

# In case of conflict with colleagues or partners

13 March 2024

## Key points

- The United Nations and UNHCR prioritizes informal resolution methods within its internal justice system to minimize unnecessary litigation, favoring facilitated dialogue and mediation to swiftly address workplace disputes and alleviate the stress associated with formal legal processes
- Resolving workplace disputes between colleagues and partners is instrumental in managing reputational risk by promoting professionalism, preserving trust, mitigating reputational risks, and strengthening partnerships. It contributes to a positive organizational image and fosters a conducive environment for continued success and growth
- Managing workplace conflicts proactively by engaging in direct conversations, early intervention, and utilizing support mechanisms. The Ombudsperson and Mediator function in UNHCR plays a crucial role as a neutral entity, offering informal dispute resolution services and promoting peaceful working relations through ombudsing, mediation and facilitating discussions

## 1. Overview

The United Nations internal justice system places great emphasis on informal resolution options to avoid unnecessary litigation when possible. Informal resolution of workplace disputes through facilitated dialogue or mediation is usually quicker and spares the parties involved of stress of litigation.

Colleagues are encouraged to first try to resolve workplace conflicts themselves by addressing the situation early on, engaging in direct and honest conversations, participating in mediation, and utilizing the appropriate support mechanisms as needed.

In UNHCR, the Ombudsperson and Mediator function is the designated **neutral** entity to provide **independent** and **informal** resolution to workplace disputes. It has a vital role in **supporting**

**colleagues in preventing conflict** and **restoring** peaceful working relations and offers an **informal alternative** to the formal complaint-handling systems within UNHCR and the UN System of Administration of Justice. They support colleagues in identifying a range of appropriate options to resolve problems and facilitate discussions for all concerned and, wherever possible, help individuals to develop new ways to solve problems themselves, and if proper, mediate disputes between parties.

## 2. Relevance for emergency operations

Stress and anxiety are likely when dealing with emergencies. As such, workplace tensions and conflicts may arise, and when they do, it is crucially important that colleagues deal with the situation at the onset before the conflict escalates. In emergency situations, preventing and dealing effectively with conflict is crucial and leads to establishing a healthy working environment. These actions contribute to increased resiliency for the parties involved and the overall team and operation. Colleagues are encouraged to seek support from their supervisors and other local resources, as well as from the Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediator, who can provide guidance and mediation.

## 3. Main guidance

### Introduction

Effective 2009, the UN General Assembly introduced a new system for handling internal disputes and disciplinary matters. This change reinforces an independent and decentralized system consistent with the relevant rules of international law and the principles of the rule of law and due process to ensure respect for the rights and obligations of staff members and accountability of managers and staff members alike. Address the Conflict Promptly: Recognize and address the conflict early.

The revised system **encourages** the resolution of disputes through **informal means** before resorting to formal litigation.

For more information, please visit the [Office of Administration of Justice \(OAJ\)](#) website.

### The Internal Justice System

UNHCR uses an internal justice system as staff members are unable to file claims, including employment-related claims, against the Organization in national courts due to the privileges and immunities of UNHCR as an international organization. The internal justice system allows staff members to **address situations** where they feel that their **rights have been violated** and the rules of the Organization have not been respected. Staff at all levels have a right to recourse through the internal justice system.

The internal justice system places great emphasis on informal resolution options to avoid unnecessary litigation when possible. Informal resolution of workplace disputes through mediation is usually quicker and spares the parties involved the stress of a litigation. Pursuing

the matter informally first does not prevent staff members from bringing the matter to the formal system of justice later, if the relevant deadlines are respected. Informal resolution can be sought at any time during the formal appeals procedures.

In UNHCR, the Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediator is the designated neutral to mediate workplace conflicts. Moreover, it allows the conflicting parties to address the underlying issues to prevent disputes of a similar nature in the future.

### **Informal resolution of workplace conflicts and concerns**

Colleagues are encouraged to first try to resolve workplace conflicts themselves by addressing the situation early on, engaging in direct and honest conversations, participating in mediation, and utilizing the appropriate support mechanisms as needed.

Tips for having a direct and honest conversation with the conflicting party:

- Address the situation at the start of the conflict. If not addressed, conflicts tend to escalate and become unmanageable
- Prepare for the conversation by organizing your thoughts, using concrete examples, and avoid using accusatory or blaming words
- Consider the other's perspective, including how you may have contributed to the situation
- Work collaboratively towards a resolution and path forward.

If colleagues cannot engage in a direct conversation, they are encouraged to seek support from their supervisors, management, and other support mechanisms. Colleagues can also, at any time, seek the assistance of the Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediator.

### **Working together to find solutions: Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediator**

The Ombudsperson and Mediator function is the designated **neutral** entity that provides **independent** and **informal** resolution to workplace disputes within the UN Administration of Justice Office. Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediator (OOM) has a vital role in **supporting colleagues in preventing conflict** and **restoring** peaceful working relations. It offers an **informal alternative** to the formal complaint-handling systems within UNHCR, such as the Inspector-General's Office (IGO) and UN System of Administration of Justice.

The Ombudsperson's job is to **provide confidential, impartial, and independent services for the informal resolution of work-related problems and conflicts**. They assist colleagues in identifying a range of appropriate options to resolve problems and facilitate discussions for all concerned and, wherever possible, help individuals to develop new ways to solve problems themselves. They do not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or adjudicate issues for the Organization.

### **Guides personnel in conflict to:**

- analyze the problem
- identify a range of options
- explore the pros and cons of each option

- develop a clear understanding of any action necessary to implement the employee's selected option

### **Facilitate informal solutions to work-related problems and conflicts by:**

- coaching parties to solution
- conducting mediation
- facilitating training in conflict management
- identifying systemic issues rooted in UNHCR practices, policies, procedures and processes
- providing upward feedback with the Administration to facilitate improvements to systemic issues identified

### **Checklist**

- Address the Conflict Promptly: Recognize the conflict early and address it before it escalates.
- Seek Support if Needed: If direct conversation is challenging, seek support from supervisors, management, or other support mechanisms within the organization, including with the Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediator.

## **4. Policies and guidelines**

[UN Resolution, A/RES/62/228 - Administration of justice at the United Nations, 2007](#)

[SG Bulletin, SGB/2016-7 UNOMS Terms of Reference, 2016](#)

## **5. Learning and field practices**

Accessible to UNHCR staff only

[Office of the Ombudsperson and Mediator](#)

## **6. Main contacts**

Ombudsperson and Mediator at [Ombuds@unhcr.org](mailto:Ombuds@unhcr.org)

# Capacity Building for Emergencies

05 January 2024

## Key points

- Emergency learning usually takes place before an emergency occurs, as part of emergency capacity building and emergency preparedness
- Ad hoc learning is available to staff working in emergencies
- Emergency Learning is available in different forms: online self-learning , face-to-face workshops, and online webinars
- This Emergency Handbook is the primary tool for guidance in emergencies
- Establish an induction facilitators team and seek GLC support where necessary.

