

2007



NGO PARTNERSHIPS IN REFUGEE PROTECTION

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS





A refugee woman in Mugano Camp, Muyinga Province, Burundi at a workshop organised by the Italian NGO partner, Intersos, to teach skills in self-sufficiency.

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Cover:

Refugees from Sudan packing up their belongings to move to a new camp in Chad established by UNHCR and its partners.



UNHCR/H. CAUX

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After spending several months in refugee camps in West Timor, families return home to East Timor by boat.

U

NHCR RELIES ON MANY PARTNERSHIPS

to help the world's uprooted people. In its efforts to protect refugees and to promote durable solutions to their problems, UNHCR works in partnership with many actors. These include other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governmental as well as inter-governmental organizations, and various civil society partners such as universities, advocacy groups, foundations and corporations. Between them, they provide an array of services for vulnerable people including immediate relief – food, water and shelter – as well as legal assistance, education and health care.

“THE UNHCR HAS HAD THE MOST EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES...
THEIR WORK IS IN A TRUE SENSE OF THE TERM INDISPENSABLE AND
THESE AGENCIES DESERVE THAT HIGH TRIBUTE SHOULD BE PAID TO WHAT THEY AND THEIR THO



Oxfam water tanks at the deserted Mugunga camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) are dismantled for use elsewhere.

“WITH PERSISTENT REFUGEE CHALLENGES AROUND THE WORLD, UNHCR CONTINUES TO RELY ON THE STRONG SUPPORT AND COOPERATION OF ITS NGO PARTNERS TO HELP REFUGEES. BUILDING ON THIS COOPERATION, TOGETHER WE CAN ACHIEVE EVEN MORE— BRINGING HOPE AND FINDING SOLUTIONS.”

Ruud Lubbers, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2004

This booklet highlights UNHCR’s cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which include both national and international partners. UNHCR could not accomplish its important humanitarian work without the support of its NGO partners. As one historian of UNHCR has put it: “No element has been more vital to the successful conduct of the programmes of the UNHCR than the close partnership between UNHCR and the non-governmental organizations.”

INVALUABLE FOR THE REFUGEES... WHENEVER THE STORY OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IS TOLD... USANDS OF COLLABORATORS ARE DOING.”

Dr. van Heuven Goedhart, the first United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1953

THERE ARE TWO TYPES of partnerships: implementing and operational. Implementing partnerships are those in which UNHCR provides financial support to an NGO that performs specific services to help refugees. This arrangement is reflected in a formal project agreement subject to UNHCR financial rules and regulations.

UNHCR has formal project agreements with 649 NGOs from around the world. Seventy five percent of these organizations are local or national organizations; the others are international, some of which have been UNHCR partners for decades.

The other type of partnership is operational. This involves the voluntary close coordination between UNHCR and NGOs, but not financial support by UNHCR. These operational partners support UNHCR's work in such areas as emergency relief and resettlement.

Both these partnerships may also work with UNHCR on advocacy activities, promoting refugee rights and state responsibility in refugee protection.

UNHCR continues to forge new partnerships with NGOs in meeting the needs of refugees and working towards durable solutions.

UNHCR has turned to NGOs more recently to address growing needs in legal assistance and protection. At the same time, UNHCR is developing partnerships with NGOs that increasingly bring their own resources and expertise to bear. In developing partnerships, UNHCR seeks to achieve synergies – added value – with its partners in order to have the greatest impact in helping refugees.



UNHCR works with its partners in providing building materials for a housing programme for Afghan returnees.

UNHCR/R. WILKINSON



5 NGO PARTNERS? |



Refugees from Eritrea planting seedlings in a community nursery in the Showak camps in Sudan.

| HOW DID UNHCR-NGO COOPERATION

■ The Early Years

UNHCR has a long history of working with NGOs. When UNHCR began its work in January 1951, numerous organizations with significant refugee experience had already existed, many dating back to the early 1920s. In 1950, some one hundred national and international “voluntary societies” were assisting refugees in Europe in the wake of the Second World War. Because in its early years UNHCR was not operational, it relied heavily on governmental and non-governmental organizations for support. NGOs responded generously. In 1955, for example, \$1 million was raised in a national appeal campaign by a Dutch NGO, the Netherlands Committee to Aid Refugees, to support the High Commissioner’s work in Europe.

