

Multimedia content gathering

07 September 2023

Key points

- Take photos and short videos to document what you see. A small glimpse of your daily reality can help audiences round the world to care about the people you serve.
- Focus on an individual or a family and share their story. Consider the protection and security of those you interview or film. Respect their dignity and seek their consent. Do not disclose details that might put them at risk. Explain that the image(s) or story could be seen all over the world on internet, television, radio, etc. Discuss whether to change names or other details to ensure their protection.
- Think of the audience. Ask yourself: why will a reader or viewer living far away find this story interesting? Explain unfamiliar details and avoid jargon.
- Use social media to share up-to-the-minute content in real time.
- Share your content with the Multimedia Content Section, which can help edit and distribute it to a wider audience.

1. Overview

The term 'content' refers to all the editorial material that we publish on our websites, post to social media platforms, or share with external media partners. It includes news and feature articles, tweets, blogs, newsletters, photos, videos, podcasts, infographics and in-depth reports.

Obtaining good content is especially important when major conflicts or natural disasters erupt. Their impact on civilians is often eclipsed by political and military issues, but strong, timely content helps UNHCR to humanize a distant conflict and call attention to the plight of civilians in need of protection and life-saving assistance. Content enables us to raise awareness of the rights and needs of persons of concern, advocate for open borders, humanitarian access and other favourable policies, and mobilize much-needed donor support.

The Global Communications Service often deploys multimedia content producers to capture stories about individuals and families displaced from their homes, but field staff make a vital contribution, especially in the first hours and days of an emergency before the international press corps has arrived, as well as after the press corps has moved on.

2. Main guidance

Underlying policies, principles and/or standards

- When we share up-to-the-minute content, it helps UNHCR to lead the narrative by showing, that we are on the ground, well-informed, and ready to engage with journalists.
- Content about an emergency can help generate empathy in ways that advance UNHCR's advocacy and fundraising objectives.
- Protection is paramount. Never share content that puts someone at risk.

Good practice recommendations

Focus on individuals. Stories and images that focus on an individual are almost always more engaging and memorable than general stories or images of a crowd. Find a sympathetic individual who can articulate his or her experience. Ask what life was like before he or she was displaced. Look for ways in which people exhibit resilience, and ways in which host communities are showing generosity. Look for the unexpected – details or themes that add an element of surprise to the story. When writing, vary the length of your sentences, avoid jargon, and omit unnecessary words. Start at a dramatic moment to hook the reader's interest and fill in context and backstory as you go along. Consider this example from a UNHCR story about desperate journeys on the Mediterranean (please see the first photo below).

Photographs. When taking photos, try to establish eye contact with the subject. Collect detailed captions with names, ages and direct quotes. If possible, take pictures in the early morning or early evening, when the light is often best. Take many photos and choose the best ones later. Take some in portrait format (vertical), which works well for report covers and Instagram stories, but take most in landscape (horizontal) because they fit most of our other online platforms better. Rather than put the subject in the centre of the frame, consider the rule of thirds. (Please see the second photo below.)

Sometimes, nevertheless, images of a crowd can powerfully capture a newsworthy situation – like the below iconic photo of Syrian refugees crossing into Iraq (please see the third photo below).

Video. When shooting video with a smartphone:

- Hold your phone parallel to the landscape (think of a wide movie screen) so that we can distribute your footage to broadcasters – unless you are intentionally shooting clips for

Instagram stories or TikTok.

- Keep it still (try to brace against a stationary object, like a tree or vehicle).
- Try to capture a sequence, three related shots that give continuity or compress time. This could be a wide, medium and close-up shot of the same subject, or the beginning, middle and end of an action (putting a kettle on to boil, pouring hot water over the tea leaves, pouring a cup for a visitor).
- Hold each shot for about 10 seconds.
- Do not pan (move from side to side), do not tilt (move up and down), do not zoom.
- Let the action move through the frame, rather than follow it with your camera.
- If someone is speaking, get as close as possible and try to minimize wind noise. Better still, use a lav mic.

See media sample below - [UNHCR's Vivian Tan with newly arrived Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh](#).

Share photos, videos and written pieces with the Global Communications Service in Geneva. You can send large video files with shotlists to <http://www.wetransfer.com> and upload photographs directly to Refugees Media, UNHCR's searchable online distribution platform, at: <http://media.unhcr.org> .

Considerations for practical implementation

- Show what the subjects' lives were like before they were displaced.
- Capture the moment when they realized they had to flee. What went through their minds?
- Describe their flight to safety, their current situation, and their hopes and plans.
- Record interviews. Quote the interviewee directly. Let the reader hear his or her exact words.
- When writing, start at the most dramatic point in the story and add context and backstory as you go along.

Resources and partnerships

- Key staff including communicators working in emergency operations should be issued smartphones, so that they can create content themselves and share it quickly with social networks and the Global Communications Service in Geneva.

Annexes

[UNHCR Guidelines on Engagement with the Media](#)

3. Learning and field practices

4. Links

[Refugees Media UNHCR Official Website](#) [UNHCR on Youtube](#) [UNHCR on Twitter](#) [UNHCR on Instagram](#) [UNHCR on Facebook](#)

5. Main contacts

Contact the Global Communications Service:

- Chris Reardon, Chief of Multimedia Content Section, reardon@unhcr.org.
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International Humanitarian and Development Coordination Architecture

27 March 2023

1. Overview

This Entry summarizes the current international humanitarian coordination structures. In addition, it also touches on areas where humanitarian and development coordination intersect. The Entry should be read in conjunction with the Entries on the [Cluster Approach](#), and the [Refugee Coordination Model](#).

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

Recent humanitarian emergencies have required a larger and more complex humanitarian response. Humanitarian actors have also had to become more accountable to the populations they serve. Public scrutiny of humanitarian action has increased. These factors have galvanized efforts to make UN coordination effective.

For UNHCR, the pursuit of effective coordination is not an end in itself, but a means to maximize the positive effects that UNHCR and its partners have on protection, the delivery of humanitarian responses, and solutions to displacement.

UNCHR and other agencies have promoted the connection between humanitarian action and development for many years. By recognizing this and promoting ways of working that increase complementarity, the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) has underscored the need to involve development actors. Connections with development should be made from the preparedness phase onwards, and the link is especially crucial when countries emerge from the emergency phase and transition into a phase during which development issues, such as livelihoods and employment, predominate.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

Chief Executive Board

The UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) is the longest-standing and highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations system. It meets biannually and is chaired by the UN Secretary-General.

It provides broad guidance, coordination and strategic direction for the system as a whole in areas under the responsibility of executive heads. While ensuring respect for organizations' independent mandates, it focuses on inter-agency priorities and initiatives. The CEB is composed of 31 United Nations entities, including the United Nations, executive heads of United Nations Funds and Programmes, Specialized Agencies such as the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and International Monetary Fund), and related organizations (the WTO, IAEA and IOM).

The CEB works through two high-level committees: the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), and the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM).

UNHCR is a member of the CEB and its three constitutive pillars; it is represented by the High Commissioner.

UN Reform

The Secretary-General (SG) has initiated an ambitious reform agenda to enhance UN

performance across the three pillars of UN work: peace and security, human rights, and development. Overall, the reform agenda seeks to improve performance at headquarters and in the field by adopting integrated, decentralized, and impact-oriented approaches wherever approaches have been fragmented, centralized or process-heavy.

In 2017, the SG initiated three reforms, to strengthen the UN development system (UNDS), UN (internal) management, and the UN's capacity to sustain peace (its peace and security architecture). The SG is also reviewing UN gender policies to enhance gender parity; UN efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; various components of the counter-terrorism architecture; and the UN's whistle-blower policy. It is important to note that UNHCR strongly supports efforts to revitalize the UN development system because doing so is key to bridging the humanitarian/development divide and delivering responses that are sustainable.

The SG has put 'prevention' at the centre of the reform effort. His vision of prevention requires the UN system to do everything possible to help countries avert the outbreak of crises that take a high toll on human life, undermine their institutions, and weaken their capacity to achieve peace and development. Elements of preventive action include: early identification of risks; intensified diplomacy; acceleration of UN development work; and strengthened member state engagement. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to prioritize efforts to raise prevention concerns with relevant intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms, such as the Security Council, the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission. The SG has formed a High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation to provide him with advice on mediation initiatives and to support specific mediation efforts around the world. The Board is composed of 18 current and former global leaders, senior officials, and experts. He also relies on the SG's Executive Committee, composed of the Principals of all Secretariat agencies, which raises and discusses issues of critical risk and pursues an overall risk mitigation and prevention strategy.

With regard to peace and security, a broad set of measures seeks to ensure that: risk analysis and responses to risk are shared; women and youth are meaningfully engaged in peace efforts; peace funding increases (including a 'quantum leap' in support to the Peacebuilding Fund); and partnerships for peace multiply, including partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations and with the World Bank.

In addition, the Security Council is leading a major review of the UN's peacekeeping operations (PKOs), which may change how the Secretariat manages peace and security functions within the UN. Management reforms mainly focus on the UN Secretariat. They seek to improve the efficiency, transparency and accountability of a system that, according to some, is often slow, unresponsive and ineffective. Ongoing UN change processes are taking steps to: review and simplify human resources procedures to raise the quality and speed of staff recruitment, deployment and development; achieve gender parity; improve workforce planning, training and development, paying special attention to the profile of leaders and managers; refocus the UN's strategy on information and communications technology; and improve global supply chain management. Of the three areas of reform, reform of the UNDS currently has the most direct impact on UNHCR operations at country level. After the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Programme Review initiated the UNDS reform process, the Secretary-General issued a report containing proposals for action, most of which Member States approved in the GA Resolution on

UNDS reform of May 2019.

UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)

At global level, the UNSDG provides a forum for joint policy formation and decision-making. It guides, supports, tracks and oversees coordination of development operations in 165 countries and territories. It brings together 36 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments and offices that play a role in development.

The UNSDG's current **strategic priorities** are to: assist countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more swiftly and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; assist national partners to implement their human rights obligations and integrate human rights principles and international standards into the work of the UN; and deliver effective support that will help crisis and post-crisis countries to build resilient societies and achieve sustainable recovery.

The UNSDG's current **strategic approaches** are to: promote coherent development results across the entire UN development system in order to improve transparency and accountability; ensure that Resident Coordinator systems are participatory, collegial and mutually accountable; simplify and harmonize business practices more swiftly; develop effective partnerships and wider multi-stakeholder engagement; strengthen capacity development as a core function of the UN development system; and integrate planning, programming and policy more completely.

Implementation of UNSDG strategic priorities and work plans is driven by **working mechanisms** – working groups and task teams – that focus on fostering system-wide norms, standards, and policies, as well as operational effectiveness.

The UNSDG meets twice a year under the chairmanship of its Chair, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, who chairs the UNSDG on behalf of the SG. The UNDP Administrator, Mr Achim Steiner, serves as Vice-Chair.

The UNSDG is composed of the executive heads of UNSDG member entities. The UNSDG Vice-chair convenes the **UNSDG Core Group**, whose members include DESA, FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP, WHO, the rotating chair of the Regional Economic Commissions, and chairs of the UNSDG Strategic Results Groups.

Resident Coordinators

The new [Resident Coordinator system](#) (RCS) remains focused on sustainable development; its overarching objective is 'the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions'. As of January 2019, it is independent (separate from UNDP). Resident Coordinators (RCs) report to the SG through the UN Deputy Secretary-General. The UN Development Coordination Office (DOC) in the UN Secretariat will manage and oversee the system, reporting to the Deputy Secretary-General. RCs will have authority to lead UN Country Teams (UNCTs) when they implement the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and assist countries to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, they have [authority](#) to:

- Ensure agency programmes for development are fully aligned with national development needs and priorities as well as with the UNSDCF.
- Ensure inter-agency pooled funding for development is used to further national priorities.
- Coordinate the UN's operational development activities in support of countries' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.
- Appraise the performance of UN country team heads.

Where international humanitarian assistance is required, and a separate Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) or lead agency is not designated, the RC leads and coordinates the response efforts of UN and other relevant humanitarian actors. In refugee crises, UNHCR is the designated lead agency and leads the response. To enable the RC to deploy and coordinate the UN development response coherently and effectively, UNHCR should brief the RC on all aspects of this work.

The accountabilities of UNCT agencies

Members of a UNCT are accountable and report to their respective agencies on matters relevant to their mandates. They are also expected to report periodically to the RC, on the activities of their individual agencies and on their agencies' contributions to the collective results of the UNSDCF. UNCT heads also report to the RC. In compliance with a recent UNDS resolution, they must now report on all activities that relate to the UNSDCF.

Funding

Funding for the new system will come from the following sources:

- A 1% coordination levy on tightly earmarked non-core contributions to UN development-related activities, to be paid at source.
- A doubling of the current UNSDG arrangement for cost-sharing between UN entities.
- Development system entities.
- Voluntary, predictable, multi-year contributions to a dedicated trust fund that will provide resources for inception periods.

Additionally, a Joint SDG Fund for Agenda 2030 has been created. It will receive voluntary contributions to implement country-level projects that support initiatives to achieve the SDGs. The aim is to raise and disburse USD 290 million annually. Because this target had not been reached at the end of 2019, the 2020 funding formula may be revised.

Regional set-up

Regional development structures (regional offices of UN agencies, regional UNSDGs, regional economic commissions) are being revitalized. The UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) coordinates global and regional UN development programmes. It provides oversight, guidance and capacity building, addresses policy guidance issues related to country-level operations, and supports the Resident Coordinator system.

UN country teams

UNCTs organize UN inter-agency cooperation and decision-making at country level. The UNCT includes every entity of the UN system that delivers operational activities for development, emergency, recovery and transition in a country. Its main purposes are to ensure that UNCT members plan and work co-operatively, within the Resident Coordinator system, to deliver tangible results in support of the Government's development agenda.

The UN Resident Coordinator (RC) is the designated representative of the UN Secretary-General for development issues. The RC leads the UNCT. The UNCT meets at least once a month to make decisions through a consultative process. All UNCT members are collegially accountable to the RC and the UNCT, as well as directly accountable to their own organizations, for producing results under the UNSDCF and the joint UNCT workplan.

UNHCR can use the UNCT mechanism to exercise its protection leadership role and advocate for the inclusion of refugees in the UNSDCF. Advocacy is recommended both to engage UNCT members in support of UNHCR's advocacy objectives, and ensure that people of concern to UNHCR (PoC) are included in the UNSDCF and other national planning mechanisms.

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

The UNSDCF is a multi-year strategic programme framework for UNCTs. Each national UNSDCF is designed to streamline UN development programmes at country level by introducing shared objectives, strategies and timeframes; it is prepared in close cooperation with the national Government. The World Bank may also participate in a UNSDCF when it contributes to development programmes.

The [UNSDCF process](#) starts with a Common Country Analysis (CCA). The CCA identifies needs and achievable changes. It provides the essential evidence base from which the UNSDCF's theory of change is derived and sets the direction and content for a strategic UN development assistance framework (UNDAF). CCAs are forward looking. In developing them, the UN system uses its convening power to consult and engage with the Government and other stakeholders. The analysis itself is the UN's, and does not require formal endorsement by Government. At the same time, preparing a CCA creates opportunities to build partnerships with key actors in a country, including international financial institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

Unlike humanitarian and refugee planning exercises, the UNSDCF does not include NGO or civil society programmes, although these organizations may be consulted and may be implementing partners. Inter-agency humanitarian plans, IASC-led [humanitarian response plans](#) (HRPs), and UNHCR-led refugee response plans (RRPs) will continue to be independent but as far as possible should complement the UNSDCF.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

The IASC is a global humanitarian forum established in 1992 under UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182. Led by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who is also head of OCHA, its members are operational

organizations that have links to the UN system. Standing invitees include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), InterAction, OHCHR, the World Bank Group, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons. In practice, no distinction is made between 'members' and 'standing invitees', and the number of participating agencies has expanded significantly since 1992. The IASC's main purpose is to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action by coordinating the activities of IASC members and other humanitarian actors, assigning responsibilities, and sharing resources and knowledge. The IASC develops and agrees system-wide humanitarian policies and resolves disputes or disagreements between humanitarian agencies or over system-wide humanitarian issues.

Role of partners involved

Overview of UNHCR's role in the IASC

- The IASC system deals with humanitarian issues that do not involve refugees. General Assembly Resolution 48/116 (December 1993) provides the legal foundation for UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons (IDPs). It is supported by the 2005 Humanitarian Reform that in turn led to the [cluster approach](#) and the [Transformative Agenda](#). UNHCR is actively involved in the IASC. It leads the [protection cluster](#), and co-leads the camp coordination/camp management cluster (CCCM) and the [shelter cluster](#). (On shelter, UNHCR leads in situations of conflict and IFRC leads in natural disasters.)
- The High Commissioner is a 'Principal' (head of agency) in the IASC.
- The Partnership and Coordination Service of the Division of External Relations represents UNHCR in IASC Working Group meetings.
- The Division of Emergency, Security, and Supply represents UNHCR in the Emergency Directors' group.
- UNHCR has made firm commitments to fulfil its global and national cluster roles and obligations, and to report to the ERC on these.

It should be borne in mind that, in line with the new IDP policy:

- UNHCR will always strive to lead the [protection cluster](#). Because UNHCR is not operational in all countries, however, in natural disaster settings leadership may be allocated to other agencies that have strong in-country capacity (such as UNICEF, OHCHR or UNFPA), subject to the agreement of peers.
- UNHCR will strive to lead the shelter and CCCM clusters in forced displacement settings. In general, UNHCR is not in favour of merging these clusters because each requires distinct technical expertise.

- The IASC/ERC does not lead on refugee matters, which are exclusively the domain of the High Commissioner, who reports directly to the UN General Assembly. (The ERC reports to the Secretary-General on matters that concern the IASC.)
- The ERC activates cluster-based responses to IDP and natural disasters via the IASC. The ERC does not have authority to declare a refugee emergency. Equally, UNHCR may not issue a system-wide emergency declaration or initiate cluster coordination at its own initiative.

One of the central roles of the IASC is to declare that an emergency has been scaled up. In November 2018, protocols for 'system-wide scale-up' replaced the previous arrangements for activating 'Level 3 emergencies'. An IASC system-wide scale-up mobilizes the entire IASC humanitarian system in response to a sudden onset crisis, or a rapidly deteriorating situation, in a country or region. System-wide scale-ups are called when the local or regional capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity, and urgency of a crisis. The five criteria for determining a system-wide scale-up emergency are: scale, urgency, complexity, capacity, and risk of failure to effectively deliver to affected populations.

Key steps include:

1. Consultation with the IASC Principals.
2. Mobilisation of cluster lead agency response capacities.
3. Immediate deployment of cluster coordination teams, possessing information management expertise, with capacity to scale up.
4. Activation of clusters, including designated leads.
5. Appointment and empowerment of a Humanitarian Coordinator. The HC:
 - Leads the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The HCT draws up a Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA), and uses it to prepare a strategic statement and response plan.
 - Leads requests for Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allocations.
 - Seeks consensus in the HCT on key decisions, but has authority to finalize proposals.
 - Raises any cluster lead performance problems with the ERC for discussion with IASC Principals.
 - Oversees effective coordination and delivery, monitoring, reporting and reviews.

Important processes

The World Humanitarian Summit

UNHCR took part in the World Humanitarian Summit, convened by the United Nations Secretary-General in Istanbul in May 2016.

In addition to subscribing to 32 commitments under the five core responsibilities of the [Agenda for Humanity](#), UNHCR made 33 individual commitments and joined several initiatives. Among these, UNHCR undertook to steer inter-agency efforts to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action, ensure predictable engagement in situations of internal displacement, and champion efforts to end statelessness.

In line with its commitment to the '[Grand Bargain](#)' which key donors and humanitarian organizations approved at the summit, UNHCR is making internal changes to improve its

effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability. It has also prioritized fulfilment of the [Commitment to Action](#), also signed at the Summit, which calls for a 'new way of working'. Through the Agenda for Humanity platform, UNHCR reports annually on its progress towards achieving these [commitments](#).

Commitment to Action: a New Way of Working and collective outcomes

Against the backdrop of the SDGs, which promise to leave no-one behind and end needs by reducing risks and vulnerabilities, the New Way of Working is now a shared commitment in the UN and the IASC. Building on major global processes, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Humanitarian Summit, the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), the [Compact on Facilitating Safe and Orderly Migration](#), and [twin resolutions on Sustaining Peace](#), the introduction of new working methods is recognized to be an imperative for both humanitarian and development action. From UNHCR's perspective, the aim should be to improve the protection environment and contribute to peace and prevention of conflict. To reduce the impact of protracted crises on affected populations, it is necessary both to meet immediate needs and make investments in the medium- and long-term that will reduce the chronic vulnerabilities and risks faced by affected communities.

It is widely recognized that aid actors must evolve their thinking and working methods to address these issues more coherently. The adoption of 'collective outcomes' analysis and a 'whole-of-society' approach may make it possible to bring together sectors and intervention timeframes that have traditionally been separate. IASC expects to release Collective Outcomes Guidelines in 2020.

Collective outcomes analysis seeks to employ the comparative advantages enjoyed by different agencies to transcend conventional thinking, silos, and other attitudinal, institutional, and funding obstacles. In practice, participating agencies define a collective vision based on a joint analysis of context and risks (in the short-, medium- and long-term) and agree strategies, roles and responsibilities based on the comparative capacity (advantage) of participating actors to deliver the different outcomes. It is important to remember that the definition of comparative advantage includes an organization's mandate, capacity, and ability to act.

Concretely, HCTs and UNCTs are applying the New Way of Working by:

1. Jointly conducting predictable situation and problem analyses.
2. Planning and programming in ways that are more inclusive and coherent, enabling humanitarian and development actors to agree collective outcomes.
3. Strengthening leadership and coordination.
4. Introducing financing modalities that can support collective outcomes.

Adopting a collective outcome approach implies objectives that deliver sustained positive change and, in particular, make future humanitarian interventions unnecessary by reducing vulnerability and risk. In most cases, achievement of such objectives requires multi-year action. 'Positive change' might include humanitarian, development and peace-building elements. Humanitarian action might continue to be relevant but would be implemented in ways that promote sustained positive change.

Refugee coordination

Under [its Statute](#), UNHCR provides international protection to refugees and seeks permanent solutions for them, acting on the authority of the General Assembly (GA). In that capacity, it is the lead agency with respect to refugee protection, responsible for seeking solutions in the UN system in association with a wider array of stakeholders. As set out in subsequent GA resolutions, its responsibilities include coordination, provision of protection and assistance, obtaining solutions, and advocacy. Importantly, UNHCR also has a supervisory role: it is the UN entity most immediately responsible for ensuring that States adhere to internationally accepted standards with respect to refugees and stateless persons and for strengthening States' capacity to protect both groups.

UNHCR has led and managed refugee operations effectively for decades. For many years, however, it did not articulate a model of refugee coordination that took account of changes in the humanitarian landscape. The [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM), formalised in 2013 and further updated in 2019, makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable by clarifying roles and responsibilities. Recent UN General Assembly Resolutions have confirmed the RCM and UNHCR's mandate to lead and coordinate the refugee response ([A/RES/69/152](#), [A/RES/70/135](#)).

States are primarily responsible for protecting refugees. However, several factors can inhibit their capacity to fully discharge this responsibility. Over two thirds of all refugees live in low- and middle-income countries that face economic and development challenges. The arrival of large numbers of refugees strains already over-stretched infrastructures and service delivery. In addition, the institutions of many States across the development spectrum are not equipped to appropriately receive, protect or otherwise respond to the challenges of receiving large numbers of refugees. For these reasons, it has long been recognized that international cooperation is required to support States that receive refugees. This understanding lay at the heart of UNHCR's creation and the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. The importance of cooperation was subsequently confirmed in a range of regional instruments and was underscored by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which stated that "there is an urgent need for more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, while taking account of existing contributions and the differing capacities and resources among States. Refugees and host communities should not be left behind." The GCR calls for a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach to reach this objective, to achieve which UNHCR plays both a support and catalytic role.

UNHCR is mandated to affirm and support the right of every refugee to a safe and dignified voluntary return to his or her own country. UNHCR provides advice and guides UN action to facilitate voluntary return to countries of origin where conditions are such that return is safe, dignified and sustainable.

The UN system expects UNHCR to advise it on refugee returns, based on its assessment of the country's readiness to receive returnees, guarantee their security, provide essential services, and do so sustainably over time.

In practical terms, UNHCR's coordination responsibilities fall operationally in the following broad areas:

1. **Preparedness.** It works with Government and partners to: assess the likelihood of refugee inflows; determine the impact of inflows on national response mechanisms; and, depending on the level of risk, take preparedness actions.
2. **Advocacy.** It intervenes politically, diplomatically and legally to influence legislation and national practices. When doing so, UNHCR may engage directly with host Governments.
3. **Strengthening national capacity.** It may strengthen the capacity of national institutions and local actors to protect refugees and find solutions for them.
4. **Delivery.** It delivers protection and assistance and facilitates solutions.
5. **Coordination.** It involves UN partners and other stakeholders in developing and implementing a [protection and solutions strategy](#) that supports refugees and assists host countries to support refugees.
6. **Participation.** It works with refugees and host communities in ways that are sensitive to [age, gender and diversity](#), and ensures they participate in designing responses to their needs that are appropriate, accessible and inclusive.
7. **Resource mobilization.** It raises funds for responding to refugees, including through inter-agency plans and appeals. **Inter alia**, it sets protection objectives; coordinates resource mobilization; drafts initial inter-agency plans; reports on their implementation and impact; and tracks contributions.
8. **Broadens the support base.** It seeks out and works with a wide array of stakeholders, including private sector, multilateral and bilateral development actors, to strengthen institutional capacity and assist host communities to address their urgent humanitarian needs. Where applicable, it works with such stakeholders to overcome shocks that result from conflict or large refugee arrivals.
9. **Monitoring and reporting.** It monitors and reports on the situation of refugees and application of the international protection regime.
10. **Prevention.** UNHCR uses the High Commissioner's good offices to prevent situations that cause refugees to flee, address root causes of migration and displacement, and promote the involvement of refugees in efforts to sustain peace.
11. **Solutions.** It promotes durable solutions; designs refugee responses that facilitate solutions; and ensures that solutions are implemented in ways that are safe and sustainable. This work includes efforts to secure return and reintegration, resettlement, local integration, obtain complementary pathways, and achieve other local solutions.

For more information on the interface of refugee coordination with the development and cluster systems, see the Entry on the [Refugee Coordination Model](#).

3. Links

[Chief Executive Board IASC Cluster Guidance UN Reform](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact the Partnership and Coordination Service in UNHCR's Division for External Relations:

- Annika Sandlund, at: Sandlund@unhcr.org
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Humanitarian programme cycle (IASC)

09 March 2023

Key points

- Engage fully in HPC processes.
- Familiarize yourself with, and follow, HPC procedures and guidance.
- Fulfill cluster obligations and commit financial and human resources to support cluster roles and responsibilities. Request support from HQ if there are gaps.
- The HPC does not apply in refugee emergencies, which are covered by the UNHCR Refugee Coordination Model (RCM). In "mixed situations", contact the Partnership and Coordination Service in the Division of External Relation (DER), to determine the best coordination and delivery arrangements.

1. Overview

The humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) is an operational framework developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in the context of the [Transformative Agenda](#). It sets out the sequence of actions that should be taken to prepare for, plan, manage, deliver and monitor collective humanitarian responses. It applies directly to inter-agency responses in situations involving internally displaced persons (IDPs) and in emergencies linked to natural disasters, including system-wide [scale-up activation](#). The IASC has prepared a [HPC reference module](#).

The HPC has five elements, coordinated in a seamless manner: each step builds logically on the previous step and leads to the next. Its successful implementation depends on emergency preparedness, effective coordination between national and local authorities and humanitarian actors, and information management.

The process for implementing the HPC is a new way of working that builds on what humanitarian organizations have learned. It focuses on taking better decisions and improving outcomes at field level, rather than preparing well-designed 'appeal' documents for donors and headquarters. This

requires a shift from past practice. The model is driven by collectively owned, evidence-based plans, direction by humanitarian country teams (HCTs) led by a humanitarian coordinator (HC), and accountability for results. Its process and tools focus on humanitarian actors working at national and subnational level in the field, not on external audiences.

Note. The HPC does not apply in refugee emergencies, which are covered by the UNHCR [refugee coordination model \(RCM\)](#), a framework for coordinating and delivering protection and relief services for refugees and host communities. UNHCR leads the entire cycle during a refugee response, including inter-agency contingency planning, needs assessment, information management, response, and resource mobilization. In mixed situations (where operations to assist IDPs and refugees occur side by side), the UNHCR's and OCHA's [Joint Note on Mixed Situations; Coordination in Practice](#) describes the respective roles and responsibilities of the UNHCR representative and the HC, ensuring that coordination is streamlined, complementary and mutually reinforcing.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

The HPC is a component of the IASC [Transformative Agenda](#) (TA). It operationalizes the accountability pillar of the TA by introducing a model of action with which all humanitarian actors cooperate to achieve collective results. The HPC defines the standard for inter-agency joint programming in humanitarian emergency situations.

Underlying principles

Protection. Protection of human rights and of people affected and at risk should inform the HPC and all operational activities. In practical terms, this means that agencies should identify who is at risk at the outset of a crisis, and determine how they are at risk and why, taking underlying vulnerabilities into account. The model requires agencies to analyse and prioritize protection needs; adopt a rights-based and participatory approach to collective action; and respond promptly to human rights violations ('rights up front'). See IASC, [Statement on the 'Centrality of Protection'](#) and IASC, [Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (2016).

Accountability to affected people. The HPC requires humanitarian actors to listen to, communicate with, and involve affected populations throughout an emergency. They are expected to establish a direct, responsible and respectful relationship with affected communities and ensure that, during planning, implementation and monitoring, affected communities participate in and provide feedback on decisions and activities that affect them. Complaint mechanisms should be established. Where their needs cannot be met or planned for, affected communities should be informed; and they should regularly receive programme updates. Good communication between humanitarian workers and affected communities improves trust and dialogue and strengthens agencies' understanding of needs and concerns, thereby improving the quality of the response. See Revised [IASC, Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(AAP/PSEA\) 2017](#).

Note. IASC Preliminary Guidance Note on [Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#) sets out actions to be undertaken

throughout the HPC to fulfil commitments on accountability to affected populations (AAP) and ensure that protection is central to humanitarian response. The guidance note is intended to accompany the IASC's HPC Reference Module (2015) and the tools and guidance on protection mainstreaming developed by the Global [Protection Cluster](#) (GPC). Protection mainstreaming is the process of incorporating protection principles and promoting meaningful access, safety and dignity in humanitarian aid. Accountability is one of the four key elements of protection mainstreaming, alongside participation and empowerment, meaningful access and providing safety and dignity and avoiding causing harm. Priorities and desired protection outcomes should be identified, pursued and achieved collectively across sectors/clusters and with communities through meaningful participation. Meaningful participation reinforces a rights-based approach, empowers communities, recognizes differences in [age, gender and diversity](#), guarantees transparent responses to community feedback, and leverages the complementary roles, expertise and mandates of humanitarian actors.

Cross-cutting issues: inclusion and data disaggregation. Affected people are not a homogeneous group and humanitarian organizations acknowledge differences of experience and need due to sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, age, and other social markers of exclusion. These differences should inform the implementation of a response. Cross-cutting issues such as gender, age, disability, and HIV/AIDS should be recognized and mainstreamed. Gender equality is of particular importance; data disaggregated by sex and age should be collected in support of gender analysis, and the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian programmes must take into account the implications for women and men, as well as other dimensions of diversity that can lead to exclusion. See IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, [Gender Handbook on Humanitarian Action](#) (IASC, 2018). Similarly, Disaggregated data on disability should be collected on the same grounds, to support inclusion of [persons with disabilities](#) in every aspect of the humanitarian programme cycle. See [IASC, Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action \(2019\)](#).

Environment. Humanitarian action must take the environment into account. Environmental issues underlie and contribute to humanitarian crises, and humanitarian action can damage the environment, harming affected people and host communities. Reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian interventions can ease the transition into sustainable recovery and help to strengthen the resilience of affected communities.

Exit and early recovery. Plans for recovery should start when a crisis begins. A response should address recovery needs that arise during the humanitarian phase using humanitarian mechanisms that align with development principles. This approach enables affected populations to use the benefits of humanitarian action to create development opportunities, strengthens their resilience, and establishes a sustainable pathway to recovery. For humanitarian organizations, it provides a pathway to durable solutions and an exit strategy. On both grounds, programmes that promote sustainable long-term solutions, including greater system and community resilience, should be integrated in the HPC and explicitly identified in humanitarian strategies and planning.

Under the HPC, all partners:

- Support the national authorities, who have the primary responsibility to assist and protect populations affected by disaster.
- Promote the participation of affected populations.
- Operate under the leadership of the HC (or Resident Coordinator, if an HC has not been appointed).
- Accept the direction of the HCT (or UN Country Team if an HCT has not been created).
- Support inter-cluster or sector coordination and cooperate with clusters or sectors (when they are activated).
- Welcome and include a broad range of actors, including at sub-national level.

3. Main guidance

Underlying process - how does this work?

Pre-emergency

The HPC recommends that agencies should take a broad range of actions to promote [emergency response preparedness](#) (ERP). These make it possible to respond more quickly, more appropriately and more efficiently when a disaster strikes; and to take decisions on the basis of more reliable information. The HC is responsible for leading the ERP process, for creating an effective and coherent HCT (or similar in-country mechanism), and for coordinating with national structures and plans. The HC is expected to work closely with the HCT, clusters/sectors, national authorities, and NGOs.

