# UNDSS Emergency Response Team (ERT) Proposal

United Nations | Department of Safety and Security

# Acronyms & Abbreviations

DOS – Department of Operational Support

ERT – Emergency Response Team

HCT – Humanitarian Country Team

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization

OCHA – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

SLT – Saving Lives Together

UN – United Nations

UNCT – United Nations Country Team

UNDAC – United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination

UNDSS – United Nations Department of Safety and Security

UNHQ – United Nations Headquarters

USAID – The United States Agency for International Development

USG – Under-Secretary-General

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# Background

**Amidst a rise in emergency response operations in insecure environments, the UN family increasingly depends upon further support and services from UNDSS. This includes flexible security risk management solutions that facilitate humanitarian interventions.**

When UN security is under-staffed or lacking in the kind of leadership and expertise, the consequences for humanitarian delivery can be profound: aid not delivered to beneficiaries in hard-to-reach areas; UN personnel confined to compounds and capitals; UN personnel may be exposed to serious risk; risks pushed to local staff and partners; partners lacking proper situational awareness and risk assessment; and the undermining of the UN – and donors' - accountability to beneficiaries.

The Department has thus far adjusted to increases in need by leveraging existing structures and personnel through part-time, voluntary surge deployments, often at insufficiently senior levels. These have frequently fallen short of client requirements. The repositioning of staff from their assigned duty station to crisis situations also creates gaps in coverage, leaving other locations vulnerable.

Recent crises have exposed gaps in the Department's capacity to foresee, plan, lead, and implement security support in a crisis, and adapt its analysis to new realities and demands. It has become increasingly clear that UNDSS needs to follow the example of its humanitarian counterparts and establish a dedicated crisis response capacity.

The Department must find a more suitable approach. This approach must be underpinned by a mechanism to help foresee crises before they occur, plan and enable a more agile, effective, and rapid response to emergencies, and support and build the resilience of field operations through effective data analysis. It must also improve the Department's ability to communicate effectively within and about security aspects of crises and provide increased and suitable temporary staff capacity to meet urgent needs given the significant change in the lifecycle of a UN emergency response.



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# Project rationale

**Goal:** **help the United Nations to deliver emergency humanitarian programming in the most complex and dangerous environments, reaching the world's most vulnerable people.**

**A new Emergency Response Team (ERT) would enable the UNDSS to provide agile, effective, evidence-based, and flexible problem-solving during complex emergencies.**

The ERT will help preserve the investments made by Member States in United Nations humanitarian programming, while ensuring security support so the UN Organizations and implementing partners can reach those most in need during times of crisis.

The ERT will focus on the most complex emerging crises around the world. Lessons learned from recent emergencies demonstrate the need for a cohesive cross-functional team that provides 'first wave' support during the first weeks of response to rapidly assess and articulate needs on the ground.

## The team will include the following profiles:

**Security** professionals & experts

**Analysts**

**Planning & coordination** experts

**Administration/ logistics** experts

1. All team members will have extensive and recent experience in complex field settings.

2. ERT team members will be selected and trained to work as enablers who rapidly assess the security needs on the ground, finding short to medium-term security risk management solutions and support access and programme delivery for the UN system.

3. Dedicated planning and coordination experts will work to ensure that the partnerships, logistical and administrative systems, and information flows are appropriate to support an effective security response.

4. Analysts will use data and contextual information to predict where there will be significant changes to the security environment and where a dramatically expanded or new UN response is likely. In emergencies, they will provide continuous analysis to allow the UN system to shift and adapt ongoing response in real time.

After a decision has been made by the USG to utilize the ERT, the multifunctional team will deploy within 72 hours anywhere in the world. The ability to do so will strengthen existing security structures in-country and assist the team in place by bringing advanced expertise on responding to complex emergencies. In some instances, the ERT will provide interim security leadership, serving as a counterpart to those leading the humanitarian coordination efforts and humanitarian agency responses.

# Operational
# details

**Upon deployment, the team will perform the following core tasks:**

✓ Evaluate the situation on the ground

✓ Conduct a rapid security needs assessment

✓ Perform analyses with a view to guiding decision-makers

✓ Provide security advice and guidance to the UN system to continue delivering programmes

✓ Oversee the UN's security approach during the first phase of sudden-onset emergencies

**Its work will be driven by people-centered security principles, with operationally focused gender and inclusivity expertise provided by deployable experts at HQ.**

Coordination and planning staff will ensure that the ERT's work is connected to and guided by the needs and plans of the broader UN system. Briefing coordination mechanisms will be designed to enhance broader response capacity, ensuring effective information flow within and beyond the Department (i.e., the Saving Lives Together [SLT] partner organizations) while tracking and monitoring progress and risks to UN operations.