## 1. Overview

This entry provides an overview of UNHCR Emergency Capacity Building initiatives and emergency learning opportunities. It gives guidance on target participants, availability, and timing, for individuals, country operations and regions. The links to UNHCR corporate emergency preparedness are also explained.

## 2. Relevance for emergency operations

Ideally, emergency capacity building and learning takes place before the onset of a humanitarian emergency. UNHCR corporate emergency trainings are not linked to emergency activation and take place as preparedness measures on a regular basis.

However, unpredictability is part of the nature of emergencies. Knowledge, skills and expertise gaps may become apparent at the onset of an emergency. Often new workforce is recruited, who may not have had the opportunity to participate in emergency trainings. For these situations ad hoc solutions are outlined below.

## 3. Main guidance

a) Learning as part of corporate emergency preparedness and DESS emergency deployment rosters

The Emergency Capacity Development Unit (ECDU) in the Division for Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) organizes the following corporate emergency trainings:

- **Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM):** Prepares active Emergency Response Team roster members (G6 to P4) for emergency missions. Calls for applications are shared through UNHCR corporate Broadcast emails.
- **Senior Emergency Leadership Program (SELP):** Prepares Senior Corporate Emergency Roster (SCER) members (from P4 eligible to apply to P5 positions onwards) for emergency missions. A call for applications is shared through UNHCR corporate Broadcast emails.
- **Situational Emergency Training (SET):** Country operations/ regions that face high risk(s) of a new or escalated emergency should contact DESS as early as possible to explore organizing a SET as part of their emergency preparedness actions.
- **Emergency Team Leadership Program (ETLP):** The ETLP builds interagency leadership capacity for emergency response. Participants in the ETLP include Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) UN member organizations and UN partner NGOs involved in disaster and humanitarian response. A few slots are available for UNHCR staff. Participation is through nomination in response to a call for applications issued twice a year.

Thematic Emergency Management Trainings:

- **Supply:** Designed to equip supply practitioners with the skills necessary for a responsive, consistent, and agile emergency capacity in a humanitarian context. UNHCR staff and external partners engage in a gamified and immersive five-day simulation workshop, focusing on refining critical technical and soft skills for emergency supply management. Organized by the Global Learning and Development Centre (GLDC), participation in the workshop is by nomination in response to a call for applications issued once a year.
- The Digital Identity and Registration Section (DIRS) in the Global Data Service (GDS) organizes the **Emergency Registration Learning Programme (ERLP)**, which prepares members on the Registration functional Roster for emergency mission.
- The Operational Data Systems and Support Section ((ODSSS) in the Global Data Service (GDS) organizes the **Training on Information Management in Emergencies (TIME)**. TIME is a weeklong training and simulation for Information Management Officers (IMOs) who are selected for the Emergency Response Team (ERT) roster.
- The Partnership and Coordination Service in the Division of External Relations (DER) offers the **Inter-Agency Coordination Course:** This interactive self-study is available to all UNHCR personnel on Workday and prepares learners to exert their functions more effectively in inter-agency coordination settings. The course is compulsory for members of the annual Emergency Roster for Inter-Agency Coordination ahead of the roster workshop. **Workshop on Inter-Agency Coordination:** Prepares members of the Emergency Roster for Inter Agency Coordination for emergency missions. A call for applications by personnel from NO to P5 is sent once a year through the UNHCR Broadcast.

#### b) Learning during emergency

All UNHCR workforce are required to complete the [mandatory trainings](#) (accessible to UNHCR staff only) below within the first three months of joining UNHCR. This also applies to workforce recruited during/for an emergency. The trainings are accessible to staff in Workday.

- BSAFE
- UN Programme on The Prevention Of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Of Authority
- Protection Induction Programme
- Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)
- ICT Information Security Awareness Training (InfoSec)
- Fundamentals of Fraud and Corruption Awareness

The [ERT Baseline Learning Package \(ERT BLP\)](#) (accessible to UNHCR staff only) is a series of short e-learning aimed at transferring critical knowledge in emergency management to colleagues selected to join the Emergency Response Team (ERT). All ERTs must complete the ERT BLP before attending the Workshop on Emergency Management. The Baseline Package is also available to the entire UNHCR workforce in Workday through self-enrollment.

Further **e-Learnings** on a wide variety of topics is available for UNHCR staff in Workday. If managers in emergencies assess significant knowledge gaps, it is recommended that concerned staff complete selected online learning during the emergency. Managers can create a list of required learning to share with the workforce in an emergency operation. The ECDU is available to support selecting eLearning and to create a list of recommended learnings.

It is the responsibility of managers to provide **guidance, coaching, work shadow opportunities and on the job training** to staff under their supervision. This is even more important during emergencies, where quick ad hoc learning solutions need to be found to bring all colleague up to speed for the emergency response. Managers should pay attention to the different capacities of the colleagues under their supervision and ensure team members share knowledge and learn from each other.

Should managers in an emergency operation notice that a significant number of workforce members is lacking in skills and capabilities to effectively respond to an emergency, ECDU can exceptionally facilitate an emergency webinar to build immediate capacity among the team. Please note, the webinar should not take time away from the operation's emergency response. If management would like to explore this possibility, please contact ECDU.

## 4. Links

[ERT Baseline Learning Package \(ERT BLP\) \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\) UNHCR intranet: Emergency Learning \(accessible to UNHCR staff only\)](#)

## 5. Main contacts

Requests for emergency training support should be directed via the concerned Regional Bureau to the Emergency Capacity Development Unit (ECDU) mailbox in the Division for Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS): [hqemfscap@unhcr.org](mailto:hqemfscap@unhcr.org)

# Requesting service packages from standby partners

22 September 2023

## Key points

- Emergency standby partners are able to deploy Service Packages (set of equipment, usually supported by deployees to manage or install it).
- The most frequently used Service Package is the 'base camp', a fully equipped deep field staff accommodation and office solution, as interim solution until more sustainable solutions are identified.
- The availability of a service package will depend on the standby partner's funding as well as the availability of the required equipment and staffing.
- Should you identify a need for a Service Package, contact the Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnerships Section (EPDPS) in the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) @ [hqdeploy@unhcr.org](mailto:hqdeploy@unhcr.org), keeping the Senior Occupational Safety Officer in copy.

## 1. Overview

In order to improve the efficiency and predictability of emergency response, UNHCR concluded a number of standby partnership agreements with Government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations whose specific expertise and capacity complement UNHCR's internal emergency and surge capacity. Emergency standby partners are organizations or entities that maintain a capacity of personnel or equipment on standby, which can be rapidly deployed upon request, to enhance UNHCR's capacity to respond to humanitarian crises. UNHCR's emergency standby partners offer two kinds of services: deployment of personnel and service packages.

