



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# POLICY ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

2017



Division of Emergency,  
Security and Supply



**POLICY ON  
EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS  
AND RESPONSE**  
2017

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**COVER:** South Sudanese refugees carrying plastic sheeting and other relief items walk down a road in Bidibidi refugee settlement, Yumbe District, Northern Region, Uganda. © UNHCR / DAVID AZIA



Recently arrived South Sudanese refugees received blankets and other relief items at Imvepi reception center in Arua district in Northern Uganda near South Sudan, 1 May, 2017. © UNHCR / JIRO OSE

## 1. PURPOSE

**1.2.** This Policy provides the framework for UNHCR's engagement in emergency preparedness and response, in line with UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021. It supersedes and replaces the 2015 Policy on *Emergency Response Activation, Leadership and Accountabilities* ('the 2015 Policy').

**1.2.** This Policy introduces a number of improvements based on lessons learned since the 2015 Policy was issued, including a reinforced focus on preparedness; a strengthened field orientation; sharpened provisions on leadership and accountabilities; improved and simplified access to human, financial

and material resources; and enhanced partnership and inclusivity.

**1.3.** This Policy also takes into account the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016 and its accompanying *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly, "New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants", Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 3 October 2016, A/RES/71/1.



## 2. SCOPE

**2.1.** This Policy covers UNHCR's engagement in situations at risk of a humanitarian emergency in which urgent and advanced preparedness action and/or an operational response are required. UNHCR defines a humanitarian emergency as any situation in which the life, rights or well-being of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR will be threatened unless immediate and appropriate action is taken; and which demands an extraordinary response and exceptional measures because current UNHCR capacities at country and regional levels are insufficient.

**2.2.** This Policy applies to all UNHCR staff members and affiliate workforce personnel in the field and at headquarters engaged in leading, managing, delivering, overseeing or supporting any aspect of emergency preparedness and response.

**2.3.** Compliance is mandatory.

## 3. RATIONALE

**3.1.** This Policy is based on a comprehensive review of the implementation of the 2015 Policy, and takes into account developments in the global displacement, humanitarian and operational contexts. It draws on progress made in relation to UNHCR's preparedness, flexibility, predictability, institutional leadership and accountability for emergency operations, and in ensuring people-centred and protection-driven humanitarian assistance and solutions.

**3.2.** The review demonstrated that early investment in preparedness is critical to paving the way for an effective response to emergencies when they eventually occur. Enhanced provisions to ensure timely and adequate emergency preparedness are therefore a central element of this Policy.

**3.3.** This Policy is strongly field-oriented. It recognizes and fosters the primary responsibility and role of Governments; inter-agency partnership; and the crucial linkages to development and broader national social, community and economic systems that must be established from the onset of an emergency.

**3.4.** Special attention is paid to simplified procedures, enhanced preparedness and capacity building. This Policy is complemented by partnership agreements with governments, UN agencies and NGOs designed to reinforce our mutual emergency preparedness and response capacities. Technical guidance, including Emergency Tool Kits in key areas will continue to be issued and updated, and made available as guidance in the [UNHCR Emergency Handbook](#).

## 4. POLICY OBJECTIVE

**4.1.** UNHCR will proactively anticipate, prepare for and respond to emergencies with urgency, speed and nimbleness. It will effectively assure protection and support for persons of concern, while from the outset working towards and leveraging solutions in the most optimal manner.

**4.2.** UNHCR will recognise, support and facilitate the fundamental role of host governments in emergency preparedness and response, leading and coordinating humanitarian and other partners in line with the Organization's mandated role in refugee situations, and/or participating fully in inter-agency responses in internal displacement emergencies and other humanitarian crises. UNHCR will engage the private sector and civil society in joint and inclusive comprehensive emergency preparedness and response activities, resource mobilisation and capacity building, with the aim of saving lives, ensuring protection and pursuing solutions.

## 5. KEY PRINCIPLES

**5.1.** UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response activities will be guided by the following principles.

### **Whole-of-UNHCR approach and the pivotal role of country operations**

**5.2.** Emergencies call for a 'whole of UNHCR' approach, in which roles, resources and capacities within the Organization are directed as one to ensure a timely and effective response. UNHCR country operations have a pivotal and fundamental role in this respect, with headquarters entities engaged to capacitate and empower them, facilitating and reinforcing field delivery, in line with applicable frameworks and standards.

