

# Evaluation of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement (2019–2023)



## UNHCR Evaluation Office

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### Evaluation information at a glance

Title of the evaluation:	Evaluation of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement
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## Abbreviations and acronyms

A2PS	Area-based Programming for Protection and Solutions
AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ABA	Area-Based Approach
ABL	Administrative Boundary Line
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
AHC-O	Assistant High-Commissioner for Operations
AHC-P	Assistant High Commissioner for Protection
CAD	Civil Affairs Directorate
CAR	Central African Republic
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CO	Country Office
CoP	Centrality of Protection
CSO	civil society organization
CWC	communication with communities
DER	Division of External Relations
DESS	Division of Emergency, Security and Supply
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DIMA	Data Information Management and Analysis
DIP	Division of International Protection
DRRM	Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service
DRS	Division of Resilience and Solutions
DSID	Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement
DSPR	Division of Strategic Planning and Results
DSTF	Durable Solutions Task Force
DSWG	Durable Solutions Working Group
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
EAF	Evidence Assessment Framework
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EDG	Emergency Directors Group
EGRIS	Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics
EHPM	Multi-Purpose Household Survey
EQ	evaluation question
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EvO	Evaluation Office
FGD	focus group discussion

GBV	gender-based violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GIFMM	Inter-Agency Mixed Migration Group
GPC	Global Protection Cluster
GSC	Global Shelter Cluster
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HLP	housing, land and property
HQ	Headquarters
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IACLP	Inter-Agency Coordination Learning Programme
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	international non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRIS	International Recommendations on IDP Statistics
JDC	Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement
JIPS	Joint IDP Profiling Service
KII	key informant interview
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFT	multi-functional team
MIRPS	Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoPIED	Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development
MSRP	Managing Systems, Resources and People
MCO	Multi-country operation
NCRI	National Commission for Refugees and IDPs
NES	Northeast Syria
NFI	non-food item
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	UN Human Rights Office

OL	operating level
ONEC	National Office of Statistics and Censuses
OP	operations plan (needs-based budget)
PARET	Project for the Support to Return and Reintegration
PPIE	Preparedness Package for IDP Emergencies
PRM	The Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso in Geneva, and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
PRMN	Protection and Return Monitoring Network
PSEA	protection against sexual exploitation and abuse
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
RB	Regional Bureau
RBM	results-based management
RC	Resident Coordinator
RMS	results monitoring survey
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SET	Senior Executive Team
SPMS	Somalia Protection Monitoring System
SoE	Summary of Evaluative Evidence
SQ	sub-question
ToC	theory of change
UDFI	Internal Forced Displacement Unit
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDC	United Nations Sustainable Development Council
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHR	Window for Host Communities and Refugees

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# Executive summary

## Background

This global thematic evaluation, commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Evaluation Office (EvO), assesses the strategic relevance, effectiveness, connectedness and coherence of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement from 2019 to 2023. The purpose of the evaluation is to generate evidence that will inform UNHCR's policies and operational approach, including the forthcoming Focus Area Strategic Plan, and to enhance the organization's engagement on responses and solutions for internally displaced people. The evaluation addresses five learning-focused questions to identify lessons for UNHCR's future positioning and the implementation of its commitments and approaches in situations of internal displacement. The evaluation focuses on UNHCR's roles and also considers some of UNHCR's internal organizational systems and processes.

The scope of the evaluation is global and is based on a range of country case studies. It is complemented by other global data including from interviews, document review, data analysis and a targeted survey to UNHCR staff in all countries where there are operations for internally displaced people. The evaluation involved a total of 723 participants, comprising interviewees from external stakeholders, individuals directly affected by internal displacement, and UNHCR staff.

## Context

The scale of displacement increased significantly between 2019 and 2023, reaching an all-time high of 71.1 million displacements at the end of 2022.<sup>1</sup> Situations of internal displacement are highly diverse with differences in causes and duration of displacement, governments' willingness and capacity to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs), the nature of the population affected by forced displacement, and the security and socioeconomic context. The drivers of displacement are complex, with 43 out of 65 countries experiencing internal displacement caused by a combination of conflict and natural disasters.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, UNHCR estimates that 70 per cent of those affected by internal displacement are situated outside camp environments, and are living primarily in urban areas.<sup>3</sup> The protection environment for IDPs is characterized by high levels of risk of physical attacks, discrimination and restrictions on IDPs' rights,<sup>4</sup> particularly in conflict settings. A further operational challenge is the pressurized funding environment in which the gap between needs and resources has continued to grow.

The evaluation is taking place close to the fifth anniversary of the "Policy on UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement", adopted by UNHCR in 2019. It emphasizes UNHCR's intent to strengthen its role in protection and supporting solutions for IDPs in collaboration with states, partners and affected populations. Since 2019 UNHCR has increased the scale of IDPs reached with assistance and protection interventions and initiated a number of internal developments to support engagement in situations of internal displacement, including training and recruitment processes. This is set against a context of UNHCR's core mandate and a strong focus on refugees.

## Key findings

### Operational delivery of assistance and protection

UNHCR adapted its operational strategy for country contexts in response to factors including the political landscape, geographic distribution and settlement patterns of the internally displaced population, and the security environment. UNHCR tailored both its assistance and protection strategies through: (a) community-based approaches, with a strong focus on outreach to dispersed populations; (b) area-based approaches; and (c) localized strategies for specific complex situations.

Identified results included meeting immediate emergency needs, enhanced access to rights and improved services as well as catalysing support from other actors. UNHCR's approaches benefited from its strong

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<sup>1</sup> IDMC (2023) "Global Report on Internal Displacement"

<sup>2</sup> Drawn from UNHCR's own analysis using data from IDMC, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR analysis: DSPR 2023.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR Global Protection Cluster (2023) Global Protection Update. For further discussion on the protection environment for IDPs see Orchard, P. (2019) "Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: Rhetoric and Reality". Routledge Press.

relationships with communities and authorities, the reach of operational partners and holistic approaches that linked awareness-raising with its delivery of protection and assistance.

Constraints included limitations in preparedness, limited adaptability to move from a refugee focus to working with disaster displaced populations, and difficulties in shifting from emergency assistance to interventions more suited to protracted situations (see section 4.5.2 for example of approaches well suited for longer term approaches). Further, the customization of strategies results in differences in the scope and boundaries of UNHCR engagement in different countries, which undermines commitments on predictability.

## **Cluster leadership**

UNHCR demonstrated creativity and flexibility in responding to different and difficult operational contexts to fulfil its leadership responsibilities in camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), protection and shelter, enabled by a strong organizational commitment to and investment in the cluster leadership role – although capacity challenges remain. UNHCR achieved significant results in terms of the numbers of people reached with assistance and protection by the members of clusters and funds mobilized, although CCCM funding levels were generally lower. UNHCR's leadership contributed to more harmonized inter-agency cooperation and improved operational quality, including responsible disengagement.

