

HSOT Humanitarian
and Stabilisation
Operations Team

Annual Report

2022-23

 Palladium
MAKE IT POSSIBLE

 UKaid
from the British people



We are HSOT



We are a team of humanitarian and stabilisation experts who support the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to deliver the UK's humanitarian and stabilisation priorities.

We are committed to supporting FCDO to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain dignity of people affected by crisis.

We bring extensive operational expertise and provide the UK Government with world-class response capabilities. Our team provides a full spectrum of preparedness planning and response to sudden-onset disasters, protracted crises and complex emergencies to meet humanitarian needs and restore stability in fragile and conflict-affected states.

We contribute to strategic thinking and provide technical expertise and analysis to inform FCDO's decision-making and policy development on longer term strategic priorities in areas such as localisation and prevention of violence against women and girls. Through our work, we strive to maintain FCDO as a global leader in international development, security and responding to humanitarian needs.

From Ukraine to Haiti, to Türkiye and Libya – we have been a trusted partner of the UK Government since 2017 and have responded to 83 crises.

We are a diverse team of over 80 UK-based experts working closely with FCDO colleagues. The team maintains a high readiness to respond (8 hours from the onset of a crisis) and also includes 900+ humanitarian and stabilisation consultants on our rosters that we can deploy to support FCDO strategic priorities, UK Overseas Missions and United Nations agencies.

We solve problems and deliver at pace with impact. We are a team known for our 'can do' attitude and agility who can be relied upon to deliver at pace and at scale during times of crisis. We hold ourselves and others to the highest professional and ethical standards and aim to raise the bar across the sectors we work in.

HSOT is implemented by positive impact firm Palladium and is part of the UK aid-funded Humanitarian Emergency Response Operations and Stabilisation (HEROS) programme since 2017.

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HSOT humanitarian
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support

Foreword

The past year has been fraught with increasing instability and intractable crises. Millions suffered the consequences of conflict and natural disaster. The international community has grappled with ever more complex challenges, as protracted conflicts continue to rise, climate change creates new disasters and compounds existing ones, and access to vulnerable populations living in situations of profound insecurity decreases.

Against this backdrop, the demand for expertise in the conflict and humanitarian space has increased. Over the course of Year 6 of the Humanitarian Emergency Operations and Stabilisation Programme (HEROS) contract, the Humanitarian Stabilisation and Operations Team (HSOT), managed by Palladium, continued to work with FCDO to ensure that our capabilities are continuously updated and adapted, so that we are optimally positioned to help FCDO deliver its priorities in an increasingly complex world.

The results shared in this Annual Report were achieved through the commitment and efforts of our team of just over 80 core staff and the many hundreds of consultants working alongside our FCDO colleagues in some of

the most difficult environments in the world. This year, we worked alongside FCDO to respond to ten emerging crises including standing up a large-scale humanitarian response to the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, drawing on all the contract capabilities. We deployed consultants to more than 40 countries during the past year extending FCDO's ability to work on conflict and humanitarian issues at depth and breadth. I also want to highlight our team's agility to respond to emergencies and draw attention to all the hard work behind the scenes that enables it.

I look forward to the final year of the HEROS contract, where we will continue to work closely with FCDO to ensure that the contract responds to the challenges of the time and that the transition to the

successor contract is well managed. I am grateful to all of my team and the dedicated FCDO colleagues who make this critical work possible.



Rebecca Pankhurst-Lapiña,
HSOT Director

HSOT in Numbers

Year 6

October 2022 – September 2023

10

142*

297

107,958

£25.8m

Cumulative

2017 – 2023

83

3,059

640

1.756m

£132.4m



Major humanitarian crises responded to



Deployments



Maps created for info and analysis



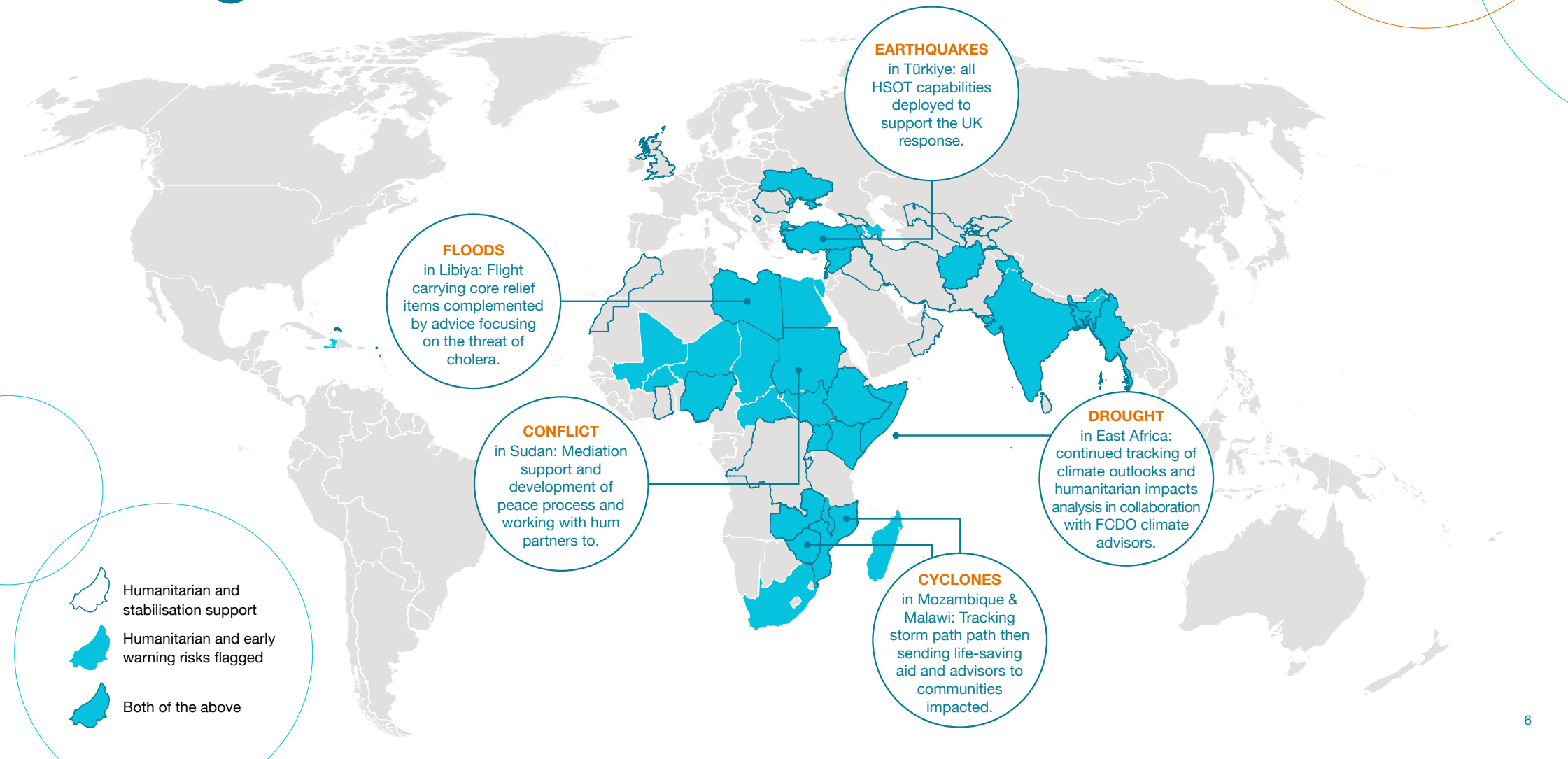
Core relief items delivered



With a value of

*HSOT has updated how deployments are calculated as part of changes made following the setting up of a unified Deployment and Roster Management Team.

Our global reach



EARTHQUAKES

in Türkiye: all HSOT capabilities deployed to support the UK response.

FLOODS

in Libya: Flight carrying core relief items complemented by advice focusing on the threat of cholera.

CONFLICT

in Sudan: Mediation support and development of peace process and working with hum partners to.

DROUGHT

in East Africa: continued tracking of climate outlooks and humanitarian impacts analysis in collaboration with FCDO climate advisors.

CYCLONES

in Mozambique & Malawi: Tracking storm path path then sending life-saving aid and advisors to communities impacted.

Humanitarian and stabilisation support

Humanitarian and early warning risks flagged

Both of the above

Agility

Delivering impact in an increasingly dynamic world requires agility. With unprecedented climate impacts and conflicts in a complex geopolitical landscape, humanitarian crises and therefore needs will likely worsen and occur more frequently in the future.

In sports, agility is defined as rapid whole-body movement with a change of direction or velocity. For a team working to deliver an impactful response to a humanitarian crisis, agility is a combination of many components — speed, flexibility, coordination, collaboration, responsiveness, and ability to adjust on the go whilst maintaining a clear purpose.

