

**Case for Support:**  
**UNHCR Emergency Action**

**As of 23 May 2023**



## **UNHCR Emergency Action**

Cover image: Fathi Mohamed Ali, 35, was forced to flee her home in Somalia by the drought and the political situation. She travelled for 15 days with her children in search of food and water.

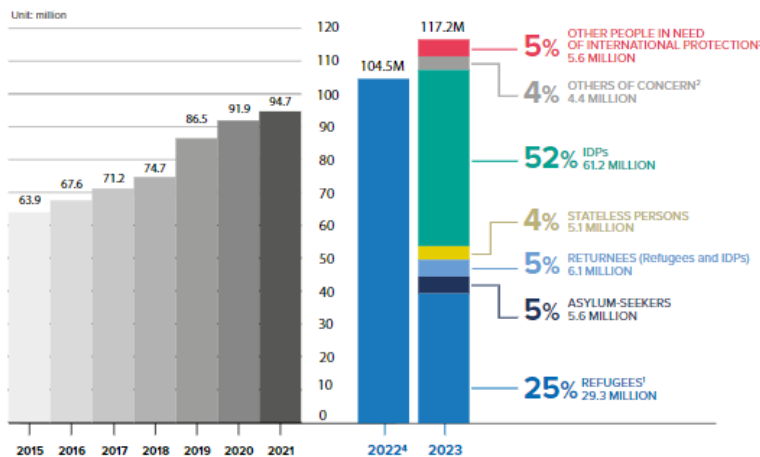
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## Emergencies are on the rise – and people forced to flee are on the frontlines

Emergencies are growing in scale, pace and complexity. More people than ever before – over 339 million people worldwide – are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>1</sup> Displacement is one of the most common and immediate impacts of emergencies, and the number of people forced to flee globally is now at a record high: over 100 million people, equal to 1 in every 78 people on earth being displaced. This number is expected to grow in 2023.

The majority of new displacement in 2022 was driven by the war in Ukraine, which has forced millions to flee within the country and across borders. Millions more have been displaced by other crises that have been deteriorating slowly and silently, far from the world’s attention, such as in Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And while more crises continue to break out, fewer are resolved, leading to long-lasting emergencies like Syria and Somalia in which millions of people are left in limbo.

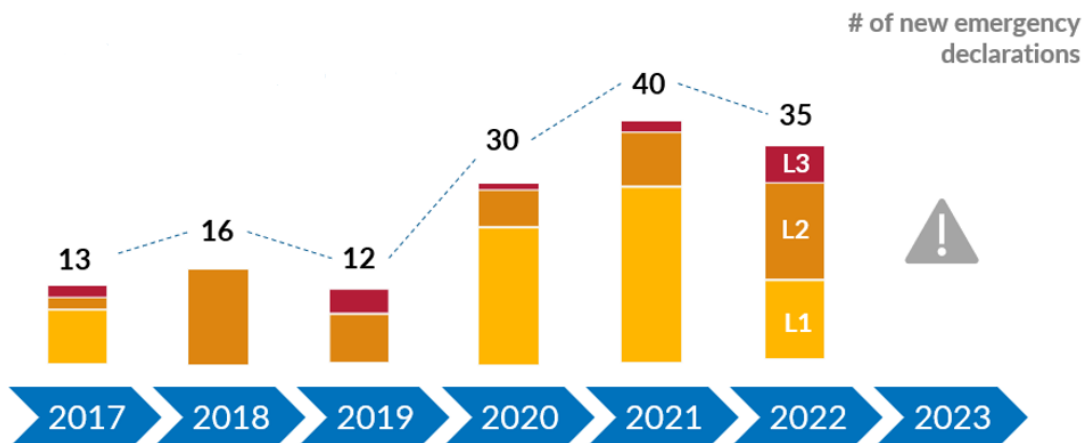
CHART1 | **PLANNING FIGURES:**  
117.2 million forcibly displaced and stateless people in 2023



