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Emergency Management

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Introduction

1. There is no single blueprint for refugee emergency management; each refugee emergency is unique. However, experience shows that emergencies tend to evolve according to certain recognizable and documented patterns.

Good emergency management relies on knowledge of these patterns and of the effective measures to deal with them.

Emergency situations do not necessarily result in tragedy. The chance of this occurring will be greatly reduced if the emergency is well managed from the stage of preparedness onwards.

2. While emergency management shares many of the characteristics of good management in general, there are a number of distinguishing features:

i. The lives and well-being of people are at stake;

ii. Reaction time is short;

iii. Risk factors are high and consequences of mistakes or delays can be disastrous;

iv. There is great uncertainty;

v. Investment in contingency planning and other preparedness activities is crucial;

vi. Staff and managers may be under particularly high stress because of, for example, security problems and harsh living conditions;

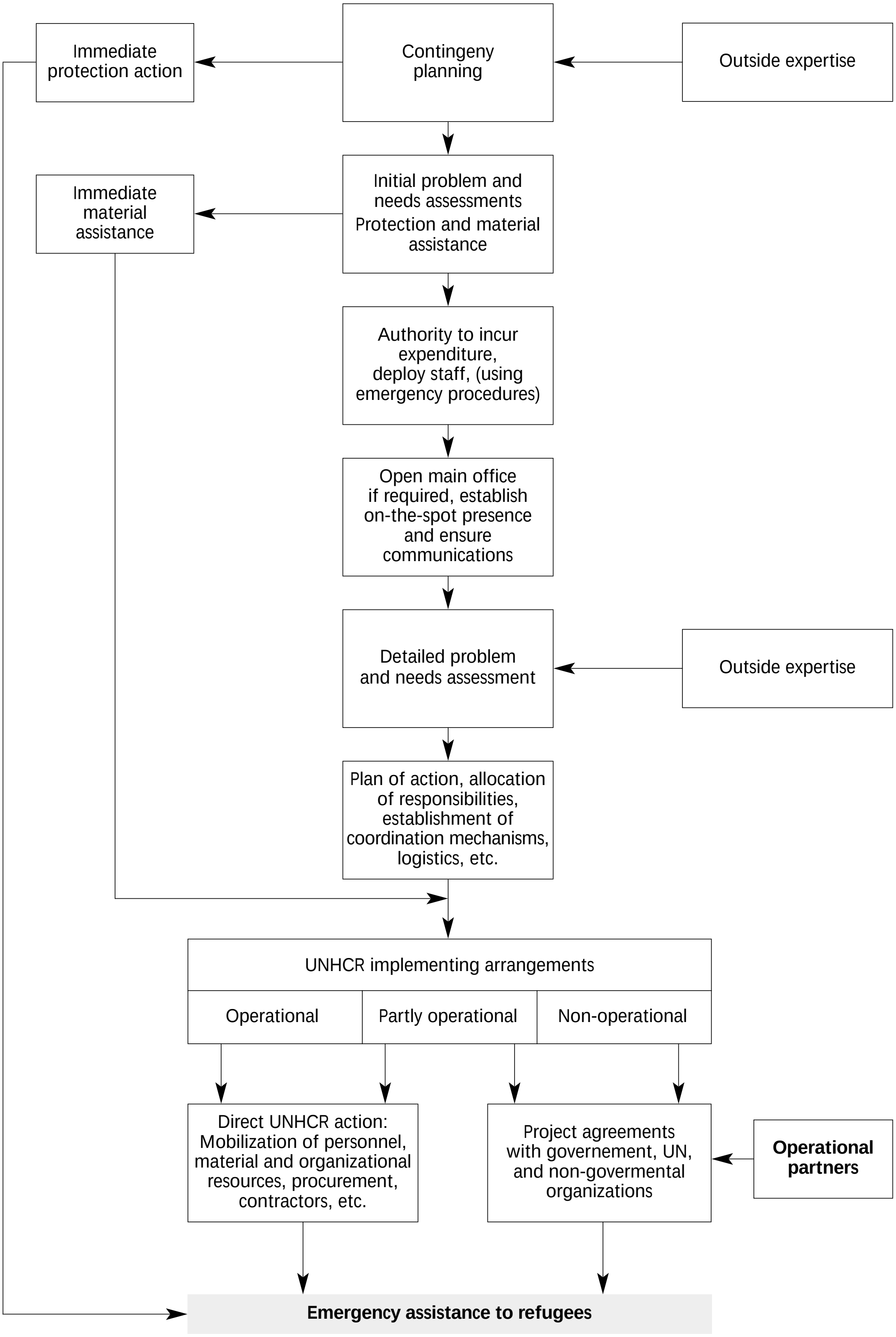
vii. There is no single obvious right answer.

Organization of this Section

3. This section of the handbook (chapters 3 to 9) is structured to reflect the phases of emergency preparedness and response. Firstly, the preparedness activities of contingency planning and early warning are dealt with (chapter 4), followed by initial needs and resources assessment and immediate response (chapter 5). Operations planning, coordination and site level organization are dealt with in chapters 6 and 7. Next, implementing arrangements are discussed, including procedures for operations implementation and control (chapter 8). Finally, chapter 9 on external relations covers relations with the host government (including establishing a formal presence in the country of operations), relations with the donor and diplomatic community and handling media interest. Note that certain activities cut across the phases of emergency preparedness and response. This is particularly the case with external relations, coordination, and planning.

4. Figure 1 shows some of the considerations discussed in this section in diagrammatic form, in particular in relation to emergency response. The response activities of problems and needs assessments, operations planning, implementing arrangements and programme formulation are all very closely related. Some aspects treated separately may be indivisible in practice, and there is no single correct order or way in which an emergency operation should be formulated (but it must conform to established UNHCR procedures governing project submission and control).

Figure 1 – Considerations in Emergency Management



Capacity and Resources

5. Emergency management can be defined as: **the organization of capacities and resources to meet threats to the lives and well-being of refugees.**

6. Preparing for and responding to refugee emergencies are tasks which require the availability of the right resources at the right time as well as the capacity to use these resources effectively.

7. Capacity is the internal organizational capability which includes planning, staffing, structure, systems, procedures, guidelines, information flow, communication, decision-making and administrative support. Resources are the financial and human resources, relief materials, support equipment, tools and facilities.

8. If capacity is weak, then the emergency response is likely to be weak, even if resources are adequate.

Strong capacity can sometimes alleviate resource shortfalls by making more effective use of limited resources.

9. Capacity is an aspect of emergency management which is sometimes not given adequate priority. Resources are often given more emphasis during both the planning and operational stages since they are a more tangible element. But it is capacity that determines the quality of an emergency response. A well-capacitated organization is more likely to be able to mount a credible and effective operation, attracting the necessary resources.

10.

Effective emergency management requires that the development and use of capacity be accorded correct priority throughout the different phases of an operation.

While much of the required capacity must be pre-existing, capacity can also be developed during an operation.

The Key Emergency Management Functions

Introduction

11. Certain management functions are essential throughout a refugee emergency.
These are:

❏ Leading;

❏ Planning;

❏ Organizing and coordinating;

❏ Controlling.

12. These will be required of UNHCR as an organization and also from individuals, at all levels, within UNHCR.

If these functions are not being performed then it is likely that there will be serious deficiencies in the management of the emergency operation.

They always remain the responsibility of the person in overall charge of the operation, though they may be delegated to other staff.

Leading

13. This can be defined as: **the process of creating and communicating a vision for the emergency operation, and providing a clear strategic direction for actions even in situations of great uncertainty and risk.**

14. Successful management requires leadership; subject to the role of the government, leadership may be the most important single contribution of UNHCR to the emergency situation. Leadership requires that once decisions are reached, they are properly implemented. This discipline is essential in emergencies when there is often no time to explain the considerations involved. As far as possible, those directly concerned should contribute to decisions that affect them, but final responsibility rests with the UNHCR officer in charge.

Planning

15. This can be defined as: **setting in place the process of assessing the situation, defining immediate objectives and longer term goals and the activities to accomplish them.**

16. Planning is vital both before and during an emergency, and operations planning must be based on detailed needs and resources assessments.

Organizing and Coordinating

17. This can be defined as: **establishing systems and mechanisms to achieve a given objective, and coordinating people and organizations so that they work together, in a logical way, towards the common objective.**

18. It involves selecting, training and supervising staff, assigning and clarifying roles and responsibilities of all those involved, and structuring communication and information flow. In an emergency, coordinating is a crucial aspect of organizing.

Delegation of Authority and Responsibility

19. Emergency management should be organized so that responsibility and authority are delegated to the lowest appropriate level, and should be exercised as close to the operation or beneficiaries as is practical. Clear and unambiguous lines of authority and reporting should be established and communicated to all staff.

20. The management structure should be organized so that accountability for actions, including management decisions, is clear. Those who make a decision should be those with the appropriate level of knowledge to enable them to make that decision and should be responsible for ensuring its implementation and follow up (including monitoring). The involvement of unnecessary layers of management, and unnecessary numbers of people, in decisions as well as in responsibility for implementation, confuses and diffuses accountability. Ambiguity and lack of simplicity in the definition of responsibilities also slows action.

Controlling

21. This can be defined as:

monitoring and evaluating performance in comparison with plans and initiating changes where necessary.

22. Note that the key management functions are important not only during emergency response, but also in the preparedness phase, although their relative importance in each phase may vary. Organization and coordination mechanisms, for example, should be developed during contingency planning.

Stages in Refugee Emergency Operations

23. The table below depicts one model of activities as they may occur in refugee emergencies. It is important to understand that the stages and activities of a refugee emergency operation could overlap, or occur simultaneously.

24. A final phase of an emergency operation is the transition from emergency response to longer-term support (care and maintenance) and durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement). The time spent providing emergency relief should be kept to a minimum, and planning and implementation should always take account of the longer term. The importance of the balance between short term and long term is seen in a number of the vital sectors.

Stage	Typical Activities
Emergency preparedness	• Prevention; • Early warning; • Contingency planning; • Development of emergency response systems; • Generation of support among potential host and donor governments; • Provision of stand-by resources; • Pre-positioning of supplies; • Training.
Emergency response	• Problem, needs and resources assessments; • Resource mobilization; • Handling donor relations and media interest; • Operations planning; • Implementation and coordination; • Monitoring and evaluation; • Transition to the post emergency operation.

25. Assisting governments in seeking durable solutions for the problem of refugees is a mandated function of UNHCR. Durable solutions must always be kept in mind, starting at the contingency planning stage. It is in this period that choices are made concerning how, how much, and for how long, aid will be delivered. These choices often have repercussions on the prospects for durable solutions that last long after the emergency has ended.

Emergency Preparedness

26. The best way to ensure an effective emergency response is by being prepared. Emergency preparedness can be defined as:

planning and taking *action* to ensure that the necessary *resources* will be available, in time, to meet the foreseen emergency needs and that the *capacity* to use the resources will be in place.

27. The scope of emergency preparedness is broad and the activities at that stage can be undertaken at the global, regional and country levels.

The preparedness measures should enable an organization to respond rapidly and effectively to an emergency.

28. At the global level, UNHCR maintains centrally a range of stand-by emergency response resources. These resources have been developed on the basis of past experience in emergencies. They include staff support, human and financial resources, operational support items and services, and a centrally managed emergency stockpile. The resources are available for deployment at short notice to any area where the need arises. They ensure a minimum and predictable level of global preparedness for emergencies. Moreover, there are also training activities available which can be used for capacity building.

29. For details of these resources, see the Catalogue of Emergency Response Resources, Appendix 1.

30. Contingency planning reduces the lead time necessary to mount an effective response and is a crucial tool to enhance the capacity to respond.

At the country and regional levels, early warning and contingency planning are the key preparedness measures.

31. The contingency planning process (see chapter 4) will allow the identification, in advance, of gaps in resources. A realistic plan may encourage donors and others to provide the missing resources.

32. Contingency planning helps predict the characteristics of the impending emergency – it increases the institutional analytical capacity which can be drawn upon should an emergency occur. It also helps identify the additional preparedness activities which may be required. These may include development or restructuring of the UNHCR organization in the country, emergency staffing, stockpiling, pre-positioning supplies and training. Priority should be given to activities requiring longer lead times.

Emergency Indicators

33. An emergency may start with a sudden large influx of refugees, with several thousand persons crossing a border, causing a highly visible life threatening situation. More often however, the onset of an emergency is not so dramatic or obvious, and a situation requiring an extraordinary response and exceptional measures may develop over a period of time. It is therefore essential to be able to recognize if a situation exists (or is imminent) which requires an emergency response, and what are the likely key characteristics (see table 1).

34. The following indicators are measurable and are therefore commonly used as thresholds above (or below) which an emergency situation clearly exists, or to signal whether a situation is under control and whether there is a need for urgent remedial action. The most important of these indicators is the mortality (or death) rate (see chapter 14 on health for information on how to calculate the mortality rate. More details of the other indicators are given in the respective chapters and in Appendix 2 Toolbox).

Table 1 – Emergency Indicators

Indicator	Emergency Levels
MORTALITY RATE	**> 2 per 10,000 per day**
Nutritional Status of children	> 10% with less than 80% weight for height
Food	< 2,100 calories/person/day
Water Quantity	< 10 litres per person per day
Water Quality	> 25% of people with diarrhoea
Site Space	< 30 sq. meters per person (this figure does not include any garden space)
Shelter space	< 3.5 sq. meters per person

35. Other indicators may not be so easily quantifiable but may be just as critical, for example, the presence of a physical threat to the refugees or to the standards of human rights which they enjoy. In particular, threats of refoulement should be considered as an indicator of a need for an emergency response.

Emergency Response

36. Emergency response can be defined as: **immediate and appropriate action to save lives, ensure protection, and restore the well-being of refugees.**

37. Once safe asylum is assured, the priority of emergency management will be life saving activities. Timely and rapid problem, needs and resources assessments will help confirm or identify areas where gaps still exist from the contingency planning stage, both in terms of expertise and resources required.

38. Identification of problems requiring-specialist expertise is essential. Most refugee emergencies will require, in addition to protection specialists, one or more technical experts to coordinate the crucial technical sectors, such as health, food, nutrition, sanitation, water, shelter and infrastructure.

Key References

A Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations Taking Account of Women, Men and Children, UNHCR, Geneva, 1992.

Contingency Planning – A Practical Guide for Field Staff, UNHCR, Geneva, 1996.

Coordination Among International Organizations in Complex Emergencies, Disaster Management Training Programme, UN, 1997.

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Supplies and Food Aid Field Handbook, UNHCR Geneva, 1989.

UNHCR Handbook; People-Oriented Planning at Work: Using POP to Improve UNHCR Programming, UNHCR, Geneva, 1994.

UNHCR Manual, Chapter 4, UNHCR, Geneva, 1995 (and updates).

Partnership: A Programme Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners, UNHCR, Geneva, 1996.

4

Contingency Planning

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Introduction

1. Contingency planning can be defined as: **A forward planning process, in a state of uncertainty, in which scenarios and objectives are agreed, managerial and technical actions defined, and potential response systems put in place in order to prevent, or better respond to, an emergency.**

2.

It is important to consider contingency planning as a planning process from which a contingency plan is drawn.

The planning process involves a group of people or organizations working together on an ongoing basis to identify shared objectives and define respective responsibilities and actions.

3. Contingency planning is a pre-requisite for rapid and effective emergency response. Without prior contingency planning much time will be lost in the first days of an emergency. Contingency planning builds organizational capacity and should become a foundation for operations planning and emergency response.

When to Plan

4. In most cases field workers will know simply from experience and good knowledge of the current situation when it is prudent to plan.

5. There is no rule as to when to start contingency planning – except that, when in doubt, develop a contingency plan.

It is better to plan when it is not needed than not to have planned when it was necessary.

Early Warning

6. Early warning signs of a potential critical event should trigger a contingency planning process. Early warning is the collection, analysis and use of information in order to better understand the current situation as well as likely future events. The particular focus is on events which might lead to population displacement. Early warning can come from a wide range of sources: governments, local population, political leaders, media, academia, refugees, international and national organizations.

7. The collection and analysis of early warning information should be integrated into the routine work of UNHCR offices. Regular monitoring and reporting, in a consistent format, is an important means to ensure that trends and patterns are recorded and that any changes indicating population displacements are spotted.

8.

Where early warning information indicates the threat of a refugee emergency, contingency planning should be started automatically.

9. The most common emergency threat for UNHCR is a new influx or sudden increase in a refugee population. However, contingency planning should also take place in the midst of an existing operation. For example, contingency plans may be needed for a possible renewed influx, a natural disaster affecting a camp, an epidemic, an attack on a camp, violence in a camp, sudden spontaneous repatriation, or a security threat to staff or premises. In these situations the realities of the ongoing operation are well known, but contingency plans must be made for future developments for which one needs to be prepared.

Planning as a Process

10. Planning is an ongoing activity; the planner needs to constantly assess the situation and adjust objectives and courses of action to take account of developments.

11. A static contingency plan is soon out of date and breeds a false sense of security. By reviewing and updating planning measures regularly, the preparedness measures in place can be kept appropriate and adequate.

12. One of the most important contributions of the contingency plan to emergency response often comes from the process itself: identifying working partners, their capabilities and resources, developing a working relationship with them and coming to a common understanding of the issues, priorities and responsibilities.

The capacity of the actors to respond in an emergency will be enhanced by their previous involvement in the contingency planning process.

13. Both contingency planning and operations planning set strategic and sectoral objectives and develop an action plan to achieve these objectives. The major difference between the two is that contingency planning involves making assumptions and developing

the scenarios upon which planning is based, while in operations planning, the starting point is known, and the planning will build on needs and resources assessments.

Figure 1 – Differences between Contingency Planning and Emergency Operations Planning

Aspect	Contingency plan	Operations Plan
Relation to emergency event	Before	During
Scope of plan	Global or scenario based	Both strategic and specific
Partners involved	All likely partners	Operational and implementing partners only
Focus	Developing agreed scenarios	Effective and rapid response
Relationships	Developing	Utilizing
Planning Style	Consultative	Directive and consultative
Allocation	Roles	Responsibilities
Time frame	Floating, uncertain	Fixed, immediate

Meetings

14. Many pitfalls in contingency planning can be avoided by planning collectively, marshalling the widest range of local skills, and complementing these by external inputs.

Contingency planning is best achieved through a cooperative and coordinated effort wherein all concerned work together with shared objectives over a period of time.

A single meeting that produces a plan is usually insufficient and the product often inadequate. The contingency planning process therefore revolves around regular meetings and follow up.

15. The participants in the contingency planning process should include those who might be involved in the emergency response, including the government, agencies, representatives of donor governments and local organizations and expertise. Contingency planning meetings are sometimes called "roundtable" meetings to stress the importance of participation by all involved. The views of one agency may differ from others, but this will often be to the advantage of the planning process since it provides a useful forum for all assumptions to be questioned and refined. The end product is thus more realistic. While UNHCR may facilitate the roundtable, the role and importance of each participant must be respected.

16. A contingency planning meeting should produce a draft contingency plan containing the following:

i. Scenario identification;

ii. Strategic objectives;

iii. Sector objectives and activities.

Subsequent meetings should review early warning indicators, report on actions taken since the previous meeting, and update the existing plan.

17. Inputs into these meetings include specialist expertise and advice, results from field visits, and statements of agency policy. Outputs include the contingency plan, draft budgets and standby arrangements such as stockpiles.

Contingency Planning Tasks

Scenario Identification

18. Based on early warning indicators and their own experience, the participants in the planning process should develop likely scenarios. This activity is the most intuitive, yet one of the most important, since it lays the basis for all further planning. In establishing scenarios assumptions must be made. While these will be based on best available knowledge, nothing can remove the element of unpredictability.

19. The scenario is a kind of benchmark: if the influx is smaller than envisaged, the safety margin will be welcome, if it is larger, the importance of taking urgent corrective action is highlighted.

20. For scenario development:

i. Consider all possibilities (be imaginative);

ii. Settle for a limited number of options only (1 or 2 options are the norm); otherwise the planning process will be too complicated;

iii. Use the concept of either worst case scenario or most likely scenario.

Policy and Strategic Objectives

21. Planners need to have some vision of the direction of the overall operation. To the extent possible this should be a shared vision. It

is not unusual for the various partners to hold different policy approaches to a particular problem. If these cannot be reconciled, at least the differences should be known and understood by all parties. However, an effort should be made to agree on some overall principles, through establishing overall objectives for the emergency response. All activities undertaken in the plan will need to be consistent with these overall objectives.

Sector Objectives and Activities

22. This is the most detailed part of the planning process. For each sector planners should agree, in as much detail as time will permit, on:

i. Sector objectives, including standards;
ii. The main tasks;
iii. Who is responsible for implementing which task;
iv. Time frame for implementation.

Characteristics of a Good Plan

23. A good plan (whether operations or contingency) should be comprehensive yet not too detailed; it should find the right balance between covering all the important issues yet not flooding the plan with detail.

24. It should be well structured, easy to read and, importantly, easy to update. Much of the plan will be action oriented, so it should have a layout that clearly shows what needs to be done, by whom and by when.

25. It should be a living document and be constantly updated, amended and improved. It is not a document which is comprehensively revised on a schedule, but is one that is constantly in a state of change.

A short document with a clear structure will facilitate updating.

26. A contingency plan should also achieve a balance between flexibility (so it can apply to a variety of scenarios) and specificity (for key practical inputs - e.g. well positioned stockpiles). The plan must not be too directive, and yet must provide adequate guidance. It should not be expected to act as a blueprint.

27. See Annex 1 for the structure of a typical contingency plan.

Key References

Contingency Planning – A Practical Guide for Field Staff, UNHCR, Geneva, 1996.

Annex 1 – A Model Structure for a Contingency Plan

The following is a proposed structure for a Contingency Plan. It is based on a refugee influx. Adaptation will be required for different scenarios.

Chapter 1: General Situation and Scenarios

i. Background and country information
ii. Entry points
iii. Total planning figure
iv. Arrival rate
v. Reception and anticipated in-country movement
vi. Settlement arrangements
vii. Expected refugee demographic profile
viii. Emergency response trigger

Chapter 2: Policies and Overall Operation Objectives

i. Overall policy (strategic) objectives of the programme
ii. Comments on policy stance of various partners

Chapter 3: Objectives and Activities by Sector

i. Management and overall coordination; allocation of responsibilities
ii. Protection, reception, registration, security
iii. Community services
iv. Logistics and transport
v. Infrastructure and site planning
vi. Shelter
vii. Domestic needs and household support
viii. Water
ix. Environmental sanitation
x. Health and nutrition
xi. Food
xii. Education
xiii. Economic activities
xiv. Support to the operation, administration, communications, staff support and safety

Each section should include a consideration of sector objectives and outputs, needs, resources, activities, and financial requirements, existing and proposed preparedness measures, implementation responsibilities and timing.

Chapter 4: Procedures for feedback, updating and future action

Describe how the Plan will be updated and revised, who will be responsible for ensuring this, and how the information will be disseminated.

Possible Annexes

i. Maps
ii. Registration forms
iii. List of organizations or individuals participating in the planning process
iv. Agency Profiles (details of staff, resources, future intentions)
v. Gap identification charts (see chapter 6 on operations planning)
vi. Commodity specifications
vii. Draft budgets.

5

Initial Assessment, Immediate Response

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Introduction

1. Emergency assistance must be based on a sound, though rapid, assessment of the refugees' most immediate problems and needs and the resources available to meet those needs.

2. The objective of the initial problem analysis and needs assessment is to provide UNHCR with a clear and concise picture of the emergency situation, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It should provide enough information to predict the evolution of the emergency, at least in the short term. It is the basis for decisions which affect the future of the operation.

3.

More detailed assessments will follow as the emergency develops and needs evolve: assessment never stops.

The initial and subsequent assessments are intricately linked with, and will form the basis for, operations planning. The initial assessment will also build on the contingency planning process.

4. The initial assessment should:

- ❏ Answer the questions "what is the main problem?" and "is there an emergency or not?";
- ❏ Provide sufficient information to decide whether UNHCR should be involved in the emergency response and what the scope of that involvement should be;
- ❏ Be an inter-agency initiative, but with one body providing the overall coordination. The team should include staff from UNHCR, the government and other potential partners (for example other UN agencies, NGOs). Ideally the inter-agency body used for contingency planning should provide the basis for the group carrying out a simple problem and needs assessment. Often the people carrying out the initial assessment will simultaneously be providing the initial response. Whenever possible, the assessment team should include those who will implement the emergency operation in the field;
- ❏ Be carried out quickly;
- ❏ Provide a full picture of the scope of the emergency, rather than focus on a limited area or sector (it is better to get the whole picture half right);
- ❏ Describe the people affected by the emergency (a simple demographic profile);
- ❏ Identify the coping ability of the refugees themselves;
- ❏ Identify locally available resources;
- ❏ Identify what are the most immediate priorities;
- ❏ Use agreed and appropriate standards against which needs can be measured;
- ❏ Involve the refugees, women and men, from the outset. Get to know them and understand their concerns. They are a key source of information;
- ❏ Record the sources of information collected;
- ❏ Cross-check information, not relying on only one tool (e.g. aerial surveys cross-checked by on the ground observations and interviews);
- ❏ Involve appropriate technical input;
- ❏ Use samples and surveys rather than collect too much detailed information which is difficult to analyze;
- ❏ Produce recommendations for immediate action indicating the resources needed to implement them;
- ❏ Be able to trigger an immediate and effective response;
- ❏ Have the results shared promptly and widely.

5. The assessment should, as a minimum, answer the questions in the checklist in Annex 1. This includes essential minimum information required for planning an emergency operation.

6. The initial assessment should focus on the priority life threatening problems which are usually in the sectors of protection, water, food, sanitation, shelter and health. The assessment should measure the actual condition of the refugees against what is needed for their survival and immediate well-being (expressed as "standards"). The resources at their disposal should also be assessed.

The setting of standards appropriate for the situation is an important prerequisite for needs assessment.

7. Standards provide a benchmark against which the condition of the refugees can be measured (see Appendix 2 for some of the minimum survival standards). The standards

established for emergency assistance must be consistent with the aim of ensuring the survival and basic well-being of the refugees, be fairly applied for all refugees and be respected by all involved.

8. The document *Initial Assessment in Emergency Situations: a Practical Guide for Field Staff* (see references) includes more detailed checklists for assessments, and contains practical information on principles, planning, techniques, methods, and forms. See also chapter 6 on operations planning for an example of a Gap Identification Chart, a useful tool for comparing needs and resources.

Organizing the Assessment

9. The initial assessment must be carried out on the spot as soon as it is clear that a refugee emergency may exist. The assessment must involve the government and other key actors.

10. Immediate access to the area where the refugees are located is, of course, a prerequisite. Getting the assessment underway as soon as possible requires quick, practical steps: establish a presence at or near the refugee site for first hand information, interview refugees, use other available sources of information, mobilize local expertise and resources.

11. While an organized approach is necessary, time must not be lost simply because the desired expertise is not immediately available. Where UNHCR is already present, initial action must not be delayed pending the arrival of staff with more expertise.

A quick response to obviously urgent needs must never be delayed because a comprehensive assessment has not yet been completed.

12. Planning the assessment involves setting the objectives, establishing the terms of reference and selecting team members. The assessment plan should indicate which information should be collected and the report should make clear if it was not possible to collect that information.

13. If UNHCR is not already present in the country, the assessment mission will normally be organized by Headquarters.

14. Any problem and needs assessment should start with a review of the existing background information (mission reports, media articles, situation reports, local maps). Ideally, a contingency plan would have been prepared and kept updated and would provide input for the assessment and the immediate response. UNHCR Headquarters can provide maps and geographical information from a computerized database. The maps and information can be tailored to the specific requirements of the assessment. The assessment should also include interviews with the refugees and others involved.

15. Tools commonly used in assessments are:

i. Questionnaires;

ii. Checklists;

iii. Visual Inspection.

16. A combination of tools is normally used in order to cross-check the conclusions. Questionnaires and checklists (see Annex 1 for a basic checklist) are particularly useful because they standardize the approach and force the assessors to plan ahead and decide which information needs to be collected. Visual inspections provide general information and can put into context data from more systematic assessments.

Immediate Response

17. Gathering information about problems, needs and resources on the one hand, and the establishment of standards on the other, will allow the immediate unmet needs to be determined.

The most urgent actions must be taken with whatever local material and organizational resources are available, even if the information at hand is incomplete.

18. In order to ensure urgent survival needs are met, the most important initial actions are likely to be:

i. Ensuring the capacity to act;

ii. Protection;

iii. Organizational considerations.

Ensure the Capacity to Act

19. The first priority is to provide the organizational capacity required to meet the needs of the emergency.

Enough UNHCR and implementing partner staff of the right calibre and experience must be deployed.

It may be necessary to invoke emergency procedures for the allocation of funds, implementing arrangements, food supply, local purchase, and recruitment of personnel. See Appendix 1 for details of how to access UNHCR emergency response resources. With the government, the resources of other UN organizations, particularly UNICEF and WFP, and of the NGO sector must be mobilized within the framework of a plan for immediate action.

Protection

20.

Unless the refugees' right to asylum is assured there can be no assistance programme.

Action must be taken to this end, and to ensure their security and fundamental human rights. The importance of a UNHCR presence where the refugees are located has been stressed. Specific measures may be needed, for example to meet the special protection problems and needs of groups at risk (unaccompanied children, single young girls, minorities, etc.), and to protect the refugees against arbitrary actions of outsiders and against groups within their own number who may pose a threat to their safety.

Organizational Considerations

21. UNHCR must establish a presence where the refugees are, with assured communications with the main office and with Headquarters. The organization of the necessary logistical capacity to deliver the assistance will be of critical importance.

22. The priority, once problems and needs have been assessed, will be to provide vital assistance wherever the refugees are located. There will also, however, be key organizational or planning decisions to take, some of which may determine the future shape of the whole operation. These often include the points summarized below; decisions on them should be seen as a part of the immediate response.

If such decisions go by default or are wrong they will be very difficult to correct later.

Protection and Material Assistance

The Location of the Refugees

23. This will have a major influence on protection and all sectors of assistance. If the refugees have spontaneously settled in a scattered manner, they should not be brought together unless there are compelling reasons for breaking their present settlement pattern. If they are already in sites which are judged to be unsatisfactory, move them. The difficulty in moving refugees from an unsuitable site increases markedly with time. Even if those already there cannot be moved, divert new arrivals elsewhere (see chapter 12 on site planning).

Control at the Sites

24. Determine the optimum population in advance and plan for new sites accordingly. Keep careful control of actual occupation of the site as refugees arrive, so that sections prepared in advance are filled in an orderly manner.

