



Answering people's urgent need for protection and humanitarian assistance anywhere in the world has been an essential part of UNHCR's work for the past three decades. Refugees and others fleeing conflict need help as quickly as possible, requiring a strong institutional commitment to emergency preparedness and response. The international community and public opinion expect aid workers to be on the scene and take action – and to do so swiftly.

Since 1998, when the second edition of UNHCR's Emergency Handbook appeared, the Office has been involved in large-scale humanitarian operations in the Great Lakes region of Africa, Timor-Leste, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to name just a few. We have been called on also in many smaller crises where our capacity for timely deployment of staff and aid has saved lives, answered sudden operational shifts and ensured that refugees at risk have received legal and physical protection. This year alone, UNHCR dispatched over 200 emergency staff to 27 countries on four continents.

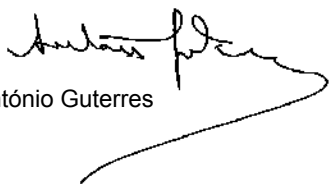
Developing the mechanisms to reinforce a quick, agile and flexible emergency response capacity is one of our operational priorities for the coming years. We have established an Early Warning system, linking key preparedness measures at country, regional and headquarters levels. Events in Lebanon demonstrated the importance of a robust logistics capacity and, as a result, we have revamped our supply and management service and integrated it in the Division of Operational Services where it will be closely associated with our emergency service. We have increased the number of staff available at any time for immediate deployment. With the collaboration of other humanitarian actors, our target is to be able to respond to unexpected refugee crises involving up to 500,000 people.

In addition to traditional emergency skills, evolving situations increasingly demand specific protection and coordination experience. UNHCR is asked to help identify genuine asylum-seekers among the growing groups of new arrivals mixed in with migrants, putting a premium on our ability to deploy qualified staff for protection screening and refugee status determination. As part of the collective response by the United Nations and the humanitarian community to situations of internal displacement, UNHCR has assumed leading responsibility for the protection, emergency shelter and camp coordination and management clusters, necessitating coordination and emergency management expertise.

As a reference tool which serves also to reinforce a common understanding among the many key actors in emergency situations, the third edition of UNHCR's Emergency Handbook reflects these latest developments.

This version includes a number of important revisions based on valuable inputs from the non-governmental organizations and other partners who are an integral part of our standby capacity. Updates include an emphasis on security awareness as an integral part of daily life and work in operations, along with important information on UNHCR and the military; a new chapter on combating HIV/AIDS in refugee situations; and how to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies. The revised Handbook underscores the need to understand, from the very outset of an emergency, the protection risks facing different members of a community and describes how to conduct participatory assessments with women, girls, boys and men to ensure adequate assistance and protection for all.

I am pleased to introduce the updated version of the Emergency Handbook and hope that you will find it helpful in every phase of an emergency operation.



António Guterres