This is all happening against the backdrop of the climate crisis – an emergency in which the most vulnerable pay the highest price. Nearly 90 percent of refugees and over 70 percent of those internally displaced by conflict come from highly climate-vulnerable countries such as Afghanistan and Mozambique. They typically lack the resources to adapt to an increasingly hostile environment – yet they are living through climate-induced disasters that are increasing in frequency and intensity.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has been responding to emergencies since 1950, protecting the rights and lives of people forced to flee ever since the organization was first created in the aftermath of the Second World War. In 2022, we had to sound the alarm and issue 35 new emergency declarations in 25 countries where refugees and internally displaced people risked being on the frontlines of disaster. While the overall figure decreased slightly from 2022, far more emergency declarations were issued as ‘Level 3’, signifying a grave situation requiring a whole-of-UNHCR response.

<sup>1</sup> OCHA [Global Humanitarian Overview](#) 2023



Time and time again, donors have responded generously to emergency appeals as they arise. However, with funds bound to specific emergencies or countries, we are not able to quickly respond when new crises emerge. On top of this, global needs are escalating to the point that they are outstripping our current capacity and resources to prepare for and respond to emergencies. In 2023, UNHCR estimates that at least US\$611 million will be required just to respond to the emergencies that we are aware of, including nearly US\$63 million needed to continue investing in emergency preparedness activities, such as training of our Emergency Response Teams to be deployed to emergencies and our global stockpiles of life-saving relief items.

As demand for our services grows, we are seeking your partnership for UNHCR Emergency Action. Your broad, flexible support will allow UNHCR to respond wherever and whenever the needs are greatest – and is more critical than ever before, as the number, pace and severity of humanitarian emergencies continue to grow.

## Emergency preparedness and response go hand in hand in saving lives

UNHCR responds to many types of emergencies, focusing on those in which people have been forced to flee, or where people already displaced have been further impacted by an emergency. While there are limitations to what UNHCR can do to prevent the drivers of emergencies, we work to understand the likelihood of emergencies developing, as well as mitigate their impact by increasing our capacity and readiness to respond quickly and effectively. The overriding priority in any response is to save lives and minimize harm through meeting the most urgent humanitarian needs.

Our impact in emergencies is dependent on our capacity in three key areas:

- **Readiness:** Investment in measures to be able to continually monitor and stay prepared to respond to potential emergencies.
- **Response:** Responding to sudden-onset emergencies that force people to flee or cause an escalation in humanitarian needs for displaced people.
- **Recovery:** Support to people in underreported emergencies, who need support long after the media headlines have moved on.

### 1. Readiness

Being ready lays the foundation of a strong response. By undertaking extensive preparedness measures, UNHCR can maintain operational readiness for a crisis and thereby pave the way for effective and timely humanitarian action.

UNHCR has extensive early warning systems in place at the global and local levels to identify when and where a crisis could strike and the possible impact it may have, to develop scenario-specific preparedness action plans, such as pre-positioning supplies

To stay ready to respond to any kind of emergency, we maintain stockpiles of supplies around the world ready to support 1 million people within 72 hours of an emergency breaking. These stockpiles include long-lasting essential items, such as tents, blankets, water containers, kitchen sets and mattresses.

UNHCR's staff work in more than 500 locations in over 130 countries worldwide. So when an emergency hits, UNHCR is often already there. But having the specific skillset on hand to respond to a certain emergency scenario is crucial. UNHCR therefore selects, trains and maintains teams of specialists ready to drop everything in order to deploy to an emergency. These experts have expertise in UNHCR's core areas of work ranging from protection and shelter, to water, sanitation and hygiene, to supply and logistics. In addition to their technical expertise, they undergo rigorous training to test their psychological readiness to work in challenging emergency contexts and practical knowledge for fieldwork in remote areas like radio, navigation and first aid.

### Spotlight: Monsoon season in Bangladesh

In August 2017, widespread violence and serious human rights violations forced hundreds of thousands of people from the persecuted and stateless Rohingya minority to flee their homes in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Many undertook dangerous sea journeys across the Bay of Bengal to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

Today, around one million Rohingya refugees are now hosted in Bangladesh, primarily in the hilly camps of Cox's Bazar. Although they have found safety, Rohingya refugees also face the yearly monsoon season, jeopardizing their already difficult situation.