HPC in sudden-onset emergencies - system-wide scale-up protocols

In November 2018, IASC introduced new [protocols for humanitarian system-wide scale-up](#). These strengthened the coordination of emergency responses and replaced arrangements for 'humanitarian system-wide emergency activation' (L3) which had been in place since 2012.

The IASC Principals have agreed that, when major sudden-onset crises occur, or a humanitarian situation deteriorates significantly as a result of natural and human-induced hazards or conflict, justifying system-wide mobilization, IASC will declare a humanitarian system-wide scale-up activation (henceforth referred to as 'scale-up activation'). This exceptional measure will last for a time-bound period of up to six months in circumstances where the gravity of the humanitarian situation justifies the mobilization of system-wide capacities and resources, beyond standard levels, to respond to critical humanitarian needs on the ground. A single three-month extension may be considered, but only in exceptional situations.

Specifically, the declaration of an IASC scale-up activation is justified when it is necessary to respond to a sudden onset and/or rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in a given country, including at subnational level, and when the local or regional capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity and urgency of the crisis.

The procedure activates a range of mechanisms and tools. These ensure that (a) the

humanitarian system delivers effective support to national authorities that complements existing capacities, and monitors its own performance; (b) the humanitarian system puts in place adequate capacities and tools for empowered leadership and coordination; and (c) IASC member organisations and global cluster lead agencies install systems and mobilize resources that are sufficient to enable them to comply with their mandates.

Within 48 hours: Activation of a humanitarian system-wide scale-up.

Within 72 hours: The HC is designated and relevant clusters are activated.

Within 5 days: A flash appeal is launched.

By day 30: A flash appeal is issued; a humanitarian response plan (HRP) is prepared.

5 months: Review period.

6 months: The system-wide scale-up ends (subject to a single extension of 3 months).

12 months: An inter-agency humanitarian evaluation is commissioned.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

UNHCR performs a number of roles during the HPC.

As an IASC Principal, the High Commissioner takes part in decisions to declare a system-wide scale-up emergency response and is consulted on the activation of clusters.

As a member of the national HCTs, the UNHCR representative is closely involved in developing the overall strategic objectives of the emergency operation, and recommending which clusters should be activated.

At country-level, UNHCR is frequently the cluster lead for protection, shelter/non-food items (NFI), and [camp coordination and camp management](#) (CCCM), and in that capacity shapes cluster-level strategies and preparation of the HRP.

As an agency, UNHCR plays a key role in delivering services (according to the level of its engagement) and supporting agreed cluster-level strategies.

When UNHCR leads a refugee operation in a country in which an HRP is developed, it prepares the refugee chapter in the HRP, based on active and inclusive consultation with partners involved in the refugee response. See the Entry on [Humanitarian Response Plan and Flash Appeals \(IASC\)](#).

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

When and how to engage in the HPC. UNHCR will fulfil its obligations with regard to clusters that it leads globally. When clusters are activated at national level, UNHCR will involve itself in all aspects of the HPC. In refugee emergencies, UNHCR will apply the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM) for coordination and planning. See Note above. In "mixed situations", UNHCR will apply the RCM and the arrangements agreed in UNHCR's and OCHA's **Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice**. See Note above.

Applying the HPC in non-refugee situations

Preparedness. Actively participate in shaping emergency response planning and related activities, for example by preparing risk profiles, establishing, early warning procedures, completing minimum preparedness actions, and drafting standard operating procedures (SOPs). Keep the Regional Bureau and the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) informed of all initiatives and progress.

Assessment. Ensure that key staff members, especially cluster-related staff, are aware of inter-agency processes such as the multi-sector/cluster initial rapid assessment (MIRA). Provide personnel for inter-agency assessments.

Flash appeals (FA) and the HRP. Actively contribute to developing the HRPs and FAs. Participate in the inter-agency assessment team, and help to complete the planning process. Ensure that protection underpins every cluster plan and the HRP. Provide necessary support to coordinator(s) of clusters relevant to UNHCR and help develop cluster specific response planning.

Resource mobilization. Individual cluster plans determine the allocations of pooled funds, such as the [Central Emergency Response Fund \(CERF\)](#) and [Country-based pooled funds \(CBPF\)](#). Ensure that the actions prioritized by clusters that UNHCR leads are included in all available pooled funds.

Information management. Ensure that UNHCR cluster coordinators are supported by one or more information management officers, and that these feed information into OCHA's [information management system](#) (the [humanitarian dashboard](#)).

Annexes

[Refugee Coordination Model](#)

[UNHCR-OCHA, Joint Note on Coordination in Mixed Situations](#)

[IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle Module July 2015](#)

4. Links

[Updated Refugee Coordination Guidance Note, April 2019](#) [Memo on UNHCR's Engagement in the 2020 HRP \(DER\) IASC, Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) [Humanitarian Programme Cycle Protocol 1: Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation: Definition and Proced...](#) [Protocol 2. 'Empowered Leadership' in a Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activ...](#) www.sheltercluster.org <http://www.globalccmcluster.org/>.
<http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/>.

5. Main contacts

- [The Partnership and Coordination Service in UNHCR's Division for External Relations.](#)
- [The global protection cluster.](#)
[The camp coordination and camp management cluster.](#)
The shelter cluster, via the DPSM, Shelter and Settlement Section, Global Shelter Cluster.
At: HQShelter@unhcr.org.
The Division for Emergency Security and Supply (DESS). At: hqemhand@unhcr.org.

Coordination skills, methods and good practices

27 March 2023

Key points

- Treat all sector and cluster colleagues as allies.
- Never assume that your preferred approach to data gathering, analysis or decision-making is necessarily shared by others.
- Do not take conflict or resistance personally, rather as part of a consensus-building process.
- Take time to get to know individuals and organizations that are critical for your coordination.
- Use your active listening skills, always and more than you would like. Let others talk while you identify opportunities and incentives and effectively coordinate.

1. Overview

In the context of emergencies, 'coordination' is the act of bringing organizations under a common [protection and solutions strategy](#) to work together in clusters and sectors to deliver protection and services effectively to persons of concern. However, coordination competencies and skills are more broadly applicable and also of great value to UNHCR in non-emergency situations. This Entry gives a snapshot of core coordination skills.

These skills not only improve coordination but are critical to general operational management and management of internal and external projects, change, and conflict resolution.

2. Main guidance

Underlying policies, principles and/or standards

A good place to start is De Bono's description of 'the coordinator':

The co-ordinator is a person-oriented leader. This person is trusting, accepting, dominant and is committed to team goals and objectives. The co-ordinator is a positive thinker who approves of goal attainment, struggle and effort in others. The co-ordinator is someone tolerant enough always to listen to others, but strong enough to reject their advice. For more on Professor De Bono's work on team roles: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_Role_Inventories

Committed to team goals and objectives, notably effective protection and delivery of services to persons of concern, the coordinator helps identify and formulate realistic objectives for the sector or cluster, and puts in place processes to reach them. Some of these processes are discussed below because they are key tools of successful coordination.

Secondly, a coordinator listens well: she is able to explore positions, identify underlying interests, search out opportunities to reach goals, work trustfully with sector and cluster peers, and chart a course of action that reconciles competing agenda and objectives.

What you think works may not always work for others.

Remembering this truism is the first step in accommodating other participants and working towards full and effective inclusion. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator offers a useful entry point for understanding and managing differences of preference, notably in the way we absorb information and the way we make decisions - two important aspects of sector and cluster work. For more on Myers-Briggs Type Indicator:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myers-Briggs_Type_Indicator

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator distinguishes (without value judgement) those who prefer data and detail from those who prefer structures and patterns. In meetings (and coordination communication in general), a coordinator needs to accommodate both, regardless of her own preferences. The second group will lose interest in prolonged discussion of data, while the first group will find 'big picture' conversations too abstract. In reality both are necessary to good decision making. You need to take the cluster or sector partners through the data and then move on to trends and opportunities to which the data give rise.

With respect to decision making, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator distinguishes (again without value judgement) those who take an objective and detached approach from those who focus on values and people. A coordinator needs to accommodate both to ensure that all stay involved and engaged.

Your role as coordinator is to design your data gathering and decision making processes in a manner that accommodates different preferences, while ensuring that progress occurs and decisions are taken.

Good practice recommendations

Coordination is a process

Coordination is best imagined as a series of parallel and interdependent processes (data is transformed into analysis that informs decision making that delivers more effective services).

Process is important for a number of reasons. It obliges a coordinator to think in terms of inputs and outputs; and it reminds the coordinator that she designs and facilitates them. Consider an everyday 'coordination meeting': a process perspective forces the coordinator to ask:

- What do I need to make this meeting deliver its output?
- Who needs to be present?
- How do I manage the meeting to ensure that the output is achieved?
- How does the output from this meeting feed into the next (phase of the) process?

The coordinator's role is to ask questions. (Do we really need this meeting? Are the right organizations and individuals involved in this consultation? Does this evaluation need to be reconfigured to achieve its objectives? Can we apply the output of this needs assessment to decisions we must make about food assistance or WASH programming?)

As a coordinator your point of departure must always be that the sector or cluster is populated by allies, individuals who may prove critical in taking the agenda forward.

Coordination meetings

Meetings are a critical aspect of coordination, provided you plan them in order to add value.

As noted, it is important to ask 'Is this meeting really needed?' Meetings serve many purposes at different times in an emergency, from pure information sharing (mostly at the onset) to analysis and decision making. They are also costly, in time, in money, and in terms of activities foregone. Consider a meeting involving 40 participants; it lasts 2 hours; participants travel for another two hours to attend it. Four working weeks have vanished. As a coordinator, your duty is to maximise the quality of meetings, ensuring they add value. This is why cluster and sector members attend them.

To prepare for effective meetings, it helps to think concretely in terms of before, during, and after the meeting.

Surprisingly, most of the coordinator's time investment actually lies up-front i.e. before a

meeting. As investment in meeting stakeholders before a meeting, ensuring that all are ready and that the right individuals are present for effective decision making etc. The book 'Making Meetings Work' (Forsyth, 1996) lists a number of very practical things to remember:

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Before

1. Is the meeting really necessary?
2. Prepare and share the agenda in advance.
3. Ensure that participants understand the purpose of the agenda. (Are you meeting to share information or take decisions?)
4. Manage the meeting environment. (For example, rotate chairs and note-taking.)
5. Ensure that key participants understand their role beforehand, and that doubts or concerns have been settled in advance.

During

1. Ensure that the right person is chairing. (It is not necessarily you or the most senior person.) In general, pick the person who is best at chairing meetings.
2. Respect the agenda's timetable. Keep within the time allocated to each topic.
3. Manage disruptions and interruptions.
4. Ensure that all those who need or want to participate are given an opportunity to do so.
5. Work hard to enforce or develop effective ground rules for meetings.

After

1. Share decisions as agreed.
2. Follow-up with one-on-one meetings as appropriate.
3. Facilitate consultation about the next agenda and restart the cycle.
4. Do not be afraid to postpone or cancel a meeting if it is not seen to add value.

Decision making

Advanced Facilitation Skills (Bens, 2005) provides useful advice on the variety of decision-making tools that are available. As coordinator, your role is to suggest and identify the best decision-making tool for each issue that needs a decision. Decision making is a continuum - from majority voting to consensus building via compromise.

Decisions by majority are rarely suitable in a cluster or sector context. Compromise is often seen to be the optimum (or default) approach by coordinators but it often leaves all parties unsatisfied - including persons of concern.

The best strategy - is consensus building. When this works, it can help broaden the understanding of the problem at hand and by extension of the possible solutions. It often leads to better decisions with more ownership and better relationship building. Consensus building, however, takes longer but should be used to the maximum by the cluster or sector coordinator and in particular when the issue or ownership of the decision is important. It requires continuous investment of time from the coordinator in understanding and exploring bilateral needs as a basis for more sustainable decision-making.

Influencing

As a coordinator your point of departure must always be that the sector or cluster is populated with allies. As you have no direct authority to tell cluster or sector participants what to do, you need to apply your influencing skills to move the agenda forward.

The following model depicts influencing as a conversation that involves both self-awareness and relationships. Overall, it is based on reciprocity or exchange of things of value ('currencies').

Things that are valued could include recognition, or the need to be seen to lead a process. The

coordinator's key skill is to identify what is important to different participants, meet their needs wherever possible, and encourage trading in order to advance the cluster's or sector's agenda.

Active listening is the critical skill in this process. After clarifying her own goals, the coordinator explores the interests of other participants, by asking open-ended questions and listening attentively to the answers. The important point is that this approach gives the coordinator access to numerous incentives. For example, she can:

- Assign leadership of technical working groups, task forces, or advisory bodies.
- Publicly acknowledge particular efforts, contributions or initiatives.
- Co-share national or sub-national bodies, taskforces or working groups.
- Create win-win outcomes for organizations, projects, or funding decisions.
- Involve individuals or organizations in working groups and taskforces.

When you begin to think in terms of incentives, you become aware of many leverage points that you can deploy to advance a group's collective agenda.

3. Links

[Humanitarian response UNHCR Data website](#)

4. Main contacts

UNHCR Global Learning Center (GLC):

- Joel Nielsen at: Nielsenj@unhcr.org.
- Peter Kessler at: Kessler@unhcr.org).

Social media in emergencies

27 March 2023

Key points

- Document what you are seeing: take photos and short videos.
- Seek informed consent from anyone featured in your photographs and videos. Make sure they understand that their image might be distributed widely on internet, broadcast on television, etc.
- Where possible, let people talk about their own experiences; do not speak for them.
- For video, hold the camera horizontally so television broadcasters can use it.
- For Twitter, turn on the SMS feature so you can send and receive messages via SMS without need of an internet connection.

1. Overview

Social media platforms are very useful for sharing information quickly with large numbers of people and listening to relevant conversations online. They are very powerful in emergency situations, because they enable you to update colleagues, partners, journalists and people of concern with timely and relevant information. The most popular social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Each is different: staff should understand their differences and use the most appropriate platform, which may vary from region to region.

UNHCR has numerous institutional social media accounts. The social media team based in Geneva manages global accounts, but regional and country-level accounts are managed locally. In addition, UNHCR encourages PI and other staff to open their own social media accounts, so that they can share information directly.

In emergency operations, up-to-date information may be shared by staff who are directly involved in the operation, via their personal social media accounts. This information can be re-shared by institutional accounts, which in most cases have larger followings. Trust is a crucial element of social media, and during emergency operations followers want information that has been sourced directly from the ground, rather than from HQ, which may be thousands of miles distant. However, never post information that might put people of concern at risk.

2. Main guidance

Underlying policies, principles and/or standards

UNHCR's [Administrative Instruction on the Use of Social Media](#):

- Explains key differences between institutional and personal accounts.
- Provides guidance on what is and is not appropriate to post.
- Lists top tips for using social media.

The most important point to remember is that, even if you post on a personal social media account, those who use that information can attribute it directly to UNHCR. It is therefore important that only staff who are closest to the operation post updates. Remember too that social media are public forums: do not post anything you would not be prepared to say during a radio or television interview.

Good practice recommendations

Top Tips for Using Social Media

- Think before you post and use common sense. Be aware that, when you share facts or opinions, it may be assumed that you endorse that information. One of the best pieces of social media advice is: 'Don't say anything online that you wouldn't be comfortable seeing quoted on CNN, being asked about by your mother, or justifying to your boss'.
- Be honest. Do not mislead or invite misinterpretation. If you did not witness an event, do not imply that you did. UNHCR's credibility may be at stake.
- Be accurate. Outdated figures or erroneous information can spread rapidly on social media. Always double-check your facts before posting.
- Be clear. If your post might be misinterpreted, find a clearer way to phrase your message.
- Exercise discretion. Leave sensitive issues to personnel specifically authorized to speak on them. When in doubt, consult your supervisor.
- Respect confidentiality. Do not share information that is not meant for external audiences, such as details that could compromise diplomacy or protection.
- Ensure safety and protection. Bear in mind that information you post, especially locations or personal details, could put you or others at risk.
- Show respect and seek consent. When you talk about, photograph or videotape people we protect and assist, strive to respect their dignity.
- Avoid taking sides. UNHCR personnel must honour [humanitarian principles](#), including impartiality, neutrality and independence. Refrain from making political statements that might compromise UNHCR's relationships with governments, partners or other stakeholders.
- Stick with what you know. When talking about UNHCR's work, focus on your own experiences and areas of expertise.
- Show integrity. You are responsible for your online reputation, which may affect UNHCR's image. Be aware of your digital footprint and act as responsibly online as you would in any other public context.
- Be transparent. Don't use a pseudonym or post anonymous comments or content about UNHCR, the UN, people of concern or the humanitarian sector. Declaring your identity and affiliation helps to build trust and prevent misperceptions.
- Be authentic. When you speak from a personal perspective and mean what you say, your posts will gain traction and visibility.
- Be generous. Credit others and avoid negativity. Being superior or patronizing reflects poorly on you and UNHCR and invites criticism.
- Listen and engage in conversations. Do not simply broadcast. If people are misreading your

posts or twisting your words, try to clarify.

- Don't feed the trolls. It is often best to ignore hateful, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate comments. Answering may only encourage more of the same.
- Seek advice. If you are unsure whether something is appropriate to post, seek advice from your colleagues or ask socialmedia@unhcr.org in Geneva.

Think about your audience

While social media can reach huge audiences, it is important to consider who you want to target. Are you hoping to provide other colleagues or partners with real-time updates of the developing situation? Are you hoping to connect with local or international journalists, letting them know you are on the ground, willing to provide information, and available for interview? Are you providing vital updates to people of concern?

It is vital to think about your audience because some platforms are better at reaching certain audiences. For example, many journalists from large international news organisations use Twitter to search for breaking news and people on the ground to interview during emergencies. Local journalists or refugee communities may be more likely to use Facebook. Ask the audiences you want to reach what platforms they use, remembering that email and SMS are still very powerful communications tools.

Creating original content

During emergencies, many people are looking for photographs or videos. Journalists in particular are desperate for content from people on the ground. If you are in the field, it is important to document what you see. In many emergency situations news organisations cannot get access or lack the funds to send journalists or camera people. They increasingly rely on content generated by aid workers.

No one expects a flawlessly constructed news video, or a perfectly composed picture. Audiences just want a sense of what the situation is really like. Images from the window of a moving vehicle captured by your smartphone can provide usable footage for news organisations. Photographs or videos of queues, camps or registration centres can show the scale of an emergency.

Video. Keep your phone as still as possible. Don't move quickly. Let movement in the scene provide interesting content.

Audio. Stand very close to your subjects so that ambient sounds do not drown out their voices. Try to record in a quiet spot, out of the wind.

Photographs. Do not shoot into the sun. Take many shots and choose the best ones later.

For more tips, see entry on [Media Content Production](#).

Wherever possible, allow people of concern to tell their own stories, bearing in mind issues of protection and consent.

Below are some simple tools for creating photos and video clips:

[Instagram](#). Allows you to take and share photos or 15-second videos. (Though you can add a

filter to make your content more appealing, do not use one because newsrooms are less likely to use filtered images.)

Hyperlapse. Allows you to shoot timelapse videos. (This is a wonderful way of showing the erection of a tent, or the arrival of refugees.)

Vine. Allows you to create looping 6-second videos.

YouTube. Allows you to upload longer videos that you have filmed on your phone.

Remember. Protection issues are paramount. When you take photographs or film video of people of concern, you must get informed consent. You must explain how the content might be used on social media accounts, and that it might be picked up and used by news organisations.

Using social media for distribution

When you have your video, photographs, text updates or statistics, or case studies of individuals, share them on the main social media channels (Twitter, Facebook). Publish them on your own personal accounts but please email socialmedia@unhcr.org or mention UNHCR in your posts. (You can add @refugees in your tweet, or tag the global UNHCR page in your Facebook post.) This makes it easier for the social media team in Geneva to share your content on the main global accounts, which have very large followings. Sharing this type of content on UNHCR's global social media channels will increase media coverage, raise awareness of the situation, and win support for the work UNHCR is doing.

If you use Twitter, turn on mobile notifications. (Via twitter.com, click on the Settings cog, and go to Mobile. It will walk you through the steps that will connect your mobile photo to Twitter.) You can then send and receive tweets via SMS and will not require an Internet connection.

Communicating with people who are directly impacted by the emergency

Before you start thinking about using social media to talk directly to refugees or internally displaced persons, find out which platforms they use. In many places Twitter is used less than Facebook. Do not set up a Facebook page on a specific emergency without talking to the social media team in Geneva. Facebook pages are often not the best way to communicate emergency updates and information, because Facebook only shows your updates to a small fraction of your followers (typically less than 15% and often as little as 5%). A Facebook Group may offer a better alternative, because you can control membership and people in the group are notified each time a new update is posted.

Consider SMS communication. In emergency situations access to the Internet can be difficult, and social media platforms may be inappropriate. If you want to message large groups of people, SMS may be more effective. It is also a private way to communicate messages that are sensitive.

Considerations for practical implementation

- Staff should be confident in using smartphones to create content and share it via social networks. In emergency situations, you need to create and post quickly and confidently. If you do not feel confident, enrol in the online social media course available through 'Learn

& Connect'.

- Staff should also feel confident about what they should and should not post on personal accounts. If you have concerns or questions, talk to your local PI officer or contact the social media team in Geneva.
- Staff should be listening to updates posted by other colleagues and partners so that everyone is well informed about the latest developments. You may want to re-share some of this content on your own accounts, helping it to reach a wider audience.

Resources and partnerships

Key staff including all PI staff working in emergency situations should be issued smartphones so that they can create content and share it quickly on social networks.

3. Links

[Twitter.com How social media is changing communications in emergencies Administrative Instructions on the Use of Social Media](#)

4. Main contacts

Communication and Public Information Service at Headquarters:

- Melissa Fleming, Spokesperson for the High Commissioner and Head of Service, fleming@unhcr.org.
- Chris Reardon, Chief of Content Production Section, reardon@unhcr.org.
- Adrian Edwards, Spokesperson and Head of News and Media Section, Edwards@unhcr.org.
- Social Media Unit: socialmedia@unhcr.org.

Emergency information management strategy

27 March 2023

Key points

- Ask the IMO in your operation for the IM strategy.
- Involve IMO staff at the beginning of any data collection exercise.
- Ask for technical advice on collection, processing and analysis of data in your operation.
- IM staff must be involved in assessment initiatives. Contact them early in the process for best results.

- Ask for support when you establish monitoring systems.

1. Overview

An information and data management strategy is a plan that defines the purposes, outputs, time frames and responsibilities of all operational information services in an emergency.

A strategy should be developed in the first two weeks of a refugee or IDP emergency and maintained through all its phases.

The strategy should provide a broad overview of how information systems relate to one another and which organizations are stakeholders in each system, allowing the information manager to better coordinate information. It also helps to identify information gaps and redundancies across systems.

In terms of consensus-building, the strategy provides an opportunity for managers and operational staff to agree on reporting frequencies and data ownership. On a practical level, it details how information systems will operate. It is also a starting point for budgeting information management costs (implementing partner agreements, data-entry staff, mobile data-collection devices, laptops).

Defining and implementing an explicit strategy will help to deliver information more predictably and more reliably.

2. Main guidance

Associated risks

- Information and data management requires the coordination and dissemination of reports and operational information throughout UNHCR and with our partners. By doing this in a regular and predictable manner, guidance and information management products will improve coordination among first-phase refugee emergency responders.
- If an IM strategy is not in place, embedded in the strategic plan, valuable IM services may focus on the wrong operational priorities.
- An IM strategy is a communication tool but can also help UNHCR and partners to focus strategically. If IM functions are not well targeted and understood, they may be misallocated.

Steps to be taken

Step 1. Preparing and coordinating an IM strategy

To develop an information and data management strategy, information managers need to answer the following questions:

- What information gaps exist?
- What types of analytical products are needed?
- Who are the focal points responsible for implementing each system?
- What methods should be used to obtain required data?
- What human resources are required to run the systems?
- What is the frequency of reporting that each system requires?
- When should each system be implemented?

Step 2. Considerations during planning

During planning, information managers need to consider some of the following factors, which will affect the design of information management systems:

- **Contingency plans.** How is the emergency most likely to evolve? How might information systems need to change in the future?
- **Programme and intervention plans.** Which sectors are now, or likely to become, the most active? Do some sectors have exceptional information management needs?
- **Displacement pattern.** Is the displaced population moving en masse or is it scattered? Is there secondary displacement? Is the population stable or is new movement occurring? What is the scale of the displacement?
- **Physical access.** Is the population of concern accessible? Is remote monitoring required? How will the logistics of data collection influence the choice of information systems? How will the logistics of data collection affect the frequency of information products?
- **Security issues, humanitarian space and the Government's stance.** Do security conditions make it hard to obtain certain data from the population? What constraints limit the dissemination of information? What kinds of information are subject to these constraints?
- **IM activities of other partners.** Which data management activities should be undertaken by UNHCR, and which by implementing partners, operational partners, the Government? What IM activities should be undertaken jointly?
- **Internet connectivity and other IM technology.** Given the context, are website and e-mail dissemination systems the best option? Should burned DVDs and hardcopies of information be shared with partners who have no Internet access? How will data from deep field locations be transmitted to the operational hub?

Refugee emergency: weeks one and two

Step 3. Set IM objectives and reporting lines, produce initial IM products

Before drafting a strategy, information managers will need to discuss IM objectives and products with the Representative and senior managers, including programme, protection and sector leads. Discuss what type of information decision-makers in the office need to know, what level of detail is necessary, and why they need the information in question. It is important to set up a regular and clearly communicated weekly dissemination schedule, so that colleagues and partners know

what type of information products they can expect and when to expect them.

The Information Manager, Representative and senior managers should ensure that IM is included in coordination meetings or that IM coordination meetings are established, and agree a plan for preparing the following standard IM products during the first four weeks of a refugee emergency:

- An IM strategy.
- A review of secondary data available from other sources and situational analysis.
- Initial rapid population estimates.
- A contact list of operational partners.
- An initial needs assessment report.
- Maps, including security, situation, and 3W maps.
- Web portal deployment.

The Representative and other senior managers, the emergency team leader (if deployed), sector leads, and the information manager will need to agree on clearance procedures and a dissemination schedule for the above products. The information manager should also help (as needed) to develop IM strategies for producing sector-specific reports, a process that includes dissemination of sector-specific information products.

To do the above, information managers should do the following on arrival at the emergency:

- Ask to see the operation's contingency plan, or (if one does not exist) ask management to describe (scenarios) how the emergency is most likely to evolve.
- Ask colleagues whether any information management preparedness activities have been undertaken, such as a needs assessment.
- Find the standard geographic data being used by the humanitarian community and learn the process for updating this. (If no process has been agreed, the information manager should create one.)
- Meet the protection officer to clarify what the operational protection risks and constraints are, and to understand what types of information are sensitive.
- Search for pre-emergency baseline data (in the country's annual statistical report, UNHCR's Global Focus Insight at gfi.unhcr.org, the Government statistical office, from development actors, etc.).
- Identify UNHCR and partner staff who can assist with data collection and analysis, because the skills that are available will influence the adoption of more or less complex information systems. Design an information management strategy that is realistic and sustainable in terms of operational capacity.
- Determine SOPs for clearance and release of IM products.

Step 4. Include IM in coordination meetings

With the agreement of the Representative, the information manager should ensure that IM is included as an agenda item for discussion at all inter-agency coordination meetings in the field and in capital.

Immediately attend inter-agency coordination meetings and begin reaching out to partners. Post contact lists on the UNHCR web portal and circulate them at meetings. Always bring information

products, population figures, maps and contact lists to meetings, to strengthen relations with partners and identify information needs.

Step 5. Establish a contact list and weekly meeting schedule

Information managers should immediately start work with a UNHCR administrative colleague (designated by the Representative) to create and track a contact list of all operational partners. The list may be circulated to partners. The information manager should be the focal point for all changes made to the list, and should remain its custodian, unless otherwise agreed. If available, it is good practice to keep a copy of the contact list on a shared drive, so that all UNHCR staff have access. The information manager should always keep a backup copy of the master contact list, saved each day on his or her personal drive.

Selective contact lists may be extracted from the master contact list and used for specific purposes. For example, the WASH sector contact list includes only staff members in that sector, and can serve as a sign-in sheet at coordination meetings. This enables colleagues to make sure that their contact information is correct, and reduces the time spent on tracking meeting attendance.

It is also useful to circulate a list of technical experts (UNHCR protection colleagues, programme colleagues, sector leads for WASH, health and shelter, etc.). A sample template for contact lists is included in this section as Annex 4: IM Strategy Template; tab 2: E-mail Dissemination List. A contact list by sector may be produced by filtering the master contact list by activity.

Step 6. Secondary data and situational analysis

Within two days of arrival, information managers should start work with the protection officer on a joint analysis of secondary data and production of a situational analysis.

'The situation analysis is undertaken through a desk review of existing information, including data gathered about the population. It also involves identifying the different stakeholders to learn about their interests and priorities, and mapping their activities, resources and expertise.' (UNHCR, **A Community Based Approach in UNHCR**, 2007, p. 27.)

When compiling the situational analysis, identify what types of camp administration (if any) have been set up by the refugee community, and note refugee coping mechanisms at camp level. The situational analysis should describe the host Government's involvement and response to the refugee situation, and track developments in camp coordination and host Government assistance.

UNHCR's Protection Gaps Framework of Analysis Tool may be adapted for emergency situation analysis (see UNHCR, **Handbook for Emergencies**, 2007, p. 28). The tool is available online at www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/430328-b04.pdf.

Step 7: Analyze emergency registration and population statistics

Information managers should work with the registration officer to compile and triangulate population figures. A Population Reporting Template should be completed and maintained for triangulation/analysis of population figures. One may be found in the Population Statistics section

of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit.

- If emergency registration has been done, begin compiling a cross-sectoral analysis based on population figures, taking account of any operational coverage of specific locations based on information compiled in the 3W and survey of surveys.
- If emergency registration has not occurred, consult the Registration in Emergencies section (Section 4) of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit for guidance on emergency registration and related IM considerations.
- If emergency registration is not possible in all areas, use rapid [population estimation techniques](#) (see Section 5 of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit for guidance).

Information managers should work closely with other information specialists in the operation. Include those employed by UNHCR and by other organizations, to ensure that all data collected, analyzed and released observes UNHCR's standards for age and sex demographics.

Information on age and sex should be included in all standard IM products. Share demographic profiles of the refugee population with partners on a daily or weekly basis (depending on the situation), via the UNHCR web portal and by other means.

Step 8. [Who does what where \(3W\)?](#)

Information managers should continuously involve sector leads and new organizations and partners on the ground. Throughout their assignment, they should establish and track 3W information, using the 3W tool included in the 3W section of the Toolkit, to ensure that operational coverage and emergency needs continue to be well understood.

Refugee emergency: weeks three and four

Step 9. Survey of surveys

It is important to compile a survey of the surveys and assessments that UNHCR and partners have carried out. UNHCR management, programme and protection colleagues will be in a position to identify partners and contacts who can help with this task. The survey of surveys template (included as an annex in this section) requires information on the organization involved in each assessment, its type and name, its location, the start and end dates of fieldwork collection, and the type(s) of population(s) assessed.

Official UNHCR population types are: refugee, person in refugee-like situations, returned refugee, asylum-seeker, internally displaced person, person in an IDP-like situation, returned IDP, stateless person, and other person of concern. For a complete definition, see UNHCR, **Annual Statistical Reporting Guidelines** (2012, p. 37, at: <http://www.unhcr.org/4fd6f87f9.html>.)

As soon as all major partners have been contacted and an inventory of surveys and assessments has been compiled, begin an initial analysis to identify information and knowledge gaps. These may concern population groups that have not been assessed, locations that are difficult to access, locations that have not been covered, etc. In addition, report if particular geographical or sectoral areas are being over-assessed by several organizations. Coordinate this process with partners (NGOs, UN agencies, Government offices) so that the outcome is shared and owned by

partners.

If information managers recommend an emergency needs assessment (ENA), based on analysis of the survey of surveys, this topic should be discussed in plenary at the next coordination meeting with partners. For guidance on ENAs, see the ENA section (Section 7) of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit.

Step 10. The Refugee Information Management Working Group (RIM WG)

The RIM WG is an IM service that UNHCR provides partners in refugee operations. With the participation of IM focal points outside UNHCR, the information manager sets up and leads a RIM WG. Though in many partner organizations no staff member will be responsible specifically for information management, each should be asked to provide at least one focal point to participate in the RIM WG. RIM WG terms of reference (TORs) are included as an annex in this section.

A RIM WG coordinates IM activities at inter-agency level between partners in refugee operations. Coordination is important to make sure that organizations cross-analyse and harmonize the data they hold, prevent data systems from duplicating or competing with each other, facilitate information sharing, and make the best use of humanitarian information resources. Information managers should map the resources available to the operational hub and in the capital. The map should indicate which organizations have datasets and monitoring systems in place; and which organizations employ data collectors, database administrators, translators, and data analysts who can assist IM projects.

Information managers should ensure that a RIM WG:

- Maps and harmonizes datasets across all operational partners. Information managers should track the locations, coordinates, Pcodes, [common operational datasets](#) (CODs) and fundamental operational datasets (FODs) (at <http://cod.humanitarianresponse.info/terms-use> in an Excel database). Contact the local OCHA office for area-specific Pcodes. Share the Excel database of Pcodes, CODs and FODs with all operational partners, to ensure they use the same units of assessment to analyse data.
- Liaises with implementing and operational partners on data quality issues and data standards; participates in or organizes inter-agency data groups at field level; and, where necessary, advises partners on methodological issues and promotes timely reporting, to agreed standards, of data for which they are responsible.
- Ensures there is agreement on initial population figures, and that partners are updated regularly on registration activities and changing population demographics.
- Distributes information products, CODs and baseline data that all partners should use.

