

STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES, INCLUDING REFUGEE SECURITY

I. OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS OF REPORT

1. This note provides an update on previous reports on staff safety and security issues, including refugee security, presented to the Standing Committee between 2004 and 2007.¹ It focuses principally on the continuing efforts to implement the recommendations of UNHCR's Security Policy and Policy Implementation Review (2004), but also addresses new initiatives in support of strengthening the security of beneficiaries and other related activities.

2. UNHCR continues to emphasize to the United Nations Security Management System that field operations need to be effectively supported through an adaptable and professional security and risk management approach. This is highlighted in Global Strategic Objective 9 (2008-2009): Optimizing security arrangements, with priority given to operationalizing an integrated approach to security risk assessment and management that promotes the safety of staff, populations of concern, and organizational assets.

3. The Office welcomes the establishment of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security and looks forward to receiving its recommendations. UNHCR has met with the members of the panel, both in the Field and at Headquarters, to relay its comments and concerns.

II. CHALLENGES

4. UNHCR continues to face challenges in all aspects of beneficiary and staff safety. The security environment in many countries is unstable and this is often overshadowed by the increasing global threat of attacks aimed at the United Nations in general. Resources are always stretched which presents a challenge for many security-related activities and programmes, necessitating the constant re-examination of priorities and reallocation of resources. The "humanitarian space" in which UNHCR works is often eroded through interventions of armed actors and efforts to maintain this space are occasionally hampered by the way in which security programmes are managed within the UN system. While much progress has been made, there is still a need for the UN Security Management System to give more consideration to UNHCR's specific organizational and mandate-related security concerns, notably the physical protection of refugees and its effect on staff security.

¹ Please see: EC/54/SC/CRP.20; EC/55/SC/CRP/21; EC/57/SC/CRP.24. EC/58/SC/CRP.13

5. Of all these challenges, resource allocation is the most significant. The very nature of UNHCR's operations – field-oriented and fast-paced – requires flexibility and a balance between operational and security needs that is not easily achieved. The high costs related to staff safety in many regions are problematic, since they tap into available resources for responding to operational needs. This is compounded by the overall approach of the UN Security Management System that attempts to provide a single-option approach for staff safety, leaving little room for specific security needs of humanitarian organizations.

III. ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

A. Minimum operating security standards

6. An analysis of a Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) compliance survey in 2006 led the High Commissioner to call for full MOSS compliance in all offices by the end of 2007. In the course of 2006-2007, UNHCR allocated an additional US\$3 million to country offices to achieve this goal, as well as deploying numerous support missions by security staff. A review of UNHCR's MOSS compliance rate at the end of 2007 indicated that more than 95 per cent of all UNHCR offices were MOSS compliant. The deficiencies could be attributed primarily to the opening of new offices that had not yet achieved MOSS compliance and to the fluid nature of security standards (e.g. a changed MOSS table for a particular country or region would automatically render an office non-compliant until the new measures were implemented).

7. As a direct result of the bombing of United Nations offices in Algiers, in which 17 staff and non-staff were killed and some 40 injured and in which the United Nations and UNHCR suffered serious damage to premises and property, the Office has undertaken a global assessment of offices, focusing on vulnerability to threats from explosions. Beyond the occasional inclusion of these threats in country MOSS tables, UNHCR has determined to address such concerns across all operations in view of the global nature of terrorism. The final report of this assessment is due in June 2008. It will provide recommendations and determine resource requirements for a global response, and will consider such measures as renovation/strengthening of offices, relocation of offices and co-location of offices where applicable. This will necessarily require significant resources and UNHCR will issue a funding call when the details are finalized.

8. As required whenever an attack on staff, operations or premises causes fatalities, serious injuries or large-scale damage involving major financial or material losses to the Office, UNHCR has also initiated an *ad hoc* inquiry on the Algiers bombing. Considering the Secretary-General's establishment of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises that is examining this incident in a wider framework, the UNHCR inquiry is limited to internal aspects and to aspects linked to its role and participation in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Security Management Team (SMT). The conclusions and recommendations of this inquiry will, as applicable, feed into the Office's local, regional and global efforts to address such security threats.

