



**THANK
YOU FOR
THINKING
AHEAD**

**A vision of
risk management
in UNHCR**



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Our vision

We will achieve strong risk management culture across all UNHCR operational and management areas.

We will take and manage risks and opportunities consistently, consciously and collectively.

Why risk management matters

Risk management supports the achievement of UNHCR's objectives.

Managing risks means asking critical questions to understand the possible options and to help make the best possible decisions.

What might **hinder** our success?

Have we done **everything possible** to address those threats?

Which opportunities can we seize to achieve **better outcomes for the people we serve**?

By scanning the horizon to know what may lie ahead, we can adapt our course of action to give us the best chance of creating the change we are striving for.

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The commitment to protecting people forced to flee, our personnel and the resources that are entrusted to us, entails taking the right risks and managing them proactively and efficiently.

Filippo Grandi
UNHCR High Commissioner

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Thinking ahead helps fulfil our mission

To deliver in the places where we are needed most, we work in complex environments under the threats of armed conflict, terrorism, fraud and corruption that can generate high risk for affected populations and the organization.

From climate change to pandemics, we rise to new challenges which amplify the already significant risks posed by displacement. We do so through close collaboration with displaced people, local authorities, host communities and our partners, often entailing careful diplomacy and difficult decisions

To maximize our impact, we remain focused on unlocking opportunities and developing new approaches to protection, such as through the Global Compact on Refugees.

As we respond to the needs of an ever-larger number of displaced people worldwide, UNHCR is growing and changing. Expectations placed on us by those forced to flee, host communities, Member States, partners and colleagues have never been higher. These challenges and the rapid evolution of the organization come with mounting uncertainties.

Through experience, we have learned that better managed risks and opportunities mean a greater chance of success for our programmes.

When we prepare for a potential refugee influx, anticipate the possible long-term effects of a crisis on protection space or funding, or put in place anti-fraud measures, we think ahead and take proactive, risk-informed action.

Reinforcing this collective ability is the cornerstone of UNHCR's approach to risk management.

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Good risk management helps us be better prepared for what lies ahead, thereby strengthening our accountability to the people we serve, our partners and Member States.

Raouf Mazou

UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations

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Progress made together

UNHCR has made significant progress in responding to the uncertainties that characterize our operating environment. Some examples of our achievements to date include:

Reviewing the risks that we face more regularly, and jointly deciding on the best possible way forward

Putting in place **the people, tools, policies and processes** to manage key risks, such as sexual abuse and exploitation, or diversion of aid

Broadening our risk assessments from being country-specific to also cover wider events and situations, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to complex, cross-border displacements

Deploying risk advisers to support high-risk operations like Kenya, Yemen and Bangladesh, where millions of people benefit from our work

Strengthening our key processes, such as supply chain management during emergencies or selection of partners, to improve results and prevent fraud and corruption

Using up-to-date, quality risk information and data to help us inform our decisions

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When an emergency spills over into many countries, exchanging information on the risks faced across operations helps colleagues develop a shared understanding of a complex situation and lay out common solutions. This is a key step towards achieving an effective and coordinated response.

Hanne Raatikainen
UNHCR Chief Risk Officer

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Taking the next steps

We must continue to develop a shared understanding across UNHCR of how to best take and manage risks and opportunities – consistently, consciously and collectively.

In a decentralized global organization of 18,000 people, we may have different perceptions of risks and how to handle them. Some of us are comfortable taking risks, while others are more cautious.

The culture of risk management is not yet fully even and this may leave some operations vulnerable to unanticipated threats, or unprepared to seize opportunities when they arise.

To fully benefit from risk management in our programme delivery, work must continue. Building on our existing tools, systems, and processes, and guided by the 2025 Risk Management Strategy, the High Commissioner has called for a sustained, strong risk management culture across the organization.

Together, we will succeed when:

- We systematically consider risks and opportunities and **embed risk management into our day-to-day work**
- We **share an understanding of our key risks** and how to tackle them
- We **consider our longer-term challenges** alongside more immediate risks, and use risk analysis to shape our strategies and responses
- We feel empowered to raise concerns, and are confident that **managers will listen and act**
- We **learn from past experiences – good and bad** – to improve our results

These positive behaviours, supported by a strong risk management framework, will help ensure good use of our resources and maximize our ability to successfully deliver on our mandate.

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Thinking about risks and opportunities has become second nature to many of us. This has a positive impact in the lives of refugees, as we focus more on longer-term, sustainable solutions.

Maria Stavropoulou
UNHCR Country Representative

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Your contribution

Field-based, screen-based, office, tent or HQ: we all have the power to think ahead and make sound, risk-informed decisions that contribute to UNHCR's success.

We always welcome your questions, comments and ideas – please contact us: **hqerm@unhcr.org**

**Whoever you are
and whatever you
do for UNHCR,
thank you for always
thinking ahead.**



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