Numbers and Registration

25. An accurate estimate of numbers is a prerequisite for effective protection and assistance. Efficient delivery of help to all in need will require at least family registration which should be organized as soon as possible. Nevertheless the initial provision of assistance may have to be based on a population estimation rather than full registration (see chapters 11 and 13 on registration and commodity distribution).

Urgent Survival Needs

26. Meet the most urgent survival needs: food, water, emergency shelter, health care and sanitation, ensuring fair distribution:

i. *Involve the refugees* and promote their self-reliance from the start. If this is not done the effectiveness of the emergency assistance will be severely reduced, and an early opportunity to help the refugees to start to recover from the psychological effects of their ordeal may be missed;

ii. *Food.* Ensure that at least the minimum need for energy is met; a full ration can follow. Set up special feeding programmes if there are clear indications of malnutrition. Establish storage facilities;

iii. *Water.* Protect existing water sources from pollution and establish maximum storage capacity with the simplest available means. Transport water to the site if the need cannot otherwise be met;

iv. *Emergency shelter.* Meet the need for roofing and other materials from local sources if possible. Request outside supplies (e.g. plastic sheeting) if necessary;

v. *Health care.* Provide the necessary organizational assistance, health personnel and basic drugs and equipment in close consultation with the national health authorities.

Although the immediate need and demand may be for curative care, do not neglect preventive and particularly environmental health measures;

vi. *Sanitation.* Isolate human excreta from sources of water and accommodation.

27. Take steps to meet the social needs and reunite families if necessary. Surveys may be necessary to identify those in need, who often do not come forward. Tracing may be required. If groups of refugees have been separeted, they should be reunited. Special measures to ensure the care of any unaccompanied children will be a priority.

28. Once these and other priority measures are underway, begin the wider planning process.

Key References

Initial Assessment in Emergency Situations – a Practical Guide for Field Staff, UNHCR, Geneva, 1998.

Annex 1 – Checklist for Initial Assessment

This checklist is based on a refugee influx, it should be modified in the light of the actual nature of the emergency.

Who are the refugees, their numbers, and pattern of arrival

- ❏ Approximately how many refugees are there?
- ❏ Where have the refugees come from? Why?
- ❏ What is the rate of arrival? Is it likely to increase or decrease?
- ❏ What is the total number likely to arrive?
- ❏ What is the location of the arrival points and of the sites where people are settling (latitude and longitude)?
- ❏ Are the refugees arriving as individuals or in groups? Are these family groups, clans, tribal, ethnic or village groups?
- ❏ Are families, village groups and communities intact?
- ❏ How are the refugees organized? Are there group or community leaders?
- ❏ How are the refugees travelling – on foot, in vehicles?
- ❏ What is the gender ratio of the population?
- ❏ What is the age profile of the population? Can a breakdown in age be given – under five's, age 5 to 17 years, 18 years and over?
- ❏ How many unaccompanied minors are there? What is their condition?
- ❏ What was the social and economic situation of the refugees prior to their flight? What are their skills and languages? What is their ethnic and cultural background?
- ❏ Are there individuals or groups with special social problems? Are there particular groups made more vulnerable by the situation? (e.g. the disabled, separated minors or elderly people in need of support).
- ❏ What are the basic diet, shelter, and sanitation practices of the refugees?
- ❏ What is the security situation within the population – is there a need for separation between different groups, are there armed groups within the population?
- ❏ What is the formal legal status of the refugees?

Characteristics of the location

- ❏ What are the physical characteristics of the area where the refugees are located?
- ❏ What is the soil, topography and drainage?
- ❏ Is there enough space for those there and those likely to arrive?
- ❏ Is there all season accessibility?
- ❏ Can the refugees access relief assistance from where they are located?
- ❏ What is the vegetation cover?
- ❏ Will the refugees need to use wood for fuel and shelter?
- ❏ Approximately how many people already live in the local area?
- ❏ Who owns (or has usage rights on) the land?
- ❏ Is there grazing land and are there potential areas for cultivation?

- ❑ What is the actual or likely impact on the local population and what is their attitude and that of the local authorities towards the refugees?
- ❑ Are there security problems?
- ❑ What environmental factors must be taken into account (e.g. fragility of the local environment and extent to which local community relies on it; how rapidly might it be degraded by the refugees, proximity to protected areas)?
- ❑ What is the condition of the local population? If assistance is provided to the refugees, should the local population also be assisted?

Health status and basic problems

- ❑ Are there significant numbers of sick or injured persons, is there excess mortality?
- ❑ Are there signs of malnutrition?
- ❑ Do the refugees have access to sufficient quantities of safe water?
- ❑ Do the refugees have food stocks, for how long will they last?
- ❑ Do the refugees have adequate shelter?
- ❑ Are adequate sanitary facilities available?
- ❑ Do the refugees have basic domestic items?
- ❑ Is there sufficient fuel for cooking and heating?

Resources, spontaneous arrangements and assistance being delivered

- ❑ What type and quantity of possessions have the refugees brought with them?
- ❑ What arrangements have the refugees already made to meet their most immediate needs?
- ❑ What assistance is already being provided by the local population, the government, UN organizations and other organizations, is the assistance adequate, sustainable?
- ❑ Is the present assistance likely to increase, continue, decrease?
- ❑ What is the government's policy on assistance to the refugees?
- ❑ Are there any major constraints likely to affect an assistance operation?
- ❑ Has contingency planning for this type of emergency been undertaken?
- ❑ What coordination arrangements are required?

Means to Deliver Protection and Assistance

- ❑ Can effective implementing arrangements be made quickly and locally, if not, what are the alternatives?
- ❑ Is there already an identified refugee leadership with whom it will be possible to coordinate the delivery of protection and assistance?
- ❑ What are the logistical needs and how can they be met?
- ❑ Where will the necessary supplies come from?
- ❑ How will they reach the refugees?
- ❑ What storage is needed, where and how?
- ❑ Are there essential items which can only be obtained outside the region and whose early supply will be of critical importance (e.g. food, trucks?)
- ❑ What are the needs for UNHCR and implementing partner staff and staff support?

6

Operations Planning

CONTENTS

Introduction

1. An emergency response requires good planning. An important aspect of planning, particularly in an emergency situation, is the development of an operations plan. The "Operations Plan" is a vital management tool which should be based on a problems, needs and resources assessment. The plan should determine programme priorities, set objectives, and specify actions that need to be taken by the actors responsible for the various sectors of an operation. Specific tasks in an emergency and the parties responsible for the implementation of these tasks need to be clearly identified and a plan formulated in as clear and concrete a way as possible.

At the start of an emergency there is a tendency to postpone planning, both because information is not available and because there are obvious urgent needs which can be met piecemeal, without a plan. This tendency should be resisted.

2. The more critical the situation, the more important it is for the operations manager to find the time to take stock, determine priorities and develop a plan for what needs to be done, when, by whom and how.

3. Ideally, the operations plan should make use of the contingency planning process, partners identified, and resources prepared, as well as the plan itself. As the same principles of planning apply, the structure of the operations plan can be based on the contingency plan (also attached here as Annex 1). There are a range of additional considerations beyond what is included in the Contingency planning format, many of which will be addressed over time. However, the main differences between contingency planning and operations planning and the characteristics of a good plan are discussed in chapter 4 on contingency planning. The tasks and approach will be different primarily because of assessments – in operations planning, the starting point is known and assessments of the situation replace the contingency planning scenarios and many of the assumptions.

4. The views of the refugees should be taken into account in drawing up the operations plan. They are the single most important resource in meeting their own needs, and will have definite ideas on how this may best be done. The plan must strengthen the refugees' own resources and self-reliance and avoid creating dependency. The plan should also reflect the aim of a durable solution.

5. The operations plan must be comprehensive, identifying all problems, needs and resources whether these are met through UNHCR or by other organizations and sources of funds. Drawing up the operations plan should be a team effort. Clear direction must, however, come from the government and/or UNHCR.

The most effective operations plans are those developed by or with the people who will implement them.

6. Although the plan should be comprehensive, this should be balanced by the need to produce the plan quickly, so that in rapidly evolving emergencies the plan will not become outdated before it is finished. In addition, lengthy plans can be difficult to update. Characteristics of a good plan are discussed in paragraphs 23 to 25 of chapter 4 on contingency planning.

7.

It should be stressed that, as with contingency planning, operations planning is a process.

A plan, as a document, is not an end in itself but simply a record of the process. It should be kept updated in light of the evolving situation: implementation of the plan should be monitored and corrective action taken, and the plan should then be adjusted and revised. The operations plan must be made available to all who need it.

8. This chapter focuses on operations plans developed with partners. However, planning within the office should not be neglected – simple plans of action at each administrative or office level within UNHCR should also be drawn up, from site to Headquarters, tying in with the overall operations plan and involving the same principles: clarifying objectives, allocating responsibilities, defining activities to achieve objectives, and defining coordination mechanisms such as staff meetings (discussed in chapter 20 on administration and staffing).

Operations Planning Tasks

9. Operations planning involves the tasks set out below:

i. *Review existing plans and information in the contingency plan;*

ii. *Assess problems, needs and resources: identify critical unmet needs.*

The problems, needs and resources assessments determine what must be done, and where the priorities are. Assessment of problems, needs and resources is part of planning: plans must be updated to take account of new assessments and progress in implementation. Identify critical unmet needs using the results of the assessments and comparing these with established standards – the determination of the standards to which assistance should be delivered is of fundamental importance. The resources which are available and those which are required must also be identified. Resources includes human resources and personnel, local and international implementing and operational partner organizations, and material resources.

At the early stages of a major emergency, it is unlikely that resources will be sufficient to meet all needs, thus prioritization will be an important part of operations planning.

iii. *Set overall goals*

The overall operation and strategic goals must be clarified. All other objectives and activities should be consistent with these overall objectives. In formulating objectives, the single most important question to ask is, "What is the intended result?" Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable and realistic, and the time frame within which they should be reached should be specified.

iv. *Clarify planning assumptions*

It will also be necessary to clarify the main constraints, planning assumptions and principles behind the emergency operation. These should be set out explicitly, including an explanation of the role, responsibilities and policies of the government, UNHCR, other UN organizations and operational partners. In addition, standard or established procedures, such as monitoring and coordination mechanisms, MOUs etc. should also be set out. Similarly, standards in various sectors and any specific guidelines necessary should be specified (where the plan includes objectives, outputs and activities on a sector by sector basis). Although these issues should have been in the contingency plan, they will need to be revisited in the light of the problem and needs assessments, and restated as necessary to new partners, so everyone is working with the same assumptions and to the same standards.

v. *Determine the courses of action to reach overall objectives (implementing arrangements)*

Consider various options to reach objectives, their advantages and disadvantages; which are flexible, which are the most efficient and effective? Choosing an option for implementing arrangements which retains flexibility is important in a rapidly changing situation. Chapter 8 on implementing arrangements discusses this in more detail.

vi. *Determine objectives and courses of action to reach objectives at sector level.*

Decide on the objectives, activities and outputs for each sector. As with contingency planning, this is the most detailed part of the plan. The organization with operational responsibility for a particular sector or site should draw up the plan of action for that sector or site.

vii. *Allocate responsibilities*

Responsibilities (both within UNHCR and between different actors in the operation), need to be clearly stated.

viii. *Determine coordination mechanisms*

Coordination mechanisms should be established between the different actors in the operation. Coordination at different geographical levels (e.g. at the site and in the capital or regional city) needs also to be assured. In a large operation, it may be necessary to have separate coordination mechanisms for sectors.

ix. *Determine monitoring mechanisms*

From the start, the management of a refugee emergency must include continuous monitoring (by measuring the indicators of performance), reporting and evaluation in order to ensure that the objectives remain appropriate as circumstances change, and the activities to fulfill the objectives are being carried out effectively.

x. *Record and disseminate the plan, monitor progress, take corrective action, and adjust and revise the plan.*

Effective Planning Guidelines for UNHCR Teams (updated in January 1999) provide more details on managing the planning process at all levels of an operation in the most effective and efficient way possible. The assumption underlying this emphasis on the planning process is that better planning processes lead to better quality results delivered on time in a cost effective manner.

Figure 1 – an example of a Gap Identification Chart

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Overall site management	Agency M	Agency M	Agency R
Protection	UNHCR	UNHCR	UNHCR
Food distribution	Agency B		Agency K
Shelter	Agency B	Agency Y	
Water	Agency W		Agency W
Health		Agency H	Agency H
Etc.			

Allocation of Responsibilities

Gap Identification Chart

10. A gap identification chart is a simple but very important and useful tool to allocate responsibilities effectively and identify the critical unmet needs of the refugees site by site and sector by sector. It illustrates who is responsible for what in an operation (by site and sector) and points out gaps where a sector or site needs attention. An example is shown below – the blanks indicate “gaps” i.e. sites or sectors for which nobody has responsibility. These would need to be given priority attention. Annex 2 shows a blank chart Figure 1 shows an example that has been filled in.

Roles and Tasks

11. The roles and tasks of all involved must be clearly stated. Delay in defining responsibility usually leads to each party defining goals independently and setting their own limits of responsibility. This in turn can lead quickly to confusion, gaps and duplication. Responsibilities should be defined for each administrative level, and for both organizations and individuals. How responsibilities are allocated to individuals is discussed in chapter 20 on administration and staffing.

12. Responsibilities are allocated to different organizations in a refugee emergency primarily through organizations’ mandates, international instruments and pre-existing MOUs between organizations.

13. The responsibilities and roles are defined in more detail in response to the specific needs of the refugee situation and capacities of the different parties on the ground. These are set out in implementing agreements with implementing partners, MOUs and exchange of letters with other UN agencies, and agreements with the government. If formal agreements have not yet been drawn up and the basis of cooperation remains a Letter of Intent, the definition of responsibilities contained in the operations plan is more essential than ever (see Annex 1 of the chapter 8 implementing arrangements for a format of a Letter of Intent).

14. The responsibilities of organizations delivering assistance but which are not implementing partners of UNHCR must also be defined. This may create problems, particularly where individual NGOs wish to have responsibility for a specific sector. Final authority rests with the government, and the Representative or the operations manager should consult closely with the authorities. To the extent possible, however, any conflict of interest should be resolved within the framework of a coordinating mechanism.

Annex 1 – A Model Structure for an Operations Plan

Based on the problem, needs and resources assessments

The following is a proposed structure for an operations plan. It is based on a refugee influx. Adaptation will naturally be required for different situations.

Chapter 1: General Situation

i. Background and country information;
ii. Entry points;
iii. Agreed planning figures;
iv. Arrival rate;
v. Reception and in-country movement;
vi. Settlement arrangements;
vii. Demographic profile of the refugees;

Chapter 2: Policies and Overall Operation Objectives

i. Overall policy (strategic) objectives of the programme;
ii. Comments on policy stance of various partners;

Chapter 3: Objectives and Activities by Sector

i. Management and overall coordination; allocation of responsibilities;
ii. Protection, reception, registration, security;
iii. Food;
iv. Logistics and transport;
v. Infrastructure and site planning;
vi. Shelter;
vii. Domestic needs and household support;
viii. Water;
ix. Environmental sanitation;
x. Health and nutrition;
xi. Community services;
xii. Education;
xiii. Economic activities;
xiv. Support to the operation, administration, communications, staff support and safety;

Each section should include overall sector objectives, and site by site objectives and outputs, problems, needs, resources, financial requirements, activities, implementation responsibilities and timing.

Chapter 4: Procedures for updating the operations plan

Describe how the Plan will be updated, who will be responsible for ensuring this and how the information will be disseminated.