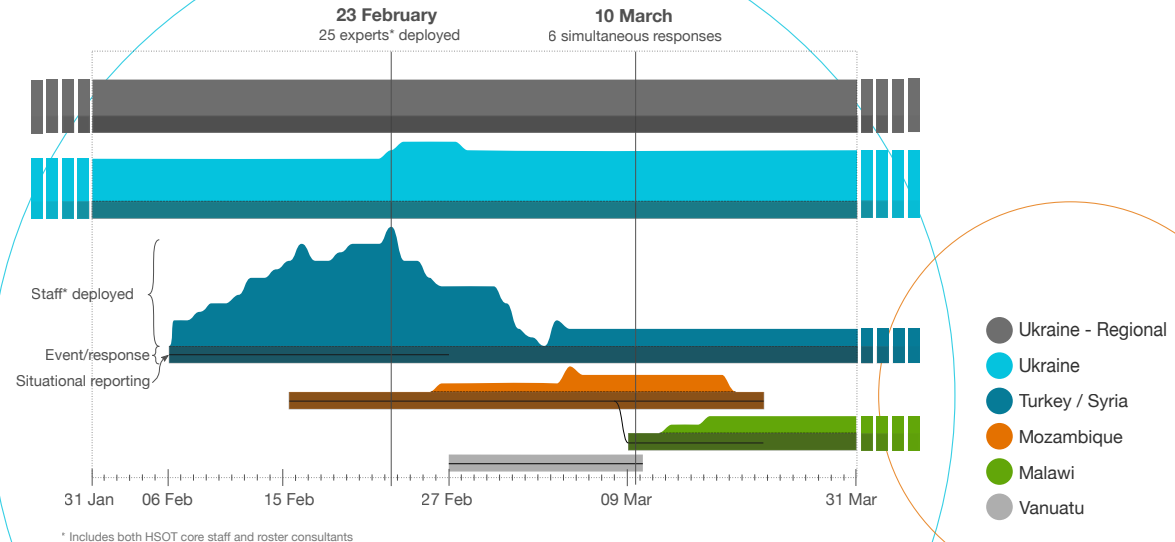


What does agility look like?

Flexing to cover simultaneous crises

HSOT is an agile team that routinely pivots to support FCDO to respond rapidly to multiple concurrent crises. In the quarter from January to March, we successfully supported UK responses to six crises taking place in parallel. HSOT provided surge support at pace all whilst continuing to provide support to stabilisation priorities and protracted humanitarian crises.

HSOT's ongoing support included deployments to regions outside of response, timely production of the Humanitarian Early Warning Note, the stocktake of humanitarian preparedness plans of 94 FCDO overseas offices, a humanitarian preparedness visit to the Philippines and a considerable amount of work to replenish FCDO's stock of core relief items to name some of the activities that continued alongside responding to rapid onset crises.



Delivering bespoke support

Over the past year, HSOT's Early Warning, Analysis and Reporting team have continued to create bespoke analysis for FCDO. Our approach is to understand the decisions that FCDO will need to reach and provide rapid and reliable analysis to support the decision-making. In March 2023, the HSOT colleagues providing humanitarian information for the Türkiye earthquake response quickly realised that understanding the science behind the earthquake would help decision-makers

make operational choices plus support the development of the humanitarian response strategy. This year, HSOT have also successfully trialled more agile approaches to scenario-building to inform response strategies and decisions. At pace, the team brought together interdisciplinary teams to develop humanitarian scenarios, which hugely benefitted from input from beyond the humanitarian sphere.

Relief items required in disasters include a core set of standard items such as emergency shelter, water

filters, solar light, hygiene kits etc., however, a crisis often demands tailored logistics support. On 6 June, the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine was destroyed causing widespread flooding. HSOT operational logistics team were tasked by FCDO to provide specialist technical equipment to Ukraine's State Emergency Services to assist with the flood response. HSOT moved quickly to identify and source equipment from a wide-ranging list of much-needed items. Within 24 hours of being tasked, the team sent four specialist boats and equipment to Ukraine.



Credit: Humanitarian Logistics Capability/DFAT



“The key to providing the most effective support is to ask the right questions, understand the context, and with our broad spectrum of experience and knowledge, deliver speedy assistance.”

Stuart Kinsey, HSOT Technical Adviser

Collaboration is central to being an agile team

The ability to build and maintain relationships is essential to agility because it enables teams to deal with tasks or problems that need solving collaboratively. “Drawing on relationships with key suppliers results in speed”, says Nicola Davey, HSOT

Supply Chain Programme Manager. “Years of building a strong global supplier network allowed HSOT to offer field team support in country within 24 hours of the earthquakes striking Türkiye.” With the field team quickly on the ground, close coordination between London, Ankara and field team became integral to a successful response.

Strong internal coordination is also paramount during a response for maintaining a clear purpose. HSOT's deployed field team in Türkiye liaised closely across several geographical sites while drawing support from teams in the UK – security, logistics, info management, finance, welfare, communication and humanitarian colleagues – to enable and bolster their work in the field locations.

During the Kakhovka dam response, the ability to build relationships with new suppliers at pace was likewise key. Procuring the technical equipment required for the flood response necessitated identifying 115 new suppliers within only a few days and negotiating costs and terms. Equipment purchased for the response included five specially configured water tankers to deliver safe drinking water.



Specialist expertise

Niche expert knowledge acts as a springboard for an agile response. During the Türkiye earthquake response, the HSOT logistics team took advantage of knowledge of local trucking companies to arrange last mile deliveries from the airport to AFAD ensuring aid reached those in need as quickly as possible.

When responding to the floods in Malawi, the operational logistics team's knowledge of aircrafts also made it possible to react quickly to maximise the aircraft's load. The team took advantage of available space on the air charter for deploying the UK Search & Rescue team. Within a mere seven hours, the team had delivered water filters and emergency shelter items to fill the aircraft. In the busy hours, before loading the plane, a core team Humanitarian Adviser worked together with logistics colleagues to confirm the shelter materials matched the global Red Cross Movement's specifications. This made it easy to integrate the UK's support with the Malawi Red Cross response and meant that distribution of UK aid could be done as part of a larger distribution thus saving on operational costs.

Deploying advisers with specialist WASH and shelter expertise who worked with partners on the ground resulted in improved local coordination with other humanitarian actors. This amplified the effect of the logistics team's lift and overall contributed to a better humanitarian response.

When responding to the floods in Malawi, the operational logistics team's knowledge of aircrafts also made it possible to react quickly to maximise the aircraft's load.

HSOT's logistics experts always aim to oversee the loading of cargo.

How to amplify agility?

This past year, HSOT has carried out a refresh completing a 360° review of work and processes. Objectives of the strategic refresh was to ensure that HSOT continues to deliver world-class operational support and innovative solutions for FCDO that address organisational priorities and meet the needs of people affected by crises.

Agile structures and processes

HSOT teams came together and worked in mixed teams collaboratively to identify priority outcomes. For each support pillar, the teams pinpointed specific results and set out a clear path with step-by-step actions. Structural changes have positioned the Early Warning and Analysis team able to better respond to analytical needs across FCDO and helped connect different parts of FCDO and HMG working on risk and warning.

HSOT also created a unified Deployments and Roster Management team that has resulted in a single, more efficient cross-contract deployment process that better serves FCDO. In the new set-up, HSOT has been able to

work even more effectively with the Humanitarian Response Group and OCSM to deliver elements of collective importance. Not least, the team has been transformed into a highly flexible unit with members surged in to fill additional support roles during crisis response, including the role of Field Support Coordinator and providing humanitarian communications support.

HSOT's refresh also focused on building readiness. The team took a fresh look at the processes and tools that enable the team to manage contingencies in a swift and effective manner.

“It’s about bringing teams together to generate new tools and promote standardised processes that build confidence in a cohesive system. This better equips staff to manage common operational situations and sets out clear decision-making lines to deal effectively with exceptional circumstances.”

Siobhan Parnell, Deputy Director

Cementing agility

For an agile team, learning must be central. A learning-oriented team captures past experiences, shares lessons and develop improved ways of working. Therefore, HSOT has worked hard to cement a mindset and project management approach that emphasise continuous collaboration and improvement.

“We have sought to embed agility in the way the team operates with a clear commitment and steer from all management levels. Our teams now follow a cycle of planning, executing and evaluating — shifting agility from ad hoc problem solving to embedding agility at the organisational level.”

Rebecca Pankhurst-Lapiña,
HSOT Director





Spotlight intervention Türkiye-Syria

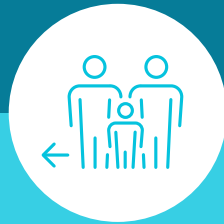


Impact in Türkiye

48,448
people killed



3.3 million
people displaced



273,000
buildings destroyed



5,954
people killed

392,000
families displaced

9,100
buildings destroyed

Source: <https://www.undp.org/turkiye-syria-earthquakes>

Impact in Syria

The earthquakes struck as the humanitarian crisis in northwest Syria was already at the highest level since the conflict began, with 4.1 million people relying on humanitarian assistance to survive. The earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria caused one of the biggest disasters to impact the region in recent times.

Source: UNOCHA

4.1 million
people relying on humanitarian
assistance to survive

Türkiye-Syria Earthquake Response

On 6 February, a major earthquake hit south-east Türkiye, affecting 10 cities including Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Gaziantep and Adiyaman, and the north-west region of Syria. Later that day a second major earthquake occurred in the Elbistan district of Kahramanmaraş, 80 miles north of Gaziantep.

The UK government responded immediately to the Turkish government's requests for humanitarian support, and also worked with the United Nations (UN) and other partner organisations to respond to the emergency in Syria. Tens of thousands of people were killed and more injured. Thousands of buildings collapsed, leaving countless people exposed to harsh winter conditions. Schools and hospitals were obliterated.



Swift deployment of a multi-expert team

The Humanitarian and Stabilisation Operations Team's (HSOT) support to the humanitarian response following the earthquakes drew on all HSOT capabilities. The Horizon Scanning and Early Warning duty system alerted the Humanitarian Response Group (HRG) of the earthquake within 30 minutes of the event and positioned FCDO to get a timely start on responding. In the early hours of the morning, HSOT activated an experienced humanitarian response team bringing leadership but also ability to trouble-shoot at pace. Technical expertise was provided as part of the early response architecture and

supported to shape strategy, and analysis products including an Earthquake Q&A, which answered key questions coming from the FCDO country team about why the earthquake occurred and potential for aftershocks. The HSOT comms liaison function was engaged early and supported communication and media during the response including liaising with various parts of the FCDO comms team covering the response.

Efficient team deployment and operational support

The deployments team arranged for core team members to deploy as first wave of the response, while roster



7 February

The first flight carried 77 members of the UK International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) team, their four search dogs and heavy-duty equipment. Onboard was also a UK Emergency Medical Team (EMT) assessment team and HSOT's staff tasked to establish field presence and support the deployment of UKISAR.



Throughout February

HSOT managed the movement of cargo across four RAF flights, seven air charter flights and free air freight offered by Turkish Airlines from the UK and Dubai to Türkiye alongside arranging the return of UKISAR equipment by truck and the delivery of core relief items to key FCDO response partner CARE, also by truck.



management contracted roster members to support FCDO country teams longer term. Operational logistics and supply chain management were supporting the response from the early hours of 6 February, including sourcing available charter options for deployment of the UK Search & Rescue Team. Existing logistics relationships combined with security advice enabled HSOT to establish a forward presence in Gaziantep on a Palladium platform, which was critical to the field team deployment. The Information Management (IM) capability was central to the response including situational reporting and GIS mapping, which enhanced information products and comparative analysis. IM support commenced on the first day of the response with dedicated core team IM support for both the Syria and Türkiye teams stretching several months ahead until September 2023.

Security advice was integral to field team operations

Scott Richards, Operational Security Adviser (OSA) joined the first wave team travelling alongside the UK ISAR on the first plane. He explains why it was so vital to deploy an OSA at the outset of the response:

“Having developed security guidelines to enable the establishment of a Palladium platform in the aftermath of a

Management capability was central to the response including situational reporting, GIS mapping enhancing info products and comparative analysis.

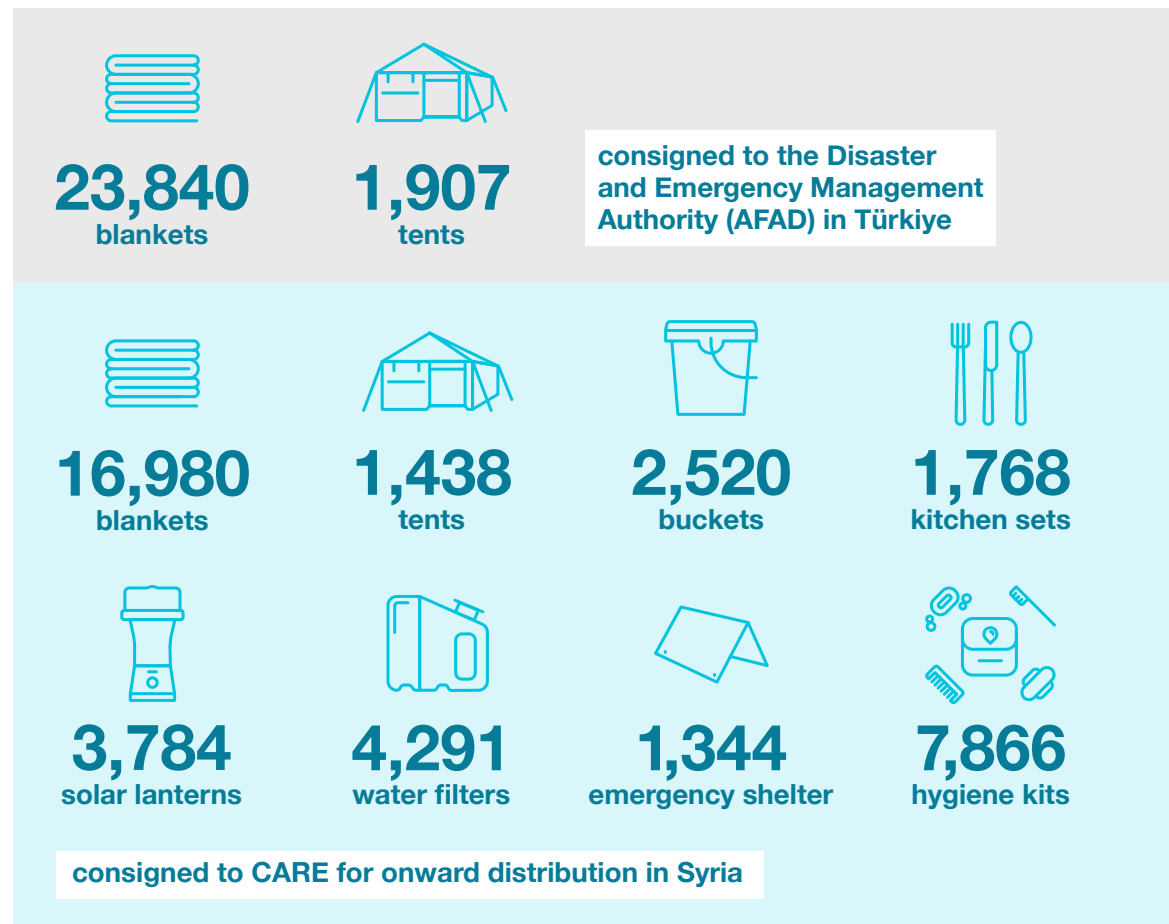


rapid onset disaster, it was a good opportunity to test and apply them during the recent Türkiye-Syria earthquake response. The first challenge was to get reliable, accurate information to make informed decisions.

Before leaving the UK, we started assessing damage and suitable locations. On February 7, I arrived in Gaziantep, but ongoing aftershocks and severe damage meant that the team first slept in tents and a parked delivery truck. After 12 days, we moved to a certified-safe hotel.

In Türkiye, my focus was on security contacts, plan updates, tracking the team, and communicating with HSOT in London. We addressed risks, including those from civil unrest, looting, and clashes among locals legally armed, thereby enabling our operational presence on the ground. This experience will shape our updated HSOT security guidelines.”

HSOT’s Procurement & Logistics Team moved a sizeable number of humanitarian supplies:





Personal insights from the Procurement & Logistics team

Senior Procurement Project Officer, Gabrielle Sanchez, was deployed for the first time to Gaziantep on day three of the disaster joining logistics colleague, Stuart Kinsey, who travelled in the first wave. They were there waiting in Gaziantep to receive the very first flight carrying aid.

Gabi tells us: “As loggies, we were constantly tracking the next flight. But our role wasn’t just about receiving and passing on aid. We had to make sure all the right connections happened – like securing airport access and engaging with AFAD’s team to offer trucks, which were in short supply. All which made the response successful.”

Rapid and joined-up response

Supporting this complex response required a unified ‘One Team’ approach. Feedback from FCDO teams highlight the speed by which response support was provided and successful cross-government collaboration was achieved. “The FCDO response was fast. Within an hour, the Embassy here in Ankara had stood up its crisis unit and started assembling a team to establish the facts on the ground and take action. This wasn’t easy but, as the scale of the disaster became apparent, rapid offers of UK assistance were made and accepted by the Turkish disaster management authorities. Within two days, a 77-strong British search and rescue team, with four dogs, was pulling people alive out of the rubble as part of one of our fastest-ever rescue deployments.

This marked the start of a major UK humanitarian response effort that saw the Humanitarian Response Group (HRG) fully embedded in the FCDO Crisis Unit. They worked hand in hand with our geographic desks (both Türkiye and Syria Unit), comms and welfare teams, and in close collaboration with the MoD [...].”



A colleague from FCDO’s Ankara team said of the response:

“The FCDO response was fast. Within an hour, the Embassy here in Ankara had stood up its crisis unit and started assembling a team to establish the facts on the ground and take action.”

On mission with UNDAC in Türkiye

The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system serves as the international response system for sudden-onset emergencies. The coordination mechanism is designed to help the UN and governments of disaster-affected countries during the first phase of an emergency. HSOT manages the UNDAC roster on behalf of FCDO and facilitates all deployments of humanitarian experts requested by the UN.

Humanitarian Adviser, deployed as part of the UNDAC team, recounts her experience:

“I joined the UNDAC team in Gaziantep a day after the earthquake hit. We planned to establish bases in both Adana and Gaziantep, with additional field hubs in Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, and Adiyaman. I led the Adiyaman hub.

Within 24 hours, we had reached Gaziantep and conducted an initial assessment to Adiyaman, meeting local authorities. Adiyaman had been severely affected, but due to a lack of communication, they had received no assistance for days, leaving people on their own to rescue loved ones and survive in sub-zero temperatures.

In Adiyaman, some Search and Rescue (SAR) teams had arrived just before us, and we navigated an utterly desperate situation to establish our base and work alongside authorities and SAR coordination. Our initial focus was SAR coordination and building relationships with local authorities, first responders, and humanitarian organisations. We transitioned into coordinating humanitarian operations, co-chairing meetings with local and international actors to support those affected.

The deployment was challenging and emotionally taxing, but the positive relationships, both within and outside the team, were crucial for effective work in a dynamic and difficult environment.”





Emergency responses

NOV
2022

DEC
2022

FEB
2023



Pakistan: extending support to humanitarian response following destructive floods

In August 2022, tens of millions of people faced devastating floods, which left a third of Pakistan under water and affected more than 33 million people. First HSOT deployed expert logisticians to deliver lifesaving core relief items to flood affected communities, while HSOT's core team worked in tandem with a roster Humanitarian Adviser already working with the FCDO country team to support context analysis, developing the response strategy and funding submissions.

The scale of the humanitarian response required extended HSOT support, and a core team Humanitarian Adviser and Humanitarian Affairs Officer (HAO) deployed to Islamabad during November. Information management support included delivering situation reports, humanitarian briefs and significant ad hoc humanitarian analysis commissions, whilst the Humanitarian Adviser focused on supporting the British High Commission to complete the allocation of UK funding to UN and NGO partners, draft the Floods Response business case, and develop a monitoring plan for the response.

Ukraine: ambulances to provide urgent care

HSOT has provided ongoing support to the UK's humanitarian response in Ukraine. HSOT arranged to send another fleet of ambulances to provide urgent care for those injured by Russian attacks. The first 8 ambulances were delivered on 21 December to Ministry of Health in Lviv.



HSOT has delivered
96
ambulances to Ukraine in total

Ukraine: sending critical equipment to power medical facilities

Working together with the British Embassy team, IOM, Chemonics, HSOT's procurement and logistics specialists designed a package of sustainable solar-power equipment. The Ukraine support package included four generators mounted on trailers to generate power for medical facilities and 198 smaller solar generators for households.

The Ukraine support package included four generators mounted on trailers





Türkiye and north-west Syria: supporting major UK government response to earthquakes

On 6 February, major earthquakes hit the Kahramanmaras region of Türkiye and north-west Syria creating acute humanitarian needs.

Tens of thousands of people were killed, many more injured and leaving 1.5 million people homeless.



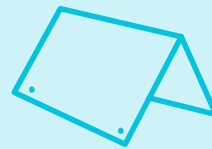
The UK government responded immediately to Türkiye's request for humanitarian support. HSOT arranged for an air charter that made it possible to deploy the UK's team of search and rescue experts and dogs within the critical 72-hour response window. The UK-based logistics team worked in tandem with deployed HSOT logistics specialists to organise complex movements of humanitarian relief items. The first UK aid relief items arrived 4 days after the earthquake. A total of 540 tonnes of emergency supplies including blankets and tents were delivered to people affected in Türkiye and across the border in NW Syria. HSOT also deployed a team of humanitarian experts to support a coordinated UK response. After two cycles of short-term deployments in the initial phases of the response, two humanitarian advisers were recruited from the HSOT roster to provide longer-term support to the FCDO country teams, whilst HSOT core team members continued to provide information management for more than 6 months.

Mozambique: responding to humanitarian needs in the wake of tropical cyclone making landfall twice

HSOT tracked Cyclone Freddy as it approached Madagascar and produced situation reports to monitor its path, including analysis and mapping. The team coordinated the use of the FCDO Research and Evidence Directorate's (RED) Flood Modelling allowing FCDO teams to understand the extent of flooding in different regions to assist in planning and decision-making. A core team Humanitarian Adviser

deployed to British Embassy Mozambique to support humanitarian planning in advance of the storm — a key focus was the UK's response to the high number of displaced people and the escalating cholera outbreak. Two core team logistics specialists deployed to arrange two charter flights and to oversee the handover of critical relief items.

Aid to Mozambique included:



4,120 emergency shelters



5,040 solar lights



2,520 menstrual hygiene kits

MAR
2023

Malawi: sending life-saving support to cyclone-hit Malawi

In Malawi, Cyclone Freddy caused widespread flooding and left a trail of destruction across 15 districts affecting over 2.2 million people. Vast areas were submerged, leaving communities cut off by the flood waters, and the storm caused the country's deadliest cholera outbreak.

HSOT arranged an air charter for the UK's Search and Rescue team to support Malawian authorities in the search for survivors of the floods. The flights also carried emergency shelter to ca. 3,600 people and water filters for more than 12,000 people to access safe drinking water, protecting them from disease. HSOT deployed a Humanitarian Adviser plus a Water & Sanitation specialist to advise the British Embassy team on the cholera response.



APR
2023

Vanuatu: responding to humanitarian needs in the aftermath of pair of intense cyclones

Cyclones Judy and Kevin made landfall in Vanuatu in the Pacific within a timespan of 48 hours. The island nation was heavily affected by the powerful winds and destructive seas. In advance of the storm, HSOT monitored intensity of trajectory and produced sitreps on the scale of humanitarian risk. Core team provided shelter advice to inform the UK's response, whilst HSOT's logistics team sent UK aid relief items to help the islanders via FCDO's reciprocal mechanism with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT).



Sudan: humanitarian and conflict advice in a complex crisis response

On 15 April, heavy fighting broke out in Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support forces following escalation of tensions between the two government military factions. Fighting quickly spiralled in Darfur and other regions with attacks on civilians and IDP camps causing large numbers of displaced people in Sudan and across international borders.

From the onset of the crisis, HSOT provided prompt info management and humanitarian

advisory support to cover Sudan and regional aspects of the humanitarian crisis. Analysis, situational updates, supply chain analysis and humanitarian scenarios helped inform response planning and decision-making. A Humanitarian Adviser (roster) provided critical advice on humanitarian access and protection of civilians from crisis onset, whilst a roster Military Adviser was central to negotiating directly with the fighting factions to ensure safe access for evacuation flights from Khartoum.



JUN
2023

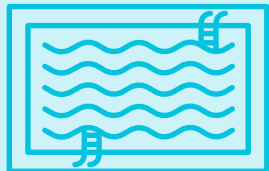
SEP
2023

Ukraine: providing critical equipment following the Kakhovka dam collapse

On 6 June, the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine was destroyed leading to catastrophic flooding in Kherson city and in villages along the bank of the Dnipro River. Over the course of a 5-week response, HSOT's procurement and logistics specialists sourced specialist items, including waders, wastewater pumps, inflatable boats, and water tankers from 115 new suppliers. The water pumps can remove the equivalent of 80 Olympic swimming pools of water per day, whilst each tanker can hold 26-28,000 litres of safe drinking water for the affected communities.

The water pumps can remove the equivalent of

80
Olympic
pools



Morocco: rapidly deploying humanitarian experts to support the earthquake response

On 8 September, a 6.8 earthquake occurred in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco affecting an estimated 380,000 people in Marrakesh and mountain villages. HSOT surged in a core team Humanitarian Adviser to assist with the coordination of the response and provide an overview of needs, whilst a Humanitarian Affairs Officer also deployed to provide information management support. A logistics expert and Security Adviser also supported the British Embassy team with technical expertise.



Libya: supporting flood response in complex environment

The floods in eastern Libya had a devastating impact particular on the city of Derna. Storm Daniel brought unusually heavy rains, which caused two dams to fail, resulting in sudden and catastrophic flooding of the city. The floods cost thousands of lives, whilst thousands more were missing. The floods also damaged critical infrastructure, including hospitals, electricity networks and drinking water supply.

From the outset of the crisis, HSOT provided a dedicated core team Humanitarian Adviser and information management expertise to support the UK's response, before handing over to a Humanitarian Adviser with health expertise, who was surged in from the roster. HSOT also organised a charter flight carrying UK-funded aid to Libya, including emergency shelter for up to 14,400 people and more than 800 portable solar lanterns. The aircraft also brought critical water filters and hygiene kits for approximately 10,500 people to reduce the threat of disease from contaminated water. Trusted partners, including the UN's International Organization for Migration distributed the emergency items to those in need.





Hearing
from our
experts



Maryann Horne

**Humanitarian
Adviser –
Protection
& Access**



Driving forward humanitarian diplomacy initiative

I am a humanitarian adviser with a specialisation in conflict, protection and humanitarian access. In my role supporting FCDO, the core of my work has been to make sure that humanitarian programmes deliver the intended impact; save lives, alleviate suffering, and uphold human dignity.

My primary responsibility has been spearheading a pioneer humanitarian diplomacy initiative for FCDO with a focus on improving humanitarian access. This initiative is in response to the growing challenges for humanitarian actors to gain access in conflict zones and the increasing politicisation of humanitarian spaces. The strategic work will significantly enhance the UK's and international actors' ability to assist a larger number of people to ensure maximum impact.

Leveraging diplomacy and effective collaboration

My role has focused on providing technical expertise to enable the UK to use its diplomatic influence and relationships to support frontline humanitarian partners in reaching the most vulnerable populations. This involved forging connections with like-minded states and governments, as well as other stakeholders — FCDO's Geopolitics Department, partner countries, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and frontline agencies like the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Collaboration has been a cornerstone of our approach. I've had the privilege of working closely with other FCDO humanitarian advisors and HSOT members, drawing on their expertise and lessons learnt in Myanmar, Iraq, Syria, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Collaborative teamwork has been critical to this role.

Efforts to ensure access and protection are closely intertwined with the pursuit of sustainable conflict resolution has also been a focus. Close collaborations with colleagues from the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation, and Mediation have been particularly productive, especially in exploring the connections between humanitarian initiatives as part of peace processes and the role of confidence-building measures such as humanitarian cease-fires, 'corridors' or detainee exchanges.

Responding to crises

My assignment over this past year has also involved secondments to support country teams during crises. Notably, my work with the Humanitarian Response Group (HRG) and the Afghanistan team during the ban on women aid workers was a significant challenge. Additionally, my expertise was drawn on heavily during the humanitarian response to Sudan. I worked across teams and was deployed to Addis Ababa to collaborate

with the UK mission to the African Union (AU), all while providing guidance on the Jeddah-hosted humanitarian initiatives.

An assignment that required a specialist skill set

The humanitarian diplomacy assignment has showcased the range of expertise that HSOT can offer to support high-priority FCDO initiatives. I've drawn extensively from my diverse experience, including my on-the-ground operational skills and my in-depth understanding of international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians in action. My experience from working in conflict zones, collaboration with state and non-state armed groups plus deciphering complex access challenges in countries such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya have been essential for designing this initiative for maximum humanitarian impact.

Providing pioneering conflict analysis tools

Conflict analyst with more than a decade's experience working in peace and security institutions including NATO, UN and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This includes working in Afghanistan (2007–11), in South Sudan (2014–17), as well as in headquarter roles in New York and Brussels.

At the beginning of 2023, I embarked on a new task within the Office of Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM) as a member of the Risk, Research and Response (R3) team. My role was to provide insight and guidance on conflict tracking and risk analysis.

Previously, I worked in HSOT's Early Warning and Response Team, and my connection to the humanitarian side of the organisation proved invaluable as I worked on aligning risk approaches among different FCDO teams. This collaboration became especially critical during sudden-onset conflict crises with significant humanitarian implications. Together with humanitarian teams, I designed a monthly Conflict Tracker for Sudan and supported the joint efforts of FCDO's Humanitarian Response Group and OCSM to develop future scenarios for Niger following the coup. Beyond my work in conflict tracking, I played a pivotal role in various ongoing analytical

projects, including OCSM's Global Triannual Conflict, Instability, and Atrocity Risk assessment. This assessment directly informs senior FCDO decision-making through the Priority Risk Report.

Transforming atrocity risk monitoring: a request from Parliament

The most significant contribution of my work has involved strengthening OCSM's capacity to monitor global atrocity risks. This initiative was born out of UK commitments in response to an inquiry by the Parliamentary International Development Committee. With the support of my colleagues, I designed a quantitative tool to assess risks in every country around the world, subsequently updating it regularly. The methodology was presented to UK partners internationally.

Expanding atrocity analysis to cover Sahel

My involvement in atrocity analysis has led to me supporting critical initiatives for specific FCDO geographic teams. Over several months, I played a key role in designing and implementing a series of workshops aimed at improving our understanding of specific atrocities in several contexts. The data collected during these workshops formed the basis of an infographic data pack distributed earlier this year, providing valuable insights to inform more effective programme and policy responses in the region.



Mark Miller

**Conflict Risk
Analysis
Adviser**



A Humanitarian Adviser's mission in Somalia to scale up the drought response



More than 16 years' experience in humanitarian emergency response and resilience programming, possessing 13 years of operational expertise in Somalia.

Since March 2022, I have been deployed as a Humanitarian Adviser to Somalia supporting the FCDO's Health, Humanitarian, Education, and Resilience Team (HHEART) during a period of severe drought and heightened insecurity due to a government offensive against Al Shabaab. This combination of unprecedented drought and conflict left nearly half of Somalia's population – 8.25 million people – on the brink of starvation. My primary focus: responding to the looming threat of famine.

Scaling up aid

Our initial efforts centred on strengthening the UK's impact and reach. We sought to improve the availability of real-time data, and vulnerability analysis to prioritise emergency assistance to the people most at risk including in hard-to-reach locations and established integrated, multi-sector programmes.

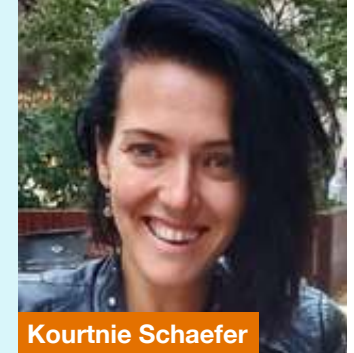
Collaboration with international and national organisations played a crucial role, I identified new partnerships and programming to fill critical gaps in assistance. This work resulted in an extensive emergency programme implemented by seven UN and NGO partners that provided lifesaving support to nearly 1.4 million Somalis and contributed to the large-scale humanitarian response that helped avert famine.

Influencing policy

I also worked to help the UK influence policy and inform the UN system-wide humanitarian scale-up. This included advocating for integrated emergency response methods, promoting Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance and the adoption of harmonised cash transfer values and the inclusion of land tenure security practices.

Securing partnerships

In a challenging funding environment, I helped secure a ground-breaking trilateral partnership with USAID and QFFD. This partnership channelled \$10.5 million through the UK to support the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRICS) consortium and sets out to deliver against both the vision and objectives outlined in the UK Government's Humanitarian Framework. Our approach prioritised assistance to people in greatest need whilst building resilience in long-running crises, and leveraging alliances to build new partnerships.



Kourtnie Schaefer

**Humanitarian
Adviser**





Chris Luckham

**Military
Adviser
Sudan**

My year as the Military Adviser on Sudan: navigating crisis and change

Wide ranging military experience from Southeast Asia, East and West Africa, The Caucuses and Northern Ireland. The last 15 years have included direct involvement in mediation with armed groups and military protagonists.

Over the past 12 months, I have served as the Military Adviser on Sudan for the British Embassy in Khartoum, and subsequently for the Enhanced Sudan Unit in KCS (London), and now with the British Office for Sudan in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. My work can be divided into three distinct stages, each presenting its unique set of challenges and opportunities.

Stage One: building trust in pre-conflict engagement

The first stage involved pre-conflict engagement, drawing upon my 13 years of prior involvement with Sudan. During this time, my primary goal was to foster relationships and build trust within the Sudanese context on behalf of the UK Government. I worked with various

stakeholders, including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and other armed actors. This was particularly important following a military coup and during negotiations aimed at restoring a transitional government. The UK's objective was to encourage their participation in the political transition and provide expert advice on reforming the security sector and integrating different armed forces.

Coordinating with international partners

Throughout this phase, my role was instrumental in coordinating with international partners, including the United Nations, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), and various international experts. I worked alongside the US to facilitate a transitional process and ensure a harmonious approach. Unfortunately, the SAF's demands for a new security sector were unrealistic, and they proved unwilling to compromise on the political process. Similarly, the RSF clung to their independence, resulting in the outbreak of civil war on April 15.

Stage Two: crisis response and evacuation

The second stage involved assisting with crisis response and evacuation in the midst of the conflict. This work has required several trips to Sudan, as well as journeys across the wider region. I also liaised with our UK and international partners' platforms in relevant countries. During this turbulent time, my direct contacts within the SAF and RSF played a crucial role in negotiating access for Rapid Deployment Teams (RDTs) to Wadi Seidna airfield (north of Khartoum) and Port Sudan, to facilitate the evacuation of British nationals and other eligible persons.

Stage Three: shifting role

The third stage centred on establishing the Enhanced Sudan Unit and British Office for Sudan in Addis Ababa. My advisory role shifted towards providing situational awareness, acting as a sounding board, and offering guidance on various matters, including regional influencers, stakeholder mapping, and

mediation processes. Throughout all three stages, I maintained a close partnership with the non-resident Defence Attaché (DA) in Cairo and coordinated with the US defence network, as the British Embassy Sudan was without a resident DA.

Flexibility and continuity

My engagement during this deployment was highly flexible, adapting to the UK's evolving needs. Initially, I committed to ten days per month over a span of six months, managed by the British Embassy in Khartoum. However, during the evacuation and crisis stage, the commitment transformed into a near full-time role managed by the Office of Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation before transitioning back to part-time support managed by the British Office in Addis. The tools provided for this transition, particularly Deploy Advisor, ensured a smooth shift between platforms while maintaining continuity through a dedicated HSOT Project Manager and single IT system.





Beyond responses



Ready to respond

– behind the scenes critical actions

Preparedness work is an integral part of what we do. All year round, the teams that make up HSOT dedicate considerable time and effort to be equipped and ready to respond to crises. Preparedness not only brings speed, but also results in better-value-for-money, and more effective humanitarian response. Here, we showcase strategic HSOT work that takes place behind the scenes.

Managing rosters of deployable experts

HSOT manages a roster of 300+ humanitarian experts and FCDO's Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG) roster that brings together conflict expertise. The two pools of experts provide flexible short- and medium-term support for FCDO priorities. A crucial aspect of preparedness is managing and engaging the humanitarian and stabilisation consultants.

This year, HSOT held a joint humanitarian and stabilisation roster conference at FCDO's King Charles Street offices in London. The conference was the first time since Covid and the DFID-FCO merger that members of both rosters have come

together to hear from senior officials about FCDO's priorities and how their work supports the delivery of the department's objectives. The conference hosted over 200 participants in person and online with plenty of time for feedback and questions during the sessions. The conference formed part of a broader consultant engagement and communication strategy, which HSOT has developed and taken forward this year in collaboration with FCDO client teams.

HSOT Roster Manager, Rob Parkinson says of the event, "The day underscored the crucial role played by the CSG and humanitarian roster for FCDO. It also gave consultants an opportunity to hear directly from different parts of the organisation how much their work in support to high-priority crises worldwide is appreciated."



Direct humanitarian preparedness support

In 2022, the Humanitarian Response Group prioritised humanitarian preparedness as a key objective. To step up work in this area, HSOT made preparedness an area of focus increasing advisory and cross-team support for this workstream. With renewed focus, HSOT has supported the Humanitarian Response Group to make great progress.

In October 2022, HSOT led a prioritisation exercise that focused on direct humanitarian preparedness support to specific FCDO country teams. The team helped draft a workplan for selected priority countries that included building and maintaining relationships, increasing technical humanitarian knowledge and skills, and providing tailored support to country teams to develop FCDO country teams' preparedness to respond to humanitarian crises.

In February, a Humanitarian Crisis Preparedness Commission was sent to 94 FCDO country teams. The 94 country teams were divided into tiers, and each tier was provided with a set of recommended



actions and HSOT-created tools and guidance. Humanitarian Adviser, Stuart Garman explains,

"The work has generated a good grasp of preparedness levels across the FCDO network and equipped us for follow-up with individual country teams on what actions they can take and how we can support them to improve their humanitarian preparedness."



Subsequently from March 2023 onwards, hands-on tailored support visits began to selected priority countries where joint HSOT/ Humanitarian Response Group teams deployed to work with FCDO colleagues in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal and others.

Safety and security preparations

The Türkiye/Syria and Moroccan earthquakes, in particular, highlighted the importance for HSOT having staff and consultants immediately and fully deployable. We comprehensively refreshed the practical exercises on our successful Hostile Environment Safety Training (HEST) course and our participant satisfaction rate has continued to be around 98% as we welcomed back our first participants on their two-year course refresher cycle. HSOT's security team also identified a need for greater attention to gender and sexual orientation-based risk vulnerabilities in our safety and security advice and support to colleagues and consultants travelling and working overseas.

HSOT conducted a study that formed the basis of a training programme, shared with FCDO Security Directorate colleagues to improve our understanding of and ability to mitigate gender and sexual orientation-based threats.

With the support of FCDO's Humanitarian Response Group, we piloted a novel approach to very high-risk, potentially very short notice deployments such as to Afghanistan; conducting a proactive security visit and assessment so HSOT can respond, without delay, to any emerging humanitarian crises.

Global UN preparedness architecture

On behalf of FCDO, the team manages the UN Standby Partnerships (SBP) and UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) roster and engages with both global networks. Both mechanisms are essential parts of the UN's architecture to respond to rapid-onset disasters.

Representing FCDO at the global level of both UN humanitarian mechanisms has helped maintain the UK's position as a key influential donor; making it possible to lobby for improvements and

to influence the longer-term strategic direction to align with FCDO priorities. This year, HSOT participated in a monitoring mission to Türkiye to evaluate how effective the UN Standby Partnership was in the earthquake response and to pinpoint lessons to improve the overall system for future responses.

“This year, HSOT has been busy handling a total of 587 UN Standby Partnership requests, and on behalf of FCDO we’ve coordinated the funding of 61 critical humanitarian response roles. On top of that, we’ve been working with FCDO to expand the network and to bring onboard two new UN Agencies. This expansion has enabled FCDO to support a Humanitarian Gender Specialist, strengthening the UN’s emergency response to address the devastating Libya Floods.”

Charlotte Elgar, Partnerships Manager

Exercising is a key tool (to sharpen preparedness)

Exercising is an important part of crisis preparedness activities and has a tangible impact on organisations' readiness to respond to real events. Exercises – whether tabletop, semi-live or mega-semi-live – aim to build familiarity with operating in crisis conditions and to improve both individual staff members' and organisational capacity to respond when a major crisis hits.

Benefits from exercising

Over the past year, HSOT provided support to 11 exercises; providing humanitarian advice and content as well as fully-developed scenarios, consistently earning great feedback for contributions. The team went above and beyond our initial plans, extending their assistance as the demand grew for this type of preparedness support. Our support has ranged from technical info and scenario injects, rewriting the humanitarian narrative to full design, exercise delivery and follow-up lessons with participants. Some trainings focused on preparedness for a single team, while the mega-semi-live exercises involved many FCDO country teams and government departments testing organisational preparedness in a controlled setting.

Humanitarian Adviser, Phil Duloy explains, "It's important that a humanitarian scenario exercise is grounded in reality and is scientifically plausible; the narrative needs to be realistic in terms of the conflict dynamic, meteorological patterns, and the existent humanitarian and development architecture. It's also important that participating staff get the right training ahead of time to equip them with the necessary knowledge for the exercise. Debriefings and lessons are integral to the learning. Individual staff learn and gain confidence with response roles, whilst part of the learning focusses on coordination and processes."

"HSOT has received much praise and positive feedback for our support to exercising and training. "It was evident [...] that all attendees were invested in the topic and eager to learn more about the humanitarian piece of preparedness and crisis. I believe the network is in a much better place for next week's exercise, and more importantly, the hurricane season."



HSOT demonstrates core relief items at FCDO's UK Disaster Response Centre in Kemble

Importance of restocking relief supplies and testing preparedness plans

HSOT keeps stocks of humanitarian core relief items in two strategically placed warehouses in Dubai and UK. Having prepositioned stocks of items required in humanitarian crises is an essential part of response readiness. After dispatching relief items in quick succession to provide much-needed aid in the aftermath of the earthquakes hitting Türkiye and northwest Syria, and the tropical cyclones that affected Mozambique and Malawi, the team moved quickly to restock supplies. This is the largest replenishment completed

to date through the HEROS programme on behalf of FCDO and included 6,850 water filters, 3,400 family tents, 6,200 emergency shelter, 3,840 solar lanterns, 5,040 solar lights and 1,104 hygiene kits, and 2,520 menstrual hygiene kits for women and girls.

The team routinely develop supply chain plans during response, but this is also a key part of behind-the-scenes preparedness work. Getting ready for the hurricane season, HSOT logistics experts undertook a real-life timebound





test of supply chain plans on behalf of FCDO. The test involved rapid sourcing of available relief items and transport from Dominican Republic within 36 hours. Aside from meeting suppliers, the team visited vessels to confirm immediate availability, inspected cargo holds, and spoke to crews of each

vessel. The team also made a stop to the Turks and Caicos Islands to brief the FCDO team and the Department for Disaster Management and Emergencies (DDME), and to check processes and identify potential challenges. For example, checking with the Port Authority that the depth of the port allows for vessels to dock.

Supply Chain Operations Manager Alex Franklin explains, “The timed simulation combined with walking through each critical stage with the organisations likely to be involved at the physical locations adds realism, rigour and robustness to our plans. Planning in situ allows us to pose some ‘what-ifs’ and identify alternative courses of action in advance of an actual response.”

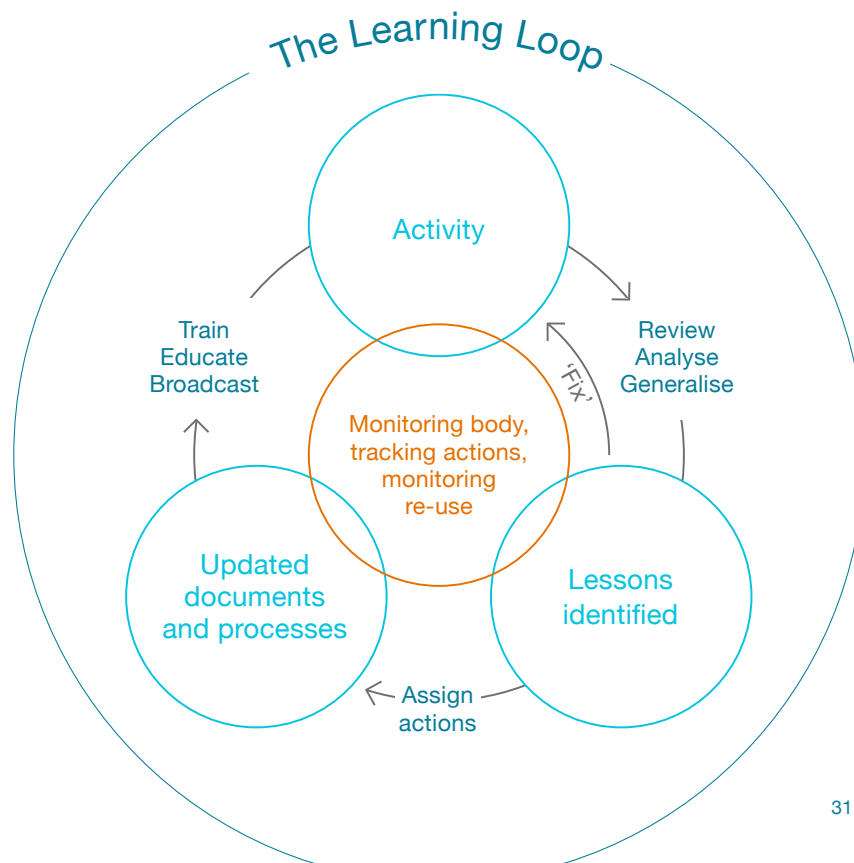
Lessons are central to preparedness

Capturing and sharing lessons from past humanitarian responses to learn from previous challenges and replicate success strategies is a fundamental part of HSOT’s preparedness work. In the past year, we have strengthened the lessons learned process for FCDO, contributing to improvements in our response to humanitarian crises.

Learning from experiences is straightforward for individuals, but in the context of a large organisation, it involves consolidating insights from many teams and disseminating knowledge across the board. HSOT has dedicated efforts to establish a clear and robust process that enables all staff to contribute at each stage of the lesson cycle – from identifying lessons to verifying, taking action, and implementing lessons learned. This learning process builds from experience of the past to prepare staff and teams for response in the future.

“The workshop where we verify lessons is key – this is where discussion and debate lead to recommended actions, which make sure lessons identified become lessons learned. Another critical element, are the quarterly lesson reviews that we have established to hold teams accountable to implement such actions.”

MEL Adviser, Kitty Williams



HSOT humanitarian advice and policy support

HSOT is dedicated to assisting the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office in advancing the UK's priorities in humanitarian crises and conflict contexts. Our commitment lies in aiding the FCDO to preserve lives, alleviate suffering, and uphold the dignity of individuals affected by crises. HSOT experts provide advice and analysis to assist UK decisions on policy, advocacy and programme delivery.

Support to humanitarian solutions in Moldova and Romania

As part of the UK's Ukraine humanitarian response, HSOT provided mission-critical support to neighbouring countries that received high numbers of refugees fleeing the fighting in Ukraine.

A Humanitarian Adviser from HSOT's core team was deployed to support both the Moldova and Romania embassy teams on a roving basis. Overseeing a response plan, the Humanitarian Adviser helped identify humanitarian priorities, gaps in provision of services to Ukrainian refugees, and made recommendations on partners to address them.

In Moldova, this initiative involved allocating £25m of regional funding to UNHCR and IOM and £12m in specific contributions to UNICEF, WFP, and UNFPA.

Having been instrumental in establishing the Ukraine Humanitarian donor forum at the outset of the response in 2022, HSOT's Humanitarian Adviser facilitated collaboration among humanitarian actors and donors. Making use of the forum, HSOT's adviser helped humanitarian stakeholders to build

consensus and successfully advocate to maintain assistance to vulnerable Ukrainian refugees.

Through our efforts, HSOT also facilitated the development of a high-level multi-stakeholder agreement aligning humanitarian activities with Moldova's social protection system. This collaboration was further developed when FCDO's Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources Facility (STAAR) experts were brought in. Together with the Minister of Social Protection, the core team Humanitarian Adviser set up a new social protection technical unit in the Ministry, staffed by FCDO and UN-funded experts reporting directly to the Minister.



Cholera Guidance Update: collaborative insights

A HSOT Humanitarian Adviser and Water & Sanitation specialist led the update of the Humanitarian Guidance Note on Cholera. The guidance note provides advisers and FCDO staff with info on how to prevent, prepare for, and respond to cholera outbreaks. Research has uncovered new insights into effective outbreak interventions, prompting a revision aimed at guiding donors in making informed decisions to reduce the scale and duration of outbreaks.

Cholera, a bacterial infection causing acute watery diarrhoea and vomiting, impacts over 3 million people annually, claiming 95,000 lives across 69 countries. While Nigeria, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, India, Bangladesh, and Haiti face the highest number of cases, significant outbreaks have occurred in Asia, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. The key to controlling cholera outbreaks effectively lies in a multisectoral prevention, preparedness, and response approach and must be based on evidence of what interventions work best.

HSOT's collaborative efforts with FCDO colleagues and external experts from the Wellcome Trust, International Federation of the Red Cross, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine involved four rounds of input and review, incorporating perspectives and experiences from the field. The updated guidance note and presentation were part of a broader initiative by the Humanitarian and Migration Directorate and the Research and Evidence Directorate, supporting policy development, humanitarian evidence uptake, and learning.

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Moh Zahman Rafiei, Development & Livelihoods Adviser Afghanistan

A Livelihoods Adviser from the HSOT's humanitarian roster, dedicated to Development & Livelihoods in Afghanistan, has played a crucial role in supporting FCDO's mission. This adviser's year-long engagement with the Essential Basic Services and Inclusion Group (EBSIG) has primarily focused on the agriculture, livelihoods, and climate change sectors. During this period, they closely collaborated with various advisers, international partners, stakeholders, and local institutions in Afghanistan's complex landscape.

The Livelihoods Adviser has contributed insightful lessons from past FCDO programmes and conducted analysis on the current state of Afghanistan's agriculture sector, encompassing informal economy and narcotics, as well as climate change issues. One of the key outcomes of their advisory work, complemented by insights from other advisers, was to equip the FCDO team with robust contextual analysis and updates on new

developments. This has significantly enhanced their understanding and strategic capabilities in a rapidly changing environment.

The adviser's recommendations have helped FCDO focus resilience and long-term livelihoods, which benefits Afghanistan and also assists the UK in sustaining some of its achievements reached over the last 20 years.

For instance, the recent analysis on Afghanistan's climate change challenges by the HSOT Adviser sheds light on the considerable difficulties faced by Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency — an organisation previously supported by the UK and other donors. The analysis highlighted the collapse in its functionality, the loss of capacities built over 20 years of international community presence, and a complete halt in active climate change projects.

Supporting the UK's efforts to tackle gender-based violence in humanitarian crises

The UK has continued to place women and girls at the centre of its humanitarian policy and global interventions. The UK's commitment is reflected in the UK Government's International Women and Girls Strategy launched in 2023. Gender-based violence has remained a key focus area as crises continue to exacerbate all forms of violence against women and girls as the conflicts in Sudan and DRC in 2023 highlight.

HSOT's core team has provided continuous support to the UK Government's efforts to develop and implement policies, systems and mechanisms to mitigate gender-based violence (GBV) risks, prevent GBV and provide comprehensive and safe services to those affected by GBV, and facilitate meaningful participation of women and girls and organisations representing them across humanitarian response.

In 2022, HSOT's Humanitarian Adviser helped to ensure that humanitarian considerations were mainstreamed throughout the International Ministerial Conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. The

two-day conference was a high-profile event in London in November 2022, where more than 50 countries signed a UK-led declaration to end sexual violence in conflict, and about 40 countries set up national commitments outlining specific steps to tackle sexual violence taking place during conflict.