Step 11: Set up web portal and information kiosk Information managers should:

- On approval by the Representative/senior managers, contact web portal administrators to initiate an emergency web portal. (For guidance on how to initiate a web portal, see the Web Portal section, section 17 of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit.) Working with senior managers, define how frequently IM products are to be updated on the web portal, and begin drafting clearance SOPs for updating and maintaining web portal

content.

- Begin populating the web portal with products supplied by information managers. Meet the Representative and the external relations officer to discuss the web portal's needs (news highlights, uploading requirements, dissemination schedules).
- Set up and maintain an information kiosk in the UNHCR office, and ensure that hardcopies of information products become available as they are developed and cleared.
- Use a range of dissemination channels to share information products and analysis (e-mail lists, SMS, meetings), both in the office and with partners.

Refugee emergency: weeks five and six

Step 12. Gather data from sector specialists and understand sectoral information needs

By the beginning of the fifth or sixth week (or sooner), information managers should meet programme and sector specialists to discover what sector-specific information systems are in place and what information needs sectors have. They should assist sector specialists to cross-analyse and build or adjust sectoral data management and tracking tools. (For protection and sector-specific IM, see the Minimum Sectoral Data sections (Sections 9-14) of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit.) Information managers should:

- Meet the programme officer to understand whether a shelter and core relief item (CRI) distribution monitoring system is working, and what current needs have been identified. If no tracking system is in place, establish one. (For guidance on tracking systems, see Minimum Sectoral Data: C. Core Relief Items, Section 11 of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit.)
- Work with the protection officer to gather protection monitoring or needs assessment reports on matters that may affect the protection status of persons of concern (security, coping strategies, population movement patterns, etc.).
- Gather health, food security, WASH and mortality reports and analyses from sector specialists.
- Where a vulnerable person case tracking system is operating, factor available information into the cross-sectoral analysis. (For information on registration, see Registration in Emergencies, Section 4 of the Emergency Information Management Toolkit.)
- Notify sectoral leads if information that sectors submit to the cross-sectoral analysis is conflicting or inconsistent, so that discrepancies can be resolved.

When these steps have been completed, incorporate sector-specific cross-analyses into information products, with the Representative's agreement.

In camp situations, camp profiles should be produced, to coordinate humanitarian activities across camps and to disseminate multi-sectoral information about particular camps.

Step 13. Identify IM needs, production of information products, contingency planning

Continue to monitor minimum sector data reports from the sector leads and identify other emergency IM needs as they arise. Include this information and analysis in standard emergency IM products. Present the most compelling sectoral information visually, as an info-graphic.

It may be necessary to move information from information systems established at the start of the emergency to systems that are sustainable over a longer period of time or permit more detail. For example, rapid population estimations may be replaced by an emergency registration.

Resources / inputs required

- Content management focal points for the data and information dissemination plan.
- Meeting schedule focal points for each meeting.
- 3W data focal points per sector/cluster.
- Needs assessment and monitoring focal points by sector/cluster/inter-agency initiative.

Related UNHCR management system(s)

Related UNHCR management system(s)

- Focus. Sometimes, when an operation preceded an emergency, sectoral data on protection and sectors may be gathered from Focus.
- proGress. Registration and case management staff working with proGres make a vital contribution.
- MRSP. Staff working in MSRP for logistics and human resources should coordinate closely with IM staff.
- Twine and GBVIMS. Sector and cluster systems (Twine for health, GBVIMS for gender based violence monitoring) make essential contributions to the overall response.

Annexes

[Information Management Officer Terms of Reference](#)

[Senior Regional Information Management Terms of Reference](#)

[Refugee Information Working Group Terms of Reference \(RIM WG\)](#)

[IM Strategy Template and E-mail Dissemination List](#)

[Survey of Surveys](#)

[Weekly Meeting Schedule Template](#)

[Sample ToRs - refugee information management working group](#)

[Guidance Note on Information Management in Emergencies 2012](#)

3. Links

[UNHCR, A Community Based Approach in UNHCR,2007 UNHCR, Annual Statistical Reporting Guidelines,2012 UNOCHA, Humanitarian Response, Common and Fundamental Operational Datasets Regi...](#)

4. Main contacts

FICSS in Geneva. At: HQIM@UNHCR.org

Multi-cluster / sector Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (MIRA)

19 April 2023

Key points

- UNHCR has a responsibility to engage in, and support the MIRA at an early stage, to ensure that secondary data reviews, primary data collection methods and questions, and analysis of results incorporate protection concerns.
- Take ownership of elements of a MIRA (including analysis and interpretation of results) that concern clusters (co)led by UNHCR.
- Provide protection guidance to all clusters, and to the MIRA process as a whole.

1. Overview

A MIRA is an inter-agency needs assessment and analysis process, from which a joint strategic plan for emergency response is developed by the humanitarian country team. Although the MIRA may be modified for various emergency contexts and can be used to respond to IDP or non-

refugee emergencies, the MIRA analytical framework and approach is the most effective in a sudden onset natural disaster, and is conducted in the first weeks of a disaster. The MIRA process focuses on producing a situational analysis during the first three days of the onset of a disaster, followed by a MIRA report to be released within 2 weeks of the start of a disaster.

A MIRA assessment also forms a part of the IASC Guidance for Inter-agency Contingency Planning and [Emergency Response Preparedness](#). MIRAs are managed by OCHA under the overall guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in the first two weeks of a disaster.

MIRAs may be undertaken in coordination with host Governments, supported by the humanitarian community through clusters. At the global level, UNHCR is responsible for leading the emergency protection, shelter, camp coordination and management clusters, although leadership may vary at the country level in natural disaster situations.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

A MIRA may be undertaken if and when the following conditions are present:

- New and sudden onset disaster followed by a period of relative stability enabling humanitarian access;
- Urgent need for information required to inform coordinated planning and response;
- The humanitarian community in country is willing to share information and coordinate.

Please note: Additional details and an easy to use graph illustrating conditions which should be factored into a decision to conduct a MIRA are available in the "**MIRA Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment Guidance**, Revision" of Jan 2015, page 2.

The MIRA is intended to support stakeholders to reach a shared understanding of the humanitarian situation and its likely evolution at its earliest stages to support initial strategic response decisions surrounding the following:

- The impact of the disaster, including scale and severity, priority needs, risks/vulnerabilities;
- The capacity to respond, both by national and international actors, including limitations; and
- Priority areas for intervention.

3. Main guidance

Underlying process - how does this work?

The MIRA methodology is comprised of the following fundamental elements: a secondary data review, collection of primary data, joint analysis and reporting.

According to the 2015 MIRA guidance, a successful MIRA requires a balanced small team with the required technical skill set represented by key actors within the emergency response. It's important to note that too large of an assessment team, may overwhelm the MIRA coordination process.

Secondary data review

The organizations participating in a MIRA collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative information pre and post disaster (for example, information surrounding the geographical area, people affected, or a sector etc.), and compile an analysis using an adapted MIRA analytical framework as a guide. Within the MIRA approach, inter-sectoral analysis is then conducted jointly and consensus is then reached on the most severely affected areas, persons or groups etc.

Secondary data plays a crucial role in the early stages of an emergency when it may be impossible to collect primary data because time, staff, resources and access may be limited. For more information on how to conduct a secondary data review, see the Entry on [needs assessment for refugee emergencies](#) (NARE). Where needed and in "mixed settings" where populations of humanitarian concern include refugees, IDPs and other affected groups, UNHCR may support the secondary data review, notably to collect information related to refugees (number, size of population, protection concerns, locations, demographics, etc.).

Primary data collection at community level; sampling size and site selection

Led by OCHA, the organizations involved identify and agree on parameters for designing and testing the MIRA sampling form, and determine how primary data will be collected (sampling methods, sites, timeframe, other specifics). As Cluster lead, UNHCR has a responsibility to support and participate in this phase, by attending relevant inter-agency meetings chaired by OCHA and actively contributing to and supporting the analysis process. UNHCR staff will also participate in this stage of the MIRA process by collecting data as members of inter-agency assessment teams.

Primary data collection within the MIRA involves the collection of data by a small inter-agency assessment team, which generally collects information through direct observation and by interviewing key informants, and holding community focus group discussions. Please note: Focus Group Discussions within the MIRA process are referred to as 'Community Group Discussion', and generally operate under the same principals as UNHCR's Focus Group Discussions.

During observation and interviews, keep these key questions in mind:

- What has changed over time? What has remained the same?
- What is surprising, important or different about one group (or time, or place) when compared to another?
- If conditions did not worsen, why not? If conditions worsen now, what will be the cause?

- What is the next level of detail required?

Direct observation provides a snapshot of an affected population or location. Observe (see, smell and hear) conditions and features of the community or place from a range of viewpoints. Walk across the community, avoid obvious routes (roads, paths or natural boundaries), to obtain a variety of perspectives and a balanced view.

Look around and talk to people, with a gender, age and diversity approach. See what is there, what is not there, and what should be there: observe water collection points, latrines, communal washing areas, schools, storage facilities, tea shops, cemeteries, markets, health facilities, religious centres. In markets, see what people buy and sell and note the prices of basic commodities.

Interviews with key informants. 'Arrange interviews with individuals of different backgrounds, responsibilities, genders, ages, and religious and/or ethnic minorities to ensure a full picture of the affected community... Where an affected community includes different population groups, such as a host population and a displaced population, key informants should be selected from all groups of interest. Conduct Interviews (using tools and measurement that can be compared) at each group level.'

Situation analysis: summarizing secondary and primary data

The MIRA process combines the secondary and primary data it has collected to generate an overall analysis. This includes possible scenarios (best case, worst case) of how the crisis is likely to unfold.

Coordinated by OCHA, a situation analysis should become available within 72 hours of the start of an emergency. The analysis is the product of discussion between all the humanitarian actors involved, and reports their agreed findings and the decisions that follow from them. Under OCHA's overall guidance/coordination, UNHCR contributes to this process by working in the cluster system, and providing field support, staff and analysis for clusters that UNHCR (co) leads or supports. UNHCR also participates in discussion and analysis of MIRA data at inter-agency MIRA meetings led by OCHA. The situational analysis is then continuously updated during the first two weeks of a disaster, and used as a basis from which to draft the MIRA report.

OCHA produces a MIRA report that contains the findings of the assessment within 2 weeks of the start of a disaster. The report informs more detailed response planning, including revised appeals, where applicable.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

In emergency IDP situations, UNHCR contributes to the MIRA process for the clusters it co(leads) during the MIRA assessment and analysis process and may directly contribute to the inter-sectoral review process of available pre-crisis and post -crisis secondary data as part of an assessment team working to produce the situational analysis within first three days of a disaster.

Clusters/sectors may also carry-out sector-specific analysis, if the nature of the crisis makes this necessary.

UNHCR provides staff to participate in field assessment and data collection for MIRA and engages in inter-sectoral discussion and analysis of the data, and the MIRA report's findings and decisions.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

Information management officers, and UNHCR cluster (co) leads (for the emergency protection, shelter, and camp coordination and management clusters as applicable), participate in and contribute to the MIRA process (from design to delivery, analysis and results).

UNHCR supports UNHCR-led clusters during MIRAs and will proactively participate through these clusters in secondary data reviews, primary data collection, analysis, and MIRA results.

UNHCR may also take a lead role in analysing population estimates and trends in the context of a MIRA assessment.

Annexes

[MIRA July 2015](#)

4. Links

[OCHA, Humanitarian Response, Needs assessment: Guidance & templates](#)

5. Main contacts

Additional guidance, tools, support pages and contact information for global UNHCR led clusters are available online as follows:

- The CCCMCluster: <http://www.globalccmcluster.org>
- The GlobalProtection Cluster:
<http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/general/contact-us/request-fo...>
- EmergencyShelter Cluster: <https://www.sheltercluster.org>

The UNHCR Field Information Coordination and Support Section (FICSS) may also provide technical advice for more in-depth assessments relating to specific thematic areas falling under UNHCR's (co)led clusters, and can be contacted at: HQIM@unhcr.org.

Needs assessment for refugee emergencies (NARE)

11 September 2023

Key points

- The NARE is an easily customized initial multi-sectoral needs assessment designed for refugee emergencies.
- A needs assessment team decides what data collection methodologies should be used and which topics should be addressed. NARE users are not obliged to complete the entire assessment set out in the NARE checklist; they can pick and choose methods and themes depending on their circumstances (resources available, time, the purpose of the assessment, the types of interventions that are planned).
- Data collection questions in the NARE checklist may be customized to take account of the local situation. You can change or omit suggested questions, or add new questions.

1. Overview

As the lead coordinator in refugee emergencies, UNHCR is responsible for assembling a multi-sectoral needs-based response to sudden large forced displacements across borders. The NARE is designed to assist UNHCR operations with the guidance and tools required to undertake an initial multi-sectoral needs assessment when there has been a significant sudden, forced displacement of populations across borders. It can also be used when new groups of refugees move into an existing operational area, or to strengthen refugee operations in which adequate needs assessments have not been made.

The key objectives of an emergency needs assessment are:

- To ensure that humanitarian aid is based on need.
- To ensure that humanitarian aid promotes and does not undermine safe local coping mechanisms.
- To identify and understand the unique and respective needs of different populations.
- To make sure that decisions on humanitarian aid are based on facts.

Under its mandate, UNHCR coordinates and leads all aspects of humanitarian responses to refugee emergencies, including coordinated needs assessments.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

The NARE applies several methodologies to produce a rapid cross-sectoral analysis that provides a relatively complete description of needs in a refugee emergency.

3. Main guidance

Underlying process - how does this work?

A NARE analyses pre-crisis and post-crisis secondary data and suggests what information should be gathered during primary data collection, through visits, observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. It occurs at one point in time and is not a continuous monitoring system.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

In an emergency, the UNHCR Representative in a country is responsible for leading and coordinating an overall refugee needs assessment, through sectoral coordination. In an appropriate inter-agency forum, the Representative should request operational partners to nominate staff to join a needs assessment team (see below). A needs assessment coordinator should be identified in UNHCR to contact sector or organizational focal points and follow up. Sectoral leads and emergency coordinators need to decide what information the operational strategy should receive from a needs assessment. An information management officer helps with assessment methodology, design, data collection, analysis and coordination. UNHCR should ensure that the assessment is coordinated with other data collection activities.

The following principles of NARE should be taken into account in all refugee emergency situations:

- A secondary data review should always take place, to determine what information is already available.
- Initial needs assessments should be multi-sectoral and coordinated across sectors. (Detailed sector-specific needs assessments can follow the initial multi-sectoral assessment.)
- Different types of information are best gathered by different data collection techniques, such as facility visits, observations, interviews with key informants and community/focus group discussions.
- Assessments should always be coordinated to ensure data collection activities produce comparable data, are not redundant and generate a shared vision of the needs and situation.

For the initial needs assessment in a new refugee emergency, UNHCR should lead a 'joint' multi-sectoral needs assessment that involves a range of sectors and humanitarian actors. Joint assessments help establish a common understanding of the situation and make good use of available resources. At the same time, all assessment activities should be harmonized, to ensure

comparability of the data and the most efficient use of resources.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

Needs assessments are often situation dependent and many factors may influence their design. They include the level of humanitarian access, whether population movements are stable or dynamic, the amount of time and resources available for the assessment, and the types of interventions that the assessment should inform.

Emergency Needs Assessment Process:

Below are listed the basic steps for designing and conducting an emergency needs assessment. Note that, while they are broadly in order, many steps will run in parallel.

- Identify inter-agency stakeholders and determine coordination arrangements.
- Identify the NARE's purpose, and the kinds of decisions that require needs assessment information. Detail the information needs in a data analysis plan.
- Conduct a secondary data review, compile an assessment registry, a 3W (who, what, when), and identify remaining information gaps.
- Decide if primary data collection is required. If yes, design a methodology for primary data collection, including how communities will be sampled. Calculate the time and resources that will be required (including equipment, translators, data collectors, and data entry personnel).
- Design and test data collection forms. Translate if required.
- Train the data collection team(s).
- Undertake primary data collection.
- Collate, clean and analyse the information produced.
- Undertake joint analysis to identify key findings, priorities and recommendations.
- Disseminate data and information products.
- Begin monitoring.

The general principles described in this entry apply to any type of emergency needs assessment. However, carrying out a needs assessment in urban areas can present particular challenges, because it is difficult to demarcate the geographic areas and populations that need to be surveyed. Remarks relevant to urban assessments can be found throughout this Entry.

Step 1. Who to involve

In the first phase of a refugee emergency, a wide range of humanitarian agencies, NGOs, government counterparts and possibly donors may be involved in the initial assessment planning process. Actors responsible for overseeing and providing assistance in the first phase of a response should be included within the assessment process. It is critical to involve WFP and other relevant partners when the population to be assessed is larger than 5,000 persons.

In urban contexts, identifying key refugee stakeholders is likely to require additional effort. Urban refugees are often mobile and tend to cluster in the poorest areas of the city, or to disperse

across many locations; as a result, they are difficult to identify. Refugee focal points can help the team to identify where refugees live, estimate the population and its demography, locate new points of influx, vulnerable groups, infrastructure and security issues, and identify coping mechanisms. Needs too may change rapidly in an urban context. Ask for help from the protection or [community-based protection](#) officer to compile the contact addresses of refugee focal points.

The Assessment Team and Refugee Information Management Working Group (RIM WG)

An assessment team is a temporary working group of stakeholders who manage a needs assessment. Members of this team include operational leads who decide what information is required for decision-making, interpret the results of the assessment, and design interventions based on those results; and an information manager, who designs the assessment, selects the sites that will be assessed, compiles the data, and produces final information products. The duties of the assessment team are to:

- Agree on a time frame, a methodology for data collection, a process for cleaning and analysing the results, and how the results will be shared and disseminated.
- Identify an emergency referral system to deal with urgent interventions that need to be made that are uncovered during the assessment process.
- Agree on minimum life-saving sectoral data.
- Finalize the assessment method and design.
- Select sites.
- Coordinate resources, training and logistics.

The assessment team will need to identify what resources will be required. If resources are limited, this may affect the assessment's design. The resources spent on a needs assessment should never exceed 10% of the value of interventions that will be made as a result; ideally, the cost of an assessment should be much lower.

The information manager may be tasked to: compile an assessment registry and do a 3W (Who, what, when - see below); put together and coordinate needs assessment methodologies; make sure that data sets are compatible; and facilitate data sharing in the context of the Refugee Information Management Work Group (RIM WG). The RIM WG is a forum for coordinating multiple assessments, sharing and tracking available data, and keeping the assessment registry up-to-date. Needs assessment coordination functions should be included in the RIM WG terms of reference: see 'Policy documents, references and tools' below.

Step 2. What to assess

Identify clear and precise **objectives and a focus** for the needs assessment. Based on the NARE checklist, detail the information needs. The NARE checklist is a multi-sectoral needs assessment list which can be used to develop a country-specific assessment adapted to the local situation. NARE users are not obliged to complete the checklist but can pick and choose information needs depending on the resources available, time, the purpose of the assessment, and the types of interventions that are to be made. List the information needs in order of importance, based on their operational importance and the resources required to collect the data. List the information needs, accompanying indicators and possible information sources in a data analysis plan. (You can see an example of a data analysis template at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/xuhhd346j0rx5kj/Data%20Analysis%20Plan%20-%20Template.xlsx?d>

[l=0.](#))

Expected outcomes

At the start of a needs assessment process, ask several questions. What are the underlying causes of risk and vulnerability? Have these causes changed and, if so, how? How widespread is the problem (throughout the country or countries, or in specific areas)? How are host communities coping? Which geographical area is most affected, and which affected groups are the most at risk? How do we expect the situation to develop in the next three months? A crucial first step is to agree what operational information will be most relevant to intervention and programme planners.

Note. Do not start a needs assessment process by designing a data-collection form. Begin by identifying the questions that need to be answered, not the ones that will be asked. If you start with the form, your assessment is much less likely to yield actionable information.

Step 3. Secondary data review

The secondary data review provides valuable information. Led by protection officers and information managers, it should consider a range of issues, including:

- Conditions before the crisis (and whether they aggravated the impact of the crisis).
- Underlying vulnerabilities. Which groups were already at risk before the crisis?
- Threats (epidemics, climate, etc.).
- Current conditions (what is already known about the scope and scale of the crisis and the humanitarian consequences)?
- Lessons that can be learned from past crises or refugee operations in the same area.

Secondary data are any information that originates from outside the needs assessment, such as data from the Government, monitoring data, etc. It includes data that are owned by UNHCR, such as registration or ProGres data. Primary data are any kind of time-bound information that is collected by completing an assessment form during an emergency needs assessment. In addition to information from humanitarian partners already **in situ**, secondary data may be collected from or found through ReliefWeb, Alertnet, ACAPS, OCHA, HumanitarianResponse.info, media, blogs, crowd-sourcing, coordination meeting minutes, census data, etc.

Compiling an assessment registry

To help understand the overall situational context, the information manager should ensure that an 'assessment registry' is compiled. (You can see an assessment registry template at https://www.dropbox.com/s/6wr85tmvwo4vn6l/1.4%20Assessment%20Registry_Template_v2.xlsx?dl=0.) This lists the coverage of current and planned assessments and helps the assessment team to decide where to focus subsequent assessment activities. Country operations that have the UNHCR web portal may be able to register needs assessments in an online 'needs assessment registry' rather than use the Excel template.

Compiling a 3W

To obtain an overview of needs, it is important to understand and map existing services, by type and location, and the capacities of the Government and operational partners, in a detailed 3W (Who, what, when?). As part of the secondary data review, a protection and programme officer

should work with the information manager to compile or expand a 3W for the operation. This can be done through a traditional 3W spreadsheet, which may be used to establish a profile of each administrative unit, highlight service coverage (or its absence), and signal areas that should be included or prioritized in the needs assessment.

An urban or rural dispersed needs assessment will need to break the area into smaller geographic units, by agreement with local or national authorities and other partners, after discussion in the RIM WG and other coordination forums. To avoid confusion, units should be based on existing formal or informal boundaries (i.e., municipal administrative units or local neighbourhoods), at least to the extent possible; where no sub-divisions exist, a new system will need to be created.

The division into smaller units should be completed by the information manager and the protection and programme officer and cross-checked with focal points in the community. Once agreed, the names of districts and neighbourhoods should be shared widely with Government and operational partners and used when reports are written and services coordinated.

For additional information on compiling a 3W, see the Entry on the [emergency information management strategy](#). To compile a 3W city map and set up a geo-referenced database, see the section on mapping in the **Emergency Information Management Toolkit** (Section 15, Annex 5, at <http://data.unhcr.org/imtoolkit/chapters/view/mapping/lang:eng>).

Situational analysis

The output of a secondary data review, including the assessment registry and 3W, should be a short report that lists secondary data sources and major findings. The analysis should identify information gaps in the secondary data that a primary data collection should fill.

Step 4: Primary data collection?

Although a needs assessment should always be undertaken when there is a refugee emergency, in some situations primary data should not be collected. Do not collect primary data:

- When collecting data will put collectors or interviewees in danger.
- When the results of an assessment will be incorrect or biased (for example, because interviewees are too afraid to tell the truth or external factors will distort data collection).
- When a population feels over-assessed and may be hostile to additional needs assessments.
- When programmatic decisions have already been made, and the assessment results will have no operational relevance.

In the above situations, it may be appropriate to assess needs by means of a secondary data review only (without collecting primary data).

Emergency referral system

Before collecting primary data, protection staff should arrange an emergency referrals system for the assessment team, by sector, with focal points identified. When field data collection teams come across life-saving issues or cases requiring urgent intervention (a collective centre in need of a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) intervention, an individual who needs urgent

protection), they should know how to refer them to appropriate service providers. To this end, teams should carry with them UNHCR's **Referral for Assistance**. In this manner, the emergency referral process and needs assessment fieldwork can be kept separate, and urgent action reports will not be mixed with assessment information for data entry. The emergency referral system needs to be operational when the field assessment occurs.

Needs assessment logistics and equipment

When planning an assessment, it is essential to cover the logistical requirements of the teams that will collect data. Core equipment includes appropriate vehicles, first aid kits, computers, radio or satellite phones, GPS devices, cell phones and chargers with appropriate SIM cards and credit, flashlights, spare batteries for all equipment, physical maps, and stationery (notebooks, pens, pencils and pencil sharpeners). They will also need community interview guides with recording sheets, key informant guides, and any materials required for participatory data collection techniques (flip chart sheets, felt-tipped pens, seasonal calendars, etc.). Ensure that teams carry adequate food and water, particularly if supplies are difficult to obtain in the areas they visit.

Assessment method and survey design

The unit of measurement for an emergency needs assessment should be the community rather than the household or individual. This saves time and reduces the volume of primary data that need to be gathered. Techniques of data collection at community level include direct observation, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions.

The recommended unit of measurement for an urban needs assessment is a neighbourhood or district. In addition to the above techniques, an urban needs assessment might gather information using crowd-sourcing technology or refugee call-in lines (either at the start or later on).

Participatory and AGD approaches

Assessments must also be designed and conducted using participatory approaches that allow populations of concern to voice their opinions about their own needs rather than humanitarian personnel simply deciding for them.

Needs assessments must also adopt an [age, gender and diversity](#) (AGD) approach, because the emergency will affect sub-groups in different ways. Field data collection teams need to be gender-balanced and to have had training in participatory approaches and conducting survey questionnaires before they collect primary data.

AGD and participatory approaches may be included in needs assessments in several ways:

- Hold separate focus group discussions for men, women, boys, girls, and groups from different social strata. It may be helpful to conduct these focus group discussions simultaneously so that, for example, men do not influence the women's discussion.
- For closed questionnaires or structured interviews, select key informants from different sections of society.
- When selecting villages or camps to be assessed, map the locations to reflect the diversity of their residents.

- Include questions and themes that are likely to be relevant to marginalized or less vocal segments of communities.
- Collaborate with specialized NGOs who work with hard-to-reach groups (such as [older persons](#), [persons with disabilities](#), children) to obtain information on their specific needs.
- Speak with self-governing associations (of youth, women, etc.) to identify specific needs.
- Use participatory techniques that enable community members themselves to rank problems and prioritize solutions.
- Triangulate the data you gather from different social classes and groups to throw light on how differently they experience the humanitarian situation, and their different needs.

Community participation helps to build on a community's capacities. It also reduces the risk that needs assessments, and the humanitarian interventions to which they give rise, will undermine local coping mechanisms, neglect the needs of marginalized social groups, or waste resources on aid that is not required.

Data collection teams must explicitly request permission from interviewees to use the information they provide (informed consent). Personal information can never be disclosed or transferred for purposes other than those for which it was originally collected and for which consent was explicitly given.

Site selection

Although desirable, it may not be possible to select statistically representative sites in the first weeks of an emergency. For emergency needs assessments, diversity-driven purposive sampling is the preferred sampling method. Purposive sampling aims to sample as many types of site as possible. The team first defines which selection criteria should be considered (in light of the assessment's objectives), and then visits sites that reflect these. Purposive sampling is recommended for rapid assessments because it ensures that the assessment captures the experiences and needs of different groups, and various experiences of impact. An alternative approach is representative sampling, where the population is divided into sub-populations (strata) and random samples are taken in each stratum. Representative sampling requires more time than purposive sampling.

For an emergency needs assessment, sites should be chosen to fill gaps in knowledge (about the severity of impact, geographical factors, the profile of the refugee community, etc.) that were identified during the secondary data review. Consider geography and protection issues but attempt to select sites that reflect the diversity of the situation. You might therefore need to include urban sites and rural camps, sites in mountains and sites in valleys, sites that are dominated by different ethnic or social groups, etc.

For urban assessments, focal points within the refugee community may be able to help identify where refugees in the city are to be found, including hidden or vulnerable sub-groups. Locations should still be chosen to highlight differences - in an emergency's impact on various localities, for example, or in host communities' ability to cope. The core aim remains to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible.

Reducing bias

When collecting and analysing data, a key concern is to reduce bias. 'Bias' is the systematic skewing of data that are collected. A 'biased sample', for example, is a sample of the population that does not accurately represent its composition. A 'biased estimator' is one that systematically over- or under-estimates what is being measured. Bias may occur because only a small number of people in some groups were interviewed, the response rate of certain groups was particularly low, or the team could not gain access to certain areas or people.

Bias can arise for many reasons: the community, Government sources, data collectors, interpreters (if used), key informants, ethnic groups, and both sexes can be responsible for it. The greatest limitation of any key informant interview is that it provides a subjective perspective. Individual responses provide important information, but each will have an individual and a cultural bias that needs to be considered when analysing the information. At all stages of the assessment process, consider whether interviewer bias or informant bias may skew the results, and adjust training and assessment methodologies accordingly.

Certain precautions can help to reduce the bias of any assessment.

- Remember that communities are not homogeneous. Information should always be gathered from different interest groups, including marginalized persons.
- Define the characteristics of those who are consulted. Note those most affected by the crisis, internally displaced persons, minority ethnic groups, women, etc. Record this information when collecting data.
- Record also groups that are absent, whose views the discussion or interviews fail to catch.
- Make sure that affected people are consulted directly and that as many groups as possible are heard (women, children, [older persons](#), [persons with disabilities](#), ethnic and religious minorities, etc.).
- Pay particular attention to the poorest and most socially excluded people, because they are likely to be most affected by a crisis, will have specific needs, and may not speak up easily.
- Jointly analyse results with people from different backgrounds (see below).

Step 5: Designing tools

Data collection questions in the NARE may be further customized, suggested questions may be changed or omitted, and new questions inserted. In addition to sectoral elements, the 'all sectors' column includes points on population data management, and security and logistics which should be considered.

Primary data-collection forms must be tested before starting a full needs assessment in the field. Testing may be done with local colleagues: what matters is to be sure that the questions are clear and that answers can be analysed. Design of the questionnaire in the appropriate language is the preferred option. Translation is costly, time-consuming and, if done inappropriately, can greatly reduce data quality and accuracy. Plan and budget for translation at an early stage.

Agreement on minimum life-saving sectoral data

Needs assessment questions should focus on gathering the core emergency life-saving data that are required for the first phase of an emergency response. All questions should relate directly to operational information that has been prioritized by the assessment team.

When prioritizing assessment questions, consider using a Prioritization Graph (template

attached) to facilitate a group discussion of questions to include in the assessment. Prioritize data elements that have life-saving importance and are easy to collect. Examples of life-saving sectoral data that might be included in the emergency needs assessment can also be found in the minimum and sectoral data sets in the protection, health information system (HIS), WASH, nutrition, mortality, shelter, core relief items (CRI), environment, and livelihood sections of the **Emergency Information Management Toolkit**. (At: <http://data.unhcr.org/imtoolkit/>.)

Step 6: Field team training

Needs assessment field team members should be trained in the following:

- Completing the needs assessment data-collection forms.
- Reporting problems.
- Key informant selection.
- Observation techniques.
- Facilitating focus group discussions (if needed).
- Managing community expectations.
- Data confidentiality principles.
- Basic principles of the UNHCR [Code of Conduct](#).

Step 7: Data cleaned, jointly analysed and agreed

Members of the assessment team should agree on a process for cleaning, analysing and interpreting assessment data before data collection starts in the field. Use mobile data collection systems where possible. If paper-based forms are used, field team members should clean and enter data into a spreadsheet at the end of each day. Where possible, data should be broken down into standard UNHCR sex and age groups and other factors of diversity.

Analysis should be done as much as possible jointly with the team involved and other subject and geographic experts. Pooling existing expertise ensures that the analysis is likely to be more comprehensive, robust and accurate. Analysis by staff from different backgrounds can help to mitigate biases, while joint analytical processes can go a long way to create a common understanding of the situation and buy-in for the results.

The team will also need to agree on a communication strategy. In some situations, two versions of the assessment report may need to be produced (one for internal and one for external audiences).

The results of an emergency needs assessment need to be set against any existing contingency plans. The information gathered should also be evaluated, for validity and relevance, the reliability of source(s), and the degree to which it corroborates other information. Any evidence or suspicion of fraud, including falsely reported needs (to attract or deny aid to a place or group) must be reported to senior management.

Unless there are protection concerns, assessment results should be shared at the level of analysis (in most cases, the community). They should be presented in a form that can be easily understood and re-used by others; wherever possible, data should be disaggregated. Emergency priorities, protection concerns and the NARE influence registration planning and provide the

foundation of emergency operations' planning.

The information manager should ensure that links between the assessment and monitoring needs are taken into consideration by the RIM WG and operational leads. For example, if the needs assessment shows there are severe problems in a particular sector or in one community, this information can be used to trigger monitoring of those problems. The assessment team should themselves verify the accuracy of the report and acknowledge any weaknesses of documentation or method in the final results.

In addition to the assessment report, the NARE contributes to camp profiles, updates, and funding appeals, as well as other information products. A 'refugee dashboard' (a one- or two-page visualization of key needs) may be produced to show the results.

Annexes

[UNHCR, NARE Full Version](#)

[Prioritization Graph](#)

[Minimum Sectoral Data Tracking Tool](#)

[UNHCR, Focus Group Discussion. Quick Instructions, \(Draft\)](#)

[3W reporting template](#)

[NARE pocket version \(draft\)](#)

[Sample ToRs - refugee information management working group](#)

[UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook](#)

4. Links

[Information Management strategy and tools, including a 3W, Assessment Registry,.... UNHCR Needs Assessment Toolbox](#) [Emergency Needs Assessment Additional details and tools on standard UNHCR age and sex groups](#) [Minimum sectoral data covering protection, HIS, WASH, nutrition, mortality, she...](#)

5. Main contacts

UNHCR DPSM / FICSS. At: HQIM@UNHCR.org

Common operational datasets (CODs) and fundamental operational datasets (FODs)

09 March 2023

Key points

- Ensure that data presented on UNHCR maps incorporate accepted common and fundamental operational datasets and established boundaries.
- Ensure data collection exercises and databases use agreed CODs and FODs at country level.
- Take the lead in using common datasets to set standards in operations; make colleagues and partners aware of their value and importance.