Possible Annexes

i. Maps
ii. Registration forms
iii. List of organizations or individuals participating in the operation
iv. Agency Profiles (details of staff and resources involved in the operation)
v. Gap identification charts
vi. Commodity specifications
vii. Budgets

Annex 2 – Gap Identification Chart (blank)

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Overall site management			
Protection			
Registration			
Shelter			
Water			
Health			
Nutrition			
Sanitation			
Distribution			
Other			

7

Coordination and Site Level Organization

■ CONTENTS

Coordination

Introduction

1. Coordination can be defined as the harmonious and effective working together of people and organizations towards a common goal.

2. Good coordination should result in:

i. Maximum impact for a given level of resources;

ii. Elimination of gaps and overlaps in services;

iii. Appropriate division of responsibilities;

iv. Uniform treatment and standards of protection and services for all the beneficiaries.

3. For effective coordination appropriate approaches and structures will need to be put in place at the various levels. Coordination requires good management and clearly defined objectives, responsibilities and authority.

Coordination is not free: it has costs in terms of time and other resources needed to make it work.

Coordination of the UN Response to Refugee Emergencies

4. Within the UN system the responsibility for refugees lies with UNHCR. Therefore, when there is a refugee emergency, UNHCR is the UN organization responsible for coordinating the response of the UN system to the emergency.

Mechanisms for Coordination in Refugee Emergencies

5. Effective coordination is the result of sound management. Coordination mechanisms set up without the establishment of clear objectives and assignment of responsibility and authority will be ineffective. Coordination must be based on good information exchange, particularly with the site level, otherwise it may even be counter-productive.

6. Mechanisms for coordination include:

i. International and Regional instruments and agreements which define responsibilities and roles at the global (and sometimes regional or country) level;

ii. Memoranda of Understanding and exchange of letters with other agencies, and agreements with implementing partners and host governments, defining responsibilities and roles at the situational level;

iii. A coordinating body;

iv. Sectoral committees as necessary;

v. Regular meetings;

vi. Reporting and information sharing;

vii. Joint services and facilities, for example, vehicle repair services, communications, and a joint staff security group;

viii. Codes of conduct for organizations working in humanitarian emergencies.

7. In refugee emergencies UNHCR should take the lead to ensure effective coordination if this is not already ensured, including establishing the coordinating body.

8.

Whatever the implementing arrangements, a single coordinating body should be established for the operation – for example, a task force, commission, or operations centre.

The coordinating body will provide a framework within which the implementation of the programme can be coordinated and management decisions taken. The coordinating body should have clearly defined and well promulgated responsibility and authority.

9. The elements of a coordinating body, including membership and functions are described in Annex 1. Tips for running meetings, including coordinating meetings are given in Annex 2.

10. Where a coordinating structure does not already exist, UNHCR should, in cooperation with the government, take the lead in setting up the coordinating body and mechanism. This is a crucial component of UNHCR's leadership role. The coordinating body may be set up and chaired by the government with strong support from UNHCR, or be co-chaired by the government and UNHCR, or be chaired by UNHCR alone.

11. The membership of the coordinating body should include government ministries and departments, as well as other UN agencies, NGOs and other concerned organizations. It is important to coordinate the activity of all NGOs – whether they have entered into an implementing agreement with UNHCR or not. In a large scale emergency with a number of actors, the coordinating body could become unwieldy. However, it should still be possible to

ensure some degree of representation or participation on the coordinating body by all actors either directly, or on sectoral committees, or through close working partners who are represented on the coordinating body.

12. The coordinating body should hold regular, formal meetings during which overall progress is reviewed and plans adjusted. These meetings should be complemented by informal contacts with members of the coordinating body.

13. When required, the coordinating body should create sectoral committees, for example for health and nutrition. Such committees will be responsible for coordinating implementation in that sector and reporting back to the coordinating body. They could also play an important part in the development of specific standards for the delivery of assistance. When the operation is sufficiently large, a sectoral committee could be coordinated by a UNHCR sector coordinator.

14. A coordinating body can also be of considerable value when new agencies arrive, both in integrating their assistance in the overall programme and with practical administrative arrangements and briefing.

15. Coordination must be based on good information exchange, particularly with the site level. The framework for the organization and coordinating mechanisms at the site level is likely to broadly reflect that established centrally. To get information passed vertically between central level and site level can be as hard as getting information passed between organizations. Each organization should be responsible for ensuring that there is good communication between its staff at site level and centrally, and that important information is then passed on to the coordination body.

Coordination of the UN Response to Complex Emergencies

16. A complex emergency can be defined as: **a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict, and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or the ongoing UN country programme.**

17. Likely characteristics of complex emergencies include:

i. A large number of civilian victims, populations who are besieged or displaced, human suffering on a major scale;

ii. Substantial international assistance is needed and the response goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any one agency;

iii. Delivery of humanitarian assistance is impeded or prevented by parties to the conflict;

iv. High security risks for relief workers providing humanitarian assistance;

v. Relief workers targeted by parties to the conflict.

18. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is the UN body charged with strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the UN to complex emergencies. OCHA has three main functions in this field: coordination of humanitarian response, policy development and advocacy on humanitarian issues.

19. OCHA discharges its coordination function primarily throughout the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) which is chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), with the participation of humanitarian partners[1]. The IASC ensures interagency decision-making in response to complex emergencies, including needs assessments, consolidated appeals, field coordination arrangements and the development of humanitarian policies.

20. Where there is a complex emergency an individual or agency is appointed to be responsible for the coordination of the UN system response at field level – this individual or agency is designated the "Humanitarian Coordinator".

21. The decision on who to appoint as Humanitarian Coordinator is made by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

22. The agency appointed as Humanitarian Coordinator will depend on the nature of the emergency, and comparative existing agency capacity in the region.

23. There are four possible options which are normally used for the coordination of UN assistance in a complex emergency. These are:

[1] The full members of the IASC are OCHA (convenor), FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, WHO, and there are a number of standing invitees, including the Red Cross movement and NGOs.

i. *Resident Coordinator*
The Resident Coordinator is the leader of the United Nations country team and is normally the head of UNDP in a particular country. In a complex emergency, the Resident Coordinator may also be designated as the Humanitarian Coordinator.

ii. *Lead Agency*
One of the UN agencies may be selected to coordinate and this is often the agency which provides the majority of the assistance;

iii. *Humanitarian Coordinator*
If the emergency is of considerable size a Humanitarian Coordinator may be appointed distinct from the office of the Resident Coordinator and lead agency. The Humanitarian Coordinator normally phases out once the emergency reaches recovery phase and any residual tasks are returned to the Resident Coordinator;

iv. *Regional Humanitarian Coordinator*
If the emergency affects more than one country a Humanitarian Coordinator having regional responsibilities may be appointed.

Role of UNHCR and Other UN Agencies in a Complex Emergency

24. In complex emergencies involving refugees, UNHCR will be responsible for protection and assistance activities on behalf of the refugees. UNHCR may also be appointed lead agency, and therefore be responsible for the coordination of the UN response.

25. Whether or not UNHCR is lead agency, the UNHCR Representative remains directly responsible to the High Commissioner on all issues related to the UNHCR country programme as well as policy matters and issues related to UNHCR's mandate.

The protection of refugees must remain the sole prerogative of the High Commissioner.

Organization at the Site Level

Introduction

26. The framework for the organization and coordinating mechanisms at the site level are likely to reflect broadly those established centrally. However, there is one fundamental difference between the site and central levels: at the site level the refugees themselves should play a major role.

The organization of the refugee community must support and enhance their own abilities to provide for themselves.

27. A clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the emergency operation and proper coordination are even more important at the site level than centrally, for it is here that failures and misunderstandings will directly affect the refugees.

Of particular importance will be the adoption of common standards when a number of organizations are providing similar assistance.

Regular meetings of those concerned are essential. There should be an overall coordinating mechanism chaired by the government authority, UNHCR Field Officer, and/or an operational partner, and this mechanism may be complemented by sectoral committees.

28. Certain activities are interdependent or have a common component and will need particularly close coordination at site level. For example, environmental sanitation measures must be closely coordinated with health services, and the home visiting component of health care with feeding programmes and community services.

29. A rapid changeover of outside personnel can create major problems for site level coordination, though some specialists may obviously be required for short periods. The importance of continuity is proportional to the closeness of contact with the refugees. Operational partners at the site should have a standard orientation and briefing procedure to ensure continuity of action and policy despite changes in personnel.

Community Organization

30. The importance of preserving and promoting a sense of community is stressed in chapters 10 and 12 on community services and site planning. The approach to thinking about and understanding site and community organization should be from the smallest unit – the family – upwards, rather than imposed from the largest unit downwards, which would be unlikely to reflect natural or existing community structures and concerns.

31. The basic planning unit for site organization and management is likely therefore to be the family, subject to traditional social patterns, and distinctive features of the popula-

tion (e.g. numbers of separated minors, adolescent and women headed households). Larger units for organizational and representational purposes will again follow the community structure. For example, the next level up is likely to be community units of about 80 to 100 people, grouped according to living arrangements, followed by groups of communities of about 1,000 people. Different settlement services are decentralized to these different levels – e.g. water and latrines at household level, and education and health facilities at community and larger levels. The physical layout of the site will have a major influence on social organization.

Generally, the smaller the settlement the better – the overriding aim should be to avoid high density, large camps.

Community Involvement

32. The refugees must be involved in planning measures to meet their needs and in implementing those measures. The way the community is organized can help ensure that the refugees' specific skills are made use of and that the personnel for services at the site will come from the refugees.

33. There are three levels to the involvement of refugees. The first is in the overall planning and organization, for example the determination of what is the best and culturally most appropriate solution to a problem, given the constraints of the situation. This level requires that the refugees have a social organization within their community that is properly representative. As the previous social structures may have been severely disrupted, this may take time to redevelop but will be important to the success of the emergency operation and for the future of the refugees. Meanwhile, urgent action to meet evident needs must of course be taken.

34. The second level of involvement is in the practical use of the refugees' skills and resources wherever possible for the implementation of the operation. The refugees themselves should run their own community to the extent possible. Where suitably qualified or experienced refugees exist, such as nurses, teachers and traditional health workers, they must obviously be used. Where they do not, outside assistance should ensure that refugees are trained to take over from those who are temporarily filling the gap. Other services include feeding programmes, sanitation, (maintenance and cleaning of latrines, drainage, garbage disposal, vector control, etc.) construction (shelters and communal buildings) education, tracing and general administration. Note that women and adolescents often have the necessary skills but lack the confidence or language skills to come forward – an outreach programme to identify them might be necessary.

35. At the same time, other traditional skills – for example in construction or well-digging – should be harnessed. While specific measures to develop self-reliance will vary with each situation, their aim should always be to avoid or reduce the refugees' dependence on outside assistance. The more successful measures are generally those based on methods and practices familiar to the refugees.

36. The third level is the education of the community on life in their new situation, which may be markedly different from their previous experience. Public health education in such matters as the importance of hygiene in crowded conditions, mother and child care and the use of unfamiliar latrines is an example. As another example, if unfamiliar foods or preparation methods have to be used, immediate practical instruction is essential. Education and guidance of this sort are best given by the refugees themselves (including women and youth), with outside assistance.

Refugee Representation

37. Refugee settlements are not, typically, simple replicas of former community life, and large numbers of refugees may be living temporarily outside their traditional community leadership structures. However, in nearly every emergency, some refugee leaders, spokespersons, or respected elders will be present. It will be necessary to define with the community the method of choosing leaders to ensure fair representation and proper participation in both the planning and implementation of the emergency programme. The more the settlement differs from former community life, the more important this action is likely to be to the success of the programme.

However, be aware that some new power structures might emerge, for example through force, and may exercise de facto control over the population, but may not be representative.

38. The system of refugee representation should:

i. Be truly representative of the different interests and sectors of the community, and of both men and women;

ii. Include various levels of representatives and leaders to ensure adequate representation and access for individual refugees;

iii. Avoid unconscious bias, for example on the basis of language. Bear in mind that there is no reason why a refugee should be representative of the community simply because he or she has a common language with those providing outside assistance;

iv. Be based on traditional leadership systems as much as possible but provided these allow proper representation (for example, if the traditional leadership system excludes women, there should nevertheless be women representatives);

v. Be consistent with the physical divisions in the layout of the site.

Key References

A Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations taking account of Women, Men and Children, UNHCR, Geneva,1992.

Partnership: A Programme Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners, UNHCR, Geneva 1996.

UNHCR Handbook; People-Oriented Planning at Work: Using POP to Improve UNHCR Programming, UNHCR, Geneva, 1994.

Each of the factors listed below would need to be evaluated against the particular context and policy of the host government. At the beginning of the operation UNHCR should secure a suitable meeting room for coordination meetings.

Membership

The nature of the coordinating body and its usefulness will be determined partly by its membership.

1. Criteria for participation:

i. Provision of direct services;
ii. Regular attendance at coordination meetings;
iii. Compliance with service guidelines and standards;
iv. Regular financial contributions to coordination mechanism.

2. Other organizations may wish to attend coordination meetings without full participation in the coordination mechanism:

i. Organizations which may choose not to fully participate, e.g. ICRC;
ii. Funding organizations and donor representatives;
iii. Public interest groups;
iv. Military forces.

Functions of the coordination body

1. Meetings.
   These may be needed at the central and the site level, and include:

i. Overall coordination meetings, which may be needed daily at the start of an emergency;
ii. Sectoral committee meetings (e.g. health, registration, water);
iii. Conferences.

2. Identification of needed services and soliciting voluntary agencies to assume responsibilities for the provision of these services.
3. Allocation of donated commodities and financial contributions.
4. Guidelines and standards for the provision of services.
5. Orientation of newly arrived agencies.
6. Orientation of incoming staff.
7. Research and documentation.
8. Support for settlement coordination committees.
9. Coordination with agencies outside the country.
10. Information sharing.
11. Fund raising.

Annex 2 – Tips on running a meeting

1. Set clear objectives for the meeting

- Why is the meeting needed and what is the expected outcome? (Communication? Problem-solving? Planning? Decision-making?)
- Who should attend the meeting?
- Should the meeting be formal or informal?

2. Prepare an agenda

- Make a written agenda with clear objectives and approximate timing for each item;
- Ensure that the agenda states why the meeting is needed;
- Make sure the agenda is realistic (not too many items) and sequence the items appropriately;
- Put the difficult, important issues near the beginning (perhaps dealing first with something quick and simple);
- Plan breaks if the meeting is more than 1 hour in length;
- Avoid mixing information sharing and decision-making in the same meeting – hold separate meetings for these functions.

3. Documentation

- Circulate a detailed agenda, list of participants and any background documentation (such as minutes of previous meetings) in advance (but not too far ahead) of the meeting, 2 to 3 days before is best;
- Indicate the time, place and duration of the meeting;
- Prepare audio-visual materials in advance.

4. Seating arrangements

- Choose a circular or rectangular table;
- Avoid a long, narrow table if possible as this makes communication more difficult;
- In an informal setting, a semicircle of chairs facing a flip chart is the best;
- Everyone should be able to see each other;
- Participants should not be too crowded or too far apart.

5. During the meeting

- Start on time;
- Have the participants introduce themselves if they do not know each other;
- Clarify the objective(s) of the meeting and review the agenda and time limits;
- Outline how the meeting will be conducted (methodology);
- Identify the rapporteur or secretary for the meeting;
- Ask the participants if they agree to the agenda and be flexible on minor changes if there is consensus;
- If applicable, review action items of previous meeting(s);
- Make sure you have everyone's attention before opening the meeting.

