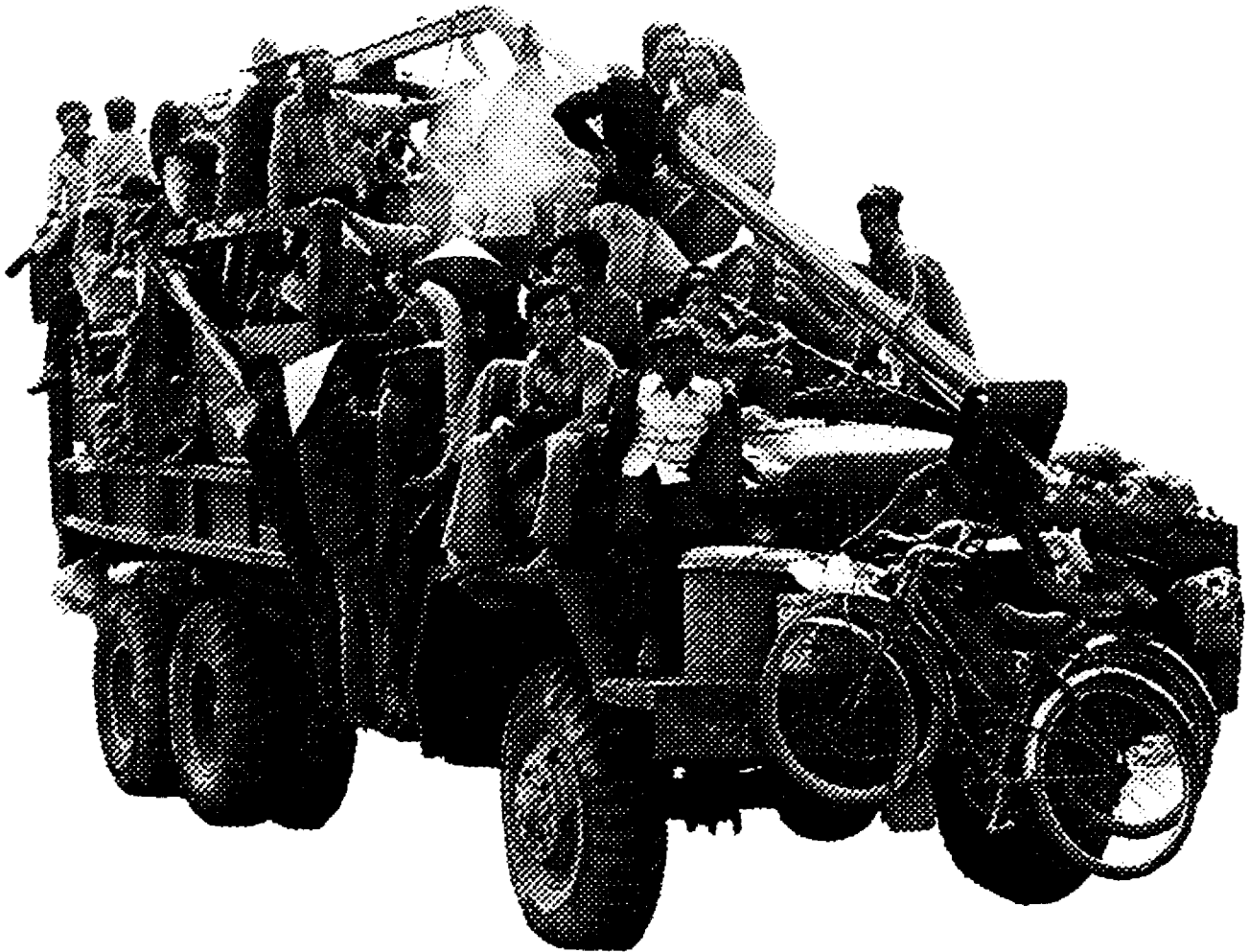


Emergency action plans



Emergency action plans

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Emergency action plans

3.1 Introduction

1. The action plans are management tools to help ensure speedy and effective response in emergencies. They are in the form of summary checklists, with notes elaborating the points and cross references to other chapters as appropriate.

2. The plans are presented in a likely sequence of actions. The needs of each emergency will determine the actual order and several actions may have to be taken together. In particular, the order may need to be altered when emergencies occur in countries where UNHCR is not represented. The overriding priority is clear: the assistance and protection necessary for survival must be made available in time. Point 21 (the last) of the Headquarters checklist summarizes the common aim of both plans.

3. Whereas there will be many common aspects to the management at Headquarters of any emergency, actions and priorities in the field will vary greatly with the specific situation. The points in the field plan are considered likely to be worthy of consideration in the majority of emergency situations. For each country there may be specific actions and priorities that can be determined in advance as a basis for contingency planning. Where this is so, field offices should prepare their own country emergency plans, taking account of the guidelines in chapter 6.

4. Figure 3-1 presents some of the considerations discussed in Part 1 in diagramatic form. The annex to this chapter gives an example of a cable to activate emergency procedures.