■ The First Emergency

UNHCR’s inaugural emergency operation, the Hungarian crisis of 1956, was also the first televised international refugee crisis. It was the first time that UNHCR was the designated “lead agency” by the international community. As a result, UNHCR received large contributions from NGOs, including \$400,000 from the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Hungarian crisis underscored the need for close cooperation with partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross Societies and others.

■ Greater Challenges and more Partnerships

In the mid-1960s, UNHCR’s NGO partners numbered less than 20, of which half were large international NGOs. The following decade witnessed the beginning of large refugee programmes and operations. Increased challenges led to a greater diversity of partnerships and the birth of a large number of humanitarian and refugee oriented organizations in North America and Europe. In 1968, the High Commissioner, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, recognizing the support of NGO partners, observed, “I am convinced that the cooperation between us will grow even closer and closer as we continue our work together.” Throughout the 1980s NGOs continued to increase in number in response to major refugee emergencies in the Horn of Africa, Asia and Central America. By the end of the decade, there were over 100 international NGOs working in the Afghan refugee camps and settlements in Pakistan.

By the early 1990s, UNHCR came to recognize that the magnitude of the global challenges exceeded its own capacity. Given the growing needs of refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and others of concern to UNHCR, the High Commissioner called for a redoubling of the organization’s partnership efforts which led to the launch of the Partnership in Action (PARinAC) initiative in 1994. This period witnessed the largest increase in the number of NGOs. Their size, operational capacity and resources

RATION BEGIN AND DEVELOP? |

expanded significantly during this period as demonstrated by their presence in major refugee emergencies in the Balkans and Africa. Innovations, such as standby arrangements, were pioneered. UNHCR engaged new partners and began to focus on building their capacities.

■ Does UNHCR share its mandate responsibilities with NGO partners?

Protecting refugees is a shared responsibility. NGOs play an increasingly important role in refugee protection. As implementing partners, NGOs contribute to a broad spectrum of protection activities;

for example, the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, and meeting the needs of women and children.

It is important to acknowledge that some aspects of protection are directly related to the performance by UNHCR of its mandate and cannot be devolved on others, such as determining who is a refugee. NGOs, however, complement UNHCR's work by speaking out and advocating for refugees in important ways that differ from those UNHCR is able to use.

To improve the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers around the world, the *Agenda for Protection* serves as a guide for concrete action by governments, UNHCR, NGOs and other partners.