1. Overview

Developed and endorsed by the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), and disseminated by OCHA, Common operational data sets (CODs) and fundamental operational datasets (FODs) are datasets used in humanitarian emergencies to support technical standards, improve the quality of data, and strengthen interoperability. OCHA identifies, publishes and maintains CODs and FODs for use in humanitarian emergencies.

Though not all countries are included in the COD/FOD Registry, information managers and designated focal points in UNHCR should periodically check OCHA's online registry (<http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/data>) to ensure their operations are using available CODs and FODs as the baseline for all operational data and information products. All UNHCR staff should be aware of the contribution that COD/FOD datasets make to data collection, sharing data, and reporting.

Please note: much of the text for this entry was taken directly from OCHA's, Humanitarian Response, and Data: COD FOD Registry; COD vs. FODs; available online at: <http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/applications/data>; accessed 7 Oct 2014.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

CODs and FODs provide a foundation for coordinating the humanitarian response in an emergency, by articulating and sharing agreed baseline data, across sectors, for mapping and other information and planning purposes.

Common Operational Datasets (CODs) are the de facto standard for the humanitarian community. They represent the best-available datasets on a range of basic subjects:

- Administrative boundaries.
- Populated settlements, towns, cities.
- Transportation network (roads, ports, etc.).
- Hydrology (streams, bodies of water, etc.).
- Hypsography (elevation models, contours).
- Population statistics.
- Humanitarian profiles (caseload).

Fundamental Operational Datasets (FODs) are datasets that are specific to a particular sector or fall outside the COD categories above. FODs cover:

- Everything else: schools, flood plains, security incidents, wells, etc.

When CODs and FODs are available, UNHCR and partners use them to inform the baseline that underpins response and planning in a refugee emergency.

3. Main guidance

Underlying process - how does this work?

OCHA maintains the agreed datasets and coordinates their distribution and updating in emergencies. If OCHA is unable to provide this service in a specific country, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) or other inter-agency coordination structures may identify another agency to undertake this role.

According to OCHA, each dataset has a designated 'sponsor' who is responsible for identifying and liaising with 'sources' or owners to analyze, collate, clean and reach agreement on a specific operational dataset. Sponsors are identified early in an emergency and then assume responsibilities in relation to their thematic dataset. OCHA maintains lists of dataset sponsors, in each country and globally, and coordinates relations between them.

Each dataset has one or more designated source or owner. These may be national authorities or agencies, a cluster, NGO, UN agency etc. The designated owner of a dataset is

responsible for developing and maintaining a dataset and associated metadata.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

UNHCR is the 'source' and 'sponsor' of several standard datasets which it maintains, updates and disseminates: on refugee locations, population statistics, border crossing points, and the presence and status of UNHCR offices, for example. Other datasets may be added at country level.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

At country level, the information manager (IM) should track the names of locations, coordinates, CODs and FODs, and Pcodes. (Pcodes are unique geographic (geo)identification codes, represented by combinations of letters or numbers, that identify a specific location or feature on a map or in a database.) Contact your local OCHA office for area-specific Pcodes or consult the website.

Information Management Officers should: share the Excel database of Pcodes, CODs and FODs with all operational partners to ensure that they use the same units of assessment for data analysis; liaise with them on data quality issues and data standards; participate in or organize inter-agency data groups at field level; advise partners on methodological issues (where needed); and encourage prompt reporting of data, according to agreed standards.

Distribute information products, CODs and baseline data that are to be used by all partners.

Annexes

[IASC Guidelines Common Operational Datasets \(CODs\) in Disaster Preparedness and Response](#)

[What is a GLIDE Number. When to use them and why they are useful](#)

4. Links

[IASC, Guidelines on the Common Operational Datasets in Disaster Preparedness an... CODs and FODs](#)

5. Main contacts

Local OCHA office or the Humanitarian Response website.

Operational data portal

07 September 2023

Key points

- Information on the web portal is publicly available. This means that it is available to everyone on the Internet, not only humanitarian actors. It is therefore vital to ensure that information and data are of good quality and have been formally cleared for posting.
- To facilitate posting, the information manager should customise the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for clearing web portal data, which are endorsed by the Representative in the content management strategy. Information products and data will not have identical clearance procedures. Some information may be given blanket clearance by the Representative or emergency coordinator, meaning that it can be posted on approval by a sectoral lead or sectoral working group. Other information may need personal clearance by the Representative or Deputy Representative. Clearance procedures will depend on local circumstances, as well as the information's reliability and sensitivity.

1. Overview

The UNHCR web portal provides a unified platform for visualizing, coordinating and disseminating information on a refugee emergency situation.

2. Main guidance

When and for what purpose

The web portal displays the latest emergency data, maps, population statistics, demographic graphs, UNHCR and partner reports and factsheets, operational highlights and situation reports, plus quick links to a variety of partner web sites. It centralizes all the operational data and information products on a refugee emergency that should be disseminated to partners, donors and governments, who are its primary audience.

A coordinated and well-maintained web portal is a key tool in an emergency. It is also an

excellent example of use of technology to sharpen emergency responses, coordination and service delivery.

How to use the template?

Step 1. Portal deployment

A few key issues must be considered before you request a portal.

- Will appropriate staffing be available to sustain the portal's content?
- What will be the portal's focus? Will it concentrate on an emergency or provide a snapshot of the refugee situation as a whole?
- Are regional portals already in place?
- Are administrative unit structures and names clear and in accordance with ProGres?
- If regions are to be used, how will 'region' be defined (as an operation area or as a geographic or administrative district)?
- How frequently will new figures be issued? How will new figures be consolidated at country and regional level?
- What population figures will be displayed? How will the figures be disaggregated?

To initiate deployment of a new regional web portal, the country information manager should first seek approval from the Country Representative. The Representative submits a Portal Deployment Request Form (template annexed to this Entry) to the Regional Representative and/or Regional Refugee Coordinator (as applicable), who consults relevant Country Representatives and information managers in the region and then forwards the proposal to the Bureau and FICSS chief of section.

For country-level portals, consultation with the Regional Representative is not required. The Country Representative may submit a Portal Deployment Request Form directly to the Bureau and FICSS. In Level 2 or 3 emergencies, the HQ Emergency Task Force may initiate a portal request.

Responsibility for managing web portal content ultimately lies with the UNHCR Representative, supported by the emergency team leader and information manager, who will create many of the products the portal displays. In association with partners and other stakeholders on the ground, the information manager will also be responsible for gathering, managing and coordinating the portal's content.

It is important to reiterate that each country or region should establish a content management strategy and clearly name the focal points responsible for updating portal content. The information manager in each country or region is responsible for keeping the site up to date. Where resources are limited or bandwidth issues exist, regional information managers can be asked to manage content for a limited period. Headquarter support is available for configuring,

maintaining and enhancing a portal's performance and capacity; HQ does not manage content.

Step 2. Structure, content and information management responsibility

Responsibility for web portal content has been defined as follows:

Regional (for example, Horn of Africa)

- Total refugee population per country: information manager working with the registration officer.
- Regional Refugee Plan, and financial information: information manager working with the Representative, sectoral leads and the public information officer. The overall framework and structure of the regional portal will be the responsibility of, and managed by the Regional Bureau. While data for country specific pages of the regional portal, will be generated by the country level Information manager.

Country (for example, Kenya)

- Overall aggregate population profile, arrival trends: information manager working with the registration officer.
- Highlights, news: information manager working with the Representative, sectoral leads and the public information officer.
- Documents (statistics spreadsheets, maps, updates, reports, meeting notes): information manager working with, and collecting and analysing information from, the sectoral leads.
- Calendar and events: information manager.
- Working groups should have a dedicated page for coordination purposes (contact information, highlights, calendar, working group documents): information manager and sectoral leads.

Sub-office level (for example, Dadaab)

- Population profile, arrival trends: information manager working with the registration officer.
- Highlights, news: information manager working with the Representative, sectoral leads and the public information officer.
- Documents (statistics, maps, updates, reports): information manager working with, and

- collecting and analyzing information from, the sectoral leads.
- Calendar and events: information manager.

Settlement or camp (for example, Ifo)

- Population profile: information manager working with, and collecting and analyzing information from, the sectoral leads.
- Basic indicators: information manager working with, and collecting and analyzing information from, the sectoral leads.
- Who's Doing What, Where? (3W): information manager working with, and collecting and analyzing information from, the sectoral leads.
- CRI distribution report: information manager working with, and collecting and analyzing information from, the sectoral leads.

Note: Population figures and 3W information are added at settlement level and aggregated upwards at the country and regional level.

Step 3. Metadata

When posting data on the portal, the following metadata should be included:

- The date of the data's validity.
- The source organization(s) of the data.
- Information on the method of data collection; other notes or comments.

Step 4. Sector-specific portal clearance

Sectoral groups, at both country or field level, may ask to post sector-specific assessments on the portal. Recommendations should be agreed consensually and are registered by the information manager at meetings of the RIM WG.

Step 5. Highlights

Highlights are 'bite-sized' newsflashes. They should not be confused with 'news'. Highlights uploaded on web portals are limited (without exception) to 160 characters.

A sectoral working group may propose highlights. Its chair should e-mail draft highlight text to the information manager, for clearance in accordance with the relevant SOP.

Step 6. News clearance

The senior public information officer or information manager may suggest news items to be considered by the Representative for publication. The information manager is authorized (by the

Representative) to upload to the website news items from UNHCR's main public website, on request from the senior public information officer. News items from non-UNHCR websites must be cleared by the Representative (at the request of the senior public information officer) before the information manager can upload them.

Step 7. Interactive maps

An interactive map displays population figures by country, region and settlement. Infrastructure (schools, border-crossing points, warehouses, etc.) may be added and linked to specific partners. Linking infrastructure to partners is optional; if done, it is important to ensure that points are correctly attributed to all the partners involved. The information manager can decide which points he or she wants to make visible, using a checkbox in the portal's administrative interface.

Step 8. Documents

The number of tags (sector, partner, document type and category, language, location) that can be attached to documents is not limited. Because tags make referencing and searching much easier, it is recommended to attach as many tags as possible.

Step 9. Who is doing what, where? (3W)

3W information is created and maintained by the information manager. 3W information needs to be updated manually in the portal, based on reports from a 3W information system. Each partner will have a page on the portal, with logo and information about the organization, that can be updated. The information manager can use the RIM WG to supply partners with up-to-date information for their pages.

Step 10. Assessment Registry

Assessment Registry information is created and maintained by the information manager. It needs to be updated manually in the portal, based on assessment reports provided by partners, governments or UNHCR. Core metadata and descriptions of assessments need to be added individually. If an assessment document is available for circulation it can be added to the registry.

Step 11. Reporting bugs

When reporting a bug, be as detailed as possible. Indicate clearly the circumstances in which the bug arose and its incidence. To enable the development team to reproduce the bug, describe step by step what happened. Include information on the following:

- What actions did you take and what resulted, and what did you expect the result to be? (For example: "I edited the title of a news article and it did not change or save.")

Always provide detail. In the above example, for instance, clearly indicate the steps taken, the news article that you edited, and the title of the new file that did not save. The development team will find it helpful if you provide screenshots. Indicate which browser you use and its version number.

Bugs can be reported either to the generic email address (webportal@unhcr.org) or via the online feedback form that can be found in the administration section.

Step 12. Portal features

Sectoral working group pages. These make it possible to display information by sectors, themes and geographic areas. Sectors may use this feature of the web portal to centralise their working documents, contact information, events calendar, highlights, and pictures.

Key Response Figures. These highlight specific figures that are relevant to an operation, helping to tell the story of the response in a succinct, comprehensible way.

Raw data export. Raw data is available for download from different location levels (regional, country, etc...) and from selected modules (timelines, 3W, the funding chart).

Funding module. This visualizes the financial requirements of the response, including gaps between budget and resources, disaggregated by country.

Image gallery. This feature uploads photographs to settlement, country or regional pages, and working group pages.

Links. This facility provides links to operational websites and partner information that are relevant to the emergency and the response.

RSS Feeds. RSS feeds feature news stories related to the refugee emergency.

Storyline page (optional). The storyline module is administered by UNHCR and tells refugees' stories, from the perspective of UNHCR, our partners, and the refugees themselves. The module may also feature news stories, videos and photos that highlight the human side of an emergency. It must be emphasized that a portal's purpose is to facilitate operations; it is not a public relations site. Before adding this page to your site you should clear the decision with PI/PR focal points locally, and put in place a strategy for updating the page with content that does not come from UNHCR.org or related sites.

Annexes

[Web portal guidance memo for emergency coordinators](#)

3. Main contacts

UNHCR DPSM / FICSS. At: HQIM@UNHCR.org

Who does what where (3W)

24 March 2023

Key points

- 3W is a practical tool of information management for coordination and gap analysis.
- Keep 3W simple at the start of an emergency; focus on coordination. Extend the matrix later to include activities and projects. Making 4W complex too early will generate highly latent results.

1. Overview

The **Who's doing what, where** (3W) tool is a valuable information management tool for coordination and activity gap analysis. In emergency situations, 3W should be kept simple; but additional Ws may be added as the situation evolves (**When? Why? for Whom?**), expanding the tool to 6W.

An information management officer may lead this process, with support and collaboration from programme, protection and sector leads, the external relations officer, and senior managers.

2. Main guidance

When and for what purpose

Creating, maintaining and sharing the 3W with external partners throughout an emergency promotes UNHCR's coordination and communication role in information management. Raw data from 3W can support emergency programme monitoring, and contribute to overall gap analysis by representing capacity that can be compared to needs.

Steps to be taken

Step 1. Responsibility and reporting

Ideally, at the start of an emergency, the Information manager should use the 3W template included with this entry to establish a 3W in their operations, and also oversee the dissemination of related 3W information internally and to partners. The Simplified Reporting Template (also included with this entry) can be used in situations at the start of an emergency when the level of

information available is not yet sufficient to complete the 3W template, however a lesser degree of 3W information is required for coordination and reporting purposes.

It is important to set up a regular and predictable clearance and dissemination plan for the 3W, because partners need to know what they can expect and when to expect it. The Representative should be briefed regularly, and should agree to a frequent 3W dissemination schedule (at least two or three times a month, externally and internally).

Once cleared by the UNHCR Representative, the 3W may be mapped and uploaded on the UNHCR web portal. Where possible, make use of creative dissemination techniques (mass SMS, e-mail lists) and ensure that hardcopies are available at information kiosks and included in briefing kits.

Step 2. Key Information

A 3W is populated through networking (in meetings, humanitarian briefings, sectoral working groups), informal contacts, and the monitoring work of field staff. It tracks information on sector and sub-sector actors, the location of activities, funding, and whether information is public.

Whenever new members join coordination or sectoral meetings, make contact and gather information for inclusion in the 3W, a copy of which should be shared. If a UNHCR Portal is established, information should be consolidated and updated on this platform as soon as possible. You may need to support this with offline 3W matrixes (see Annexes 1 and 2).

How to use the template?

Criteria for inclusion in (and exclusion from) a 3W should be decided at national level, under the guidance of senior management. For example, should donors as well as implementers appear? Should planned activities appear if they have not yet begun? Should activities appear only if Government has authorized them?

Such questions should be considered explicitly when deciding who and what to track in the 3W matrix. Columns and filters can be added to the spreadsheet template, to separate different forms of humanitarian activity (planned-started-completed, donor-implementer, officially authorized, etc.) making it possible to derive different 3W matrices for different purposes. Senior management should determine what 3W matrices appear in public domains, such as the web portal.

Annexes

[Simplified 3W Reporting Tool for Coordination](#)

[3W Excel Reporting Template](#)

3. Links

[UNHCR data portals / information management toolkit](#)

4. Main contacts

UNHCR DPSM/FICSS in Geneva. At: HQIM@UNHCR.org

MoUs and LoUs with UN agencies and NGOs

09 March 2023

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 \(2018\)](#)

[UNICEF, LoU, template and guidance notes \(2015\)](#)

[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

[Partnership Section](#)

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.

Sectoral Coordination Toolkit: Public Health in Emergencies Toolkit

18 September 2023

Key points

- The Public Health in Emergencies toolkit provides a set of tools to facilitate timely assessment and efficient coordination of a public health and nutrition response in a refugee emergency.
- A sound public health and nutrition assessment at the onset of an emergency will guide the key actions to be implemented by the relevant stakeholders at the right time.
- UNHCR public health staff can play a convening and catalytic role to assist in identifying support needs for the national response, mobilise UN and other partners as well as humanitarian and development donors in line with an agreed strategic response.
- Every public health and nutrition response should consist of a timely set of actions, decisions, programs and interventions to be undertaken along the different phases of a refugee emergency. The extent of UNHCR engagement will vary according to the context and the national capacity.

1. Overview

This Public Health in Emergencies Toolkit is intended to provide UNHCR Public Health and

Nutrition staff, interagency coordinators and health, nutrition and other relevant partner staff with robust, yet straightforward tools to identify public health and nutrition needs, capacities, and vulnerabilities during the initial stages of an emergency and to guide, facilitate and support a well-coordinated response. While this document is written primarily for public health responses, many of the tools presented may be relevant for staff working in other sectors.

2. Main guidance

UNHCR is prioritizing emergency preparedness and response by ensuring standardized approaches to public health and nutrition coordination and response.

The intent of this toolkit is to propose key actions and guidance to allow for better-informed decisions to be made in the emergency operation at the refugee hosting site(s), sub-national and national level and to facilitate, guide, coordinate and monitor the various stages of the response. The tools facilitate understanding of a situation with enough detail to make decisions that are based on both best practices and field-level evidence of needs, risks, and existing capacities.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

Displacement of people is frequently associated with high mortality and morbidity. A key objective of most humanitarian interventions is to reduce excess mortality and minimize preventable morbidity and suffering. How do UNHCR, national partners and the humanitarian community at large ensure that the most appropriate interventions are in place at the right time to achieve these objectives?

Refugee emergencies entail movement of people across borders at varied speed, caused by diverse reasons and affecting populations with different burdens of morbidity. The capacity of national systems to respond will also vary greatly. Public health responses to refugee situations will therefore vary, and will require a sound public health assessment and development of a context specific strategic response. UNHCR public health staff can play a convening and catalytic role to assist in identifying support needs for the national response, mobilise UN and other partners as well as humanitarian and development donors in line with an agreed strategic response.

Nevertheless, every public health response consists of a timely set of actions, decisions, programs and interventions and this toolkit tries to provide guidance to UNHCR Public Health and Nutrition Officers on the steps to follow and tools (listed below) to use so that the relevant actions are undertaken along the different phases of a refugee emergency.

- Assessment tool
- Public Health Response and Accountability Framework
- Outline of a Public Health Sector Strategy
- Outline of Public Health and Nutrition Components of a Refugee Response Plan
- Terms of Reference (ToR) templates for various coordination groups
- Weekly Health and Nutrition update template

- 3W template, tool and instructions

This public health toolkit will facilitate the work of UNHCR in health sector coordination in line with the [Refugee coordination model](#) (RCM). The RCM offers a partner inclusive platform for planning and coordinating refugee operations; clarifies the coordination modalities in relation to broader humanitarian coordination structures, under the overall leadership of the host government. UNHCR's approach to coordination is determined by the needs and concerns of refugees and persons of concern and the operational context.

Furthermore, effective coordination with the Ministry of Health (MoH), other line ministries and other UN agencies, particularly WHO and UNICEF, is of paramount importance including in exploring opportunities for integration of services and inclusion of refugees in national programs. Designed accordingly, the toolkit makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable, inclusive and partner-friendly, to ensure that refugees receive the assistance and protection they need throughout the duration of the refugee response.

Role of partners involved

- Refugees, other persons of concern and host communities: Beneficiaries and key partners in planning and implementation and use of the programs.
- Ministry of Health (MoH) to include refugees in national programs with support from UN agencies and NGOs (national and international).
- NGOs : Key role in direct implementation and/or support to implementation of the public health and nutrition response at refugee hosting site level .
- UN agencies: support the MoH in preparedness and contingency planning for scenarios with a refugee influx, within the broader work on strengthening MoH capacities in health emergency risk management.
- Development partners and international financial institutions: strengthen institutions for the management of a refugee influx; develop financial instruments to facilitate the flow of financial support; and to establish surge capacity for service delivery.
- Global Fund: for HIV, TB, malaria program support where applicable including emergency fund grants.
- Gavi: For vaccine support to MoH for refugee response with possibility of waiving co-financing obligation of MoH.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

- Establishing sectoral coordination mechanisms in refugee emergencies , with government counterparts where possible, to lead sector-specific needs assessments, planning, monitoring, reporting, and information management, within and across sectors, at national and sub-national level.
- As the agency ultimately responsible for refugee responses, fulfil its role in coordinating UN and partner responses for refugees including convening and catalysing the engagement of a broader array of stakeholders in line with the GCR. Being accountable for the quality of the refugee response, UNHCR maintains a direct line to the Government on refugee issues.
- Ensuring that protection considerations are taken into account in the health - related interventions of the refugee response, including those of partners.
- Advocacy and technical support to legislative, policy or strategy changes where relevant,

to facilitate inclusion in national systems and plans: UNHCR advocates with relevant counterparts (Ministries, UN) to include refugees in health service delivery at national and local levels, and in national planning documents (National development plans (NDP) and support frameworks such as UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). When needed and feasible, UNHCR to work with relevant partners [relevant line ministries, international organizations such as WHO and local partners] who would provide support to host governments to strengthen national health systems and health service provision.

- Ensuring that a situation analysis and mapping of relevant actors (Government, UN agencies, NGOs, multilaterals and donors) in the health sector is done in collaboration with the ministry of health to inform the design of a response in each area of public health and nutrition and for every stage of the response.
- Facilitating data driven responses: Facilitate and support the collection, compilation, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of health program data. Support inclusion of refugees in national data systems and tools including disaggregation of data by nationality to the extent possible.
- Refugee participation and consultation: wherever possible, continue to develop and support consultative processes that enable refugees and host community members to assist in designing appropriate, accessible and inclusive responses.
- Providing technical expertise & support: UNHCR will seek to provide or facilitate technical and general support to partners on program implementation and support for inclusion of refugees in national systems.

Annexes

[01 Health 3W Kobo Template](#)

[02_Health_3W_PowerBI_Report.pbix](#)

[03 Health 3W Excel Template](#)

[Public Health 3W Tools](#)

[TOR - Sexual and Reproductive Health Sub-Group](#)

[Public Health Response and Accountability Framework](#)

[UNHCR Public Health Toolkit - Assessment Tool](#)

[TOR - Nutrition Sub-Working Group](#)

[TOR - Health Sector Strategic Advisory Group](#)

[TOR - Health Sector Group](#)

[List of Annexes and Key Documents for Public Health in Emergencies](#)

[TOR - Community Health Working Group](#)

[Outline of a Public Health Sector Strategy in Refugee Emergencies](#)

[Outline of Health and Nutrition Components of a Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\)](#)

[Weekly Health and Nutrition Update \(Country\)](#)

[TOR - Mental Health and Psychosocial Support \(MHPSS\) Technical Working Group](#)

3. Links

[UNHCR Public Health iRHIS](#) [The Sphere Handbook](#) [IATT HIV in Emergencies](#)

4. Main contacts

UNHCR Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS)- Public Health Section

HQPHN@unhcr.org

Inter-agency UNHCR-led refugee response plans

27 August 2023

Key points

- Involve Government from the start of an emergency, in the Contact Group and in preparing the RRP;
- Be flexible, transparent and inclusive; involve participating agencies and key stakeholders;

- Make arrangements that enable all actors to communicate clearly and transparently;
- Make sure that RRP's take account of the requirements of all agencies involved in the response;
- Ensure that agencies' requirements are realistic, match agencies' presence and capacities in the country, and can be implemented before the RRP's term ends;
- Avoid duplication or overlaps in budgeting. When agencies issue their own appeals, take account of requirements that might be included in the budgets of UNHCR or other UN agencies;
- Consult the UNHCR Emergency Information Management Toolkit when you prepare an RRP. It contains useful tools for communication and information management;
- Draft RRP's in language that is agency-neutral;
- Do not change planning scenarios, planning figures or priorities unilaterally;
- Do not focus on agency-specific planning.

1. Overview

Refugee Response Plans (RRPs) are UNHCR-led, comprehensive inter-agency plans for responding to refugee emergencies. An RRP contributes to the application of the Refugee Coordination Model ensuring accountable, inclusive, predictable and transparent coordination in responding to large-scale or complex refugee situations. It provides the vehicle through which UNHCR together with a broad range of key actors, including representatives of the host Government (where possible), members of the UN/Humanitarian Country Team, other international organizations, civil society, development and financial institutions and the private sector, seeks to foster joint humanitarian and development programming initiatives in the country of asylum. See [Refugee Coordination Model](#).

The RRP articulates the protection and solution priorities and describes the needs of refugees, impacted host communities, and other persons of concern, states how and by whom these needs will be addressed, and defines the financial requirements of all the partners involved. It builds on national preparedness measures and prior contingency plans. See [Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies](#) for inter-agency contingency planning in a refugee situation.

The development of an RRP is coordinated and led by the UNHCR Refugee Coordinator, who is often the UNHCR Representative in medium-sized emergencies and a senior staff member in the Regional Bureau concerned in larger ones, with the aim of ensuring an overarching vision and the coherent engagement of all actors in pursuit of protection and solutions.

An RRP is based on protection and assistance assessment findings. The [needs assessment for refugee emergencies \(NARE\)](#) is designed to assist UNHCR operations with the guidance and

tools required to undertake an initial multi-sectoral needs assessment when there has been a significant sudden, forced displacement of populations across borders. In addition, RRP partners should step up cooperation by exchanging information, carrying out joint assessments and analysis in line with the 'new way of working' to jointly understand the challenges on the ground and better identify actions and sectors for intervention. Assessments should consult refugee and host communities about their needs, capacities and possible solutions.

2. Main guidance

When and for what purpose

An RRP is prepared in situations where the scale of a refugee crisis requires a formal coordinated inter-agency response plan. The RRP sets out a detailed strategy and implementation plan that provides a framework for all the partners involved. The planning process should be inclusive, building on each key actor's comparative advantage to produce a complementary combination of interventions in multiple contexts to respond to various types of refugee crises from the onset of emergencies to more protracted situations.

Given that the host Government is the primary duty-bearer in any refugee situation, the RRP supports Government leadership and coordination, through mobilisation of international support and funding, while it seeks to broaden the scope of partnerships to mobilise additional resources and increase visibility for the needs of refugees and their host communities.

The RRP serves as the base from which to implement and advocate for refugee situations. The inclusiveness of UNHCR's RRP approach brings agencies together: they share their analysis of protection risks and the needs of refugees and host communities, and jointly elaborate a strategy to address them. In addition to deciding who is responsible for what, and financial requirements, the RRP is also a fundraising tool for agencies involved in the response.

An RRP does not cover UNHCR's involvement in IDP and natural disaster response situations. A separate planning process exists for these situations which is led by the Humanitarian Coordinator, supported by OCHA, and with the active involvement of Cluster Coordinators. UNHCR takes an active part in this planning process as a member of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and as a cluster lead. If a **Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)** is already in place when a refugee influx occurs, a high-level summary of the RRP for a newly emerged refugee situation along with any on-going refugee response(s), and presentation of related resource requirements are included in the HRP as a separate refugee chapter.

In response to the many challenges inherent in identifying and protecting refugees within broader movements of persons, an RRP could also be developed for mixed refugee-migrant displacement situations. In such cases the **Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP)**, which is typically co-led by UNHCR and IOM, seeks to ensure humanitarian, protection and integration interventions to address the needs of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, as well as to support host communities in response to mixed population flows.

The RRP plays a key role in:

- Providing partners in the refugee response with a platform and tools to properly coordinate an inter-agency response, as well as to engage new partners;
- Raising the profile of refugee assistance among the various inter-agency plans, as well as enhancing refugee inclusion in national and local development plans and policies;
- Mobilizing resources for partners, which are operationally engaged, by providing donors with a jointly agreed plan;
- Providing the host Government with an overview of who-is-doing-what in support of the refugees, ensuring an overarching vision and coherent engagement in pursuit of protection and solutions.

Summary of guidance and/or options

In line with [UNHCR's Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response](#), country operations shall from the start of an emergency elaborate resource requirements and mobilization strategies together with partners and ensure that these are reflected in Refugee Response Plans.

The duration of an RRP depends on the nature of the emergency situation. However, ideally it should be aligned with the calendar year, particularly UNHCR's "financial biennium", which is the period from 1 January of one year to 31 December of the following year.

Within the framework of the RRP partners have to work together to develop and implement responses in the immediate, medium and long-term to assist and empower refugees, as well as to support host communities and the host Government. The inter-agency activities included in an RRP, should aim to provide protection and multi-sectoral assistance, and to increase the focus on building the self-reliance and resilience of refugees. Advocacy for the inclusion of refugees in national developments plans and labour markets shall also be included.

Depending on the context of the displacement situation, as well as the capacity of host communities to support the impact of massive numbers of refugees, the RRP should focus on reinforcing and supporting national structures wherever conditions permit.

The response plan should be pillared on broadening partnerships and operationalizing the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GRF\)](#), underpinned by the [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework \(CRRF\)](#) and incorporating the humanitarian-development and peace nexus into the response.

An RRP includes:

- A situation analysis, including contextual information and maps;
- Planning figures;
- An overview of the needs and vulnerabilities of the refugees, host communities and other persons of concern as relevant;
- Protection and solutions priorities;

- Strategic objectives and main priorities;
- Key sector specific responses by involved partners, and their responsibilities;
- Indicators with baselines and targets for each planned result;
- Inter-agency budget;
- Coordination arrangements.

Where refugees from a country flee to more than one country of asylum, a Regional RRP is prepared. This sets out a regional strategy that incorporates the country-level inter-agency response plans of all refugee-receiving countries affected by a particular refugee situation. A Country RRP is prepared to reflect the needs of an entire refugee population in a country of asylum. The Country RRP includes the inter-agency response delivered by partners in the country.

See [UNHCR / DER Guidance Note on 2020-2021 Refugee Response Plans](#), aimed at ensuring consistency in the preparations of RRP and promoting best practice.

Regional RRP

Where refugees from a country flee to more than one country of asylum, a Regional RRP is developed. This presents the inter-agency response plans of all refugee receiving countries in separate sections, together with a regional overview. Coordination of a regional RRP is led by the Regional Refugee Coordinator, or the Regional Bureau Director's Office of the relevant bureau. UNHCR offices in coordination and consultation with relevant partners, should work with the Regional Bureau or Regional Refugee Coordinator and agree:

- A timeline for preparing the RRP;
- Planning figures and a planning scenario, in close consultation with the operation in the country of origin;
- Protection and solutions priorities and strategic objectives;
- A plan or chapter for each country that receives refugees;
- Working group and sector arrangements;
- Inter-agency financial requirements, broken down by country of asylum and sector;
- Regional coordination arrangements.

Regional RRP should not include UNHCR's response to IDP situations in a country of origin. While it is vital to coordinate with operations in countries of origin on likely scenarios, possible outflow patterns and numbers, and causes of refugee outflows, Regional RRP only cover the response to the needs of refugees, host communities and other persons of concern in countries of asylum.

While an RRP is developed in close collaboration and consultation with relevant government counterparts in countries of asylum, it should not include financial requirements of host governments.

Country RRP

While Regional RRP continue to be essential for the coordination of refugee crises with regional implications, when possible, operations are encouraged to develop Country Refugee Response Plans (Country RRP), consisting of a multi-year inter-agency plan covering all refugee populations in a country.

The development of a Country RRP is coordinated by UNHCR, under the leadership of the UNHCR Representative, including the plans of all multilateral organizations for humanitarian assistance and beyond it could pave the way for the development of comprehensive plans for refugees led by the host Government.

The Country RRP, follows the structure of the Regional RRP and supports interventions from humanitarian assistance to medium and long-term responses, focused on resilience and solutions. In this regard, the Country RRP includes activities based on a two-year inter-agency budget (in line with UNHCR's and partners' biennium), while the protection strategy covers a three to five-year period.

How to implement this at field level?

When developing an RRP, the following steps are recommended.

Step 1: Convene a core strategy group and set up coordination structures for the planning process

Under the leadership of the UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator a core strategy group should be convened to help establish priorities and strategic objectives of the RRP.

This group should be composed of representatives of agencies involved in the response (including UN agencies, as well as international and national NGOs), and the head of the Refugee Protection Working Group. As appropriate, the host government should also participate.

Coordination arrangements for Sector Working Groups should be reviewed and confirmed as early as possible in an emergency (ideally before the planning process starts) and should be informed by contingency plans and preparedness actions. Sector co-coordinators should be drawn from UN agencies, NGOs and, where applicable, Government.

If not already in place, it is particularly important to establish a UNHCR-led Refugee Protection Working Group that represents a wide range of agencies, to ensure that all sectors integrate cross-cutting protection priorities and align their plans accordingly.

Step 2: Develop planning assumptions and broad strategic objectives

Under the leadership of the UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator supported by the Head of the Refugee Protection Working Group, the core strategy group undertakes a joint analysis of the situation and develops the overall planning assumptions that should guide the response. They also jointly review the protection and solution priorities and establish the corresponding strategic objectives to guide the response.

Step 3: Development of sector level response

The UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator convenes the sector co-coordinating agencies and the head of the Refugee Protection Working Group to provide high-level guidance for sector-level planning, based on the protection and solution priorities and strategic objectives

set by the core strategy group to ensure a collective response that meets the needs of refugees and leverages the capacity of all actors. Taking account of the protection priorities, the overall strategy, and working with partners in their sectors, sector co-coordinators determine sector-specific objectives and key activities (based on sector-level assessments) and identify gaps and priority needs.

Sector plans should provide:

- A situation analysis for the sector;
- Overall planning figures for targeted populations (broken down by region or location where relevant, and disaggregated as a minimum by gender and age);
- An overview of needs and vulnerabilities;
- List of key geographic locations in which partners should develop interventions;
- Key assumptions that affect the work of the sector (such as government policies, refugee specific needs and protection related risks, security issues, etc.);
- Financial requirements, with a break down by partner and sector, in each country of asylum.

Step 4: Consolidate and Review the plan

When sector-level plans are complete, the Representative or Refugee Coordinator convenes the sector co-coordinating agencies and the head of the Refugee Protection Working Group to review the plans and identify areas of overlap or duplication. The UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator should then confirm overall needs, priorities and requirements with the core strategy group, as well as partners involved in the response and the concerned Regional Bureau.

Step 5: Launch the plan

Once the response plan has been validated and agreed by all the partners involved, including at their Headquarters or Regional Director level, the UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator organizes the formal launch of the RRP, in coordination with the host Government, partners and relevant stakeholders.

Step 6: Monitor the plan

A monitoring framework should be set during the development phase of the RRP with clear responsibilities as to who should monitor, what and when. Data on progress should be collected from partners and regular progress reports on key indicators and RRP objectives should be coordinated and published. For **Country RRs**, operations are responsible for putting in place a monitoring system. For **Regional RRs**, the Regional Bureau/ Refugee Coordinator's Office is responsible for coordinating the monitoring and reporting. Mechanisms and tools are necessary to allow country operations to monitor the collective results and report on the collective achievements on a regular basis. Establishing an information management system early on is critical.

Information Management: In an early stage in the RRP planning process, UNHCR will reinforce its country data and information management capacity. Data portals are created to facilitate coordination and information sharing among stakeholders engaged in the response. An on-line inter-agency RRP portal (operational data-portals: <http://www.data.unhcr.org/>) should be established with the support of UNHCR HQ. In addition, UNHCR has an information management

role and field operations should produce external Inter-Agency Operational Updates to report on the progress achieved by all agencies in the Country and Regional RRP, as well as UNHCR-specific updates.

Step 7: Fund tracking

- As the lead coordinating agency, UNHCR is responsible for tracking funding received by all agencies for the RRP and sharing Inter-Agency Funding Updates. The Refugee Response Financial Tracking (RRFT) was developed by UNHCR and rolled out in 2019 as a "One stop shop" platform compiling all financial data related to refugee programmes. Data available includes funding received by agencies involved in refugee response. It includes funding and budgets for refugee-related appeals and plans such as Country and Regional Refugee Response Plans (RRPs). See **UNHCR, Guide to the Refugee Funding Tracker**.
- **Timeframe and action plan**
Depending on the emergency of the situation, a new RRP should be finalized within a timeframe of not more than 20 working days. Given the importance of inter-agency consultations and understanding the complexity of the challenges facing partners involved, including organizing appropriate needs assessments, this timeframe may be extended further to ensure a higher quality response plan especially in more protracted situations where revisions of annual plans are concerned.

Action Plan: what and by whom

- Following a decision to develop an RRP, the UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator and the Regional Bureau agree draft timelines and the period the RRP will cover.
- UNHCR agrees a detailed timeline with the Government and participating actors in the host country and establishes a coordination mechanism for preparing an RRP.
- The UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator forms a small core strategy group composed of senior representatives of key agencies involved in the response and convenes a strategy meeting.
- This group prepares a situation analysis, develops the planning scenario and assumptions, reviews the protection and solutions priorities and establishes the strategic objectives. These are communicated to sector co-coordinators and other actors involved.
- Based on established criteria and in consultation with key agencies the UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator identifies sector co-coordinating agencies.
- Prepare a draft RRP. It should also include the financial requirements of agencies participating in the response by sector. The RRP is based on available evidence and a needs analysis.
- Circulate a consolidated draft for review to the core strategy group and all agencies participating in the response as well as to Government counterparts.
- The UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator conclude the process of feedback from core strategy group, partners and Government counterparts and provide a consolidated RRP draft to UNHCR HQ and to the Regional Bureau for review.
- Thereafter, the UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator shares the draft with the

HQs of participating agencies for information and further feedback. At that stage, a validation meeting could be organized among all the partners involved.

- The UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator, in cooperation with UNHCR HQ, reviews and integrates the comments of other agencies and prepares the final document for launch. Upon approval by the UNHCR HQ and the Regional Bureau Director, the RRP is finalized.
- The UNHCR Representative or Refugee Coordinator, in cooperation with UNHCR HQ, launches the RRP and presents it where possible with the host Government, partners, as well as donors and other stakeholders.
- UNHCR coordinates the collection of data from partners and offices and regularly publishes progress updates.

Annexes

[UNHCR, Guide to the Refugee Funding Tracker](#)

3. Links

[UNHCR, Guidance Note on 2020-2021 RRP \(access with password\)](#) [UNHCR, Templates for Regional RRP Narrative and Budget, and Country RRP Narrati...](#) [RRPs on the online refugee data portals](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact the UNHCR DER/DRRM, Humanitarian Financing and Field Support Unit: Rachel Manning: manning@unhcr.org and Stylianos Kostas: kostas@unhcr.org

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster (IASC)

19 September 2023

Key points

- Contact UNHCR's CCCM Unit at headquarter as soon as it becomes evident that activation of clusters will be discussed. This will enable the unit to provide timely guidance and support.
- Emphasise that CCCM does not promote the creation of camps. Explore and promote alternatives to camps and do not establish camps if other options are feasible.

- Analyse the country context and possible forthcoming emergency situations. Identify existing coordination mechanisms and whether they will cope. Advocate for cluster activation in the HCT if you conclude that it is appropriate to do so on the basis of your analysis. Past experience indicates that it is better to activate the CCCM cluster early, and deactivate it if necessary, than to activate too slowly. Argue for a single cluster lead, supported by an NGO co-chair or co-facilitator where appropriate.
- Where those displaced are not located in formal camps (or the creation of formal camps is not planned or desired) but numbers are rising quickly and occupation of unused public or abandoned buildings (such as schools or churches) becomes common, consult the Global CCCM Cluster.
- Coordinating a cluster is a full-time job. Ensure that a dedicated CCCM cluster coordinator is appointed, supported by an information manager and a capacity-development specialist. Sub-national cluster coordinators should also be appointed when necessary.

1. Overview

The Global CCCM Cluster was established in 2005 and is co-led by UNHCR in conflict situations and by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in natural disaster situations. The CCCM cluster's overall goals are to coordinate and facilitate the efficient, effective and predictable delivery of protection and services at community level, ensure that the rights of IDPs and other affected populations are protected, and advocate for durable solutions.

The coordination mechanisms of the CCCM cluster, like other clusters, are mainly relevant in situations of internal displacement and natural disasters. The IASC [cluster approach](#) is not applicable to refugee situations, where responses are coordinated within the framework of the [refugee coordination model](#) (RCM), including the 2014 Joint UNHCR - OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice.

CCCM is inherently a cross-cutting sector that may be present in all types of communal displacement settings in rural or urban environments - including planned camps, spontaneous self-settled informal sites, collective centres, reception centres and transit centres. In recent years, CCCM has also worked with displaced populations living with host families and in remote communities. The CCCM cluster does not advocate for camps but rather seeks to establish and maintain dignity and standards in camps if they are created, and to develop exit strategies and durable solutions when feasible. Camps should therefore be considered temporary measures when alternatives to camps are not an option, recognising the specific needs of the displaced communities.

In CCCM responsibilities are distributed across three main roles:

Camp administration (CA). This function is carried out by the State authorities that are responsible for providing protection and assistance to displaced persons on their territories. It relates to the oversight and supervision of activities, including security. State responsibilities are

not transferable. A CA is usually represented at camp level.

Camp coordination (CC). UNHCR usually assumes this role in complex, conflict-related IDP emergencies, and it includes both strategic and inter-camp operational coordination. A CC is responsible for designing strategy, setting standards, contingency planning, and information management. Its primary objective is to create the humanitarian space necessary for the effective delivery of protection and assistance. To develop exit strategies and more durable solutions, it liaises closely with local actors, including civil society organisations. The CC is functioning at inter-camp level.

Camp management (CM). An NGO partner or a national or local authority usually fills this function. Where capacity is limited, UNHCR may support a CM or take on the role itself. A CM coordinates and monitors the delivery of, and access to, services and protection to IDPs, and ensures maintenance of infrastructure. It is also responsible for community participation by setting up representative committees. These enable the displaced communities to exercise their right to participate in decision-making and to influence the design and delivery of humanitarian programmes at all stages. Prevention and response to GBV is crosscutting through all phases of camp management. CM operates at camp level.

For more information on CCCM levels of response, see first image below "CCCM Cluster levels of response".

The main roles and functions of the CCCM can vary according to the institution that is responsible and the circumstances in which it operates. What matters is to cover all CCCM functions, making sure that the needs of displaced people are met and that there are no gaps or overlaps in responsibility or response. CCCM approaches and tools remain relevant to situations of displacement whether a CCCM cluster is activated or not.

Where IDPs settle scattered and in remote locations and with host communities and families, CC and CM's approach is sector-based or area-based (Area-based Approach (ABA)), with mobile teams or through remote management (see under **Camp Management Camp Coordination (CCCM) and CCCM Paper on Area-based Approaches (October, 2020)**).

When engaging outside camps it is crucial to work closely with and support existing and functional local structures in relation to information, communication, coordination and monitoring of services to the displaced populations. For a more detailed description of community participation and roles and responsibilities in CCCM, and of approaches outside of camp, see **the Camp Management Toolkit (2015), the UNHCR's Collective Centre Guidelines (2010), and Urban Displacement & Outside of Camp (UDOC Desk Review 2014)**.

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

- The CCCM cluster's roles are to ensure that humanitarian action for internally displaced persons (IDPs) is coordinated, access to services and protection during displacement is equitable, and IDPs participate meaningfully in efforts to enable them to enjoy their rights, ideally by developing their own capacities. In practice this means that the human or 'software' dimensions of the humanitarian response are fully integrated and coupled with 'hardware' programmes such as shelter, relief item distributions or WASH infrastructure. Accountability mechanisms are fundamental to achieving this goal. They give the displaced population a voice, permit them to participate meaningfully in governance, and enable them to influence decisions that concern them and the direction of humanitarian programming. **The CCCM cluster should be viewed as a mechanism for mainstreaming protection, considering its key partners work in all areas of humanitarian action and have the closest contact with the displaced community.**
- The **Global CCCM Cluster** develops tools, provides field support through remote guidance and rapid response mechanisms, capacity through training and e-learning, and coordinates policy development to guide national CCCM clusters. To fulfil this task, UNHCR and IOM, which co-lead the Global CCCM Cluster, work closely together to develop common approaches for broader CCCM responses and design specific tools and methodologies to address specific subtleties that arise in natural disasters and complex emergencies. The Global CCCM Cluster also works closely with other global clusters and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It also supports cross-cutting initiatives of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), including its work on accountability to affected populations (AAP) and communicating with communities (CwC).
- At **national (or CC) level**, CCCM clusters develop an overarching strategy to provide a harmonized, efficient and effective humanitarian response to displaced persons and communities. Central to this is a strong information management and monitoring system that ensures similar approaches are adopted. Identifying relative gaps and duplications in service delivery and protection within specific camps and regions must be coupled with a strong advocacy role to ensure that other clusters and stakeholders provide the most efficient, equitable and logical humanitarian response across all camps and communal settings outside of camps.
- The CCCM cluster is unique in that it has an additional level of coordination and engagement - the **communal/camp (or CM) level**. This is the level of the CCCM cluster's operational engagement, and involves coordinating service provision, monitoring, governance and engagement within a single (or small grouping) of camp/communal setting. Several Camp Management specific activities also need to be accounted for and are described in depth in the Camp Management Toolkit (2015).

The structure and responsibilities of a CCCM cluster at country level

A country cluster should form a CCCM coordination team that is capable of providing effective leadership of the cluster. Ideally, it should have a minimum of three members: a cluster coordinator, an information management officer (IMO), and a capacity-development specialist. In

some geographical or operational settings, additional sub-national coordination mechanisms may be required.

Cluster coordinator

A UNHCR CCCM cluster coordinator reports to UNHCR's Representative or (in sub-national clusters) Head of Office, and is responsible for providing overall cluster leadership. S/he works closely with other country-level cluster coordinators, and particularly with Protection, Shelter, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). For guidance and support, s/he also keeps closely in touch with UNHCR's Global CCCM Cluster coordinator and support team.

Appointing an NGO as co-chair or co-facilitator promotes inclusion, but this decision should be discussed and endorsed by cluster partners. A memorandum of understanding or terms of reference (ToR) should clarify exact roles and responsibilities of the co-facilitator, and define clear lines of accountability. UNHCR will usually take the lead role, and the co-chair or co-facilitator supports. The appointment of a co-facilitator has important implications and should be assessed in consultation with the UNHCR Global CCCM Cluster coordinator.

Information management officer

An information management officer (IMO) reports to the cluster coordinator and is responsible for identifying and satisfying data-analysis and information requirements at a range of levels. The IMO's work: supports cluster priorities, informs decision-making by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) or the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), strengthens data collection and processing systems, establishes information dissemination mechanisms and facilitates information exchange between key stakeholders.

Capacity development specialist

In principle, a capacity development specialist should be deployed alongside the cluster coordinator and IMO. Experience has shown that CCCM training is required at an early stage, because many of the new personnel hired at the start of an emergency are unfamiliar with CCCM concepts.

Sub-national and field level coordination

Complex emergencies or geographically-spread responses may require additional coordination at sub-national or field level. Sub-national coordinators and resources to support sub-national coordination may be mobilised externally but also internally, through standby partner arrangements or CCCM cluster members (if they are willing and have the capacity).

See graphic 2: A minimum CCCM cluster coordination structure for a system-wide L3 emergency.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

The IASC's **Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level** explains the work of clusters, including their activation and de-activation and core functions. The paragraphs below set out specific steps that an activated (or soon to be activated) national CCCM cluster should take in the first months.

Formal activation of a CCCM cluster

Under the [Transformative Agenda](#), IASC Principals agreed that activation of clusters must be more strategic, less automatic, and time limited. In consultation with the Humanitarian Country Teams and cluster lead agencies, the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator (HC/RC) should only recommend the activation of clusters when there is an identified gap in the enabling environment warranting their activation. Formal activation of clusters may be difficult in circumstances where government capacity is constrained. In such contexts, different ways of augmenting coordination and response capacity may need to be found, underpinned by the principles of the [cluster approach](#). To ensure that clusters continue to operate for no longer than they are strictly needed, plans to deactivate and transition clusters should be prepared as soon as possible after activation. Building the capacity of local partners and government institutions should be an objective from the outset.

The criteria for cluster activation are met when:

1. Response and coordination gaps exist due to a sharp deterioration or significant change in the humanitarian situation.
2. Existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs in a manner that respects [humanitarian principles](#), due to the scale of need, the number of actors involved, the need for a more complex multi-sectoral approach, or other constraints on the ability to respond or apply [humanitarian principles](#).

The procedure for activating cluster(s)

1. The RC/HC and cluster lead agencies (CLAs), supported by OCHA, consult national authorities to establish what humanitarian coordination mechanisms exist, and their capacities.
2. Global CLAs are alerted by their country representatives and OCHA, prior to the UN Country Team (UNCT)/HCT meeting to discuss activation, to ensure they are represented at the meeting.
3. The RC/HC, in consultation with the UNCT/HCT, decides which clusters should be recommended for activation, informed by analysis of the situation and preparedness planning. In each case, the decision should be based on the criteria for cluster activation.
4. The RC/HC, in consultation with the UNCT/HCT, selects CLAs based on agencies' leadership accountably in IASC, their operational presence, and their ability to scale up. Ideally, the selection of CLAs mirrors global arrangements; but this is not always possible and sometimes other organizations are in a better position to lead. Under the IASC [Transformative Agenda](#), CLAs were encouraged to consider developing a clearly defined, agreed and supported sharing of cluster leadership with NGOs wherever feasible.
5. The RC/HC writes to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), following consultation with the HCT, outlines the recommended cluster arrangements, suggests CLAs, and explains why particular clusters need to be activated. If non-cluster coordination solutions have been agreed, these are also described.
6. The ERC transmits the proposal to the IASC Principals for approval within 24 hours, and informs the RC/HC accordingly. The Principals may ask the IASC Emergency Directors Group to discuss in more detail, if necessary.
7. The ERC writes to the RC/HC to confirm that activation of the suggested clusters has been endorsed and/or to provide feedback from the IASC Principals.
8. The RC/HC inform relevant partners when decisions on clusters and lead agencies are approved.

Activating a country-level/national CCCM cluster after endorsement

- Cluster formation workshop – Invite interested actors to a workshop. Highlight what the cluster is, what it can do and how partners can contribute. Establish the capacities of stakeholders and where critical gaps need to be filled.
- Define the cluster's terms of references (ToRs) – Establish clear ToRs clarifying the role of the cluster in this specific context, scope, regulations for membership and national structure including sub-national CCCM structures. Membership of national CCCM clusters can vary considerably, but it is advisable to have a representative from all the major operational clusters (WASH, Protection etc.) to ensure cross-cutting representation.
- Define roles and responsibilities between CA, CC & CM functions – Define in writing, which actors will be responsible for which specific CCCM architecture functions. Depending on the context CM actors may need to take on CA functions, or the government will take on both CA and CM. What is essential is that it is clearly defined which specific actors are responsible for which specific activities and that a document outlining these can be referenced.
- Create a strategic advisory group (SAG) – Ideally, a SAG should have no more than six members. The group is responsible for developing the cluster's strategic direction.
- Define the scope of CCCM intervention – Will the intervention involve formal camps only or a variety of informal settlements and communal settings outside of camps? Will it involve people living with host communities and families? Establish clearly in writing what the cluster will and will not cover. Depending on the context overlap with OCHA's inter-cluster coordination mechanisms may be anticipated. The delineation of these responsibilities should be made clear in writing, and be based on actual human resources and the ability to effectively cover the defined scope.
- Outline a CCCM strategy – Initially, quickly produce a one page 'living' document that sets out what the cluster would like to do (why, by whom, how and by when). Do not aim for perfection: create something that sets the direction and then elaborate it over time.
- Continue to develop capacity and run information sessions – Given that new emergencies often entail a high degree of staff turnover and recruitment, continued CCCM information and training sessions should be conducted in the initial months to ensure smooth transitions and a sustained quality response.
- Information management products – Establish a regular and predictable dissemination of Information Management products. Initially this should include 3/4Ws (Who, What, When, Where) and basic information on population, key indicators and mapping. Eventually this should evolve into fuller camp profiles and key data on displacement trends. The onset of the emergency is a critical moment to harmonize systems among partners as this becomes increasingly challenging as the response gets more established.
- Communicate with the CCCM Unit at HQ – At least at the beginning of the emergency weekly or biweekly calls with an HQ CCCM focal point can provide remote support. Seek advice on strategy development, good practices, capacity development support, comparison with other operations and funding applications (to pooled funds, such as common humanitarian funds (CHF) and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF)).

For recent developments, consult the Global CCCM Cluster.

Role of partners involved

Partners	Roles
Internally displaced persons	Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are important CCCM partners at operational level. The CCCM cluster should explore how to involve them at cluster level, through representatives or camp management agencies (CMA). They are a key source of information on the needs and capacities of the displaced community, and on solutions. At community level they are directly engaged in governance and grievance mechanisms and play a crucial role in identifying specific and individual needs and targeting assistance.
Host communities	Host communities play crucial roles. They grant access to fuel wood, pasture, and other community services; facilitate a smooth humanitarian response; give IDPs access to protection and rights; promote harmonious relations by participating in peace and co-existence programs; protect the environment; and participate in efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV, etc.
National authorities	Government offices are responsible for policies, regulations, land allocation, data and documentation, camp administration, camp security and access, and provision of protection and assistance to the IDPs. The Government also promotes peaceful relations and co-existence with host communities. Where feasible, national authorities should be encouraged and assisted to assume responsibility for camp management as well as camp administration. This will ensure ownership and continuity after UNHCR exits. The ministries of home affairs and land are most commonly a CCCM cluster's counterparts.
HC, HCT supported by OCHA	The Humanitarian Coordinator and Humanitarian Country Team determine the shape and functions of inter-cluster coordination, supported by OCHA.
Other UN agencies	UN agencies share information on protection and assistance needs, participate in joint needs assessments, and respond to needs/gaps in their respective areas. Cluster/sector leads, notably those responsible for shelter, protection and WASH, should be invited to participate in the CCCM cluster.
National NGOs	National NGOs make a crucial contribution to CCCM responses and should be encouraged and assisted to participate in the cluster. Typical roles will be camp management and the provision of services to IDPs in camps. After clusters phase out, national NGOs ensure the continuity and sustainability of a response; they should be capacitated to fulfil these roles

International NGOs	<p>Like national NGOs, international NGOs (INGOs) with relevant experience should also be represented in a CCCM cluster. INGOs that typically participate in a CCCM response include (note that programs and activities are subject to change):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ ACTED. Emergency response, camp management, access to basic services, inclusive economic opportunities, infrastructure and climate action, strengthening civil society, peace, stability and justice. ◦ CARE. Food security, maternal and child health, climate change, education, HIV and AIDS, WASH, economic development. ◦ Catholic Relief Services (CRS). WASH, community resettlements and camp construction, agriculture, health, children, (girls') education, microfinance, road, justice and peacebuilding, partnership and capacity strengthening. ◦ Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Camp construction, camp management, shelter and non-food items, food security, community-based protection, WASH, education, income generation, humanitarian mine action, armed violence reduction (AVR). ◦ International Rescue Committee (IRC). Emergency response, economic recovery, governance and rights, protection of children, youth and women. ◦ Lutheran World Federation (LWF). WASH, shelter/construction, community services (special needs, psycho-social counselling, peace building, distribution of non-food items), protection (of unaccompanied minors). ◦ Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Camp management, education, information-counselling and legal assistance (ICLA), livelihood and food security, shelter and settlements, WASH, expert deployment to UN. ◦ REACH. Emergency response, assessments, data collection, remote sensing, data analysis, publications, maps, web-maps and online dashboards. ◦ Red R. Capacity building in camp management, recruitment for the humanitarian sector.
IOM	<p>When UNHCR leads a CCCM cluster, the IOM is invited to participate in it, and vice-versa. IOM's CCCM experience and resources contribute in addition to capacity development and information management, including Data Tracking Matrix (DTM).</p>
Donors	<p>Relevant donors interested in the work of a CCCM cluster should be involved as soon as possible and invited to strategic discussions.</p>
Media	<p>The media are important partners but should not join cluster meetings. To ensure accurate reporting and cluster visibility, specific mechanisms for working with the media should be established</p>

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

Under the [cluster approach](#), UNHCR has specific CCCM roles and accountabilities at national level associated with its responsibilities as a **cluster lead** and an **operational agency**.

UNHCR as a CCCM cluster lead

At national level, the UNHCR Representative heads the lead agency of the CCCM cluster and is accountable to the HC. The Representative has responsibility to:

- Ensure that coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported.
- Serve as first point of call for the Government and the HC.
- Discuss cluster-specific concerns at the HCT as well as challenges the cluster cannot solve.
- Act as provider of last resort.

The CCCM cluster coordinator is responsible and accountable for ensuring that the CCCM cluster performs the following six core functions:

- To support service delivery by providing a forum in which approaches can be agreed and duplication eliminated.
- To inform the strategic decision-making of the HC and HCT by coordinating needs assessments, gap analysis, and prioritization.
- To plan and develop strategy (including cluster plans, adherence to standards, funding needs).
- To advocate for identified concerns on behalf of affected populations and cluster partners.
- To monitor and report on the cluster strategy and its results, and recommend corrective action where necessary.
- To conduct contingency planning, preparedness, and capacity development where needed.

The CCCM cluster coordinator is ultimately responsible for ensuring that service provision is equitable and harmonized across communal displacement setting and that camp managers apply participatory and community-based approaches universally.

By building trust via regular, two-way engagement at community level, camp managers enable CCCM clusters to play a unique role in strengthening accountability to affected populations (AAP).

The following five commitments are part of a camp manager's everyday responsibilities:

- Leadership and governance
- Transparency
- Feedback and complaints
- Participation
- Involvement in design, monitoring and evaluation

Operationalising UNHCR's commitments

The text below is drawn from UNHCR's **Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement (2019)**.

The scope of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement consists of global and country leadership, advocacy and coordination responsibilities, including those set out in arrangements agreed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as operational involvement in line with relevant General Assembly resolutions. It will normally be aligned with UNHCR's leadership and coordination responsibilities related to protection, [camp coordination and camp management](#) and shelter, with a particular emphasis on displacement owing to conflict and violence, in line with IASC arrangements.

UNHCR will at all times strive to place protection at the centre of humanitarian action through strategic leadership of the three UNHCR-led clusters and ensuring, together with partners, an evidence-based analysis that informs inter-agency decision-making and operational delivery. UNHCR will also contribute to any inter-agency response to disaster-induced internal displacement, taking the lead on protection, whenever the three criteria of field presence, a government request and inter-agency agreement are met. The scope of UNHCR's engagement in such situations will generally be time-limited, and will be determined in consultation with the Senior Executive Team.

UNHCR may also make available its protection expertise in the context of national, regional and international preparedness and response measures related to forced displacement or planned relocations arising from development projects, climate change and environmental degradation. The implementation of the Policy requires concerted organisation-wide commitment and effort to ensure the predictable exercise of leadership and coordination responsibilities in line with IASC agreements, and an operational stance that is fit for purpose at each stage of our engagement.

Notably:

- The Senior Executive Team (SET), namely the High Commissioner, Deputy High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioners for Operations and Protection shall ensure that our IDP commitments are fully reflected in the exercise of their leadership, oversight, management and support responsibilities, including in relation to strategic planning and resource allocation;
- Regional Bureaux Directors and Representatives have a crucial accountability and responsibility for ensuring prompt and robust engagement in humanitarian crises characterized by internal displacement, from prevention through to solutions, on a 'no regrets' basis; and
- Directors of Divisions and Heads of Services are responsible for mainstreaming internal displacement in their respective areas of work and ensuring that the necessary capabilities, systems, processes and procedures are in place to resource, guide and support Regional Bureaux and country operations in preventing and responding to internal displacement, including through strategic and effective global cluster leadership, strategic communications and advocacy, and contributing to global policy development and

standard setting.

Delivering a protection and solutions response

With respect to delivering protection and solutions, and disengaging, the Policy states: UNHCR will support Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and UN/Humanitarian Country Teams to develop an overarching [protection and solutions strategy](#), based on an evidence-based protection analysis. UN and humanitarian partners will be able to rely on UNHCR for expertise and advice on protection priorities and Representatives will participate actively in UN/Humanitarian Country Teams, to help ensure that protection is placed at the centre of the humanitarian response.

When cluster or cluster-like arrangements are established, UNHCR will assume leadership and coordination functions in line with global responsibilities. These will be supported by dedicated cluster coordination capacities, underpinned by a robust operational response – with both aspects supported by information management capacities.

In its cluster leadership capacity, UNHCR will support and steer the development and implementation of comprehensive cluster strategies while, as Provider of Last Resort, mobilizing internal and external resources and engaging a range of stakeholders to fill response gaps. UNHCR will promote protection mainstreaming, working with all clusters to design and deliver an inter-agency response that is shaped by protection considerations. Appropriate opportunities will be identified to reinforce local and national actors, including those responsible for development, to engage in and eventually lead the response to internal displacement.

In its operational capacity, UNHCR will ensure a [community-based protection](#) approach and prioritize interventions to prevent, respond to and mitigate the most urgent and immediate protection risks and needs, including protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and [child protection](#). UNHCR will apply and integrate systematically to its work with IDPs its longstanding expertise in shelter, and camp and site management, including experience gained in the refugee context in transitioning from camps into inclusive settlements.

UNHCR will also prioritise actions that contribute to the conditions conducive for safe, dignified and comprehensive solutions, including (where relevant) for refugees returning from countries of asylum. Special areas of focus will include community engagement, law and policy, documentation, shelter, secure land tenure, livelihoods, peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution.

UNHCR will galvanise and contribute to government led efforts to address the needs of IDPs – including those who are integrating locally, returning to places of origin or settling in another part of the country, as well as the wider displacement-affected community.

In line with the 2030 Agenda and the principle of "leaving no-one behind," UNHCR will work together with partners to secure the inclusion of IDPs in national services, such as education, health, access to livelihoods and social services, including social safety nets; promote the participation of IDPs in local and national social and economic development, including through an enabling legal framework; and build effective approaches to resilience and solutions that assist IDPs, wider displacement affected communities and their governments to better manage and overcome the consequences and effects of displacement. In pursuit of solutions, UNHCR will contribute to transition strategies that link humanitarian and development action, and activities that build and sustain peace.

Results from protection monitoring and assessments, and other monitoring systems, will be

systematically utilised to generate an evidence-base to inform analysis, advocacy, programme design, resource mobilisation and communications. Protection assessments and monitoring will also be used to reinforce community based protection work and to ensure that the humanitarian response takes full account of age, gender, disability and other diversity elements. Protection and conflict analysis will also be used to ensure a "do no harm" approach to solutions. In this regard, UNHCR will initiate and participate in multi-stakeholder assessments, profiling and analysis, engaging relevant national bodies and other actors to develop a comprehensive understanding of the longer term protection and assistance needs, vulnerabilities, socio-economic conditions, capacities and aspirations of IDPs, returning refugees and wider displacement-affected communities.

Disengaging responsibly

UNHCR will disengage responsibly when local and national actors can meaningfully take over operational delivery, coordination and monitoring in relation to protection and solutions for IDPs. This will require UNHCR, from the outset of its involvement, to undertake interventions and measures aimed at enhancing national response capacity, including technical advice and support for national laws and policies on internal displacement, training and capacity development. UNHCR will work alongside others in the UN/Humanitarian Country Team to support the gradual de-activation of clusters in support of government-led coordination arrangements, including in the transition of any IDP sites to governments and/ or other agreed approaches.

3. Links

[CCCM Collective Centre Guidelines, 201](#) [CCCM Cluster Desk Review - Urban Displacement & Outside Camp \(UDOC\), 2014](#) [CCCM Cluster, CCCM Paper on Area-based Approaches, 2020](#) [IASC, Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level, 2015](#)
www.twitter.com/@cccmcluster [Camp Management Toolkit](#) [Global CCCM Cluster webpage](#)
[UNHCR Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, 2019](#) [CCCM branding and logos](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact UNHCR's CCCM Unit. At: hayo@unhcr.org

Contact the Global CCCM Cluster. At: globalsupport@cccmcluster.org

Civil - military coordination

18 September 2023

Key points

- Work with OCHA CMCS or the individual appointed to establish civil military coordination. Understand the specific UN-CMCoord strategy for the operation.
- Establish who is participating in UN-CMCoord cell meetings, and channel relevant requests or concerns to them.
- Understand how Government and local authorities coordinate with the military. Understand how partners and other relevant actors coordinate with the military. Share this information with the UN-CMCoord officer.
- Establish and share contact details with CIMIC personnel (if the HCT/UNCT has determined that they are the appropriate interlocutor).
- Understand in which sectors, and where, the military are operating and how their operating methods may differ from those of other actors.
- Understand the security environment in which you operate, and risks that may arise from associating with the military.
- Understand the military structure and hierarchy.
- Build and use networks, in accordance with country or other guidelines.
- Avoid public criticism of any actor.
- Determine whether the operation depends on military and civil defence assets (MCDA). If it does, identify additional or alternative forms of delivery.
- Review plans for phasing out military assets and factor these into operational planning.

1. Overview

Humanitarian operations may take place in areas affected by armed conflict. It is frequently justified and essential to interact and dialogue with military forces, in order to gain access to persons of concern and deliver vital humanitarian assistance.

In natural, technological and industrial disasters, governments may use national and external military forces to deliver relief (Haiti 2010, Philippines 2013). Particularly in complex emergencies (Pakistan 2005, 2010), coordination between military and humanitarian actors is vital, to ensure that [humanitarian principles](#) are fully understood, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, where appropriate, pursue common goals.

The United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) exists to provide such coordination. UN-CMCoord promotes a broad understanding of humanitarian action, guides political and military actors on how best to support that action, helps develop context-specific policy based on internationally agreed guidelines, and establishes humanitarian civil-military coordination structures, ensuring that staff members are trained to make coordination work. It plays a particularly essential role in complex emergencies and high-risk environments, where it is

vital to facilitate humanitarian access, protect civilians, and provide security for humanitarian workers.

Within the UN and humanitarian community, OCHA's Civil Military Coordination Service (CMCS) has responsibility for civil-military coordination. It supports relevant field and headquarter activities by developing institutional strategies to enhance the capacity and preparedness of national and international partners. By means of non-binding guidelines on use of military assets, and through training, workshops, conferences and simulation exercises, it improves the response of operational partners to humanitarian crises. As the custodian of UN-CMCoord guidelines, CMCS also helps humanitarian actors to develop context-specific guidance for operations in particular situations.

When necessary, CMCS advises the international community on mobilization of foreign military assets to support relief operations or humanitarian assistance. Its advocacy, coupled with the publication of operational guidance, complements and supports USG-level dialogue.