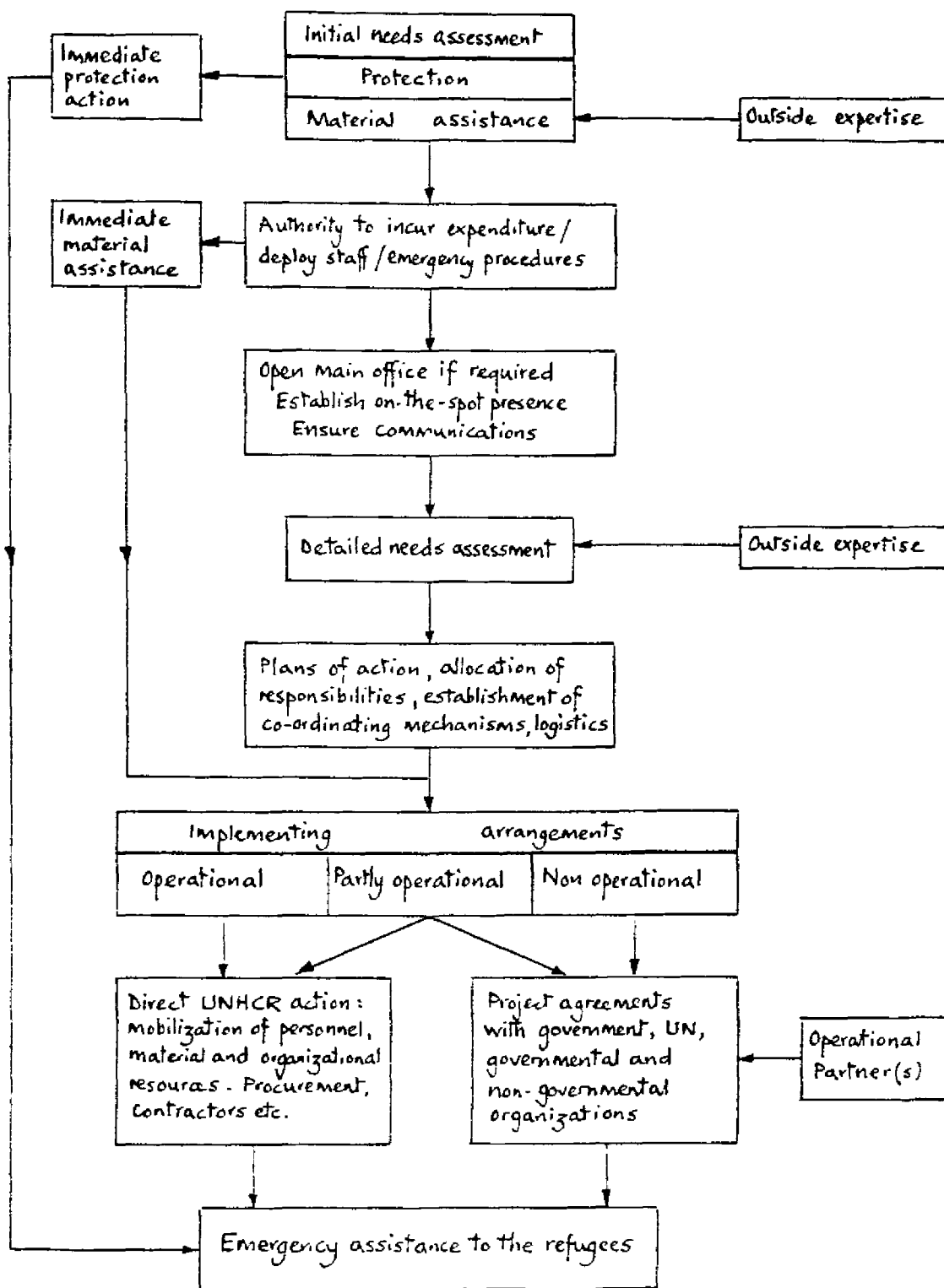


Figure 3-1

3.2 Headquarters emergency action plan

CHECKLIST

1. Is sufficient information available to indicate the development and extent of an emergency likely to concern UNHCR?

2. Is government's position known?

3. Has information on situation been evaluated with recommendations for UNHCR policy/action

by Field Office to Headquarters?

by Regional Section to Directors of Protection and Assistance?

by Directors to High Commissioner for meeting foreseen at point 6?

4. Is it established that an emergency of concern to UNHCR exists or is developing?

NOTES

1. Early warning of a possible emergency provides the lead time necessary to mount an effective response. Indications of a potential or actual emergency must immediately be brought to the attention of the Directors and the High Commissioner. At the same time the Emergency Unit and Chief, Public Information Section should be alerted. Regular and frequent situation reports from the field should be instituted as early as possible.

Sources: (1) Government(s);
 (2) UNHCR field offices: specific reports and periodic analyses; close monitoring of ongoing programmes;
 (3) other UN organizations in area: ask UNDP if UNHCR not present;
 (4) Diplomatic channels;
 (5) ICRC, LRCS, NGOs and private individuals;
 (6) Media.

Responsibility: Field office and/or Regional Section

2. Following points may be considered if answers not self-evident:

- (1) Is government aware of its protection responsibilities, both generally and as a result of accession to any relevant international instruments?
- (2) Has government requested material assistance from UNHCR, (or does alternative basis for assistance exist)? If not, see note 6. If so, has there been at least an interim reply?
- (3) Has government approached others e.g. Secretary-General, other UN agencies, ICRC/LRCS?

Responsibility: Field Office/Regional Section/Directors of Protection and Assistance

3. (1) This should be done as soon as possible and whether or not all elements are available.

