence, local Chadians have been filling the gap.

© UNHCR/CAITLIN KELLY

Geneva Technical Hub - GTH enters new phase of localization and knowledge management

The Geneva Technical Hub, originally launched in 2021 through a partnership with the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency (SDC), has proven to be a resilient and highly effective collaboration platform, providing sustained, high quality support for complex technical and operational challenges despite major funding pressures across the humanitarian sector. In its first four years of operation, GTH delivered specialized expertise to 40 country teams in climate-responsive settlement planning, resilient shelter, sustainable water systems and renewable energy, strengthening operations in some of the world's most complex displacement settings. Over 30 training programmes were implemented, sharing knowledge with 200 staff members from UNHCR, partner organizations, and local authorities.

Strengthening capacity remained central to its mission, with hands-on training in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh) and Kakuma (Kenya) reinforcing local skills in integrated settlement design and optimized hydraulic engineering. Throughout the year, GTH also expanded its suite of practical, field-ready tools that help partners make faster, greener and more informed decisions to reduce operations costs. New resources included guidance on e-waste management for solar products, improved approaches to borehole diagnostics, a step-by-step manual for piped water supply design, a rapid pumping main sizing and assessment chart, a digital Solid Waste Management Compendium and concise guidance on sustainable shelter construction and indoor climate. Environmental screening in refugee operations was also strengthened through new Frequently Asked Questions on the Nexus Environmental

Assessment Tool (NEAT+), developed in collaboration with the UN/OCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Country operations that benefited from GTH support include Kenya, where GTH experts responded to a request from UNHCR, partners and authorities for a facilitated joint training to develop a roadmap and technical work plan for optimizing water supply networks. In Mauritania, a GTH expert supported the definition of sustainable water production rates for the solarization of boreholes, significantly reducing operational costs of water provision.

Together, these outputs have equipped field teams with more sustainable, efficient and innovative solutions, directly improving the quality and environmental performance of refugee responses worldwide.

Looking ahead, GTH enters an expanded second phase with renewed support from SDC and ECHO, and additional expertise from MCF (Sweden), CGIAR and the Veolia Foundation. This next chapter will continue serving UNHCR, ICRC, IFRC, IOM, the Global WASH Cluster, the Global Platform for Action (GPA), UNICEF and UN-Habitat, with an even stronger emphasis on localization and knowledge management.

The Hub is now positioned to deliver broader, deeper and more strategic technical support, helping the humanitarian system respond smarter, greener and more effectively to growing complex displacement challenges.



iMAP and DRC provide coordination and support to Myanmar



Mariana Vieira Fernandes Moura:
Protection Cluster Coordinator, Myanmar



Ketan Trivedi:
Information Management Officer, Myanmar

Nearly 3.7 million people are internally displaced across Myanmar with ongoing instability and recurring crisis driving growing needs. To help meet these expanding needs, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and iMAP deployed experts to support cluster operations. Protection Cluster Coordinator Mariana Vieira Fernandes Moura and Information Officer Ketan Trivedi supported critical efforts to safeguard the country's displaced population, gaining firsthand insight into the challenges on the ground.

UNHCR – the lead protection agency – coordinates the protection, camp coordination, camp management, and shelter clusters, working with partners to support the refugee response. Mariana works at the heart of this effort, helping partners to better protect displaced communities, while navigating an increasingly complex operating environment. For her, the role goes beyond systems and structures – it is about people. “One of the key elements of my work is capacity building – not just for partners but also for national staff,” she explained. “I’m coaching a colleague who will become the coordinator in the future. I’m helping him build confidence, learn when to speak up, and how to build trust through small actions, like ensuring information is shared on time.”

Coordination is essential to the response, but is not always straightforward, particularly when resources are stretched, and relationships with local actors can be fragile. In this environment, much of the

work also depends on bolstering the information systems that support decision-making and coordination.