A service package is a pre-defined set of operational support equipment that, upon request and mutual agreement between UNHCR and a standby partner. They often include the deployment of a dedicated support team that helps to set up the Service Package and train UNHCR staff on its use. Examples of Service Packages include light base camps, base camps, prefabricated facilities, accommodation and office space, as well as information and communications

technology (ICT) modules.

The following entry covers Service Packages only. For more details on the deployment of standby personnel, please refer to the dedicated entry on standby partners available [here](#).

## 2. Relevance for emergency operations

Service Packages can be requested from UNHCR's emergency standby partners when UNHCR faces one of more of the following situations:

- UNHCR lacks the capacity to provide a particular technical service;
- The demand for a service exceeds the capacity of UNHCR's partners in the field;
- UNHCR is unable to meet the demand for a service at short notice.

The availability of a service package will depend on the standby partner's funding (taking into account the partner's geographic or thematic priorities), as well as the availability of the required equipment and staffing. Additionally, while delivery timelines are outlined below, such Service Packages can often take longer to be delivered, depending on factors linked to operational contexts (availability of land, customs clearance process, building security fencing, etc.) or the partner's capacity (availability of specific items).

## 3. Main guidance

A Service Package is a pre-defined set of operational support equipment that, upon request and mutual agreement between UNHCR emergency operation and a Standby Partner, is deployed to a country. Service Packages often include the deployment of a dedicated support team that helps to install the equipment and train UNHCR workforce on its use.

Service Packages usually consist of:

- Light Base Camps: tented facilities to provide short-term and rudimentary working and living conditions in emergency operations (Lifespan: 2-8 weeks);
- Base Camps: tented facilities of high quality that provide comprehensive offices and accommodation, including all necessary equipment and services; it can also serve as a transit centre (Life span: 3-12 months);
- Prefabricated Facilities: to provide offices, accommodation, sanitary facilities, a kitchen, tools and equipment, water purification and distribution, power supply and distribution, etc. (Life span: 2-5 years).

Additionally, Service Packages can consist of:

- Accommodation and office space as part of longer-term construction projects;
- ICT modules, including systems to enhance connectivity for forcibly displaced and stateless people;

- Civil or mechanical engineering modules;
- Logistics support, including transport capacity, light vehicles, armoured vehicles, etc.

The legal framework for UNHCR's collaboration with Standby Partners is the Emergency Standby Partnership Agreement that UNHCR has signed with each Standby Partner, covering the deployment of standby personnel and Service Packages. Support staff included in a Service Package deployment follows the same terms and conditions applying to [Standby Partner deployees](#) (as outlined in the Emergency Standby Partnership Agreement). The specific terms and conditions for a particular Service Package deployment should be indicated in a Service Package Letter of Agreement (LoA). The LoA concerning a specific Service Package is signed directly between the Standby Partner and the Country Office. Such contributions are recorded as in-kind contributions to UNHCR. The in-kind contribution related to the Service Package is recorded at field level as part of the Country Office's Operations (OPS) budget, in coordination with the Division of External Relations (DER).

The following Emergency Standby Partners offer Service Packages to UNHCR operations:

- Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA)
- Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning of Norway (DCPEP)
- Emergency.lu, Luxembourg
- Ericsson Response
- German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)
- International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP): *An informal umbrella organization for multinational cooperation between governmental emergency management agencies active in the field of humanitarian assistance. The IHP member agencies are: The Crisis Management Centre Finland (CMC), Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB), The Luxembourg Rescue Services Agency (ASS Lux), Estonian Rescue Board (ERB), Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW).*
- Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)
- Veolia

More details on the Service Packages are available at the following link:

<http://ihp.nu/ihp-modules-experts>.

**Advice to request Service Packages:**

To request Service Packages, contact UNHCR DESS Emergency Service (Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnership Section / EPDPS - [hqdeploy@unhcr.org](mailto:hqdeploy@unhcr.org)) with the subject title "Request of Service Packages", copying the Regional Bureau covering your operation and the Senior Occupational Safety Officer of the Division of Human Resources. Requests should contain the following information:

- Type of Service Package required
- Brief description of emergency situations in country (displacement numbers, affected people's needs, UNHCR response)
- Area, location and expected duration of the operation

- A brief description of the UNHCR team on the ground
- A description of safety and security issues
- The required lead time for deployment

For the base camps specifically:

- Number of staff (to be accommodated in the Base Camp)
- Site specifications
- Types of facilities: office, accommodation, electricity, etc; and
- Need for security installations.

EPDPS/DESS contacts Standby Partners to seek their support. A Standby Partner who is interested to support may send a rapid technical field evaluation mission to the area concerned. If both an UNHCR operation and Partner agree, they proceed directly to transfer the Service Package. A Service package is formalized by a Letter of Agreement (LoA).

Service Package team members complete the same formalities and procedures as other individual standby partner deployees, except that Service Package teams may not be integrated in UNHCR's office structure and may have shorter deployments. Like individual deployees, service package team members may be accorded the status of 'UN expert on mission' - this depends on the LoA.

Service Packages are usually delivered to the capital initially. The CO will have to provide logistical support, including customs clearance processes, to the standby partner in country in order to secure land and ensure security/fencing in the case of base camps, as well as internal transport to the location.

## **Post emergency phase**

Service Packages such as base camps are usually deployed to provide support in the emergency phase, with a limited lifespan depending on weather conditions as well as wear and tear (from 2 weeks up to a year, as stated above). This capacity is deployed with the understanding that the Office will look at establishing more sustainable accommodation and/or office arrangements, should it be required. In exceptional circumstances, Service Packages can also consist in longer-term construction projects accommodation and office space in protracted crises contexts.

## **4. Links**

[Emergency Preparedness and Response Portal – Service Packages \(access for UNHCR... IHP Office and Accommodation Handbook IHP Service Packages](#)

## **5. Main contacts**

CONTACT To request a Service Package, contact the Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnerships Section (EPDPS) in the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) @ [hqdeploy@unhcr.org](mailto:hqdeploy@unhcr.org)

# In case of sexual assault during employment

03 May 2023

## Key points

- For Victim-survivors
  - Your safety and security are your first priority
  - Disclosing to a trusted person in your office will help us to put the appropriate support in place for you
  - You may need medical care and a PEP kit, including emergency contraception
  - Connect with the Victim Care Officer
- For managers and colleagues
  - Be compassionate, non-judgmental and respectful
  - Maintain confidentiality
  - Ensure access to medical care and PEP kit, including emergency contraception where needed
  - Follow the principles outlined in UNHCR's Policy on a Victim Centred Approach
  - Connect with the Victim Care Officer

## 1. Overview

A higher risk of violence, including sexual violence, exists in emergency responses. During emergency deployment, it is important everyone involved is familiar with and understands the principles of a victim centered approach in prevention and response to an incident of sexual assault of a colleague. Sexual assault comes under the UN definition of sexual harassment, for which there is a separate broader entry in this emergency handbook on others forms of sexual harassment. This entry relates specifically to UNHCR's response to sexual assault.