Resource constraints were often addressed by operational staff “double-hatting”, which can present accountability challenges. The evidence found inconsistencies concerning UNHCR's performance in cluster leadership within mixed population contexts involving both refugees and IDPs. Additionally, in disaster situations, there was evidence of a lack of preparedness within UNHCR to assume cluster roles.

## **Promotion of the centrality of protection**

UNHCR's strategies and approaches to promote the centrality of protection were adapted to operational and political contexts with a particular focus on measures to strengthen the legal and policy framework, as well as advocacy and support to Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs). Results include governments' development and adoption of laws and policies on IDPs. Evidence of results from other strategies is less robust. Uncertainty regarding the meaning of the term “centrality of protection” and how to respond to inconsistent HCT application of responsibilities for the centrality of protection as well as human capacity constraints all limited the scope of UNHCR approaches.

## **Provision of data, analysis and evidence**

UNHCR has developed approaches at country level to address identified data, analysis and evidence deficiencies in countries where there are significant gaps. Its contributions include protection risk monitoring and the ability to draw upon its rich operational data and the capacity of its network of partners. These strengths enable relevant contributions to inter-agency data initiatives. UNHCR's investment in its data and analysis capabilities, and the development of new global partnership and data-sharing agreements have yielded benefits for its roles in multi-agency efforts to develop evidence and support government data management capacity. However, there are still limitations in UNHCR's capacity. UNHCR's evidence is utilized by other stakeholders, but its full potential is hindered by limited engagement with key users and synergies are not maximized with other data processes, notably the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix.

## **Contribution to durable solutions**

UNHCR supported the development of normative frameworks for inter-agency approaches to solutions in internal displacement situations through its protection leadership, and it advocated for and supported their adoption by host governments. UNHCR supported the leadership and capacity of governments to pursue solutions for their internally displaced populations through provision of technical and financial assistance. UNHCR has also made significant contributions towards durable solutions in terms of access to documentation, interventions supporting access to justice and resolution of housing, land and property issues. Protection risk monitoring also makes a significant contribution to the safety and security of IDPs over time. Furthermore, area-based approaches have demonstrated potential benefits, particularly in mixed population settings. Yet the scale of results from area-based approaches is limited by costs, which tend to confine their use to a small proportion of overall populations in need. UNHCR contributions have been enabled by UNHCR legal and other technical expertise, effective relationship-building with authorities and by its evolving abilities to work collaboratively within multi-agency arrangements.

## **Operational enablers: UNHCR organizational systems and processes**

Developments in UNHCR's organizational processes and systems have improved its engagement in situations of internal displacement including through enhanced resource mobilization for IDPs, staff recruitment and training initiatives for internal displacement situations, and the development of relevant policies and guidance.

Refugees – rather than IDPs – remain by far the population group who receive the most UNHCR resources. This is a function of UNHCR's specific mandate, and the extent to which it takes financial responsibility for assistance and protection services to this group. Nonetheless, it highlights the need for a rationale, which the evaluation could not find, to underpin UNHCR's approach to equity and to frame the notion of needs-based assistance. Challenges remain in mobilizing resources and in communicating UNHCR's role in internal displacement situations to donors. Gaps also exist in human resource capacity for the wide range of roles that UNHCR undertakes in internal displacement situations.

Country Offices require practical support in their application of UNHCR policy commitments in specific operational settings. Also, while the evolving results-based management system shows promise for increased focus on outcomes, adjustments are needed to ensure outcomes for IDPs and UNHCR's contributions to multi-agency initiatives can both be effectively assessed.

## **Conclusions**

### **Relevance**

The relevance of UNHCR interventions was supported by its tailoring of country strategies to specific contexts; this was enabled by decentralized decision-making and organizational responsiveness when flexible resources were available but it was hindered by limitations in preparedness. An explicit rationale across UNHCR to inform resource allocation and defined boundaries is needed for decision-making processes to be consistent and transparent. Country contexts in which humanitarian and protection principles are under pressure pose a challenge to UNHCR's formulation of relevant strategies.

### **Effectiveness**

UNHCR's effectiveness has consistently been aided by its community base, the network of partners at country and global levels, technical expertise in protection, notably in law and policy, and sustained interventions over time. The ability to assess effectiveness was limited by shortcomings of UNHCR's monitoring and reporting systems which have little data on outcomes for IDPs and how these are sustained over time. The most important factor limiting effectiveness was that Country Offices were stretched when trying to meet all UNHCR commitments. The situation highlights the need for prioritization, given the ongoing gap between needs and resources.

### **Connectedness**

UNHCR worked well in multi-agency settings and has demonstrated robust cooperation with other actors – namely, UN and international organizations, governments and civil society from local to global levels. However, there are areas where this could be strengthened, for instance, to improve efficiency in the leadership of CCCM clusters, especially in countries where a dual leadership model with IOM has evolved, and to build on potential synergies in data and evidence.

UNHCR has maintained a focus on promoting government responsibility for IDPs. There has also been a positive move to increase cooperation with organizations involved in implementation but there were more limited opportunities for IDPs and local organizations in shared decision-making. Despite much positive cooperation with development agencies in specific initiatives and countries, tensions remain in how development actors and UNHCR respond to some government initiatives when contexts remain dynamic and insecure.

### **Coherence**

UNHCR has worked in line with its 2019 IDP policy for engagement in situations of internal displacement, and Country Offices are both aware of and committed to the policy. But Country Offices struggled to apply policy commitments in practical ways in their particular contexts. Greater clarity is needed on how to apply: a) UNHCR intentions towards an equitable needs-based approach that is consistent with UNHCR's responsibilities in relation to IDPs, refugees and others; b) the meaningful implementation of "provider of last resort", particularly when resources are insufficient; c) reinforcement of government responsibilities in internal displacement

situations when humanitarian principles are challenged; d) responsible disengagement, including during the deactivation of clusters; and e) “solutions from the start” in dynamic and insecure contexts.

## **Strategic positioning**

The comparative advantage of UNHCR is clearly in protection – an advantage enhanced by its field presence, its engagement at the community level through to global levels, its network of partners, its expertise in law and policy, its authority and convening power and protection lead, and its sustained engagement over the years with governments. The evaluation found this comparative advantage in each of the roles considered and concludes that UNHCR would benefit from consolidating its positioning around these areas.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations respond to the evaluation’s findings and their implications for UNHCR’s future strategy and programme implementation in situations of internal displacement.

### **Recommendation 1: Strategic positioning**

Promote UNHCR’s comparative advantage in protection as a key element in how UNHCR is positioned in situations of internal displacement. Operationalize the strategic positioning through the consistent provision of protection technical expertise and advocacy at global and country levels, through operational delivery of services and through cluster leadership roles.

### **Recommendation 2: Equity and working across population groups**

Enhance UNHCR’s approach to equity and needs-based programming across population groups with practical guidance for Country Offices to support consistent and equitable resource allocation and decision-making processes in country and regional plans and strategies, bearing in mind UNHCR’s mandate for refugees.

