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Standing Committee
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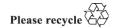
Update on coordination issues: strategic partnerships

Summary

This paper reviews the progress made on coordination issues and the development of strategic partnerships since the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2013. It includes updates on strategic partnerships with non-governmental organizations, and leadership and coordination in emergencies involving both internally displaced persons and refugees. The paper describes UNHCR's new refugee coordination model, which was launched in December 2013. It also discusses strategic partnerships in the areas of solutions and statelessness.

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I. Introduction

1.   The past year has been one of the most challenging in UNHCR's history. The number of people displaced by conflict and persecution topped 50 million[1] – the highest level since the Second World War. Since the last report on coordination at the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee one year ago, the humanitarian community was confronted with five system-wide level-3 emergencies[2] – the Central African Republic, Iraq, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. While responding to these mega-crises, UNHCR and its partners simultaneously continued to assist those displaced by conflict in other parts of the world, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali and Somalia. The management of these new and protracted situations has highlighted the need for enhanced leadership, coordination and partnership.

2.   Against this background, UNHCR continued to deepen and expand its working relationships and partnerships with an array of actors, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies and other key partners, including in the development field. It contributed to strengthening coordination in the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and through the implementation of the Transformative Agenda, which is aimed at improving collective action in humanitarian emergencies. In close consultation with these partners, UNHCR also developed a new refugee coordination model, which reaffirms an inclusive, predictable and partner-friendly approach. Together with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), coordination arrangements and accountabilities for situations involving both refugees and internally displaced persons ("mixed situations") were clarified and elaborated in order to ensure the effective and seamless delivery of protection and assistance. UNHCR also bolstered its capacity and leadership in the three IASC clusters for internally displaced persons (IDPs) which it leads or co-leads.

3.   As 2014 marks the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, UNHCR has ramped up its work with partners on preventing and addressing statelessness. On the solutions front, UNHCR continued to forge relationships with development-oriented partners and explore innovative approaches to its solutions work.

II. Partnerships in humanitarian response

A.   Refugee coordination and accountabilities in mixed situations

4.   In December 2013, UNHCR launched a new refugee coordination model which outlines the Office's role and responsibilities in refugee operations and mixed displacement situations; offers an inclusive platform for planning and coordinating refugee operations; and clarifies the coordination modalities in relation to broader humanitarian coordination

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[1] This includes 16.7 million refugees (11.7 million under UNHCR's mandate and 5.0 million Palestinian refugees registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, 33.3 million internally displaced persons and close to 1.2 million asylum-seekers. More detailed statistical information may be found in the *UNHCR Global Trends 2013*, available from: http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends.

[2] Level-3 emergencies are defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as major sudden onset humanitarian crises triggered by natural disasters or conflict which require system-wide mobilization. Scale, urgency and complexity are among the criteria used to determine whether a level-3 response is required.

structures, including the IASC cluster system. It draws on best practices from the field and the IASC Transformative Agenda's focus on leadership, coordination and accountability, while seeking to ensure complementarity and flexibility in line with operational requirements.

5. The refugee coordination model underscores the host country's primary responsibility for the protection of refugees. It also affirms UNHCR's responsibility for engaging with the host government on refugee-related matters; leading strategic planning with operational partners; coordinating a multi-sectoral response; and coordinating protection matters. By clarifying roles and responsibilities, it aims to make UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable, inclusive and partner-friendly, and ultimately helps ensure that refugees and other persons of concern receive the assistance and protection they need. The importance of coordination with Government line ministries and development actors in seeking solutions for refugees is also highlighted in the refugee coordination model.

6. In April 2014, the High Commissioner and the Emergency Relief Coordinator issued a *Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice*, which clarifies leadership and coordination arrangements in a situation where a complex humanitarian emergency is taking place. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of the UNHCR Representative and the Humanitarian Coordinator, where UNHCR is leading a refugee operation and the clusters are activated. It does not cover refugee-only contexts, where UNHCR leads the entire cycle of response, including contingency planning, the emergency phase and solutions, as detailed in the refugee coordination model. The note also outlines operational coordination in two contexts: 1) where refugees are present in a separate geographical area from IDPs and other affected populations, and 2) where refugees are present in the same geographical area as IDPs and other affected populations.

