

Risk management tool

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# EMERGENCIES



## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The importance of preparedness is widely recognized within the humanitarian system. When humanitarian actors take steps to prepare for imminent humanitarian crises, they mitigate the impact and reduce human suffering and loss.

The objective of emergency preparedness is to ensure that the strategic direction and required support measures for an eventual emergency response are in place. Preparedness includes a context analysis, planning, gap identification, training and capacity building, partnership development and coordination, and resource pre-positioning. Good emergency preparedness lays the foundation for a predictable emergency response.

In this regard, the Emergency Service of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) has provided support to the ERM Service for the development of this tool, which is comprised of four main key risk events that could each result in an emergency declaration. Each event has examples of causes, consequences, and treatments. This tool is designed to assist multi-functional teams and managers in operations to ensure that emergency risks have been adequately identified and analysed, and relevant treatments, proactive and reactive, thoroughly considered and agreed upon. This list is not exhaustive, as UNHCR offices may identify additional risks, causes, consequences and treatments depending on their operational context. Comments can be addressed to [hqerm@unhcr.org](mailto:hqerm@unhcr.org), with a copy to [hqeshalep@unhcr.org](mailto:hqeshalep@unhcr.org).

## REMARKS

The tool does not constitute a comprehensive guidance. It should be read in conjunction with the [Emergency policy](#), [IDP Policy](#), the [Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies \(PPRE\)](#), the [Preparedness Package for IDP Emergencies \(PPIE\)](#) and other guidance on emergency preparedness. They help operations to implement [risk analysis](#) and monitoring, to prepare a scenario-based contingency plan and actions to undertake to get ready.

They are designed for use by UNHCR staff in coordination and collaboration with all relevant actors, including governments, the UN, NGOs, and other partners involved in preparing for a potential emergency situation.

As DESS is simplifying the tools for preparedness, this is an advisory resource for colleagues to better anticipate and manage emergency risks in the field operations.

## HOW TO USE THE TOOL?

Operations can select one or more risk event(s) that apply to their operation, as well as the applicable causes, consequences and treatments. Please note that proactive and reactive treatments can be applicable to one or several causes or consequences. All statements (cause, event, consequence and treatments) should be adjusted to the operational context.

The tool consists of four risk events that differ in nature and scope of UNHCR's engagement, therefore having different proactive and reactive treatments. Operations are encouraged to be specific when recording emergency risks and discouraged from merging two and more risks into a more general one as it will affect the specificity and monitoring of the proactive and reactive treatments.

In UNHCR, an emergency declaration is driven by two factors: the level of displacement and humanitarian needs; and the response capacity in country. Emergency risks belong to a category of contextual risks. UNHCR can do little to prevent the drivers of displacement. However, we can understand and monitor the likelihood of emergencies developing and it is also possible to mitigate their impact by increasing capacity and readiness to respond. Therefore, this tool considers both external and internal causal factors for each risk event.

Should the risk event materialize, it would trigger an emergency response, requiring a revision of the country risk register to incorporate any new risks and opportunities arising from the emergency response.

Emergencies which trigger displacements may create other risks which are beyond the scope of this document. A series of risk management tools on other high-risk areas have been developed and should be used in conjunction with this tool to tackle risks that emerge from emergency situations, such as increased likelihood of sexual exploitation and abuse or internal displacement situations. A full catalogue of these tools can be found [here](#).

## RESOURCE LINK

The [Preparedness Portal](#) is where relevant guidance and templates are published.

- A risk statement as reflected in the online Risk Management Tool consists of four parts, namely, a risk event, its causes, consequences and a name. A risk may have multiple causes and consequences but has only one risk event. The risk name should be succinct and clearly identify the risk. Risk treatments are actions to reduce the likelihood and impact of the risk. Proactive risk treatment actions are implemented before a risk event occurs, based on identified causes of the risk event. Reactive risk treatments are executed after a risk event occurs, thus addressing the consequences of the risk event occurring.