### **Recommendation 3: Prioritization**

Streamline Country Office decision-making on programming priorities by establishing a standardized process with transparent criteria. This approach should adapt to the unique needs and challenges of each operational context. Focus investments on impactful areas identified through this process, leveraging dedicated national cluster coordinators and continuous engagement in long-term initiatives like policy advocacy and evidence-based program design. Ensure strong strategic alignment with inter-agency priorities outlined in HRP/cluster strategies and UNHCR’s specific contributions towards those goals.

### **Recommendation 4: Durable solutions**

Implement clearer programme and thematic boundaries for UNHCR’s role in durable solutions for IDPs. Provide UNHCR staff with consistent guidance on the intended scope and content of UNHCR’s engagement in this area, with the aim of consolidating UNHCR’s contribution to solutions for IDPs around its protection expertise. Beyond UNHCR’s core area of competence in protection, set clear conditions and criteria for its engagement in solutions.

### **Recommendation 5: Learning and tracking results at outcome level**

Enhance UNHCR’s systems for results-based management with a consistent focus in all internal displacement situations on monitoring outcomes for IDPs in UNHCR’s operations, including in multi-agency initiatives. Build into the system the means to track less visible results, including protection dividends of UNHCR interventions and results of UNHCR roles in convening, cluster leadership, advocacy and evidence provision.

### **Recommendation 6: Connectedness with other organizations**

Build on UNHCR’s progress in multi-agency approaches to internal displacement and resolve areas of tension at the international and country levels. Enhance ways of working with local organizations to support the localization agenda.

**Recommendation 7: Resource mobilization**

Enhance resource mobilization efforts for situations of internal displacement, both through communicating to current and potential donors about UNHCR's role in internal displacement situations and through addressing internal constraints to accessing resource mobilization opportunities.

**Recommendation 8: Workforce management**

Enhance UNHCR staff accountability, capacity, skills and expertise for internal displacement situations through training, guidance, recruitment and management processes.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This global thematic evaluation, conducted by Itad on behalf of UNHCR's Evaluation Office (EvO) looks at UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement (2019 to 2023) through the lens of five overarching evaluation questions (EQs).

- **Relevance:** What lessons are there for how UNHCR ensures relevance of its approaches in situations of internal displacement?
- **Effectiveness:** What lessons are there for how UNHCR articulates and achieves its intended results in situations of internal displacement?
- **Connectedness:** What lessons are there for UNHCR on how to work in multi-agency situations of internal displacement?
- **Coherence:** To what extent is UNHCR working in line with the 2019 UNHCR policy on engagement in situations of internal displacement?
- **Strategic positioning:** What are the implications for UNHCR's strategic positioning on internally displaced persons (IDPs) at country, regional and global levels?

The evaluation coincides with the five-year anniversary of UNHCR's 2019 "Policy on UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement",<sup>5</sup> which provides a timely opportunity to take stock of policy implementation and to generate recommendations for future strategic positioning, planning and operational engagement.

The evaluation report is structured as follows:

- Section 2: Evaluation purpose, scope and methodology, including limitations
- Section 3: External and internal context for UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement situations
- Section 4: Evaluation findings by theme and role, including operational enablers and their impact
- Section 5: Conclusions, lessons and alignment with overarching EQs
- Section 6: Recommendations for strategic and technical/enabling improvements.

## 2. EVALUATION PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This section summarizes the purpose, scope and overall approach of the evaluation. It presents the evaluation methodology, including its evaluation matrix, data collection and analysis methods; it highlights some of its limitations, and summarizes the evaluation management and governance.

### 2.1 Evaluation purpose and scope

**The purpose of the evaluation** is to generate evidence that will inform UNHCR's policies and operational approach to situations of internal displacement, including the forthcoming Focus Area Strategic Plan. The specific objectives of the evaluation are to assess implementation and to identify good practice and lessons to inform recommendations on how to strengthen UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement situations, including regarding its strategic positioning and operational advantage. The evaluation addresses the five overarching EQs agreed during the inception phase.

The **scope** of the evaluation is global, considered primarily through a range of country case studies from across the regions of UNHCR operation. It is complemented with other data analysis (discussed further in Section 3). Data collection and the evaluation focus have been mainly on settings which are or have been protracted, as agreed in the inception phase. Data from other types of contexts have been considered where relevant, e.g. evaluations from recent large-scale (L3) responses. The evaluation focused on evidence from UNHCR's

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<sup>5</sup> UNHCR (2019) "Policy on UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement" – referred to hereafter in the report as UNHCR's "2019 IDP policy".

engagement between 2019 and 2023. The thematic focus of the evaluation is around UNHCR roles in internal displacement situations (see 2.2).

The EQs were adjusted during the inception phase to reflect the evaluation's learning-focused approach and to highlight specific themes; the EQs listed on the previous page represent the adjusted and final version. These adjustments responded to the priorities highlighted by the inception process, particularly to focus on understanding why trends occur and how to unblock obstacles to equitable and predictable responses in internal displacement situations. All adjustments were in cooperation with, and were agreed with, the UNHCR EvO.

**The intended users** of the evaluation are a range of key UNHCR stakeholders, including the Senior Executive Team (SET), Divisions for International Protection (DIP), Resilience and Durable Solutions (DRS), Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS), External Relations (DER), Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service (DRRM), Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR), and the Multi-Functional Team (MFT), the Global Data Service (GDS), and Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement (JDC), as well as the Office of the Principal Advisor on Internal Displacement. Equally important are UNHCR's Regional Bureaux (RBs), operations engaged in IDP responses, UNHCR's global cluster leads in protection (GPC), Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), and Shelter. UNHCR's strategic partners through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and Emergency Directors Group (EDG), as well as donors, implementing partners and governments, will form a secondary audience for the evaluation.

## 2.2 Evaluation approach and questions

**This evaluation is learning and user-focused.** It is primarily formative, with an aim to inform UNHCR's future plans and strategies in internal displacement situations by identifying key lessons derived from UNHCR experience since 2019. It also encompasses elements of a summative evaluation and normative inquiry, assessing UNHCR's progress regarding policy commitments, mapping approaches and their outcomes while investigating enabling factors and constraints. The evaluation integrates a learning focus by framing overarching questions around lessons learned and using a participatory approach in Country Office workshops. The evaluation team also maintained contact with the Division of Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR) that is responsible for coordinating the development of a global five-year Focus Area Strategic Plan, together with a cross-divisional senior team. The evaluation team shared emerging findings to support the UNHCR's planning team's development of a theory of change.

