

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**South Asia Earthquake:
Internal Review of UNHCR's Emergency Response
(Pakistan)**

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Policy Development and Training Section
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The enormity of the humanitarian emergency in Pakistan in the days immediately following the massive earthquake of 8 October 2005, and still today the range and scope of the humanitarian and operational challenges, can not be underestimated.

UNHCR will be heavily tasked in its role as cluster-lead and key actor in camp management. Indeed, the Office, a senior colleague commented, has taken “more than its fair share” of the work that must be completed and the challenges that must be met.

An estimated 183,000 persons live in some 376 camps throughout the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Pakistani Administered Kashmir and the phased application of contingency measures sees the preparation for another 70,000 possible new arrivals that may come down from the higher altitudes as winter sets in. The urgent focus and absolute priority of UNHCR’s present engagement is to further strengthen its support to the Government of Pakistan, and to work alongside operational and implementing partners in ensuring that a “winterization” programme is rapidly and fully delivered to all those who reside in the camps.

“For us as a refugee agency, the problems faced by the people of Pakistan are our problems ... and we could not do anything else but to be fully committed, together with the UN system, in supporting the government and people of Pakistan in this moment of suffering ... we have limited resources and capacities but one thing I can guarantee [is] that all our resources and capacities are at your disposal.”

High Commissioner António Guterres during his visit to Pakistan in November 2005

All information shared with - and majority of opinion offered to - the review team suggest that the High Commissioner’s stated commitment to the people of Pakistan is being delivered to the best of UNHCR’s ability and within the limits of its existing capacity, and that the efforts of staff involved in the operation, especially those working in deep-field locations, is both highly praised and greatly appreciated.

Notwithstanding UNHCR’s rapidly delivered and much-appreciated contribution in the initial phase of the relief effort (showcased by a “historic” NATO air-bridge of UNHCR non-food items into the country), there were and still remain concerns (and in the view of the mission team, a degree of misunderstanding) about the initial uncertainties about UNHCR’s engagement and the organisation’s role in the response to this natural disaster, stemming from a general unease about an operational response role in natural disasters - as opposed to any real hesitation in identifying the legitimate rationale for its humanitarian response in Pakistan.

But this important observation does not detract from the “main message” of this report; that more lives may yet be lost during the winter months if UNHCR’s role and responsibility (as cluster lead for the camp management cluster) to deliver “winterization” assistance in the planned and self-settled camps is not very urgently implemented and fully supported throughout.

The mission was in fact able to see first-hand a number of actions being undertaken by UNHCR in implementation of the multifaceted winterization strategy. This includes the decentralization of emergency programme management from Islamabad to the humanitarian hubs in Mansehra and Muzaffarabad; a rapid increase in the number of technical and community services mobile teams put in place by NGO implementing partners; and, a steady augmentation of the number of experienced UNHCR staff on mission to Pakistan (and therefore ensuring UNHCR's essential field presence). Nonetheless it needs to be recognised that once UNHCR was fully engaged in the emergency response, it found itself having to "catch up" with certain situations (witness the necessary adjustments in camp design to ensure minimum humanitarian standards, and the overdue preparation of a camp management strategy).

As UNHCR has taken the cluster-lead role in Camp Coordination/Camp Management at the global-level (and in Pakistan has taken this lead contrary to its intentions stated on 12 Sept 2005 as regards to natural disasters), it is worth emphasizing that out of all the nine IASC clusters, this is the only sector or activity identified in the Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) report that has never had a mandated nor an assumed leader; indeed it has never been categorised as a sector *per se*. In that respect, the review mission would learn of inconsistencies in how the cluster is operationally defined and more importantly - as the main goal was to address "gaps" in humanitarian assistance - that it is the most cross-cutting of all the clusters when it comes to actually ensuring that assistance activities are provided to the most accessible part of a beneficiary population; albeit the protection sector is cross-cutting and viewed as the overall chapeau in humanitarian actions. And, as assistance "gaps" in the camps and settlements should - by IASC agreed principle - be resolved by the relevant sector-cluster, it appears that the "responsibility" already falls too easily into the inadequately defined remit of the Camp Management (CM) cluster, at least in Pakistan.

It is hoped that the recommendations contained within this report will help UNHCR address the now pressing concerns and ongoing imperative to save (and protect) lives during the winter season that has arrived. By effectively addressing this next phase of the emergency it is foreseen that UNHCR's humanitarian activities during the winter months will provide a secure platform of capacity-building actions leading to an eventual closure of direct UNHCR assistance, and at a time when other longer-term or better placed actors should have established their programs (in early recovery and reconstruction) and that generally improved conditions allow the emergency response and humanitarian relief phase to draw to a close.