### People at the centre

**5.3.** People affected by or at risk of emergencies are at the centre of UNHCR's preparedness and response operations. Saving lives, providing protection, and ensuring that their fundamental needs are met, shall drive the design and delivery of all interventions and inform UNHCR's engagement with States and other stakeholders.

**5.4.** In line with UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach, persons of concern will be duly engaged and consulted in the design and implementation of UNHCR's interventions, and measures will be implemented from the outset to ensure that the Organization and our partners are accountable to them, including through effective and on-going two-way communication. Host communities will also be engaged and their perspectives and needs taken into account as far as feasible.

### Overriding duty to act on a 'Do no harm' and 'No regrets' basis

**5.5.** UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response operations will be driven by and aligned to Sphere and other applicable standards, and the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

**5.6.** UNHCR shall not under any circumstances permit that persons of concern face avoidable harm or endure undue suffering. Managers will be empowered, supported and held accountable to take all decisions and actions necessary to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern receive protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance in a timely and effective manner that stems or diminishes harm, suffering and untoward hardship.

### State responsibility and humanitarian complementarity

**5.7.** States have the primary responsibility to ensure the protection of persons seeking safety as refugees on their territories. As an internationally-mandated protection agency, UNHCR works with and supports Government authorities and host communities in preparing for and responding to emergencies and promotes and complements protection, humanitarian assistance and solutions for persons of concern in line with international human rights law, humanitarian and refugee law and national laws and responsibilities.

### Diversifying partnerships

**5.8.** UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response operations shall be



*Rescue workers shuttle a group of tired, cold and hungry refugees to a rescue boat.*  
© UNHCR / GIUSEPPE CAROTENUTO

designed and delivered as inclusive, collaborative undertakings, including governments, civil society, local and international NGOs, UN agencies, development actors, financial institutions, the private sector, and the media — as well as refugees, the internally displaced and local and host communities.

### Solutions and link to development

**5.9.** The pursuit of durable solutions for refugees and other persons of concern shall be embedded in all emergency preparedness and response activities from the outset.

**5.10.** Accordingly, emergency operations shall be designed and delivered in

the most comprehensive manner possible, in line with the CRRF. In particular, UNHCR will proactively seek the involvement of governmental and non-governmental development actors, financial institutions and the private sector, with a view to fostering the inclusion of persons of concern in relevant development plans, projects and activities, including those related to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

#### Duty of care

**5.11.** Managers must ensure that all necessary safety and security arrangements are in place for personnel carrying out preparedness and response activities. This includes ensuring adequate working, living and health care conditions.

**5.12.** Particular attention shall be paid to addressing the needs of nationally-recruited staff in the most flexible, sensitive and creative ways possible.

**5.13.** UNHCR shall, as far as feasible, extend support to and advocate for the security, access, accommodation and other relevant needs of partners and other non-UNHCR humanitarian personnel engaged side by side with UNHCR in emergency response activities.

#### Innovation and scanning the horizon

**5.14.** UNHCR shall be attentive to and shall incorporate in its emergency preparedness and response relevant organizational, global, regional or national policy, strategic or operational innovations or trends that can further enhance efficiency and/or transformative outcomes for persons of concern.

**5.15.** In particular, in line with UNHCR's *Policy on Cash-Based Interventions (CBI)*, operations shall systematically and proactively consider the feasibility of using cash as a priority response modality.

## 6. PREPAREDNESS IN THE PRE-EMERGENCY PHASE

**6.1.** UNHCR will continue to strengthen institutional risk analysis, the generation of information, preliminary preparedness and planning, training and resource mobilization accordingly.

**6.2.** Representatives will ensure that their operations undertake the actions outlined below.

#### All country operations: Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs)

**6.3.** All operations shall undertake on an annual basis, risk analysis and Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs) following the guidance set out in *UNHCR's Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE)* and with the support of the Division of Emergencies, Security and Supply as needed.

#### Country Operations at medium or high risk of a new or escalated emergency

**6.4.** Operations at a high risk of a new or escalated emergency shall be included on the High Alert List for Emergency Preparedness (HALEP) coordinated and maintained by DESS. Such operations shall follow the *Operational Guidelines for the HALEP*, and undertake the prescribed actions, including:

- a) Designate a senior-level Preparedness Focal Point who, among others, shall be responsible to complete a self-assessment and other reporting as spelt out in the Advanced Preparedness Actions (APAs) in the PPRE, on the basis of which the preparedness rating of the operation shall be assessed and determined;
- b) In collaboration with government counterparts and other partners, develop and implement a Preparedness Action Plan (PAP), including if appropriate, a scenario-based contingency plan;<sup>2</sup>
- c) Contribute to the development of a Regional Refugee Response Plan or other resource mobilization instrument;
- d) Complete a "Business Continuity Plan" (BCP) as required in light of the security situation.