The evaluation addresses five overarching EQs and is focused on five thematic roles of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement:

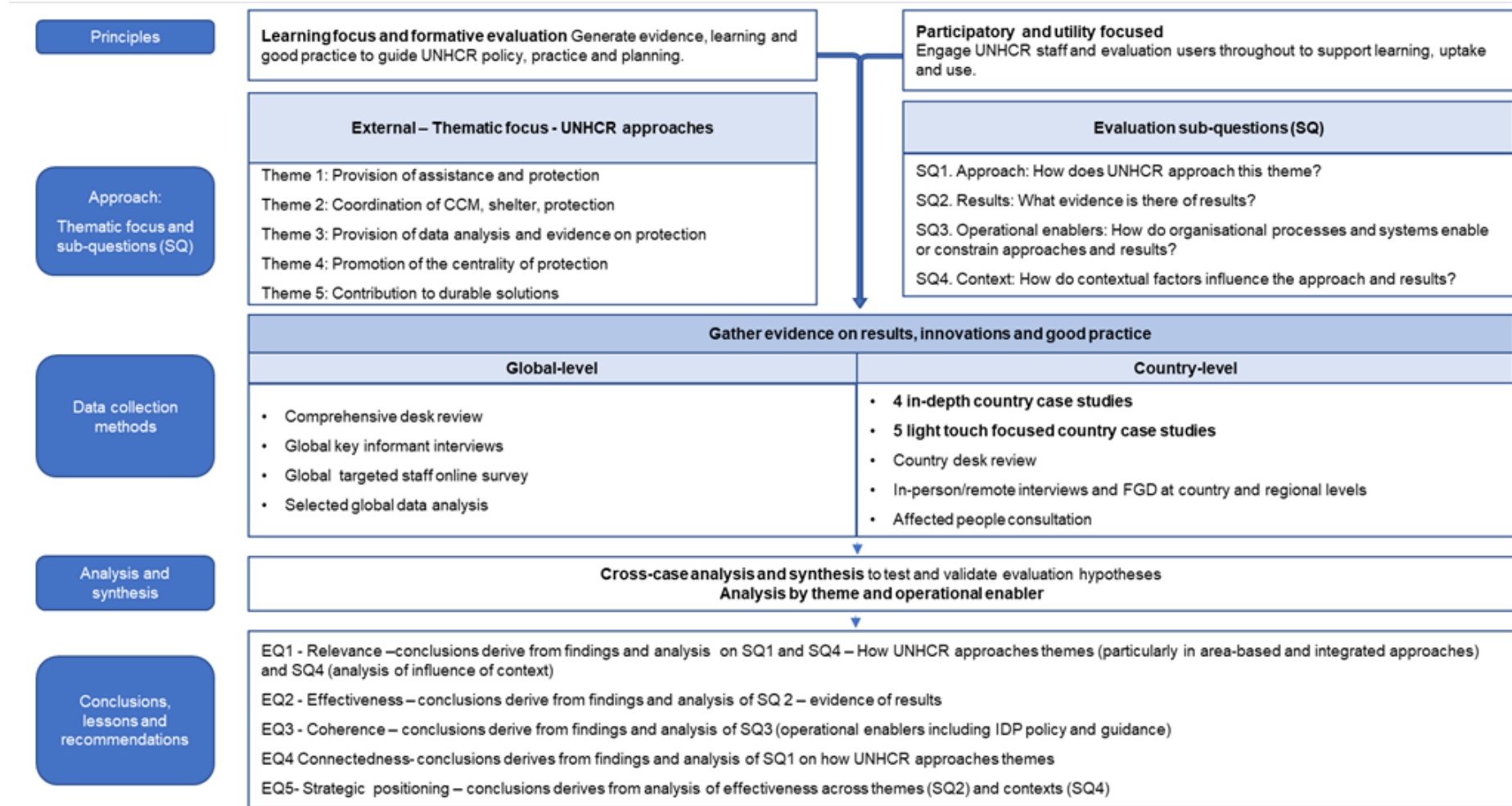
1. operational delivery of assistance and protection;
2. cluster leadership;
3. promotion of the centrality of protection;
4. provision of data, analysis and evidence of internal displacement situations particularly protection risks; and
5. contribution to durable solutions.

The evaluation also considered some of UNHCR's internal operational enablers – i.e. organizational systems and processes, and whether and how these enable or constrain engagement. The evaluation focused on:

- resource mobilization and allocation processes;
- workforce management;
- decision-making within UNHCR's decentralized structure;
- policies and guidance; and
- UNHCR's planning and results-based management (RBM) systems.

Across the themes, the evaluation sought to explore how UNHCR worked in different country contexts, evidence of results, and the influence of country contextual factors. The EQs and themes are summarized in Table 1, and a full evaluation matrix is included in Annex 3, which includes further details of how terms have been defined.

Figure 1: Overview of evaluation principles, focus and approach, methods, and questions





**Country case study selection.** Through a consultative process with UNHCR, nine countries were selected as case studies for the evaluation and to represent a range of contexts, taking into account strategic, operational, evaluability and contextual criteria. Selection criteria included:

- the size of the UNHCR IDP operation in terms of IDP population and budget;
- geographical spread, covering operations from different geographical regions; and
- programming features, including a mix between cluster and non-cluster operations, coordination, operational delivery in protection and assistance to IDPs, and the presence of integrated programming and area-based approaches.

Detailed context analysis was conducted for the case study countries; key features, including those considered in case study selection, are summarized in Annex 7. The selected country case studies, whether in-depth (involving in-country data collection and analysis across EQs) or light-touch reviews (remote data collection focusing on specific areas of interest), are listed in Table 2. It also provides information on the scale of internal displacement, UNHCR operations, relevant Operating Level (OL) budget, and total IDP numbers for each country. Further contextual factors are discussed in the report sections pertaining to evaluation findings.

Table 1: Country case studies

Country	OL budget for IDPs (2022) <sup>6</sup>	Total IDPs (2022) <sup>7</sup>	Type of study	Area of focus
El Salvador	18,573,571	114,400 <sup>8</sup>	In-depth	All EQs
Iraq	73,269,209	1,155,000	In-depth	All EQs
Nigeria	18,522,472	2,500,000	In-depth	All EQs
Somalia	18,484,407	2,967,500	In-depth	All EQs
Central African Republic (CAR)	10,184,161	580,000	Light-touch	Durable solutions
Colombia	11,585,812	6,700,000	Light-touch	Area-based approaches for operational delivery and durable solutions
Georgia	1,841,969	292,000	Light-touch	UNHCR's advocacy and promotion of centrality of protection as well as some aspects of UNHCR's operational delivery
Myanmar	28,692,532	952,500	Light-touch	Community-based models for operational delivery, incremental solutions and advocacy and promotion of centrality of protection
Syria	39,339,489	6,700,000	Light-touch	Community-based model for delivery of protection

**Evaluation methods and tools.** The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, using a range of quantitative and qualitative methods and tools. Data for the evaluation draws from a variety of sources and includes both primary data collection through key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and a staff survey enabling triangulation of evaluation findings (Table 3) and secondary data such as UNHCR documentation, including other independent evaluations of UNHCR IDP operations, external documents and results reporting.

