

**A recently returned mother washes her children** in northern Bhar El-Ghazal State, South Sudan.



# Providing for Essential Needs

**S**EVERAL LARGE-SCALE emergencies occurred simultaneously in 2011, displacing hundreds of thousands of people, most of them compelled to abandon their homes with few or no personal belongings, fleeing to safer locations within their own or in neighbouring countries. Helping these people with their essential needs in the areas of public health, water, sanitation, food, shelter and education is a critical part of UNHCR's work.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE OF CONCERN attain the highest possible standard of physical and mental health, in 2012-2013, UNHCR will advocate with host governments for people of concern to be given access to public health services equivalent to those of the host populations. They should thus be included in national disease prevention and control programmes, with special attention being given to refugees in urban areas.

Malaria control and prevention will remain a high priority. In line with

its Malaria Strategic Plan (2008-2012), UNHCR will campaign to provide durable long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets on the basis of one net for every two people, and to ensure their access to prompt diagnosis and the latest anti-malaria treatment. Another priority is the care of pregnant women, who will receive regular screening and preventive treatments against malaria during antenatal visits. UNHCR aims to provide all pregnant women of concern with long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

Health care for refugees in urban settings will follow the nine operational principles listed in UNHCR's recently published operational guidance on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas: Ensuring Access to Health Care. The key principles underlying this guidance are: i) ensure that refugees have **access** to similar services at similar or lower costs as nationals; ii) **integrate** public health services for refugees in the national public health system; iii) ensure special service arrangements for

refugees with special needs so they have **equitable** access to services; iv) prioritize access to primary health care and emergency care over access to more specialized medical services; v) **rationalize** by selecting a number of qualified health service providers and facilities for support; vi) **partner** with a wide range of government, non-governmental and international actors; vii) promote the **participation** of refugees to address health problems in their communities; viii) establish effective **communication** mechanisms to improve access to primary health care services; and ix) promote the information systems to improve **evidence-based decision making** and health policies, and to enhance prioritization and the impact of programmes. The creation of referral committees aims to ensure that referrals are both equitable and effective. The diagnosis and care of chronic diseases will also receive renewed attention.

UNHCR will ensure sufficient resources and measures to meet the immediate health needs of affected populations in all new refugee

## HELPING PEOPLE OF CONCERN TO ADDRESS THEIR ESSENTIAL NEEDS IN THE AREAS OF PUBLIC HEALTH, WATER, SANITATION, FOOD, SHELTER AND EDUCATION IS A CRITICAL PART OF UNHCR'S WORK

emergencies. These will include the Minimum Initial Service Package for reproductive health as well as mental health and psychosocial care and the control of communicable diseases. The scope of UNHCR's Health Information System (webHIS) will be extended to include refugees in urban areas. The system will serve to support programme monitoring, evaluation, evidence-based decision making and resource allocation.

### HIV AND AIDS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

UNHCR WILL FOCUS ITS interventions on strengthening the links between sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS programmes. These programmes will also aim to ensure the inclusion of young people of concern in national plans to meet the Millennium Development Goals related to the prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS. Partnerships with other agencies will be key to these efforts, helping UNHCR to promote the access of people of concern to HIV and AIDS prevention, care and treatment programmes, especially for the benefit of those most at risk.

In continuing its work with governments for the inclusion of refugees and other people of concern in their national policies and programmes, UNHCR will advocate against discriminatory legal measures, such as mandatory HIV testing. It will also seek to ensure access to services to prevent mother-to-child transmission as well as the availability of anti-retroviral therapy.

Another major goal of UNHCR will be to strengthen local health systems, in particular, safe motherhood services, aimed at reducing maternal and postnatal morbidity and mortality. More attention will be given to improving family planning services.

In 2010, UNHCR contributed to the development of the 2012-2015

UNAIDS Getting to Zero Strategy and the revised arrangements for shared responsibility among UNAIDS co-sponsors. In 2012, UNHCR and WFP will co-lead action to address HIV in emergency situations. This will ensure that issues related to HIV and AIDS will be addressed in UNHCR-led humanitarian clusters.

### WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER IS essential to life, health and dignity; proper sanitation is another key determinant of health and wellbeing. In striving to provide people of concern with enough clean water and basic sanitation, UNHCR seeks to prevent the spread of disease and sustain a hygienic living environment.

To help meet unmet needs identified in various operations, in 2011, the High Commissioner allocated an additional USD 25 million to the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) promotion sector. Eleven operations have benefited from this increased funding, which has allowed the expansion of water and sanitation systems, the rehabilitation of ageing infrastructure and an increase in numbers of latrines. However, to ensure that this investment has a real impact, its implementation, monitoring and maintenance will need to continue in 2012 and beyond. Many other operations still struggle to meet the minimum WASH standards and require additional resources and technical input.