9. UNHCR has developed an information toolkit to assist field management and security staff in planning, developing and budgeting for security measures, including MOSS, some UNHCR-specific security requirements, and for a range of beneficiary security programmes. This toolkit is available to all staff on UNHCR's intranet site.

10. Alongside its own efforts in implementing and monitoring MOSS compliance, UNHCR continues to participate actively in the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) monitoring and compliance programme.

B. Security management training

11. UNHCR promotes the Security Management Learning Programme (SMLP) as the principal vehicle for security training. The SMLP is directed at mid- and senior-level field managers and covers a wide spectrum of security-related issues. The goal is to increase the knowledge and capacity of field managers to address security issues, thereby reducing the need for additional financial or human resources. UNHCR has concluded an agreement with the Government of Sweden, through the Swedish Rescue Service Agency, for the in-kind donation of facilities to host an additional two SMLP workshops in 2008 and 2009. This brings the total number of courses per year to four, from the originally planned two. Each course will train approximately 25 UNHCR staff as well as representatives from implementing partners and from UNDSS, for the purposes of cross-organizational training. Since its inception in 2005 to date, some 200 staff have benefited directly from the SMLP, and over 60 per cent of UNHCR staff have benefited indirectly from the knowledge and skills that these managers have acquired.

12. In addition to the SMLP, UNHCR includes security management as a significant component of the Workshop for Emergency Management (WEM), held four times a year. The security management section of the WEM places a strong emphasis on programme risk management and beneficiary security and includes a practical simulation exercise. UNHCR has concluded an agreement with UNDSS to recognize the security-component of the WEM as equivalent to the newly-introduced Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments (SSAFE) training conducted by UNDSS. This agreement further strengthens UNHCR's operational capacity as it helps reduce training time before deployments to hazardous environments.

13. UNHCR is developing a Crisis Management Training programme for managers. This programme is designed with a view to increasing the institutional knowledge and capacity of UNHCR staff to address efficiently and effectively incidents of a critical nature (e.g. medical emergencies, office evacuations, hostage incidents, etc.). This training programme is being developed with a view to incorporating the UN system rules and regulations for critical incident management into UNHCR's global policies and procedures. The first pilot session is scheduled for July 2008. UNHCR also participates in the UNDSS-led SMTeam training at country level.

C. Beneficiary security

14. FSS works with the regional bureaux on the development and implementation of specific refugee security "packages" for country situations (e.g. provision of refugee security liaison officers in Chad). Additionally, refugee/IDP security mechanisms are being strengthened through participation in security-sector reform forums and activities such as Mine Action, and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). UNHCR is an active participant in the inter-agency working groups on Mine Action and DDR, both in Geneva and New York.

15. FSS works closely with the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS), on links between refugee security and staff security. Both have been collaborating with the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (ROLSI) of the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations on increasing cooperation in areas such as beneficiary security, DDR, Mine Action and capacity building for national security and law institutions.

D. Partnerships

16. UNHCR supports the United Nations Security Management System, and collaborates regularly with UNDSS and other Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) partners. The Office fully supports the mission of the United Nations Security Management System in its role of enabling operations in the Field. However, UNHCR will continue to emphasize the need to give precedence to the operational needs of the Office and of other partners in the Field, by supporting these through professional programme risk management strategies, i.e. security risk assessments that fully consider the operational and programmatic aspects of humanitarian operations.

17. UNHCR continues to work closely with UNDSS and implementing partners on the development of security training and participates in the UNDSS Induction Training Programmes (ITP) and Refresher Training Programmes (RTP) at the Training Centre of the International Labour Organization in Turin, Italy. This gives UNHCR the opportunity to make UNDSS personnel more aware of agency-specific operational needs and methods, in order to facilitate a security management system that is more responsive to the requirements of UNHCR and its beneficiaries. Additionally, UNHCR has reached an agreement with UNDSS on the equivalency standards for certain training courses, allowing UNHCR training programmes to substitute UNDSS programmes, thus saving money and time during deployments.

E. Change management

18. In view of UNHCR's overall restructuring effort, two of the six Headquarters-based posts in FSS have been relocated to the Field, with effect from January 2008. Headquarters staff in FSS currently consist of the chief of section, the senior liaison officer (operational security), the senior training officer (risk management), the senior field safety advisor (with special focus on beneficiary security), four roving field safety officers and an administrative clerk. This restructuring has led to some changes in the Section's modus operandi so that FSS services can continue to be delivered with the same high quality to colleagues and beneficiaries.