7. The note was shared with all UNHCR and OCHA staff, as well as with the IASC. Joint missions with partners, including UNICEF, WFP and NGO representatives, have taken place in key operations, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to promote understanding of the new coordination modalities, provide advice on implementation and receive feedback. Additional missions are being planned.

B.   UNHCR's role in the IASC

8. UNHCR remained actively involved in further developing and revising aspects of the IASC Transformative Agenda. It seconded an experienced colleague to the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team, which was set up to support Humanitarian Coordinators and humanitarian country teams in priority countries in improving the effectiveness of the humanitarian response through the tools outlined in the Transformative Agenda Protocols. UNHCR contributed to the refinement and simplification of the operational framework with a view to facilitating clear, delivery-oriented and effective emergency response; this was complemented by the development of the refugee coordination model.

9. The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) has kept UNHCR staff at Headquarters and in the field abreast of the evolving coordination modalities and their practical implications for the management of UNHCR's operations. In June 2014, she issued an internal message on the subject, which underscored the importance of UNHCR's active engagement in humanitarian country teams and its support to Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators in jointly developing plans and strategies for collective humanitarian response. It called on UNHCR Representatives to ensure that their staff were familiar with IASC policies and the Transformative Agenda Protocols, the Refugee Coordination Model and the *Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations*. She also reminded

Representatives that, where relevant, Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators must be included as a multi-rater in their annual performance evaluations and that they must include their contribution to the humanitarian country team as one of their objectives.

10.   At a meeting of the IASC Principals in December 2013, a statement on the "centrality of protection" was endorsed. Developed by the global protection cluster, with broad participation from all IASC members, the statement underscores the commitment to ensuring the centrality of protection in humanitarian action and the role of the Humanitarian Coordinators, humanitarian country teams, and clusters in this. It stresses that protection must inform analysis, planning and decision-making, and that it must be central to all phases of the response including early warning/preparedness, immediate life-saving activities, recovery and solutions. For UNHCR Representatives in the field, this also means advocating for critical protection issues and ensuring that the protection cluster adopts a protection strategy agreed to by all cluster members no later than eight weeks from the onset of an emergency.

C.   Cluster responsibilities in IDP operations

11.   As a committed member of the IASC, UNHCR leads or co-leads three IDP clusters: (1) protection; (2) shelter; and (3) camp coordination and camp management (CCCM).

12.   UNHCR leads 20 field <u>protection clusters</u> worldwide. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and UNHCR co-lead protection clusters in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia; in Afghanistan, Colombia and South Sudan UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) co-lead; while the International Rescue Committee (IRC) co-leads the protection cluster with UNHCR in Pakistan. UNHCR co-leads the protection cluster with the Governments in the Philippines and Chad. Sub-national protection clusters also have co-facilitation arrangements with NGOs and government bodies such as the national human rights commissions in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia. At the global level, the protection cluster has created a strategic advisory body composed of the DRC, InterAction, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), IRC, NRC and Oxfam, as well as key United Nations partners, including OCHA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN-Habitat, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNHCR.

13.   UNHCR leads 10 of the 24 country-level <u>shelter clusters</u> worldwide. The 2013-2017 global shelter cluster strategy provides a framework for the method and means to provide rapid support at the country level. With the rising number of emergencies, shelter clusters or similar mechanisms have been recently activated in the Central African Republic, Chad, Iraq and Turkey. The global shelter cluster support team has conducted 19 field missions to 10 countries, deployed several teams of trained and experienced cluster coordinators at short notice, and undertaken shelter assessments in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia with REACH[3], and in some cases jointly with representatives of the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and health clusters. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and UNHCR host a web portal[4] for global and field shelter cluster practitioners to exchange information, share best practices, obtain technical guidance, and consult resources and tools.