A sexual assault is any sexual act that happens without consent. It is a serious incident that can have a profound impact on an individual. Victim-survivors should know they are not alone and that the organization is here to support them in a way that takes their needs into consideration and puts them at the center of our response.

Managers and colleagues must be aware of how to respond appropriately and sensitively, in a manner consistent with UNHCR's Victim Centred Approach policy, if a member of our personnel experiences sexual assault. The initial response i.e., the way in which managers and other colleagues handle an incident is critical to reducing the risk of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), secondary victimization or other harmful outcomes for a victim-survivor's wellbeing.

Although managers and colleagues play a critical role, they are not alone in organizing or managing the response. It is important to connect with the [Victim Care Officer](#) as soon as possible for further guidance.

The below advice provides practical guidance in the circumstances of sexual assault in emergency deployment. The advice is differentiated depending on whether you are a victim-survivor of a sexual assault or a manager/colleague supporting someone following a sexual assault.

## 2. Main guidance

The recommendations are separated into two categories:

- For victims-survivors of sexual assault
- For managers or a colleague of a member of personnel who has experienced sexual assault

Please select the heading that best meets your need.

### **A) I am a victim-survivor of sexual assault**

Emergency deployments can be challenging environments. We find ourselves outside of our comfort zone, familiar context and environment, away from family, friends and familiar colleagues. In such an environment like this, it isn't easy to know where to turn for support when you find yourself in a crisis or a difficult situation.

If you experience sexual assault:

#### 1. Get yourself to a place of safety.

Your physical wellbeing is paramount. For support to ensure your physical safety and security you can contact your local Field Security Advisor, who will observe confidentiality, or use the Electronic Travel Advisory (ETA) App on your phone. Managers, colleagues and friends can also support you. You should contact the person you are comfortable with.

#### 2. Disclose your experience

You may find it difficult to share your experience with anyone else. It is your experience to choose to disclose or not to disclose. However, sharing what happened to you with a trusted person within UNHCR will allow us to respond in an appropriate way to support you and to aid your recovery.

### 3. Medical Care

You may need medical treatment. The Security colleagues or your manager will be able to locate the Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kit in your office which you can take with you to the Medical clinic in case they do not have one available. Ask the doctor to collect forensic evidence as you may need this later.

Post Exposure Preventive (PEP) Treatment is an emergency medical response for individuals exposed to the HIV virus. PEP Treatment consists of medication, laboratory tests and counselling as well as emergency contraception. PEP Treatment must be initiated within hours of possible HIV exposure and must continue for a period of approximately four weeks. For information about the efficacy of the treatment and associated risks please contact [UNHCR's Medical Service](#).

### 4. Contact the Victim Care Officer

The [Victim Care Officer](#) provides psychosocial support, guidance and will coordinate with colleagues in order to ensure that the varied support you need - from physical safety concerns, to psychological wellbeing, to protection from retaliation to justice and resolution as well as your return to work are adequately met.

UNHCR has a [Victim Centred Approach Policy](#), which outlines the approach the organization should take when responding to Sexual Misconduct. The policy was designed in consultation with victim-survivors and based on published research to ensure we respond in a way that is appropriate. We want to support you in a manner that works for you. The following outlines how the principles of our Victim Centred Approach policy will be applied in cases of sexual assault.

#### *Wellbeing and security first*

In order to help you regain your sense of safety we will:

- Help to get you to an immediate safe space
- Help you get medical attention
- Connect you to the appropriate services to meet your immediate needs

This will be done collaboratively with you depending on your expressed needs and preferences. We will ask whether you feel safe currently and if not, where would be a safe space for you?

In an unfamiliar environment, it might be difficult to know where a safe place might be, which is why it is important to connect with Field Security colleagues. Field Security Services can support you in getting to a place of safety and link you to the appropriate support services such as medical support and the [Victim Care Officer](#) for psychosocial support. They will also be aware of the available additional support in your location. If you do not feel comfortable with the local Field Security colleague, for example for reasons relating to gender, you can ask for someone of a different gender to be also present during your interactions. We will consult with you to ensure that the people around you are ones that make you feel safe and secure. If this is not the case then we will try to get you to be with people who make you feel safe and secure.

The [Victim Care Officer](#)- a clinical psychologist- provides specialist psychosocial support to

victim-survivors in all UNHCR locations and is based in Geneva. However, if you would like psychosocial support face to face, and you have a Staff Counsellor available in your location, you may wish to contact them.

### *Assistance and support*

Speaking with the Victim Care Officer is completely confidential.

The Victim Care Officer will

- Offer you confidential psychosocial support, guidance and accompaniment
- Coordinate the response and support offered by UNHCR
- If you agree, support you to get local support (medical or psychosocial) (available support will depend on your location)

### *Non-discrimination*

We will ask what you need so we don't make inappropriate assumptions based on any of on your characteristics e.g., race, skin colour, sexual orientation, gender identity, language.

### *End to end holistic approach*

- We will be mindful of how we engage with you from the first time we learn of your sexual assault.
- The Victim Care Officer will accompany you through administrative process until you both agree the support is no longer needed.

### *Give back a measure of control to the extent possible*

- We will aim not to do things **to** you but rather to do things **with** you.
- We will do our best to share information with you, so you are aware of what is happening.
- We will seek your consent whenever possible before taking actions.
- We will consult with you and bring you into decision-making processes as much as possible and where appropriate.
- We will not overwhelm you. If you don't feel able to make decisions, then a core group of colleagues (Head of Office/Representative, Victim Care Officer, Security, Medical Doctor and Staff Counsellor) might need to make decisions in your best interest.

### *Confidentiality and informed consent*

Maintaining confidentiality is an important part of maintaining trust. It is also vital to help you to regain your sense of trust.

- We will aim not to disclose information without your consent whenever possible.
- We will work to provide services whilst doing our best to maintain confidentiality.
  - In some cases, we can seek advice or guidance without sharing your name and personal information.
  - If there is a need to share information to safeguard your wellbeing or in order to link you with needed services, we will do our best to let you know in advance.

- We will share only needed information and make sure it is proportionate and related to the service being provided i.e not all your personal information, rather only select information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- We will endeavor to get your informed consent before taking actions
- We will not assume to know what is best for you.

### *Information*

#### Information gathering

- We will think carefully about the information we ask you and how we ask it
- We will only ask for necessary information
- We will be mindful of when and how we ask for information
- We will be mindful of whether we are the right person to ask you for this information
- We will ask only the basic amount of information needed to best support you.

#### Information provision

- We will also think carefully about the information we share with you.
- We will do our best to be transparent
- We will be upfront and honest about what we can and cannot do
- We will keep you regularly updated
- In most cases you will be provided with updates about issues that relate to your situation by the Victim Care Officer.