## Causes

External causes:

Causes for each risk are analysed in the specific context of the country of origin and hosting country. One or more of the following hazards in a neighbouring country may cause forced cross-border displacement:

- Armed conflict: Fighting between two or more parties that have standing military capacity and relatively strong hierarchical organizations. Conflict may be international or non-international
- (Inter) communal conflict: Fighting between groups that lack conventional military capacity and have relatively weak hierarchical organizations. Includes inter-ethnic conflict
- Electoral violence. Violence between political rivals that occurs due to election process
- Human rights violations. Significant increase in the number of serious violations of human rights, including persecution and systematic discrimination, committed by State or non-State actors controlling a territory
- Weak rule of law. Domestic laws and government policies and practices do not protect human rights, reducing the capacity of the State to prevent or halt violations and heightening the incidence of violations or the risk that violations will occur
- Political instability. Political instability can cause States to respond in ways that violate human rights

## Proactive treatments

Analyse and monitor the risk on a systematic basis in consultation with partners (early warning)

Brief UN country team and relevant partners on the refugee risk, set up a Refugee Coordination Model in consultation with the Government

Agree on legal status, reception, registration, and hosting arrangements for new arrivals with the Government

Establish a border monitoring system

Undertake initial assessment and mapping of partners, reception facilities, capacity to respond and where agreed, suitability of sites allocated to host refugees

Lead and coordinate an inter-agency scenario-based contingency planning, jointly with the Government

Work on a supply strategy in support of the contingency plan, including on prepositioning if necessary

Where applicable, undertake [CBI preparedness](#). Lead inter-agency cash working group if exists and contribute with technical inputs

Work to strengthen the emergency response capacity of staff, government, partners, local and national organizations.

Anticipate requests for deployment of personnel with the required profiles (e.g. child protection, SGBV, technical sectors, etc.)

## Consequences

Failure to provide basic, life-saving assistance in a timely manner

Protection needs exacerbated (including potential instances of SEA) and inadequately addressed by UNHCR and partners

Internal control mechanisms overwhelmed

Reputational damage to UNHCR

Occupational health and safety of UNHCR and partner personnel may be overlooked

In addition to these consequences, emergencies can increase the likelihood and impact of a range of other risks that UNHCR normally faces. In some areas such as SEA, resettlement and complementary pathways, CBI, implementing with partners, procurement and others, similar risk management tools are available that could be used in conjunction with this one to identify other potential consequences. A full catalogue of these tools can be found [here](#)

## Reactive treatments

The protection and humanitarian needs cannot be met with the in-country response capacity, requiring the activation of exceptional procedures and measures:

Activate contingency plan along with all the necessary surge measures.

Request activation of internal emergency (Level 2 or Level 3 depending on the scale of displacement and response capacity in country)

In coordination and with the support of the Regional Bureau, mobilize the needed resources for an immediate surge:

- Human (deployments, fast track)
- Financial (emergency reserve, appeals)
- Material (CRIs, global stockpiles)

Design and launch a country Refugee Response Plan (RRP) in coordination with the Government and partners

Where you have identified relevant consequences from other risk management tools (available [here](#)), those tool also contain corresponding reactive treatments that could be included in your risk register

\*This also includes situations when asylum-seekers and refugees are impacted by armed conflict in the country of asylum and are displaced again or returned

### Causes

- Impunity. Any situation in which perpetrators of crimes enjoy impunity, or in which victims (including groups) are unable to obtain reparation for crimes and violations against them, is a hazard because impunity and lack of redress increase the likelihood of future violations
- Sudden and major deterioration of asylum conditions expected to result in significant movements of refugees and asylum-seekers and increase in humanitarian needs (e.g. due to premature cessation of status, policy changes, changes in Government, xenophobic policies etc.)

Internal causes:

The displacement scenario is expected to exceed the response capacity of the host country, partners and UNHCR, if:

- Insufficient financial resources
- Insufficient core relief items (CRIs)/non-food items (NFIs) in-country
- Insufficient human resources and/or inadequate profile (including for preparedness and contingency planning) / no presence or outreach capacity in the area(s) of potential influx
- Poor partnership capacity
- Non-existent or poor coordination mechanisms/capacity
- Non-existent or outdated Business Continuity Plan
- Non-existent or inadequate regulatory framework for the reception/registration of new arrivals and hosting arrangements in-country

### Proactive treatments

Create and/or update a business continuity plan depending on changes in the operational environment

Systematically and regularly identify preparedness gaps and escalate them to RB and HQ entities when additional support is required

Request the declaration of Level 1 emergency ("Proactive Preparedness") to ensure necessary resources are in place to get ready

Risk assessment of SEA

### Consequences

### Reactive treatments

### Causes

External causes:

Causes for each risk should be analysed within the in-country context. One or more of the following hazards may cause conflict-induced internal displacement:

- Armed conflict: Fighting between two or more parties that have standing military capacity and relatively strong hierarchical organizations. Conflict may be international or non-international
- (Inter) communal conflict: Fighting between groups that lack conventional military capacity and have relatively weak hierarchical organizations. Includes inter-ethnic conflict
- Electoral violence. Violence between political rivals that occurs due to election process
- Human rights violations. Significant increase in the number of serious violations of human rights, including persecution and systematic discrimination, committed by State or non-State actors controlling a territory
- Political instability. Political instability can cause States to respond in ways that violate human rights.

