

STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES, INCLUDING REFUGEE SECURITY

I. OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS OF REPORT

1. This note provides an update on activities and issues noted in previous papers presented to the Standing Committee in 2004-2006.¹ 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.

II. CHALLENGES

3. UNHCR continues to face challenges in all aspects of beneficiary and staff safety. Security in many countries has failed to improve and, in some cases, continues to deteriorate. Resources are stretched which presents a challenge for many security-related activities and programmes, necessitating the constant re-examination of priorities and re-allocation of resources. While much progress has been made, there is still a need for the United Nations Security Management System, including the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), 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.

4. Of all these challenges, resource allocation is by far 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 resource-heavy approach to staff safety that is common in many regions is problematic, since it leaves insufficient resources for security or operational needs, thus preventing full operational

¹ EC/54/SC/CRP.20, EC/55/SC/CRP. 21 and EC/57/SC/CRP.24

capacity. This phenomenon is compounded by the significant contributions that UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes provide to the United Nations Security Management System through cost-sharing mechanisms. UNHCR contributes over USD 6 million per year directly to UNDSS and gives additional funds at the country level for country-specific cost-sharing arrangements. While not contradicting the necessity of having a centralized security management system, UNHCR questions the viability of this approach if it is not supported by a centralized funding mechanism.

III. ACTIVITIES & RESULTS

A. Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS)

5. An analysis of a MOSS compliance survey in early 2006 led the High Commissioner to call for MOSS compliance in all offices in areas of security phase III or above, by the end of 2006. By that time, UNHCR had allocated an additional USD 1.4 million to field offices to cover specific MOSS-related expenditures. Despite these efforts, a few offices – particularly those in evolving operations and situations – require further attention.

6. Offices have received targeted financial and advisory support to achieve MOSS compliance. This was been initiated in cooperation with the Regional Bureaux. Funding from the regional security budgets has been directed to a number of specific security-related improvements in country offices. These efforts are being reinforced through missions by security staff to certain countries and regions with the aim of strengthening the capacity of field offices to develop and implement their own security management systems, including effective budgeting for security measures.

7. In addition to the short-term objective of filling gaps in MOSS compliance, UNHCR is developing an interactive toolkit to assist field management and security staff in planning, developing and budgeting for security measures. This will include a monitoring mechanism for MOSS and documentary support for field managers to assist them in managing security requirements in their respective areas.

8. Complementary to its own efforts in implementing and monitoring MOSS compliance, UNHCR actively participates in the UNDSS Monitoring and Compliance programme. To date, offices in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have all been formally assessed, most with very positive results.

B. Security management training

9. UNHCR continues to promote the Security Management Learning Programme (SMLP) as its principal security training tool. The SMLP is directed at mid- and senior-level field managers and covers a wide spectrum of security-related issues. The ultimate goal of the SMLP is to increase the knowledge and capacity of field managers to address security issues without having to resort to additional staffing or other resources. UNHCR has conducted two

SMLP workshops in 2007 for 44 mid- and senior-level managers. Since its inception in 2005 to date, some 145 staff have benefited directly from the SMLP, while over 50 per cent of staff have profited indirectly from the knowledge and skills that these managers have acquired.

10. In addition to the SMLP, UNHCR continues to include security management as a significant component of the Workshop for Emergency Management (WEM), now 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.

11. In addition to UNHCR's in-house training programmes, the partnership between the Office and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the e-Centre has helped to develop several security-related training programmes, such as the Safety Awareness and Security Management Workshop; the Security Risk Management (SRM) Workshop; and the Safety in the Field Workshop. Participants in the e-Centre programmes include representatives of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and governments, with venues across the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East.

12. UNHCR is also actively participating in the United Nations system-wide security management training initiatives. The "Advanced Security in the Field" CD-ROM training programme was rolled out in early 2007 and UNHCR actively promoted this training module among staff, and set a deadline for completion. As the records for this training are monitored by UNDSS, UNHCR has only an unofficial estimate of completion rates. However, it is believed that almost all staff in countries of security phase 1 or above have completed this course successfully.