### *Ask and listen*

- We will only ask questions that are relevant to the immediate situation to provide you with the appropriate support.
- We will listen to you to understand your needs to support you appropriately.
- We will try to establish a safe space so that you are able to ask any questions, request updates or clarification.
- We will be available to listen and to make sure you feel heard.

### *Due Process*

What happened to you may need to be reported to UNHCR's Inspector General's Office and/ or externally to local authorities.

## **B) If you are a manager or a colleague of a member of personnel who has experienced sexual assault**

Emergency deployments can be challenging and we often find ourselves relying on our colleagues more as we are outside of our comfort zone. Managers and colleagues can both play an important role during a crisis or difficult situation. If you witness a sexual assault or if someone discloses an experience of sexual assault to you, then be mindful of the principles of

the

[Victim Centred Approach Policy](#). The policy was designed in consultation with victim-survivors and is based on published research on what victim-survivors view as positive and negative experiences following a disclosure.

As a manager or colleague in an emergency context, an individual has either come to you directly to disclose a sexual assault or you may have been made aware of an incident of sexual assault. In both circumstances please:

1. use the principles outlined below to provide appropriate support
2. contact the [Victim Care Officer](#) for specific guidance in the situation

If the victim-survivor has disclosed to you, remember they chose to do so because

- They need support
- They trust you
- They feel safe with you
- They had no one else to turn to

It is important that the actions you take (or don't take) lives up to and helps to maintain that trust. Above all be kind, respectful and considerate. The first experience of disclosure for a victim-survivor should be a positive one, as it will likely impact the next decisions the victim-survivor/survivor makes. Some of the harmful actions that victim-survivors/survivors encounter are from people who are trying to help but take thoughtless or harmful actions. This can often stem from an anxiety to show that you care or are taking the situation seriously. However, you can best demonstrate care by showing empathy and listening to the victim-survivor. The best way to maintain the trust of a victim-survivor-survivor is to be honest and transparent with them. Let them know if you need to speak to someone for their safety or to get them the right support. You do not need to have all the answers. Reach out to the [Victim Care Officer](#) who can guide you in your response.

If the victim-survivor has not disclosed the incident directly to you, remember

- you do not need to speak with the victim-survivor directly
- follow the lead of the victim-survivor

It is OK for their main contact to be someone else that the victim-survivor is comfortable with, as long as you are helping to ensure that the affected colleague(s) is receiving the necessary support.

The following outlines actions which managers and colleagues can take in line with the Victim-survivor Centred Approach Policy

Wellbeing and security first

Consider the victim-survivor/survivors physical and psychological safety.

- Are they in a safe space? If not, where would be a safe space and what is the safest way to

get them there?

- Do they have access to medical attention as well as a PEP kit and emergency contraception?
- Do they have access to psychosocial support?
- Are they surrounded by people that make them feel safe and secure? If not, who might make them feel safe and secure and how can you get them to be with these people?

When considering physical and psychological safety, be transparent and collaborative with the victim-survivor. Let them know what is happening and ask them for their input. Don't assume you know best.

#### Assistance and support

The [Victim Care Officer](#) provides psychosocial support, advice, guidance and accompaniment to individuals who have had an experience of sexual assault. Let the victim-survivor know about this dedicated resource and connect them to the Victim Care Officer. If they do not consent, contact the Victim Care Officer yourself (without disclosing the identity of the victim-survivor for guidance on how you can provide assistance and support to the victim-survivor.

- Connect the victim-survivor to the Victim Care Officer if they agree
- Connect the victim-survivor to local medical support if they agree
- Let the victim-survivor know that additional psychosocial support can be sought through your local or regional Staff Counsellor

#### Non-discrimination

Don't make assumptions or judgements based on victim-survivor's characteristics e.g. race, skin colour, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, health or other status.

- Do your best to accommodate the needs of the individual before you. The best way to do that is to ask what they need so that you don't make inappropriate assumptions.

#### End to end holistic approach

As one of the first responders, your initial encounter will help with the victim-survivor's recovery. Follow the principles of [psychological first aid \(PFA\)](#), The Pocket Guide found on pages 53/54 of the document gives a quick summary. Connect the victim-survivor with the Victim Care Officer so that all other necessary services (medical, administrative, psychosocial, judicial) are coordinated on behalf of the victim-survivor.

#### Give back a measure of control to the extent possible

This means we don't want to do things **to** the victim-survivor but rather we want to do things **with** them. Do your best to share information with the victim-survivor so they are aware of what is happening. Seek their consent whenever possible before taking actions. Let them be part of the decision-making process as much as possible.

At the same time, it is important to not overwhelm the victim-survivor. If they are not in a state to make sound decisions then the Victim Care Officer can consult with a core group of colleagues (Head of Office/Representative, Victim Care Officer, Security, Medical Doctor and Staff Counselor) who may need to make collective decisions in the best interest of the victim-survivor.

## Confidentiality and informed consent

Maintaining confidentiality is an important part of maintaining trust. Do not disclose information without the victim-survivor's consent whenever possible. If you need to share information for their wellbeing or in order to link them with needed services let the victim-survivor know in advance.

Remember you can often seek advice or guidance without sharing the name and personal information about the victim-survivor.

When you share information, only share what is needed by that person. Not everyone needs to know all the details of the incident. If someone has a specific role to play in responding to the incident, they just need to know enough information to provide their particular service. If you are unsure about the level of information to share, you can ask them what information they need to know.

Get informed consent from the victim-survivor before taking actions. Don't assume you know what is best for them. If there are certain actions you must take, then inform the victim-survivor of these actions and the reasons you need to take such actions.

## Information

### Information gathering

- Think carefully about the information you are asking of the victim-survivor and how you are asking it.
  - Is it necessary?
  - Is this the right time to ask it?
  - Are you the right person to ask it?
- Only ask the basic amount of information you need to best support them.

### Information provision

- Think about the information you share with the victim-survivor.
  - Be transparent
  - Be honest about what you can and cannot do
  - Keep them regularly updated

It is important to provide the victim-survivor with updates about issues that relate to their situation. In most cases, this will be carried out by the Victim Care Officer. However, if the victim-survivor asks you for information, please update them if you are able to do so.

## Ask and listen

Only ask questions that are relevant to the immediate situation. Ask the victim-survivor as little as possible such as: Where shall I take you to feel more safe? Are you injured? (to arrange medical care) what do you need? Is there anyone you want to call or inform?

Try to listen to the victim-survivor carefully. Avoid interrupting them or filling silences with questions or comments.

#### Due Process

- Do not investigate or try to establish the facts.
- What happened may need to be reported to UNHCR's Inspector General's Office and/or externally to local authorities. Contact the Victim Care Officer for advice.