During the meeting the chairman or facilitator should

- Avoid getting personally involved in the discussions;
- Keep an overall view of the objective(s);
- Do not lose the thread of the argument;
- Stick to the agenda (but be flexible within agenda items);
- Ask for information and opinions;
- Summarize and reformulate key points (have the rapporteur or secretary use the flip chart to record the points as they occur);
- Clarify and elaborate where needed;
- Concentrate on key issues and stop digressions;
- Test for consensus;
- Ensure everyone gets a chance to speak;
- Assign responsibilities and deadlines for agreed tasks (action, responsibility, and date by agenda item);
- Set date, time and place for next meeting;
- Close the meeting on time, on a decided and positive note.

7. After The Meeting

- Keep a record of the meeting. It should include the following basic items:
  - i. A list of the participants noting those who were invited but did not attend ("apologies" list);
  - ii. The conclusions, decisions, recommendations and the follow up action required, by agenda item, with the name of the person responsible for action and time frame;
  - iii. The time, date and place of the next meeting.

Note: working in small groups

Dividing the participants into small groups can be useful in large meetings (more than 12 participants), when discussions are lengthy. Depending on the subject, it can allow in-depth discussion on specific questions and possibly help to solve problems.

8

Implementing Arrangements

■ CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Appropriate arrangements to implement an emergency operation will be fundamental to its success. UNHCR has a unique statutory responsibility for the provision of international protection. However, there is no such unique statutory responsibility for the provision and distribution of material assistance to refugees, which might be carried out by other organizations – governmental, UN agencies, NGOs, as well as directly by UNHCR. There are a number of factors which will influence the implementing arrangements for assistance operations. This chapter outlines implementing arrangements and procedures in emergencies including monitoring, reporting and evaluation. UNHCR guidelines for standard procedures must be referred to for more detail.

Implementing Arrangements

2. Depending on the scale and needs of the emergency, a number of different implementing arrangements may be needed in the various sectors. One organization might have operational responsibility for health care, and another for logistics. Even within a sector, operational responsibility may have to be split up. Different operational partners might have responsibility for health care in different refugee sites or communities. In UNHCR terminology, an operating partner is an organization or agency that works in partnership with UNHCR to protect and assist refugees, and an implementing partner is an operational partner that signs an implementing agreement with UNHCR.

3.

Whenever possible UNHCR seeks to implement assistance indirectly through an implementing partner rather than directly.

The origin of this policy is found in the Statute of UNHCR. Article 1 requires the High Commissioner to seek "permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and, subject to the approval of the Governments concerned, private organizations...". In accordance with Article 10, the High Commissioner "shall administer any funds, public or private, which he/she receives for assistance to refugees, and shall distribute them among the private and, as appropriate, public agencies which he/she deems best qualified to administer such assistance".

Degree of Operational Responsibility of UNHCR

4. Although UNHCR normally seeks to implement indirectly through an implementing partner, there are circumstances in which it may be necessary and/or clearly in the interests of refugees for UNHCR to assume greater operational responsibility. UNHCR's degree of direct operational responsibility will vary for each emergency situation, and also with time as the operation evolves.

5. Factors influencing the degree of operational responsibility undertaken by UNHCR, other organizations and the government include the following:

i. The government's capacity to manage the refugee emergency, because of the scale, nature, location of the emergency, and ability of existing government structures to respond;

ii. The existence and capacity of other organizations in the country, and in the sectors where assistance is most needed;

iii. The stage of the emergency. At the start of an emergency, the government itself frequently has full operational responsibility. For example, a new influx is often first assisted by the local district and provincial authorities. On the other hand, in other circumstances, it is often at the start of an emergency where UNHCR has the greatest operational responsibility because there may be no suitable operational partner immediately available within the country.

6. Where UNHCR does assume a high degree of operational responsibility, swift action is needed to ensure that the necessary personnel and expertise are available, by obtaining the rapid deployment of sufficient UNHCR staff (see chapter 20 on administration and emergency staffing). At the same time, steps should be taken to identify and mobilize other organizations to assume responsibilities in the various sectors as soon as possible.

The Operational Role of the Government

7. Whatever the implementing arrangements, overall responsibility remains with the host government, assisted by UNHCR. The government's concurrence must, in accordance with Article 1 of the Statute, be sought on the proposed implementing arrangements.

8. The government may not have the capacity to be the primary operational organi-

zation, but may play a major role in the implementation of various activities of UNHCR and donors. In this case, it is preferable to ensure that the policy arm of the government (e.g. the Ministry of the Interior) is separate from the "operational" entities, since, as recipients of UNHCR funds, the relationship with the latter is substantially different.

It is preferable that the implementation of programmes be carried out by existing line ministries – e.g. the Ministry of Health for health programmes. As a rule, new government departments should not be specifically created to respond to the refugee emergency.

Every effort should be made to resist the creation of such specialized departments.

The Operational Role of UN Agencies

9. UNHCR always retains responsibility for the protection needs of refugees, but the refugees' material needs are likely to fall within sectors for which other organizations in the UN system have special competence through their mandate, experience and capacity, e.g. WFP and UNICEF. The roles and responsibilities of UN agencies are defined through their mandates and MOUs, and situation-specific responsibilities are set out in exchanges of letters and agreements – this should avoid duplication, minimize gaps, and clarify roles on the basis of recognition of comparative advantages.

Non-Governmental Organizations

10. Where the government is not the implementing partner in a particular sector, there may be advantages to selecting a national organization or an NGO with the required capacity as a partner. National or locally-based organizations may already be delivering emergency assistance, would already have staff on the ground, and would already be familiar with the country.

11. Many international NGOs have great experience of refugee emergencies and some can deploy teams and resources at short notice, both for specific sectors and for general management. In addition to their own staff, they will also know of a wide circle of individuals with the appropriate skills and experience. International NGOs already working in the country may be strengthened by their headquarters. For instance, under the overall responsibility of the national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society, the IFRCRCS may be able to help strengthen quickly the capacity of the national society to implement the emergency operation.

12. Criteria for the selection of implementing partners may be found in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual.

Implementing Procedures

Implementing procedures are subject to change. The forms, terms, documentation, procedures and references (e.g. chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual) referred to in this section from paragraphs 13 to 31 may change from time to time. However, the basic principles should remain the same.

13. Authority to implement the activities envisaged in the operations plan must be given formally through implementing instruments. These define the conditions which govern project implementation and authorize the obligation and expenditure of funds.

14. Authority to implement is firstly delegated internally within UNHCR. This is usually given through a Letter of Instruction (LOI) which authorizes the UNHCR Representative to implement projects directly or to enter into implementing agreements with implementing partners. Based on the internal delegation of authority, implementing agreements can be signed with UNHCR's implementing partners.

Any party disbursing UNHCR funds must have a formal signed agreement with UNHCR.

The Emergency Letter of Instruction (ELOI)

15. An Emergency Letter of Instruction (ELOI) is simpler in form and procedure than a "normal" LOI and is used to delegate implementing authority rapidly to the field. It is usually sent via e-mail, fax or telex. The ELOI gives the Representative in a country where an emergency is rapidly evolving the immediate authority to incur expenditures, and to enter into agreements for project implementation with implementing partners. It is not intended to cover the entire emergency operation, but to permit a rapid response to immediate needs, pending the formulation of an assistance project based on a detailed needs and resources assessment. Thus, in order to ensure continued assistance once these funds are exhausted or the ELOI project is termi-

nated the manager of the operation should, as soon as possible, send Headquarters a detailed project proposal for the issuance of an LOI, in accordance with the procedures set out in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual.

16. The minimum information which the Field Office must send to Headquarters in order that an ELOI be prepared is a budget proposal in US dollars at sector level. No project description or workplan is required.

17. Headquarters can then issue an ELOI with the following basic information:

i. Total requirements;

ii. Initial obligation level;

iii. Purpose of the expenditure (at sector level);

iv. Any time limit applicable to the expenditure;

v. Project symbol;

vi. Summary budget at sector level.

18. Actual expenditure under an ELOI must be recorded at a more detailed level (sector activity or, preferably, sub-item). It must be charged to the appropriate project under which implementation is taking place. A voucher must be completed to record every disbursement made, showing the name of the payee, the amount, the project symbol, the purpose and date of disbursement. The voucher should be signed by the payee or supported by receipted bills and sent to Headquarters with the monthly accounts.

19. In certain circumstances, the ELOI may not be necessary, as it will be possible to reallocate funds under an existing LOI.

Implementing Agreements

20. Implementation of all or part of a project may be sub-contracted to one or more implementing partners. A party disbursing UNHCR funds must have a formal signed agreement with UNHCR. The agreement must be based on the internal delegation of authority, and must comply with the terms of the authority (LOI, ELOI, etc.) and the Financial Rules. The standard clauses which must figure in any implementing agreement are described in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual.

21. If the government or an international organization advances relief supplies from their own resources, UNHCR may agree in writing to reimburse them in cash or kind, provided the maximum US dollar commitment is specified and does not exceed unobligated funds available under the ELOI or other existing authority. Any such commitments should immediately be reported to Headquarters.

22. An agreement with the government covering the provision of assistance is quite separate from the administrative agreement that governs the status of the High Commissioner's representation in the country. Where this administrative agreement (often referred to as the "UNHCR Cooperation Agreement") needs to be concluded, special instructions will be given by Headquarters. See also annexes to the *Checklist for the Emergency Administrator* for examples of such agreements.

Letter of Intent

23. If the implementing partner must start providing assistance before there is time to conclude an agreement, a signed "Mutual Letter of Intent to Conclude an Agreement" can authorize the obligation of funds. This is a temporary arrangement until there has been time to develop the detail of the agreement. The letter must include certain basic clauses. Annex 1 contains a sample format for such a letter and the basic clauses.

Agreements

24. The form of the agreement will depend on the circumstances and on the identity of the implementing partner. The agreements exist in two different formats. Bipartite agreements are for projects implemented by a governmental or a non-governmental organization. Tripartite agreements are for projects implemented by an non-governmental organization and where the host government is a third signatory to the agreement. The individual signing on behalf of UNHCR should be the addressee of the ELOI or LOI. The agreement sets out the responsibilities of each party, for example the government's contributions to the programme (land, services etc.) and its undertakings on facilitating the import and transport of relief supplies (traffic and landing rights, tax and customs exemptions, etc.).

Administrative Expenditure by Implementing Partners

25. UNHCR looks to implementing partners to contribute their own resources to the refugee programme, and to develop the capacity to meet their own support costs, in particular their headquarters support costs. UNHCR recognizes, however, that certain types of support costs

could be a legitimate charge on UNHCR voluntary funds. Support costs (as opposed to operational costs) are defined in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual, as are the guidelines applicable to the coverage of such costs.

Direct UNHCR Expenditure

26. In many cases, there may be a need for direct UNHCR project expenditure in addition to programme delivery, and administrative support. This might include international procurement by UNHCR, clearing, storage and internal transport expenses for contributions in-kind, and initial direct operational expenditure by UNHCR Field Officers at the refugee site.

Procurement

27. The Representative may enter into a contract (or series of related contracts[1] for the procurement of goods and services up to a certain limit (US$100,000 in 1998), without special Headquarters approval, but subject always to the appropriate authority (e.g. the ELOI) and procedures.

28. Where the Representative needs to enter into a contract (or series of related contracts) in excess of this amount, approval must be obtained either from Headquarters, or from the Local Committee on Contracts. A Local Committee on Contracts can be established when circumstances demand, for example at the beginning of an emergency where required goods and services are available locally. It can only be established with the approval of Headquarters (according to the procedures in Annex 2).

29. In all cases, the Representative must ensure that there is always due assessment of the available alternatives, including competitive bidding, before procuring any goods or services.

30. Procurement procedures are described in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual, and set out in Annex 2. See also chapter 18 on supplies and transport.

Contributions In Kind

31. Contributions in kind may be made towards needs foreseen under the emergency programme. Whether these are made bilaterally or through UNHCR, their value (generally assessed on the same basis as foreseen in the budget costing) will normally be credited against the appropriate budget item, and the cash requirements through UNHCR for that item reduced accordingly. This mechanism may need to be carefully explained to the government and implementing partners. For all contributions in kind made through UNHCR, a separate project or an "in kind LOI" will be established by Headquarters for the value of the contribution. The addressee of the relevant LOI is required to provide reports from the field to Headquarters on the arrival and distribution of the contribution. Paragraph 53 of chapter 9 on external relations discusses contributions in kind received by the Field.

Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

32. Control of UNHCR funds by the UNHCR field office and operational partners, and monitoring and evaluation, should be in accordance with established UNHCR procedures and the relevant clauses of the ELOI or LOI. Proper project control, including the close monitoring of obligation and expenditure levels, is particularly important in an emergency because of the risk of over-expenditure and the need to reallocate under-used resources without delay.

33. Careful and close monitoring of the activities and outputs is essential. Whatever the implementing arrangements, a UNHCR presence at, or at least frequent visits by the same person to, the site of the refugees will be required.

34. Monitoring is the ongoing review of an operation or project during its implementation to ensure that inputs, activities, and outputs are proceeding according to plans (including budget and work schedules). Monitoring tracks progress towards objectives, and that progress should be analyzed and evaluated by management, who can make improvements and take corrective measures to better achieve those objectives. Monitoring can be summed up in the question: *"Are we doing the thing right?"*.

35. Projects should also be evaluated to analyze the goals of the project themselves: their relevance and achievability – this can be summed up in the question *"Are we doing and have we done the right thing?"*.

[1] Related purchases are contracts entered into with one supplier within the previous 90 days which amount to $100,000 or more, not including contracts that have been approved by the Committee on Contracts.

Sufficient information must be available to decision-makers so that the operation can be adjusted to meet changing needs or to correct shortcomings.

36. Monitoring and evaluation should not be considered as time consuming detractions from protecting and assisting refugees, but as important tools in an emergency to ensure that activities being carried out retain their relevance in rapidly changing situations, and continue to address the most urgent problems. The circumstances of refugee women and children should be specially monitored; their circumstances could and should be used as benchmarks for monitoring the effectiveness of the overall operation.

37. Reports should be in standard formats or cover standard issues, in order to ensure important information is covered but avoiding unnecessary detail. Always bear in mind the purpose of the report, and who will be reading it, keeping it concise and to the point. Energy should not be wasted on exchanging information that is not acted upon – a report that is not read and acted upon is a waste of paper and time.

38. See Annex 3 for a suggested format for a standard emergency situation report.

Situation reports should be sent as a matter of routine.

Specific reports will be required for various sectors like protection, health and community services.

39. Regular reports should be made by the implementing partner to UNHCR at field level. The reporting obligations of implementing partners must be set out in the implementing agreements. The Field must also send regular reports to Headquarters - implementing partners' reports that are forwarded to Headquarters must always be accompanied by an analysis and comments from the Representative.

Special Considerations

40. In a refugee emergency, staff may be faced with a number of questions on which the following guidance may be helpful.

Payment for the Purchase or Rent of Land Occupied by Refugees.

41. As a matter of policy, UNHCR does not buy or rent land, which the government of the country of asylum is expected to provide. Headquarter's approval is required for exceptions to this policy. Construction on the land may however be financed by UNHCR.

Payment to Refugees

42. The issue of paying refugees in cash or kind for certain assistance activities (e.g. some community services, establishing basic infrastructure and shelters) will inevitably arise. How this issue is resolved can have a crucial effect on a settlement's character.