A project to monitor the aquifer (an underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock from which groundwater can be extracted) at Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, hosting more than 450,000 refugees, begun in 2010-2011, will continue in 2012. The aim is to ensure that the aquifer will not be depleted. Satellite data will be analysed in collaboration with the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. This is one of several innovative projects that will be pursued in 2012.

A new WASH monitoring system is currently being piloted in eight operations. Its monthly reporting systems will allow UNHCR to follow emerging trends more accurately, and to make evidence-based decisions. This pilot system will be expanded to monitor other operations in 2012-2013.

Standby arrangements with partners will be strengthened to create surge capacity to respond to emergencies. For those on the roster of standby WASH experts, joint training sessions and exchanges will broaden their mutual understanding of expertise and operational methods.

### NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY

UNHCR WILL CONTINUE TO be a partner of the Emergency Nutrition Network, providing technical support for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes to prevent anaemia and malnutrition, as well as specialized support in meeting nutrition needs in emergencies. In the area of nutrition for young children, UNHCR will collaborate with UN agencies and NGOs that are part of the Infant Feeding in Emergencies group. WFP will continue to be UNHCR's principal partner in this area, a partnership that has recently been reinforced by the signing of a revised Memorandum of Understanding.

As an active member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Nutrition Cluster, UNHCR will work on nutrition surveys with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States of America. UNHCR is also looking at innovative technologies to facilitate data collection and analysis and 2012 will see the use of mobile devices for UNHCR's standardized nutrition surveys. This will be done in partnership with the French NGO *CartONG*, which provides mapping and information services to humanitarian organizations.

In 2012, UNHCR will also reinforce its collaboration on nutritional and food security issues with academic institutions, notably the University of Oslo in Norway and Tulane University in the United States.

## SHELTER

PROVIDING PEOPLE OF CONCERN TO UNHCR with adequate shelter, whether in emergencies, or in ongoing and protracted situations, remains a global strategic priority.

In 2012, UNHCR will seek to strengthen its emergency shelter roster further, to facilitate the rapid deployment of trained experts, including experienced Emergency Shelter Coordinators. Standby partnerships with various organizations will continue to allow UNHCR to benefit from their specialized resources. Leadership courses for UNHCR and partner staff will improve management skills, secure inter-agency coordination and maintain consistency in approaches.

Emergency shelter strategies will remain part of contingency planning. A more coordinated and strengthened corporate emergency response will be sought through better procurement and storage of high-quality core relief items. Inter-agency systems in place will facilitate quality control with regard to tents and other emergency shelter material, including plastic sheeting.

While in recent years, UNHCR has made considerable progress in improving the quality of its emergency shelters, in situations of mass displacement, the tent option is only partially effective. Efforts have begun in 2011 to explore an alternative range of shelter options by piloting cost-effective, foldable shelter kits, composed of metal frames and lightweight panels. UNHCR will seek the expertise of academic institutions and the private sector in this area, and anticipates other innovative solutions.

As most of the people affected by conflict, famine and other disasters in 2011 may remain displaced throughout 2012, transitional and semi-permanent shelter arrangements will need to replace the short-term emergency shelter provided to these communities.

In 2012, UNHCR will construct some 15,000 mud-brick shelters for 60,000 families in Dadaab, in eastern Kenya. In Dollo Ado, Ethiopia, construction kits will be provided to refugee families, who will use local materials to erect traditional domes

with block walls and iron-sheet roofing. A similar approach will be applied in the refugee camps in countries neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. The internally displaced population in that country will likewise benefit from the provision of local construction materials.

In Liberia, 20,000 semi-permanent shelters will be built to cover the needs of some 100,000 refugees. Almost all of the estimated 60,000 families returning to South Sudan are in need of adequate shelter, and in 2012 UNHCR plans to build 15,000 shelters for the most vulnerable among them. Shelters in rural areas will use thatch, while those in urban areas will use iron sheeting.

Shelter programmes in countries with protracted displacement situations will focus on helping refugees to develop their building skills. UNHCR will encourage communities to take responsibility for shelter projects once assistance ends, and will train them in the necessary maintenance skills. Special attention will be given to solutions that can contribute to local and national economies, either by providing skills in construction techniques and methodologies or through the involvement of local construction companies and the supply of materials. Such projects could provide livelihood opportunities and decrease unemployment.

Shelter interventions will continue to be planned and implemented with the least possible impact on the natural environment. Wherever possible, shelter items will draw on local, environment-friendly materials.

## EDUCATION

ENSURING THAT DISPLACED PEOPLE have access to quality education in safe environments constitutes a major challenge. A review of the global education programme for refugees conducted by UNHCR in 2011 has highlighted areas for improvement. The lack of quality learning opportunities results in major protection risks for out-of-school children and youth, while reducing their prospects for durable solutions.