The ERT is designed to deploy as one team or break up into different configurations depending on the requirements on the ground. The capacity will be split between two locations: a large component of deployable positions, such as the Head of ERT, will be based in a location away from HQ.

A small component led by the Deputy will be based at UNHQ NY where it can liaise with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) and UN system organizations to provide back-end support while leveraging specialized expertise on communications, gender, and inclusivity.

**The ERT deployment is temporary. Team members will generally depart a crisis country within two-to-three months (depending on their specific function) and leave under the following scenarios:**

**1.** The crisis is short-term and ends within weeks.

**2.** The regular in-country capability becomes equipped to deal with the crisis*

**3.** Longer-term surge staff deployed through rosters or stand-by partnerships and ongoing resource requirements captured in the crisis appeal.

*e.g., security management systems have been reinforced; response and contingency measures put in place; enhanced SLT coordination platform established; and the existing team mentored to a point where they can manage the crisis with indirect support from HQ.

# Outcomes

## Foresight

Better anticipate emerging crises to preposition expertise and support resources

- Conflict-sensitive and evidence-based analysis to inform UN leaders' decision making about programming and staff security
- Improved foresight regarding the scenario(s) that would necessitate an emergency response
- Establish strong linkages with the Department of Operational Support (DOS) and OCHA surge teams for joint foresight planning and deployment
- A standby surge roster is ready for deployment to cover medium-term security needs during special situations (emergency, start-up of a new UN entity, transition, downsizing or liquidation)
- ERT professionals are regularly trained to ensure operational readiness, making use of available and relevant UN training programmes

## Crisis expertise

Mitigate the impact of crisis situations through flexible expert security problem solving

- Sufficient personnel, at the right level of seniority and with the appropriate experience, is deployed within 72 hours of the USG's decision to deploy the ERT
- Context specific rapid security needs assessments are conducted upon deployment
- Assessed staff gaps are filled by surge capacity (drawn from ERT professionals) or standby partners (professionals from outside organizations managed by ERT), until new context specific security resources are embedded with humanitarian appeal
- Post-crisis advice and support is provided to in-country security systems as needed

## Effective security coordination

Coordinate multi-effort security risk management systems during escalating or sudden onset emergencies

- Security risk management planning, presence and coordination are quickly upscaled and reoriented to enable the UN to respond to the ongoing crisis
- Security coordination mechanism with the Saving Lives Together (SLT) partner organizations is strengthened to enhance information sharing and operational planning
- Coordination is ensured with the Logistics Cluster, UNCT, HCT and UNDAC, when deployed
- The transition of security systems from crisis to recovery/normal management is successful

# Budget

## FIELD BASED

- 1x Head of Crisis Response Service (D1)
- 2x Security Coordination Officer (P4)
- 2x Security Coordination Officer (P3)
- 2x Planning and Coordination Officer (P3)
- 2x Security Analyst (P4)
- 1x Support Services Officer (P3)

## HQ BASED

- 1x Deputy Head of Crisis Response (P5)
- 1x Programme Management Officer  (P4)
- 1x Security Gender and Inclusivity Specialist (P3)
- 1x Programme Assistant (G5)

| | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| **14 field and headquarters based staff*** | $ 2,649,851 | $ 2,928,572 |
| **Office equipment and supplies; communications technology** | $ 157,475 | $ 14,575 |
| **Rent and establishment of premises** | $ 509,200 | $ 258,000 |
| **Rapid deployment and travel costs** | $ 1,000,000 | $ 1,000,000 |
| **Programme support costs of 13%** | $ 561,148 | $ 546,149 |
| **Total per year** | **$ 4,877,674** | **$ 4,747,296** |
| **Total budget** | **$ 9,624,970** | |

*The costs are based on a scenario in which field-based staff are hosted in Istanbul. This is for illustrative purposes. Staff and related costs will depend upon the location of the ERT rapid deployment team.

| Strategic intervention | Indicators | 2023 target | 2024 target |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Emergency Response Team (ERT) quickly deployed to affected country** | Percent of emergencies in which ERT personnel are deployed to country within 72 hours after USG UNDSS decision | 100% | 100% |
| **Inclusive coordination mechanisms established to ensure effective channels of communication** | Percent of HCT meetings that ERT participates in | 100% | 100% |
| **Rapid security / UNSMS needs assessment conducted** | Percent of ERT deploy-ments in which a rapid needs assessment is conducted within 7 days | 100% | 100% |
| **Standby Partnership Mechanisms operational** | Number of standby partnerships with IN-GOs and/or other organizations | 5 total | 10 total |
| **Gender mainstreamed into UNDSS emergency response** | Percentage of ERT supported responses which include robust gender considerations | 100 % (stakeholder survey) | 100 % (stakeholder survey) |
| **Lessons learned and best practices identified in Emergency responsiveness to inform UNDSS policy** | UNDSS framework on emergency response updated | Standard operating Procedures in place; UNDSS lessons learned framework adjusted to include Emergency Response | ERT Lessons learned exercise within 3 months of each deployment (if applicable) |
| **UNDSS as an enabler of UN Programmes** | Percent of partners that consider UNDSS is effective in providing leadership in security crises and emergency situations | 74% (The survey will measure overall partner satisfaction with UNDSS leadership in security crisis and emergency situations and UNDSS' contribution to their programme delivery) | |