### **Sexual Assault- Checklist for Managers**

- Get the victim-survivor to a place of safety
- Ensure confidentiality
- Ask the victim-survivor as little as possible. Only ask what is necessary to address the immediate situation e.g where shall I take you to feel more safe? Are you injured (to arrange medical care or provide PEP kit and emergency contraception) what do you need? Is there anyone you want to call or inform?
- Connect with security colleagues for advice.
- Connect victim-survivor to the Victim Care Officer.
- Contact the Victim Care Officer yourself for further guidance.

## **3. Policies and guidelines**

The main document that guides our response to sexual assault in an emergency setting is the [Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach in UNHCR's response to Sexual Misconduct](#). We follow the principle of Do No Harm.

Psychological First Aid (PFA) principles are also helpful in supporting someone following a traumatic incident. You can have a look at [Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers](#) for further tips on PFA. It is a document that was produced by WHO but endorsed by UNHCR. The Pocket Guide found on pages 53/54 of the document gives a quick summary

## Annexes

[Sexual Assault - Checklist for Managers](#)

[WHO, Psychological First Aid](#)

[Psychological First Aid Checklist](#)

## 4. Links

[Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment](#)

## 5. Main contacts

For safety and security concerns contact your local **Field Security Service**

UNHCR Field Safety Section (FSS), Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS). At: [HQFS00@unhcr.org](mailto:HQFS00@unhcr.org)

For medical advice contact the **Medical Service** 24/7 MEDICAL SECTION EMERGENCY CONTACT: +41227397399

For psychosocial support, advice and guidance about a sexual assault, please contact the **Victim Care Officer**:

Dr Zuhura Mahamed

[mahamed@unhcr.org](mailto:mahamed@unhcr.org); Mobile +41 79 337 7940

To report a sexual assault to UNHCR's Investigation Service, please contact: **Inspector General's Office**: [inspector@unhcr.org](mailto:inspector@unhcr.org)

# Requesting deployments from emergency standby partners

12 October 2023

## Key points

- UNHCR has agreements with several emergency standby partners that are able to deploy individual experts in a wide range of functions for an average of 6 months (with possible extension), often supported by the partners' own resources (considered as in-kind contribution).
- Country operations under emergency declarations (L1, L2, L3), or at high / medium risks of emergencies, and/or covered by IASC systemwide Scale-up, can request deployments from standby partners.
- Country operations and HQ divisions can also request deployment from standby partners if they require specific profiles or expertise that are not internally available to pursue organizational strategic priorities.
- Deployment requests from standby partners need to include TORs endorsed by the Representative. There may be cases where the partners do not have funds / suitable candidates to support.
- To request a deployment from Standby Partners, contact the Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnerships Section (EPDPS) in the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS).

## 1. Overview

In order to improve the efficiency and predictability of emergency response, UNHCR concluded a number of standby partnership agreements with Government agencies, NGOs, and private sector organizations whose specific expertise and capacity complement UNHCR's internal emergency and surge capacity. Emergency standby partners are organizations or entities that maintain a capacity of personnel or equipment on standby, which can be rapidly deployed upon request, to enhance UNHCR's capacity to respond to humanitarian crises. UNHCR's emergency standby partners offer two kinds of services: deployment of personnel and Service Packages.

Through the deployment of standby personnel, qualified deployees are made available quickly for short periods, often at no cost to UNHCR. Emergency Standby Partners can provide a wide range of skills, such as technical experts (in shelter, site planning, WASH, energy & environment,

etc.); protection specialists (child protection, gender-based violence, accountability to affected populations etc.), or have skills in cluster/sector coordination or information management.

The following entry covers the deployment of standby personnel. For detailed information on [internal deployment mechanisms](#). For detailed information on the deployment of [Service Packages](#).

## 2. Relevance for emergency operations

The deployment of standby personnel is meant to temporarily complement UNHCR staffing, especially in emergency operations. Therefore, it should be used strategically and should not be used to fill regular staffing gaps.

The possibility to secure a standby deployment depends on the standby partner's funding (Standby Partners usually have their own geographic or thematic priorities), as well as the availability of suitable roster members. It usually takes several weeks to secure such deployments, up to 8 weeks.

## 3. Main guidance

### Requesting Deployments from Standby Partners

In general, standby deployments can be requested when UNHCR operations meet one or more of the following criteria:

- UNHCR operations need emergency staffing that are not internally available, and are in one or more of the following situations:
  - (i) under UNHCR's declared emergencies (Level 1/2/3)
  - (ii) rated at high or medium risk of emergencies (ERM risk register)
  - (iii) covered by [IASC systemwide Scale-Up](#)
- UNHCR operations and HQ divisions require specific profiles or expertise that are not internally available to pursue organizational strategic priorities.

Standby partner deployment requests from declared emergency operations will be prioritized among all the requests. The average duration of the standby deployment is 6 months, with possible extension. The deployment duration may be shorter (e.g. 3 months) in certain circumstances, depending on the needs on the ground.

UNHCR currently has Standby Partnership Agreements with [20 Standby Partners](#) (access to UNHCR staff only).

They are the following:

- CANADEM, International Civilian Response Corps, Canada
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA)
- Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning of Norway (DCPEP)
- Dutch Surge Support, Netherlands Enterprise Agency (DSS Water)
- Emergency.lu, Luxembourg
- Ericsson Response
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
- German Center for Peace Operations (ZIF)
- German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)
- International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP)
- iMMAP Inc.
- Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Norwegian Refugee Council, including NORCAP (NRC)
- RedR Australia
- Save the Children Norway
- Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)
- Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)
- Veolia
- White Helmets Commission

The Standby Partner deployees are considered as 'UN expert on mission' and support emergency response within the UNHCR's office structure in the country.

If a Standby Partner is not able to fully fund a deployment, costs may be covered by the requesting UNHCR operation under a Reimbursable Loan Arrangement (RLA) on an exceptional basis. In this case, Standby Partners would submit a budget to be confirmed by the UNHCR operation, prompting the UNHCR operation to prepare a Letter of Agreement (LoA) that is to be signed by both parties. This modality can be used to cover the cost of an extension, should the partner not have funding available.

#### **Requesting an emergency deployment from Standby Partners:**

- Contact Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnerships Section (EPDPS)/DESS and the Regional Bureau. The request must be submitted to EPDPS/DESS with TORs and a Request Form endorsed/signed by the Representative, keeping the Regional Bureau in copy. The TORs should be provided in Word format, while the request form should be provided in PDF format.
- **Profile:** The **TORs** should be specific and realistic, in line with the timeframe of the deployment. It is recommended to avoid using standard job descriptions given the shorter and temporary nature of these deployments. The more specific the TORs are, the higher the chance of identifying a candidate corresponding to the actual needs of the operation. UNHCR colleagues can find the TOR template as well as the Standby Partner request form on the [Emergency Response and Preparedness Portal](#) (access to UNHCR staff only).
- **Grade:** Given that the majority of Standby Partner roster members are at **P3** or **P4** levels, it is generally recommended to avoid requesting junior experts at P2 level.
- **Feasibility and timeframe:** Succeeding in securing Standby Partner deployments

depends on several factors, including the availability of funding on the Partner's side (often reflecting the partner's geographic or thematic priorities), as well as the availability of a suitable candidate in the Standby Partner's roster. Some profiles can be particularly hard to find, such as a combination of technical experts with a specific language requirement (e.g. Arabic, French or Spanish). The time it takes to secure a deployment varies. It may take from 6 to 8 weeks, depending on the context, profile and the partner. It is thus important for the operation to consider alternative staffing solution from the onset should the deployment request not be successful, especially in the emergency phase or if the need is urgent.

