
**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

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Emergency response and supply

Summary

This paper presents developments in the areas of emergency preparedness, response and supply matters since the last update provided to the eighty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2023 (EC/74/SC/CRP.4). The paper highlights the emergency-related activities undertaken by UNHCR and its partners in a challenging context, marked by growing insecurity and the adverse effects of climate change, as well as continued progress in strategic supply chain management.

I. Introduction

1. The number of complex humanitarian crises around the world continues to grow. In 2023, UNHCR responded to multiple emergencies in parallel and in nearly all regions. While UNHCR responded to emergencies that were mainly triggered by conflict, climate change and natural hazards were increasingly contributing factors in the context of forced displacement.
2. In its emergency preparedness and response, UNHCR mainstreamed the centrality of protection and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and applied an age, gender and diversity approach in support of a protection-sensitive and accountable engagement. Building on lessons learned from previous responses, including in Ukraine, the development and implementation of simplified procedures in areas such as supply, partnership agreements and human resources were also prioritized.
3. Consistent with the Office's commitment to effective engagement in emergencies, UNHCR launched an updated Emergency Handbook, devised new emergency trainings and doubled the number of workshops on emergency management. The surge in capacity development activities resulted in an increased number of personnel on standby and equipped to respond to an emergency.

II. Strengthening emergency preparedness and response capacity

A. Preparedness actions

4. In 2023, UNHCR promoted proactive emergency preparedness and early action, including through the launch of new guidance on emergency preparedness. The guidance provides practical information for country operations, including with respect to risk analysis and the development of contingency plans in refugee and internal displacement situations and in the context of mixed population movements.
5. UNHCR undertook global monitoring of situations at high risk of developing into an emergency, including as a result of natural hazards. Country operations also began recording contingency plans in the new UNHCR planning and budgeting software, COMPASS, to enable consistent global monitoring of preparedness. Products, such as regional risk snapshots and visualizations, were made available through an internal emergency preparedness and response portal.
6. Over the course of 2023, 40 country operations identified a high risk for a new or escalated emergency and received support with risk analysis and contingency planning. Targeted support was provided to country operations with a level-1 emergency declaration (proactive preparedness), especially those situations involving more than one regional bureau, to ensure coordinated preparedness efforts.
7. UNHCR contributed to the bimonthly Inter-Agency Standing Committee early warning, early action and readiness process. Global and regional collaboration was also strengthened with United Nations partners and independent specialists in the areas of early warning and risk analysis, and with expert bodies such as the World Meteorological Organization.

B. Capacity development

8. During the reporting period, UNHCR strengthened the emergency preparedness and response capacities of more than 380 members of its workforce and partner staff. It doubled the number of workshops on emergency management, training nearly 240 new emergency response team roster members. UNHCR also enhanced the emergency leadership capabilities of 15 senior managers selected for its senior corporate emergency roster. In line with the commitment to support country operations, local partners and government officials, three context-specific situational emergency workshops were carried out in country operations at high risk of developing into an emergency. UNHCR also revised its self-learning package on emergency management.
9. UNHCR strengthened the capacities of 17 members of humanitarian organizations through the emergency team leadership programme, on behalf of the Inter-Agency Standing

Committee. Moreover, UNHCR significantly upgraded its Emergency Handbook, a digital reference tool for UNHCR staff as well as partners in emergencies, which is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

III. Delivery of emergency response

A. Overview of emergencies and policy implementation

10. In 2023, UNHCR declared 43 emergencies in 29 countries, representing a notable increase when compared to the 35 emergencies declared the previous year. Some 60 per cent of the emergency declarations in 2023 were internal level-1 emergencies, requiring proactive preparedness and initial responses in regions such as the Americas and West and Central Africa.

11. Following the outbreak and rapid escalation of conflict in the Sudan in April 2023, emergencies were declared in six countries: in the Sudan for the internal displacement situation, and in the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan to manage the influxes in those countries. In addition to carrying out large-scale emergency deployments, UNHCR supported these operations through five airlifts of essential items to the Sudan and eight airlifts to Chad.

12. As part of its commitment to being a decisive and reliable partner in disasters, UNHCR declared internal level-2 emergencies in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, following the earthquakes in February 2023, and in Bangladesh and Myanmar, in response to Cyclone Mocha. Immediate life-saving interventions were prioritized for refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities in these contexts.

13. The new UNHCR policy on emergency preparedness and response, which came into effect in February 2023, was accompanied by efforts to ensure effective implementation. The Office developed guidance materials and conducted trainings on the policy that included targeted interventions on specific areas, such as supply, inter-agency coordination and cash-based interventions. In 2023, more than 1,000 colleagues from the regional bureaux and country operations, where emergencies had been declared or where there were high risks of an emergency developing, participated in training on the emergency policy.