HSOT's adviser provided support to the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) team and CARE in the run-up to the conference for the development of the session on 'Responding to GBV in Humanitarian Contexts'. This included contributing to developing UK commitments on addressing GBV and supporting women and girls in emergencies.



Building on this advisory work, HSOT has in 2023 supported FCDO in its role as co-chair of the Financing Task Team of the multi-stakeholder initiative 'Call to Action on Protection from GBV in

HSOT's core team has provided continuous support to the UK Government's efforts to develop and implement policies, systems and mechanisms to mitigate gender-based violence (GBV) risks

emergencies'. The UK has been a driving force behind securing a High-level Roundtable with Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals including the Emergency Relief Coordinator and UN agencies executive directors, and key donors and women-led organisations. UK-driven results include shaping the roundtable to facilitate meaningful discussion on new actions and commitments on prioritising and financing of the GBV sector including through funding and meaningful engagement of women-led organisations. HSOT provided support for the UK to draft and develop the background documents shared with the participants ahead of the event, including a guidance for formulating new commitments and a best practice document on support to women-led organisations, plus help to develop the briefing pack for the UK's representative at the roundtable.

In 2023, HSOT has also provided support to FCDO country teams to strengthen the integration of gender, inclusion and addressing GBV within UK-funded humanitarian programmes.

As part of this work, HSOT's adviser has supported the FCDO Somalia country team to select partners for their new £15 million protection programme focusing on GBV and child protection.



Strengthening humanitarian strategy in South Sudan

A Humanitarian Adviser from HSOT's core team lead a discrete effort to strengthen the strategic assessment of the humanitarian context, needs, and response in South Sudan. The objective

was to inform FCDO's advocacy and engagement with the UN, donor and NGO partners as well as contribute to the development of a new humanitarian and resilience business case.

The assessment was commissioned by FCDO's South Sudan team to explore how to better respond to rising humanitarian needs in the context of less international funding. Eleven years after independence, a staggering 76 percent of South Sudan's population is estimated to need humanitarian assistance.

HSOT's Humanitarian Adviser spent two weeks in Juba working closely with the Humanitarian and Livelihoods team, as well as interviewing humanitarian donors and key UN and NGO partners. Interviews and analysis covered a breadth of humanitarian sectors – Water & Sanitation, Health, Nutrition, Food Security & Livelihoods, and Protection. The analysis reviewed areas to scale-up or deprioritise support, but moreover focused on making programming more integrated across the nexus of emergency relief, development, and peacebuilding. Recommendations for shifting to resilience and development work included flexible funding for faster decision-making to better help populations to withstand sudden shocks and encouraging better coordination between development and resilience programme activities. A key recommendation was for the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator to work with government counterparts to lead a process that defines collective outcomes across

sectors for both humanitarian and development programming.

HSOT's support to carry out the assessment provided real value and provided analysis to help the FCDO country team to prioritise funding in a context that demands difficult trade-offs to deliver the Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan.

Specialist advice to support humanitarian critical health programming in Ukraine

A core team Humanitarian Adviser continued to provide ad hoc critical health advice to the Ukraine Humanitarian team up until March 2023. FCDO'S Ukraine health objectives are led by the wider FCDO Humanitarian Strategy for Ukraine and the region, but also look beyond immediate humanitarian needs with a view to supporting early recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine.

Humanitarian advisory support delivered over the period included developing the health strategy and presenting it to the wider health network, supporting the team to review ad hoc requests for medical supplies, working jointly on tasks with programme leads and the FCDO Research and Evidence Directorate (RED), and estimating the impact of health facility attacks to get a



The Rivne facility is the only centre in Ukraine dedicated to rehabilitating veteran patients with spinal cord and traumatic brain injury. With UK support, the specialised treatment centre has raised capacity from 50 to 100 beds and created links to tertiary care facilities in four key oblasts in Ukraine with improved acute care and post-

discharge follow-up treatment. The project has been a success and future plans include strengthening referral and follow-up mechanisms for patients with spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries as well as extending this learning to more areas in Ukraine.

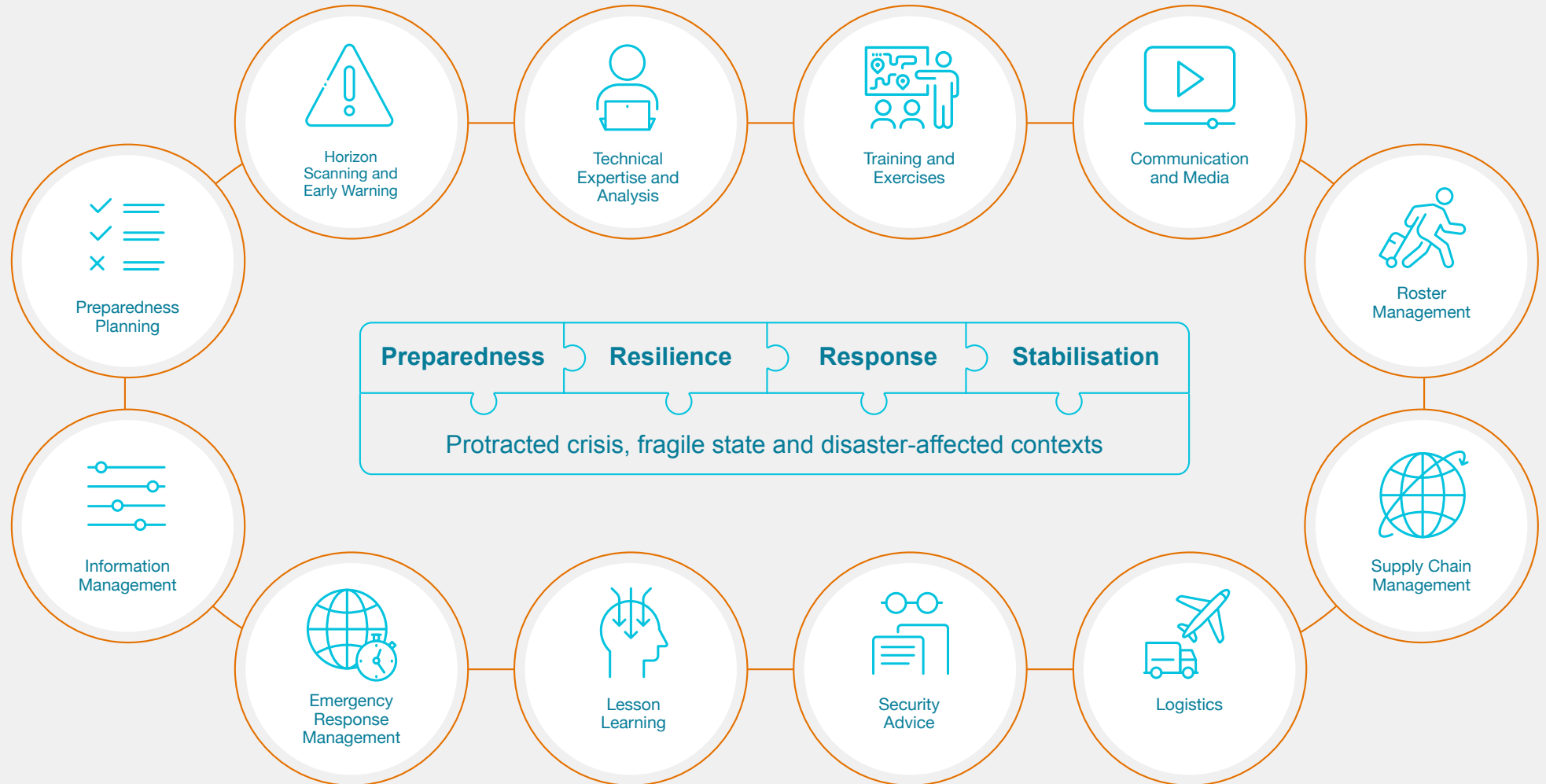
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clear picture and understand the gravity of the situation. The HSOT Humanitarian Adviser also reviewed and prioritised UN Standby Partnership requests to evaluate what positions were critical in terms of programming needs and against FCDO priorities.

HSOT also provided health advice to support to the UK-funded programme to develop the Rivne Spinal Cord Injury Centre into a national referral hub.



HSOT Capabilities





Contact us

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**Humanitarian and Stabilisation
Operations Team**

Palladium has a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. If you know or suspect that an incident has occurred, you can seek confidential advice and/or report this incident using the following hotlines:

FCDO's Whistleblowing helpline +44 (0) 1355 84 3747 or reportingconcerns@fcdo.gov.uk

Palladium's compliance hotline: +44 (0) 20 3318 5468 or tellus@thepalladiumgroup.com

HSOT Humanitarian
and Stabilisation
Operations Team

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