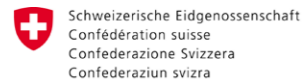
Information systems are exactly what Information Officer Ketan Trivedi, was deployed to strengthen. During his deployment, he developed information management tools and trained national colleagues on data management and analysis, creating dashboards, and utilizing automated systems. Ketan describes national colleagues as “very kind, very supportive, and very willing to learn.” For him, one key lesson stood out clearly: investments in national capacity are essential. “International staff rotate, but national colleagues remain.” Investing in their skills, he noted, is critical to ensuring continuity and strengthening the response over time.

Together, Mariana and Ketan's deployments demonstrate how Standby Partnerships can reinforce emergency response through strengthening information management and protection coordination, promoting sustainable, locally led humanitarian action in one of the world's most challenging contexts.

Chad. A massive influx of Sudanese refugees that persisted for nearly three years following the outbreak of the war in Sudan.

Farchana refugee settlement is home to more than 22,000 Sudanese refugees.

© UNHCR/ALA KHEIR



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SDC strengthens peacebuilding in Bangladesh



Claudia Marti:
Senior Protection Officer (Access), Bangladesh

Across the sprawling camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, more than 1 million Rohingya refugees are rebuilding their lives after fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar. But in this densely populated setting, rising tensions and insecurity are increasingly shaping daily life. As these pressures have grown, so has the need to ease tensions and prevent conflict within the camps. To support this, UNHCR deployed peace practitioner Claudia Marti, as a Senior Protection Officer through the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), to help bring different groups together and rebuild trust in local systems.

After assessing local needs, Claudia began developing and implementing peacebuilding programmes as part of a peace and security campaign working closely with NGOs, UN agencies, local groups, authorities, security actors and refugees. Her workshops on Nonviolent Communication blended practical tools with psychosocial support, giving refugees new ways to express themselves and navigate conflict – skills many had never had the opportunity to learn. These sessions quickly became a cornerstone of her work.

“For us, it’s a simple thing, but they had never learned how to take a deep breath,” Claudia recalled. “They were asking, ‘What is this breath thing?’ So we did it slowly together, with my colleagues translating. When they all started taking these deep breaths, it was like a revelation. Some

participants shared that it helped them feel calm.” She reflects that moments like these emphasize how even simple techniques can offer real relief to people living under intense emotional strain.

While Claudia’s deployment marked an important first step towards peaceful conflict resolution within the camp, it also underscored the need for sustained engagement amid limited resources. To address the program’s continuity, she reached out to the International Non-Violent Communication Network. “There was exactly one person in Bangladesh who had the right preparation,” Claudia explained. The match proved ideal: the new instructor could continue and expand the trainings Claudia had developed, delivering them directly in the local language.

Reflecting on her first humanitarian deployment, Claudia noted that humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and development are often discussed as if they were separate fields, when in reality they are deeply interconnected. That, she stressed, is why Standby Partnerships are so vital: they allow organizations like SDC to deploy the right expertise at the right time, strengthening the collective ability to respond to complex crises.



Bangladesh. A closer look at the camps of Cox's Bazar. A young girl peeks through a shelter wall in a refugee camp in Bangladesh. More than half of the refugees in the Rohingya refugee camps are children.

© UNHCR/SHARI NJUMAN



Australia Assists partners to protect girls in Pakistan

 **Esther Lalai:**
Gender Based Violence Officer, Pakistan

Esther Lalai, a Gender-Based Violence Officer deployed in partnership with Australia Assists, an Australian Government initiative, works to address the protection needs of women and girls in Pakistan. In a country that currently hosts around 1 million registered refugees, her work reflects the complex social realities that shape the lives of women and girls in displacement.

As part of her efforts, Esther supported the implementation of the Engaging Men through Accountable Practices programme, which works with men and boys – alongside women and girls – to help prevent gender-based violence and enhance community awareness and response to it.

In addition to programme implementation, she also developed inter-agency and internal gender-based violence materials, such as standard operating procedures. They help to promote consistent standards of care, effective information sharing, and trust among women in the community. Trust, Esther explains, is critical considering the risks faced by survivors. Those seeking support may be stigmatized, shunned by their communities, or even arrested. Her capacity-building efforts help ensure that case management services reflect local realities, resources, and protection needs.