Although refugee enrolment rates in primary education have improved, around 30 per cent of refugee children

have no access to primary education, and only one in five young refugees are enrolled in secondary schools. Only 12 per cent of refugee girls are enrolled in secondary education: staying at school and completing their education is particularly difficult for girls. Some 50 per cent of refugee camps report a student-teacher ratio of more than 40 students per teacher, as well as large numbers of unqualified teachers. Unsafe learning environments are common, and only 21 per cent of refugee children with specific needs are enrolled in primary schools.

To address some of these challenges, UNHCR is reviewing its educational strategy, focusing on three areas: access to education, quality and protection. The goals are: improving literacy, monitoring learning achievement and increasing retention at school. UNHCR will also explore how to best use educational information and communication technology. Strengthening awareness of the central role of education in protection remains a top priority.

The new education strategy for 2012-2014 includes guidance on improving access to education for refugees in urban settings. It will be extended to all Field operations, with ten operations selected

### UNSAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS ARE COMMON, AND ONLY 21 PER CENT OF REFUGEE CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS ARE ENROLLED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

to receive additional technical and financial support for programmes based on the global strategy.

Partnerships remain central to UNHCR's educational programmes, which depend on more than 200 implementing partners worldwide. Secondments of education experts will continue to bring additional expertise. Regional and country level workshops on Education Priorities and Safe Learning Environments will strengthen staff capacity in the management and oversight of programmes. Improvements to the education management information system will allow more accurate programme monitoring and impact assessment.

The “[ninemillion.org](http://ninemillion.org)” campaign, sponsored by Nike, Microsoft and other private corporations, which benefited more than 460,000 people of concern to UNHCR in 20 countries in 2010, will continue to improve access to education and sports for girls. The German Albert Einstein Academic Scholarship Programme for Refugees (DAFI), which in 2010 provided 1,800 scholarships to refugee students in 37 countries, will continue to endow them with skills needed for leadership, reconstruction and nation-building.

#### ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

MOST DISPLACED POPULATIONS START their new lives making do with very little, and they are forced to rely on natural resources around the camps: wood as fuel and for shelter, land for agriculture, vegetation to feed their livestock and water for health and sanitation. It is of key importance that the natural resources so vital to host communities and displaced populations are used in a sustainable manner.

A sudden influx of people can have a serious impact on the environment of hosting areas, in particular, when large numbers of displaced people live in camps, frequently situated in environmentally fragile locations. Competition for scarce resources may lead to conflict with host communities, making host governments and local authorities reluctant to accept them. This in turn can leave displaced people deprived of livelihood opportunities.

Ensuring access to sources of domestic energy is one of the most critical challenges in humanitarian operations. As fuel for cooking and lighting is rarely part of the non-food item packages that are distributed to the displaced, women and girls are frequently forced to walk for hours to collect firewood, exposing them to danger. Sometimes the displaced are forced to sell part of their rations to buy charcoal or kerosene.

In 2012-2013, UNHCR will continue to give priority to environmental conservation and sustainable natural resource management in its field operations by:

- Promoting the introduction of fuel-efficient stoves and alternative energy sources, such as solar energy, biogas, ethanol and eco-friendly briquettes, to reduce domestic energy consumption;
- Conserving and rehabilitating natural resources through reforestation and sustainable land management, together with strengthening the management of natural resources, as well as reforestation and rehabilitation, both during the camp's existence and after closure;
- Expanding solar lighting in public areas in camps to improve security at night, especially for women and children, thereby allowing people to participate in educational, social and income-generating activities after dark;
- Promoting sustainable land use, agriculture, and livestock management, resulting in more harmonious coexistence with the host community and improved livelihoods, as well as establishing Community Environmental Action Plans to improve environmental management in the camps and surrounding areas;
- Calling for the use of environmental management tools in refugee operations, including environmental impact assessments, monitoring and evaluation, while encouraging the participation of the refugee community in environmental management;
- Promoting environmental awareness by updating and disseminating UNHCR's Environmental Guidelines and other materials, as well as developing training tools for environmental education;
- Strengthening partnerships with other UN agencies and UN coordination mechanisms such as the UN Delivering as One initiative in the area of environmental management;
- Mainstreaming the protection of the environment into humanitarian action, poverty reduction and development programmes;
- Fostering collaboration with the private sector, NGOs and academia to support innovation in environmental management, and in adapting to climate change; and
- Establishing and disseminating policy and guidelines on environmentally sustainable operations, "green" procurement and eco-friendly consumption and behaviour.

Given the expected increase in natural disasters, such as droughts and floods, UNHCR will survey selected refugee sites to determine the best available techniques to adapt to the effects of extreme conditions linked to the changing climate. Adaptation and disaster mitigation are increasingly important to UNHCR operations, as both host-country governments and camp administrations aim to put in place emergency preparedness and response systems. More specifically, in 2012-2013, UNHCR will:

- Develop an organization-wide strategy to mainstream climate change adaptation and disaster mitigation into all operations;
- Support adaptation measures in the Field through an area-wide approach, including the host country, implementing partners, site management and administration; and
- Continue to engage in high-level processes such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the preparations for the UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. ■