INTRODUCTION

At the request of the regional Bureau (CASWANAME), Branch Office Islamabad and the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section (EPRS), a field-level review of UNHCR's response to the humanitarian emergency in Pakistanⁱ was undertaken. The aim of the mission was twofold: (i) to identify key aspects of the operation and offer recommendations so as to maximise UNHCR's contribution to the humanitarian life-

ⁱ Caused by a 7.6 magnitude earthquake in Pakistan on 8 October 2005, resulting in an estimated 80,000 deaths, many more injured, large-scale human displacement, and massive structural devastation.

saving operation; and (ii) to highlight early lessons-observed as it relates to the new “cluster approach” in addressing humanitarian emergencies. The field review might also serve UNHCR in further developing its global-level emergency preparedness and response capacity. (*Annex C: Terms of Reference*)

The review was undertaken by Iain Hall, Senior Policy Advisor, and Andrei Kazakov, Senior Training Officer, both from the Policy Development and Training Section (PDTS) of the Emergency and Security Service (ESS). The team spent seven days in-country from 1-7 December 2005 and met with more than 30 individuals and external actors, plus many UNHCR staff in Islamabad, Mansehra, Muzaffarabad and Geneva. (*Annex B: Meetings*) Visits were made to planned and self-settled camps in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and in Pakistan Administered Kashmir. The mission was able to talk with a number of families and individuals directly affected by the earthquake and that are now dependent upon and mostly surviving from humanitarian relief assistance. The mission also visited Balakot, a town of some 30,000 people, which was entirely destroyed by the earthquake.

This report will focus on the *main findings* made in respect of UNHCR’s emergency mission in Pakistan, and present *recommendations* aimed at supporting a time-limited and effective operational contribution. It is hoped that the report will also help advance the organization’s institutional thinking and develop its operational approaches to large-scale emergencies (conflict generated or natural disaster) and the IASC cluster approach. A chronology of the main events and actions taken since 8 October is provided. (*Annex A*)

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Emergency Response in Natural Disasters: UNHCR Policy and Rationale for Action

The rationale for UNHCR's emergency response to the south Asia earthquake in Pakistan was never going to be difficult to determine; first off, the overwhelming scope of the disaster demanded the urgent intervention of the international community, and the Government of Pakistan called for international aid. Second, UNHCR already had a large and long-established presence in the country and region in relation to the Afghan refugee situation (and voluntary repatriation was decreasing as winter approached, so UNHCR capacities could be relocated for the purpose of the new emergency). A third and especially important rationale for a rapid intervention was that out of solidarity it was clear that any UNHCR response should likely be significant given Pakistan's overwhelming support to Afghan refugees during the past 25 years.

Yet despite all this sound rational, the organisation confirmed what exactly its engagement would entail over a week after the earthquake, the main reason being that UNHCR was having some conceptual difficulty in "determining its role" in natural disasters. This is understandable of course, given its specific mandate and not forgetting that only one month before the High Commissioner had informed the ERC and his IASC counterparts (in the Principals meeting of 12 September 2005) that UNHCR would not take a lead role in any of the clusters during a natural disaster.

The questions that the organisation still needs to find an answer to are: What criteria should UNHCR set when determining whether or not it should engage in a natural disaster? And, after the experiences of the last few years, has sufficient precedent now been laid-down that will allow UNHCR to more easily and rapidly respond to future natural disasters of such scale (see UNHCR operations in a number of tsunami affected countries and the South Asia earthquake)? Should the High Commissioner be advised to declare an emergency in such situations, effectively curtailing time-consuming debate when urgent action is the real imperative? And, does UNHCR want to become an effective emergency organization in response to such large-scale natural disasters? By some accounts and suggested scientific thinking, the world will see the number of natural disasters increase in both magnitude and number; perhaps in light of the above questions it would be important to undertake a comparative analyse of UNHCR's responses to natural disasters over the last few years.

Recommendation: 1

In large-scale sudden emergencies (as opposed to slow-onset complex emergencies) UNHCR must deploy a senior officer such as the Chief EPRS, the Head of ESS, or other P.5 level officer within 24-48 hours who will advise/assist the country office in determining the scope and nature of UNHCR's possible response. Also, to advise HQ, facilitate policy discussion and ensure operational decisions are made as near as the point of delivery as possible, without delay, and without long distance micro-management.

Recommendation: 2

Regarding natural disasters and sudden-onset complex emergencies, it is advisable to review the emergency management actions/procedures to be taken within the first days. Part of these procedures should be whether and when the High Commissioner is to be advised to make a 'Declaration of Emergency', and with it a pre-determined and agreed set of response actions that would be set into motion.

Recommendation: 3

In order to better inform and develop policy regarding an operational response to natural disasters, UNHCR should undertake a comparative analysis of its recent experiences.

Recommendation: 4

Revisit the Emergency and Security Service (ESS) 'Comprehensive Plan of Action' (UNHCR's emergency preparedness/response procedures and global capacity strategy submitted to the High Commissioner). Lessons observed from the Pakistan emergency operation and any recommendations stemming from a comparative analysis of other natural disaster responses must be properly reflected in this important policy document.

Operational Strategy

Instructions communicated on 17 October from HQ to the country representative gave the policy direction and "green light" for UNHCR to strengthen its response at the field level (beyond the provision of non-food items) and also set the timeframe at six months, i.e. until the spring of 2006. Following this decision a mission by the Director, DOS, and the Head of Unit, CASWANAME, would "assess the level and mode of UNHCR's engagement, and consult with relevant stakeholders to confirm the scope of UNHCR's intervention".

This high-level mission would present a two-pronged approach: (i) to contribute assistance to high altitude villages before winter set-in; and (ii) to coordinate and provide technical support to increase standards in the planned and self-settled camps (and in doing so, UNHCR would more effectively lead the camp management cluster).

It was only at the time of this important HQ mission that the deployment of an emergency team would start to take shape. UNHCR's Senior Emergency Coordinator would arrive in Islamabad on 20 October followed a week later by two senior Emergency Preparedness and Response Officers to head-up operations in Mansehra and Muzaffarabad (almost 3 weeks into the emergency). The team members, who included staff from the Emergency Roster together with national and regional staff released by their offices, had to urgently deal with crucial issues such as the situational needs assessment, operational coordination and camp management (and all aspects that it entailed).

