Introduction UNHCR's definition of an "emergency" is composed of two criteria. Firstly, there is a humanitarian crisis or disaster which either has caused or threatens to cause new forced displacement, loss of life or other serious harm, or which significantly affects the rights or well-being of displaced and stateless persons, unless immediate action is taken. Secondly, the humanitarian crisis must demand exceptional measures because current government and UNHCR capacities are inadequate for a predictable and effective response. The declaration of an emergency level is based on a country operation's analysis of the situation, as well as its existing preparedness and response capacity. As part of its inter-agency commitments, and in addition to engaging in humanitarian situations arising from armed conflict, violence and human rights violations, UNHCR must also contribute to the delivery of protection, humanitarian assistance and durable solutions for persons of concern affected by humanitarian crises, whether sudden-onset or gradually deteriorating, arising from hazardous climate and other environmental events and conditions. The level of involvement in natural hazard-induced crises is linked to UNHCR’s presence and added-value operational capacity in the country and/or expertise compared to other humanitarian actors. The overriding priority in any humanitarian response is to save lives and minimize serious harm, through meeting the most urgent humanitarian needs. UNHCR’s Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response(opens in a new tab) sets out UNHCR’s internal mechanisms for emergency preparedness – such as risk analysis and contingency planning – and response – including when and how an emergency is declared, and the simplified procedures that exist in areas such as supply, partnership agreements and human resources.

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