**6.5.** Where the risk relates to a non-refugee situations, UNHCR will participate in the RC/HC-led inter-agency processes and lead relevant cluster preparedness through the "Emergency Response Preparedness" (ERP) approach developed and endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) which

<sup>2</sup> Technical support is available from Headquarters through DESS and the respective Bureau(x).



Syrian refugees Shahad, 5, and Waad, 3, have their picture taken in this unofficial refugee site in Athens, Greece in summer 2016. © UNHCR / ROLAND SCHÖNBAUER

provides tools for UN Country Teams and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to understand and prepare for risks and establish a system to monitor them.

**6.6.** Security conditions shall be integrated in planning at the earliest stage possible to ensure that risks are taken into account and that the response is delivered in a manner consistent with the organizational duty of care.

**6.7.** In all these activities, relevant linkages will be made to the CRRF, highlighting how the relationships, partnerships and ways of working set out in the CRRF can be applied in the specific context.

## 7. ACTIVATION OF EMERGENCIES

**7.1.** A UNHCR emergency is declared in order ensure that the right attention and support is provided across the Organization, and with its partners and interlocutors, for preparedness for and response to potential, unfolding or escalating emergencies.

**7.2.** One of three emergency levels may be declared as set out below, taking into account the existing capacity of the country operation(s) and the Regional Bureau(x) concerned, in light of the expected magnitude, complexity or consequences of the emergency, to effectively and accountably assume and discharge UNHCR's leadership and delivery of the response.

### Emergency Level 1: Proactive preparedness

**7.3.** An Emergency Level 1 is activated in order to trigger active preparations for a likely humanitarian emergency. Preparedness actions are undertaken in the operation(s) concerned, with the support of the relevant Regional Bureau, DESS and other support services as needed. These may include preparedness missions and human, financial and material support.

### Emergency Level 2: Stepped-up Bureau support

**7.4.** Emergency Level 2 applies to a situation in which additional support and resources, mainly from the concerned Regional Bureau, are required for the operation to be able to respond in a timely and effective manner.

**7.5.** Upon declaration of a Level 2 emergency, the Bureau is authorised to mobilize and/or re-allocate resources available under its auspices and may seek specific support from Headquarters Divisions.

### Emergency Level 3: Whole-of-UNHCR Response

**7.6.** The activation of a Level 3 Emergency signifies an exceptionally serious situation in which the scale, pace, complexity or consequences of the crisis exceed the existing response capacities of the country operation and Regional Bureau(x) concerned, and call for a corporate, whole-of-UNHCR response.

**7.7.** The declaration of an Emergency Level 3 automatically triggers the establishment of Headquarters coordination mechanisms, deployment of staff and supplies, access to additional financial resources, real-time reporting and



follow-up mechanisms.

### Activation and duration of Emergency Levels

**7.8.** Emergency Level 1 is activated by the AHC-O. Drawing on analysis provided by the Representative, the Regional Bureau and DESS Directors shall communicate the need for a Level 1 activation to the AHC-O for confirmation, who will accordingly inform Directors at Headquarters.

**7.9.** Level 2 and 3 emergencies shall be declared by the High Commissioner through an all-staff message on the advice of the AHC-O, following consultations with the relevant Bureau Director(s) and DESS.

**7.10.** When a UNHCR Level 3 emergency is declared for a refugee situation, the High Commissioner will notify the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the IASC Principals.

**7.11.** For sudden-onset emergencies, the level will be determined within 72 hours of the initial event, as verified by the concerned Bureau(x).

**7.12.** Level 2 and 3 emergency declarations shall remain in force for an initial period of six months, at which time they will be reviewed.