(2) Policy/action recommendations which differ from those from the field should be shared with the field for comments, and decisions taken in the light of these comments.

4. The answer to this may be self-evident from the start. On the other hand, it may not be finally established until a fact-finding mission reports. The status of those involved must be considered. In any event, unless there is clear evidence that the situation is not of concern to UNHCR, action in accordance with this plan should continue to the extent possible pending further information.

Responsibility: Regional Section to alert others concerned at Headquarters and particularly Fund-Raising, Liaison Officer with NGOs, and Procurement.

HEADQUARTERS CHECKLIST

5. Has a "focal point" officer been designated and the Regional Section strengthened if necessary?

6. Have preliminary policy decisions been taken by the High Commissioner?

7. Have these decisions been conveyed to the field, government(s) concerned, rest of the UN system and NGO sector as appropriate?

NOTES

5. This officer would normally be the Chief of the Regional Section and will be responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of this plan, assisted by the Emergency Unit. Until further notice all incoming communications from the field, and others directly concerning response to the emergency, will be first routed through this officer. Communications to the field should be initiated by or with the prior knowledge of the focal point officer. The focal point officer will make the necessary arrangements for handling communications from the field outside normal working hours. As soon as the designation has been made, all staff at Headquarters and the appropriate field office(s) must be informed.

Responsibility: Directors of Assistance and Protection

6. Available information and recommendations should be summarized for a directors' meeting also attended by the Chief of the Regional Section, (focal point officer), and Emergency Unit.

The purpose of the meeting is to determine the nature of the emergency and of UNHCR's involvement, and what immediate action is possible and appropriate at this stage, with particular reference to protection (point 8), if not already in hand, contingency planning (point 9), the need for a fact-finding/programming mission (point 10) and, if already possible, the allocation of funds (point 15).

If no request for material assistance has been received from the government, the meeting could consider:

- (1) a specific proposal of assistance plan to government;
- (2) a direct approach to provoke general request for assistance;
- (3) an indirect approach (e.g. through Secretary-General) to same end.

The scope of the meeting will depend on the availability of information and further such meetings may be necessary as facts become known. Alternatively, it may already be possible to take decisions foreseen under point 12.

Responsibility: Focal point officer for initiating the convening of meeting, preparing documentation, recording decisions in minutes, informing those concerned of these decisions, and monitoring their implementation.

7. In particular, Regional Office New York must be kept fully informed of developments and of the High Commissioner's policy and concerns and this information shared with the Secretary-General's office.

Responsibility: Focal point officer with functional sections/units as appropriate.

HEADQUARTERS CHECKLIST

8. Has immediate action been taken to assure protection of persons who are, or are likely to be, of concern to UNHCR?
9. Has specific contingency planning begun?
10. Is a fact-finding and/or programming mission necessary?
11. Is sufficient information now available to enable the High Commissioner to take the necessary further policy decisions on UNHCR's response?
12. Have these decisions been taken by the High Commissioner?

NOTES

8. Action can be taken:

- (1) At field level, by UNHCR or through UNDP or other appropriate body;
- (2) By démarche from Headquarters through Permanent Mission or direct;
- (3) By UNHCR mission from neighbouring field offices and/or Headquarters.

Responsibility: Field Office/Regional Section/Protection Division.

9. The nature of this will of course depend on the particular situation. Priority should be given to actions requiring longer lead-time, e.g.

- (1) Mobilizing personnel and outside assistance, (see point 16 and chapter 5);
- (2) Procurement (see point 17 and chapter 27);
- (3) Communications and logistics (chapters 10 and 27);
- (4) Implementing mechanism (chapter 5).

10. If at all possible information must be first hand, and assessments made as a result of direct contact with those who may be in need.

- (1) In selecting members of the mission, consideration should be given to the need for expertise in protection, programming, specialized assessment (e.g. public health, water, food/nutrition, sanitation), fund-raising, public information and the NGO sector.
- (2) If there is no UNHCR presence in the country, the mission should include a suitable experienced staff member who would remain behind after departure of the mission and an experienced administrative assistant/secretary who would likewise stay on.
- (3) A fact-finding mission should have guidance to the extent possible on likely nature of any UNHCR involvement.

11. Even if not, the needs will first be known in the field and action to provide funds and initiate procurement (points 15 and 16) should not necessarily be delayed.

12. As soon as possible a further directors' meeting attended by the Chief of the Regional Section, (focal point officer), and Emergency Unit should be convened. Concise details of the problem and recommendations should be presented to the High Commissioner in writing by the Directors of Protection and Assistance. The documentation should cover inter alia the status of those requiring UNHCR's assistance, their immediate protection and material needs, the position of the government(s) immediately concerned, the prospects for durable solutions and the role of UNHCR vis-à-vis the rest of the UN system and others. To the extent possible, the recommendations should include a costed programme for an appropriate initial period as well as proposals for meeting immediate personnel and financial needs and for the invoking of emergency procedures as required (points 15, 16 and 17). The High Commissioner's decisions would thus

- (1) Determine the nature of and provide the framework for UNHCR's response including initial funding and need for any appeal;
- (2) Give the authority for invoking the necessary emergency procedures.