### Proactive treatments

Participate in UN system-wide and government-led or supported prevention, risk analysis & monitoring and early warning mechanisms (e.g. Emergency Response Preparedness, Common Country Analysis, Disaster Risk Reduction etc.)

Engage in the interagency coordination, agreeing on UNHCR leadership for protection, shelter and CCCM\*

Support and promote the centrality of protection in all inter-agency processes

Coordinate and lead initial mapping of partners and their capacity to respond under UNHCR-led Clusters, if applicable

Lead preparedness for protection, shelter and CCCM Clusters, including contingency planning both as sector lead and operational agency

Create and/or update a business continuity plan depending on changes in the operational environment

Work on a supply strategy in support of the contingency plan, including on prepositioning if necessary

### Consequences

Failure to provide basic, life-saving assistance in a timely manner

Protection needs exacerbated (including potential instances of SEA) and inadequately addressed by UNHCR and partners

Internal control mechanisms overwhelmed

Reputational damage to UNHCR

Occupational health and safety of UNHCR and partner personnel may be overlooked

Failure to fulfil coordination responsibilities

In addition to these consequences, emergencies can increase the likelihood and impact of a range of other risks that UNHCR normally faces. In some areas such as SEA, resettlement and complementary pathways, CBI, implementing with partners, procurement and others, similar risk management tools are available that could be used in conjunction with this one to identify potential consequences. In particular, the [risk management tool on internal displacement situations](#) is relevant to this risk. A full catalogue of these tools can be found [here](#)

### Reactive treatments

The protection and humanitarian needs cannot be met with the in-country response capacity, requiring the activation of exceptional procedures and measures:

Engage in discussion on cluster system activation and/or the activation of the IASC “Scale-up Protocols” at the country level (if not in place)

Advocate for the activation of UNCT/HCT inter-agency contingency plan and launch flash appeal. Activate internal contingency plan along with all the necessary surge measures

Request activation of internal emergency (Level 2 or Level 3 depending on the scale of displacement and response capacity in country).

In coordination and with the support of the Regional Bureau, mobilize the needed resources for an immediate surge:

- Human (deployments, fast track)
- Financial (emergency reserve, appeals)
- Material (CRIs, global stockpiles)

UNHCR to participate in the cluster systems, assuming leadership of the relevant clusters or cluster-like mechanisms,\* and contributing to Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans as necessary

\* When Cluster system is being activated, the RC/HC, in consultation with the UNCT/HCT, selects cluster lead agencies based on agencies’ coordination and response capacity, operational presence, and ability to scale up. The selection of cluster lead agencies ideally mirrors global arrangements; but this is not always possible and sometimes other organizations are in a better position to lead.

**Note:** At the global level, UNHCR leads the Global Protection Cluster (GPC). It also co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster with the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

## Causes

- Impunity. Any situation in which perpetrators of crimes enjoy impunity, or in which victims (including groups) are unable to obtain redress or reparation for crimes and violations against them, is a hazard because impunity and lack of redress increase the likelihood of future violations
- Weak rule of law. Domestic laws and government policies and practices do not protect human rights, reducing the capacity of the State to prevent or halt violations and heightening the incidence of violations or the risk that violations will occur

### Internal causes:

The displacement scenario is expected to exceed the response capacity of the host country, partners and UNHCR, if:

- Insufficient financial resources
- Insufficient core relief items (CRIs)/non-food items (NFIs) in-country
- Insufficient human resources and/or inadequate profile (including for preparedness and contingency planning)/no presence or outreach capacity in areas of potential displacement
- Poor partnership capacity
- Inexistent or poor coordination mechanisms/capacity
- Inexistent or outdated Business Continuity Plan

## Proactive treatments

Where applicable, undertake [CBI preparedness](#). Where inter-agency cash working group exists, actively participate, contribute with technical inputs and consider to co-chair

Work to strengthen the emergency response capacity of staff, government, partners, local and national organizations. Anticipate requests for deployment of personnel with the required profiles (e.g. child protection, SGBV, technical sectors, early recovery), including for coordination purposes

Systematically and regularly identify preparedness gaps and escalate them to RB and HQ entities when additional support is required