## 8. CONSEQUENCES OF AN EMERGENCY DECLARATION

### Leadership in the Country Operation

**8.1.** For Emergency Level 1 and Level 2, no leadership adjustments are normally expected.

**8.2.** For Emergency Level 3, the High Commissioner shall reaffirm the existing leadership arrangements or decide on an alternative model. Where, the Representative's profile and experience are no longer suited to the new situation, the High Commissioner will request the Representative to step aside. The Representative may also request such an arrangement. In cases where a 'step-aside' mechanism is activated, a staff member with the required seniority, experience and aptitudes will be deployed to assume leadership of the operation until a permanent solution is found.

**8.3.** Leadership of the response at Sub-office or Field office level, including confirmation of or change in current leadership shall also be addressed as early as possible by the Representative and the concerned Bureau.

**8.4.** For Emergency Levels 2 and 3, the Representative will receive a letter from the AHC-O advising the Representative of the High Commissioner's expectations in relation to UNHCR's leadership, coordination of and response to the emergency and the support to be provided by Headquarters, in particular through the leadership of the Regional Bureau Director supported by the DESS Director.

### Country-level coordination in refugee emergencies

**8.5.** For refugee emergencies declared pursuant to this Policy, the Representative shall immediately ensure that the following actions are carried out:

- a) Bring together a multi-functional emergency team within the Country Office, Sub-Office or across the operation as appropriate, to support the management of the emergency operation on the ground.
- b) Establish the arrangements set out in the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), with a clear coordination structure shared with partners and stakeholders, while at the same time fostering the multi-stakeholder approach and inclusive engagement with partners underlined in the CRRF.
- c) Ensure that all key functional and response areas are adequately and effectively coordinated by UNHCR or partner staff with the right profile, experience and authority across the entire spectrum of the response (planning, operational, monitoring, reporting and information management), including by seeking support from Headquarters and other sources as needed.
- d) Confirm to the Regional Bureau and concerned Divisions that the arrangements set out above, including the respective roles and responsibilities, have been established.

### Regional Refugee Coordination

**8.6.** In Level 3 refugee emergencies covering more than one country, the High Commissioner will normally appoint a Regional Refugee Coordinator (RRC), who

shall normally be located in the region.

**8.7.** The RRC shall provide overall internal and external coordination and oversight of the emergency preparedness and response operation. The RRC's accountabilities, responsibilities, authorities, reporting lines and duration of appointment will be established by the Director of the Regional Bureau concerned and set out in Terms of Reference (TORs) to be issued together with the appointment.

#### Coordination at Headquarters

**8.8.** For Emergency Level 1, the Bureau will determine the modalities for coordination.



*A man pushed a woman passed an old building while fleeing fighting in Mosul, Iraq on June 24, 2017. © UNHCR / CENGIZ YAR*

**8.9.** For Emergency Levels 2 and 3, the arrangements set out below will be established at headquarters to support the country operation to mount and deliver an effective response in line with the leadership, coordination and management arrangements established there, and including the external relations, strategic communication, resource mobilization and other global aspects of the emergency response.

#### (a) Senior Level Working Group

**8.10.** The Senior Level Working Group (SLWG), consisting of the Directors of the relevant Regional Bureau(x) and Divisions, most notably DESS, DIP, DPSM, DHRM, DER and DIST, shall be convened by the AHC-O and will meet as and when required.

**8.11.** At the onset of the emergency, the SLWG will ensure the effective establishment of UNHCR's response in line with to this Policy. It will thereafter review its key strategic, inter-agency, management, operational and external relations aspects and overall effectiveness on an ongoing basis, including any issues arising from the Joint Senior Level Mission provided for in paragraphs 8.19 and 8.20 below.

#### (b) Emergency Cell

**8.12.** The Emergency Cell (EC) shall be activated and chaired by the Director, or in the absence of the Director, the Deputy Director, of the Regional Bureau concerned, with technical support from DESS.

**8.13.** The objective of the EC is to coordinate Headquarters support for the country operation(s), ensuring that all the requirements and issues necessary for an effective response are rapidly addressed in an action-oriented manner and to trouble-shoot in real-time.

**8.14.** Participation in the EC will be limited to a small number of senior staff with decision-making authority of the concerned Bureau(x), DESS, DPSM, DER, DIST, DHRM and DIP, together with Regional Service Centres where applicable. The Field will be represented by their respective Bureau(x) and shall maintain technical contact with the Divisions as required.

**8.15.** EC meetings will be documented through concise and succinct action points indicating the issues for which back-stopping, actions or solutions are

required; the entity to take action; and the timeline within which the necessary actions shall be taken.