Table 2: Main evaluation methods and data collection activities

Methods and tools	Description	Participants	Documents
<b>In-depth country case studies</b>	Conducted four in-depth country case studies. Data collection included document review; data analysis; FGDs with people directly affected by internal displacement; KIIs and FGDs at Country Office and field office levels with UNHCR staff and with external stakeholders, including government and local authorities, the United Nations (UN), partners and civil society organizations (CSOs).	Total of 407 people interviewed  (details in Figure 4 and Annex 4)	200+ documents per country

<sup>6</sup> Source: Managing System, Resource and People (MSRP) file: OP OL EXP by Regions – Subregions and Operations.

<sup>7</sup> Source: UNHCR Orion Analytics Tools, IDP Numbers 2022.

<sup>8</sup> The latest official figure (2023) was stated as 71,500.

<b>Light-touch country reviews</b>	Conducted five light-touch country reviews, with desk reviews and an average of nine KIs per country. Light-touch reviews focused on specific issues and collected data on other EQs, when possible, from document review and the interviews undertaken.	Total of 47 people interviewed (details in in Figure 4 and Annex 4)	80+ documents per country
<b>Global document review</b>	Analysis of relevant documents, including UNHCR operational and programme documents, evaluations and assessments. The document review built on the Summary of Evaluative Evidence (SoE) undertaken by UNHCR in 2022 (see Annex 5 for further details).	-	250 documents at global level
<b>Global KIs</b>	Interviews, using a semi-structured interview process: at global and RB levels with UNHCR staff; and at global and regional levels with external stakeholders, including academics, donors, UN and international civil society stakeholders and partners.	71 people (details in Figure 2 and Annex 4)	-
<b>Online targeted survey</b>	An online survey administered to 34 Country Offices and seven RBs and including both national (levels NOA–NOD) and international staff (levels P2–D1). The survey focused on: (a) the relevance and utility of UNHCR’s policy and operational guidance; (b) the appropriateness of UNHCR internal systems and processes; and (c) UNHCR’s strategic effectiveness and positioning (see Annex 6 for further details).	198 UNHCR staff members (details in Figure 3 and Annex 6)	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>723</b>	<b>1,450+</b>

**Ethics.** The evaluation followed an ethical approach as laid out in the inception report and in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines and code of conduct for evaluation. In particular the evaluation ensured participants’ voluntary participation, right to withdraw, anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent by providing full explanations to all participants on the purpose of data collection at the outset of interviews or meetings, by seeking their consent verbally and by anonymising all data sources. Furthermore, cultural norms were respected during community-level data collection. Full safeguarding training was provided to all evaluation team members who were contracted to conduct engagement with people with and for whom UNHCR works, before undertaking the work; and all team members committed to the UNHCR code of conduct.

**Stakeholder participation in the evaluation.** A total of 723 people were involved in the evaluation through interviews, FGDs (IDPs, returnees, and host communities, and local stakeholders), and a survey. Figures 2, 3 and 4 provide a breakdown of types of stakeholders interviewed and their respective locations. Interviews were conducted in Arabic, English, French, Hausa, Kurdish, Maay, Somali and Spanish.

Figure 2: KIs and FGD by type and location (n=525)

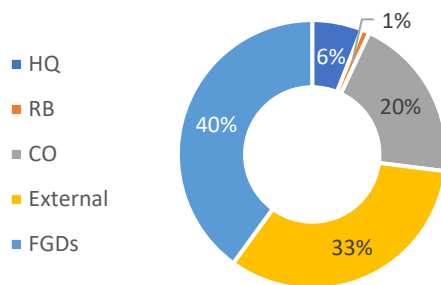


Figure 3: UNHCR Survey respondents by office type (n=198)

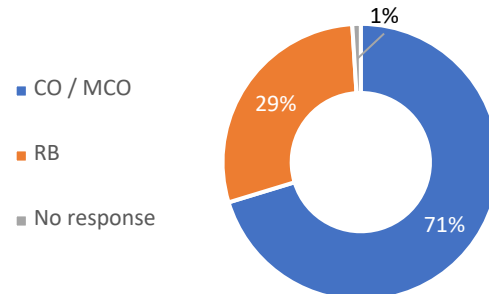
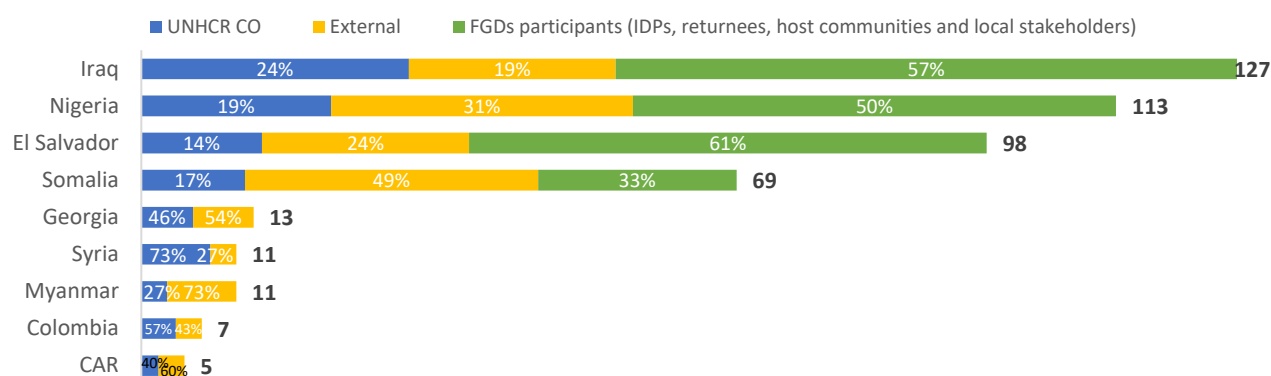


Figure 4: Interviewee type by case study country



**Data analysis.** The team reviewed considerable quantities of data, with assistance from the UNHCR EvO, who sourced and analysed some of the data. Steps included analysis across the case study countries to review the following:

- **UNHCR CO results.** To identify reported results in country case studies, the team first mapped the evaluation’s thematic areas against the COMPASS<sup>9</sup> outcome areas and indicators. This process was guided by UNHCR’s “Implementation Planning Tool for IDP Contexts (“Building Blocks”)” to identify the relevant outcome areas for IDPs. Additionally, the team worked with the UNHCR EvO to cross-reference these areas with the equivalent results reported in UNHCR’s reporting system used in 2021 and prior to that.<sup>10</sup>
- **Annual reports.** Following the mapping, the team analysed annual reports to map reported results with the identified thematic and outcome areas. The evaluation analysis focused primarily on annual reports from 2021 and 2022, due to data collection constraints. Data quality and variability across different Country Offices and within operations for different indicators limited a comprehensive analysis of UNHCR’s reported results for IDPs.<sup>11</sup>
- **Staffing level and financial data by Country Office,** including analysis of operating level (OL) budget in relation to operations plan (OP) needs-based budgeting.
- **Analysis of regional and country IDP populations** and analysis of numbers of IDPs assisted by UNHCR and comparison to numbers of others assisted by UNHCR, including refugees.
- **Cluster data** on coverage of financial and programming targets for country case studies.
- **UNHCR monitoring data,** including some initial results monitoring survey (RMS) data. RMS is a new survey-based process being introduced by UNHCR as part of the development of its results-based management system with the objective to monitor and collect information to identify changes in the lives of forcibly displaced people (see further details in Section 4.6.5 and Annex 14).