Through strong preparedness efforts, UNHCR works with refugees, partners, authorities and host communities to mitigate the impact of the monsoon season's heavy rainfall and strong winds.

Refugees are at the forefront of supporting themselves and their communities. Thousands of volunteer first responders have been trained in practical measures ranging from life-saving water rescues and evacuations, to counselling, to spreading awareness about health risks.

Volunteers like Samuda work day and night in heavy rain to help families in urgent need. "They only move when the mud hits them," says Samuda, who visits fellow camp residents to spread awareness about the risks of floods and landslides.



UNHCR's experts in Cox's Bazar lead work in preparing the camp's infrastructure for the tropical storms. This includes evaluating risk areas, as well as building bamboo bridges and extensive drainage, stabilizing hillsides against landslides, and upgrades to shelters.

Relief supplies are pre-positioned throughout the camps in case of emergency, with "tie-down" kits of rope and wire provided to help refugee households reinforce their shelters against the torrential downpours and wind. Communal facilities are also proactively equipped as temporary shelters in case families are forced to relocate due to shelter damage, before repairs take place and they can return.

In 2021, more than 12,000 people were impacted by monsoon flooding. Ongoing preparedness efforts are essential to keep refugees and host communities safe each year.

[Learn more about UNHCR's work in Bangladesh](#) →

## 2. Response

When an emergency hits, timing is everything – there isn't a moment to lose. The sooner the response begins, the greater the chance we have to save lives. There is no one-size-fits-all response, so UNHCR's local teams on the ground conduct extensive assessments in affected communities to assess what kind of assistance is required when and where, whether it is a camp, urban or rural context. This 'needs-based approach' helps us determine the best direction of resources as well as vulnerabilities and risks – present and future.

Depending on the humanitarian needs arising from an emergency, UNHCR's assistance, protection and support might include:

- Relief supplies such as tents, blankets and water containers
- Setting up reception centres and safe spaces to protect people forced to flee
- Emergency financial assistance (via electronic transfer, cash cards or vouchers) for people to cover their own basic needs
- Emotional first aid and psychosocial support
- Registering people forced to flee within their country or across borders to ensure they can receive assistance and access their rights
- Identifying and referring vulnerable people to appropriate resources and services like children on their own or women at risk of sexual violence

We scale up our response by deploying three key resources in parallel: staff, supplies and cash.

**Staff:** We deploy expert emergency staff trained to help in crisis situations to ensure technical skills are immediately available. UNHCR has mechanisms in place to deploy emergency staff when sudden surges in demand occur during emergency situations. UNHCR's Emergency Response Team is one of these mechanisms, and staff remain ready to deploy to an emergency within 72 hours. UNHCR also maintains rosters of functional staff and senior management to deploy for shorter missions, and external 'standby' partners.

**Supplies:** We deliver core relief items from our global stockpiles. As well as smaller warehouses maintained locally, the strategic location of our stockpiles in global logistics hubs mean that they are accessible to be quickly transported by land, air or sea anywhere in the world. Within 72 hours, we organize cargo planes, ships and other vehicles to transport supplies to where people need it, even in the most remote, hard-to-reach areas.

**Cash:** The rapid mobilization of funds is key. When an emergency hits, we transfer funds directly to the emergency so our staff on the ground can immediately purchase local supplies, set up registration centres and camps if and when required, help relocate affected people to safer areas, and establish all other aspects of our response. When appropriate in the context, our emergency response might entail providing cash assistance to people in need. Just like keeping supplies fully stocked and staff fully trained, the availability of financial resources is central to our ability to save lives.

### Spotlight: Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria

In February 2023, powerful earthquakes struck southeastern Türkiye and northern Syria. earthquakes – which struck in the peak of winter – impacted 9.1 million people over the 11 hardest-hit provinces in Türkiye, and a further 8.8 million in Syria. Over 50,000 people lost their lives across both countries, and tens of thousands more were injured.