**8.16.** These and other EC updates will be shared on a timely basis with key stakeholders including the AHC-O and other SET members, Bureaux, Divisions and relevant Regional/Country offices.

### **(c) Specialist Cells**

**8.17.** The EC may decide to establish specialist or subject-specific cells to focus on and track required actions in the specific functional areas as needed - most notably, Human Resources, Supply, Protection, Programme, Public Information, Resource Mobilization, Security and Administration/ Finance.

**8.18.** The Specialist Cells will address and provide updates on the issues and challenges faced in the respective subject areas and progress in resolving them.

### **Joint Senior Level Mission**

**8.19.** Within the first two weeks following the declaration of a Level 2 or 3 Emergency, a Joint Senior Level Mission (JSLM) will be undertaken by the Director or Deputy Director of the concerned Bureau with the Regional Representative or Regional Refugee Coordinator, if applicable, and the Director or Deputy Director of DESS to review the overall response to the emergency, including its protection and operational strategy, and provide operational guidance.

**8.20.** An oral briefing will be provided immediately upon return, and a report presented to the AHC-O within one week, summarising its findings and recommendations to enhance leadership, coordination and/or delivery capacities at country, regional and Bureau levels. The AHC-O will review and take action accordingly, and escalate to the High Commissioner those that may require his decision, including where leadership adjustments are called for.

## **9. IASC SYSTEM-WIDE LEVEL 3 EMERGENCIES**

**9.1.** Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) System-Wide Level 3 emergencies, are declared by the Emergency Relief Coordinator following consultations

with the HCT, the Emergency Director's Group (EDG) and the IASC Principals. An IASC system-wide Level 3 Emergency requires the collective humanitarian sector to mobilize capacity for the accelerated delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance to those affected.

**9.2.** In particular, UNHCR will:

- a)** In conflict-related internal displacement, normally assume cluster leadership of the Protection, Shelter and CCCM Clusters from the onset of the emergency and elaborate a strategy to ensure effective UNHCR cluster leadership, including adequate staffing for leadership, coordination and information management;
- b)** In the case of internal displacement caused by natural disasters, determine its interventions and cluster leadership on a case by case basis, and in consultation with humanitarian actors as appropriate.

**9.3.** UNHCR may declare or maintain a UNHCR emergency declaration at the same time as an IASC system-wide Level 3 Emergency declaration. Coordination arrangements in 'mixed' IDP/refugee situations are dealt with in the Joint Note between UNHCR and OCHA.

## **10. AUTOMATIC MOBILIZATION OF HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES**

**10.1.** Upon the declaration of a Level 2 or Level 3 Refugee Emergency, the accountabilities and procedures set out in this Policy are automatically activated and emergency procedures, guidelines and tools become applicable. Central and regional emergency resources - including human, financial and material — shall be made available to the concerned operation(s).

### **Human resources**

**10.2.** The country operation shall, working with the Bureau, immediately identify staffing requirements and work with DHRM and DESS to ensure that these are met. Priority shall be given to the accelerated recruitment of local workforce, including temporary arrangements and affiliate workforce.



**10.3.** Deployments may be sought at any time for a declared emergency<sup>3</sup>. For an Emergency Level 3, multi-functional Emergency Services (ES) response teams, led by a Principal/Senior Emergency Coordinator with well-defined responsibilities, authority and scope of work, will be automatically deployed. These teams will be supported by additional technical staff in life-saving and other key sectors as required, to ensure a decisive and comprehensive response.

**10.4.** Arrangements must be made at an early stage for the transition from emergency deployments to more stable staffing arrangements through temporary assignments or appointments, and Fast Track assignments. A Fast Track vacancy announcement should normally be issued within the first 8 weeks. The EC should be consulted on the final Fast Track proposals to ensure that the proposed staffing is in line with assessed corporate accountabilities.

**10.5.** The High Commissioner retains the authority to assign and reassign staff to any UNHCR activity and operation in accordance with UN Staff Regulation 1.2 (c).

#### Financial resources

**10.6.** Working with the Bureau and supported by DER, country operations shall from the start of an emergency, elaborate their resource requirements and matching supplementary budgets and mobilization strategies reflecting the participation of partners, and ensure that these requirements, plans and strategies are properly reflected and integrated in pertinent contingency plans, Regional Refugee Response Plans or Humanitarian Response Plans.

**10.7.** Resources from internal emergency reserves shall be allocated in accordance with the Resource Allocation Framework under which Bureau Directors can authorize allocations of up to USD 5 million and the AHC-O up to USD 10 million for any declared emergency. Initial allocations which should be released within 24 hours, should cover immediate response needs, including any requirements to ensure compliance with Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) or other critical security requirements.

<sup>3</sup> Human resources are made available by Emergency Services (ES) and DHRM through the Senior Corporate Emergency Roster (SCER), the functional rosters, the Emergency Response Team (ERT) Roster, standby partnership arrangements, affiliate workforce, technical staff from Divisions, former ERT members and other forms of shorter and longer term deployments.



Community leader Omar Idu works with interpreter Lisa Gabrilidis and UNHCR Protection Officer Erin Hampton to distribute thermal blankets to residents of Faneromeni accommodation in Greece. © UNHCR / ROLAND SCHÖNBAUER

#### Material resources

**10.8.** Upon request, DESS will promptly make available material resources critically required for the emergency response. The Global Stock Management provides Core Relief Items (CRIs) for up to 600,000 persons of concern; vehicles and security equipment for operations, and other materials as needed.

**10.9.** Where conditions allow, cash-based interventions and local procurement in lieu of international procurement should be applied.

#### Project Partnership Agreements

**10.10.** To facilitate partnership engagement during emergency preparedness



and response, the following measures are hereby introduced:

- a) A waiver for the selection of partners in declared emergencies is decentralised to country operations during the first 6 months of a declared Emergency Level 2 or 3. The decentralisation of the waiver process is granted to the Representative, and while in force it is no longer a requirement to seek approval of a waiver from Headquarters.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The country operation is required to document the rationale for the decision and share the note with DFAM/IPMS for the records.



*Fateem Hadi Jaber and her daughter, Sameera, live on the street in Hodaydah City, Yemen, after fleeing their home in the neighbouring governorate of Hajjah.*

© UNHCR / SHABIA MANTOO

- b) The thresholds for the optional selection of partners undertaking small scale projects have been raised from USD 50,000 to USD 100,000 without limitation on the number of objectives and outputs under one agreement. For these small scale projects in Level 2 and Level 3 declared emergencies, prior registration of the partner on the Partner Portal is not necessary.
- c) The duration of a simplified Letter of Mutual Intent (LOMI) can be up to 6 months. A LOMI can be used in emergency situations to allow activities to start while the standard agreement is being negotiated. Once the situation normalises, standard partnership agreements should be signed with partners.

## 11. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

**11.1.** UNHCR will further broaden its standby partnership arrangements. Furthermore, in collaboration with Governments, UN agencies, NGO partners, development, business and financial institutions and local stakeholders, UNHCR will apply the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to large movements of refugees, including rapid and well-supported admission, reception and registration of new arrivals; support for immediate and on-going needs; assistance for local and national institutions and communities receiving refugees; expanded opportunities for solutions; and linkage to and interface with national social, economic and community safety nets.

## 12. DEACTIVATION OF EMERGENCIES

**12.1.** Emergency declarations will be subject to an automatic review after six months, or earlier if necessary. The review will be undertaken under the direction of the AHC-O and shall take into account analysis and recommendations by the Bureau and DESS, drawing on consultations with country operations and partners. The AHC-O will recommend to the High Commissioner whether the declaration should be maintained or deactivated.

**12.2.** Emergencies will be deactivated in a timely manner to ensure that available emergency resources are dedicated to those operations with the most

urgent needs. The deactivation of an emergency does not necessarily imply that the crisis it relates to has come to an end, but reflects that the operational response has been stabilised and that exceptional mobilization of capacities and emergency procedures and systems is no longer required. An emergency may be declared again at a later stage should the situation so require.

**12.3.** UNHCR will also support the deactivation of a system-wide Level 3 declaration and/or IASC clusters when no longer required. A system-wide Level 3 Emergency declaration is deactivated by the ERC after consultation with the Principals.

### 13. ACCOUNTABILITIES

**13.1.** UNHCR is accountable to persons of concern in all aspects of emergency preparedness and response according to the priorities outlined in its institutional, policy and strategic documents, among them UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017- 2021, and the IASC "[Accountability to Affected Populations \(AAP\) Operational Framework](#)".

**13.2.** The High Commissioner is vested with overall accountability for UNHCR's emergency operations in line with his/her mandated responsibilities. The High Commissioner is supported by the SET members in their respective areas of responsibility, most notably the AHC-O who, at that level, oversees emergencies on a day to day basis. The High Commissioner has overall authority to allocate resources for emergencies under the Resource Allocation Framework.

**13.3.** At Headquarters, the concerned Bureau Director is accountable to provide strategic direction, reporting and updates to the SET, managing resources and coordinating Headquarters support.

**13.4.** At country level, the Representative is accountable for timely emergency preparedness and response including ensuring protection and humanitarian assistance for refugees and other persons of concern, leadership and coordination, active participation in inter-agency fora such as the HCT and reporting to the Bureau as required. In IDP emergencies, the Representative is accountable to ensure UNHCR leadership of the clusters under its responsibility, most notably protection, emergency shelter and camp coordination and camp manage-

ment and more broadly to participate in over-arching HCT and cluster management to ensure the centrality of protection and the drive for solutions.

**13.5.** Where an emergency is declared in a country operation falling under the purview of a Regional Representative, she/he will maintain and continue to exercise her/his accountabilities, responsibilities and authorities as conferred on him/her by the Bureau Director and in line with his/her job description, including providing support and oversight for emergency operations in the region. Depending on the level and nature of the emergency, the High Commissioner may make temporary adjustments to the accountabilities, responsibilities and authorities of the Regional Representative for the duration of the emergency. Any such changes must be communicated in writing to the Bureau Director, the Regional Representative and the Country Representatives who report to the Regional Representative. These arrangements will be reviewed periodically and in any event, at the time of the deactivation of the emergency.

**13.6.** All Division Directors are responsible to ensure extension of functional and technical support, guidance and expertise including by coordinating the respective rosters and producing and/or updating Emergency Tool Kits in their respective areas of responsibility to facilitate and support simplified, streamlined, timely and effective delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance. More specifically:

- a) The Division of Emergency, Supply and Security (DESS) is responsible for timely deployment of experienced emergency staff and management of all emergency rosters, analysis of security trends and provision of security advice, releasing CRIs/NFIs and vehicles, providing procurement support/advice, pipeline and warehouse support, establishing, as required, regional and local frame agreements and maintaining global / regional stockpiles
- b) The Division of International Protection (DIP) is responsible to support operations in the development of a protection and solutions strategy and overseeing that protection and solutions objectives underpin operational preparedness and response. This includes advising operations and Bureaux on appropriate protection staffing, protection cluster management including population data management and working closely with operations and Bureaux to develop and implement

protection advocacy strategies.

- c) The Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) is responsible to support programme management and technical excellence across a range of sectors, CCCM and Shelter Cluster coordination, information management and the implementation of key institutional strategies and policies in its areas of oversight including, notably, on alternatives to camps, livelihoods and cash based interventions.
- d) The Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) is responsible to provide guidance and support on Human Resources management issues including staffing, health, welfare and accommodation of the workforce, learning and capacity building from the onset of the emergency in both the preparedness and response phases and the rapid deployment of staff on temporary basis and pursuant to the Fast Track.
- e) The Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) is responsible to support budgeting in emergencies; opening UNHCR bank accounts and selecting financial service providers as well as transferring funds to the field; supporting partner selection and management of partner agreements; providing guidance on financial operations; and approving DOAP.
- f) The Division of External Relations (DER) is responsible for fundraising and emergency resource mobilization, including supporting the development of Supplementary Appeals and Refugee Response Plans in refugee situations, activating the PSFR “Global Emergency Group”, dissemination of external updates, organising donor briefings and advocacy, public outreach, strategic communication and media relations.
- g) The Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications (DIST) is responsible for emergency ICT support at the preparedness and response levels including availing strategic ICT stocks commonly used in emergency response and trained technical ICT staff for emergency deployment. DIST will conduct emergency ICT assessments, review ICT staffing in the areas of response and provide overall ICT coordination capacity in line with the Refugee Coordination Model.



*On arrival at Impevi, Uganda, refugees go through a medical screening where all children under 15 are vaccinated against measles and all children under 5 receive polio drops.*

© UNHCR / JORDI MATAS

- h) The Division of Solutions is responsible to extend strategic, planning, technical, advisory and advocacy support to ensure that the respective solution aspects are reflected and realized in the context of emergency preparedness and response.<sup>5</sup>
- i) The CRRF team is responsible to provide guidance and support to realize CRRF linkages, methods of work, objectives and outcomes in the emergency preparedness and response contexts.