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[3] REACH is a joint initiative of two international NGOs (Impact Initiatives and ACTED) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Operational Satellite Applications Programme (see www.reach-initiative.org).

[4] See www.sheltercluster.org.

14.   The global <u>camp coordination and camp management cluster</u> (CCCM) co-led by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), currently supports over 19 field operations globally. The CCCM rapid response team, drawn from a roster of technical experts, ensures prompt technical support to field operations and coordinates the deployment of teams to train staff on the ground. Recent efforts have focused on strengthening the cluster's emergency preparedness and response capacity and conducting a review to explore how resources and experience can be applied to address the needs of displaced populations outside camps, particularly in urban environments.

15.   Information management services are a vital tool for coordination and partnership in both refugee and IDP situations. UNHCR currently has some 60 staff members around the world who are dedicated to information management; some are located at Headquarters and in regional hubs. Many country offices are establishing information management services as part of their operational structures. A new Emergency Information Management Toolkit has been established (see http://data.unhcr.org/imtoolkit) to provide information and data management guidance for emergency situations; web portals have been set up to support the coordination of major emergency operations and are systematically updated; and new geographic information system (GIS) and mapping technology has been introduced in UNHCR operations to coordinate the refugee response.

D.   UNHCR-NGO partnerships

16.   UNHCR draws on the expertise and capacities of nearly 800 NGOs, of which almost 80 per cent are national or local organizations. They remain essential allies in meeting the needs of populations affected by conflict and are effective advocates for protection and resources to meet the needs of the displaced.

17.   UNHCR continued to invest in bilateral partnerships with major NGO partners at the global level, exploring further complementarities in expertise and resources in various settings, revising "memoranda of understanding" to strengthen partnerships where necessary, and supporting regular strategic consultations. It continues to work with ICVA and InterAction to strengthen implementation of the partnership principles and recommendations emanating from the High Commissioner's structured dialogue with NGOs and the IFRC, which was held in 2012. This has included joint support missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan.

18.   The theme of the Annual Consultations with NGOs, held in June 2014, was "women's leadership and participation." The consultations covered a wide range of regional, operational and programmatic themes, including strategies and best practices in advocating for protection. The Annual Consultations continue to attract an ever-increasing number of NGO participants working on refugee, statelessness and displacement issues (in 2004, 480 people representing 250 organizations working in more than 70 countries) and provide a unique forum for frank discussion with UNHCR senior managers and sharing information. The successful introduction of the use of social media in 2014 extended the reach of the consultations to NGO and UNHCR colleagues who were not present.

E.   Partnerships with United Nations agencies and other international organizations

19.   Close collaboration with UN operational partners and international organizations remains critical to delivering effective protection and assistance and to achieving durable solutions. This paper highlights some of the initiatives undertaken over the past year to

strengthen coordination with key partners. More comprehensive information may be found in the *UNHCR Global Report 2013[5]*.

20. UNHCR continues to work closely with UNICEF on education, the provision of community-based health care, immunization programmes, the prevention and response to outbreaks of communicable diseases and child protection in emergencies. Several joint high-level missions were undertaken to reinforce country-level coordination and "letters of understanding" signed, outlining collaboration in operational areas and supporting the identification of complementary interventions and synergies across various settings. In several countries, coordination mechanisms in the area of education were established and protection assessments undertaken jointly. Together with the DRC, trainings for standby partners on child protection in emergencies were carried out.

21. The World Food Programme (WFP) continues to be one of UNHCR's most important partners. Both organizations recently collaborated on a food security campaign, which highlighted the consequences of ration cuts on refugees in Africa, and engaged in joint fundraising initiatives. WFP and UNHCR have also further expanded the geographical scope of cash-based interventions to address food needs and pursued efforts to move from food aid to self-reliance in protracted situations. Joint advocacy with OHCHR remains strong with consistent engagement on doctrinal and normative issues, including the integration of refugee protection alongside advocacy for migrants' rights in the post-2015 development agenda.