**Data synthesis and analysis.** The evaluation data synthesis and analysis used the following process:

- **Coding.** Global-level data and case study findings were coded and synthesized using MAXQDA software. The evaluation used the software to organize and map global interview notes, document review data and case study findings against the evaluation framework, which was informed: a) by the EQs and SQs; b) by theme (UNHCR role); and c) by operational enabler (organizational systems and process).
- **Synthesis.** The evaluation matrix enabled data to be synthesized according to the evaluation themes and EQs. The data platform built a systematic evidence base for subsequent triangulation and analysis of the evaluation findings.
- **Analysis.** All data was analysed initially by theme and operational enabler. A team member led on the analysis of data by theme and enabler to identify trends, patterns, emerging lessons and examples of

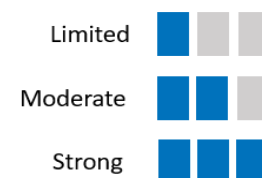
<sup>9</sup> COMPASS is the platform and system used by UNHCR for planning and reporting.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR reporting systems were changed in a process beginning in 2020. This is discussed further in Section 4.6.5.

interest. A two-day team workshop and subsequent team meetings discussed the themes, patterns and emerging lessons.

- **Conclusions and lessons.** Initial lessons were identified in country case studies for UNHCR corporately and were presented, discussed and refined through Country Office workshops. The evaluation team developed emerging conclusions by theme and operational enabler, based on the evidence and initial analysis of themes, patterns and emerging lessons. Team meetings brought together these draft conclusions to develop together the evaluation's overall conclusions, lessons and recommendations against the broader EQs.
- **Strength of evidence assessment.** The evaluation team developed findings through triangulation and assessment of the strength of evidence, using an evidence assessment framework (EAF) (see Annex 13). The evaluation key findings, conclusions and recommendations are backed by triangulated data, and the evidence strength is noted against each finding in the following sections as strong, moderate or limited, using Figure 5 in line with the definitions of the EAF.
- **Definitions.** The EAF defines a single source of evidence as an evaluation case study finding; or documentation such as an independent evaluation; or a global or regional level KII; or an Itad or DSPR analysis of a single data set. Definitions of strength of evidence to support key findings are:
  - Strong – two or more case studies findings OR one case study plus two other data sources or three single sources of data.
  - Moderate or medium – one case study plus one other single source of data or two other sources of data.
  - Limited – one source of data or internal KII only.

Figure 5: Strength of evidence



## 2.3 Evaluation management and governance

The evaluation was undertaken by the independent organization Itad and was managed by the UNHCR EvO. An internal advisory group has reviewed evaluation outputs at different stages. The evaluation made use of an internal (UNHCR) consultation group comprising of key technical and managerial staff, who participated in a validation and co-creation workshop. An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) further supported the evaluation in an advisory capacity, particularly at inception and during the reporting phase. The ERG comprises members of UNHCR staff from across the organization as well as staff from external organizations (UNOCHA, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), The Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso in Geneva, and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM); see Annex 12 for details). The evaluation was subject to both Itad and UNHCR quality assurance processes.

## 2.4 Limitations and mitigations

Limitations of the evaluation methodology are presented here, along with the ways in which the evaluation team sought to mitigate them.

- **Scope and scale.** The terms of reference for the evaluation are appropriately broad, given the nature of the topic. However, this breadth poses a limitation on the depth of analysis feasible with the scale of resources available.
- **Diversity of context.** The methodology is informed by the importance of contextual factors in programming, in particular the use of country case studies but these are unique and highly dynamic. It is therefore challenging to make high-level, generalizable, universally applicable conclusions, lessons and recommendations while also covering all types of country context. This was addressed as far as possible by additional data-gathering for all relevant countries, such as the evaluation survey, document review and global interviews.
- **The scale of the numbers of people affected by displacement who were directly involved as evaluation participants.** FGDs involved a small IDP sample relative to total IDP populations. The

evaluation mitigated this by incorporating document reviews, secondary data (UNHCR RMS data), and KIIs/FGDs with relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) including some led by IDPs.

- **Outcome data.** Assessing UNHCR effectiveness in relation to IDP outcomes posed challenges, initially identified in the inception phase, due to inconsistencies in Country Office data and indicator reporting. This was aggravated by changes in the RBM system. The new RMS system is at a very early stage of introduction; it was piloted in 2022–2023 in 33 countries; IDP-specific data from these has been analysed for three countries so far. Hence, the system provided limited additional data for use in the evaluation at this point but analysis did illustrate its potential. Furthermore, the methodology acknowledges that any changes in the lives of forcibly displaced persons will not be solely the result of UNHCR interventions given the multi-agency nature of operations. This needs to be combined with other methods to assess UNHCR-specific results. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified trends and data that were sufficient to support findings.
- **External stakeholder perspectives in light-touch country reviews.** Light-touch reviews were carried out remotely, with a limited number of KIIs which restricted the range of external sources and perspectives collected. Considerable secondary data was considered, and data was sufficient to identify lessons from and for UNHCR.
- **Evaluation framework and theory of change (ToC).** As mentioned earlier, the evaluation team did not develop an evaluation ToC, because a process is already under way in UNHCR to develop a ToC as part of the UNHCR Focus Area Strategic Plan. Instead, the evaluation team developed an evaluation guiding framework to inform the methodology (see Annex 2).
- **Timing and availability.** The majority of evaluation data collection took place during July and August 2023. The evaluation team encountered some limitations in the availability of some internal and external stakeholders; the team addressed this by extending data collection into September 2023, although it still did not reach all the planned specific interviewees. Despite this setback, the total number of people participating in the evaluation is large and represents the planned range of stakeholders.

## 3 CONTEXT AND UNHCR OPERATIONS

### 3.1 Global context of internal displacement<sup>12</sup>

The scale of internal displacement increased significantly between 2019 and 2023, reaching an estimated all-time high of 71.1 million displacements at the end of 2022. This included in 2022 an estimated 28.3 million conflict-related displacements and a further 32.6 million disaster displacements.<sup>13</sup>

The global context of internal displacement has become increasingly complex, with country contexts presenting highly diverse causes and durations of displacement. Other variables include governments' relationships with and capacity to assist IDPs, the nature of the population affected by forced displacement, whether refugee populations are also present, and socioeconomic conditions and security. A notable aspect of internal displacement is its prolonged nature.<sup>14</sup> The drivers of displacement have grown more complex, with 43 out of 65 countries experiencing internal displacement caused by a combination of conflict and natural disasters.<sup>15</sup> Notably, 75 per cent of those displaced by conflict reside in countries that are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the settlement patterns of IDPs have been evolving, with UNHCR's analysis estimating that 70 per cent of those affected by internal displacement live outside camps and are dispersed across various settings, with the proportion outside camps being higher in urban areas.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, the protection environment for IDPs presents a grave situation. UNHCR analysis found that IDPs suffer high or very high protection risks, particularly in conflict contexts, including risk of physical attacks,

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<sup>12</sup> Key features of the global context are presented here. Details of the country context of the evaluation's case study countries are summarized in Annex 7 and further elaborated in the relevant findings sections of the report.