Payment can destroy the sense of responsibility refugees feel for their welfare.

However, the absence of payment may mean that tasks essential to the settlement's well-being are either not done or have to be done by paid outside labour.

43. In the first days of a settlement's existence payment to refugees would not normally be appropriate. In this start-up phase refugees should assume their responsibility towards themselves and their fellows to participate in the establishment of their settlement. Even payment-in-kind is probably inappropriate at this stage. In addition to the unfortunate impression of creating a right to payment, it may also involve commitments which cannot continue to be met, or have to be met at the expense of the entire settlement's general ration. Problems with the supply system are almost inevitable at the beginning of a settlement's life and no group should in such circumstances get extra commodities to the direct detriment of others.

44. In the longer-term, certain types of community work frequently start to emerge as areas where standards will drop if some form of payment is not given. This is often the case with key public health services whose importance is not always correctly understood by the refugees. Before starting any payment scheme, calculate its full potential cost and ensure that the required extra funds or food are available. The continuing financial implications for a large refugee population may be considerable.

It should be borne in mind that, after payment is introduced for one type of job or for one group of workers, others will see this as a precedent.

It will be necessary to have some very clear but restrictive criteria for paid community work. The wage system introduced should not inhibit progress towards a self-reliant settlement. Those agencies responsible for different sectoral services should meet the wage costs of refugees working in that sector.

45. As the refugees are already supported, remuneration levels should be well below national rates. It is important that this remuneration be fairly applied to all refugees doing broadly the same work. A major cause of discord at many refugee sites has been the payment by different organizations of markedly different rates to refugees for the same work.

A standard scale is essential.

Whether or not there are differentials recognizing different levels of skill will be a matter to decide in consultation with the refugees.

Provision of Services to the Local Population.

46. The local population should not see the refugees as a burden, because of their effect on existing local services and environment, nor should the refugees be a cause of resentment, because of benefits which may seem to accrue only to them. So activities to benefit the refugees such as maintaining or improving the local infrastructure (roads, hospitals and schools) or to look after the local environment, could help avoid or diminish resentment on the part of the local population.

47. Bilateral aid programmes and other organizations, both within and outside the UN system, should be encouraged to help affected nationals. Assistance available to refugees should take account of the conditions of nationals in the area and a flexible approach should be adopted – the principle is that provision of services to refugees should not be higher than that available to the local population.

Corruption

48. UNHCR should ensure that all concerned with the provision of assistance know clearly what UNHCR policy is regarding corruption. UNHCR is obliged by donors and by its mandate to ensure that all funds distributed by it are properly used for the benefit of refugees and all transactions must be in accordance with the Financial Rules. UNHCR should clearly specify which practices are acceptable and proper and which are not. It should also be clear that breaches of the policy will not be tolerated, and this message will be reinforced if rigorous monitoring and control are apparent to all parties.

Political and Religious Activity

49. Everyone has a right to political and religious expression: however, refugees are also obliged to conform to the laws and regulations of the host country as well as to the measures taken for the maintenance of public order. UNHCR itself is obliged to be non-political[2]. Responsibility for security and public order at the refugee site always rests with the government. To help maintain order, site planning should take into account any need there may be to physically separate any previously hostile groups among the refugees.

50. Other organizations active in the delivery of assistance may have a religious aspect in their normal work. Some are traditional partners of UNHCR, and the separation of religious and other activities is long established and well understood, but for others it may be useful to recall the basic principles. Religious activities by those outside the refugee community, where permitted by the authorities, must be clearly dissociated from the delivery of assistance and services to refugees.

No proselytizing should take place in association with the provision of services such as education, health and community services.

Key References

Partnership: A Programme Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners, UNHCR, Geneva, 1996.

Supplies and Food Aid Field Handbook, UNHCR, Geneva, 1989.

UNHCR Manual, Chapter 4, UNHCR, Geneva, 1995 (and updates).

[2] *Para. 2 of the Statute of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees states: "the work of the High Commissioner shall be of an entirely non-political character; it shall be humanitarian and social..."*

NATIONS UNIES
HAUT COMMISSARIAT
POUR LES REFUGIES

UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES

Date
Notre/Our code:

Dear

I should like to refer to our exchanges [*add details as appropriate*] concerning the implementation by [*name of implementing partner*] on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of a programme of emergency assistance to [*origin and number of beneficiaries*].

It is my understanding that it is our mutual intention to conclude and sign as soon as possible an agreement covering our cooperation in the above mentioned programme. This agreement will incorporate, inter alia, the attached clauses and will require [*name of implementing partner*] to report in financial and narrative form on the use of all contributions received from the High Commissioner. The conclusion of an agreement embodying these requirements is mandatory under the Financial Rules of UNHCR whenever funds are made available by UNHCR.

I should be grateful if you would confirm in writing below that this understanding is correct, and your agreement that the use of the sum of [*amount in local currency or in US dollars*], that the High Commissioner intends to make available to [*name of implementing partner*] on receipt of this confirmation, will be considered as subject to the terms of the Agreement, once concluded and signed.

[signature and title of addressee of ELOI]

I confirm that the understanding set out above is that of [*name of implementing partner*], which agrees that the use of the sum of [*amount in local currency or in US dollars*] will be considered as subject to the terms of the Agreement, once concluded and signed.

[signature and title of addressee of letter above, and date]

MANDATORY CLAUSES

Clauses governing Rate of Exchange (1.08 or 2.03), Maintenance of Financial and Project Records (3.08), Inspection and Audit (3.11 and 3.12), Audit Certificate (3.13) and Non-Liability of the High Commissioner (4.05 and 4.06) are STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS and cannot be excluded (paragraph numbers given are those from UNHCR Manual, Chapter 4, Appendix 8). These clauses are set out below:

Rate of Exchange

1.08 (if the government is a signatory to the Agreement): grant the most favourable official rate of exchange for all conversions into local currency of funds provided by the High Commissioner for the implementation of the project governed by the UNHCR Agreement;

2.03 (if an NGO is the implementing partner): apply the most favourable official rate of exchange for all transactions relating to the implementation of the project governed by the UNHCR Agreement;

Maintenance of Financial and Project Records

3.08 maintain separate project records and accounts containing current information and documentation which, **inter alia**, shall comprise:

a) copies of the UNHCR Agreement(s) and all revisions thereto;
b) payment vouchers, clearly showing the (Sub-)Project symbol, the name of the payee, the amount, the purpose and date of disbursement, evidencing all payments made and with all pertinent supporting documentation attached;
c) vouchers evidencing the receipt of all remittances, cash or any other form of credit to the project account;
d) periodic analyses of actual expenditure against the project's budget;
e) records of all financial commitments entered into during the project;
f) reports by auditors on the accounts and activities of the project;

Inspection and Audit

3.11 facilitate inspection and audit of the project governed by the UNHCR Agreement by the United Nations Internal Audit Service or any other person duly authorized by the High Commissioner on behalf of the United Nations. Should they at any time wish to do so, the United Nations Board of Auditors may also carry out an audit of the project. Audits of the project will include, **inter alia**, the examination of the project accounting records in order to determine that the charging of administrative and operational support costs to the project complies with those specified in the annexes to the UNHCR Agreement. For auditing purposes, project accounting records shall be retained for the six years following the project's termination;

3.12 facilitate visits by the High Commissioner or of any other person duly authorized by him/her to the project site(s) to evaluate the progress and achievements of the project during its period of implementation or thereafter;

Audit Certificate for Governmental Implementing Partners

3.13 submit to the High Commissioner, within three months of the final date for liquidation of commitments, an audit certificate issued by the appropriate government audit authority, together with such comments as the auditor may deem appropriate in respect of project operations generally and, in particular, the financial situation as reported by the Government;

Audit Certificate for International NGO Implementing Partners

3.14 submit to the High Commissioner, within six months of the end of the Agency's fiscal year, a copy of its consolidated audited financial statements, wherein UNHCR funding is clearly identified, issued by an independent audit authority and as presented to and endorsed by the Agency's governing body. The audit report and opinion should include such comments as the auditor may deem appropriate in respect of UNHCR funded project operations generally and, in particular, the opinion should clearly indicate that UNHCR funds were duly included in the audit;

Audit Certificate for National NGO Implementing Partners

3.15 for all UNHCR Agreements for a value of US$100,000 and above, submit to the High Commissioner, within six months of the final date for liquidation of commitments, an audit certificate issued by an independent audit authority. The audit report and opinion should include such comments as the auditor may deem appropriate in respect of project operations generally and, in particular, the financial situation as reported by the Agency to UNHCR in its final Sub-Project Monitoring Report. For all UNHCR Agreements for a value of less than US$ 100,000, UNHCR reserves the right to request an audit in accordance with Clause 3.11 above.;

Non-liability

4.05 not be liable to indemnify any third party in respect of any claim, debt, damage or demand arising out of the implementation of the project governed by the UNHCR Agreement and which may be made against the other parties to the Agreement;

4.06 not accept liability for compensation for the death, disability or the effects of other hazards which may be suffered by employees of the other parties to the UNHCR Agreement as a result of their employment on work which is the subject matter of the Agreement.

1. Introduction

1.1. The procedures applicable to the procurement of goods and/or services by UNHCR Headquarters or UNHCR offices in the field (other than contractual arrangements for the employment of staff) vary according to the US dollar value (at the prevailing United Nations rate of exchange) of the goods or services, and are described below.

1.2 For all purchases of substantial quantities of relief or other supplies by UNHCR offices in the field, Representatives should nominate a purchasing/logistics focal point with a clear line of responsibility. Local purchases will be initiated by, or at least cleared with, the purchasing/-logistics focal point. In all circumstances, including the evaluation of contracts for the supply of goods and services or consultancies, the procedures described below will apply. The term "Purchase Order" is to be read as also applying to other forms of authorization used in relation to contracts for services or corporate or institutional consultancies.

1.3 In all cases of procurement of goods and/or services, the procedures and controls applied should be in accordance with Appendix 8 of Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual and must provide an open, competitive, qualitative and accountable process to obtain such goods or services which meet project requirements at the lowest available cost. It is the responsibility of the addressee of the Letter of Instruction to ensure that the relevant procedures are adhered to.

1.4 All contracts entered into for the procurement of goods and/or services should ensure exemption from, or reimbursement of, all customs duties, levies and direct taxes on services and goods, supplies or any other articles imported or domestically purchased.

1.5 It is the responsibility of the Representative to ensure that each UNHCR office in the field maintains a register of all commercial contracts entered into and that a sequential number is assigned to every such contract.

1.7 **For a value of less than US$ 2,500**

A Purchase Order may be issued without recourse to formal tender, provided that funds are available under the Letter of Instruction and that at least three informal offers or prices have been considered and the best offer has been selected.

1.8 **For a value of over US$ 2,500 and up to US$ 5,000**

A Purchase Order may be issued provided that funds are available under the Letter of Instruction and that at least three informal quotations have been compared and the best offer has been selected. A written record of the quotations and the reasons for the selection must be kept.

1.9 **For a value of over US$ 5,000 and up to US$ 50,000**

A Purchase Order may be issued provided that funds are available under the Letter of Instruction and that selection has been made on the basis of at least three competitive offers obtained in response to a formal Quotation Request sent to selected suppliers inviting them to submit sealed quotations within a specified time frame. Chart 3.F and Annex VIII of the Supplies and Food Aid Field Handbook provide guidelines and an example of a Quotation Request. The Quotation Request must stipulate that all offers must be received at the UNHCR office in signed and sealed envelopes and marked with the Quotation Request number. All quotations received must remain sealed and must be kept under lock and key until the expiration of the bid deadline. All bids must be opened before a witness by the Administrative Officer or the Officer in charge of administration in the office, and must be initialled by both the person opening the bids and the witness. The witness shall be selected by the Representative and drawn from the professional or national officer categories. All formal quotations will be compared on a Tabulation of Bids form as per Annex IX of the Supplies and Food Aid Field Handbook. The recommended supplier and the reasons for selecting that supplier will be stated thereon.

1.10 **For a value of over US$ 50,000 and up to US$ 100,000**

Representatives will establish a Purchasing Committee to consider bids and to make the appropriate recommendations. The approval of Headquarters is not required. Rules and procedures concerning Purchasing Committees and their composition are set out below. In a country with more than one Field/Sub Office, the Representative may wish to establish Purchasing Committees at different duty stations. Depending on local costs and current exchange rates, Representatives may also lower the financial limit of procurement to be considered by the Purchasing Committee. The Committee will consider quotations subject to the same conditions as set out in paragraph 1.9 above. If appropriate, the Representative and/or the Committee may wish to request specialist advice from the Programme and Technical Support Section or the Supply and Transport Section at Headquarters.

1.11 **For a value of US$ 100,000 or more**:

A submission must be made to the Committee on Contracts at Headquarters except in cases where Headquarters has authorized the establishment of a Local Committee on Contracts as described in 3 below. For submissions to the Headquarters Committee on Contracts, a minimum of four formal quotations must be requested and considered by the Purchasing Committee which will make a proposal as to the most suitable supplier to the Committee on Contracts through the relevant Desk at Headquarters. In cases where Headquarters has authorized the establishment of a Local Committee on Contracts, the latter may evaluate and decide on all bids without recourse to the Purchasing Committee. Nevertheless, in all cases, the relevant specialists in the Programme and Technical Support Section and the Supply and Transport Section must be consulted before or during the tendering and evaluation stages so as to ensure compliance with technical requirements and that prices are compatible with international market rates for the goods or services under consideration. Submissions to the Committee on Contracts should include information as shown in Chart 3.G of the Supplies and Food Aid Field Handbook. After approval by the Committee on Contracts (or a Local Committee on Contracts), a Purchase Order may be issued.

2. Purchasing Committee

2.1 Procurement of goods or services by a UNHCR office in the field for a value of over US$ 50,000 and up to US$ 100,000 must be approved by a Purchasing Committee. This Committee will also prepare proposals to the Headquarters Committee on Contracts for procurement for a value of over US$ 100,000 in cases where Headquarters has not authorized the establishment of a Local Committee on Contracts. The Purchasing Committee will be established and chaired by the Representative and will consolidate the requirements, oversee the tendering process, select suitable local suppliers and record its recommendations in writing.

2.2 The Committee will be composed of Members and alternate members designated by the Representative and drawn from the professional or national officer categories. Staff members responsible for procurement should be excluded from membership. In cases where several implementing partners require similar supplies the Representative may consider including in the Purchasing Committee staff from implementing agencies. A quorum will consist of three Members.

2.3 The staff member in charge of procurement should present a written proposal to the Purchasing Committee which will include information on the goods or services to be procured as per Chart 3.G of the Supplies and Food Aid Field Handbook. The minutes of the meeting will be taken and issued (at least in draft) within two working days after the meeting. Alternatively, particularly in an emergency, Members of the Committee may approve purchase by signature of the proposal with appropriate comments. In general, the Committee should adopt procedures similar to those of the UNHCR Committee on Contracts as set out in Annex 8.5 of Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual, except for the provisions concerning emergency procedures.

3. Local Committee on Contracts

3.1 In a UNHCR office in the field, the Representative may request Headquarters to approve the establishment of a Local Committee on Contracts, particularly in the early stages of an emergency operation and when required goods or services are known to be available locally or regionally. The authority to establish a Local Committee on Contracts must be obtained from Headquarters, which will normally stipulate the purpose, the geographic, time and financial limits, the necessity to apply the relevant rules and procedures and, if applicable, the necessity to consult the Supply and Transport Section or the Programme and Technical Support Section on the prices and sources of supply of commodities and/or services available in the region. The Committee will be chaired by the Representative or by a formally designated alternate, and will be composed of at least three professional staff members. If there is no quorum, the matter will be referred to the Committee on Contracts at Headquarters. The Local Committee on Contracts will consider quotations subject to the same conditions as set out in paragraph 1.9 above.