# Ukraine assistance

Since the war in Ukraine began, UNDSS has been fully mobilized to provide support to the UN presence in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. The Department's rapid deployment of an agile and effective multifunctional team clearly illustrates the importance of the proposed Emergency Response Team. In this case, the sustainability of the Department's response has been achieved through the generous USAID funding of $7 million USD, which also ensured that much needed resources were not taken from other duty stations in supporting the longer-term needs on the ground.

## Phase I

The first phase of the response focused not only on the evacuation of the families of international personnel and non-programme-critical international personnel but also the relocation of locally recruited personnel across the country. These massive internal and external movements have involved over 700 people and were undertaken with the capacities present on the ground at the time of the start of the conflict.

## Phase II

The second phase of the response-maintained security support amidst the accelerating tempo of humanitarian programme activities in the elevated security risk environment. It worked to enable, where possible, the delivery of humanitarian assistance whilst identifying mid to long-term security needs. Recognizing the needs on the ground for the first time, UNDSS surged a cross-functional team consisting of security coordination officers, security information analysts, a planning and coordination officer, a stress counsellor, an admin assistant, and an appointed a regional security adviser for the humanitarian response. This helped UNDSS stay ahead of the curve in supporting the humanitarian upsurge in the region. During this phase, 35 personnel were deployed to Ukraine and the following neighboring countries: Poland, Moldova, Belarus, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Russia. This makes up 48% of the total UNDSS surge deployments conducted in the first six months of 2022. The Department also increased its capacity at Headquarters in New York and Geneva to support colleagues in the field, enhance information flow, and liaise with the rest of the UN system.

This cross-functional team worked closely with the UN Crisis Coordinator and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), enabling the rapid scale-up of activities by the UN agencies, funds, programmes, and implementing partners. It also assisted with the overall coordination and implementation of the humanitarian response, with security being an essential common service. More specifically, the team performed the following duties:

▶ Mapped out strategic humanitarian support bases across Ukraine and the region that fed into the crisis support system
▶ Analyzed and assessed the changing threat environment to strengthen the security advice underpinning humanitarian operations
▶ Set up structures and processes for an effective and efficient management of security threat information to improve situational awareness of all factors that could potentially affect the safety and security of the UN family in Ukraine
▶ Established and maintained a predictable humanitarian and security notification and information-sharing process with the Governments of Ukraine and the Russian Federation to ensure sustained programmatic support, safe and secure UN movements across Ukraine, as well as evacuation and relocation of UN personnel and implementing partners in extremis
▶ Enhanced the cooperation framework between SLT partner organizations and the UN to achieve stronger and more effective information-sharing, security coordination and operational arrangements
▶ Reviewed and conducted security risk assessments and route planning to support humanitarian actors in accessing vulnerable populations and affected persons
▶ Conducted rapid psychosocial needs assessments of UN personnel and coordinated a system-wide response to provide psychosocial support to staff in and from Ukraine to manage critical incident stress and strengthen their resilience.

# Phase III

The third phase of the response set up medium to long-term security support for humanitarian operations in Ukraine by hiring security personnel and replacing those colleagues on surge missions in order to build up a sustained capacity for security risk management.

This phase is being achieved through the generous USAID funding of $7 million USD. The project aims to support the scale-up of humanitarian operations in Ukraine and enable the programme delivery of UN agencies, funds, and programmes in response to the rapidly evolving and complex humanitarian situation. The project has deployed professional security personnel and equipment to complement the existing security structure in the field; provide increased analytical and operational capability; enhance security awareness, forward-planning, crisis readiness and preparedness; and enable full operational support for the scaled-up humanitarian operations.

The intent is to facilitate the safe passage of personnel and humanitarian aid to the affected areas in Ukraine, including through crossline and cross-border operations, at acceptable levels of risk, given some are within or adjacent to active areas of armed conflict. It also aims to enable humanitarian operations and to ensure that UN agencies, funds and programmes, as well as their INGO implementing partners (under Saving Lives Together framework), can implement their relief programmes. Funds are also covering urgent equipment needs for UN personnel, such as armored vehicles, satellite phones, VHF radios, laptops, emergency trauma bags, PPE kits, and other items.



The UN team supported the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol.