MoUs and LoUs with UN agencies and NGOs

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Key points

- UNHCR has MoUs with several key partners relevant to emergency operations. Consult the MoU database on the intranet. If you are familiar with the terms of agreements, it can greatly help partnership at field level.

- Emergency operations can conclude new LoUs at field level with strategic partners. Operations should however not sign new LoUs on issues that may involve the direct transfer of funds. Other types of agreement, such as a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA), are used in those cases.

1. Overview

UNHCR works in partnership with a diverse array of actors. It formalizes such partnerships by means of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) at global or regional level, and Letters of Understanding (LoU) at field level. Their purpose is to clarify roles and promote productive relationships with other actors, support strategic partnership on global priorities, and provide a formal framework for cooperation. Partnerships maximize complementarities and make efficient use of capacities and resources, while clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the participating entities. MOUs/LOUs should also refer to coordination mechanisms which help structure the collaboration between the partners, such as the protection working group, specific roles partners have in the cluster system, etc.

2. Main guidance

When and for what purpose

MoUs and LoUs cover strategic or operational collaboration in areas of converging mandates and
objectives, including protection, emergency response, solutions, and advocacy. They do not address funding relationships, implementation, or stand-by arrangements, which are covered in entries Refugee Emergency Response Agreements (RERAs) and Emergency Standby Partners. LoUs may have financial implications (like the Joint Action Plan, which is part of the UNICEF LoU at country level), but do not govern funding relationships.

Summary of guidance and/or options

UNHCR has global Memoranda of Understanding with many UN agencies. Examples include: WFP (food supply and distribution); FAO (food security and self-reliance); WHO (health); UNFPA (reproductive health and SGBV); UNICEF (child protection); ILO (microfinance and skills training); and UNDP (reintegration and post-conflict recovery).

UNHCR also has global MoUs with several major NGO partners, including NRC, DRC, LWF, and Oxfam. As with UN agency MoUs, these agreements are relevant in a variety of contexts, including emergency response. In an emergency context, the most relevant UN MoU is with WFP (2011), and the most relevant LoU is with UNICEF. Neither is relevant for the cluster approach or resources designed to assist IDPs.

The MoU with WFP clarifies respective roles and responsibilities in the planning, distribution and monitoring of food assistance. It is valid in contexts where more than 5,000 refugees in need of food assistance are concentrated on one or more areas of a given country.

A model Tripartite Agreement has been developed for UNHCR, WFP and partners involved in food assistance. A tripartite agreement among WFP, UNHCR and a Jointly Appointed Partner must be concluded whenever in-kind food assistance to UNHCR persons of concern is envisaged in collaboration with these parties. Overall, the Model Tripartite Agreement, improves compliance with the internal policies and partnership arrangements of both organisations, including WFP Field Level Agreement and UNHCR Project Partnership Agreement.

Following the move to cash-based assistance, UNHCR and WFP signed an MOU Addendum on cash assistance in May 2017, and a MOU Addendum on data sharing in September 2018. Both addenda are extremely important wherever cash-for-food assistance is foreseen. These documents set out beneficiary targeting principles as well as detailed guidance on sharing of beneficiary data.

The LoU guidance and template for partnering with UNICEF provides a general basis for collaboration, with particular reference to WASH, health/nutrition, child protection, and education. The template includes a Joint Action Plan that provides clarity at operational level for a specific timeframe.

The MoU with WHO clarifies what technical support and normative guidance WHO will provide UNHCR and Ministries of Health to assist a host Government to extend national health services to refugees. A revised MOU with WHO will be issued shortly (December 2019).

The MoU with IOM outlines what evacuation support will be offered in emergencies to persons
of concern, third country nationals, stranded migrants, and others. There are regular Joint Letters issued to all staff by the two Principals, the last one in January 2019.

**How to implement this at field level?**

Emergency operations can conclude new LoUs at field level with strategic partners. The relevant technical unit at UNHCR HQ, LAS, and/or the Partnership and Coordination Service of the Division of External Relations should always be contacted beforehand.

Operations should not sign new LoUs on issues that involve funding obligations on the part of UNHCR. Other types of agreement, such as a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA), are used in those cases.

**Annexes**

- UNHCR - WFP MoU January 2011
- Model Tripartite Agreement WFP UNHCR February 2016
- WFP MoU (2011) and summary sheet
- WFP Addendum on cash assistance (2017)
- WFP Addendum on data sharing (2018)
- IOM-UNHCR Joint Letter (2019)
- UNFPA Cooperation Agreement on emergency preparedness and response (2018)
- UNHCR-WHO MoU 2020
- UNHCR-WHO Operational Guidance 2020

3. **Links**
4. Main contacts

- For general MoU questions, contact the Partnership and Coordination Service. At: hqng00@unhcr.org.
- For questions on implementation of the WFP, MoU, contact Chief Public Health Section. At: HQPHN@unhcr.org.
- For questions on country-level LoUs with UNICEF, contact the Partnership and Coordination Service. At: hqng00@unhcr.org.