HEADQUARTERS CHECKLIST

13. Have these decisions been conveyed to the field, government(s) concerned, rest of UN system and NGO sector as appropriate?

14. Has the emergency decision-taking mechanism been activated?

15. Has authority to incur expenditure been given and have funds been made available to meet immediate needs locally, including if necessary, to another suitable agency pending arrival of UNHCR staff?

16. Is action in hand to provide immediately the necessary personnel in the field (see chapter 5)

- (1) for direct UNHCR needs including personnel management and financial control?
- (2) with specialized expertise?
- (3) as implementing partners if suitable local arrangements cannot be made?

17. Is essential local procurement/diversion and Headquarters procurement action under way (chapter 27)?

18. Has appropriate liaison at Headquarters level been established (chapter 9)

- (1) with other organizations directly involved in the emergency, in order to promote effective action and coordination?
- (2) for information-sharing with donors?

NOTES

13. Responsibility: Focal point officer with functional sections/units as appropriate.

14. For the rest of the emergency phase, responsibility for major operational decision-taking and the overall co-ordination of the implementation of the plan will rest with the Emergency Co-ordination Group, chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner. Its members will normally be

- The Directors
- The Chief of the Regional Section (focal point officer) (Secretary of the Group)
- The Emergency Unit
- The competent Protection Officer and as required
- The Chiefs or representatives of
 - Finance, Budget and Personnel Sections
 - Fund-Raising Section
 - Programming and Co-ordination, Counselling and Education and Resettlement Sections
 - Public Information Section

The Emergency Co-ordination Group will meet regularly during the emergency phase. The Secretary will initiate the convening of meetings and prepare the agenda (in the form of decision sheets) in consultation with others concerned, and will be responsible for recording and disseminating the decisions and monitoring their implementation. Each meeting should review the answers to point 21 below.

15. Emergency allocation of funds and intention to appeal should have been decided under points 6 or 12. As required, activate Emergency Letter of Instruction and Emergency Programme Support Allotment Advice Authority by cable or memorandum to Representative. See example in annex for both this point and 16 and 17.

16. Sources:
- (1) UNHCR staff (including those already in area).
 - (2) Card index of outside individuals known to UNHCR.
 - (3) Standing arrangements e.g. with Centers for Disease Control, Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief, national disaster units.
 - (4) From NGOs.
 - (5) Activating local recruitment authority (annex to chapter 5).

17. (1) Consider activating local contracts committee and procurement authority.
 (2) Invoke emergency procedures with WFP if necessary (chapter 23).
 (3) Consider possibilities for diversion of existing stocks within country.
 (4) Start Headquarters procurement action on a priority basis for items not available locally.

18. (1) For large emergencies, regular inter-agency co-ordinating meetings should be convened and include appropriate representatives from NGO sector. Additional separate arrangements for NGOs (e.g. through ICVA) may be needed.
 (2) Will depend on nature of emergency and need for special appeal. See also note 19(3) on regular sitreps.

HEADQUARTERS CHECKLIST

19. Is necessary Public Information action in hand, have field and RO New York and region UNIC been briefed on policy and are all receiving regular information on Headquarters media action? (chapter 9.4).

20. Has a comprehensive emergency programme and emergency project submission been drawn up and approved covering operational and programme support needs for a specified initial period? (chapter 7).

21. (1) Is basic assistance necessary for survival reaching those in need and is their protection assured?
- (2) Has UNHCR enough staff of the right calibre in the right places and with the authority and funds they need?
- (3) Is the necessary specialist advice and guidance available where and when needed, with particular reference to logistics, health, water supply, sanitation and nutrition?
- (4) Is the operational partner(s) or implementing mechanism equal to the task?
- (5) Do others directly involved know who should do what and are they doing it?
- (6) Are the rest of those concerned kept properly and regularly briefed?

NOTES

19. (1) Consider sending PI officer to field if media interest warrants.
- (2) Press releases, particularly the early ones, may be sensitive for governments(s) concerned and should be cleared with the field if practicable.
- (3) Regular standard telex sitreps should be considered for the first phase of major emergencies (chapter 9.3 and annex 3 to chapter 6).
- (4) Avoid overloading field with UNHCR-sponsored PI, (or other non-essential) missions to area in emergency phase.
- (5) The field may not have access to international media reports and should be kept informed by Headquarters.
20. This will start the transfer from full emergency to normal operational procedures (the elements may be needed at an earlier stage for an appeal).
21. The duration of the emergency phase will depend on many factors. Once the answers to these questions are positive, the situation should at least be under control. However, there may be factors - for example a continuing and major influx - which warrant the maintenance of emergency procedures.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN - HEADQUARTERSSUMMARY CHECKLIST

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer/Date/Observation</u>
1. Is sufficient information available to indicate the development and extent of an emergency likely to concern UNHCR?	
2. Is government's position known?	
3. Has information on situation been evaluated with recommendations for UNHCR policy/action	
- by Field Office to Headquarters?	
- by Regional Section to Directors of Protection and Assistance?	
- by Directors to High Commissioner for meeting foreseen at point 6?	
4. Is it established that an emergency of concern to UNHCR exists or is developing?	
5. Has a "focal point" officer been designated and the Regional Section strengthened if necessary?	
6. Have preliminary policy decisions been taken by the High Commissioner?	
7. Have these decisions been conveyed to the field, government(s) concerned, rest of the UN system and NGO sector as appropriate?	
8. Has immediate action been taken to assure protection of persons who are, or are likely to be, of concern to UNHCR?	
9. Has specific contingency planning begun?	
10. Is a fact-finding and/or programming mission necessary?	