19. FSS currently has five regional senior field safety advisers (SFSAs); in Costa Rica, Kenya, Senegal, the Syrian Arab Republic, and in Tokyo, Japan.² Regional SFSAs focus on countries and operations in their region that do not have an international field safety advisor, and they will have to carry out additional regional responsibilities similar to those previously performed by the SFAs at Headquarters

² This post is time-shared between FSS duties and the UNHCR eCentre in Tokyo. It is estimated that the incumbent spends approximately 25 per cent of his time on FSS functions.

20. In addition to this restructuring and regionalization effort, a number of thematic responsibilities that used to be held by FSS at Headquarters are now placed with individual FSAs in the Field. These include: air safety; armoured vehicles; travel safety; access control systems; and close circuit TVs. Headquarters maintains the role of focal point for requests for information concerning these thematic areas, and will either obtain the information or establish contact between the requesting party and the specialist FSA.

IV. FOLLOW-UP

21. The goal of strengthening UNHCR's security management and the related activities are generally not time-bound, but reflect the continuously evolving nature of the operational environments. The overall strategy of UNHCR's security management system is based on ensuring ongoing technical support, while, at the same time providing training and guidance to field staff. This will assist country operations to address their country-specific security issues.

A. MOSS and security management

22. UNHCR will continue to focus on MOSS implementation; despite achieving MOSS compliance in the vast majority of offices. The changing nature of the environment and the respective evolution of country MOSS tables will require continued monitoring and support.

23. The report on the global assessment of security standards offices vis a vis the threat of explosions is expected to be finalized in June 2008. The current financial resources will most likely be insufficient to address the needs of the offices and, thus, a call for specific donor support will be issued.

24. UNHCR is undertaking a review of its budgeting practices for security activities. The current "integrated" budget system for country offices has raised a number of challenges specifically with regard to security activities, and the review will examine both procedural aspects and technological aspects. It is anticipated that recommendations for improvements will be drafted by the third quarter of 2008.

B. Security management training

25. UNHCR will continue to utilize the SMLP as the primary tool for strengthening the security capacity of country offices. UNHCR will hold at least two SMLP workshops per year, with the ultimate goal of four per year, and these will include staff from implementing partners as well as from UNHCR.

C. Beneficiary security

26. UNHCR will continue to place a high degree of emphasis on issues of security and safety of beneficiaries. The Office anticipates being in a position to report significant progress in the next reporting cycle, particularly with regard to its contributions to chapters on Security, Mine Action, and DDR in the forthcoming Inter-Agency Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons.

D. Partnerships

27. UNHCR reiterates its commitment to the UN Security Management System and to the inclusion of a practical, field-based, risk-management approach to security management. UNHCR will continue to participate in the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, as well as in ad hoc bodies such as the Independent Panel for Safety and Security, with a view to ensuring both the inclusion of a field perspective and continued emphasis on the enabling of field missions.

V. CONCLUSIONS

28. UNHCR is committed to ensuring that the strategic direction of security management emphasizes the continuous development of staff, managerial, and organizational capacity; an effective relationship with security partners; and an overall approach which encompasses every facet of security and programme risk management, including the physical protection of persons of concern.

29. Building upon the Review of UNHCR's Security Policy and Policy Implementation, and in consideration to current events and the wide range of issues relevant to the evolution of security management within the Office, the activities outlined in this paper are intended to help UNHCR's security management system to:

- Foster a planning and management capacity which enables UNHCR not only to comply with Minimum Operating Security Standards, but also to plan, budget and monitor effective implementation of MOSS, as well as other security-related activities with a programme risk management perspective;
- Provide relevant and effective training in security management to field managers and decision-makers;
- Engage partners in the security management system to work towards a comprehensive approach that considers the needs of beneficiaries as well as the security implications in all aspects and stages of UNHCR's operational planning;
- Approach the physical protection of beneficiaries as an integral component of the security management and programme risk management process of country operations; and
- Promote a culture of security risk management throughout the organization, recognizing that this is a fundamental element underpinning all operations.

30. The Office will continue to keep the Standing Committee informed of any new developments with regard to efforts to strengthen safety and security for staff and beneficiaries.