3.2 All requests for the establishment (or the extension of the period of validity) of a Local Committee on Contracts should be sent via the Desk to the Chairman of the Committee on Contracts who will check the criteria and the justifications provided, and, if appropriate, request the Secretary of the Committee on Contracts to prepare an authorizing communication. The authorizing communication should be cleared by the relevant Regional Bureau and the Chief of the Supply and Transport Section, and be authorized by the Chairman of the Committee on Contracts. Requests for the establishment of a Local Committee on Contracts must include a full justification as well as information on the requested time and financial limits, and must also confirm that the goods or services being sought are available locally or regionally and that the requisite minimum number of professional staff would be available to act as Members of the Local Committee on Contracts. Requests must include the names of three members and three alternate members.

3.3 The Representative shall appoint a secretary to the Local Committee on Contracts to receive submissions to the Committee, to schedule meetings and secure the relevant documentation, to conduct required correspondence, to maintain the Committee's files and to prepare and distribute minutes of the Committee's proceedings.

3.4 Copies of the minutes and proceedings of each meeting of the Local Committee on Contracts, together with a Tabulation of Bids form and copies of the contracts entered into or purchase orders placed (and any amendments to these) must be forwarded to the Secretary of the Committee on Contracts at Headquarters who will present these to the Chairman and Members of the Committee on Contracts for their comments. The minutes must contain a summary of the discussion, the reasons for decisions taken, details regarding the contractor or supplier selected and the potential costs involved.

1. In emergencies, it is essential that regular situation reports reach the outside world (other UN agencies, implementing partners). The frequency of such reports will be determined by the characteristics of the situation; more frequent reports will be necessary in the initial stage of an emergency. Situation reports should give an overall view of the situation with sufficient factual content and explanation of changes since the last report to answer rather than raise substantive questions. By indicating progress achieved, problems encountered and steps being taken or planned to overcome these problems, the reports should give a cumulative picture of how the needs of the refugees are being met. It should report on actions including actual and planned activities; however, it should not dwell on intentions.

The SITREP should:

- ❑ Be short;
- ❑ Focus on priority areas;
- ❑ Give quantitative data in a standard format (e.g. give the death rate as deaths/10,000/day NOT the number of people who have died);
- ❑ Highlight trends (e.g. increasing/decreasing water supply, increase/decrease in arrival rate);
- ❑ Clearly say who is expected to take any actions which are specified.

2. A suggested format is given below. Information contained in the SITREP should be analyzed and consolidated before being passed on to the next management level. The practice of simply copying “raw” and un-analyzed information from one level to another should be avoided. If the same format is used by all levels from site to central office to Headquarters, it will make it easier to consolidate reports from various areas. Major headings should as a rule be the same in each report, indicating "no change" if appropriate. The report can either be structured by sector of assistance with sites covered under each sector, or alternatively, by site, with sectors of assistance covered under each site heading. In either case, the information under each sector of assistance and for each location should cover as applicable:

i. Current situation;
ii. Particular problem areas, remedial action planned with time frame;
iii. Any variation from overall implementing arrangements;
iv. Any action required from the addressee of the SITREP.

3. The reports should be sequentially numbered, copied to other UNHCR offices as appropriate (including the UNHCR liaison office in New York). The report may be used as the basis for wider situation reports issued from Headquarters.

SITREP (*number*)

COUNTRY

COVERING PERIOD (*date*) TO (*date*)

Drafted, cleared, authorized by ( ) on (*date*).

A. GENERAL SITUATION

B. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Summary of general assessment of situation, assessment of refugee location, and field deployment of UNHCR staff. Summary of major trends including protection.

C. REFUGEE STATISTICS AND REGISTRATION

By location in country of origin or by distinct groups if not self-evident. Explanation of changes since last report. Indication of sources, e.g. government, UNHCR, etc. Any additional information (as relevant) on gender breakdown, vulnerable cases, variances between UNHCR and official figures, group or individual determination, etc. A format for reporting on population in emergency situation reports is given in Annex 1 of chapter 11 on population estimation and registration.

D. PROTECTION AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Summary of any developments.

E. OPERATIONS

E.1. Coordination

Government departments, UN system, NGOs – both at central and field levels.

E.2. Overall Implementing Arrangements

Role of authorities. Operational role of UNHCR. Role of UNHCR's government counterparts, other UN agencies, international organizations and NGO partners. Other sources of significant assistance.

E.3. Assistance

Summary of main developments since the last report, broken down by sector and/or site, as applicable. Additional information provided could include major problems encountered in programme delivery and modifications required to implementing arrangements.

F. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Significant events in relations with donor government representatives, with diplomatic missions in general and with the media.

G. ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Establishment of UNHCR presence, office premises, vehicles and equipment, staffing arrangements, local recruitment, etc.

Annex 4 – Format for Reporting on Population in Emergency Situation Reports

Period: From ____________________ to ____________________

Type / status of popu-lation	Current location	Origin / from	Pop. at start of period	New arrivals	Decreases			Pop. at end of period		
					Vol. return	Resettle-ment	Other	Total	% of total 0-4 years*	% of total who are female*

*Estimate

Main source of information is ❑ Government; ❑ UNHCR; ❑ NGO

Main basis of the information is ❑ Registration; ❑ Estimate

9

External Relations

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Relations with Government and Diplomatic Corps

1. All matters of protocol relating to establishing a new UNHCR presence in an emergency are likely to be handled by the Foreign Ministry in the same way as for other United Nations organizations. However, substantive matters concerning refugees may be handled by another authority, for example the President or Prime Minister's office or the Ministry of Interior. Guidance on the form of written communications with the government is given below.

2. It is important that the diplomatic corps accredited to the country is kept informed of UNHCR's activities from the start of an emergency. An informed and concerned diplomatic corps will be helpful in gaining support for the emergency operation both from the host country institutions and from donor governments for funding.

Briefing Meetings

3. Briefing meetings should start in the early days of an emergency and continue on a regular basis. There may already be a contact group of the ambassadors most interested in refugee matters who could be briefed in the early days of an emergency. Where there is no such group, or to make the arrangements for meetings more formal, it may be appropriate to invite the ambassadors of member states of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (EXCOM) to the briefings (for a list of EXCOM members, see Annex 1).

The aim is to keep Executive Committee and other immediately concerned Governments well informed while not devoting scarce time to a major protocol exercise.

4. A number of people may be helpful in giving advice on the organization and participants of the meetings, including: the ambassador from the country of the current Executive Committee Chairman may be helpful in advising on the organization of briefings, or the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, or the ambassador of the country currently holding the presidency of the European Union (as a major donor group), or the Organization of African Unity or other regional groups.

5. A representative of the government would normally be present at these briefings. United Nations organizations and NGOs directly involved in the emergency operation should also be invited to attend.

6. Unless chaired by the representative of the Government, the meeting should normally be chaired by UNHCR. Other agencies should be encouraged to give account of their activities. Initially these meetings may need to be held fortnightly or even weekly, but once a month is a reasonable interval once the situation starts to come under control.

7. It may be useful to prepare for briefing meetings by prior discussions with other participating agencies to ensure that there is agreement on the issues and on information such as population figures.

8. If a question cannot be answered immediately, arrangements to follow up on an individual basis with the questioner should be made.

9. These briefing meetings will be important for fund-raising purposes. Representatives of donor governments will form part of the diplomatic corps and will therefore be involved in the meetings. Additional smaller briefing meetings may be appropriate, to deal with particular concerns of a donor, or to respond to a donor mission, or in respect of major protection issues which might require smaller, more discreet, briefings.

10. A useful complementary measure, which might eventually substitute for the diplomatic and other briefings, is a weekly or monthly written report prepared by UNHCR. The standard internal emergency situation report, or sitrep, could be used as the basis for this report (the format for this is suggested in Annex 3 of chapter 8 on implementing arrangements). If the sitrep is to be used in this way the parts which must not be made public should be clearly marked. Other United Nations bodies directly involved should contribute an account of their work. Such situation reports should be given wide distribution in the operations area and to focal points at Headquarters.

11. Implementation of these briefing arrangements will require valuable time and effort. Clearly the priority is to deliver the emergency assistance needed by refugees. However, if those interested do not have a regular source of information on the progress of the operation, UNHCR staff may end up spending even more time on individual briefings.

Relations with the Media

Introduction

12. The media has traditionally been an ally of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies working in difficult conditions. The media, especially locally based correspondents, can also be a useful source of information. There may be considerable media interest in an emergency and perceptions of how the international community in general, and UNHCR in particular, is responding will be set in the early days. This has important implications for support for UNHCR. It takes time to correct an unfavourable first impression, and media interest may have shifted elsewhere before this happens.

The best way to have positive media coverage and support is to run the most effective emergency operation possible in the circumstances. Expertise in relations with the media can never substitute for good performance.

13. Television, radio and newspapers operate on tight deadlines and need factual stories on the emergency, with some background information. Magazines and some radio and television programs cover stories in depth and have more time available for research and subsequent re-checking. Television news channels (such as CNN, BBC World and Sky News), and wire services (for example AFP, AP, Reuters), produce bulletin-type news stories, have very short deadlines, and are likely to be the major source for world-wide coverage of the emergency.

14. Given the logistical difficulties of some emergencies, journalists are likely to approach humanitarian agencies with requests for help in moving around. Whenever possible, and taking into account the operational priorities and the sensitivity of some situations, journalists, both national and international, should be assisted in getting to the story.

General Guidelines for Relations with the Media

15. The first decision to make concerns who should handle relations with the media. The media prefer information directly from those responsible, which can be very time-consuming. It is therefore recommended that a Public Information Officer be a member of the UNHCR field team from the start.

16. The Public Information Officer must have full and immediate access to information concerning developments in the operation and UNHCR policies and reactions. He/she needs to be updated by the most senior UNHCR Officer in the operation as often as necessary, at least once per day in a major emergency. The Public Information Officer should then be responsible for all aspects of relations with the media. Where there is no UNHCR Public Information Officer, good contacts with the press officers of other organizations will be helpful for general advice, and for organizing joint news conferences.

17. In emergencies the media will probably go to the location of the refugees, often unannounced, and expect a briefing from UNHCR field officers on the spot. The briefing given should be limited to facts and practical intentions. See below for tips for interviews.

18. When intense press interest in a particular event can be predicted, there is much to be said for preparing a short and simple statement, distributing it to the enquirers, and avoiding further comment. Close internal coordination with field staff is essential, particularly if the interest relates to an event occurring in a location where UNHCR has field staff. Sending the statement to Headquarters is essential as questions are likely to be raised in Geneva.

19. Newspaper editors will generally print a factual correction, and will often give space in opinion or correspondence columns for UNHCR to comment on errors of interpretation of UNHCR's role and policy. It is more difficult to correct a factual error made on television or radio. However, when trying to made corrections, these should be corrections of fact not interpretation.

UNHCR should be careful to avoid public polemical debate.

Locally-based Media

20. The national media will be very important in determining local attitudes to the refugees, and may also give an early indication of sensitive issues and even government policy. The government may be as concerned by national coverage as by foreign coverage. Local foreign-language newspapers may be less important, except indirectly as a result of their effect on the diplomatic community or foreign press corps.

21. Field offices should monitor the local media, including the radio and television, which may play a much greater role in influencing public opinion than newspapers. Good relations should be developed with local correspondents covering the emergency. However, exercise considerable discretion until there is practical experience of the outcome of interviews. Language barriers are often a source of misunderstanding, particularly on the telephone and a locally recruited Public Information Assistant can be very helpful in this regard.

22. It will probably be useful to make early contact with the news editors of the main national (and any local foreign language) radio, and television stations and newspapers to explain UNHCR's role. Stress that every priority is being given to the needs of the emergency and give a contact reference, should further information be required.

Information Sharing with the Government

23. The government may be sensitive to coverage of the refugees, and early contact should be established with the official press office or information service. General statements or press releases should be shared with the government information services and the department handling refugees and UNHCR. Statements relating to joint government-UNHCR actions may have to be cleared with the government first.

Field/Headquarters Information Sharing

24. A regular and swift exchange of information is essential. Many questions on the operation will be asked directly in Geneva and New York. There is a UN press briefing in Geneva every Tuesday and Friday morning, where UNHCR participates, and a weekday press briefing at noon in New York by the spokesperson of the Secretary-General. In addition, UNHCR calls special news conferences whenever necessary.

25. The Public Information Section at Headquarters must have access to up-to-date information. The Field should therefore:

❏ Keep media interest in mind when reporting to Headquarters (for example in sitreps);

❏ Provide information (in sitreps or separately) on matters likely to be of specific press interest;

❏ Send reviews of local media coverage to Headquarters.

26. In addition, if the Field has given an interview with a major foreign newspaper or network, or if a foreign correspondent has been aggressive or appeared unsatisfied with answers, the Public Information Section at Headquarters should be forewarned.

27. Similarly, the Field must be kept regularly informed by the Public Information Section at Headquarters of international media coverage. Important international media reports (including those based on briefings given in the field) may not be available in the field.

Press who contact Headquarters before going to the field should be clearly briefed that only limited attention and logistical support can be devoted to them by the field offices during the emergency phase.

Tips for Interviews

28. Reporters generally respect the ground rules for an interview, provided these are clearly established in advance. The interviewer and interviewee should agree on type of attribution and how the interviewee will be quoted: for example: by name, "a UNHCR spokesman", "UN sources", "humanitarian worker", "sources in the international community", etc. An interview may need to mix full attribution for the facts, and no attribution for information on political considerations and constraints. Alternatively an interview can be fully attributed and may often be tape recorded. An interview can also be for background information, and in this case what is said by the interviewee is not attributed directly.

29. Radio and television interviews can provide good coverage for UNHCR's aims. They are, by definition, for full attribution. If this is not advisable because of particular sensitivities, avoid such interviews. Bear in mind that interviews on radio and television can be edited.

30. In all interviews and comments to the media, when in doubt err on the side of discretion. Considerable experience and self-discipline is needed to limit remarks to what was previously planned. Having agreed to give an interview or answer questions, showing hostility or irritation will nearly always be counter-productive, no matter how unreasonable or loaded the questions are.

31. UNHCR's work is difficult and mistakes will inevitably be made, but do not try to hide problems and difficulties.

Though it is important to be discreet, honesty and clarity are the best policy.

Most journalists understand these problems and respect efforts in what they know are very difficult conditions. In fact, it is almost always best to talk about problems before the media find out about them on their own – and they usually do. Finally, if mistakes are made, admit them and try to learn from them.

32. When a complete answer to a question is given and a silence ensues, leave it silent. There is no law stating that one has to say more than one wants or intends to say. It is better to pause to construct a response than to ramble. Do not suggest follow-up questions, unless it is in order to disseminate important information.

33. Do not ask for a story to be killed or suppressed. Attempts at censorship will backfire and are likely to generate two immediate consequences; stepped up investigation of the matter to be suppressed; and an unfavourable story on the attempts to suppress it.

34. When in a press conference and especially with the electronic media, state the most important point at the beginning. In subsequent answers and statements, refer again to the most important point. When dealing with radio and television, keep answers short; television and radio put severe restrictions on how much information can be used and long drawn-out explanations and answers tend not to be used and the main point not covered.