<sup>13</sup> IDMC (2023) Global Report on Internal Displacement.

<sup>14</sup> Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Yemen: DSPR, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Drawn from UNHCR's own analysis using data from IDMC, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR analysis: DSPR 2023.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR analysis: DSPR 2023. Globally 70 per cent of IDPs are outside camps or camp-like settings. This comprises more than 60 per cent of IDPs in urban areas and approximately 27 per cent of IDPs in rural areas.

discrimination and restrictions on their rights, such as freedom of movement.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in the most prolonged displacement contexts, an estimated 50 per cent of the population have no access to protection services.<sup>19</sup> In some countries, such as Myanmar and Sudan, protection risks are associated with the state itself, thus impeding inter-agency policy commitments to galvanize and support government-led responses to internal displacements.

This global context presents a highly complex environment for UNHCR operations. The sheer diversity of settings means that no single model of response can be presumed as suitable for all locations.

**A further challenge for UNHCR IDP responses relates to trends in the funding environment.** Humanitarian assistance levels provided by donors stagnated from 2019 to 2022 at around \$32 billion.<sup>20</sup> Despite increases in total donor humanitarian funding in 2021 and particularly in 2022 following crises such as the Afghanistan and Ukraine emergencies, the gap between needs and resources has continued to grow. A record \$22.1 billion gap existed between appeals and funding secured in 2022. Significant funds, particularly most of those from the US, EU and UK, were allocated to specific country contexts, reducing their flexibility. Ten countries received nearly two-thirds of all humanitarian assistance in 2022. This presents a challenging environment for all agencies, including UNHCR, to mobilize sufficient funds to meet the needs they identify around the world. This is discussed in more detail in Section 4.5.

The escalating needs and increasing financial pressures have prompted inter-agency reviews of ways of working. Processes relevant to this evaluation's focus include the Emergency Relief Coordinator's Flagship Initiative, a reform effort aimed at shifting from a supply-side to a demand-driven approach to humanitarian assistance and the establishment of leaner and simpler coordination systems.<sup>21</sup> More specifically relevant to IDPs is the work of the office of the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement, which is currently focusing on supporting solutions in 15 pilot countries. There is also an independent review, commissioned by IASC, of the humanitarian response to internal displacement.<sup>22</sup> The various review processes may stimulate developments in the inter-agency policy frameworks for cooperation. This evaluation sought to avoid duplication by maintaining its focus on UNHCR in line with the terms of reference.

During the evaluation time period, these were the key guiding inter-agency policies and frameworks:

- **“Guiding principles on internal displacement”**.<sup>23</sup> These underpin international cooperation in situations of internal displacement and define IDPs as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” They affirm that national authorities are responsible for IDPs, but they also encourage authorities to reach out to international organizations when they need support, although no single UN body is mandated to respond to IDPs.
- **IASC’s “Framework: durable solutions for internally displaced persons”**.<sup>24</sup> Adopted in 2010, this emphasizes that the primary responsibility for providing durable solutions for IDPs rests with national authorities and that the participation of IDPs is essential in the process of finding solutions.
- **“Joint UNHCR – OCHA note on mixed situations: coordination in practice”**, which spells out the respective responsibilities of UNHCR and the IASC coordination system in mixed situations, when there are both refugees and IDPs.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> UNHCR, Global Protection Cluster (2023) Global Protection Update. For further discussion on the protection environment for IDPs see Orchard, P. (2019) “Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: Rhetoric and Reality”. Routledge Press.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR analysis: DSPR 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Development Initiatives (2023) “Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2023”.

<sup>21</sup> Flagship Initiative homepage, see: [www.unocha.org/flagship-initiative](http://www.unocha.org/flagship-initiative)

<sup>22</sup> More information on the Independent Review of Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement commissioned by IASC available [online](#).

<sup>23</sup> United Nations (1998) “Guiding principles on internal displacement”.

<sup>24</sup> IASC (2010) “Framework: durable solutions for internally displaced persons”.

<sup>25</sup> OCHA (2014) “Joint UNHCR – OCHA note on mixed situations: coordination in practice” [[available online](#)]. Indisputably, UNHCR takes the lead in refugee-only situations. When there are mixed situations, in contexts where refugees and IDPs are in separate geographic areas, UNHCR leads in the refugee areas and IASC clusters lead the response to IDPs and other affected populations (though not refugees). In contexts where refugees and IDPs are in the same geographic area, UNHCR and the inter-cluster coordinator work together to ensure that the needs of all are met.

- “The United Nations Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on internal displacement”,<sup>26</sup> finalized in 2022 in response to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, focuses on advancing: (i) the prevention of displacement, (ii) durable solutions, and (iii) effective protection and assistance of IDPs.

## 3.2 UNHCR IDP response

**UNHCR policy and strategic frameworks.** Despite not having an exclusive mandate with respect to IDPs, UNHCR plays a crucial role in their protection and assistance based on UN resolutions (Resolution 48/116) and its historical involvement and expertise concerning forced displacement, spanning more than 50 years.

This evaluation coincides with the fifth anniversary of UNHCR’s IDP Policy adopted in 2019. The context described above highlights the timeliness of the evaluation to provide evidence that can support UNHCR planning to fulfil its commitments, while also being confronted with the growing complexity of internal displacement situations, increasing needs and growing pressure on global financial resources for humanitarian response.

The 2019 IDP policy was a significant declaration of UNHCR’s commitment in internal displacement situations, reaffirming the organization’s commitment to “a decisive and predictable engagement in situations of internal displacement globally, including through strengthened operational delivery, emergency preparedness, coordination leadership and solutions for IDPs”.<sup>27</sup>

Guided by its 2017-2021 Strategic Directions, UNHCR has demonstrably committed to consistently, predictably, and sustainably addressing internal displacement. This commitment aligns with the framework’s emphasis on inter-agency responses, as evidenced by UNHCR’s active coordination and operational roles in areas like protection, camp management, and emergency shelter. Notably, the framework prioritized assisting the most vulnerable populations within these contexts.

The subsequent Strategic Directions 2022–2026 committed the organization to an expanded focus on responses and solutions for IDPs and is identified as one of eight focus areas of the Strategic Directions. The document emphasizes UNHCR’s intent to amplify its role in protecting and delivering solutions in collaboration with states and affected populations. It commits to enhancing leadership and coordination in protection, shelter and camp management for IDPs and to fostering stronger alliances among humanitarian, development and peace actors to promote solutions and more effective international support, aligned with the UN Secretary-General’s action agenda on internal displacement.