If the initial response through the rapid delivery of non-food items was seen as the first wave of UNHCR's operational engagement, then this HQ mission was to set in motion the second wave of what was clearly presented as "life saving" activities by the organization, and was greatly welcomed by the Government and the humanitarian community. The third wave - or phase - of UNHCR's intervention sees the stabilization of affected communities and individuals living in the camps and settlements throughout the winter period; a phase which may well prove to be the most important contribution that UNHCR will make throughout the operation. The fourth and final phase of UNHCR's intervention will be a responsible progressive disengagement as spring arrives and people start to leave the camps to rebuild their lives. UNHCR's strategic plan to ensure this ultimate phase of its operation should commence immediately, running parallel with the third phase over the winter months, and where capacity-building support to the Government authorities and national NGO's will be essential. To that end, BO Islamabad has developed a [post-Spring 2006] Strategy Paper which requires sustained support from Geneva.

UNHCR should also maintain a realistic and pragmatic approach as regards the exact date for wrapping-up its field operation which may have to go beyond the six-month instruction provided by HQ on 17 October. This would be essential if UNHCR is to be successful in ensuring a comprehensive plan focused on providing capacity-building support to The Government of Pakistan counterparts at the federal, provincial and district levels. Similarly, UNHCR needs to sustain the activities of national NGOs responsible for service delivery in the camps in order to consolidate the efforts in promoting and facilitating links with the early recovery and rehabilitation plans of the Government of Pakistan, and the support programmes of the international community.

Recommendation: 5

HQ to undertake a second operational review/support mission in early February 2006.

Winterization Programme

The internal mission report submitted by the Director, Division of Operational Support (DOS), and Head of Unit, Bureau for Central Asia, South West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East (CASWANAME) (20-26 Oct 05), talked of a "life saving operation" with a "three week window of opportunity" before the harsh effects of winter would set-in. That very narrow window is somehow still ajar (helped by an unseasonably mild early December) but will likely close in the coming days. And so it remains that the most urgent set of activities for UNHCR and its partners, in support of the Government of Pakistan, is to ensure that the planned and self-settled campsⁱⁱ are adequately winterized, and that no more lives are lost to the humanitarian tragedy in Pakistan, at least not due to winter's cold or to inadequate living conditions during what may be an extremely challenging period.

The winterization of the camps and settlements has been the highest concern for most of the clusters not least UNHCR, and the media has raised doubts about the ability of the

humanitarians to meet all the needs, including questioning why the vast majority of the tents were not suitable for winter conditions, necessitating a senior OCHA representative in Islamabad to adopt “damage control” mode when questioned by the international press on the inadequacy of the tents for winter conditions (a legitimate question posed after an IOM staff member stated that 90% of the tents sent to Pakistan were not winterised).

Through a number of ways UNHCR has begun the task of “winterizing” the tents in the camps. This includes demonstrating to people how they could better insulate their tents by the use of additional plastic sheeting placed on the roof, and by digging a shallow hollow within the tent acting as a lowered floor, thereby enabling low walls that help the insulation process. UNHCR plans to distribute additional blankets and mattresses.

The team learnt that the debate on which type of heating stoves to procure (kerosene versus LPG) was still in session; although to UNHCR’s credit, the request for kerosene stoves/heaters had already been made, with the first consignment of some 30,000 stoves due to arrive from stocks in Turkey and Jordan. When the stove will be distributed was not certain, nor how the issue of fire prevention and fire-fighting would be handled, as this is clearly an issue of real concern to the Government of Pakistan.

What can be reported is that the necessary planning of activities to assist affected populations through the winter appeared to have advanced during the time of the mission, and OCHA with input from all the clusters has prepared a document entitled the ‘Winter Plan’ that covers a 3 month period (December 2005 - February 2006).

Recommendation: 6

As a matter of highest priority and with all urgency, obtain and distribute the agreed winterization items.

Recommendation: 7

Pay special attention to vulnerable families and individuals to help them winterize their tents and ensure they receive sufficient blankets, mattresses and winter clothing.

Camp Management and Cross-Cutting Cluster Issues

In Pakistan, camp coordination is understood as the framework for managing and coordinating the over-arching response, and standards-setting. Camp management focuses on the practical day-to-day running of particular camps. The stated goal of the Camp Management Cluster is to provide all support and technical advice to the Government of Pakistan (including the Pakistan military and civilian administration) on issues pertaining to the coordination and management of the planned and self-settled camps that fall within the agreed criteria set-out in the Camp Management Strategy (i.e. camps of 50 tents or more accessible by road). It is evident that this strategy requires a multi-sector protection and assistance response by all actors and stakeholders in the humanitarian relief effort, incorporating all cluster areas of responsibility.

The general condition of the planned camps visited by the mission team ranged from very good to mediocre (the process of ongoing structural improvements continues and advice on standards and camp management is being provided). The general condition of the self-settled camps varied considerably and definitely will pose serious challenges for the Government of Pakistan, UNHCR and members of all the related clusters. The major concerns are sanitation, especially given the recent outbreaks of acute watery diarrhoea, the implementation of the winterization programme, and the social protection of the most vulnerable.