- **Administration:** The Standby Partner Agency is responsible for the arrangement and payment of most administrative matters related to the employment cost including salary, daily subsistence allowance (DSA) and any other benefits. UNHCR is responsible for covering the cost of internal travel (excluding DSA) and travel to the designated Rest and Recuperation (R&R) location. More details on the administration of the deployment of standby personnel are available in the Standby Partners Deployments Information Note available on the [Emergency Response and Preparedness Portal](#) (access to UNHCR staff only).

## Post emergency phase

Emergency operations may request deployments from Standby Partners at any time, during which they are covered by the funds associated with an emergency declaration (L1, L2 or L3). Standby Partner deployments can also provide support in the post-emergency phase as well as in protracted crises as long as the deployments are considered as UNHCR's strategic priorities and it does not have internally available human resources. The operations are encouraged to plan for mid and longer-term staffing requirements as soon as possible, including standby partner deployments.

## 4. Links

[Emergency Preparedness and Response Portal - Standby Partners \(access to UNHCR ...](#)

## 5. Main contacts

To request a standby partner deployment and/or Service Package, contact the Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnerships Section (EPDPS) in the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) @ [hqdeploy@unhcr.org](mailto:hqdeploy@unhcr.org)

# Requesting emergency deployments from

# UNHCR internal deployment mechanism

20 October 2023

## Key points

- Country operations under emergency declaration (L1, L2, L3) can request additional staff from UNHCR internal emergency deployment mechanisms. The roster members are trained and on call to be deployed to emergency operations at short notice
- First responder mechanisms of the Regional Bureaux and corporate missions from HQ divisions and other operations complement the global emergency deployment mechanisms
- Emergency deployment requests from the internal deployment mechanisms need to include TORs and to be endorsed by the Representative and the Regional Bureau
- To request an emergency deployment, contact the Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnerships Section (EPDPS) in the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS)

## 1. Overview

UNHCR is committed to deploying the right people to the right place, at the right time, to effectively respond to emergencies. In line with [UNHCR's Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response](#), at any point during an emergency declaration (L1, L2 or L3), country operation(s) may request deployments from internal and/or external (standby partners) deployment mechanisms to address increased or new humanitarian needs. This entry provides information on internal deployment mechanisms. For detailed information on external deployment [Requesting deployments from emergency standby partners](#).

If you are a UNHCR staff interested in applying for internal emergency deployment schemes, more information can be found in the [Frequently Asked Questions on Emergency roster membership and deployment](#).

## 2. Relevance for emergency operations

UNHCR maintains internal emergency deployment capacity through the following deployment schemes:

- DESS Emergency Surge Team;
- Emergency Response Team (ERT);
- Senior Corporate Emergency Roster (SCER);

- Emergency Functional Rosters.

UNHCR's internal emergency deployment mechanisms enable the organization to maintain 100-150 active roster members at any given time for eventual emergency deployments. First responder mechanisms of the Regional Bureaux and corporate missions from HQ divisions and other operations complement these global emergency deployment schemes.

DESS is responsible for managing UNHCR's internal emergency deployment schemes (DESS Emergency Surge Team, ERT and SCER), and jointly manages Emergency Functional Rosters with relevant HQ divisions.

### 3. Main guidance

This section first provides information on the types of UNHCR's internal emergency deployment mechanisms, followed by advice to the operations on how to request such emergency deployments.

#### 1. Emergency Surge Team of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS)

The DESS Emergency Surge Team is a multi-functional team of emergency professionals who can be deployed at short notice as a team or individually to provide emergency response coordination as well as specific technical support in declared emergencies. Deployments can also be sought exceptionally in other situations that are being considered for an emergency declaration or based on corporate priorities, as decided by the DESS Director.

#### 2. Emergency Rosters (managed by DESS)

Roster	Details	Deployment within (hours)	Roster commitment period (months)	Deployment duration (months)
Emergency Response Team (ERT)	Contains all profiles  Roster members participate in the Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM)	72	9	3

Senior Corporate Emergency Roster (SCER)	Profiles include emergency coordination, managerial functions	72	9	2 with possibility to extend
	Participation in the Senior Emergency Leadership Programme (SELP)			

### 3. Emergency Functional Rosters (managed jointly by DESS & the Divisions)

Emergency Functional Roster	Jointly managed by	Related profiles and trainings	Deployed within (hours)	Commitment period (months)	Deployment duration (months)
Information Management	DESS and Global Data Service (GDS)	Information Management  Training of Information Management in Emergencies (TIME)	72	12	3
Interagency Coordination	DESS and Partnership and Coordination Service (PCS) and clusters	Protection, CCCM, and Shelter Coordination  Interagency Coordination Course (IACC)	72	12	3

Registration	DESS and GDS	Registration, Operational Data Management (ODM) Emergency Registration Learning Programme (ERLP)	72	9	3
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### **Advice to request an emergency deployment from UNHCR internal emergency deployment mechanisms listed above**

- **Contact EPDPS/DESS.** The request must be endorsed by the Representative and the Regional Bureau, and accompanied by the following:
- **An official request** by email, containing the following information:
  - Mission location
  - Deployment duration
  - Language requirements
  - The budget code for travel and DSA: UNHCR internal Staff (ABOD), or International United Nations Volunteer (OPS)
  - Visa requirements
- **Terms of Reference (TORs):**
- UNHCR colleagues can find the TORs template on the [Emergency Response and Preparedness Portal](#) (accessible to UNHCR staff only).
- The TORs should include clear reporting lines (name of supervisor) and concrete deliverables.
- On request, DESS can provide generic or specific TORs for certain functions to be adapted for the operational context.
- **An existing welcome package** for new staff or a one pager on useful information on the following:
  - Security level/situation
  - Description of working conditions (availability of laptops and communication equipment, vehicles, internet access, etc.)
  - Description of living conditions (accommodation, electricity, food, water, etc.)
- **The DSA and travel costs of UNHCR internal emergency roster members are covered by the requesting operation.**
- Staff on the ERT, Emergency Functional Rosters or SCER rosters, as well as DESS Surge Team members are **mobilized within 72 hours** after receiving the official travel instructions from DESS, if visa is not required.
- When contemplating to request emergency deployees, ensure to provide required administrative support, such as office space, equipment, and accommodation, etc.
- **Plan from the onset** for mid/longer term staffing needs.