Request the declaration of Level 1 emergency (“Proactive Preparedness”) to ensure necessary resources are in place to get ready

Risk assessment of SEA

## Consequences

## Reactive treatments

Where you have identified relevant consequences from other risk management tools (available [here](#)), those tool also contain corresponding reactive treatments that could be included in your risk register

## Risk event | Increase in humanitarian needs of refugees and asylum-seekers as a result of a disaster exceeding the response capacity – 1 of 2

### Causes

External causes:

Causes for each risk should be analysed within the in-country context as part of the wider UN and humanitarian community. The following hazards should be considered as possible causes for the risk event and detailed analysis needs to be conducted:

- Geological or geophysical:
  - Earthquakes
  - Volcanic activity
  - Landslides
  - Tsunami
- Hydrometeorological:
  - Tropical cyclones also known as hurricanes and typhoons
  - Floods, including flash floods
  - Droughts
- Other hazards (including biological hazards such as pandemics and diseases, environmental hazards such as pollution and technological hazards such as explosions, fires and dam failures)

### Proactive treatments

Assess refugee sites and settlements for the risk caused by natural hazards and monitor the risk on a systematic basis in consultation with partners (early warning).

Brief UN country team and relevant partners on the risk and mobilize partners to plan and participate in the response.

Assess the options to mitigate the risk (in sectors like shelter, health, WASH, SGBV etc.).

Lead and coordinate an inter-agency risk prevention and mitigation action plan (e.g. reinforcement of the shelter structures, preventive relocation, improvements to the drainage system etc.).

Reinforce communication with communities, ensuring existing mechanisms can be used to share early warning messages.

Lead and coordinate an inter-agency scenario-based contingency planning, jointly with the Government.

Work on a supply strategy in support of the contingency plan, including on prepositioning if necessary.

Work to strengthen the emergency response capacity of staff, government, partners, local and national organizations.

Anticipate requests for deployment of personnel with the required profiles (e.g. child protection, SGBV, technical sectors)

### Consequences

Injuries and loss of life as well as loss, damage and destruction of property, livelihoods, communities and protection coping mechanisms.

Failure to provide basic, life-saving assistance in a timely manner

Protection needs exacerbated (including potential instances of SEA) and inadequately addressed by UNHCR and partners

Internal control mechanisms overwhelmed

Reputational damage to UNHCR

Occupational health and safety of UNHCR and partner personnel may be overlooked

In addition to these consequences, emergencies can increase the likelihood and impact of a range of other risks that UNHCR normally faces. In some areas such as SEA, resettlement and complimentary pathways, CBI, implementing with partners, procurement and others, similar risk management tools are available that could be used in conjunction with this one to identify other potential consequences. A full catalogue of these tools can be found [here](#)

### Reactive treatments

The protection and humanitarian needs cannot be met with the in-country response capacity, requiring the activation of exceptional procedures and measures.

Activate contingency plan along with all the necessary surge measures.

Request activation of internal emergency (Level 2 or Level 3 depending on the scale of displacement and response capacity in country).

In coordination and with the support of the Regional Bureau, mobilize the needed resources for an immediate surge:

- Human (deployments, fast track)
- Financial (emergency reserve, appeals)
- Material (CRIs, global stockpiles)

Where you have identified relevant consequences from other risk management tools (available [here](#)), those tool also contain corresponding reactive treatments that could be included in your risk register

## Risk event | Increase in humanitarian needs of refugees and asylum-seekers as a result of a disaster exceeding the response capacity – 2 of 2

### Causes

Internal causes:

The scenario is expected to exceed the response capacity of the host country, partners and UNHCR if:

- Insufficient financial resources
- No or insufficient CRIs/NFIs
- Poor outreach mechanisms and communication with refugee/asylum-seeker communities
- Insufficient human resources and/or inadequate profile (including for preparedness and contingency planning)/no presence or outreach capacity in affected areas
- Poor partnership capacity
- Inexistent or outdated Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

### Proactive treatments

Create and/or update a business continuity plan depending on changes in the operational environment

Systematically and regularly identify preparedness gaps and escalate them to RB and HQ entities when additional support is required

Request the declaration of Level 1 emergency (“Proactive Preparedness”) to ensure necessary resources are in place to get ready

### Consequences

### Reactive treatments



## Risk event | Increase in humanitarian needs and internal displacement as a result of a disaster exceeding the response capacity – 1 of 2

### Causes

External causes:

Causes for each risk should be analysed within the in-country context as part of the wider UN and humanitarian community. The following hazards should be considered as possible causes for the risk event and detailed analysis needs to be conducted:

- Geological or geophysical:
  - Earthquakes
  - Volcanic activity
  - Landslides
  - Tsunami
- Hydrometeorological:
  - Tropical cyclones also known as hurricanes and typhoons
  - Floods, including flash floods
  - Droughts
- Other hazards (including biological hazards such as pandemics and diseases, environmental hazards such as pollution and technological hazards such as explosions, fires and dam failures)

### Proactive treatments

Participate in UN system-wide and government-led or supported prevention, risk analysis & monitoring and early warning mechanisms (e.g. Emergency Response Preparedness, Common Country Analysis, Disaster Risk Reduction etc.)