UNHCR/CREDIT UNHCR

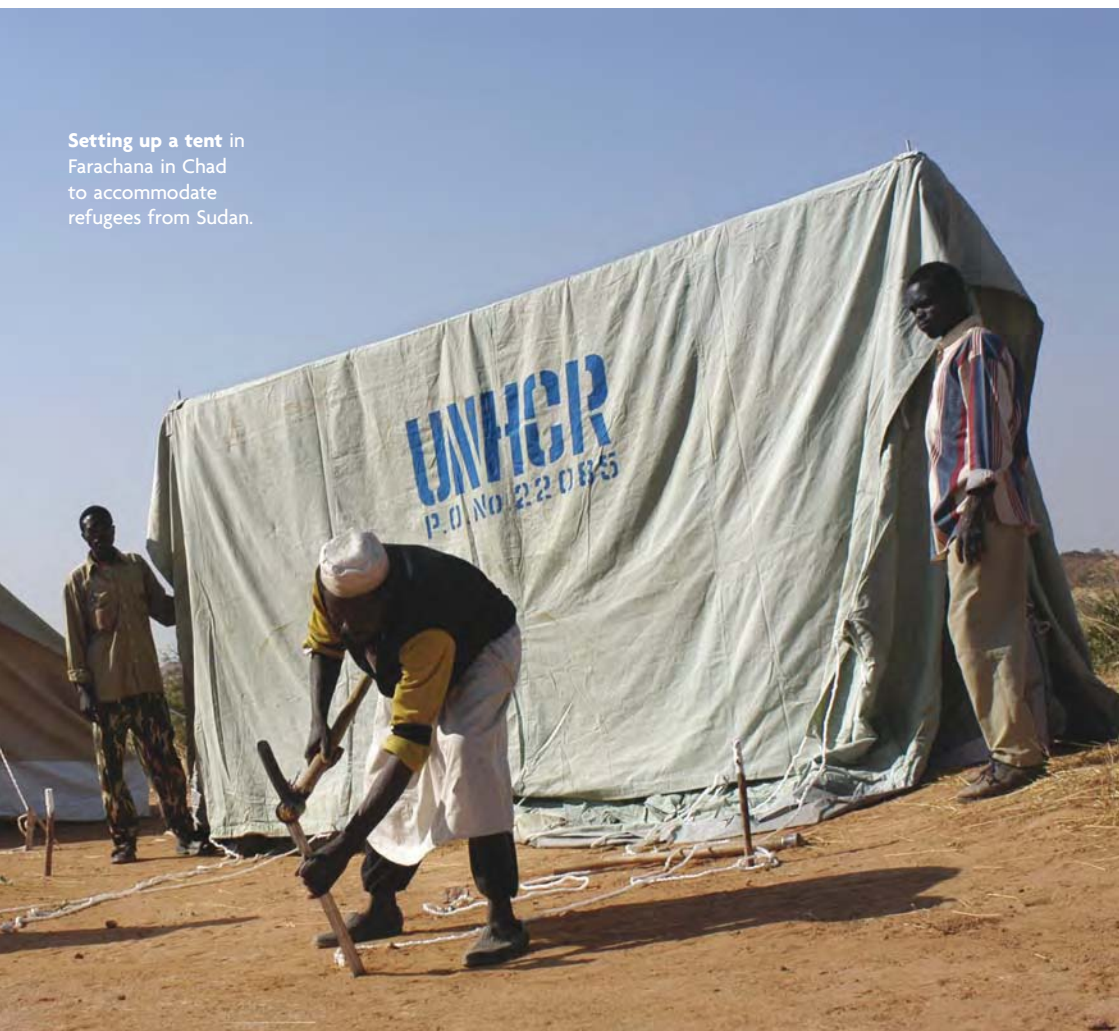
These Hungarian refugees are taking the train which will lead them from Austria to Switzerland, a new country of asylum.

■ Why does UNHCR partner with other organizations?

Because refugee needs are enormous and resources are limited, UNHCR cannot do its job alone. It relies on the support of NGOs with special skills

and resources to help refugees. Such partnerships have proven to be especially useful during emergencies by providing life-saving assistance.

Setting up a tent in Farachana in Chad to accommodate refugees from Sudan.





UNHCR/CREDIT UNHCR

Gas, electricity, water and garbage removal are provided for Chechens living in the tented camp called Bart in Ingushetia.

■ How does UNHCR coordinate with its partners?

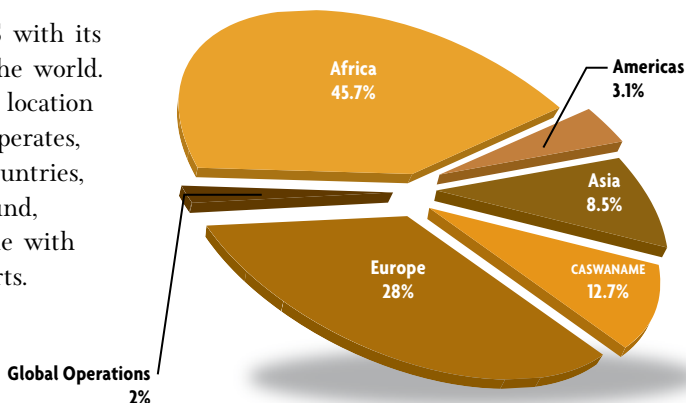
UNHCR coordinates with its partners at all levels, including in the field and at headquarters. Regular consultations are held which focus on assessment, planning and implementation. Where more than one NGO is carrying out similar functions in an operation, UNHCR and its partners will agree on mechanisms to ensure compatible programmes and appropriate standards. UNHCR often plays a coordinating role in refugee and return situations involving NGOs. UNHCR also coordinates assistance to refugees that is implemented by UNHCR or its NGO partners.

■ Does UNHCR work with faith-based organizations?

Since its earliest days, UNHCR has worked with faith-based organizations and this cooperation continues today. Between 1994 and 2006, UNHCR channelled \$1.09 billion to faith-based organizations. Faith-based organizations, like all UNHCR partners, must meet certain basic conditions as outlined in the Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership. Under the Agreement, partners agree to provide aid regardless of race, creed, or nationality of the recipients and ensure that such assistance will not be used to further a particular political or religious point of view.

WHERE DO UNHCR'S PARTNERS WORK?

UNHCR WORKS with its partners around the world. In virtually every location where UNHCR operates, some 262 offices in 116 countries, NGO partners can be found, often working side by side with their UNHCR counterparts.



PARTNER ACTIVITIES BY REGION: 1994-2006

REGION	SUB-REGION	US\$	%
Africa	East and Horn of Africa	650, 174, 466	12.0
	The Great Lakes and Central Africa	996, 970, 416	18.4
	Southern Africa	277, 741, 045	5.1
	West Africa	555, 278, 487	10.2
Africa Total		2,480, 164, 413	45.7
Americas	Central America	80, 100, 519	1.5
	North America and Caribbean	16, 988, 553	0.3
	South America (north)	41, 361, 929	0.8
	South America (sud)	30, 770, 875	0.6
Americas Total		169, 221, 876	3.1
Asia	East Asia and Pacific	271, 861, 830	5.0
	South Asia	188, 122, 206	3.5
Asia Total		459, 984, 035	8.5
CASWANAME*	Central Asia	26, 507, 380	0.5
	Middle East	170, 239, 636	3.1
	North Africa	52, 680, 576	1.0
	Others countries of CASWANAME	2, 949, 002	0.1
	South West Asia	437, 529, 058	8.1
CASWANAME Total		689, 905, 652	12.7
Europe	Central Europe and Baltic States	105, 041, 118	1.9
	Eastern Europe	239, 463, 470	4.4
	South Eastern Europe	1, 129, 710, 539	20.8
	Western Europe	46, 055, 888	0.8
Europe Total		1, 520, 271, 015	28.0
Global Operations		106, 228, 201	2.0
Global Operations Total		106, 228, 201	2.0
GRAND TOTAL		5, 425, 775, 192	100

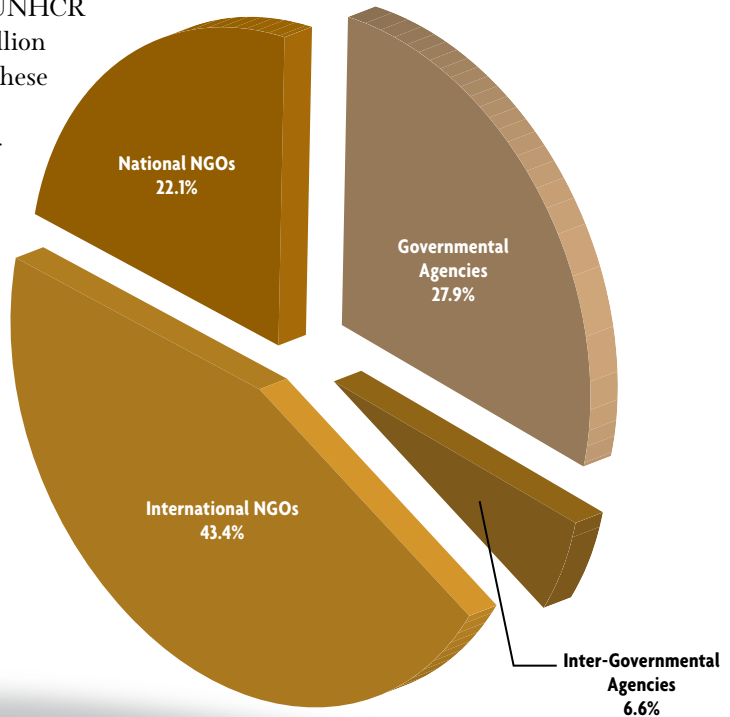
*CASWANAME: Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle Est.