CMCS deploys experts known as Civil Military Coordination Officers to support the HCT/UNCT. Where they are not present, the Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator takes the lead, relying on UN-CMCoord doctrine. All UN personnel are expected to understand and follow UN-CMCoord policies and guidelines.

2. Main guidance

Underlying policies, principles and/or standards

- Preserve humanitarian space.
- Cooperation (or perceptions of cooperation) with the military must not jeopardize core [humanitarian principles](#) of neutrality and impartiality, or put persons of concern or humanitarian personnel at risk.
- Form and maintain appropriate relations between humanitarian and military or armed actors.
- Make appropriate and timely use of foreign or national military assets to support humanitarian operations.
- Ensure that relief efforts are consistent, whether they are delivered by civilian or military actors.

Good practice recommendations

- Planning. This varies according to the phase of an emergency. All those involved in the response need to share the same strategic overview, share information regularly, and understand clearly who is doing what, where and for how long.
- Information sharing. This works best when it is proactive. Information sharing helps to validate plans and adjust priorities and is critical to the safety and security of humanitarian workers and persons of concern.
- Task allocation. Clear attribution of roles ensures consistency and avoids duplication. It

matches capacities to needs and supports forward planning by organizations on the ground.

Considerations for practical implementation

Map the actors

This will help you to identify the critical actors in the civilian and military communities, and decide which actors can most effectively operate and meet needs in given areas, in accordance with [humanitarian principles](#). Military actors may help particularly to:

- Secure and maintain access to persons of concern.
- Support the security and logistical dimensions of an operation.
- Provide additional resources, especially in emergency operations.
- Make available their good offices to expedite assistance and resolve difficulties.

Assess and analyse civil-military relations, perceptions and approaches

Short-term cooperation can be effective, but long term implications must be considered, particularly where international military actors may be involved and where action to establish security on the ground might compromise (perceptions of) neutrality.

Determine missions and mandates

Consider the roles of:

- Domestic civilian actors: local leaders, NGOs, Government.
- Domestic military and paramilitary actors: military, police, gendarmerie, border and customs forces.
- International civilian actors: UN, INGOs, donors, ICRC.
- Foreign military actors: UN and non-UN peacekeeping forces, UN Civil Military Officers (CIMIC), military police, UNPOL.

Ascertain the mission or mandate of each of the actors identified, and understand their engagement in terms of UN-CMCoord.

Agree the character of civil-military relationships and set a CMCoord strategy

Basic strategies range from co-existence to cooperation. Coordination (essential dialogue and interaction) is always required, but its character should reflect the strategy.

Understand the strategy of the HC/RC and HCT/UNCT

When military and civilian actors clearly understand the HCT/UNCT's strategy, it helps the HCT/UNCT and the response to:

- Build shared situational awareness and understanding.
- Establish a common approach.
- Agree and implement a strategy.
- Facilitate implementation and monitoring.
- Share lessons learned.

Country specific UN-CMCoord guidelines should be developed for each operation, and persons with coordination responsibilities identified clearly.

Resources and partnerships

- OCHA Civil Military Coordination Officers.
- OCHA Civil Military Coordination Section.
- Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination.
- UNHCR Field Security Advisors.

Annexes

[IASC, Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, February 2013](#)

[Recommended Practices in Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination, OCHA 2018](#)

[UN Civil Military Coordination Handbook 2018](#)

[OCHA, On Message – Civil Military Coordination, November 2013](#)

[CMCoordination Operational Guidance COVID19](#)

[IASC, Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies, Reference Paper, June 2004](#)

[Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief, the Oslo Guidelines](#)

[Recommended Practices for Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets in Natural and Man-Made Disasters](#)

[Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, the MCDA Guidelines, Rev. 1, January 2006](#)

3. Links

[OCHA Humanitarian/ Military Dialogue Resource Library of Humanitarian/Military Dialogue OCHA](#)

4. Main contacts

UNHCR Field Security Service (FSS), Division of Emergencies, Supply and Security (DESS).

Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)

03 July 2023

Key points

- UNHCR's is accountable for coordinating refugee responses as follows:
 1. Preparedness. It makes sure that joint risk analyses are prepared and that, where necessary, joint preparedness plans and actions are completed.
 2. Protection strategy. It guides the development of a comprehensive refugee response, drawing on the contributions of partners.
 3. Resource mobilization. It coordinates immediate and ongoing inter-agency funding appeals. It seeks support from pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and other relevant fundraising fora.
 4. Sectoral set up:
 - a. It determines whether current Government-led or interagency coordination mechanisms (including clusters) can be adapted to address the needs arising from refugee influx, in accordance with UNHCR's accountabilities.
 - b. Where necessary, it establishes sectoral coordination mechanisms, with government counterparts where possible, to lead sector-specific needs assessments, planning, monitoring, reporting, and information management, within and across sectors, at national and sub-national level.
 - c. It leads the refugee protection working group; ensures protection concerns are reflected in the work of other sectors; and ensures that refugees and host communities participate in a manner that is sensitive to age, gender and diversity.
 - d. It ensures that other sectors and their leaderships, including leads from other agencies, have appropriate expertise, experience and operational capacity.
 - e. Being accountable for the quality of the refugee response, the UNHCR Representative maintains a direct line to the Government on refugee issues.

- 5. Coordination forum. Where appropriate, it establishes a national coordination forum, if possible co-chaired by the Government, to support the overall refugee response.
- 6. Information management. It builds or strengthens information management, including through contributions by other agencies.
- 7. Information sharing. It ensures that information is shared regularly with the RC and UNCT; updates and ensures coordination with the HC and HCT (where they operate); and shares information regularly with donors.

1. Overview

The coordination of international protection, assistance and solutions is central to UNHCR's refugee mandate and derives from the High Commissioner's responsibility to ensure international protection for persons of concern to UNHCR from the time they become a refugee or internally displaced person (IDP) until they find a solution, whether they live in urban or rural host communities or in camps, with other refugees and internally displaced people, with other populations affected by humanitarian crises, or in non-emergency settings.

The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) provides the model for leading and coordinating refugee operations. It sets out our shared duty to refugees, an integrated humanitarian vision, and responsibilities. Together with the [UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations: coordination in practice \(2014\)](#), the RCM sets out a framework and principles for responding to refugee and mixed situations.

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

UNHCR's mandated responsibility to protect refugees, and coordinate action on their behalf

Under [its Statute](#), UNHCR provides international protection to refugees and seeks permanent solutions for them, acting on the authority of the General Assembly (GA). In that capacity, it is the lead agency with respect to refugee protection, responsible for seeking solutions in the UN system in association with a wider array of stakeholders. As set out in subsequent GA resolutions, its responsibilities include coordination, provision of protection and assistance, obtaining solutions, and advocacy. Importantly, UNHCR also has a supervisory role: it is the UN entity most immediately responsible for ensuring that States adhere to internationally accepted

standards with respect to refugees and stateless persons and for strengthening States' capacity to protect such persons.

UNHCR has led and managed refugee operations effectively for decades. For many years, however, it did not articulate a model of refugee coordination that took account of changes in the humanitarian landscape. The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), formalized in 2013 and further updated in 2019, makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable by clarifying roles and responsibilities. Recent UN General Assembly Resolutions have confirmed the RCM and UNHCR's mandate to lead and coordinate the refugee response ([A/RES/69/152](#), [A/RES/70/135](#)).

States are primarily responsible for protecting refugees. Several factors can inhibit their capacity to fully discharge this responsibility. Over two thirds of all refugees live in low- and middle-income countries that face economic and development challenges. The arrival of large numbers of refugees strains already over-stretched infrastructures and service delivery. In addition, the institutions of many States across the development spectrum are not equipped to appropriately receive, protect or otherwise respond to the challenges of receiving large numbers of refugees. For this reason, it has long been recognized that international cooperation is required to support States that receive refugees. This understanding lay at the heart of UNHCR's creation and the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. The importance of cooperation was subsequently confirmed in a range of regional instruments and was underscored by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which stated that "there is an urgent need for more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, while taking account of existing contributions and the differing capacities and resources among States. Refugees and host communities should not be left behind." The GCR calls for a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach to meet this objective, to achieve which UNHCR plays both a supportive and catalytic role.

UNHCR's approach to coordination is determined by the needs and concerns of refugees and persons of concern, the capacity of Government to respond, and the operational context. Coordination is a means to an end, whose purpose is to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern receive the protection and assistance they need through the collective efforts and capacities of all stakeholders involved. Reflecting these points, the RCM:

- Reaffirms that States' have the primary responsibility to protect refugees, and that the High Commissioner has a mandate to provide international protection to refugees and support the efforts of host Governments to protect refugees by providing leadership and coordination.
- Affirms that coordination of a refugee response takes account of the approach of the host Government, and its capacity, and builds on the resources of refugees and host communities.
- Makes clear that UNHCR's approach to coordination is predictable, inclusive and partner-friendly, designed to ensure that refugees receive the assistance and protection they need throughout the duration of a refugee response.
- Underlines that UNHCR is mandated to undertake advocacy on refugee issues and international protection.
- Welcomes sector leadership by partners who have the necessary expertise and experience.
- Seeks to widen the support base for refugees and countries that host them, and promotes

self-reliance and collaboration with development actors, in accordance with [UN Reform and the Global Compact on Refugees](#).

In practical terms, UNHCR's coordination responsibilities lie operationally in the following broad areas:

1. **Preparedness.** It works with Government and partners to assess the likelihood of refugee inflows, determine the impact of inflows on national response mechanisms, and (depending on the level of risk) take preparedness actions.
2. **Advocacy.** It intervenes politically, diplomatically and legally to influence legislation and national practices. When doing so, UNHCR may engage directly with host Governments.
3. **Strengthening national capacity.** It may strengthen the capacity of national institutions and local actors to protect refugees and find solutions for them.
4. **Delivery.** It delivers protection and assistance and facilitates solutions.
5. **Coordination.** It involves UN partners and other stakeholders in developing and implementing a [protection and solutions strategy](#) that supports refugees and assists host countries to support refugees.
6. **Participation.** It works with refugees and host communities in ways that are sensitive to [age, gender and diversity](#), and ensures they participate in designing responses to their needs that are appropriate, accessible and inclusive.
7. **Resource mobilization.** It raises funds for responding to refugees, including through inter-agency plans and appeals. **Inter alia**, it sets protection objectives; coordinates resource mobilization; drafts initial inter-agency plans; reports on their implementation and impact; and tracks contributions.
8. **Broadens the support base.** It seeks out and works with a wide array of stakeholders, including private sector organizations and multilateral and bilateral development actors, to strengthen institutional capacity and assist host communities to address their urgent humanitarian needs. Where applicable, it works with such stakeholders to overcome shocks that result from conflict or large refugee arrivals.
9. **Monitoring and reporting.** It monitors and reports on the situation of refugees and application of the international protection regime.
10. **Prevention.** UNHCR uses the High Commissioner's good offices to prevent situations that cause refugees to flee, address root causes of migration and displacement, and promote the involvement of refugees in efforts to sustain peace.
11. **Solutions.** It promotes durable solutions; designs refugee responses that facilitate solutions; and ensures that solutions are implemented in ways that are safe and sustainable. This work includes efforts to secure return and reintegration, resettlement, local integration, obtain complementary pathways, and achieve other local solutions.

UNHCR's mandate includes leadership responsibilities. Within countries, the **Representative** speaks for the High Commissioner on matters concerning UNHCR's mandate and is responsible for coordination, as described in the next section. Where large refugee movements occur, the Representative coordinates UN and NGO partners as they prepare a refugee response plan, which serves as an advocacy tool and is used to raise resources.

At regional level, the High Commissioner may appoint **Regional Refugee Coordinators** to

address a specific refugee situation and lead development and implementation of regional refugee response plans. These are developed jointly with partners at regional level.

The High Commissioner may also appoint **Special Envoys** to provide political representation and advocacy on behalf of the High Commissioner in specific contexts.

Resident Coordinator system

In the UN system, the Resident Coordinator (RC) in a country leads the UN Country Team (UNCT) in undertaking development activities under the UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF, formerly UNDAF) and assisting countries to implement the 2030 Agenda. As a member of the UNCT, UNHCR contributes to this work and is accountable to the RC for UNHCR programming in support of the UNSDCF/UNDAF. RCs are in turn accountable to members of the UNCT, who expect the RC to support their efforts to fulfil their mandates. UNHCR exercises its mandate as an agency and fulfils its supervisory responsibilities. These include the duty to monitor States' compliance with their international obligations to refugees and stateless persons, and play a catalytic as well as support role in implementing the GCR, which encourages a broad range of stakeholders – including development actors – to participate in refugee responses.

In line with the GCR, UNHCR is committed to work with RCs and UNCTs to advance national development priorities and ensure no one is left behind. This collaborative work includes encouraging development actors to intervene on behalf of refugees and in support of host communities, as well as to work with States to include refugees in national development plans, as part of the Agenda 2030 imperative to 'leave no one behind'.

Humanitarian Coordinator system

In complex emergencies, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), if one has been appointed, leads overall humanitarian planning, advocacy and resource mobilization. When a complex emergency occurs that has a refugee dimension, UNHCR leads the refugee response, working with the overall humanitarian response to make sure it is coherent. The arrangements are set out in UNHCR's and OCHA's **Joint Note on mixed situations: coordination in practice** (2014). They were reconfirmed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the High Commissioner in 2018. The Note describes in detail the division of responsibilities between the UNHCR Representative and the HC in such situations.

The High Commissioner remains accountable for protection of persons of concern; the Joint Note is about increasing operational efficiency by flexible and pragmatic organization, not about transferring accountability or responsibility. The High Commissioner's protection responsibilities, combined with his advocacy and supervisory functions, mean that he must continue to oversee and monitor the delivery of services to refugees during UN responses. UNHCR's refugee response is an **integral yet distinct** element in the overall humanitarian coordination architecture. By developing visions that are integrated and strategic alongside distinct but interoperable plans and funding tools, UNHCR and the larger humanitarian response can remain accountable and fulfil their responsibilities coherently and transparently.

The RCM is applicable **in all refugee situations and throughout a refugee response**, whether the emergency is new or protracted, and whether refugees are living in camps, rural

areas, urban settings or in mixed situations. According to the operational context and the size and length of the response, certain features of the RCM may be less or more significant.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

Preparedness

Refugee influxes can often be anticipated. Large movements may build over time and can be predicted as the conflict that drives them intensifies.

UNHCR's emergency policies require operations to prepare annual risk analyses and complete minimum preparedness actions. This work is done with government and partner counterparts to: assess the likelihood of refugee inflows; determine the impact that refugee flows are likely to have on national response mechanisms; and, depending on the level of risk, make ready.

When refugee influxes are anticipated, UNHCR coordinates refugee preparedness actions. Where relevant, it does so as part of broader UNCT or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) preparedness processes. Wherever possible, UNHCR works jointly with Government. Preparedness actions include mapping of partner capacities.

The growing engagement of multilateral development actors, including the World Bank Group, mean that preparedness efforts can be supported more actively by national institutions, whose capacity goes well beyond what UNHCR can do on its own. By engaging early on with development and financial institutions, UNHCR can provide information and guidance that will help them to: strengthen the institutions that will manage any refugee influx; prepare instruments to facilitate flows of financial support; devise social protection systems able to support affected host communities and refugees; and establish surge capacity for service delivery.

Emergency

At the outset of a refugee emergency, UNHCR's knowledge and operational capacity assists Governments to design and roll out quickly a response that has the capacity to be sustainable and encourages contributions from a wide array of stakeholders. Importantly, Governments expect UNHCR to act immediately to raise financial and in-kind resources to meet urgent and pressing needs.

Operations are expected to reinforce or establish coordination arrangements, as prescribed in the RCM, ensuring a smooth interface with other interagency mechanisms.

Building for resilience

Not all refugee situations start with an emergency influx, but all emergency responses need to become consolidated programmatically and become a more stable form of operation.

National ownership is crucial. Wherever possible, UNHCR will work to establish and support national arrangements for coordinating a comprehensive refugee response. As envisaged by the GCR, UNHCR may support the development of a comprehensive plan, in line with national policies and priorities. Comprehensive plans set out: policy priorities; institutional and operational arrangements; requirements for support from the international community, including investment, financing, and material and technical assistance; and solutions, including [resettlement and complementary pathways](#) for admission to third countries, as well as voluntary repatriation.

The GCR also makes clear that refugee responses should be designed (or adapted) to be able to evolve into more sustainable forms of support and response. One objective of the GCR is therefore to strengthen the resilience both of refugees and the communities that host them, especially when displacement is protracted. The GCR's Programme of Action sets out various arrangements for supporting refugees and hosting countries and identifies areas in which immediately or long term support is likely to be needed. Longer term action is likely to be required to: strengthen the capacity of facilities and systems that deliver asylum, education, health and [child protection](#) services; enhance accommodation, energy supply, and natural resource management; increase livelihoods and grow the economy; and empower women and youth.

UNHCR will remain engaged in all areas of refugee protection and solutions; however, the transformative support envisaged by the Programme of Action requires **investments that go well beyond a humanitarian or even a UN development response**. A much broader array of stakeholders must be engaged. While UNHCR can act as a catalyst, it recognizes that it is not competent to lead in all areas.

UNHCR must therefore encourage others to make significant contributions, to strengthen institutional capacity, help host communities overcome shocks resulting from conflict or large refugee arrivals, and advance the rights of refugees. These objectives can be pursued in the following ways:

-Within the UNCT. UNHCR actively draws on the expertise of other agencies to promote refugee resilience: UNICEF and UNESCO in education; ILO in employment; WHO in health etc. It works to include refugees in UN development frameworks (UNSDCF/UNDAF).

-NGOs. NGO contributions and leadership are vital and can be promoted in HCTs and within refugee responses that UNHCR coordinates. Encouraging others to lead in their areas of expertise strengthens their engagement and the inclusion of refugees without undermining UNHCR's mandate or accountability.

-The private sector, and multilateral and bilateral development actors. UNHCR encourages involvement by the private sector and development actors. Its knowledge of refugees, of the operating environment, and other agencies and actors involved in refugee

response, mean that UNHCR can be an invaluable guide and source of information for such organizations.

Voluntary repatriation and returns

Within the UN, UNHCR is the authoritative voice on the right of every refugee to a safe and dignified voluntary return to his or her own country. It advises and guides UN action and facilitates voluntary return by refugees to their country of origin when conditions in those countries are such that their return can be safe, dignified and sustainable.

UNHCR advises the UN system on the basis of its own assessment of the degree to which countries are in a position to: receive returnees; assure their security and provide essential services; and sustain return. In its assessment, UNHCR identifies obstacles to voluntary return, conditions favourable for voluntary return, and specific protection needs. UNHCR also leads on a range of other relevant activities by UN and operational partners. These include: compiling information on possible return areas; structured dialogues with refugees and intention surveys; go and see visits; identification of specific protection needs; monitoring; and comprehensive measures to support protection and solutions. With both host and receiving Governments, UNHCR may sign a Tripartite Voluntary Repatriation Agreement that defines the legal framework, lists refugee guarantees, and describes the responsibilities of the parties.

In countries of return, UNHCR's work to support returning refugees usually focuses on the country's coordination mechanisms (notably the UNCT and HCT, where applicable), and, for an initial period of time, on the protection, assistance, and well-being of returnees. Its responsibilities include the provision of: return packages; initial reintegration support; returnee monitoring; information sharing on protection risks in areas of refugee return; and advocacy and operational guidance on measures to reduce those risks.

It is a given for UNHCR that Governments should lead refugee responses wherever possible. Beyond this, how UNHCR exercises its coordination responsibilities is context specific.

Refugee Response Plans. With respect to both inter-agency refugee response plans (which are country specific) and regional refugee response plans (which address refugee influxes in several countries), UNHCR leads their development, their implementation, and resource mobilization. Response plans are a coordination tool: they establish a common strategy and give host Governments as well as donors an overview of the inter-agency response, including resource requirements.

Comprehensive Response Framework. When requested to do so, UNHCR assists Governments to put in place the national, regional and international arrangements needed to establish a comprehensive refugee response framework. These frameworks should engage a broad range of stakeholders as envisaged by the GCR and are context specific.

As recognized in the GCR, population movements are not always homogeneous and may be composite. Some large movements involve both refugees and others on the move; others involve refugees and internally displaced persons; in certain situations, people are displaced across

frontiers by sudden-onset natural disasters and environmental degradation.

These situations present complex challenges for affected States. In responding to refugee movements within mixed movements, UNHCR works with a range of operational partners, such as OCHA, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), drawing on their mandates, roles and expertise as appropriate to develop a coordinated approach.

In **complex emergencies** that include internal displacement and refugees, for example, UNHCR and OCHA apply a joint coordination model that ensure their leadership and coordination are complementary and clearly defined, reflecting their expertise, mandates, and responsibilities.

UNHCR is also actively engaged in efforts to ensure that humanitarian and development responses are linked and engage multilateral partners such as the World Bank and international financial institutions. These efforts include the [humanitarian-development-peace nexus](#), the [collective outcomes approach](#), and the New Way of Working set out in the [Agenda for Humanity](#).

Mechanisms for joint coordination, which can be adapted to regional contexts, have been designed for responses to mixed movements of refugee and migrants, and responses to refugees and hosting communities. These are elaborated by UNHCR and IOM in their [Joint UNHCR-IOM letter on Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration](#) (25 January 2019).

Wherever **inter-agency mechanisms** function in countries or regions, UNHCR will seek similarly to coordinate its work with them.

At all times, UNHCR exercises its mandate responsibilities which include coordination of efforts to ensure refugees are protected and to advance solutions for them.

Annexes

[Joint UNHCR and OCHA, Note on Mixed Situations. Coordination in Practice](#)

[Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and his Office](#)

[Refugee Coordination Model](#)

3. Links

[Refugee Coordination Model - Updated Guidance \(2019\) UNHCR-OCHA, Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#) [Refugee Coordination Model \(internal link\)](#) [Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner](#)

4. Main contacts

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IASC Scale Up Activation

20 September 2023

Key points

- A system-wide scale-up activation automatically triggers mechanisms and responses that UNHCR has undertaken to support. These include the deployment of cluster coordinators and information management support, and development of a budgeted inter-agency response plan.
- It is a priority to deliver humanitarian support to IDPs and affected populations in a sudden onset or significantly deteriorating humanitarian crises requiring a system-wide scale-up activation. Empowered leadership and effective coordination help to achieve this priority.
- The decision to activate a system-wide scale-up is a high level priority statement as much as a practical response mechanism. It will (and should) generate attention. Agencies will be scrutinized on how well they deliver their response.
- Be proactive and share information about the emergency with bureaux and support divisions.
- Inform HQ which clusters should be activated and why.
- Actively participate in HCT discussions.
- Assess your office's capacity and identify resource and staffing gaps that will impede or prevent delivery of assistance; request support from HQ to fill gaps.

1. Overview

This entry provides guidance on humanitarian system-wide scale-up activation, related inter-agency processes and actions, and their implications for UNHCR. It should be read in conjunction

with the most recent version of the IASC's [Humanitarian Programme Cycle](#). The entry is based on IASC's 'Protocol 1. Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation: Definition and Procedures' (November 2018), which replaces the 2012 [Transformative Agenda](#) Protocol on L-3 definition and procedures.

IASC scale-up activation is a system-wide mobilization in response to a sudden onset or rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in a given country, including at subnational level, where the capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity and urgency of the crisis. It is an element of the [Transformative Agenda](#) (TA), which aims to strengthen leadership, coordination, and accountability in inter-agency responses to major humanitarian emergencies.

A scale-up declaration activates mechanisms and tools which:

- Ensure that the IASC system delivers effective support both to national authorities and existing capacities, and monitors its own performance.
- Ensure that adequate capacities and tools for empowered leadership and coordination of the humanitarian system are in place.
- Engage IASC member organisations and Global Cluster Lead Agencies to put in place the systems and resources required to contribute to the response in line with their mandates.

Activation is for a time-bound period of up to six months, and is appropriate only in cases where the gravity of the humanitarian situation justifies the mobilization of system-wide capacities and resources, beyond standard levels, to respond to critical humanitarian needs on the ground. In exceptional situations a single additional three-month extension can be considered. During the activation, sufficient capacity should be created to sustain the level of response. The procedure mandates the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to develop benchmarks, appropriate for the context, followed by a transition plan and post-activation accompanying measures. Though UN system-wide scale-up declarations and agency-specific emergency level declarations are often linked in practice, they have separate procedures.

Note. Refugee emergency responses (and where applicable emergency responses for returning refugees) are led and coordinated by UNHCR and guided by the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM). The scale-up protocol does not apply to such situations.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

In December 2011, the IASC Principals agreed to the [Transformative Agenda](#) (TA). This set of actions was designed to improve the humanitarian response model while reaffirming that the [cluster approach](#) is the most appropriate coordination model for non-refugee inter-agency humanitarian responses. Since then, as part of this initiative, the Principals have approved or continued to update protocols that set parameters for the TA, strengthen leadership, increase stakeholder accountability, and improve coordination.

UNHCR is committed to successful implementation of the TA. It will continue to contribute to its evolution, implementation, and tools, as well as monitor its implementation.

3. Main guidance

The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) declares a scale-up activation based on five criteria:

- Scale.
- Urgency.
- Complexity.
- Capacity.
- Risk of failure to deliver effectively and at scale to affected populations.

Within 24 hours of the event, or recognizing that the humanitarian situation has deteriorated dramatically, the ERC receives an initial assessment of the situation, including data on affected populations. The information is provided by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in the affected country, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), or a Resident Coordinator (RC) if the former is not yet designated. The IASC secretariat should share the assessment with the Emergency Directors Group (EDG) and Global Cluster Coordinators.

Within 24 hours of receiving the initial assessment, the IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG), composed of representatives from each agency, convenes to discuss the event. It considers the context, the response, capacity, expected gaps, lessons learned from past emergencies, and advocacy priorities, and agrees recommendations. These cover leadership and coordination arrangements, including cluster activation for the IASC Principals' consideration. The Global Cluster Coordinators should be consulted on proposed coordination arrangements, where relevant.

Following receipt of the EDG recommendations, the ERC contacts national authorities at the highest level to brief them on the measures being considered to bolster operational capacity. The ERC informs the UN Secretary-General (S-G) and the lead UN Secretariat Department (Department of Peace-Keeping Operations or Department of Political Affairs as applicable), as well as the chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and the UN Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC), that a scale-up activation is under consideration.

Within 48 hours of the crisis, the ERC convenes the IASC Principals to jointly review the initial assessment and present recommendations on a 'no objections' basis. The Principals discuss whether the initial assessment warrants a scale-up activation. The ERC, as Chair of the IASC, makes the final decision. If it is agreed to declare a scale-up activation, the Principals also discuss (1) the most appropriate leadership model, (2) the most appropriate coordination arrangements, (3) common advocacy priorities for the humanitarian system and common messages, and (4) other context-specific arrangements.

The ERC announces the activation via e-mail to all IASC Principals. The ERC also issues a note for the attention of the Secretary-General (including the UNOCC Director), and a note to the HCT via the RC/HC. The ERC contacts national authorities at the highest level to explain the decision and its implications, including additional support that will be provided to national and in situ capacity. All messages from the ERC include information on geographic coverage, the length of the activation (up to six months), and leadership and coordination arrangements (including the

appointment of a HC, cluster activation, and designated in-country cluster leads).

The activation automatically triggers:

- Immediate establishment of a HCT. The current RC is re-hatted as HC pending a decision on the most appropriate leadership model.
- Activation of the 'empowered leadership' model.

Within 72 hours of the onset of the crisis:

- A HC is designated and deployed for up to six months, to lead coordination of the overall humanitarian response, exercising empowered leadership in line with the IASC protocol.
- A Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF), if available in country, are announced. Allocations are issued by the ERC (by the HC in the case of CBPFs) on a 'no regrets' basis, in support of priorities identified in the strategic statement.

Within 72 hours of the scale-up activation:

- The ERC activates clusters for priority sectors, after consulting the IASC Principals on the basis of a request from the RC/HC in consultation with the HCT.
- The IASC Principals, after consulting the Global Cluster Lead Agencies, immediately deploy appropriate coordination capacity, including qualified cluster coordinators and information managers (as required).
- The RC/HC issues a 'Statement of Key Strategic Priorities', to establish shared messaging and advocacy from headquarters level down, and for press releases.
- A multi-cluster or -sector Initial Rapid Assessment (or alternative rapid assessment) is implemented based on coordinated assessments. The initial Situation Analysis is followed by a multisector assessment and report within the first two weeks.

Within 5 days of the scale-up activation:

- A Flash Appeal is developed, supported by the Situation Analysis. It contains a top-line analysis of the scope and severity of the crisis, sets out priority actions, and lists financial requirements.

Within 4 weeks of the scale-up activation:

- The Flash Appeal is revised. If a longer response is required (beyond the initial activation period of six months), the HCT develops or updates the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The HNO consolidates and analyses information on the needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population, and develops or updates a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The HRP sets out the strategy chosen to respond to the assessed needs, and is the basis for implementing and monitoring the overall response.

Within 5 months of the scale-up activation:

- An Operational Peer Review (OPR) takes place.

Within 9-12 months of a Scale-Up activation:

- An Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) is conducted, in accordance with IAHE terms of reference.

End of the scale-up

The scale-up activation automatically expires after a maximum period of six months. The IASC Emergency Directors (EDG) meet towards the end of the activation period to review the situation.

The EDG may, in exceptional circumstances and before the scale-up activation expires, recommend to the ERC that the scale-up activation should be extended for an additional three months (to a total maximum duration of nine months). Exceptional circumstances might include a further deterioration of the situation, based on an OPR recommendation.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

When a decision to declare a system-wide scale-up activation is considered, UNHCR will actively contribute to the initial assessment of the UN Country Team (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), because the decisions taken will affect UNHCR's involvement later in the process. If the crisis involves refugees, UNHCR will lead discussion of refugee aspects. Scale-up activation is not applicable to such situations.

In its internal communications with HQ, the UNHCR office will:

- Communicate the outcomes of UNCT/HCT discussions to the Director of the concerned bureau and to DESS, focusing especially on the five criteria on which the decision to declare is based.
- As cluster lead agency, share with the Directors of the regional Bureau and DESS its assessment with respect to:
 - (1) UNHCR's in-country capacity (cluster coordinators, information management, needs assessment officers, etc.).
 - (2) Which clusters should be activated (if they are not already operational).
 - (3) Available stocks of core relief items (CRIs), and staff readiness.
- (4) The RC's ability to lead a scale-up mobilisation as HC.
 - Brief the Bureau Director and DESS Director in preparation for the Principals' review of leadership and coordination (within 72 hours of the event).

In addition, if a system-wide scale-up is activated, the office will:

- Mobilize internal response capacity and prepare to receive additional staff for clusters deployed under the Inter Agency Rapid Response Mechanism (IARRM).
- In consultation with the bureau, prepare to receive other support staff.
- Make sure that personnel (particularly cluster coordinators and information management focal points) are aware of their roles and the time-bound outputs they need to deliver under the system-wide scale-up procedure. These include: an emergency response plan; a strategic response plan; cluster response plans; and CERF submissions and allocations.

Considerations for UNHCR's engagement at country level

IDP situations

During a system-wide scale-up activation, all or some of the three clusters that UNHCR co-leads at global level (Protection, Shelter, and [Camp Coordination and Camp Management](#) (CCCM)) may be activated at country level. This decision is made by the ERC, in consultation with the IASC Principals, based on recommendations by the RC or HC.

At country level, the UNHCR office should be involved in discussions of cluster activation and should keep the bureau, DESS, DIP, DPSM and other relevant HQ entities informed.

Once clusters are activated, UNHCR must be ready to lead the clusters for which it is responsible for. It should provide dedicated staff for coordination and information management (IM). For both functions, it may need to have dedicated personnel at national and local level.

Mixed refugee and IDP situations

If a new emergency also affects refugee populations, UNHCR should lead discussion of refugee aspects of the crisis and determine the coordination arrangements for an effective response (in accordance with the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) and the **Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations - Coordination in Practice**). Field operations should keep Headquarters (the DESS and Partnership and Coordination Service) closely informed.

Post emergency phase

If factors affect the response that the scale-up activation cannot address, a transition from scale-up may commence. The IASC Principals and leadership on the ground should provide clear messaging on both the expiry of the scale-up activation and the transition strategy as soon as possible. The transition plan should include (at a minimum):

- A statement indicating how the chosen leadership model will affect arrangements at the end of the period, and how the transition will be managed.
- A strategy for continuing core coordination functions, in support of national and local coordination efforts (where applicable and relevant).

- A statement indicating how reporting lines, roles and responsibilities will be defined at the end of the period of application.
- An outline of measures that will contribute to efforts to reach solutions. This should indicate how the humanitarian response will bridge with longer term recovery and national development priorities.

Annexes

[Protocol 1 IASC, Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation - Definition and Procedures](#)

[Protocol 2 IASC, 'Empowered Leadership' in a Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation](#)

[IASC, Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation – Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle July 2015](#)

[IASC, Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism \(IARRM\), Concept Note](#)

[Refugee Coordination Model](#)

[UNHCR-OCHA, Note on Mixed Situations. Coordination in Practice](#)

4. Links

[IASC web-site](#)

5. Main contacts

UNHCR Division for Emergency Security and Supply (DESS). At: hqemhand@unhcr.org

Shelter Cluster

22 September 2023

Key points

- Contact UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section in the Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS) as soon as there is an indication that cluster activation will be discussed. This permits the section to provide guidance and support effectively.
- UNHCR leads the shelter cluster in conflict-related emergencies. Representatives should consult UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section if they feel their office cannot take the lead, as a decision not to lead the shelter cluster contradicts UNHCR policy and guidance and can have important operational and reputational consequences.
- The appointment of a NGO partner or a government body as co-chair is encouraged by the IASC, where appropriate and possible, but should be made after consulting UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section because the decision has important consequences.
- Coordinating a cluster is a full-time job. It should not be merged with another function. A dedicated full-time Shelter Cluster Coordination Officer and a full time Information Management Officer should be appointed. Other coordination positions (Information Manager, Technical Coordinator, Sub-national Cluster Coordinators) are normally also required.
- UNHCR's Global Shelter Cluster Section can deploy surge capacity for Coordination but also Information Management at short notice to help establish a cluster or support during an emergency situation. It can also provide support and advice from headquarters.