From day one, UNHCR and partners were able to rapidly scale up its response in Türkiye and Syria to deliver critical assistance and protection to earthquake survivors. Flexible funding enabled this first phase of the response - which saw thousands of core relief items, health kits, essential shelter supplies and protection services provided – to begin, together with local authorities and partners.

In Türkiye, UNHCR prioritized the delivery of core relief items and shelter materials to support the authorities leading the response. Within a month, 100,000 blankets, 40,000 hygiene kits and 31,000 tents had been delivered as well as heaters, winter clothes, and other core relief items. UNHCR also worked with authorities to carry out assessments, develop guidance for earthquake response teams on referral for people affected by protection issues, and support counselling efforts.

In Syria, by early March, over 280,000 people had been reached with protection support such as psychological first aid and counselling at community centres, collective shelters and through mobile teams. UNHCR also delivered core relief item kits across the country reaching 187,000 people, as well as 110,000 items of winter clothing. Thanks to stock already prepositioned, UNHCR managed to quickly dispatch tents and supplies in north-west Syria – where over 4 million people were already dependent on aid - as well as ramp up cross-border assistance with 86 trucks of assistance in convoys.



UNHCR mobilized from day one to support local earthquake response efforts and within a month, had provided vital supplies and assistance to thousands of people. But affected communities remain extremely vulnerable. As the response continues beyond the immediate emergency phase, ongoing support is critical to help families rebuild their lives and meet the challenges that lie ahead.

[Find out more about UNHCR's earthquake appeal in Türkiye and Syria](#) →



### 3. Recovery

Once UNHCR has mobilized core relief items, experts, and funds, our work has only just begun. In an emergency, we are often the first ones to arrive and the last ones to leave – often long after the world’s attention has moved on.

Press coverage can help to drive public awareness and attract resources for humanitarian aid in some of the direst emergencies. But with more people displaced than ever before, the media spotlight moves quickly. Some emergencies spend a few hours, days or weeks in the global headlines, while others barely receive attention at all.

When a crisis fails to receive public attention, more often than not it will also fail to receive adequate funding, affecting the delivery of humanitarian support to people in need. Underreported crises are less likely to receive necessary support –

Emergencies can continue for a very long time or may be slow-onset, deteriorating over months and years. What’s more, there is always the possibility for an ‘emergency within an emergency’ to make a situation even more complex, such as new bouts of conflict or a unpredictable natural disaster. We need to ensure that we are equipped to respond.

Just like in a breaking emergency, our response can vary and is tailored to the needs on the ground – and even if a crisis falls out of the headlines, our work continues. Your support to Emergency Action will allow UNHCR to continue its life-saving response to people in the most underreported crises, ensuring they have a chance to recover, rebuild and restart their lives.



### Spotlight: Displacement and drought collide in Ethiopia

Since hostilities erupted in February 2023 in Somalia's Laascaanood city, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced within Somalia, and close to 100,000 people – mostly women, children and older people - have crossed the border into Ethiopia to escape the violence.

The humanitarian situation on the ground is dire. Exhausted and traumatized, refugees in Ethiopia have arrived with very little. Many of them have lost loved ones in the clashes or have been separated during flight. Moderate acute malnutrition has been observed in many young children and in pregnant and nursing mothers, with worrying reports of measles cases also in the area.



This is an emergency on top of an emergency. Since 2019, five consecutive failed rainy seasons across the Horn of Africa have created a devastating drought that has affected millions of people in the region. Water sources have dried up, crops and livestock have been decimated, and people's capacities to support themselves have been eroded. Ethiopia's Somali region – where refugees are arriving – is one of the hardest hit.

To respond to the latest influx, UNHCR immediately deployed emergency response teams, working with authorities to set up temporary reception centres and provide urgent aid to new arrivals. With support from local partners and the community, a site was established for refugees to settle and access existing services such as health care, water and education. Refugee families are now being biometrically registered and provided with a tent and other essential relief items to set up a new home.

Despite hundreds of thousands of people in need, the situation has received little public attention – and no dedicated funding, even months since the clashes began. Fortunately, donations of flexible funding – support without geographic or sectoral restrictions – allowed UNHCR to quickly mobilise in response to this underreported crisis and make a difference.