HOW MUCH FUNDING DOES UNHCR PROVIDE TO ITS PARTNERS? |

BETWEEN 1994 AND 2006 UNHCR channelled \$5.4 billion through its implementing partners; two-thirds of this amount went to NGOs. In 2006, UNHCR channelled \$359.4 million through NGOs. Of these NGO partners, some 490 were national or local NGOs.

PARTNER FUNDING: 1994-2006		
TYPE	US\$	%
Governmental Agencies	1, 511, 847, 984	27.9
Inter-Governmental Agencies	356, 760, 370	6.6
International NGOs	2, 356, 176, 496	43.4
National NGOs	1, 200, 990, 342	22.1
TOTAL	5, 425, 775, 192	100

DATA SOURCE: UNHCR/MISRP/APRIL 2007



PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION consists of four stages including identification of programme objectives, selection of partners, implementation of the project, and evaluation. Each stage depends upon close coordination between UNHCR and its partners.

The ultimate purpose of the partnership is to maximize resources dedicated to the assistance and protection of refugees and other beneficiaries. Thus UNHCR-NGO partnerships are based on two concerns: the actual benefit and its cost-effectiveness.



The Humanitarian Demining Unit was assisted by the NGO Norwegian People's Aid working in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

UNHCR/R. CHALASANI

■ How does an NGO become a UNHCR implementing partner?

UNHCR-NGO partnerships are normally established in the area of operations. NGOs interested in working with UNHCR as implementing partners sign a formal project agreement spelling out specific responsibilities. The basic conditions for partnership which must be met involve strict financial and accountability

requirements including audit certification. UNHCR rules and procedures must also be followed. Additional criteria include the NGO's quality of service, rapid response, local experience, contribution of resources, continuity of staff, previous experience working with UNHCR, and phase-out potential.

■ What implementing partner costs does UNHCR cover?

UNHCR covers operational costs – those generated by an activity itself – and support costs - those incurred in managing an activity. Examples of operational costs include emergency relief items, education facilities, shelter programmes, salaries and travel costs. Support costs include expenses often incurred at the activity site, in country and regional offices as well as headquarters. Partnership means sharing costs. Although UNHCR provides financial support to its partners, it is expected that the NGO partner contributes resources to the programme (cash and/or in-kind) including staff and administrative support.

■ How long does UNHCR work with NGOs as implementing partners?

This depends on the performance of the NGO, and the need for the partner's services. Project agreements operate on



UNHCR/A. HOLLMANN

Children in Georgia attend psychosocial rehabilitation classes after being uprooted from their homes for years.

annual budget cycles and project monitoring reviews are conducted twice a year. In emergencies, for example, agreements are often extended because of on-going needs.

■ Are there limits on the amount of support that UNHCR will provide to an NGO?

Support for NGOs depends on a variety of factors including available UNHCR resources, demonstrated need for specific services, and the amount of the NGO contribution to the overall programme. For example, UNHCR provides a limited contribution to NGO staff costs.

UNHCR cooperates with NGOs in a wide variety of activities, such as:

■ Protection

NGOs play a valuable role in supporting UNHCR's efforts in the field of international protection. Many partners contribute to the well-being of refugees and asylum-seekers in their reception, counselling and care, in finding durable solutions, and in advocacy and public awareness activities. *Protecting Refugees: A Field Guide for NGOs* is a tool that provides information on international protection and practical guidance for operations.

