Risk analysis and monitoring - refugee emergencies

Key points

- Operations should undertake refugee emergency risk analysis regularly.
- PPRE Advanced Preparedness Actions (APAs), including PPRE contingency planning, must be taken when the refugee emergency risk is high, they are to be considered when the risk is medium.
- Refugee emergency risk analysis is led by UNHCR offices, and undertaken jointly with partners.

1. Overview

Emergency risk analysis determines the likelihood and impact of a potential emergency in a defined period, and improves understanding of the level of risk. The level of risk, and related early warning analysis, trigger advanced preparedness actions (APAs), including inter-agency contingency planning. Refugee emergency risk analysis is part of the Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPAs).

The refugee emergency risk assessment tool described in this entry is part of the Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE). Its principles are similar to those of the IASC standard for risk assessment.

Terminology

Hazard: A phenomenon, natural or man-made, with negative humanitarian consequences.
Likelihood: The probability of a hazard occurring.
Impact: The humanitarian consequences of a hazard, if it occurs.
Risk: An attribute of a hazard, representing a combination of likelihood and impact.
Risk seriousness: Impact multiplied by likelihood.
2. When and for what purpose

Refugee emergency risk analysis should be undertaken at all times by UNHCR country operations, with the UNCT/HCT in the country, in close coordination with UNHCR regional bureaux, regional offices, and UNHCR offices in potential outflow countries. Regional coordination is vital, because the country from which refugees originate is usually in the best position to indicate the risk to countries that may receive new refugees, and ensure that risks across the region are assessed consistently.

A risk analysis generates early warning information, which country operations and regional bureaux rely on when they take advanced preparedness actions to address specific risks. Early warning information will only be useful if warning connects to action. In many crises, preparedness has been limited or slow despite clear early warning, hampering the subsequent operation's ability to respond effectively.

3. Summary of guidance and/or options

A value for impact, and a value for likelihood are selected to measure the risk of a potential refugee emergency. The values for both factors are ranked on a scale from 1 (least likely) to 5 (most probable). A graphic ‘risk matrix and value definition’ clearly describes the key elements of impact and likelihood. The matrix assists country operations to undertake risk analysis regularly.
4. How to implement this at field level?

- The UNHCR Representative is responsible for undertaking refugee emergency risk analyses together with partners, and related coordination with possible countries of origin and UNHCR HQ regional bureaux.

- Possible risks should be discussed with Government, and with UN and NGO partners. The seriousness of the risk, and the preparedness actions that need to be taken, should be agreed with them.

- UNHCR contributes its analysis of refugee emergency risks to the multiple risk analysis prepared by UNCT/HCT.

Case study
The following illustration describes how to use the risk matrix to prioritize different refugee emergency scenarios, and determine when to implement APAs, including contingency planning.

**Situation.** Planners in the Host Country review the likely displacement effect of elections in a neighbouring state (Home Country), due in six months. They propose three scenarios, each of which is realistic and possible (supported by analysis and past experience).
**Scenario A.** Small numbers of refugees arrive in the Host Country within 6 months, in numbers ranging up to 100 per day, resulting in a minor emergency. This has happened in several recent elections.

**Scenario B.** Up to 500 refugees arrive per day in the Host Country. Though this has not happened in the past, analysts say the relatively small numbers of previous years could escalate this year, creating a 30% probability of a moderate-scale emergency.

**Scenario C.** A critical emergency situation develops in the Home Country, causing more than 1,000 refugees to arrive in the Host Country per day. Analysts say that there is a 50% chance that this will occur. This has happened a few times in the past.

When the Risk Matrix is applied to the 3 scenarios it generates the pattern below:

**Interpretation**

- Scenario B is ranked as low seriousness. If this were the only or most serious scenario, the Host Country should continue to implement the MPAs and regularly conduct the risk analysis.

- Scenario A is ranked as medium seriousness. The country operation should review and consider implementing APAs. It should perhaps begin with APAs that are easiest to implement, or that provide additional information that can be used for future analysis.

- Scenario C is ranked as high seriousness. The country operation should implement APAs immediately, and complete contingency planning for this scenario in 2-4 weeks. Together with UNHCR HQ regional bureaux, the country operation should coordinate with other potentially affected countries to ensure that risk across the region is analysed consistently.
Risk Matrix Scenarios

5. Links
Inform Risk Index
International Crisis Group

**Need help?**

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**Annexes**

- UNHCR PPRE print publication, 2014
- UNHCR PPRE training session 2, Risk analysis and scenario planning, 2013
- ppre_riskmatrix.pdf

**Version and document date**

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