1. Overview

The Global Shelter Cluster was established in 2005 and it is co-led by UNHCR (conflict situations) and IFRC (disaster situations) at the global level. The Shelter Cluster is an inter-agency mechanism that coordinates shelter, settlement, and shelter-related non-food items (NFIs) during a humanitarian response for internal displacement (IDP) situations. When activated at country level, it is responsible for coordinating the emergency shelter and NFI response with Shelter Cluster partners, other clusters and government authorities to support affected populations (through the provision of plastic sheeting, shelter kits, tents, cash, NFIs or other support) and longer-term needs (through transitional shelter, building or reconstruction of houses, capacity building, and related matters).

The Shelter Cluster promotes the inclusion of disaster risk reduction measures in the design and construction of shelters and settlements. Protection mainstreaming and risk analysis, particularly for [housing, land and property \(HLP\)](#), have important implications for shelter interventions. Close coordination with the Protection Cluster but also other clusters is therefore very important.

2. Relevance for emergency operations

The objective of a Shelter Cluster is to ensure there is a coordinated approach for meeting the shelter needs of affected populations more effectively by strengthening leadership, coordination,

and accountability in the humanitarian shelter sector. UNHCR should recommend the activation of shelter clusters when there are shelter needs and the government requires additional capacity for coordination of shelter-related responses. According to the [Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#), in situations of conflict UNHCR should lead the Shelter Cluster.

The UNHCR Global Shelter Cluster Section should be contacted as soon as there is an indication that the activation of clusters will be discussed.

Please note that the cluster coordination approach is applicable in situations of internal displacement and natural disasters. In refugee situations the IASC does not apply, and the response is coordinated within the framework of the (RCM). In mixed settings, the "[Joint UNHCR - OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice](#)" (2014) applies.

3. Main guidance

The Shelter Cluster has developed tools and guidance for shelter operations which can be found on the [GSC website](#). The Global Shelter Cluster Coordinator and the GSC support team at HQ stand ready for any advice needed.

Preparedness/ Pre-Crisis

- Understand and familiarize your team with Shelter and settlements issues and the Shelter Cluster and responsibilities of UNHCR as Cluster Lead Agency: The shelter sector is very broad covering household or shelter-related NFIs, emergency shelter, transitional and longer-term shelter, and issues related to settlements, including settlement planning and infrastructure development. UNHCR is the lead for conflict contexts which includes being the first port of call for the activation of the cluster at country-level, and the responsibility to be the "provider of [last resort](#)"

- Familiarize your team with Shelter and the Shelter Cluster: Educate your team on the wider impact and importance of Shelter as a way to achieve protection, improve health and a basis for livelihoods. Several helpful tips from the [Guidance Package on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#) (public) or the [UNHCR \(internal\) "Building Blocks", the Implementation Planning Tool for IDP contexts](#)

- Advocate for activation and leadership by UNHCR and analyse the country context and evolving emergency situation and identify existing coordination mechanisms and whether they will be able to cope. Get in contact with donors as resources and donor support will be needed early on. Donors will not only be able to provide funding, they have also very useful expertise, insights and leverage with the government and cluster partners that can be of enormous support to the cluster.

◦ Pre-identify Shelter Cluster Partners, particularly the Government and local actors – start getting in contact with shelter actors present in country, including local shelter actors or other organization, e.g. architects or engineers’ societies, local academia or research. Identify which of the different government bodies will be best placed to be the counterpart of the Shelter Cluster or to co-lead a coordination mechanism, where applicable, including at subnational level.

Once the activation of the Shelter Cluster at country level has been activated:

✓ Establish a cluster coordination team: When UNHCR takes the leadership of a Shelter Cluster, a dedicated Shelter Cluster Coordinator should be appointed. Information management capacity should also be put in place.

✓ Define national Shelter Cluster ToR: Establish a clear ToR clarifying the role of the cluster in this specific context, scope, regulations for membership and national structure including subnational structures. Where appropriate and possible, co-leadership with Government bodies and NGO partners is strongly encouraged.

✓ Create a Strategic Advisory Group (SAG): Chaired by the Cluster Coordinator, the SAG is responsible for developing and adjusting the strategic framework, priorities and work plan for the [cluster](#). SAGs must represent the overall cluster partnerships, including the different types of cluster partners (International NGOs, national NGOs, UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement) but also government representatives. A SAG should not have more than about ten members.

✓ Outline a shelter strategy: Aim initially for a quickly produced one page document that outlines what the cluster would like to do, why, by who, how and by when. Do not aim for perfection initially but rather create something that gives direction and elaborate details with time. Examples and templates can be found in the [GSC Coordination Toolkit](#).

✓ Establish a regular and predictable dissemination of Information Management Products. The GSC has a [toolkit](#) and a companion available to support this. Initially this should include activity planning, 3/4Ws (Who, What, Where, and with Whom), and basic information on population, key indicators and mapping. The onset of an emergency is a critical moment to harmonize systems among partners as this becomes increasingly challenging as the response becomes more established. The [Shelter Severity Classification](#) (SSC) System can improve IM activities to support evidence-based decision-making.

Checklist on UNHCR’s roles and accountabilities in countries where UNHCR leads the Shelter Cluster

As Shelter cluster lead agency, the **UNHCR Representative** as head of the Shelter Cluster lead agency is accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and is responsible to:

- Ensure that coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported.
- Serve as first point of call for the Government and the Humanitarian Coordinator.
- Represent at the HCT cluster-specific concerns and challenges that the cluster cannot solve.
- Act as provider of last resort.

The **Shelter Cluster Coordinator** is responsible and accountable for ensuring that the Shelter Cluster performs the following six core functions:

- To support service delivery by providing a forum in which approaches can be agreed and duplication eliminated.
- To inform the strategic decision-making of the Humanitarian Coordinator and Humanitarian Country Team by coordinating needs assessments, gap analysis, and prioritization.
- To plan and develop strategy (including cluster plans, adherence to standards, funding needs, HPC processes, CERF and Country-Based Pool Fund processes, etc.) and mobilise resources
- To advocate for identified concerns on behalf of affected populations and cluster partners.
- To monitor and report on the cluster strategy and its results and recommend corrective action where necessary.
- To conduct contingency planning, preparedness, and capacity building where needed.

As an Operational Organization and as indicated in the guidance on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, assuming cluster leadership not only implies readiness to coordinate, but also readiness to be operationally relevant, predictable and accountable.

1. Promoting State responsibility for Shelter and Settlements interventions: Ultimately this suggests that shelter coordination and shelter interventions need to be designed with a handover/exit or transition phase in mind, especially where internal displacement is likely to remain protracted.

2. Upholding and maximizing synergies with refugee protection and right to asylum, predominantly in mixed contexts;

3. Promoting human rights: Particularly Housing Land and Property (HLP) rights should be carefully addressed.

4. Applying a community-based approach responsive to age, gender and diversity (AGD);

5. Responding in partnership: Designing a response that fosters collaboration with other sectors such as WASH, [CCCM](#), and Protection as well as development and peace actors, CBOs and faith groups.

6. Infusing protection principles across clusters in an interagency response;

7. Promoting comprehensive solutions: Shelter interventions are more meaningful when holistic, multi-sectoral interventions at a neighbourhood or settlement level are considered. All shelter interventions should include adequate access to water and sanitation, all settlements should have drainage, health and education facilities, garbage collection and waste disposal facilities. Engagement with the WASH, Health, Education, [CCCM](#), and Protection clusters, but also (local) government authorities will be important to ensure multi-sectoral issues are adequately addressed. It is also essential to include the host community and find ways to ensure that the interventions are designed jointly and will also benefit them. Disaster risk reduction should be considered in every shelter and settlement intervention. Overall, keep in mind these approaches and long-term solutions from the start of a response.

8. Disengaging responsibility: Shelter interventions should be sustainable and as easy to maintain as possible. Local building practices and local materials should be prioritised so that shelters can be maintained and repaired with the existing know-how. Building capacity of the local population and local builders such as masons and carpenters should also be considered.

The Shelter Cluster performance can be measured against the 6 core functions of the Clusters and accountability to affected population. The [CCPM Process](#) is a tool provided to country Clusters to carry out a yearly self-assessment. Standard indicators will follow the following headings:

1. Supporting service delivery
2. Informing HC/HCT strategic decision-making
3. Planning and implementing cluster strategies
4. Monitoring and evaluating performance
5. Building national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning

6. Supporting robust advocacy

7. Promoting accountability to affected populations

Post emergency phase

UNHCR and IFRC, as Shelter Cluster co-lead agencies at global level, work in close partnership with shelter actors to develop common approaches for shelter responses while developing more specific tools and methodologies for Disasters and Conflict contexts, which might include longer-term considerations. The Shelter Cluster develops an overarching strategy to provide a harmonized, efficient and effective humanitarian shelter response and support resource mobilization efforts.

Given the often long-term impact of shelter interventions, it is essential to ensure that appropriate approaches and technical solutions are defined based on good practices, needs, and capacities. Advocacy with donors and government is a key activity of a Shelter Cluster in order to get funding for cluster partners and support for issues such as land allocation or other HLP issues. The Shelter Cluster Coordinator also plays a crucial role in advancing coordination and cooperation between different sectors' intervention (e.g. WASH, Protection, Early Recovery (where existing), etc.). Country Shelter Clusters should coordinate and provide inputs to the shelter sector sections of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and its outputs including the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

Annexes

[IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level 2015](#)

[Guidance Package for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#)

4. Links

[Global Shelter Cluster Website](#) [Global Shelter Cluster Coordination Toolkit](#) [Global Shelter Cluster Information Management Toolkit](#) [Shelter Cluster Performance Monitoring](#) [Shelter severity classification system](#) [More than just a Roof: GSC online training on Shelter Building Blocks \(access for UNHCR staff only\)](#)

5. Main contacts

Functional mailbox: Global Shelter Cluster <info@sheltercluster.org>

Protection Cluster

11 July 2023

Key points

- Try to achieve consensus with cluster members on as many issues and questions as possible, both on cluster products and initiatives and on how the cluster functions. The cluster belongs to its members: empower them to decide how it works, so they can feel responsible for it.
- Engage with cluster members. The cluster lead agency should support the work of all the cluster's members, and make sure the response always meets minimum standards. Do not try to achieve these goals alone.
- Engage with the sub-cluster lead agencies. They bring their technical expertise, knowledge and institutional capacity to the cluster.
- Engage with national authorities and international actors, both civilian and military. Advocacy is a key component of any response: it starts by establishing contacts and working relationships with all key stakeholders.
- Engage with other clusters and relevant interlocutors (such as peacekeeping missions). The protection cluster has expertise in, and is responsible for, protection activities. However, protection is not achieved by protection cluster activities alone. Engage other clusters and actors and understand the impact of their activities on the protection of affected populations. The protection cluster should facilitate analysis of protection risks for other actors and help to design appropriate responses. In particular, protection clusters should work closely with CCCM and shelter clusters, which UNHCR also leads, to make sure that activities, advocacy, and protection responses are complementary.

1. Overview

Protection clusters bring together protection partners who have the necessary expertise, resources, access and capacity. They are integral to the [cluster approach](#) adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for non-refugee humanitarian crises.

UNHCR leads the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) and co-leads the Global Cluster for Shelter and the Global Cluster for [Camp Coordination and Camp Management](#) (CCCM). Its priorities are to ensure effective leadership, coordination, advocacy and operational delivery at country level, and to drive and influence the development of global policy on protection in humanitarian action, including protection of IDPs in particular.

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

At sector level, protection clusters should make it possible to prevent and respond to human rights violations and meet the protection needs of affected populations in a coordinated and predictable manner. By collecting and sharing information on protection risks and needs, and applying an integrated approach to assessment, monitoring and analysis, protection clusters can identify protection priorities that should guide the development and implementation of sectoral strategies.

At inter-agency level, the protection cluster is responsible of supporting the development of overarching multi-sector protection strategies in light of the 2013 IASC Statement on the Centrality of Protection emphasizing the protection clusters fundamental role in providing sound protection analysis, promoting protection and guiding decision-making as well as the priorities of a humanitarian response.

Equally valuable is the technical guidance and advice that they can provide the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), for example when it mainstreams protection in programmes or implements IASC commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).

Protection clusters (and UNHCR Representatives by virtue of their leadership role):

- Coordinate [community-based protection](#) and solution-oriented interventions and services.
- Promote the [Centrality of Protection](#) in the overall humanitarian response.
- Provide comprehensive and timely protection analysis to HCTs.
- Train and guide other clusters in mainstreaming protection and promoting AAP.
- Seek to ensure that protection drives HCT strategies, advocacy and response plans.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

The IASC's **Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level** (July 2015) is the principal reference document for clusters. It describes their activation, de-activation, core functions, and other features.

Under the [Transformative Agenda](#), IASC Principals have agreed that the activation of clusters should be more strategic, less automatic, and time limited. Accordingly, Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) should recommend their activation only when gaps in the enabling environment warrant. The criteria for cluster activation are met when:

- Response and coordination gaps exist due to a sharp deterioration or significant change in the humanitarian situation.
- Existing national response or coordination capacity is unable to meet needs in a manner that respects [humanitarian principles](#), due to the scale of need, the number of actors involved, the need for a more complex multi-sectoral approach, or other constraints on the ability to respond or apply [humanitarian principles](#).

Before recommending the activation of a cluster, the HC must consult the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and secure its agreement (including on which clusters to activate). The HC's recommendation is then sent to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who consults the IASC Principals and communicates their decision to the HC.

Structure and responsibilities of a protection cluster at field level

The structure of a protection cluster should be flexible, and adequate to respond to the scale and complexity of a particular crisis, and to work with sub clusters and sub-national clusters.

In accordance with the [Transformative Agenda](#), UNHCR leads protection clusters in conflict-induced crises. Areas of Responsibility (AORs) are coordinated by the following agency focal points: [Child Protection](#) by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Gender-Based Violence by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF; [Housing, Land and Property](#) by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and UN-Habitat; and Mine Action by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). Final arrangements at country-level should be dictated by operational circumstances, including the presence and capacity of protection actors.

In situations of natural disaster, leadership of the protection cluster is determined by the relative in-country capacities of UNHCR, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and UNICEF. These three agencies agree on leadership, under the overall leadership of the HC, after consulting each other.

The IASC included the concept of 'provider of last resort' in its [cluster approach](#) to guarantee predictability and accountability in humanitarian action. It is an essential element of UNHCR's accountability as cluster lead. UNHCR is expected to do its utmost to fill critical gaps in funding, access to populations, or security, while working with the Humanitarian Coordinator and donors to mobilize resources, meet security challenges and remove obstacles to access.

Protection clusters are increasingly co-facilitated by an NGO. This can enhance overall support and improve coordination by bringing in specific expertise and analysis and expanding the partnership network. Co-facilitation with an NGO requires a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the NGO co-facilitator.

Under the [Transformative Agenda](#), a cluster's core functions include:

- Needs assessment, analysis and prioritization, to inform strategic decision-making;
- Service delivery support (including elimination of gaps and duplication);
- Planning and strategy development; and

- Advocacy and fundraising.

To fulfil UNHCR's protection cluster commitments, the following posts are recommended at country level, at a minimum, under the overall direction of the Representative:

- A dedicated Protection Cluster Coordinator (PCC) (P4 or P5). He or she should be supervised by the Representative and have direct access to the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) Operations Cell for advice and guidance. (See Field Protection Cluster Coordinators Model Terms of Reference and UNHCR's internal job descriptions).
- A dedicated Protection Information Management Officer (P2 or P3), to be supervised by the PCC.
- Depending on the humanitarian response's size and scale, it may be necessary to designate a full time post (P3 or P4) to coordinate sub-national protection clusters under the supervision of the Head of Sub- or Field Office(s).
- A Protection Officer for protection cluster support (P2 or P3), to be supervised by the PCC.
- A Protection Officer (P3 or P4), to represent UNHCR as an operational partner in the protection cluster.

UNHCR's protection cluster commitments are to:

- Identify and engage partners (including government bodies) to participate in the protection cluster.
- Develop terms of reference for the protection cluster, covering its scope, criteria for participation, and structure (including sub-clusters and sub-national clusters).
- Lead preparation of a cluster strategy with cluster partners.
- Undertake advocacy on protection.
- Promote community-based engagement, including for the purpose of carrying out comprehensive assessments and analysing protection risks.
- Provide the HCT with sound protection analysis, which can guide its decision-making and help set priorities for advocacy and programming.
- Engage other clusters, both in analysing protection risks and needs and in assessing the impact of programmes on the protection of crisis-affected communities.
- Support efforts by each sector to mainstream protection in their assessments and in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes.
- Manage protection information products, including those that report on progress and assess the overall impact of the activities of protection cluster partners.
- Mobilize resources, and coordinate and monitor the implementation of resource plans to support the activities of protection cluster partners.
- Ensure coordination of protection delivery and outreach services, such as [child protection](#), gender-based violence (GBV), mine action, and [housing, land and property](#) (HLP), in close collaboration with sub-clusters.
- Assist sub-national protection clusters to fulfil their responsibilities (to develop strategy, collect and share information, do assessments and analysis, report, etc.).
- Promote and monitor compliance with protection policies, standards and guidelines.
- Strengthen preparedness capacity and contingency planning.
- Consider the creation of a Strategic Advisory Group, for example to develop and update the protection cluster's strategic framework, priorities and work plan.

- Monitor coordination (including through self-assessments), making improvements as necessary.
- Develop the outline of a transition plan, within three months (in sudden onset emergencies) or annually (in protracted crises).
- Maintain a dialogue with the GPC Coordinator and GPC Operations Cell to make sure that timely and effective support and guidance are available.
- Provide secretariat functions for the protection cluster.

Via the GPC Operations Cell, protection clusters can access additional support through the Protection Standby Capacity Project (ProCap) and rosters managed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC Surge) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NorCap). Support missions can be requested for short-term assistance on strategy development, capacity building, and specific programmatic or advocacy activities. Through its global network, the GPC can also provide targeted capacity building and resources, for example on IDP law and policy and on protection information management. Finally, protection clusters can access tools and guidance through the GPC web portal (see below: Policy documents, references and tools).

Role of partners involved

Participation in protection clusters is open to all protection actors that are ready to contribute to information collection and sharing, strategy development, prioritization, and preparation of work plans. Minimum commitments for participation in the protection cluster include:

- Commitment to [humanitarian principles](#) and the Principles of Partnership, including the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.
- Readiness to participate in actions that improve AAP, in line with the IASC's commitments.
- Demonstrated understanding of responsibilities associated with cluster participation, including in relation to agreed terms of reference at country level.
- Active participation in the cluster and consistent engagement in the cluster's collective work.
- Capacity and willingness to contribute to the cluster's strategic response plan and activities, including inter-cluster coordination.
- Commitment to work cooperatively with other cluster partners to ensure the best and most strategic use of available resources, including sharing information on organizational resources.
- Willingness to take on responsibilities as needed, taking account of capacity and mandates.
- Readiness to help draft and disseminate advocacy and messages targeted inter alia at affected communities, national authorities, donors, the HCT, cluster lead agencies, and the media.

As Protection Cluster lead agency, UNHCR needs to work to ensure the protection cluster reaches out to and engages with a diverse group of stakeholders, including:

- Crisis-affected communities in general and internally displaced people and their host communities in particular.
- National authorities.
- UN and inter-governmental agencies.
- Local and national NGOs and civil society.
- National human rights commissions.
- International NGOs.
- Peacekeeping missions.
- Donors.

For an explanation of how protection clusters engage with peacekeeping missions, see Diagnostic Tool and Guidance on the Interaction between Field Protection Clusters and UN missions.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

Under the UN Humanitarian Reform and the subsequent [Transformative Agenda](#), the Representative is responsible for ensuring that, as protection cluster lead agency, UNHCR:

- Ensures that coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported.
- Serves as first point of call for the protection cluster with regard to the Government and HC.
- Raises cluster-specific issues, concerns and challenges with the HC and HCT.
- Acts as 'provider of last resort'.

As Protection Cluster lead agency, UNHCR has undertaken to:

- Promote a timely, evidence-based and holistic approach to protection based on direct and meaningful engagement with crisis-affected communities, both to achieve accountability and to deliver well-informed analysis of protection risks and needs.
- Recommend to the HC and HCT priority actions (in the context of a system-wide strategic response) that address the most urgent and immediate protection risks and needs of crisis-affected populations in a manner that is responsive to differences of [age, gender and diversity](#).
- Work to align and represent the views of protection actors on advocacy and operational matters, in the UN Country Team and HCT, as part of an integrated approach to protection.
- Initiate the development of an overarching strategy for protection (owned and implemented by the Resident Coordinator (RC) or HC and the UNCT or HCT) that leverages each actor's expertise and experience to maximize protection and, ultimately, find solutions.
- Outline an advocacy strategy, which supports the priorities of the protection strategy and identifies forms of action, key stakeholders, and intended impacts or anticipated changes with regard to the protection risks and needs of crisis-affected populations.
- Stay abreast of developments in global policies relevant to protection and increase

understanding and appreciation of system-wide initiatives, such as the Human Rights Upfront initiative (designed to prevent or respond to major violations of human rights or international humanitarian law), that provide platforms for country-level protection advocacy as well as regional and headquarters' support and interventions.

- Build support and strategic alliances, inside and outside the humanitarian system, to increase support for protection priorities among organizations that do not have a protection mandate, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank.

Annexes

[Global Protection Cluster, Framework for the Establishment of a Protection Cluster Strategy](#)

[Global Protection Cluster, Protection Mainstreaming Training Package 2014](#)

[Global Protection Cluster, Guidance on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle for Protection Clusters](#)

[IASC, Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level](#)

[IASC, Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action - Statement by the Principals](#)

[Joint UNHCR OCHA Note on Mixed Situations, Coordination in Practice](#)

[UNHCR OG 2016 2 Operational Guidelines for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement](#)

[Annex to UNHCR OG 2016 2 - IDP Footprint](#)

[UNHCR-IOM Framework Agreement - Serving and Protecting Together 30.06.2022](#)

3. Links

[Global Protection Cluster Global Protection Cluster, Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility](#)
[Global Protection Cluster, Child Protection Area of Responsibility Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#)
[OCHA, Indicator Registry](#)
[IASC, Accountability to Affected Populations](#)
[IASC,](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact the Global Protection Cluster Support Cell, Division of International Protection, UNHCR HQ. At GPC@unhcr.org.

Cluster Approach (IASC)

24 March 2023

Key points

- The UNHCR Representative actively participates in the HCT, representing both the agency and the cluster(s) UNHCR leads.
- The cluster approach provides the coordination architecture for non-refugee humanitarian emergencies.
- In refugee situations, coordination is guided by the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM); clusters are not activated in refugee situations.
- At global level, UNHCR leads the protection cluster; co-leads the shelter cluster when conflict causes displacement; and co-leads the CCCM cluster when conflict causes displacement. UNHCR also leads the protection cluster in cases where disasters induce displacement provided it has an in-country presence, is requested to do so by the Government, and there is inter-agency agreement.
- Through the UNCT or HCT, UNHCR participates in decisions on country cluster activation; at global level, the High Commissioner endorses cluster activation proposals.
- At country level, inter-agency cluster-based responses are led by the HC through the cluster lead agencies. Sector-specific strategic direction and operational coordination is led by national cluster coordinators.

1. Overview

This entry should be read in conjunction with the [Entry on International Coordination Architecture](#).

The Cluster Approach is used for coordinating in non-refugee humanitarian emergencies. Humanitarian organisations have agreed to lead certain clusters at global level (see the chart), and have defined a cluster structure for non-refugee humanitarian responses at country level. At country level, cluster leadership should ideally mirror global arrangements and clusters are often co-led with government and/or co-chaired with NGO partners. The cluster system emerged to fill accountability gaps in international humanitarian responses. It spreads accountability for the delivery of services (health, shelter, etc.) across different cluster lead agencies, and as a result no single agency is accountable for the entire response. In each country situation, overall accountability for coordination and delivery rests with the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).

Note. Protection and assistance to refugees is coordinated and delivered through the [Refugee Coordination Model](#) (RCM). (Clusters are not activated for responses to refugee crises.) (Clusters are not activated for responses to refugee crises.) In mixed situations, where a response is needed for both refugees and persons who have been internally displaced, the **Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice** should be used for guidance.

The foundations of the current non-refugee international humanitarian coordination system were established by UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (December 1991), which created both the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator. Led by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the ERC (who is also head of OCHA), the IASC system brings together its members, which are operational organisations linked with the UN system, and a number of standing invitees, including ICRC, IFRC, ICVA, InterAction, OHCHR, the World Bank Group and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.

Almost 15 years later, in 2005, the 'humanitarian reform agenda' introduced several new operational and policy elements to enhance predictability, accountability and partnership. The Cluster Approach was one of the new elements.

Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action (water, health, shelter, logistics, etc.). They are designated by the IASC and have clear responsibilities for coordination.

The Cluster Approach was applied for the first time after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. Since then there have been two evaluations. The first, finalized in 2007, focused on implementation. The second, in 2010, examined the contribution clusters made to improving humanitarian assistance. After the 2010 report, the Cluster Approach was further refined and improved in the context of the '[Transformative Agenda](#)'.

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or

system

Good coordination is needs-based, not capacity-driven. It establishes a coherent and complementary approach that identifies ways to work together for better collective results.

Large non-refugee humanitarian crises are crises in which needs exceed a government's existing capacity and in which the needs, scale and complexity of the crisis warrant a multi-sectoral response with the engagement of a wide range of humanitarian actors. In such situations, a cluster response is activated under the overall leadership of the designated Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). Each cluster is accountable to the HC through its Cluster Lead Agency (CLA), as well as to national authorities and to people affected by the crisis.

A Cluster Approach may be used both in humanitarian emergencies caused by conflicts and in humanitarian emergencies caused by disasters.

The Approach aims to strengthen system-wide preparedness, make sure that critical materials and expertise are immediately available, and focus technical capacity. It:

- Increases transparency and accountability. Its mechanisms improve transparency in resource allocation, establish leadership, and focus on operational performance, leading to stronger accountability.
- Enhances predictability. Sector and thematic responsibilities are made clear; formal mechanisms at national and international level bring clarity to areas that are not otherwise covered.
- Engagement with national and local authorities. Government authorities are the primary duty-bearers. Humanitarian actors should actively engage with and support them to lead or progressively take over operational delivery, coordination, and monitoring of protection, assistance, and solutions for IDPs.
- Inclusion of affected communities. Humanitarian actors are required to make themselves accountable to affected populations. At minimum, they must consult and engage with the populations they assist. Affected communities help to determine the best responses to the problems they face.
- More effective advocacy. When clusters, singly or collectively, speak with one voice on issues of common concern, and do so in association with affected groups who are not normally heard, advocacy has more weight.
- Joint strategic and operational planning. Formal processes of coordination within and between clusters enhance efficiency and improve effectiveness.

Centrality of protection

In December 2013 the IASC Principals issued a statement on the [Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#). It is considered to be a core commitment of HCs, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), and clusters. It affirms that, while Governments are primarily responsible for protecting people in humanitarian emergencies, humanitarian actors must protect people and respect and promote their human rights in accordance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law (IHL). Responses must develop a specific protection strategy at HCT level, covering preparedness, all aspects of the humanitarian response, and solutions. The

[protection cluster](#) is expected to provide analysis and support the HCT needs to prepare this strategy.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

Cluster activation

In specific country situations, clusters can only be activated by the ERC, with the endorsement of IASC Principals. In 2018, 'system-wide scale-up' replaced the previous emergency activation procedure referred to as 'Level 3'. An IASC Scale-Up is a system-wide mobilization in response to a sudden-onset and/or rapidly deteriorating situation in a given country or region and is declared when national or regional capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance does not match the scale, complexity, and urgency of the crisis. Five criteria are used to determine whether an emergency should be scaled up to a system-wide emergency: scale, urgency, complexity, capacity, and risk of failure to effectively deliver to affected populations.

Key steps include:

1. Consultation with the IASC Principals.
2. Mobilisation of cluster lead agency response capacities.
3. Immediate deployment of cluster coordination teams that possess information management expertise and capacity to scale up.
4. Activation of clusters, including designated leads.
5. Empowerment of an HC. The HC:
 - Leads the HCT in a multi-sector initial rapid assessment (MIRA), leading to a strategic statement and response plan.
 - Leads requests for allocations from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).
 - Seeks consensus in the HCT for key decisions, but has authority to finalize proposals.
 - Raises any cluster lead performance problems with the ERC, who may bring them to the IASC Principals for discussion.
 - Oversees effective coordination and delivery, monitoring, and reporting.

UNHCR's participation and involvement in initial discussions of cluster activation at country level are crucial. In this period, it should make clear its readiness and commitment to lead particular clusters and activate internal mechanisms for rapid deployment of relevant staff.

Core functions of a cluster

At country level, clusters:

1. Support service delivery by providing a space in which to agree approaches and eliminate duplication.
2. Inform strategic decision-making of the HC/HCT by coordinating needs assessment, gap analysis, and prioritization.
3. Plan and develop strategies, including cluster plans, and arrangements for adhering to standards and meeting funding needs.
4. Advocate on behalf of cluster participants and affected populations.
5. Monitor and report on the cluster strategy and its results, and recommend corrective action where necessary.

6. Undertake contingency planning and, preparedness actions, and build capacity where the cluster has resources to do so.

From the outset of a humanitarian response, each cluster is also responsible for mainstreaming protection and integrating a solutions-orientation.

Coordination structure

A cluster-based response is led by the HC, in support of the host Government. At senior level (usually in the HCT), clusters are represented by the country head of the cluster lead agency. For example, the UNHCR Representative will represent the protection, the shelter and the [camp coordination and camp management](#) (CCCM) clusters, the UNICEF Representative the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) cluster, etc. OCHA supports the HC's coordination role, and typically convenes inter-cluster coordination meetings in which national cluster coordinators participate.

At country level, a cluster has six core functions:

1. To support service delivery, it:

- Provides a coordination platform that ensures service delivery is driven by the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and strategic priorities.
- Develops mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery.

2. To support the HC/HCT's strategic decision-making, it:

- Prepares needs assessments and analyses of gaps (across and in clusters), using information management tools as needed, to guide decisions on priorities.
- Identifies (emerging) gaps, obstacles, problems of duplication, and cross-cutting issues, and finds ways to address them.
- Formulates priorities on the basis of analysis.

3. To plan and implement cluster strategies, it:

- Develops sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the response's strategic objectives.
- Applies and adheres to agreed standards and guidelines.
- Clarifies funding requirements, helps set priorities, and agrees cluster contributions to the HC's overall humanitarian funding proposals.

4. To monitor and evaluate performance, it:

- Monitors and reports on activities and needs.
- Measures progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results.
- Recommends corrective action where necessary.

5. To build national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning.

6. To support robust advocacy, it:

- Identifies concerns, and contributes support and content to HC and HCT messaging and action.
- Undertakes advocacy on behalf of the cluster, cluster members, and affected people.

Role of partners involved

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The IASC is a unique inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making. It includes the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. Led by the EKC, the IASC develops humanitarian policies, demarcates responsibilities across the various dimensions of humanitarian assistance, identifies and addresses gaps in response, and advocates for effective application of [humanitarian principles](#).

Government and national actors. Under UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (19 December 1991), the affected State, including the Government and its official institutions, is primarily responsible for initiating, organizing, coordinating, and implementing humanitarian assistance in its territory.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator. The post of ERC is held by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who leads the IASC. The ERC is responsible for overseeing all complex emergencies that require UN humanitarian assistance. In countries affected by disasters or conflict, the ERC may appoint an HC. The ERC secures IASC endorsement of HC proposals to activate clusters and appoint cluster leads. The responsibility of the ERC does not detract from the High Commissioner's mandated accountability for refugees.

Humanitarian Coordinator. When crises occur, the HC in a country is responsible for assessing whether an international response is warranted and, if it is, for ensuring that it is well organized. HCs are accountable to the ERC. At national level, they lead the HCT in deciding the most appropriate coordination solutions for a crisis, taking into account the local situation. Agreement must be reached on which clusters to establish, and which organizations will lead them.

Humanitarian Country Team. The HCT is a strategic and operational decision-making and oversight forum established and led by the HC. It includes representatives from the UN and NGOs; the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement often attends with observer status. Agencies that are designated cluster leads represent their clusters as well as their organizations. The HCT is responsible for agreeing on strategic issues relevant to humanitarian action.

Cluster lead agencies. Heads of cluster lead agencies are accountable to the HC. They

- Ensure that coordination mechanisms are established and properly supported.
- Act as first point of call for the Government and the HC.
- Are the provider of last resort in their respective cluster.

Note. The IASC term 'provider of last resort' translates into a commitment by the Cluster Lead Agency to do the utmost to ensure an adequate and appropriate response. This means

calling upon all relevant humanitarian partners to address critical gaps, and if this fails, depending on the urgency, and subject to access, security and funding availability, the cluster lead may need to commit itself to filling the gap" **(from UNHCR's IDP policy)**.