In order to increase protection capacity in the field, for example, UNHCR and its partner, the International Rescue Committee

(IRC), have developed the Protection Surge Capacity Project. IRC helps recruit, train and quickly deploy qualified protection officers to UNHCR field offices in case of "protection surges" when there are increased protection needs and limited UNHCR staff. IRC protection officers, seconded to UNHCR, serve on short-term missions performing various protection activities including monitoring of refugee returns, child protection, registration and organizing voluntary repatriation. This innovative programme allows UNHCR protection staff to expand and contract as conditions warrant.

■ Emergency Response and Standby Agreements

Close partnerships have been developed between UNHCR and NGOs in the field of emergency response. A wide range of external staffing and standby arrangements has been developed with several NGOs to facilitate rapid deployment of qualified staff in the early stages of an emergency. These arrangements have enhanced UNHCR's capacity to respond to emergencies by providing specialized staff in the areas of refugee protection, community services, field security, child protection, engineering, telecommunications, and other vital sectors.

Some of UNHCR's partners in this capacity include the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Save the Children.

In addition to emergency response, standby agreements also support the process in which refugees are resettled in another country. The on-going partnership with the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) includes the deployment scheme to strengthen resettlement operations in the field. Deployments last up to one year.



An Angolan refugee family being registered at Osire Camp in Namibia.

■ Capacity-Building and Joint Training

Capacity-building is a regular part of UNHCR operations from the emergency phase of an operation to durable solutions. UNHCR supports the transfer of skills, know-how and equipment to a wide variety of institutions including NGOs. This includes training programmes and the strengthening of overall technical and management capacity of UNHCR implementing partners, especially national NGOs. For example, UNHCR provides regular emergency management training programmes such as the Workshop for

Emergency Managers (WEM) and the Situational Emergency Training (SET).

■ Advocacy and Fund-Raising

NGO partners also contribute to UNHCR's advocacy efforts which target both governments and the general public, especially in countries of asylum. UNHCR's national association partners operate in a number of countries and raise both funds and public awareness to benefit refugees.

COLLABORATION, GOVERNANCE AND NETWORKS

■ The Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership

The Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership (FAOP) which evolved from the PARinAC process seeks a common and coordinated approach by UNHCR and its operational partners in addressing refugee protection and assistance. It seeks coordinated programme planning and implementation of activities and the efficient use of resources.

Under the Framework, partners are guided by humanitarian principles found in the Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations which includes a commitment to ensure that the humanitarian imperative comes first and to determine aid priorities based on need alone.

■ The PARinAC process

Conceptualized in 1994 at an Oslo conference in the context of growing refugee challenges, the Partnership in Action process (PARinAC) established a framework for cooperation between UNHCR and its NGO partners. The conference developed a broad plan of action including recommendations on refugee protection, internally displaced persons and emergency preparedness. The process has resulted in the strengthening of ties between UNHCR and its partners, especially national NGOs.

■ The role of NGOs in UNHCR's governance

NGOs play an important part in UNHCR's governance, bringing special expertise and field experience to deliberations among the Office's Executive Committee (ExCom). Prior to ExCom, UNHCR holds its Annual NGO Consultations, often called Pre-ExCom, to focus on a broad range of operational issues of refugee protection which are of shared concern. The NGO Consultations also provide valuable insights and input into the joint NGO statements delivered at ExCom.

■ The role of ICVA and other NGO networks

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the various other NGO networks provide valuable input in the form of ideas and recommendations, especially concerning joint needs assessment, planning and implementation. ICVA, a Geneva-based global network of over 70 human rights, humanitarian and development NGOs, has contributed to the development of numerous dynamic relationships between UNHCR and NGOs over the decades. Since its establishment in 1962, ICVA has worked closely with UNHCR and it continues to play an important coordination and liaison role. UNHCR regularly participates in ICVA and other NGO networks' forums, conferences, and discussion groups that influence UNHCR policy.



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MSF clinic in Massakoundou camp in Guinea.

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