The Pakistan military has played the major role in setting-up and managing the 40 planned camps and they should be congratulated for their tremendous efforts. The challenge now lies in handing-over their duties to civilian counterparts in government. The new management responsibility is likely to be headed by the Commission for Afghan Refugees (CAR), which of course UNHCR has already developed a strong working relationship over the past years. A key factor in UNHCR's eventual operational disengagement from the camps in NWFP and Pakistani Administered Kashmir will be how successfully it assists the handover process and to what extent it will be able to capacitate the civilian administration in camp management. Part of the solution will be found through the use of national NGO partners in camp management, supported by good international NGO's. UNHCR Branch Office (BO) Islamabad has already developed a strategic plan for this critical phase of the operation.

Contingency planning for the anticipated increase in camp populations (due to inclement weather conditions forcing people to come down from the higher altitudes) is underway. The mission team was informed of these contingency planning measures and gained an overall impression that the approach adopted by the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR in preparing additional space and maintaining non-food items will be adequate.

Site planning is an important part of the Camp Management cluster and is a direct role undertaken by UNHCR. By the time UNHCR was fully engaged on the ground, many camps had already been constructed by the Pakistani army and by local NGOs. The late arrival of UNHCR site planners meant that many camp facilities and design layouts did not meet established minimum standards, and major corrective measures could not be implemented. The difference following UNHCR's "arrival" was very quickly noted and highly appreciated by all actors. The 'Practical Guidelines' (standards and methods on camp infrastructure) prepared by UNHCR for the Pakistan operation, were to prove an excellent technical tool and should be developed for future emergencies.

Concern about the practical application of IASC-agreed cluster responsibilities and lead-agency accountability in the Camp Management Cluster - including the provision of "last resort" - has already raised some important operational questions. So far these early concerns have generated uneven responses from respective cluster leads. The main examples being the Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) and Protection clusters where assistance "gaps" were quickly identified, yet it seemed uncertain as to whether the responsibility to address these gaps falls under the Camp Management cluster or the other sectors (aforementioned clusters).

Given that UNHCR is a key member of the Protection Cluster and a participant of the WATSAN cluster, it might be simple enough to say that it can and should "contribute" to

addressing the identified gaps in the camps (and this indeed seems to be the way UNHCR is engaging in the cluster approach in Pakistan); not on the basis of being Camp Management cluster-lead, but simply by fact of being a humanitarian agency involved in a number of assistance sectors. Partnership and solidarity within the cluster and with the cluster-lead is the essence of the cluster approach, and UNHCR is playing its part in the various clusters in Pakistan, and leading a key one. This is the pragmatic way forward to ensuring that the cluster-approach is successful and that assistance gaps are addressed. But this realistic engagement should not be viewed as way of letting the respective cluster-lead “off the hook”, and the issue of camp coordination/camp management clearly requires further definitional discussion at the global level, while drawing some early conclusions from its application at the operational level.

Another way of addressing the emerging dilemma of which agency is responsible to address assistance gaps within what is clearly the most cross-cutting of all the clusters (camp management has been defined more as a “spatial issue” as opposed to a classically defined technical sector) could be the wholesale application of overall responsibility within camps and settlements similar to the situational approach seen in UNHCR’s mandated lead successfully applied within refugee camps. This may be viewed as a possible alternative to emerge after a full evaluation of the agreed cluster approach over the coming years, once studied within a multitude of operational environments. However, a reflection of UNHCR’s concern was the comment from a senior colleague that “we need to be able to deliver without relying on others”.

One interesting development in Pakistan is the recently agreed merging of the Emergency Shelter with the Camp Management clusters. This will see the strengthening of the collaboration between operational partners addressing the shelter needs within the camps and settlements, especially over the winter months.

Regarding the Protection cluster and UNHCR concerns that the protection cluster has not fully adopted stated goals (reflected within the UN Flash Appeal document), it is the opinion of the mission team that UNHCR should proactively help the cluster-lead identify and address any protection gaps within the camps. This issue is addressed in more detail in the next section of this report.

Based upon a very brief visit to the field, and looking at this first - unplanned - adoption of the new cluster approach in response to a sudden natural disaster, a few observations are offered. First, it is far too early to draw any real conclusions as to whether the approach is making a difference from the old sector coordination approach. There was concern that the new approach had only led to an additional and unnecessary layer of meetings and that decisions were only made after protracted discussion when dynamic leadership and urgency of action are the order of the day. There were also signs for UNHCR that the cluster meetings were not well attended and that attendance was sporadic (this is not so different from the sector coordination system of the past). Also, the fact was again observed that there are so many actors that don’t rely on UN agency funding and simply don’t want to be coordinated (or “clusterized”), but again this is not peculiar to the cluster approach. Some NGO’s especially national and local organizations don’t have the capacity to join cluster meetings as they struggle to get on with the work in-hand. Others felt that there was too much “buy in” versus “fit in” and that only well-positioned stronger NGO’s would have any influence in the cluster approach.

Conversely, a comment that “too much was going into it and not enough was coming out of it” is perhaps a reflection of the inordinate amount of time spent in cluster meetings.