B. Emergency deployments and partnerships

14. UNHCR continued adjusting and refining its emergency deployment mechanisms, processes and management to ensure a more efficient response to the large-scale, complex and geographically diverse emergencies it faced. In total, UNHCR facilitated some 470 emergency deployments, including over 200 deployments supported by its emergency standby partners. More than 30 per cent of these deployments were in support of the response to the Sudan situation, followed by the Ukraine situation and the drought in the Horn of Africa. Other emergency deployments supported the response to the mass return of undocumented Afghans, the Somali influx in Ethiopia, the earthquakes in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, and mixed population and onward movements in the Americas.

15. A dedicated seven-member emergency surge team and senior emergency staff spent almost 1,200 days on emergency missions in 2023, providing critical emergency response support to the countries affected by the Sudan situation, as well as in Armenia, Somalia and Türkiye. Given the increasing deployment needs in francophone countries, UNHCR developed a specific, French-speaking cohort of personnel to be deployed. Diversity and inclusion, including profiles, language skills, gender equality and geographical balance, were key considerations for UNHCR when managing emergency rosters and deployments.

16. The value of the service donation from standby partners was higher than any previous year, amounting to \$13.4 million. In addition to the deployment of experts, UNHCR benefited from the generous support of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency to establish base camps in Chad, Ethiopia and Türkiye. UNHCR also remained actively engaged in the inter-agency Standby Partnership Network, consisting of 16 United Nations organizations and 56 partners, and continued to share good practices and lessons learned on surge mechanisms with relevant stakeholders. In addition, UNHCR participated in the Inter-

Agency Standing Committee's Emergency Directors Group and provided support to field missions, including through joint visits.

IV. Supply management

17. In the face of multiple emergencies, UNHCR mobilized its global emergency stockpiles and transferred \$53.5 million worth of critical items to provide assistance to forcibly displaced and stateless people, which was a significant increase compared to 2022. Approximately 3,270 metric tons of supplies were shipped by air, 10,700 tons by sea and 18,900 tons by road. UNHCR organized 53 chartered airlifts, carrying life-saving supplies from its emergency stockpiles and suppliers to Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye. Global stocks were regularly replenished to ensure they could meet the urgent needs of up to 1 million people in simultaneous and complex emergencies.

18. In the last few years, the Office's supply capabilities have been challenged by an unstable international context, while the upward trajectory in global forced displacement and the need for humanitarian assistance has shown no sign of slowing. To protect and deliver solutions to people forced to flee, UNHCR requires a robust and resilient supply service that will remain effective and suitable in the future. With this in mind, UNHCR continued to work on transforming its supply chain in 2023, making significant progress on a number of critical initiatives.

19. In the context of the business transformation programme, the Office redesigned and simplified all critical supply procedures by leveraging its new enterprise resource planning system, with the aim of delivering goods and services faster and more effectively. By doing so, the organization reinforced its ability to take informed action and manage supply-related risks and opportunities through increased accountability and in-built performance management indicators.

20. In parallel, UNHCR introduced a new supply operating model, enabling a swift operational response by defining clear roles and responsibilities globally and optimizing inventory holding. This transition entails new supply structures, the segmentation of various supply functions, and the redistribution of business processes based on the complexity of tasks and proximity to the point of delivery. Through the adoption of the new operating model, UNHCR has strengthened the functional oversight of supply teams in the regional bureaux and helped ensure the second line of support to operations. A new headquarters structure has also facilitated increased capacity centrally and marked a distinction between transactional and strategic roles. Equally important is how the new model is enhancing and refocusing supply capacity at the local level in order to meet local needs. These changes echo the ongoing institutional transformation that aims to strengthen the delegation of authority and agility at the country and regional levels.

21. In line with the UNHCR strategic framework for climate action, UNHCR is on track to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in carbon emissions stemming from the procurement, delivery and utilization of core relief items and other goods by 2025. In 2023, the Office developed environmentally friendly product specifications for two additional core relief items adding to the list of four other items, amended corresponding frame agreements and gradually replenished its stock with greener goods, such as solar lanterns. The Office's procurement of 100 per cent recycled blankets for its ongoing winterization response in Ukraine was a key milestone. Following concerted advocacy efforts, UNHCR, together with United Nations agencies and other partners, launched a call to action for a sustainable humanitarian supply chain at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai, also known as COP28.

V. Conclusion

22. The reporting period saw the outbreak of new conflict and flare-ups of violence in existing situations, in addition to devastating natural hazards, such as earthquakes and cyclones. The growing humanitarian needs and limited resources underscore the importance of effective, predictable and timely emergency preparedness and response. To this end,

UNHCR will continue emphasizing the importance of proactive preparedness and early action, expanding its emergency partnerships and capacity development activities, and advocating for simplified procedures across a range of operational areas.