35. Give direct answers to direct questions. If the facts are not known, say so, and offer to get back to the reporter with the information.

36. Sensitive political or policy questions should be referred to the main UNHCR field office. Responses to general questions about the situation should be made with UNHCR's mandate and goals in mind.

37. Take the initiative/control. Avoid answering speculative "what if" questions.

Be prepared to take the lead and direct the interview into positive areas of information about the operation.

38. Key things to remember for all interviews are:

❏ BE YOURSELF. While journalists are always on the lookout for a good story, they are not out to make your life miserable. So relax and be friendly. Look at the interviewer. Avoid nervous gestures and mannerisms. Keep your answers short and simple;

❏ BE POSITIVE. Do not criticize colleagues or other UN organizations and NGOs. We are all in the same boat;

❏ BE CONVERSATIONAL. When you talk to journalists, keep it simple and clear. Do not use the type of language found in many UNHCR internal documents. In everyday conversation, ordinary people don't use terms like "modalities", "durable solutions," "inter alia" "specific international protection mandate," "NGO," and "implementing partner." Use examples that will make the information comprehensible to your audience;

❏ BE CONCISE. A 10-minute interview may end up being seconds on the air, or three lines in the newspaper. It is essential to crystallize your thoughts in a few quotable sentences;

❏ BE IDENTIFIABLE WITH UNHCR. If you are being interviewed for television, or if a photograph will accompany the report, try to get a UNHCR logo in the background – possibly a flag or on a vehicle, wear a UNHCR T-shirt or cap.

Guidelines For Appearance On Television

39. Key things to remember for television interviews are:

DO's

❏ Do make and maintain eye contact with the questioner, not the camera. Do not let your eyes wander;

❏ DO wear suitable subdued-coloured clothes. Normal working clothes for field conditions are fine – ties and suits are not appropriate;

❏ DO check your appearance before going in front of the camera, hair, buttons, zips?

❏ DO make short statements, each holding up on its own;

❏ DO remember to make your most important points as early as possible;

❏ DO, before you begin, discuss with the interviewer what line the discussion will take;

❏ DO remember that the interviewer and audience know less about your subject than you do;

- ❏ DO remember that any programme is likely to be edited before use.

DONT's

- ❏ DON'T smoke;
- ❏ DON'T wear sunglasses or jewellery;
- ❏ DON'T forget that the smallest mannerisms show up more obviously on television;
- ❏ DON'T fidget or fiddle with pens, pencils, lighters, etc.;
- ❏ DON'T say "I think" too often. it sounds as though you are uncertain of your subject. Talk about “we” or “UNHCR” instead.

Visibility of the Operation

40. In addition to working with the media to ensure coverage of UNHCR operations, emergency managers must pay attention to the visibility of the operation.

41. Proper identification of staff, vehicles, buildings and relief materials contributes to improved dialogue with beneficiaries, local authorities and partners.

> **In conflict zones, visible markings can be an important security measure for staff and property.**

42. Staff should be visible and identifiable as UNHCR personnel. Visibility items for staff, vehicles and buildings are available from Headquarters (see Catalogue of Emergency Response Resources, Appendix 1). A visible UNHCR will help to show the beneficiaries and the outside world that UNHCR is present, active and delivering services to the refugees.

Funding and Donor Relations

Emergency Fund

43. The availability of funds is a prerequisite for any UNHCR emergency action. The initial funding in an emergency for project and operations delivery and administrative support expenditure is likely to be allocated from UNHCR’s Emergency Fund. Under the terms of UNHCR’s Financial Rules, the Emergency Fund is established to provide “financial assistance to refugees and displaced persons in emergency situations for which there is no provision in the programmes approved by the Executive Committee”, and to meet additional administrative expenditures resulting from those emergencies. The High Commissioner may allocate from the Emergency Fund up to US$25 million annually, provided that the amount made available for any one single emergency does not exceed US$8 million in any one year and that the Fund shall be maintained at not less than US$8 million. Further details are provided in Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual and in Appendix 1, Catalogue of Emergency Response Resources.

Central Emergency Revolving Fund

44. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was established to provide funds within the UN system to respond rapidly to emergencies. The fund has a target level of US$50 million and is financed from voluntary contributions. It is used for cash advances to UN operational organizations and entities. In principle these advances are to be reimbursed as a first charge against income subsequently received, usually as a result of consolidated appeals. Further details are provided in the Catalogue of Emergency Response Resources (Appendix 1).

Using Existing Funds

45. If an emergency develops in an existing operation, immediate funds may be available from those already foreseen for that operation or, if appropriate, from the Programme Reserve. Depending on the scale of further needs, and also on the time of year when the emergency occurs, further funding could either be proposed to the Executive Committee as a new current year project or as a new project for the coming year, or could be the subject of a special appeal.

Communicating Needs to Donors

46. Operational needs, progress and constraints must be clearly communicated to donors. A donor relations strategy should be established in the first days of an emergency and maintained for its duration.

47. Donor relations should be maintained through:

i. Briefing meetings and regular contact at field level between UNHCR staff and donor representatives. Regular briefing meetings (see paragraphs 3 to 11 above) with donors should aim to keep them up to date on actions being taken, protection issues, and any constraints;

ii. Regular contact and follow-up at Headquarters level;

iii. Involving donor representatives in missions to see refugee sites and other points at which assistance is delivered;

iv. Indirect communication of operational needs through UNHCR visibility in the media.

48. It is important to highlight UNHCR's protection and coordinating role when communicating with donors. Coordination must be a reality on the ground with UNHCR taking, and being seen to take, an appropriate leadership role.

49.

Only request funding for operations and budgets which have been formally approved.

There are no exceptions to this. This is necessary to ensure funding is targeted where it is most needed, to provide consistency in operational priorities and objectives, and in communicating these priorities to donors. Several sections in UNHCR brief donors and it is important for credibility that the briefings be similar. In case of doubts regarding what should be presented to donors for funding, contact the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service at Headquarters for advice.

50. Steer donors towards funding those activities or areas of the operation that are most in need of funding. When appropriate, promote regional funding. Do not forget that the emergency may have a regional dimension. Include this and other elements of the UNHCR operation in the briefing and be prepared to discuss funding for all aspects of the operation with donors.

51. Contributions tightly earmarked to one aspect of the operation impede flexibility. Sometimes substantial contributions are strictly earmarked and there is little scope for amending budgets once they are approved.

Donors should be encouraged to make unearmarked contributions whenever possible.

However, if donors do want to earmark a contribution to a specific part of the operation, advise them to check with the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service at Headquarters to ensure that this portion of the operation has not been funded already, or offered for funding, to another donor.

52. Particularly in emergencies, donors may offer to supply commodities or services rather than make a cash contribution. To a large extent it will be up the Field to decide on the suitability of such contributions. The offer should be immediately reported to the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service at Headquarters, and the donor requested to follow up with Headquarters. In kind contributions need to be coordinated by Headquarters to avoid duplication of similar contributions by different donors, and to avoid confusion over the amount of cash versus total contribution[1].

Preparation of an Emergency Appeal

53. The primary document for communicating with donors is the emergency appeal. It is the appeal which needs to be brought to the donors' attention at briefings, and it is the activities in the appeal against which progress should be reported.

54. The emergency appeal is developed by both the Field and Headquarters.

Information contained in the appeal about operational needs to be generated at the point of delivery – i.e. the field – so appeals written primarily in the field are the most effective in raising funds.

Headquarters is responsible for issuing the appeal: it should have all the information necessary from the Field as soon as possible to enable it to approve budgets and to issue the appeal at the earliest opportunity.

55. The government should be consulted in the development of the appeal. The appeal should also take into account the results of the initial assessment, and the budget should cover all foreseen expenditures.

56. If the situation changes dramatically during the emergency, and the current appeal becomes inappropriate, then the Field should review operational objectives and agree the new direction with Headquarters before the revised operation is presented to donors.

57. The appeal and the way the operation is funded can be a potential source of confusion when the government is UNHCR's operational partner. The total target can be misunder-

[1] *Further information on contributions in kind can be found in* Procedures for Handling Contributions In Kind, IOM/65/96 – FOM/74/96, *UNHCR, November 1996. Budgetary procedures for dealing with contributions in kind are discussed in chapter 8 on implementing arrangements.*

stood as being entirely intended for expenditure in the country, whereas the budget will, of course, cover all UNHCR's direct expenditure, such as for any international procurement and field and Headquarters operational delivery and administrative support, including protection. Clarity on this point from the start, for example in any local press release or comment, can avoid embarrassment later.

Communication Between the Field and Headquarters

58. Headquarters and the Field need to work together closely on funding and donor relations issues. The focal point for this at Headquarters is the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service. The Private Sector Fund Raising Unit at Headquarters may also issue appeals to the general public or aimed at individual or corporate donors.

59. Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service at Headquarters should:

❏ Advise how to deal with a particular donor;

❏ Provide latest information on funding for the operation;

❏ Follow up with donor capitals on potential contributions discussed in the field;

❏ Produce and distribute appeals (with the active participation of the Field);

❏ Prepare specific submissions to donor funding agencies (with the active participation of the Field);

❏ Submit detailed reports to the donors.

60. The Field should:

❏ Produce the basic operation information and information for the appeals;

❏ Inform Headquarters when a donor has indicated an interest in contributing funds, whether to the appeal, to a particular operation, to earmarked activities, or as a contributions in kind, and should also ask the donor to follow up through the normal channels at Headquarters;

❏ Provide information to the donors about the current situation and UNHCR's plans. When deciding on a contribution, donors need relevant information. Some information will be in the emergency appeal and given at briefings, but some donors require more detailed information. Timely and detailed responses will ensure the most rapid funding;

❏ Provide reports and information to Headquarters to assist it in submitting reports to donors. To ensure continuity of funding it is essential that the required information be provided from the Field without delay.

Reporting to Donors and Special Requirements

61. A variety of reports are required by donors in order to account for their contributions and to release additional funds. Bear in mind that donor reporting cycles do not necessarily correspond to UNHCR's reporting and operation cycles.

62. Some major donors to UNHCR's emergency operation require particularly detailed reporting at both financial and narrative level in a unique format with strict deadlines. These special reports are prepared by the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service at Headquarters on the basis of information from the Field. Some donors also monitor implementation directly through their local representatives.

63. A number of donors attach great importance to the visibility of their financial support, through the marking of assistance material and other means.

Formal Written Communications

64. When establishing a new UNHCR presence in a country, there is likely to be a need for a number of formal written communications to government or local authorities. The purpose of this section is to give brief guidance on the preparation of formal letters and "notes verbales" (formal notes written in the third person – see sample in Annex 2).

65. Formal letters are used for communications to ministers, ambassadors and senior officials (for example, the Director-General of a government department) on important matters.

66. Note the following points for written correspondence with ambassadors, ministers and other dignitaries:

i. The proper opening salutation is: "Sir" or "Madam", with "His/Her Excellency" used, if appropriate, only in the address. However, it may be local practice to begin and end with "Your Excellency". When in doubt check with UNDP or use "Sir". His/Her Excellency precedes all other titles and ranks (e.g. Her Excellency Dr. X Y; His Excellency General A B, Minister of the Interior);

ii. The expression "I have the honour ..." is usually used only in the opening sentence;

iii. "You" can normally be used in the text. However, in a long text it may be courteous from time to time to interject the more formal address (e.g. "I should be grateful if you, Sir, [or Your Excellency] would confirm that this is also the understanding of your Government");

iv. Formal letters end with "Accept, Sir/Madam/Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration".

67. A note verbale is a formal note written in the third person. Notes verbales may be addressed to a Minister for Foreign Affairs or a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an ambassador or an embassy. Notes verbales are always used in replying to an incoming note verbale. It is written from person to person (e.g. Representative to Minister) or office to office (e.g. Branch Office to Ministry). The following points should be noted:

i. Typical uses of notes verbales include the exchange of information between UNHCR and governments, embassies or permanent missions. The note verbale is not normally used to communicate with other United Nations agencies and is never used to address NGOs or the public. The note begins either, "The Special Envoy/Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in (country) presents his/her compliments to ... and has the honour to ..." or "the Branch Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in (country) presents its compliments to ... and has the honour to ...";

ii. Titles must be given in full, at least in the opening and closing paragraphs. Be sure to use the full correct designation of the country (Kingdom of ..., Republic of ..., Democratic Republic of..., etc.)[2];

iii. The complimentary closing of a note verbale is always the same: "The (Representative/Special Envoy) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in (country) avails him/herself of this opportunity to express (renew) to ... the assurances of his/her highest consideration", or, as appropriate, "The Branch Office ..." etc.;

iv. The note should bear no signature. The Office stamp should be placed over the typewritten date and the officer responsible for its dispatch should sign his/her initials within the stamp. The Representative or Special Envoy and an alternate may be required to register their initials or even signatures with the protocol department of the foreign ministry;

v. The place and date should appear on the bottom right-hand side of the last page. The address does not appear on a note verbale;

vi. The text of the note verbale should be single spaced with double spacing between paragraphs.

68. Both formal letters and notes verbales may bear file references, as brief as possible, on the top left of the first page.

69. Notes verbales are always answered by notes verbales, and formal letters by formal letters. Apart from the restrictions on the use of notes verbales given above, there are no completely clear-cut rules about which to employ when UNHCR is initiating the communication. In general terms, the note verbale conveys brief information and is the normal form for routine exchanges with the protocol department, for example, when seeking customs clearance for relief supplies or advising of the arrival of international staff. References to important meetings with senior officials and major issues, particularly those already discussed, are better treated in a formal letter. A formal letter may also reach the action officer more quickly than a note.

70. If it is necessary to set out UNHCR's position on a specific subject (policy, action taken, intentions, etc.), this may be done in the form of an aide-mémoire written in the third person. An aide-mémoire has no addressee and is simply headed Aide-Mémoire, with the title below. A similar purpose is served by a "Note by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", a minor difference being that this description goes below the title. An aide-mémoire would normally be used to convey information to a government ministry or department, an embassy or the diplomatic corps. For a less formal or wider distribution, the "Note by ..." form may be appropriate.

71. All four types of communication should be presented on UNHCR letterhead stationery.

[2] *The following document is a useful guide:* Terminology, Country Names, *United Nations Bulletin No. 347 (ST/CS/SER.F/347/Rev.1).*

MEMBER STATES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

As of November 1998

Algeria
Argentina
Australia
Austria
Bangladesh
Belgium
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Canada
China
Colombia
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Holy See
Hungary
India
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Japan
Lebanon
Lesotho
Madagascar
Morocco
Namibia
Netherlands
Nicaragua
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Philippines
Poland
Russian Federation
Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sudan
Sweden
Switzerland
Thailand
Tunisia
Turkey
Uganda
United Kingdom
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Venezuela
Yugoslavia

NATIONS UNIES HAUT COMMISSARIAT POUR LES REFUGIES		UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Note Verbale

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Branch Office for [*Ruritania*] presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ______________________________ and has the honour to request authorization to import [*two Toyota land-cruisers*]. It requests furthermore that the usual advice be sent to the appropriate authorities for exemption of payment of import duty, excise duty, registration and licensing fees for [*these vehicles*]. Details of (the vehicles) are as follows:

1. Bill of lading number:	TAN-P-C 16-11/25-03
2. Engine numbers of vehicles:	B-L-C 741-1334
	B-L-C 24-04-01

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [*of Ruritania*] the assurances of its highest consideration.

(stamp)

[*name of place of UNHCR office in Ruritania*], [*date*]