This last aspect is also one that UNHCR might do well to consider, and to ask itself whether it is effective having senior staff chair, support and facilitate a cluster while at the same time having to lead the operational response and “roll-up the sleeves” to make sure things get done. The mission team learnt how IOM and UNICEF have attempted to address this question. These organizations have dedicated senior staff whose main task it is to chair the clusters and adopt a supportive approach to coordinating and facilitating the work of the cluster members. They have separated the task of “coordinating” as opposed to “doing”, and have left this latter aspect to either their Head of Office or to a senior operations officer. Such an approach obviously needs to be determined by the specific situation and the level of operational activities required from the cluster-lead agency. It was the view of the mission team that UNHCR should consider this approach as Camp Management cluster-lead in Pakistan, knowing that this may imply needing additional senior experienced staff member(s) with good coordination, communication and organizational skills.

No coordination system is perfect (and agencies must constantly remind themselves that the cluster approach was not developed to address coordination gaps). But whatever system is in place it will only be effective if it has strong, dynamic and respected leaders that support and interact with all the actors. Such leadership remains the key ingredient for developing a collaborative humanitarian response, and in that respect OCHA did well to deploy a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator to support the RC/HC who is based in Islamabad. By all accounts, the Deputy HC played a hugely important and well-appreciated role as he based himself out of the Muzaffarabad humanitarian hub. He was supportive of all the agencies and organizations and was appreciated by UNHCR.

Is the humanitarian system response better for the clustered approach? It is far too early to say, but it has provided an increased sense of responsibility within, and structure to, the emergency response. The IASC would do well to undertake some degree of joint analysis of the Pakistan experience.

Recommendation: 8

As camp management lead UNHCR must maintain an interactive engagement within and across all the clusters, including helping partners identify and address assistance gaps.

Recommendation: 9

UNHCR must continue its technical support of Government of Pakistan, both to the military in camp management, and increasingly to the new civilian administration that will take over responsibilities. UNHCR’s post-Spring 2006 Strategic Plan must receive the full support of Geneva, cluster partners and donors.

Recommendation: 10

Addressing assistance gaps in the camps can only be achieved through partnership in the intended spirit of the cluster approach. This does not imply that other cluster leads can abdicate their responsibilities within the camps, but rather that UNHCR strengthens its existing partnership with UNICEF and IOM (including at the global level), and with others through burden-sharing and more articulated division of labour once joint assessments have been performed.

Recommendation: 11

With a view to strengthening UNHCR's field-level capacity to chair, facilitate and support the Camp Management cluster and all its partners (especially national NGO's), HQ should favourably consider any request made by UNHCR BO Islamabad for additional staff experienced in coordinating operations (with good communication/partnership and organizational skills).

Recommendation: 12

Further analysis of the Camp Coordination/Camp Management Cluster is required at the global level, based upon a bottom-up approach and learning from the early experience in Pakistan. UNHCR should also support the idea of a joint IASC review of the cluster approach adopted in Pakistan (operational analysis as opposed to an in-depth evaluation).

Protection and Community Services

Before departing for Pakistan, the mission team would learn of UNHCR protection "concerns" relating to wider protection needs beyond those of children, vulnerable women disabled and traumatized individuals. These concerns seemed to be directed towards the strategic direction the cluster- lead was taking, but it was uncertain as to whether any specific issues had been highlighted and discussed with them. The cluster 'Terms of Reference' were drafted fairly soon into the operation and stated it would: (i) ensure coordination among the partners expert and active in protection work in the earthquake affected areas; and (ii) facilitate information sharing and quality joint action. These overall objectives do not seem very "action oriented" and the specific tasks of the cluster are overwhelmingly focused on cluster capacity-mapping and standard setting as opposed to beneficiary needs assessment and programme design.

The mission team was not aware of any specific protection strategy prepared by either the cluster or by UNHCR itself. If this is actually the case, then it was felt that an important gap in the overall operational strategic thinking needs to be addressed.

While basic registration of camp populations is to be completed by the Government of Pakistan with support from UNHCR, and a dedicated data management capacity is being established in the two hubs with overall data coordination the responsibility of UNHCR BO Islamabad; such a registration exercise must be supported by a protection survey and

vulnerability assessment (and to the extent possible, incorporating impact assessments using participatory methods). This work would help the cluster develop a comprehensive protection framework.

UNHCR should also seek to support human rights bodies, legal advisory groups and women's and children's organizations so as to better respond to social protection needs within the camps. Such efforts will also help build capacity and must be linked to the relevant Government departments. Meanwhile, it was felt that the mobile Camp Management Technical Teams and Camp Management Support Teams will have an important role to play in the protection strategy.

It is a fair assumption that protection concerns will become more apparent as winter sets in and life in the camps becomes routine, but also increasingly frustrating for many of the population who have "lost" almost everything. And so for its part, UNHCR will continue to monitor and identify the most vulnerable among those residing in the camps, and address their social and protection needs. As the humanitarian operation gathers further momentum the protection focus will very likely shift towards assisting people in accessing existing social services, legal advice (land/property issues) and any other specific protection needs.

As indicated in the previous section of this report, UNHCR must be concerned that the protection gaps not addressed by the cluster members will - in the first instance - fall on its shoulders, and therein the issue of "first resort / last resort" starts to look like an improbable arrangement, at least in the context of Camp Management cluster responsibilities. Whatever the case, it is the opinion of the mission team that UNHCR should play a very proactive role as a cluster member in addressing any protection gaps, and that this is undertaken in a supportive and collaborative manner with other clusters.