## Post emergency phase

While operations may request deployments from internal or external deployment schemes at any time during which they are covered by an emergency declaration (L1, L2 or L3), emergency operations are required to look at sustainable staffing options from the start, and to think about the medium- and longer-term staffing plans.

## 4. Links

[Emergency Preparedness and Response Portal – Emergency Deployment & Service Pac...](#)

## 5. Main contacts

CONTACT UNHCR Emergency Service (ES) / Emergency Preparedness, Deployments and Partnership Section / EPDPS at: [HQDEPLOY@unhcr.org](mailto:HQDEPLOY@unhcr.org)

# Departure Handover and Return

26 January 2024

## Key points

- DO consider which information will help your successor to step into the job seamlessly and continue the specific tasks that support the operation
- DO start compiling documents, emails, other information from arrival and fill in the handover template as you go, to avoid the handover becoming a burden at the end of the mission
- DO NOT schedule a handover briefing after departure but provide your contact details and offer to answer specific inquiries
- DO arrange a farewell gathering to mark the completion of your mission, to reflect on the experience and give thanks for the support
- DO anticipate your return home and to your regular duties and plan to take a break after departure to ease the transition

## 1. Overview

A well-organized handover ensures that work continues with minimal interruption after a change of incumbent. It is considered good practice to compile a file or folder with essential information such as background material, key documents and a list of contacts, for an incoming manager to understand the job, the specific concerns and to connect with the right people. This 'package' is especially valuable if the handover cannot be conducted in person, and it can be complemented well with a Teams call.

The period of handover is also the time to prepare for departure and re-entry into regular life and work. The transition from a high-pressure emergency assignment to the regular environment should not be neglected and given some thought to prevent taking the stress home.

This section compiles recommendations on handover and return after emergency missions.

## **2. Relevance for emergency operations**

In fast moving emergency operations, a structured handover is particularly important to avoid losing valuable time in the transition between two position incumbents. If there is no overlap of current and new incumbent, the information regarding the specific job must be transmitted through other means, foremost as paper and electronic files and documents. A file with key documents and reading material will benefit a successor in taking over the function quickly and support the emergency operation effectively from the start. Ideally, the handover file should be made available even before arrival, through email or by providing a link to an online folder, to save time and give a head start to the new incumbent. Offering a Teams call to answer specific questions will enhance the quality of the handover.

## **3. Main guidance**

### Handover

An organized handover is an essential part of a successful mission. It should not be seen as a one-time action but builds on continued, mutual interaction with team colleagues, including non-ERT and local colleagues who remain. In case there is no successor in an international capacity, the handover and transition will be to a national colleague (do not assume that the person already knows all details of the job you performed).

If a personal handover is feasible, schedule an introduction of the new incumbent through face-to-face meetings with internal and external counterparts. This effort will pay off since personal meetings are usually more effective in establishing rapport and trust.

If there is no overlap of incumbent and successor, the incumbent should inform internal and external counterparts personally or in writing of the incoming replacement with name (if known) and function ahead of the arrival and encourage welcome and support.

In case too many constraints prevent the compilation of a handover package, arrange at least a Teams call with the successor to brief him/her on essential points and contacts. Do so before departure. Experience shows that, once personnel departed and returned to their regular job,

other priorities take over and there is less time and inclination to provide a constructive handover.

### *Recommended content of a Handover Note*

- Description of duties during the mission (which may differ from the standard job description)
- ReadMe file with key documents, reference material
- List of recurring meetings to attend
- List of reporting duties and deadlines
- Note on projects and reports worked on and completed
- List of projects in progress, with status update and priorities, challenges, contacts of partners
- Recommendations
- Other observations, miscellaneous
- Contact list of external counterparts, stakeholders, with brief assessment if possible

The ReadMe file is best compiled as part of regular work by saving relevant documents and files in a dedicated online folder that can then be made accessible to a successor. Even in the digital age, physical files with originals or hard copies of key documents (e.g. signed contracts) are kept and should be included in the handover.

The same approach helps with producing the handover note. That way these tasks do not turn into an extra burden during the stressful departure period. Share the link to the ReadMe file and the handover note with your supervisor. A sample handover note template is annexed to this entry.

Last but not least, complete departure formalities and leave contact details (phone, email) for possible inquiries later on. Departure formalities include returning organization equipment (mobile phone and SIM card, laptop, radio, etc.) and signing off on the custodian sheet, submitting UN and other ID cards, and settling all payments and obligations.

### Return

While you are looking forward to returning home, the departure can be stressful and transition back to normal life challenging. It can be difficult to let go of the emergency operation, leave the team and end the commitment. The needs continue but must be addressed by someone else, and a successor taking over the job means we become aware that we are replaceable.

Mark the conclusion of your mission with an informal gathering of colleagues to reflect on your experience, your contribution to the operation (professional and personal) and to say goodbye and thank you. Inform also external counterparts of your departure and thank them for their cooperation and support.

In case of a mission to an E or D Duty Station, arrange post mission debrief with Psychosocial Wellbeing Section and schedule the mandatory CTO right after the mission to create a 'buffer zone' during which to take time for yourself and re-establish your normal routine. If not entitled to CTO, request AL to take a break.

You are looking forward to family and friends whose life continued in your absence. By staying in touch online, the gap created by the separation and distance can be bridged to some extent but perhaps not fully. Visualize your return, the expectations of your loved ones as well as your own. You will want to tell of your experience but not all of it may be suitable for sharing. Consider taking difficult things that cannot be shared with family and friends to a professional counsellor in order not to suffer a negative impact over time.

Colleagues will expect the 'old' you to return and to step back into your role fully and shoulder responsibilities as before. Ask colleagues and your supervisor for their consideration if you need time to re-adjust. If you find re-entry into your regular work and life difficult, it can be an indication to seek professional counselling and advice.

## Checklist

- Collect relevant job-related information and documents in an online folder during your deployment to serve as a ready-made handover file at the end of the mission.
- Consider which information helped you (or would have helped) on arrival when compiling the package for your successor.
- Review the handover note template for guidance on which kind of information to provide.
- If it is not possible to meet in person, arrange a Teams call to brief your successor, preferably before your own departure.
- Inform internal and external counterparts of your departure and ask for support to your successor.
- A farewell gathering to say thank you and goodbye contributes to the return preparation.
- Stay in contact with family and friends during your absence while bearing in mind that their life continues separately and reuniting may take some effort.

- Make sure to attend the post mission PWS de-brief and take the mandatory CTO break or request AL after emergency mission to ease the transition back to regular life.
- Seek professional support if you find it difficult to adjust after returning home.

## **4. Policies and guidelines**

### **Annexes**

[UNHCR, Handover Note template, 2024](#)

## **5. Main contacts**

[Psychosocial Wellbeing Section](#)

[Medical Section](#)