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer/Date/Observation</u>
11. Is sufficient information now available to enable the High Commissioner to take the necessary further policy decisions on UNHCR's response?	
12. Have these decisions been taken by the High Commissioner?	
13. Have these decisions been conveyed to the field, government(s) concerned, rest of UN system and NGO sector as appropriate?	
14. Has the emergency decision-taking mechanism been activated?	
15. Has authority to incur expenditure been given and have funds been made available to meet immediate needs locally, including if necessary, to another suitable agency pending arrival of UNHCR staff?	
16. Is action in hand to provide immediately the necessary personnel in the field	
(1) for direct UNHCR needs including personnel management and financial control?	
(2) with specialized expertise?	
(3) as implementing partners if suitable local arrangements cannot be made?	
17. Is essential local procurement/diversion and Headquarters procurement action under way?	

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer/Date/Observation</u>
18. Has appropriate liaison at Headquarters level been established	
(1) with other organizations directly involved in the emergency, in order to promote effective action and co-ordination?	
(2) for information-sharing with donors?	
19. Is necessary public information action in hand, have field and RO New York and region UNIC been briefed on policy and are all receiving regular information on Headquarters media action?	
20. Has a comprehensive emergency programme submission been drawn up and approved covering operational and programme support needs for a specified initial period?	

QuestionAnswer/Date/Observation

21. (1) Is basic assistance necessary for survival reaching those in need and is their protection assured?

(2) Has UNHCR enough staff of the right calibre in the right places and with the authority and funds they need?

(3) Is the necessary specialist advice and guidance available where and when needed, with particular reference to logistics, health, water supply, sanitation and nutrition?

(4) Is the operational partner(s) or implementing mechanism equal to the task?

(5) Do others directly involved know who should do what and are they doing it?

(6) Are the rest of those concerned kept properly and regularly briefed?

3.3 Field emergency action plan

CHECKLIST

1. Are there indications of the development of an emergency?
2. Has this information been immediately conveyed to Headquarters with analysis and recommendations?
3. Is the protection of persons of concern to UNHCR ensured?
4. If material assistance is required, has it been requested by the government?
5. Are sufficient personnel available to handle the emergency?
6. Has at least an initial on-the-spot assessment of needs been made and immediate action taken to mobilize resources to meet them?
7. Has a UNHCR presence been established at or in the immediate vicinity of the refugees?
8. Has a specific plan for immediate action been prepared and responsibilities assigned?
9. Is Headquarters being kept fully briefed and have the necessary emergency procedures been requested?
10. Are satisfactory communications available to UNHCR between the location of the refugees and the main UNHCR office and between that office and UNHCR Headquarters?
11. Is co-ordination ensured with those directly involved including NGO sector?
12. Are others concerned in the international community being kept informed?
13. Has appropriate public information action been taken?
14. Has a comprehensive emergency programme now been formulated, in consultation with the government and Headquarters?
15. Has an emergency project submission been made?
16. Are the answers to point 21 on the Headquarters list positive?

NOTES

1. Political events may provide general advance warning. Sources of specific indications could include asylum seekers, UNHCR field officers, UNHCR offices in neighbouring countries, the government, operational partners (and close monitoring of existing programmes), the international community, NGOs and the media.
2. The report(s) should:
 - (1) identify sources of information;
 - (2) assess information and cover government's position;
 - (3) indicate steps taken or envisaged by the Representative,
 - (4) recommend Headquarters policy and any immediate action required by Headquarters at this stage.
3. Provided they appear prima facie to be of concern to the High Commissioner, immediate action must be taken and Headquarters support enlisted if necessary (chapter 2).
4. See Headquarters plan points 2 and note 6.
5. Including needs assessment: see chapter 5. Request reinforcements or Headquarters mission as soon as considered necessary.
6. This is covered in detail in chapter 4.
7. Appropriate official vehicles will be essential, see chapter 8.4.
8. See chapter 6 and chapter 5.2 on implementing arrangements.
9. For example, covering activation of Emergency Letter of Instruction, local or international procurement, WFP emergency procedures (annexes 1 and 2 to chapter 23), staff/recruitment and transfer of funds. See annex to this chapter and annex 3 to chapter 6 for standard sitrep.
10. See chapter 10.
11. See chapter 6: at both central and site-levels.
12. See chapter 9 on possible briefing mechanisms.
13. See chapter 9.4; co-ordinate closely with Headquarters.
14. See chapter 7.2
15. See chapter 7.2.8. A proposed administrative budget must also be submitted. See annex 1 to chapter 8.

AnnexExample of Format of Cable to Field Activating Emergency Procedures

HCR/

HICOM HAS INVOKED EMERGENCY PROCEDURES TO MEET SITUATION
 (description of emergency). RE EMERGENCY HANDBOOK.