Many of the protection issues within the camps will be of a very practical nature such as ensuring that cultural and gender sensitivities are fully observed, that women's ablutions are properly located, that camp security mechanisms are developed, and so on. UNHCR must make certain that it has good community services and protection teams in Mansehra and Muzaffarabad, sufficient in number and well-supported by the Hub and UNHCR BO Islamabad.

To the full credit of the existing teams and the Protection lead provided by UNHCR BO Islamabad, a number of meetings (brainstorming and strategic planning sessions towards a comprehensive protection plan) have taken place, and it would be important for UNHCR HQ to support this process in any way possible, including by offering a protection specific support mission.

Recommendation: 13

Given the magnitude of the emergency, the specificity of UNHCR's involvement and its anticipated duration, it is recommended to assist the operation with a support mission by the Senior Protection Officer (CASWANAME) and/or other senior protection officer with extensive emergency experience. Such a mission would help UNHCR BO

Islamabad, emergency team members in Mansehra and Muzaffarabad, and the cluster, to develop a Protection Framework (regarding planned and self-settled camps).

Program Related Issues

The efforts of the programme team in UNHCR BO Islamabad are to be highly praised and the overall emergency response was quickly facilitated and supported by programme officers on mission to Pakistan. The decision to decentralize the programme from UNHCR BO Islamabad to the two hubs in Mansehra and Muzaffarabad was welcomed and was completed by the time the mission had returned to Geneva. This decision will facilitate ongoing discussions with existing and potential partners, and it is felt that assistance activities will better reflect the operational imperatives and priorities on the ground. It should also hasten and improve program related requests at the field-level. Programme support in Islamabad will remain an important function of the Branch Office

Logistics

The initial phase of the humanitarian response placed enormous pressure on the logistics capacities at all levels (HQ, Branch Office and Humanitarian Hubs). The availability of UNHCR emergency stocks within the region and the unprecedented utilization of the external logistical assets (NATO airlift) saved time and significant financial resources. By the end of the air-bridge, NATO aircraft had delivered some 1,780 MT of UNHCR relief items to Pakistan. This was estimated to have saved UNHCR about USD 3.7 million had commercial flights been used.

At the same time the air-bridge placed enormous pressures on UNHCR logistics staff in terms of tracking, and taking receipt of deliveries. This was due to difficulties in planning and coordination with NATO logistics cells, sometimes the lack of accompanying documentation, and the chaotic system of processing arriving aid at Islamabad airport.

While the capacity of UNCHR in avoiding delays in dispatching the aid for the final distribution should be commended, there is a need to improve the logistics tracking system in Pakistan (note: currently one Logistics Officer in UNHCR BO Islamabad is tasked to closely follow-up on these issues).

Recommendation: 14

It is necessary to ensure adequate capacity in UNHCR BO Islamabad and in the field to deal with logistical aspects of the operation. Continuity and better follow-up on logistical issues must be guaranteed, and as would be expected by internal audit standards and donors.

Recommendation: 15

UNHCR should prepare a formal thank you letter to NATO for the excellent and unprecedented support it provided UNHCR during the relief phase of the operation.

Staffing

The initial uncertainties about UNHCR's involvement and role resulted in a difficult planning process for the deployment of staff with appropriate functional profiles and skills-sets, although the recent decision to significantly increase UNHCR's presence in the field is appreciated. Special consideration should be placed on the "quality" of staff to be deployed, and according to the priority needs. Meanwhile, it should be noted that deployment of staff from the region (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, etc.) will become difficult when spring approaches and when the Afghan repatriation operation will resume. Thus, the operation will become more dependent on the deployments of staff from other countries and possibly the Emergency Roster. In this situation deeper involvement on the side of the Division of Human Resources Management will be required in order to supplement the efforts by CASWANAME Bureau and the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section to address the issue.

Recommendation: 16

Special attention should be paid to the specific profiles required (site planning, field, community services and protection). It is important that field teams are led by senior (P4-P5) experienced emergency managers with proven coordination skills. Staffing gaps must be avoided if UNHCR is to achieve its goals over the winter period and during the important hand-over phase towards the eventual closure of the emergency programme.

Staff Welfare and Accommodation Issues

UNHCR BO Islamabad – colleagues deployed on emergency do not seem to encounter any serious problems and generally receive good support from the Branch Office. Accommodation is adequate and living conditions do not significantly differ from that of the regular staff based in Islamabad.

Mansehra Hub – office and living premises in the Hub should be improved. In addition to the fact that the office is overcrowded, the building is located on one of the main roads with constant traffic, even at night. It is extremely noisy and dusty, unpleasant, distracting and unhealthy. Living accommodation in the residential part of Mansehra town (adequate living conditions) was only just provided. Efforts are being put in to identifying a more suitable office building along with additional accommodation in the same area. This would solve many of the existing problems.

Muzaffarabad Hub – colleagues are accommodated in the UN tented compound together with other UN agencies. Lack of sleeping privacy seems to be the main inconvenience for the staff and this issue should be resolved as quickly as possible by construction partitions in the living quarters (tents).

Generally speaking, morale of colleagues involved in the operation is high. At the same time many colleagues are looking quite exhausted and are in obvious need of several days rest and relaxation. There is a need to formally introduce a time-off arrangement which would allow colleagues time to recuperate after a sustained period of very long and

intensive working hours (“normal” working day lasts from 7:30am until usually 10:00 pm, no weekends).

Recommendation: 17

A decision must be taken to oblige a “time-off” system, even if informal. The Senior Emergency Administrator has proposed such a system be introduced, pending the approval of the Representative.