Esther's work strengthening systems and standards extends beyond direct support to refugees. She has delivered case management and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

(PSEA) training to local community organizations, strengthening the capacity of local NGOs to safeguard both refugee and host community women and girls. To date, nearly 20 community partners have been trained, with seven showing marked improvement in PSEA safeguards and four achieving full capacity following assessment.

Reflecting on her experience, she values her collaboration with dedicated local colleagues, who have deepened her understanding of the context and the realities faced by women and girls. Their support strengthens efforts to advance gender-based violence prevention and response. As Esther explains, "Sometimes partners want to see how we can include men in the intervention, but the safety of women and girls remain the priority. Protection always should be the guiding principle."



Afghanistan. UNHCR: Exhausted Afghan Families Return Through Torkham Border Amid Growing Challenges.

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**Government
of Ireland**
International
Development
Programme

Irish Aid strengthens the long-term livelihood strategy in the Americas

 **Conor Prenderville:**
Senior Livelihood Officer, MCO Panama

Spanning 9 countries across Central America and the Caribbean, UNHCR's Multi-Country Office (MCO) operates in a region marked by population movements, political sensitivities, and rising humanitarian needs. As the lead protection agency, UNHCR is working toward long-term solutions, helping refugees and displaced people build sustainable livelihoods rather than relying on short-term support.

To support this shift, Irish Aid deployed Conor Prenderville to Panama. With a background in project management and development, Conor joined the Panama office as a Senior Livelihood Officer with a clear task: to develop a regional strategy to guide UNHCR and local partners in supporting refugees and other displaced people achieve greater self-reliance.

Conor's initial plan was to visit each of the MCO's nine countries. However, unexpected funding cuts to humanitarian efforts in 2025 forced him to pivot quickly. Reworking his approach, he began arranging remote consultations, meeting with a range of UNHCR staff and key external partners to deepen his understanding of each country's specific context. Through discussions with stakeholders in neighbouring country offices, IOM, UNICEF, WFP, international donors, and private sector actors, Conor developed region-specific strategies to guide future livelihoods operations.

His only opportunity for field engagement came through a visit to the Darién Gap, a key transit point

for hundreds of thousands of people on the move. There, Conor observed UNHCR's work directly. He described the visit as a highlight of his deployment, providing valuable insight into the realities facing displaced people travelling through one of the region's most challenging migration corridors.

The resulting strategy places strong emphasis on private-sector engagement, an approach that Conor sees as central to integration in the region. "If you're not working with the biggest employers, you're not really doing livelihoods," he explained. "The strategy gives UNHCR and partners a clearer mandate to approach employers directly and advocate for refugee inclusive recruitment."

Although limited travel prevented him from forming country-level working groups as originally planned, Conor believes the deployment reinforced the value of Standby Partnerships. As a time-bound expert coming from outside the organization, he was able to bring a fresh perspective, asking questions and making recommendations unconstrained by institutional familiarity. UNHCR also received urgently needed technical capacity at a time when internal staff had limited bandwidth. "Someone was going to have to write this strategy," Conor said. "Irish Aid providing the needed expertise instead of direct financial contribution was incredibly valuable."

Donor Acknowledgement

UNHCR extends its sincere appreciation to its donors whose generous contributions enabled life-saving responses across the emergencies highlighted in this report.

Flexible and unearmarked funding is crucial in allowing UNHCR to respond rapidly and at scale during emergencies, prioritize needs in real time and adjust operations as situations evolve. These contributions ultimately ensure that protection and assistance reaches those most in need, when and where it matters most.

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BACK COVER PHOTO

Bangladesh. A closer look at the camps of Cox's Bazar. As night falls in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, the sparse light of solar lamps is the only source of light in the otherwise dark camps.

© UNHCR/Shari Nijman



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