AAA CHAPTER SEVEN ANNEX ELOI HEREBY ACTIVATED AS FOLLOWS

PRIMO (Representative/Chief of Mission)
 SECUNDO (beneficiaries)
 TERTIO (project symbol)
 QUARTO (amount in US\$)
 QUINTO (commencing)
 SEXTO (terminating)

BBB CHAPTER EIGHT ANNEX ONE AMENDMENT (number) TO ALLOTMENT ADVICE LETTER DATED
 (date of original) HEREBY ACTIVATED AS FOLLOWS

PRIMO (Representative/Chief of Mission)
 SECUNDO (beneficiaries)
 TERTIO (amount of increase in US\$)
 QUARTO (amount included in tertio for local GS recruitment)
 QUINTO (additional amount for furniture and equipment)
 SEXTO (account code for quinto)
 SEPTO (start of emergency)
 OCTO (end of period for which emergency admin. budget
 required)

CCC THIS IS YOUR AUTHORITY ESTABLISH LOCAL CONTRACTS COMMITTEE TO OPERATE IN
 ACCORDANCE RULES OF PROCEDURE CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN ANNEX TWO UP TO CONTRACT LIMIT US\$
 OR LOCAL EQUIVALENT AT UN RATE. AUTHORITY EFFECTIVE PERIOD (date) THROUGH
 (date). (Add any limitations, e.g. This authority covers only procurement of items
 physically available within (country).)

DDD YOU HEREBY AUTHORIZED TEMPORARILY RECRUIT LOCALLY UP TO (number) PROFESSIONAL
 STAFF IN ACCORDANCE PROCEDURES CHAPTER FIVE ANNEX.

Notes

1. For illustrative purposes all possible authorizations are shown above; they would, of course, not necessarily all be given, or not all at once.

2. Decisions on activating these procedures would normally be taken by the High Commissioner at points 6 and/or 12 in the Headquarters Emergency Action Plan. The cables would be drafted accordingly by the focal point officer and cleared/authorized as follows:

Emergency Letter of Instruction	Chief Finance and Control, Chief PCS, Director of Assistance
Emergency Administrative Expenditure and authority for local P recruitment	Chief Personnel, Chief Budget and Management, Director of Administration and Management
Local Contracts Committee	Director of Assistance (Chairman of Headquarters Contracts Committee)

3. Confirmation copies should be pouched/airmailed to the field office, and RO New York should normally be on the distribution list.

4. A cable on the following lines would also be prepared by the Chief, Finance and Control Section if applicable:

either

WE TRANSFERRING US\$ (amount) YOUR ACCOUNT VALUE (date) AND ADDING (names of staff reinforcements if appropriate) TO PANEL OF SIGNATORIES WHO SHOULD CONTACT BANK FOR FORMALITIES.