Recommendation: 18

UNHCR does not have an agreed or communicated global policy on the issue of obliging staff working in emergencies to take time-off after set periods of intensive and continued work. DHRM in consultation with ESS and the staff welfare section should determine a fair system (and possible options that could be applied according to the nature of the operation), and present to the SMC for approval.

Reporting, External Relations and Operational Support

External relations have been successfully handled at both the HQ and UNHCR BO Islamabad levels. Despite the initial period of policy discussions with regard to the UNHCR’s operational role in the response to a sudden natural disaster, the collation and presentation of information and operational data has been dealt with in a very professional way. While getting timely factual information on developments in the field was a major challenge for the PI section, it was nonetheless comprehensive and well-presented. The central depository of information on UNHCR’s emergency response (i.e. a dedicated webpage within the UNHCR public internet site) has proved to be an important tool in handling external relations.

The Senior External Relations Officer along with her colleagues in UNHCR BO Islamabad and the hubs played an important part in facilitating the preparation of the Camp Management Strategy, UNHCR’s post-spring 2006 [exit] strategy and other documents.

Notwithstanding the excellent work of those involved in external relations, donor relations and public information, the initial period of policy discussions about UNHCR’s involvement in the first couple of days seemed to affect donor relations activities. At the initial period of the emergency (1st. week) the reaction of some donors was rather hesitant. Once the Information Notes for donors began to be issued after the first week which clarified the rationale of the organisation’s operational involvement, including in areas with no Afghan refugee were present, and the activities it would undertake, this situation improved significantly. Currently the financial situation seems to be satisfactory, with good chances of having the operation almost fully funded by the end of 2005.

The Pakistan Emergency Operation put in place by UNHCR has greatly benefited from excellent leadership at the Bureau level, and colleagues in Islamabad, the Hubs and in other sections in HQ were quick to praise the support that they have received. Of particular note was the work of the Task Force and the dynamic, focused engagement and overall management of the Head of Unit and his colleagues.

Recommendation: 19

A dedicated external relations and reporting function should be established at the Hubs. This would enable UNHCR to ensure a more detailed and unified approach to relations with external partners and donors. In addition, these functions could also provide support to the respective Chairs of the Camp Management clusters in both locations.

Chronology of Events and Actions

Information note on initial UNHCR response to South Asian Earthquake in Pakistan

8 Oct. ... **Urgent UNCT meeting convened and an Emergency Task Force set-up.** Within 6 hours of the earthquake UNHCR had emptied its warehouse to provide WHO with all available relief items to set up field hospitals.

9 Oct. ... **Arrival of UNDAC team.** Meeting with UNCT, **cluster approach agreed** (UNHCR initially requested to take the lead in Protection, Emergency Shelter and Camp Management clusters).

BO Islamabad Representative and senior staff traveled to the earthquake area and undertook preliminary assessment.

Head of the UNHCR Peshawar deployed to conduct formal assessments of the impact of the earthquake on the Afghan refugee camps.

11 Oct. ... **HC's guidelines outlining UNHCR response were sent to UNHCR BO Islamabad.** They restrict intervention to areas where refugees are mixed within the affected population, and not to assume lead role in any of the clusters.

11 Oct. ... UNCT and coordination meetings, UNDAC stress this is the first time using the new UN emergency response cluster system and imperative it succeed.

11 Oct. ... **UNHCR confirmed it is leading only the camp management cluster.** UNICEF takes over protection cluster but UNHCR remains part of this group.

13 Oct. ... Government of Pakistan send letter to UNHCR requesting they play lead role in the camp management cluster, and offering its full support in this task.

Supplementary Budget for the Earthquake Emergency was established, and a loan amounting to USD 7,584,440 from the Operational Reserve was authorized to cover immediate needs.

A Pakistan Army helicopter crashed while delivering aid in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, killing all six soldiers on board.

By end of first week UNHCR had released 7 staff from its offices in Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad, deployed to the field until Emergency Response Team members arrived.

17 Oct. ... **UNHCR opened two-tent office at the Army base in Mansehra** and sends a Field Officer to assess the camp locations and needs in the area.

From outset, UNHCR worked alongside the Pakistani military.

18 Oct. ... **NATO airlift of UNHCR relief items commences.**

Main focus of the humanitarian response is on search and rescue activities.

Roads blocked making it impossible to reach out to people.

Continuing landslides further reducing access. The Government of Pakistan appealed for helicopters, which were in very short supply to enable any access.

Primary relief was provided by the nation's people and The Government of Pakistan while the military focused on search and rescue efforts.

UNHCR emptied its warehouse in Quetta, sent all available relief supplies to Mansehra.

20 Oct. ... Mohammad Adar (Senior Field Coordinator) and Roberta Montevocchi (Emergency Program) arrive in Islamabad.

Week two:

In addition to establishing the NATO airlift and the continued distribution of relief supplies, with the first arrivals of the emergency teams, UNHCR had 17 staff fully deployed and engaged with mapping the planned and spontaneous camps.

20 Oct. ... **Mission by Director, DOS, and Head of Unit** to Pakistan to assess UNHCR response, TOR and scale of UNHCR's involvement, development of camp management responsibility, external relations, coordination, consequences for the Afghan programme, next steps on staffing, necessity of establishing a SAEQ unit, coordination, hand-over to other agencies/NGOs.