Cluster coordinators. A cluster coordinator is responsible for ensuring that his or her cluster fulfils its role (with regard to needs assessment, response planning, setting of strategies/approaches, provision of policy/operational guidance, coordination of field responses, inter-cluster engagement, information management, monitoring and evaluation, donor engagement, Government engagement, advocacy, etc.), as set out in the [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level](#). Cluster coordinators co-operate through the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) to: jointly deliver an effective and efficient humanitarian response that results in meaningful protection outcomes in line with the IASC Policy on Protection; reach a shared understanding of needs, informed by a robust protection and gender analysis; and agree a joint strategy to meet needs. They brief the HCT and raise strategic issues for discussion in the HCT. (For more information on ICCG standard terms of reference, see <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/global-cluster-coordinators-group-initiatives-0>.)

Shared leadership. The IASC recommends that country-level cluster leadership should mirror global arrangements. Accordingly, UNHCR should normally lead the [protection cluster](#) and, in conflict situations, the [shelter cluster](#) and the CCCM cluster. When appropriate, Governments should co-lead the cluster. Practice has shown that the appointment of NGOs to co-chair a cluster generally improves partnership, advocacy and information distribution and therefore the response as a whole. When an NGO co-chairs a cluster, it should contribute staff to the cluster coordination team in roles that complement and enhance the cluster's capacity. Appointing two UN agencies to co-lead clusters should be avoided because this does not strengthen ownership or make coordination more sustainable, but dilutes accountability and complicates decision-making. Global clusters should be consulted when the appointment of co-leads or co-chairs is considered before cluster activation. (For IASC guidance on cluster leadership, see IASC, **Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level**, activation procedures, p. 10.)

OCHA. OCHA works closely with global cluster lead agencies and NGOs to develop policies, coordinate inter-cluster issues, disseminate operational guidance, and organize field support. At field level, it helps ensure that the humanitarian system functions efficiently and supports the HC's leadership. OCHA provides guidance and support to the HC and HCT, and facilitates inter-cluster coordination. It also helps coordination between clusters at all phases of the response, when required, including needs assessment, joint planning, and monitoring and evaluation.

A cluster benefits from wide and representative participation, but can become unmanageable if it has too many members or its members are transient. In such cases, the appointment of a smaller strategic advisory group (SAG) or technical working groups (TWIG) can improve its performance.

Minimum commitments for participation. These set out what local, national, or international organizations undertake to bring to country-level clusters. They are not meant to exclude

organizations or prevent national authorities from participating, where it is appropriate for them to do so.

Organizations that join clusters undertake to:

- Adhere to [humanitarian principles](#) and [principles of partnership](#).
- Participate in actions that specifically improve [accountability to affected populations](#).
- Engage consistently in the cluster's collective work, and make capacity available for this.
- Make the best use of resources, and share information on organizational resources.
- Take on leadership responsibilities as needed and as capacity and mandates allow.
- Help to develop and disseminate advocacy and messaging for relevant audiences.

The minimum commitments are not prescriptive and should be adapted to actual needs and context. Country-level clusters should consult the IASC's **Coordination Reference Module** when they develop or update their terms of reference or commitments.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

Within the IASC system, UNHCR leads three clusters:

Protection. In situations involving conflict, UNHCR leads the [protection cluster](#). UNHCR also leads this cluster in situations where a disaster has caused displacement provided that it has an in-country presence, the Government asks it to lead, and there is inter-agency approval. This cluster includes 'areas of responsibility' that are attributed to UNFPA for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), to UNICEF for [child protection](#), to UNMAS for mine action, and to NRC for [housing, land and property](#). Recognizing that protection is central to the purpose of any humanitarian response, the [protection cluster](#) advises the HC and HCT, and works with all clusters to strengthen protection and rights-based responses.

Camp coordination and camp management (CCCM). In conflict situations involving IDPs, UNHCR leads this cluster. IOM leads this cluster in natural disasters. The CCCM cluster neither advocates for, nor automatically creates, camps and similar collective settings; it seeks rather to establish and maintain the dignity of living conditions and services of an appropriate standard for displaced populations, whether they live in planned or spontaneous collective settings.

Shelter. In situations involving conflict, UNHCR leads this cluster. In natural disasters, the IFRC leads. If IFRC is not present or is not able to lead the cluster at the outset of a natural disaster, UNHCR may temporarily lead until IFRC is ready to do so. Because IFRC is not a recipient of CERF funding, UNHCR can provide support in natural disasters by receiving CERF funds for shelter. Country operations should consult the Global [Shelter Cluster](#) in such situations.

When new emergency situations arise, UNHCR Representatives at country level consult HQ and participate in UNCT or HCT discussions of cluster activation. When a cluster led by UNHCR is activated, in accordance with IASC commitments and accountabilities, UNHCR offices must be

prepared to resource cluster coordination, including coordination capacity at national and local level and information management support. Merging of clusters (shelter/NFI and CCCM) is not considered a good practice and should be avoided. Country operations should consult global clusters before taking steps to merge clusters.

To implement its updated **Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement** (September 2019), UNHCR is currently making an agency-wide effort to strengthen its preparedness, response and solutions interventions in internal displacement situations, underpinned by a robust operational response in each of these sectors. Globally and in all IDP operations, it is strengthening internal tri-cluster synergies, including by mainstreaming protection across all sectors.

Annexes

[UNHCR-OCHA, Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations. Coordination in Practice](#)

[IASC Principals, The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action, statement](#)

[Global Shelter Cluster Coordination Toolkit](#)

[IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at the Country Level 2015](#)

[UNHCR-IOM Framework Agreement - Serving and Protecting Together 30.06.2022](#)

3. Links

[Shelter cluster](#) [Global CCCM Cluster](#) [Global protection cluster](#)

4. Main contacts

Contact

- Annika Sandlund (sandlund@unhcr.org) or Maria Kiani (kiani@unhcr.org) at the Partnership and Coordination Service
- The Global Protection Cluster at <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/general/contact-us/>
The Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, at: <https://cccmcluster.org/about/team> or HQGLOBCC@unhcr.org.
- The Global Shelter Cluster, at: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/about-us/global-support-team> or HQShelter@unhcr.org.

Working with the host government

13 April 2023

Key points

- Familiarize yourself with the political dynamics, capacities and institutional arrangements of the host government wherever these are relevant to the emergency response.
- Understand other UN agencies' engagement with the government and identify synergies and complementarities.
- In refugee situations, the UNHCR Representative or most senior UNHCR official in the country has an important role in direct advocacy with high-level government authorities.
- Always work with local government authorities (governors, municipalities) in operational areas.
- Always maintain an up-to-date contact list of key government counterparts.
- If key protection or operational issues vital to an emergency response cannot be resolved at national level, the UNHCR Representative may pass major advocacy issues to UNHCR HQ.

1. Overview

States are responsible for the safety and security of refugees and internally displaced persons on their territory, including the provision of assistance and law and order. Within this framework, and in accordance with UNHCR's mandate, UNHCR supports host governments in emergency situations, working with government authorities at all levels. This Entry outlines basic principles for working with host governments in both refugee and IDP emergencies.

2. Main guidance

Underlying rationale / objective of the approach or system

The international legal instruments listed below establish the core elements of State responsibility.

With respect to refugee protection:

- The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.
- The 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).
- The 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.
- The 1994 San José Declaration (for operations in Latin America only).

With respect to IDP protection:

- The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998). (The Principles are not an international convention, but collate and reaffirm relevant international human rights and humanitarian law with regard to IDPs as well as clarify legal grey areas and gaps.)
- African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2012).

For all populations on a State's territory:

- Human rights law.
- Humanitarian law (applicable only during times of conflict).

National laws on refugees and IDPs determine the scope of national mechanisms to fulfil international obligations. During an emergency response, operations should be aware of the provisions of national law.

UNHCR's relationship with the host government

Refugees

The High Commissioner's core mandate covers refugees. Given the particular character of refugees as people who are not protected by their own States, the post of High Commissioner was established with legal authority to intercede on their behalf, as illustrated by his supervisory responsibilities with regard to international refugee instruments.

The refugee mandate applies to asylum-seekers and refugees in both emergency and non-emergency situations, as well as to emergency and non-emergency mixed movements that involve asylum-seekers and refugees. The mandate covers camp settings and settings outside camps. In short, the High Commissioner has a global mandate with respect to refugees, regardless of their location.

The High Commissioner and his Office (UNHCR) are authorized to declare which individuals or groups may be of concern to the Office under its core mandate. Their concern may relate to a specific individual or a wider group. Exercising the mandate in this way informs other external actors of the High Commissioner's international protection interest in and responsibility for persons of concern.

In the course of fulfilling these functions, UNHCR has acquired more than sixty years of experience of collaborating with governments and developing partnerships with other international agencies and non-governmental organizations.

Stateless persons

The High Commissioner for Refugees has specific responsibilities for refugees who are stateless, pursuant to the 1951 Convention, which refers to stateless persons who meet its refugee criteria. Moreover, in accordance with GA resolutions 3274 XXIX and 31/36, and pursuant to Articles 11 and 20 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, it is to UNHCR that persons claiming the benefits of the 1961 Convention apply, both to examine their claims and assist them to present claims to the appropriate authorities.

IDPs

Certain requirements must be met before the High Commissioner may act in favour of internally displaced persons. The Secretary-General or a competent principal organ of the UN must issue a specific request or authorization; the State or other entities concerned must consent; there must be assurances that UNHCR will obtain access to the internally displaced persons in question; adequate resources and the Office's particular expertise and experience must be available; action should complement the action of other agencies; and adequate staff safety should be assured.

The High Commissioner does not have a general or exclusive mandate to intercede on behalf of internally displaced persons. However, it has been authorized by the UN General Assembly to become involved operationally under certain circumstances for the purpose of enhancing protection and providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons through special operations.

Currently, the Office's involvement with internally displaced people is largely defined by the inter-agency approach to co-ordination that has been articulated in the Humanitarian Reform and the [Transformative Agenda](#). These models, developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator [ERC], fully respect the mandates of the participating agencies and partners. In mid-2005, UNHCR agreed to assume global cluster leadership for protection, and co-leadership of both camp coordination and management and emergency shelter.

For more legal information on UNHCR's mandate, see UNHCR, **Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and His Office**.

UNHCR presence/offices

The relationship of UNHCR offices with host governments is usually regulated by host country agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs), often called **Accords de Siège**. Host governments are responsible for the safety and security of UNHCR staff. The Charter of the United Nations and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 13

February 1946 (General Convention) provide the legal foundation of the status of UNHCR and its personnel as well as applicable privileges and immunities.

Policy, strategy and/or guidance

When a major new crisis occurs, UNHCR operations should be conscious that government arrangements for managing refugees or IDPs may change. Emergency response operations are delivered by a number of government departments, including those responsible for public works (water, sanitation), education, health, and home affairs (safety and security), which often also oversees local government institutions.

In terms of the practical management of government relations, UNHCR emergency managers should always keep an up to date contact list, including the mobile phone numbers of key government counterparts. These can make a big difference when quick or urgent operational and protection decisions or interventions need to be made.

Refugee emergencies

Pre-emergency preparedness

UNHCR offices, or visiting missions if there is no presence, support host governments to prepare for emergencies. Assistance covers all aspects of preparedness, from identifying/monitoring specific emergency risks and scenarios to advanced preparedness actions, including contingency planning. UNHCR offices should ideally be aware of government contingency plans and national response capacities. For more information on preparedness, please consult the Entry on the [Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies](#).

During refugee emergencies

When a refugee emergency occurs, or is imminent, UNHCR should immediately initiate high level consultations with the host government on the points listed below. With respect to inter-agency coordination arrangements, the [refugee coordination model](#) (RCM) applies, by which UNHCR (co-) leads the emergency response in support of the host government.

Main points to consider in deliberations with the Government:

- What information is available to UNHCR on the refugee influx? Highlight those who, in UNHCR's view, are or may be of concern to UNHCR.
- Seek to ensure that newly arriving asylum seekers and refugees have access to the territory and access to asylum and asylum procedures.
- Seek to ensure that new arrivals in the country are granted appropriate status and enjoy corresponding rights.
- Given that the government is responsible for ensuring the civilian character of asylum,

clarify security arrangements as well as related procedures for separating civilians from combatants and former combatants, as required.

- Establish who will be the most senior government counterpart in charge of the emergency situation, as well as primary working level counterparts.
- Open initial consultations on the response strategy and how (as appropriate) UNHCR can enhance the host government's emergency response capacity.
- Propose joint development of a contingency plan or refugee response plan (RRP), as applicable.
- Offer assistance with coordination of the emergency response, given the possible involvement of UN and NGO partners.

Response leadership and coordination

UNHCR assists the government on coordination, response delivery and protection issues. Typically, this involves joint coordination arrangements, partnership with various government departments in service delivery, and regular dialogue at all levels on refugee protection issues.

Emergency response delivery

At the request of government, UNHCR may complement national capacities to deliver essential services to newly arriving refugees in an emergency situation. It is of critical importance that an emergency response operation supported by UN and NGO actors does not displace or operate in parallel to government services: existing national capacity should always be the starting point when planning emergency response services. Perhaps assisted by targeted capacity-building, most national public services are able to deliver essential services such as health, education, and water.

IDP emergencies

When an IDP emergency occurs, or is imminent, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) or Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) initiates consultations with the host government on UN engagement. In terms of inter-agency coordination, the [cluster approach](#) applies to IDP emergencies and the overall response is (co)-led by the RC or HC.

UNHCR's role and engagement with host governments focuses on the three global clusters for which it has lead or co-lead responsibility. UNHCR leads the Global [Protection Cluster](#) (GPC) and co-leads the Global Cluster for Shelter and the Global Cluster for [Camp Coordination and Camp Management](#) (CCCM). UNHCR does not normally support the entire response. Its role and interventions reflect the plan and approach adopted by the UN Country Team (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

UNHCR presence /offices

In countries that have not agreed an **Accord de Siège**, the UNHCR country office or the

Emergency Team should strive to formalize exchanges with the government and define the initial scope and modalities of cooperation. This needs to be done in close consultation with the relevant Bureaux and Divisions at HQ.

Role of partners involved

National government authorities

National authorities lead and manage the overall emergency response in a country, and their decisions and policies have a major impact on persons of concern. It is vital that UNHCR jointly plans and coordinates with national authorities, and engages them in protection and operational issues.

National authorities include government leaders; the principal focal points or task forces on refugee and IDP issues; relevant line ministries (including those responsible for foreign affairs, justice, immigration, social welfare, civil registration, etc.); and relevant security forces, enforcement agencies and the military. Policies and guidance issued by national authorities, including the executive and line ministries, may have a major impact on the approach that local authorities take in specific operational areas.

Local government

Local government may include governors, mayors, municipalities, local councils, police, security forces, and branches of line ministries. The influence and role of local government authorities should not be underestimated. They are usually responsible for all local public services, land and settlement issues, and security and law and order. In both out-of-camp and camp operations, the success of a response will depend significantly on the degree to which persons of concern have access to public services. UNHCR may put in place capacity-building initiatives or community support projects (CSPs) to facilitate service delivery and ensure the good will of local populations.

Judicial authorities

Judicial authorities are institutions of the State but are normally independent of the government in terms of their functions. They may operate at national, regional or local level, and include courts of appeal as well as first instance. UNHCR's engagement with the judicial system may take several forms. It may intervene formally as a party in legal proceedings, may offer informal support or input to courts or other judicial bodies, and may support lawyers or applicants associated with an action or who seek redress, for example, after removal or to prevent **refoulement**.

Independent bodies

Independent bodies may include commissions (such as national human rights commissions), ombuds offices and other independent institutions that may be established or appointed by the

government or parliament to investigate and address complaints of maladministration or violations of rights. Where appropriate, UNHCR approaches such bodies for support or intervention, for example to prevent **refoulement**.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

- UNHCR engages with the host government at all levels on emergency preparedness and response.
- On issues of operational delivery and to channel international humanitarian assistance, UNHCR always works in support of government authorities.
- When it is appropriate, feasible, and when requested by the authorities, UNHCR may engage in emergency service provision for refugees and IDPs, and in capacity-building initiatives that strengthen the ability of host government systems and services to cope with an emergency situation.

Annexes

[UNHCR, Note on Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and his Office, 2013](#)

[Risk Management _ Fraud Prevention _ Toolkit](#)

3. Links

[Fraud Prevention](#)

4. Main contacts

When appropriate, contact the relevant UNHCR HQ Regional Bureau.

Contact UNHCR's Division for Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS). At: hqemhand@unhcr.org.

Coordination on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

18 September 2023

Key points

- Ensure that structures for inter-agency coordination on PSEA are established from the outset of the emergency
- Take lead in establishing and coordinating in-country PSEA Networks in refugee emergencies
- Actively engage in in-country PSEA Networks in non-refugee emergencies in collaboration with other actors
- Ensure close coordination with all concerned sectors / clusters for PSEA to be effectively mainstreamed across the emergency response

1. Overview

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of forcibly displaced and stateless persons and other affected communities by aid workers causes irrevocable harm to victims and their communities. Even one incident of SEA breaks community trust and undermines the work of the entire humanitarian response. UNHCR works in close collaboration with sister UN agencies, non-governmental and civil society organisations, government and other partners to coordinate engagement, strengthen prevention and promote a victim-centred approach in response to SEA within the humanitarian and development systems. In emergency situations which continue to rapidly evolve, inter-agency and multi-sectoral coordination is of critical importance to ensure that protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) is effectively integrated into the emergency response from the outset, including prevention, risk mitigation, community engagement, safe and accessible reporting, and a victim/survivor-centred response.

While PSEA is the responsibility of all UNHCR personnel, at UNHCR, PSEA Focal Points (FPs) are formally appointed by the Representative and work to ensure PSEA is implemented within the operation in line with UNHCR policies. While certain activities fall under specific functional units, the PSEA FP provides guidance to all colleagues in their respective areas of responsibility to ensure PSEA is adequately implemented and mainstreamed across the operation. In large operations, more than one PSEA FP may be appointed. Usually, the PSEA FP represents UNHCR in the inter-agency PSEA Network.

In-country inter-agency PSEA networks serve as the primary body for technical level coordination and oversight of PSEA activities to prevent and respond to SEA and mitigate risks thereof. The network is responsible for implementing coordinated activities between members to minimize the risk of SEA by aid workers and associated personnel delivering humanitarian assistance, ensure effective response when incidents do arise, and raise awareness of PSEA. The network should also ensure collaboration and coordination with other sectoral working groups or clusters in relevant thematic areas to ensure that PSEA is mainstreamed across the response.

2. Main guidance

Close coordination amongst agencies is essential for PSEA efforts to be coherent and effective in an emergency response. Inter-agency coordination brings organizations together under a common situation analysis, strategy and approach, to ensure consistent messaging on PSEA to communities and stakeholders, build on good practices and expertise of partners, streamline procedures and mechanisms for reporting and referral, utilize shared tools and resources, ensure complementarity of interventions and avoid duplication, and increase overall efficacy of interventions.

In addition, coordination with various sectors / clusters is essential in order to mainstream PSEA prevention, risk mitigation and response across sectors, including mapping potential SEA risk areas by sector and taking actions to mitigate those risks, integrating PSEA messages into community outreach and capacity-building sessions, and ensuring multi-sectoral services and referral pathways are in place for survivors to access the support that they may require including safety and security measures, basic material assistance, medical care, psychosocial support or legal services as part of GBV response.

PSEA is a cross-cutting issue requiring a range of technical expertise. Working to prevent and respond to SEA is a collective responsibility for all actors in all sectors. For this reason, the PSEA Network is an independent, standalone structure and not a sub-group of Protection, GBV, Gender, or AAP.

PSEA inter-agency coordination in refugee, IDP, development and mixed contexts

Under the auspices of the Refugee Coordinator (UNHCR Representative) in a refugee situation and the Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in a development or an internal displacement situation, an in-country PSEA Network should be established (if one does not exist already) as the primary body for technical-level coordination and oversight of PSEA activities. It is recommended that the PSEA Network is situated as a cross-sectoral group, rather than under a specific sectoral / cluster working group, given the cross-cutting nature of PSEA which requires mainstreaming across sectors and clusters. The PSEA Network should liaise regularly and closely with the broader inter/multi-sector coordination group.

For refugee emergencies, UNHCR has the role to take the lead to establish (if one does not exist already) and coordinate / co-chair the PSEA Network in accordance with the Refugee Coordination Model. For non-refugee emergencies, UNHCR should actively engage in the PSEA Network, which may include co-chairing if appropriate or required depending on the operational context. (See also [UNHCR's Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response](#), paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2)

- The above structure is an example, to be adapted depending on the local context of the operation.
- UNHCR Representative / Refugee Coordinator is accountable for coordination of refugee response.
- UNHCR establishes sectoral coordination mechanisms, with government counterparts wherever possible. PSEA Network is part of RCM coordination structure.
- The PSEA Coordinator reports to the UNHCR Representative / Refugee Coordinator.

In mixed situations, where a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) has been appointed and the

populations of humanitarian concern include refugees, IDPs and other affected groups, the [UNHCR/OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations Coordination \(2014\)](#) applies and the PSEA Coordinator has a shared reporting line to the HC and the Refugee Coordinator / UNHCR Representative. On PSEA, UNHCR maintains overall coordination and leadership responsibilities for PSEA in the refugee response, while the configuration of PSEA coordination structure will need to be guided by the operational context, what structures already exist, and what would be fit for purpose and optimize results (e.g. separate PSEA Network for refugee response or merged PSEA Network covering both refugee and IDP operations). Moreover, the UNHCR Representative, as Refugee Coordinator, actively engages in coordinating PSEA efforts with the HC, shares updates on developments on PSEA in the refugee response with the HC and UN Country Team (UNCT)/ Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and actively contributes to system-wide efforts maximizing resources, efficiency, and impact in addressing PSEA. In accordance with the [IASC Vision and Strategy : Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment \(PSEAH\) 2022-2026](#) and the IASC's [Generic Terms of Reference for In-Country PSEA Coordinator](#), in country contexts where refugee situations are the predominant humanitarian concern, the PSEA Coordinator should be situated within the UNHCR office with a shared reporting line to the UNHCR Representative and the (D)SRSG/RC/HC as appropriate.

These considerations also apply in countries where there is a refugee response as well as a UN development coordination system under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC). UNHCR maintains overall coordination and leadership responsibilities for PSEA in the refugee response and the configuration of PSEA coordination structures will need to be guided by the operational context, what structures already exist, and what would be fit for purpose and optimize results (e.g. sub-national PSEA Network for refugee response or integration into the national PSEA Network if one exists, etc). The UNHCR Representative, as Refugee Coordinator, actively engages in coordinating PSEA efforts with the RC, shares updates on developments on PSEA in the refugee response with the RC and UNCT and contributes to system-wide efforts maximizing efficiency and impact in addressing SEA.

In situations of mixed movements of refugees and migrants, UNHCR and IOM seek to achieve co-leadership of the response and establish adequate coordination mechanisms in accordance with the [UNHCR-IOM Framework of Engagement](#). While guidance and models of coordination arrangements in mixed refugee / migrant movement situations is evolving, building on experience in the Coordination Platform for refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V model) and other existing models, it is considered good practice to establish a cross-cutting PSEA Network as part of the inter-agency coordination structure for coordination of response to the mixed movements, in a similar way to refugee and mixed refugee / IDP situations.

The role of the Inter-Agency PSEA Network

The PSEA Network is responsible for implementing coordinated activities between member organizations to minimize the risk of SEA, ensure that systems are in place for effective response when incidents do arise, and raise awareness of PSEA in the operation. It provides technical level coordination and oversight on PSEA, including: developing and/or adapting country level strategies for endorsement by country-level leadership (e.g. UNCT / HCT, Refugee Coordination Forum, depending on the operational context), workplan, guidelines, procedures and mechanisms contextualizing global and/or regional guidelines and tools where applicable;

carrying out joint SEA risk assessments; and organizing activities and advocacy for prevention, response and risk mitigation for PSEA. The PSEA Network activities should follow a victim-centered approach and respect the principles of safety, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination. For further information on the role of the Network, please refer to the Generic ToRs of an in-country PSEA Network available at the links below.

The Network should be open to all UN agencies, international and national NGOs, and local organizations operating in the response, and engage in outreach with relevant non-member organizations as part of ongoing activities. The presence of the PSEA Network does not lessen the responsibility of individual network members to develop, implement, and strengthen measures, activities and programmes internally for PSEA at the country level. Senior management within each member organization is accountable for PSEA within their organizations. However, the Network ensures that initiatives by agencies are well coordinated and provides a forum through which joint inter-agency efforts for PSEA can be undertaken collectively.

The PSEA Network is not responsible for investigating or adjudicating complaints. Within UNHCR these functions rest exclusively with the Inspector-General's Office (IGO), or in case of allegations against individuals employed by other agencies the entity that employs the individual against whom a complaint has been alleged, in line with internal policy and procedures.

To ensure adequate coordination capacity in a rapidly evolving environment, it is highly recommended that a dedicated PSEA Coordinator is appointed to coordinate and represent the PSEA Network (or support the PSEA Network in coordination with the network co-chairs if the latter are different from the Coordinator), particularly in a refugee emergency where UNHCR is responsible to take lead. The PSEA Coordinator is responsible for reporting on Network activities, including progress made against key objectives and priorities. The PSEA Coordinator also represents the Network in relevant coordination bodies and advises actors in country on good practice to support effective PSEA implementation. PSEA Network Co-chairs take an active role at the Network level in convening and managing network meetings and events and help coordinate and oversee the PSEA Network Action Plan. In operations where there is no PSEA Coordinator position available in the country, the Coordinator role will usually be divided between the co-chair agencies as appropriate. In some countries the PSEA Coordinator may serve as the Network Chair or co-chair.

Relationship between the PSEA Network and other inter-agency coordination groups

It is important that the PSEA Network and PSEA Coordinator ensure close coordination with inter-agency coordination structures and focal points for GBV, child protection, accountability to affected people (AAP), community-based protection and other sectors / clusters, with a view to ensure effective inclusion of SEA victims in GBV referral pathways and services, inclusion of SEA in communication with communities planning and messaging and the development of feedback and response mechanisms, integration of PSEA in programmes for groups at heightened risk (including children, persons with disabilities, older persons, women at risk, and LGBTIQ+), and assessment and mitigation of SEA risks in programming by sectors / clusters such as camp management and coordination, shelter, WASH, health, food, education, etc.

Member organizations of the PSEA Network will be represented by their PSEA focal points, who actively participate in the meetings and activities of the Network on behalf of their organizations. Additionally, membership to the network is also open to sector / cluster coordinators, who are strongly encouraged to attend PSEA Network meetings in order to improve two-way coordination between sectors / clusters and the network and ensure that PSEA considerations are integrated in multi-sectoral programming.

PSEA in the Inter-Agency Programme cycle

In refugee contexts, in order to mainstream PSEA across the [Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\)](#) cycle, it is important to look at the full programming cycle, i.e. collecting information on PSEA through multi-sector needs assessments (MSNAs); developing PSEA indicators (both regionally and nationally); and informing the planning process and the information provided to RRP partners on the topic. Please also see the [Guidance on Reflecting PSEA in RRP](#)s (link accessible to UNHCR staff only).

In IDP contexts, integrating PSEA in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is critical to embed PSEA within the cluster system as a standard and integrated part of the humanitarian response and to ensure that PSEA activities are properly resourced. PSEA indicators should be integrated into the humanitarian needs assessments overseen by OCHA, as its findings shape the country-level Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The HNO is then used as a basis for the design of the HRP. Integrating PSEA in each cluster chapter reflects the importance of building strong relationships with each of the clusters. Please also refer to the [OCHA Guidance Note on Reflecting PSEA in the HRP](#).

Role of partners involved

- **Host government authorities:** The Government has the primary responsibility for the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Therefore, engagement of national and local governmental structures early on is essential for the success and sustainability of inter-agency coordination on PSEA. Without government support and buy-in, it will not be possible for the PSEA Network to undertake its roles and responsibilities. As SEA can also be perpetrated by government officials, it is important that the relevant authorities are included in initiatives for awareness-raising, capacity-building sessions, and risk assessment and mitigation as appropriate.
- **UN agencies, international and national NGOs:** It is important that agencies designate PSEA focal points who coordinate PSEA activities within their organization and actively engage in the PSEA Network. Based on their area of expertise, experience and available resources, such agencies may take on the co-chair role of the PSEA Network, contribute to the work of the PSEA Network, take lead on specific activities in coordination with other Network members, and ensure linkages with sectors / clusters to promote mainstreaming of PSEA.
- **Community-based organizations (CBOs) and community-based structures:** Community-based organizations and structures are often the bridge between affected communities and organizations. CBOs and community-based structures have a good understanding of the needs, views and situation of the community, and also often enjoy great trust within communities and can provide links between agencies and the

communities that they serve. Therefore, they are ideally situated to help identify relevant entry points to feedback and response mechanisms, communication channels for effective community outreach and awareness-raising, identify protection risk areas including SEA risks, and social and cultural dynamics that must be taken into account in designing appropriate and relevant prevention and response mechanisms. They also have responsibility to ensure PSEA in their own activities and projects, with the support of UNHCR and other larger organizations and PSEA Network as appropriate.

- **Forcibly displaced and stateless persons:** It is important that PSEA Networks closely engage with and work in partnership with affected communities. Consultations with girls, boys, women and men in affected communities, including those of diverse backgrounds and groups at heightened risk, to help to design and tailor PSEA messages, information campaigns, community outreach strategies, and feedback and response mechanisms to ensure that they are effective in reaching the community and are accessible. Furthermore, engaging the community in programme design, adjustment, implementation and monitoring of interventions will also allow more ownership by the community and sustainability.

Sector / cluster coordinators: Close engagement with sector / clusters is key to ensure that PSEA is mainstreamed across the emergency response, including integrating SEA prevention, risk mitigation and response assessment and mitigation of SEA risks in programming by sectors. To this end, sector / cluster coordinators are strongly encouraged to attend PSEA Network meetings, and the PSEA Network and PSEA Coordinator must maintain channels of communication with relevant sector working groups / clusters through the inter-sector / cluster coordination group and bilaterally where appropriate.

UNHCR's role and accountabilities

As noted above, UNHCR has leadership and coordination responsibilities in refugee situations, in line with its mandated accountabilities and reflected in the [Refugee Coordination Model \(RCM\)](#). For refugee emergencies, UNHCR therefore has the role to take the lead to establish (if one does not exist already) and coordinate the PSEA Network in the refugee response in accordance with the Refugee Coordination Model. It must also ensure that referral pathways and services are in place for the provision of needed assistance to SEA survivors, in line with a victim centred approach, through inclusion of SEA victims in GBV and child protection referral pathways. For non-refugee emergencies, UNHCR should be actively engaged in the PSEA Network, which may include co-chairing if appropriate or the situation so requires, depending on the operational context.

In accordance with the UN system-wide "[Guidance Note: Requirements and procedures for all United Nations entities on information on allegations of sexual exploitation and/or abuse related to United Nations staff and related personnel and implementing partner personnel with the most senior United Nations official in country](#)" dated 8 June 2023, as well as the "[UNHCR Internal Guidance Note to UNHCR Representatives on Sharing Incident Information on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse with Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators](#)" of June 2023 (links accessible to UNHCR staff only), UNHCR Representatives are also responsible to share information on SEA allegations related to its personnel and personnel of UNHCR funded partners with the Resident Coordinator (RC), Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC), Special Representatives of

the Secretary General (SRSG) and Heads of Mission (HoM), depending on the country context.

In addition to engagement in inter-agency PSEA efforts, UNHCR remains accountable to ensure that mechanisms and measures are in place to prevent and respond to SEA and to mitigate risks thereof throughout its programmes, while ensuring that a [victim-centred approach](#) is applied throughout all related processes and procedures. (Please refer to entry [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\)](#) for further details)

Senior level coordination responsibilities

While everyone has a responsibility to prevent and respond to PSEA, Senior Management has a particular coordination role at the strategic and leadership level – to promote a multi-functional approach to PSEA in inter-agency response; pool resources to enhance what’s being done; burden share; and identify what needs strengthening. Whether as Heads of Office, Sector / Cluster leads, or Inter-Agency Coordinators – their role is to cultivate a culture of collective responsibility, and create a space where members reflect honestly on SEA risk areas in their organisations and sector / cluster programming, seek support from others, raise concerns, acknowledge shortcomings and commit to agreed actions.

In refugee contexts, the PSEA Network reports directly to the Refugee Coordinator, who is also the UNHCR Representative. The Representative, therefore, has overall accountability and strategic oversight for PSEA inter-agency coordination within the refugee response.

3. Policies and guidelines

[UNHCR, 2023-2025 Strategy and Action Plan: Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abu...](#)

[Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Collective Responsibility](#)

4. Links

[UNHCR intranet page on SEA and sexual harassment and resources page \(accessible... Reflecting Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) in RRP \(access... Checklist on PSEA/SH for Representatives and Senior Managers \(accessible to UNH... Checklist for emergency deployees – PSEA/SH \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\) Generic ToR for PSEA in Refugee Emergencies \(PSEA Network, PSEA Coordinator\) \(a... Module 10: Inter-agency Coordination on PSEA \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\) UNHCR website: Tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment IASC PSEA website IASC PSEA resource library IASC Secretariat, Generic Terms of Reference of In-](#)

[country PSEA Network IASC, Deployment Package for PSEA Coordinators UN website: preventing sexual exploitation and abuse Interagency PSEA Community Outreach and Communication Fund UN Online course on PSEA \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\) UN Online course on PSEA - accessible to partners](#)

5. Main contacts

Office of the Senior Coordinator for Prevention of and Response to SEA / SH
(hqpseash@unhcr.org)