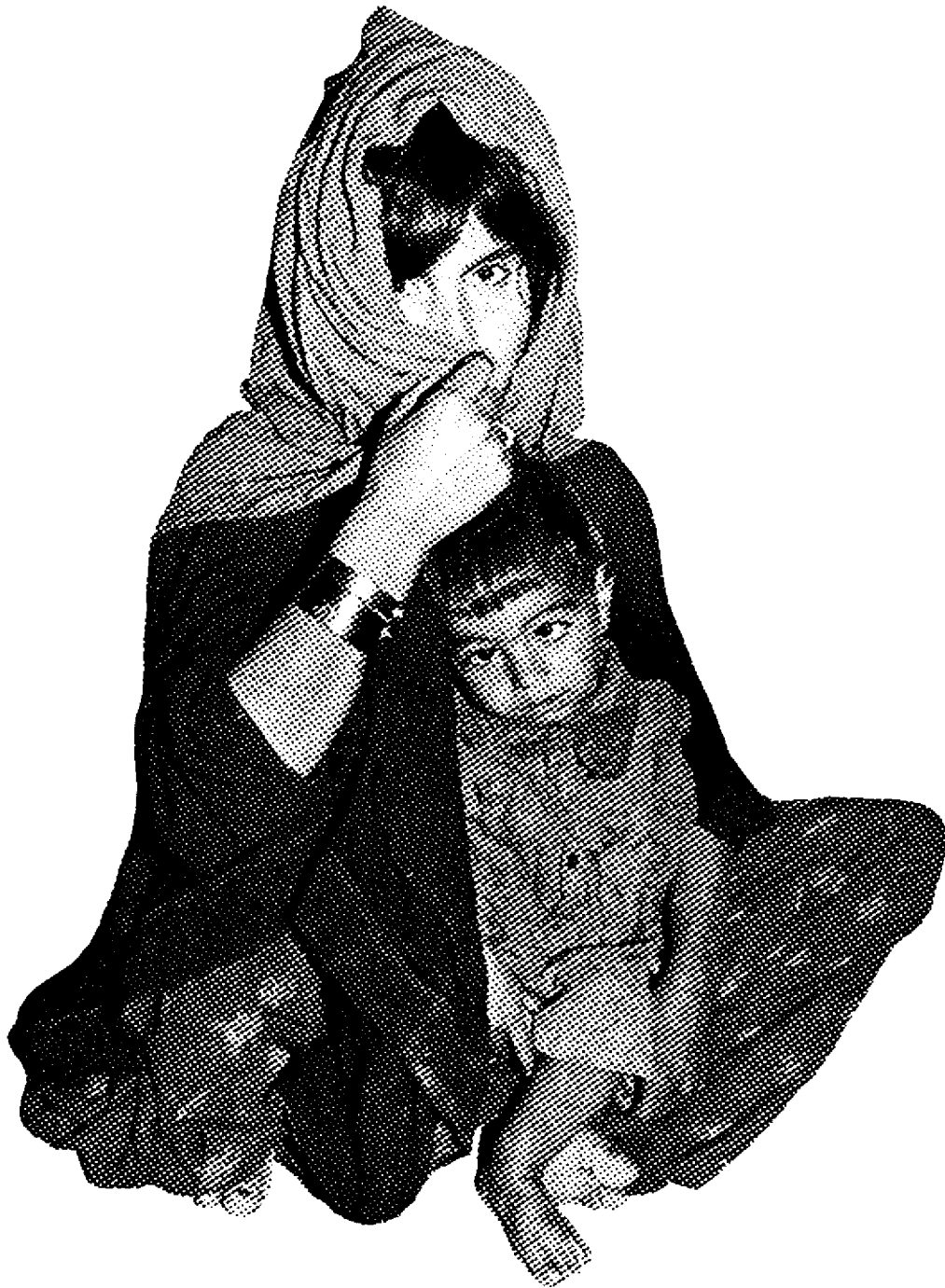
or

WE OPENING ACCOUNT WITH (bank) AND TRANSFERRING US\$ (amount) VALUE (date) WITH FOLLOWING PANEL SIGNATORIES (names) WHO SHOULD CONTACT BANK FOR FORMALITIES.

or

(Details any other arrangements for transfer funds e.g. via UNDP).

Needs assessment and immediate response



Needs assessment and immediate response

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Needs assessment and immediate response

4.1 Introduction

1. To be effective, emergency assistance has to be based on a sound assessment of the refugees' most immediate needs. No two refugee emergencies are alike. In each case, objectives, priorities and standards in the response to needs must be based on the actual situation.
2. The initial assessment must be carried out as quickly as possible to allow immediate action. A more detailed assessment will be required for the formulation of a comprehensive emergency programme. As soon as possible, the needs of the longer-term programme for a durable solution must be assessed. Needs evolve in the course of an emergency operation and must be kept under continuous review.
3. The emergency action plans in chapter 3 provide an overall framework for response, while guidelines for specific sectors of assistance, including assessment and priority actions in each, are given in Part 2. This chapter links the initial needs assessment to the immediate response, identifying those assistance measures which generally need to be given priority at the start of an emergency.
4. A number of organizations may already be delivering emergency assistance. They will be a valuable source of information on the situation, and the assistance they are giving and intend to give must be taken into account in deciding UNHCR's immediate response.
5. Where the emergency concerns the immediate protection of refugees, rather than their need for material assistance, the priority will be to obtain information on the actual situation, position of the government(s) and possibilities for resolution. An on-the-spot UNHCR presence will be very important. Action in such emergencies will depend on the circumstances and is not considered in this chapter: certain general guidelines are given in chapter 2, Protection.

4.2 Needs assessment

Organization

1. A initial assessment of the situation and needs must be carried out on the spot as soon as it is clear that a refugee emergency may exist. This must involve the government. Immediate access to the area where the refugees are located is, of course, a prerequisite. The emphasis must be on quick, practical steps: establishing a presence at or near the refugee site for first-hand information, interviewing refugees, utilizing other available sources of information both in the area and in the capital, and mobilizing local expertise and resources.
2. While an organized approach is necessary, time must not be lost because the desired expertise is not immediately available. A quick response to obviously urgent needs must never be delayed because a comprehensive assessment has not yet been completed.
3. A detailed assessment must be undertaken as soon as possible. Brief indications of the types of expertise that may be required are given below, with more detail given by sectors in Part 2. Local expertise is generally best when available. Sources include government departments, UN agencies, bilateral aid and voluntary agencies, universities, or consulting firms in the country. Headquarters assistance should be requested if necessary.
4. Where UNHCR is not already present in the country, the assessment mission will be organized by Headquarters. Whenever possible, the assessment team would include those who are going to implement the emergency operation in the field. An indication of possible personnel needs is given in chapter 5. The participation of one or more officers who will return to Headquarters with the results of the assessment has obvious advantages, but where UNHCR is already present, initial action must not be delayed pending the arrival of a Headquarters mission.

5. Participation in the needs assessment by other agencies and individuals likely to be involved in the emergency programme will be extremely valuable.

6. To assess the material needs of refugees in an emergency is to measure, as quickly and effectively as is possible, their actual condition and the resources at their disposal against what is needed for their survival and immediate well-being. Standards establishing what is needed must therefore be set. To the extent possible, the needs assessment should first answer the questions in the following paragraphs.

Numbers, location, pattern of arrival and characteristics

7. (1) Approximately how many refugees are there?
- (2) Where are they located?
- (3) Are more arriving? Where? How many?
- (4) Are they arriving in groups of scattered individuals or as families, clans, tribal, ethnic or village groups and by what means are they travelling?
- (5) Did those already there arrive in a similar manner?
- (6) What are the approximate proportions of men, women, children (ages 0-4, 5-14, 15 and over)?
- (7) Ethnic/geographic origin (urban or rural)?
- (8) Sedentary or nomadic background?
- (9) Customary basic diet?
- (10) Customary shelter?
- (11) Family, clan, or tribal structure?
- (12) Customary sanitation practices?