13. UNHCR is participating in the UNDSS-led Security Management Team training at country level. UNDSS has conducted this training in seven countries and will give another 15 courses in 2007. UNHCR strongly welcomes these efforts and encourages UNDSS to continue this programme.

C. Beneficiary security

14. To strengthen UNHCR's response to situations with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), UNHCR has reinforced the role of its Field Safety Section (FSS) on issues related to beneficiary security. FSS has designated one of the HQ-based Senior Field Safety Advisor posts as the Refugee/IDP Security focal point, who is the primary contact in the Division of Operational Services for all issues related to the physical protection of refugees and other persons of concern.

15. FSS is actively involved in the drafting of the safety/security chapter included in the Inter-Agency Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons. This initiative examines the support structures in countries of concern to enhance the physical security of IDPs in practice, and to ensure that those practices are complementary to legal protection. As

a concrete example, FSS is currently reviewing procedures and developing methods for working with State and non-State actors, such as rebel groups and militias, perpetrators of violence and abuse that target civilians.

16. FSS continues to work closely with the Division of International Protection Services, on links between refugee security and staff security (e.g. drafting of guidance on resettlement and staff security). The Service also 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.

D. Partnerships

17. UNHCR continues to support the United Nations Security Management System, and to provide regular input and assistance on policy matters in collaboration 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.

18. As part of the effort to train professional security officers in the specific organizational and operational aspects of different United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, UNDSS has invited UNHCR and others to provide a training session during the UNDSS Induction Training Programmes (ITP) and Refresher Training Programmes (RTP) at the ILO Training Centre in Turin, Italy. The Office has participated in every ITP and RTP this year. This participation 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.

E. Change management

19. The Field Safety Section (FSS) has undertaken an internal review of the priority areas for support, and the implications that this may have in a restructured organization. As the structure of the organization evolves, so will the support on security-related matters. Emphasis is being placed on direct and efficient support to country operations through the Regional Bureaux, including the potential re-assignment of two HQ-based Senior Field Safety Advisor posts to regional hubs.

IV. FOLLOW-UP

20. It should be recalled that the goal of strengthening UNHCR's security management and the related activities are generally not time-bound. They reflect the continually evolving nature of the operational environments. The overall strategy of UNHCR's security management system is based on ensuring continuous technical support, while, at the same time providing training and guidance to field staff. This will assist country operations to address their own country-specific security issues.

A. MOSS and security management

21. UNHCR has initiated a monitoring exercise that will deploy missions to countries of operation on a regular basis. The aim of these missions is to provide guidance and training to country managers on all security-related activities, including MOSS development and budgeting. The missions are designed to complement the training provided in the SMLP, and they are expected to improve the country-level management of security programmes significantly. The first such mission focused on operations in West Africa and resulted in a comprehensive report that has enabled the country offices and the Bureau to plan more effectively for security activities in the future, and included recommendations on UNHCR's budgeting practices for security-related activities. It is anticipated that this project will continue for the foreseeable future, reaching as many as 10 countries per year.

B. Security management training

22. UNHCR will continue to utilize the Security Management Learning Programme (SMLP) as the primary tool for strengthening the capacity of country offices to address security issues. UNHCR will endeavour to hold at least two SMLP workshops per year and these will include staff from implementing partners and UNHCR.

23. UNHCR is committed to the strong and mutually-beneficial relationship with JICA and the e-Centre. This arrangement has brought a wealth of knowledge resources to the field of security management and has also provided the opportunity to strengthen UNHCR's relationships with implementing partners and NGOs in security management.

C. Beneficiary security

24. The appointment of a Refugee/IDP Security focal point will afford FSS the opportunity to engage directly with internal and external interlocutors on issues of security and safety of beneficiaries. UNHCR will be in a position to report significant progress in this area 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

25. UNHCR reiterates its commitment to the United Nations 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 DSS-led reviews of MOSS and Integrated Mission Framework, both with a view to ensuring the inclusion of a field perspective and the continued emphasis on the enabling of field missions.

V. CONCLUSIONS

26. UNHCR reiterates its commitment to ensure 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.

27. Building upon the Review of UNHCR's Security Policy and Policy Implementation, and in consideration of 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.

28. 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.