UNFPA-UNHCR Cooperation Understanding on
Strengthening Emergency Preparedness and Response

Background

UNFPA and UNHCR have been working in partnership on issues of mutual interest for more than two decades, with formal cooperation established through a Memorandum of Understanding in 1995. Cooperation has increased since then and in 2008, the UNFPA Executive Director and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees signed a Letter of Cooperation outlining additional areas of collaboration to reflect the transformation within the humanitarian architecture and new developments under the humanitarian reform process. UNFPA has further supported UNHCR through the provision of sexual and reproductive health commodities, especially in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention.

UNFPA’s humanitarian activities have grown in the last decade and UNFPA has expanded its engagement in humanitarian settings, taking the lead in coordinating interventions for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender based violence (GBV) in non-refugee humanitarian emergencies, with a special focus on women, adolescent girls and young people. As lead of the GBV Area of Responsibility of the Global Protection Cluster, UNFPA also has a lead role in coordination at the global level of prevention and response to GBV in non-refugee emergencies. Where appropriate, UNFPA also convenes SRH working groups under the health cluster. In refugee emergencies, UNFPA collaborates closely with UNHCR in both prevention and response to SGBV, as well as SRH issues.

UNHCR leads and coordinates humanitarian response in refugee settings, leads the Global Protection Cluster, and co-leads the Global CCCM and Shelter Clusters. UNHCR has well established emergency response capacities which are guided by its Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response. The Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) supports HQ and field operations in emergency preparedness and response. The High Alert List for Refugee Emergencies (HALEP) monitors country preparedness and the preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE) is used for preparedness actions. UNHCR maintains a range of internal rosters for emergency deployments as well as stand-by partnerships for personnel and service packages. Its Global Stockpile Management provides the capacity to provide relief items for some 600,000 persons in simultaneous emergencies.

The 2016 New York Declaration lays out a vision for a more predictable and more comprehensive response to refugee crises, known as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). To better support refugees and hosting communities, UNHCR is working closely with a wide range of new partners, and is strengthening cooperation with existing partners. It is in this spirit that UNHCR and UNFPA commit to enhancing collaboration in emergency preparedness and response.
Areas of cooperation

Recognizing unprecedented humanitarian needs, it is proposed that the two agencies cooperate to strengthen UNFPA’s operational capacity to prepare for, and respond to ongoing and new refugee and forced displacement emergencies. Therefore, this cooperation understanding between UNHCR and UNFPA outlines areas of cooperation for emergency preparedness and response.

The cooperation is foreseen in the following areas:

1. **Preparedness**: During the past two years, UNFPA has strengthened preparedness measures in countries and capacity building through the rollout of the Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs). To strengthen and build upon existing UNFPA preparedness efforts, UNHCR will provide technical guidance and support to UNFPA in the development of an early warning system.

2. **Prepositioning of supplies**: UNFPA is one of the largest suppliers of contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities, and ensuring that supplies reach affected populations in emergency settings is essential for reducing maternal mortality and ensuring health and wellbeing. UNFPA and UNHCR will cooperate in pre-positioning UNFPA supplies alongside those from UNHCR and will identifying further areas of cooperation.

3. **Emergency financial management**: The flexible use of available financial resources allows organizations to pre-finance a new emergency response whilst developing emergency budgets and appeals at a later stage. UNFPA will learn from UNHCR to develop appropriate mechanism for setting up an emergency reserve and managing emergency budgets alongside regular ones.

4. **Resource mobilization**: UNHCR can coach UNFPA in the timely elaboration of emergency plans including human, financial and material resources. In large refugee situations, UNFPA will participate in the (regional) refugee response plan (RRP), and UNHCR can provide visibility to UNFPA in the context of inter-agency updates on the RRP. Moreover, the two agencies can approach donors together in specific situations as appropriate.

5. **Cash-based interventions**: In line with the Grand Bargain commitments, UNFPA and UNHCR will support cash-based assistance in relevant contexts and participate in inter-agency forums and mechanisms set up for this purpose. In refugee contexts, UNHCR will normally lead these forums and mechanisms.

6. **Surge systems**: UNHCR has a range of rosters and stand-by partnerships for emergencies, and UNFPA has taken significant steps to improve its surge mechanism in the last two years. UNFPA personnel will work closely with UNHCR to learn from their practices and experiences and will provide technical GBV expertise in strengthening UNHCR’s curriculum for surge workshops, while UNHCR staff will share knowledge and expertise in surge trainings related to its own areas of expertise.

7. **Staff exchange**: UNHCR and UNFPA may mutually exchange a senior staff member to the sister organization to further strengthen knowledge sharing and understanding the practices and technical expertise found within both organizations.
8. Strengthening of protection cluster coordination for situations of internal displacement: UNFPA will enhance efforts to ensure timely placement of qualified and experienced GBV coordinators within the Protection Cluster to non-refugee field operations in a timely manner.

This cooperation understanding will come into force on the day of signature and remains in force for two years, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the parties, by which time the above-mentioned capacity building activities will have been completed. This understanding complements the formal cooperation between UNHCR and UNFPA established by the Memorandum of Understanding of 30 June 1995 and the 2008 Letter of Cooperation, which remain in force in their entirety.

UNHCR’s Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply and UNFPA’s Chief, Humanitarian and Fragile Contexts Branch, will meet at least twice a year to discuss and review the implementation of the cooperation and correct/ change its course as necessary.

On behalf of UNHCR
Filippo Grandi
High Commissioner for Refugees

Place: New York
Date: 23 March 2018

On behalf of UNFPA
Dr. Natalia Kanem
Executive Director

Place: New York
Date: 4 April 2018