Engage in the interagency coordination, agreeing on UNHCR leadership for protection\* in line with IASC protocols.

Coordinate and lead initial mapping of partners and their capacity to respond under protection Cluster, if applicable.

Lead preparedness for protection Cluster, including contingency planning both as sector lead and operational agency, participating as necessary in other sectors' responses.

Anticipate – as applicable - requests for deployment of personnel with the required profiles (e.g. coordination, child protection, SGBV, technical sectors)

Work on a supply strategy in support of the contingency plan, including on prepositioning if necessary.

Where applicable, undertake [CBI preparedness](#).

Create and/or update a business continuity plan depending on changes in the operational environment

### Consequences

Failure to provide basic, life-saving assistance in a timely manner

Protection needs exacerbated (including potential instances of SEA) and inadequately addressed by UNHCR and partners

Internal control mechanisms overwhelmed

Reputational damage to UNHCR

Occupational health and safety of UNHCR and partner personnel may be overlooked

Failure to fulfil coordination responsibilities

In addition to these consequences, emergencies can increase the likelihood and impact of a range of other risks that UNHCR normally faces. In some areas such as SEA, resettlement and complimentary pathways, CBI, implementing with partners, procurement and others, similar risk management tools are available that could be used in conjunction with this one to identify potential consequences. In particular, the [risk management tool on internal displacement situations](#) is relevant to this risk. A full catalogue of these tools can be found [here](#)

### Reactive treatments

The protection and humanitarian needs cannot be met with the in-country response capacity, requiring the activation of exceptional procedures and measures

Engage in discussion on cluster system activation and/or the activation of the IASC “Scale-up Protocols” at the country level (if not in place)

Advocate for the activation of UNCT/HCT inter-agency contingency plan and launch flash appeal. Activate internal contingency plan along with all the necessary surge measures

Request activation of internal emergency (Level 2 or Level 3 depending on the scale of displacement and response capacity in country)

In coordination and with the support of the Regional Bureau, mobilize the needed resources for an immediate surge:
 

- Human (deployments, fast track)
- Financial (emergency reserve, appeals)
- Material (CRIs, global stockpiles)

UNHCR to participate in the cluster coordination system, assuming leadership of the protection cluster where applicable,\* and contributing to Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans as necessary

\* UNHCR is the Cluster Lead Agency of the Global Protection Cluster. However, at the country level in disaster situations or complex emergencies without significant displacement, the three protection-mandated agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and OHCHR) will consult closely and, under the overall leadership of the HC/RC, agree which agency among the three will assume the role of Cluster Lead Agency for protection. (see [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level](#))

## Risk event | Increase in humanitarian needs and internal displacement as a result of a disaster exceeding the response capacity – 2 of 2

### Causes

Internal causes:

The scenario is expected to exceed the response capacity of the host country, partners and UNHCR if:

- Insufficient financial resources
- No or insufficient CRIs/NFIs
- Poor outreach mechanisms and communication with displaced communities
- Insufficient human resources and/or inadequate profile (including for preparedness and contingency planning)/no presence or outreach capacity in potential areas of displacement
- Poor partnership capacity
- Inexistent or outdated Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

### Proactive treatments

Reinforce community-based protection mechanisms and activities.

Train officials and key humanitarian partners on protection and protection mainstreaming, support and promote the centrality of protection in all inter-agency processes.

In coordination with other partners (especially Red Cross/Crescent national society), work to strengthen the emergency response capacity of staff, government, partners, local and national organizations.

Recommend key protection outcomes in all sectors of response.

Systematically and regularly identify preparedness gaps and escalate them to RB and HQ entities when additional support is required.

### Consequences

### Reactive treatments

Where you have identified relevant consequences from other risk management tools (available [here](#)), those tool also contain corresponding reactive treatments that could be included in your risk register

Notes:



## Enterprise Risk Management