But funding levels in Ethiopia remain critically low, and the response to the wider drought in the Horn of Africa is under severe pressure due to the rapidly rising needs. More support is urgently needed to reach everyone in need.

[Read more about the situation in Ethiopia](#) →

[Read more about the response to the Horn of Africa drought](#) →



## **Partnering for Emergency Action**

UNHCR Emergency Action is a key enabler to UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response efforts, allowing our teams to prepare for crises, immediately launch a response and continue to support in emergencies after the world's attention has shifted.

Flexible funding will allow UNHCR to respond in emergencies wherever and whenever the needs are greatest globally. This funding is more critical than ever before, as the number, pace and severity of humanitarian emergencies continue to grow.

By supporting UNHCR Emergency Action, you are helping people forced to flee in their time of greatest need, no matter where and when an emergency may strike. Thank you for your trust and partnership.

**Price Points:**  
**UNHCR Emergency Action**

**As of 23 May 2023**

**Price points**

While our exact emergency response varies between locations and contexts, we are prepared to provide a range of assistance, protection and support services in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. This may include:

- Shelter support such as tents, tarpaulins and plastic sheeting
- Sleeping items like blankets, sleeping mats and sleeping bags
- Kitchen sets for cooking and eating
- Water containers and jerry-cans
- Warm clothing
- Emergency cash assistance (via electronic funds transfer, cash cards or vouchers)
- Psychosocial first aid
- Biometric registration of people forced to flee within their country or across borders
- Setting up reception and transit centres to provide people with a safe place to stay for the short and medium term
- Conducting case management for individuals, like needs assessment, assistance, and referrals to specialized services
- Community outreach (in person, online or via telephone hotlines) to provide essential information
- Family reunification support to bring together relatives that have been separated in the chaos of an emergency
- Identification of vulnerable people and referral to specialised resources and services

Actual costs differ globally between each emergency depending on the size, scale and location; the following are approximate unit costs (excluding 6.5% ISC costs) and can be used as general examples in 2023.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit cost</b>
Jerry-can	One 10L collapsible container for a family to carry and store clean water safely	US\$2
Sleeping mat	One waterproof sleeping mat, suitable for one adult or two children	US\$2
Mosquito net	One long-lasting net treated with insecticide to protect against insects and preventable diseases like malaria	US\$2
Bucket	One heavy-duty 14L plastic bucket with lid, handle and clip-on cap.	US\$3
Blanket	One fleece blanket to provide warmth and comfort day or night	US\$6
Solar lamp	One portable LED solar lamp to provide light while moving around after dark	US\$13
Tarpaulin	One 4 x 5 metre sheet of reinforced plastic tarpaulin to	US\$14

	help secure, strengthen and weatherproof shelters	
Kitchen set	One family set of cooking and eating equipment such as pots, cutlery, plates and serving utensils	US\$22
Solar lamp with charger	One portable LED solar lamp with a mobile phone charger, to provide light while moving around after dark and enable someone to recharge their mobile phone battery	US\$29
Tent	One tent to provide a family with shelter, privacy and protection from the elements	US\$461
Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM)	One Workshop on Emergency Management to train emergency response specialists on how to prepare for, plan and organize an emergency response ( <i>NB: six trainings will be held in 2023, of which 3 are already funded by government donors</i> ).	US\$285,000
Emergency Surge Team	UNHCR's Surge team: a multi-functional team of seven experienced and trained emergency professionals who can be deployed as a team or individually to provide leadership and technical support in assessing and responding to emergencies.	US\$1,900,000
Emergency trainings	The cost of all emergency trainings annually in 2023 including: Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM); Situational Emergency Training (SET) to support scenario and contingency planning; Senior Emergency Leadership Programme (SELP) training senior roster members to exercise management and leadership skills in an emergency; and Emergency Training Leadership Programme (ETLP), an inter-agency course providing emergency management training to selected external and internal possible deployees.	US\$2,116,000
Global stockpiles	Annual rental costs for UNHCR's seven global stockpiles	US\$2,400,000