22. Joint operational responses with IOM are helping to address complex mixed migration challenges, especially in the Horn and East Africa, including protection at sea. Cooperation on this issue was reinforced through a high-level meeting between the High Commissioner and Director General of IOM in June 2014. The meeting, involving senior staff from both organizations, also discussed current challenges in key operations, recent institutional developments and areas for strengthened collaboration.

III. Partnerships in the area of statelessness

23. UNHCR continues to forge stronger links with governments, United Nations partner agencies, regional organizations, NGOs and academic institutions in the area of statelessness. It is also working to enlarge the pool of actors working to address this issue, particularly in the context of the Campaign to End Gender Discrimination in Nationality Laws to be launched in November 2014, which coincides with the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention this year.

24. Numerous regional initiatives are also underway to resolve statelessness. An International Conference on Migration and Statelessness was held in Turkmenistan in June 2014. Organized together with the Turkmen Government and IOM, the conference explored statelessness challenges in Central Asia and ways to address them. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNHCR is working with UNICEF, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Plan International, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners to promote the use of a newly established Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars' Network, which is aimed at preventing statelessness through improved civil registration. To strengthen coordination among civil society organizations, 30 NGOs and academic institutions based in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the

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[5] See http://www.unhcr.org/globalreport (chapter on partnerships).

Middle East that work on statelessness participated in a third global retreat on statelessness.

25.   A campaign to end gender discrimination in nationality laws was launched in June 2014 in cooperation with UN Women, academic and NGO partners, including the Women's Refugee Commission.   In addition, a First Global Forum on Statelessness, co-hosted by UNHCR and Tilburg University, will be held in September 2014 at the Peace Palace in The Hague. It will bring together some 300 academics, government representatives, international organizations, NGOs and stateless people from around the world to present their research, policy work and experiences on addressing statelessness.

IV.   Partnerships for solutions

26.   Where durable solutions are not yet possible, UNHCR builds relationships with partners to achieve interim goals that support durable solutions in the long-term. This includes supporting the self-reliance of refugees through livelihood interventions and other initiatives which allow them to make positive contributions to their host communities. One such initiative – the "graduation model" was developed by UNHCR, the NGO Trickle Up and the Brac Development Institute (BDI). This model has been implemented in a dozen countries worldwide and aims to "graduate" people in rural or urban areas out of poverty through interventions that include grants, capacity-building and microfinance.

27.   Strategic partnerships are also being pursued with development partners such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme to help move such efforts forward. The Office is working to make more effective use of private-sector partnerships to explore innovate ways to assist the displaced and bring benefits to local communities at the same time.

28.   Durable solutions for displaced populations require close ties between relief and development actors, involving both strategic coordination and formal partnership. In 2014, Denmark hosted the Copenhagen Roundtable, building on recommendations from previous discussions in the Netherlands and Japan, to agree among a wide range of actors involved in humanitarian response and long-term development on ways to address protracted displacement. One concrete outcome was the new Solutions Alliance[6], a network of governments, humanitarian and development organizations, civil society and the private sector that aim to find innovative solutions to displacement. UNHCR is one of the five co-leads of the Alliance, alongside the Danish and Colombian Governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Rescue Committee. Thus far, national groups for Somalia and for Zambia have been established to explore innovative solutions to these displacement situations. Thematic groups have also been established on research, data and performance management; engaging the private sector and post-2015 common messaging.

29.   To resolve protracted situations of statelessness, UNHCR is increasingly investing in specific initiatives which are jointly implemented by UNHCR, government authorities and NGOs and through which stateless persons are identified and able to acquire a nationality.   Such projects are already ongoing in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

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[6]   Further information is available at www.solutionsalliance.org.