28 Oct. ... Senior Emergency Coordinators (Mansehra and Muzaffarabad) arrive Pakistan.

By end of week three:

Total of 87 local and international staff dedicated to the earthquake response.

As camp management cluster lead, UNHCR drafted a detailed strategy for camp management which has adopted by the Government of Pakistan as policy. It had been previously negotiated with camp management cluster partners, other sector leads and donors.

A joint UNHCR/FRC team visits Muzaffarabad and Mansehra humanitarian hubs in order to brief the military, civil administration, UN agencies, NGOs and other actors on how to "operationalise" the camp management strategy.

24-26 Nov. ... **High Commissioner and Goodwill Ambassador visit Pakistan**

1-7 Dec. ... HQ Review Mission team in Pakistan

Meetings

Islamabad

UNHCR:

Michael Zwack, Deputy Representative

Mohammed Adar, Senior Emergency Coordinator

Robyn Groves, Senior External Relations Officer

Beat Schuler, Senior Protection Officer (Legal)

Abid Ali Mir, Senior Emergency Administrator

Roberta Montevicchi, Program Officer

Marat Zafirov, Program Officer

Sunila Thapa, Senior Logistics Officer

... *(plus other senior staff during 2-hour video-recorded mission debrief)* ...

External:

Gen.Nadeem, FRC

Saeed Ahmad Khan, Member of PM's Inspection Commission, FRC

Tariq M.Khosa, Coordinator, PAKISTANI ADMINISTERED KASHMIR Relief Operations, FRC

Jan J.Vandemoortere, UN Humanitarian Coordinator

Andrew Macleod, Chief of Operations, UNDAC, OCHA

Sakandar Ali, Humanitarian Advisor, DFID

Chris Porter, DFID

Yassine Gaba, ECHO

James Barron, Coordinator, Emergency Shelter Cluster, IOM

Mohamed Bendriss Alami, Consultant, UNICEF

Mariko Hayashida, NICCO

Konrad Clos, Head of Mission, THW

Giorgia Muresu, INTERSOS

Mansehra

UNHCR:

Vanno Noupech, Senior Coordinator (end of mission)

Marin Kajdomicaj, Senior Coordinator (start of mission)

Okbay Afewerki, Field Officer

Robert Friedman, Field Officer

Malang Ibrahim, Field Officer

Abosse Kpekpo, Site Planner

Margriet Veenma, CS Officer

Olga Vorontsova, CS Officer

External:

Mr.Tarik, Head of Office, WFP

Mary Gludice, Emergency Shelter Coordinator, IOM

Thomas Bamforth, Programme Officer, IOM

Kirsten Zaat, Head of Office, OCHA

Osama Makkawi Khogali, Chief of Provincial Office, UNICEF

Muzaffarabad

UNHCR:

Christine Neveu, Senior Coordinator

Musa Khan, Field Officer

Zainab Fazal, Field Officer

External:

Brig.Iftikar, PakMil

Local NGOs (Shelter Cluster Meeting)

Pat Dugan, Head of Office, OCHA

Augustino Paganini, Emergency Coordinator (o/m), UNICEF

Karen, Rikke, UNJLC

Yassine Gaba, ECHO Correspondent, Islamabad

Eszter Nemeth, Desk Officer, ECHO

Meetings with IP's and NGO's (convened by UNHCR)

Weekly Coordination Meeting (Chaired by OCHA)

Inter-Cluster Meeting (Chaired by OCHA)

Shelter Cluster Meeting (Chaired by IOM)

Geneva

David Lambo, Assistant High Commissioner

Arnauld Akodjenou, Director, DOS

Ekber Menemencioglu, Director, CASWANAME

Salvatore Lombardo, Head of Unit, CASWANAME

Laurent Raguin, Snr. Desk Officer (Pakistan), CASWANAME

Monique Naufal, Senior Protection Officer, CASWANAME

Dag Sigurdson, Logistics Coordinator (Pakistan Emergency Response), SMS

Karl Steinacker, Chief, PGDS

Daniel Endres, Head of Emergency and Security Service (ESS), a.i.

Yvan Sturm, OiC EPRS, ESS

South Asia Earthquake
Internal Review of UNHCR's Operational Response in Pakistan

Terms of Reference

At the request of the Bureau (CASWANAME) and Office in Pakistan, the Emergency and Security Service (ESS) will undertake a rapid field-level review of UNHCR's operational response to the humanitarian emergency in Pakistan, and will be guided by the following mission objectives:

- i) Review UNHCR's operational emergency humanitarian response;
- ii) Provide early analysis of UNHCR's application of the IASC-endorsed cluster approach to humanitarian emergencies, specifically in the Camp Management cluster (where UNHCR is the designated lead in Pakistan);
- iii) Present recommendations as it concerns UNHCR's operational response in Pakistan, and institutional level emergency management policy and procedures.

The mission will cover the period from the onset of the emergency through to present day and will consider the rationale and objectives of UNHCR engagement in Pakistan while being cognizant of the urgent humanitarian imperatives on the ground and the system environment that has seen the recent development - and unexpected early application - of the new cluster approach to addressing humanitarian emergencies.

Special attention will be paid to operational structures and the modalities of UNHCR's intervention, including logistical, human and financial resources at its disposal. Programme management, coordination mechanisms and the inter-organizational dynamics at the various levels, as well as UNHCR's staffing capacity, their welfare and security will also be considered.