Health status (chapters 22 and 23)

8. (1) Are there significant numbers of injured or sick persons?
- (2) Signs of severe malnutrition? (See 23.9 for description.)
- (3) A high mortality rate?
- (4) Specially vulnerable groups?
- (5) What was their condition before the emergency?

Assessment of the health status of refugees requires expertise, particularly in epidemiology, to detect and interpret signs of communicable disease, and in nutrition.

Material condition

9. Have the refugees brought or already available:
 - (1) Sufficient clothing, blankets, etc. to meet immediate needs?
 - (2) Food?
 - (3) Shelter material?
 - (4) Domestic utensils?
 - (5) Livestock?
 - (6) Funds (and can they be fairly exchanged for local currency)?
 - (7) Other possessions (vehicles etc.)?

Characteristics of location

10. These are given as site selection criteria in chapter 21.3; the essential characteristics for the initial needs assessment are:
 - (1) Space;
 - (2) Security;
 - (3) Accessibility (all-season) and proximity to sources of essential supplies;
 - (4) Environment conditions and seasonal variations;
 - (5) Water (chapter 24);
 - (6) Soil topography and drainage;
 - (7) Vegetation;
 - (8) Land rights and impact on local population.

Expertise may be required in geology, physical planning and public health engineering, especially water and sanitation.

Social needs (chapter 26)

11. (1) Are there individuals or groups with special social needs (for example, the mentally or physically disabled, unaccompanied children, single parent families, the sick and destitute, unsupported elderly refugees)?
- (2) Are their immediate material and emotional needs being met satisfactorily and if not what outside assistance is needed?
- (3) Are many refugees separated from other members of their families?

Spontaneous arrangements and assistance being provided

12. (1) What arrangements have the refugees already made to meet their most immediate needs?
- (2) What assistance is already being provided by the local population, the government or other agencies?
- (3) Can the above provide a durable basis for their survival and well-being at their present location?
- (4) Is present assistance likely to continue, increase, decrease?

Means to deliver assistance

13. (1) Can effective implementing arrangements be made quickly and locally (chapter 5)?
- (2) If not, what are the alternatives?

- (3) What arrangements are required to co-ordinate the emergency programme with all concerned (chapter 6)?

- (4) What are the needs for UNHCR personnel, programme support (offices, vehicles, equipment, etc.), and experts not provided under implementing arrangements (chapters 5 and 8)?

- (5) What are the logistical needs and how can they be met (chapter 27)?

- 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)?

4.3 Immediate response

1. While certain immediate material needs will usually be obvious, the specific types and amounts of emergency assistance required will depend on the standards established for each situation. An indication of appropriate general standards is given by sectors of assistance in Part 2. These must be adjusted in the light of three main considerations: the general condition of the refugee population (people in extreme distress will need extraordinary measures); immediately available resources (for example, canned food may have to be used if there is nothing else); and the customs and levels to which the refugees and the local population are used. 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.

2. Gathering the information summarized in paragraphs 7-13 of the previous section and on other factors specific to the emergency, on the one hand, and the establishment of standards, on the other, will allow the immediate unmet needs to be determined. Priorities will differ from situation to situation. The most urgent actions must be taken with whatever local material and organizational resources are available, even if the information at hand is incomplete. The following paragraphs indicate actions that are likely to be priorities. More detailed guidance on each is provided in other chapters. All action in response to the needs of the emergency must be taken in close co-operation with the government and in light of professional advice whenever possible.

3. Ensure the capacity to act. The first priority is to provide the organizational capacity required to meet the needs of the emergency. Enough UNHCR staff of the right calibre and experience must be deployed. Emergency procedures for the allocation of funds, implementing arrangements, food supply, local purchase, and recruitment of personnel may need to be invoked. With the government, the resources of other UN organizations, particularly UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and WFP, and of the NGO sector must be mobilized within the framework of a plan for immediate action. (See chapter 6, Field-level management.)

4. UNHCR must establish a presence where the refugees are, with assured communications with the main office and thence with Headquarters. The organization of the necessary logistical capacity to deliver the assistance will be of critical importance. (See chapter 27, Supplies and logistics.)

5. Meet the most urgent survival needs: food, water, emergency shelter, health care and sanitation, ensuring fair distribution. The location of the refugees will have a major influence on achieving this aim: move them if necessary.

(1) Food

Ensure that at least the minimum need for energy is met; a full ration, if required, can follow. Establish temporary storage facilities.

(2) 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.

(3) Emergency Shelter

Meet the need for roof material from local materials if possible. Only request outside supplies (e.g. tents) if necessary.

(4) Health Care

Provide the necessary organizational assistance, health personnel and basic drugs and equipment if necessary (chapter 22 annex 1), in close consultation with the national health authorities. While the immediate need and demand may be for curative care, give equal priority to environmental health measures.

(5) Sanitation

Isolate human excreta from sources of water and accommodation. The first step is probably to designate one or more appropriate areas for defecation.

6. Involve the refugees from the start. Involving the refugees and building on their own initiatives and resources will improve effectiveness in all sectors of emergency assistance.

7. 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 split they should be reunited. Special measures to ensure the care of any unaccompanied children will be a priority.

8. Once these and other priority measures are being taken in immediate response to emergency needs, the wider planning process must begin.