<sup>5</sup> The implementation of this will effect once the new Division of Solutions has been created.



## 14. REAL-TIME REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS

**14.1.** A joint Bureau/DESS real-time review of each Level 2 and Level 3 Emergency Operation will be undertaken after three months through a joint mission and/or workshop. This will involve the key stakeholders to take stock of the timeliness, appropriateness and effectiveness of UNHCR's operational response, monitor the application of this Policy and support adjustments and course correctors as may be necessary.

**14.2.** An evaluation of UNHCR Level 3 emergency operations shall be conducted within 18 months or earlier as may be decided by the High Commissioner.

Such evaluations shall be commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Service.

**14.3.** Evaluations of Level 1 or Level 2 emergencies may also be commissioned in line with the provisions of the *UNHCR Policy on Evaluation*.

## 15. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

**15.1.** DESS is responsible to monitor and, working closely with the Regional Bureaux, Divisions and Services concerned, support this Policy's implementation and compliance and report accordingly to the AHC-O.

## 16. DATES AND APPLICATION

**16.1.** This Policy will come into effect upon signature. It shall be reviewed as needed to reflect major evolutions in UNHCR, IASC or other policies, practices and developments, or as directed by the High Commissioner. The next overall review shall be conducted no later than July 2021.

## 17. HISTORY

**17.1.** This Policy supersedes and replaces the 2015 *Policy on Emergency Response Activation, Leadership and Accountabilities*.

## 18. CONTACT

**18.1.** The contact for this Policy is the Chief, Emergency Policy and Capacity Development Section, Division of Emergency, Security and Supply.



*An elementary school temporary constructed from wood and plastic sheeting is in disrepair after strong storms at Bidibidi refugee settlement in Yumbe district in Northern Uganda 2 May 2017. © UNHCR / JIRO OSE*



## 19. ACRONYMS

<b>AAP</b>	Accountability to Affected Populations	<b>PAP</b>	Preparedness Action Plan
<b>AGD</b>	Age, Gender and Diversity	<b>PPRE</b>	Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies
<b>AHC-O</b>	Assistant High Commissioner (Operations)	<b>PSFR</b>	Private Sector and Fund Raising
<b>APAs</b>	Advanced Preparedness Actions	<b>RPM</b>	Policy and Procedures for Resource Planning and Management
<b>BCP</b>	Business Continuity Plan	<b>RRC</b>	Regional Refugee Coordinator
<b>CBI</b>	Cash-based Intervention	<b>RCM</b>	Refugee Coordination Model
<b>CCCM</b>	Camp Coordination and Camp Management	<b>RC/HC</b>	Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator
<b>CRIs</b>	Core Relief Items	<b>SCER</b>	Senior Corporate Emergency Roster
<b>CRRF</b>	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework	<b>SET</b>	Senior Executive Team
<b>DER</b>	Division of External Relations	<b>SLWG</b>	Senior Level Working Group
<b>DESS</b>	Division of Emergency, Security and Supply	<b>TORS</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>DFAM</b>	Division of Financial and Administrative Management		
<b>DHRM</b>	Division of Human Resources Management		
<b>DIP</b>	Division of International Protection		
<b>DIST</b>	Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications		
<b>DOAP</b>	Delegation of Authority Plan		
<b>DPSM</b>	Division of Programme Support and Management		
<b>EC</b>	Emergency Cell		
<b>EDG</b>	IASC Emergency Directors Group		
<b>ERC</b>	Emergency Relief Coordinator (UN)		
<b>ERP</b>	Emergency Response Preparedness		
<b>ERT</b>	Emergency Response Team (deployed through ES-managed roster of UNHCR staff)		
<b>ES</b>	Emergency Services, DESS		
<b>HALEP</b>	High Alert List on Emergency Preparedness		
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team		
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee		
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology		
<b>JSLM</b>	Joint Senior Level Mission		
<b>LOMI</b>	Letter of Mutual Intent		
<b>MOSS</b>	Minimum Operating Security Standards		
<b>MPAs</b>	Minimum Preparedness Actions		
<b>NFIs</b>	Non-Food Items		
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs		



# POLICY ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

2017

Division of Emergency,  
Security and Supply

For more information  
and enquiries, please contact:

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*Staffers load UNHCR emergency supplies  
at a UNHCR warehouse in Sana'a, Yemen.*  
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