The UNHCR 2019 IDP policy is accompanied by a range of guidance including an *IDP guidance package* (currently under review). There are also other policies and guidance which apply to IDPs, such as the 2021 *Practical guidance for UNHCR staff on IDP protection in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change* and the *Implementation planning tool for IDP contexts (building blocks)*, rolled out in late 2022. Other documents that provide a backdrop to UNHCR’s engagement in internal displacement situations include the 2020 *UNHCR preparedness package for IDP emergencies (PPIE)*, the 2021 *Step-up initiative (UNHCR’s initiative on internal displacement 2020–2021)* and the 2023 *Institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement*, as well as other UNHCR policies which apply across all operations such as the 2020 *Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence* and *UNHCR’s Emergency Preparedness and Response Policy*.

**UNHCR operations in internal displacement situations.** UNHCR’s caseload for IDPs is substantial, with ongoing engagement in 34 countries. As the global IDP count has risen, so too has the population assisted by UNHCR, increasing from 24 per cent of the total identified population of 43.3 million in 2019 to 38 per cent of the population figure of 58.9 million in 2022.<sup>28</sup> The increase reflects UNHCR’s identification of growing needs, as demonstrated in Figure 66, which shows the year-on-year increase in UNHCR’s needs-based planning budget for its IDP response.<sup>29</sup>

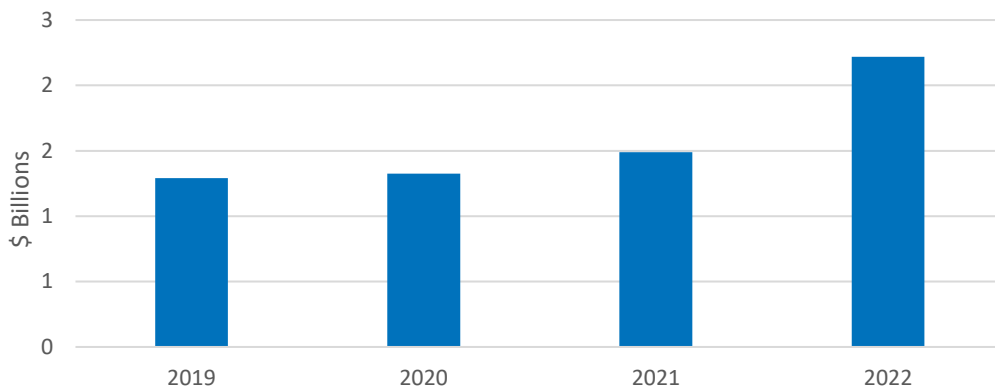
<sup>26</sup> United Nations (2022) “The United Nations Secretary-General’s action agenda on internal displacement”.

<sup>27</sup> Source: UNHCR’s IDP initiative

<sup>28</sup> Source: 2019–2021 figures from UNHCR Refugee population statistics database, population type IDPs and people in IDP-like situations. 2022 figures: Orion Analytics Center, Population Planning Figures, figures taken as of 31 December 2022.

<sup>29</sup> These figures are based on UNHCR Pillar 4 budget, which is dedicated to IDPs. It is noted that not all planned IDP-related expenditure is reflected in Pillar 4, but the figures serve as a good estimate of trends in resourcing needs identified for IDPs.

Figure 6: 2019–2022 global needs-based, operation plan (OP) budget for IDP response (US\$)<sup>30</sup>



The UNHCR 2019 IDP policy details the commitments for UNHCR in terms of its operational role. These include that UNHCR will do the following:

- Ensure a community-based protection approach.
- Prioritize interventions to prevent, respond to and mitigate the most urgent and immediate protection risks and needs, including protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), gender-based violence (GBV), and child protection.
- Apply long-standing expertise in shelter and in camp and site management.
- Prioritize actions that contribute to the conditions conducive to safe, dignified and comprehensive solutions. Special areas of focus will include community engagement, law and policy, documentation, shelter, secure land tenure, livelihoods, peaceful coexistence, and conflict resolution.
- Galvanize and contribute to government-led efforts to address the needs of IDPs.

An important development articulated in the 2019 IDP policy is that UNHCR commits to work across the “full spectrum of forced displacement”, through area-based and integrated ways of working inclusive of all relevant population groups, in particular, operational contexts. This has implications for UNHCR’s approach and way of working, especially in mixed settings which host refugees, IDPs and others affected by statelessness and forcible displacement, where UNHCR’s guidance to Country Offices is to develop strategies and plans equitably across population groups on the basis of needs<sup>31</sup>

Also important is the evolution of UNHCR’s approach to solutions in internal displacement situations which became more pronounced in UNHCR’s 2019 IDP policy and, most recently, in the 2023 release of the “UNHCR institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement”.<sup>32</sup> In alignment with the 2019 IDP policy and following the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs, the institutional plan defines a durable solution as having been achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs related to their displacement and can exercise their rights without facing discrimination based on their displacement. Important elements of UNHCR’s commitments are to consider “solutions from the start”, to work as part of a multi-agency approach, and the adoption of an area-based and integrated approach to solutions. This evaluation report, particularly Section 4.4, discusses how UNHCR has approached these commitments and their results.

In terms of cluster leadership, since the 2005 Humanitarian Reform, UNHCR has led or co-led three clusters globally and at country level: Protection, Shelter (in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in disaster situations), and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (in tandem with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as a co-lead in disaster situations). The cluster system was established to streamline and expedite responses to sudden-onset emergencies, ensuring effective

<sup>30</sup> Source: Business Intelligence Reporting tools, Global Analysis and Reporting Power BI, version 2.6 2023 June 28 - OverAll view; Budget Years from 2019–2022, retrieved 12 July 2023 from Global Analysis Reporting (2019–2023).

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, UNHCR High Commissioner Memo on Guidance for 2021 Resource Allocation cited which emphasizes “the importance of ensuring that resources and capacity [...] in situations of internal displacement are deployed on an equitable basis with other populations of concern”; and UNHCR (2022) planning guidance, UNHCR (2022) “Implementation Planning Tool for IDP contexts (Building blocks)”.

<sup>32</sup> UNHCR (2023) “UNHCR institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement”.



and efficient coordination to meet the needs of all vulnerable people.<sup>33</sup> It aimed to prevent IDPs from being left without a humanitarian response, serving as both the first point of call and the provider of last resort.<sup>34</sup> The cluster system spreads accountability for the delivery of services (health, shelter, etc.) across different cluster lead agencies, and as a result, no single agency is accountable for the entire response.<sup>35</sup> Over time, clusters have taken on a broader role in coordinating humanitarian responses for all crisis-affected IDPs, whether due to conflict or disasters.

The 2019 IDP policy distinguishes between UNHCR's leadership role in the three clusters, where it coordinates joint action in a specific area as part of a broader collective effort overseen by the Humanitarian Coordinator<sup>36</sup> (discussed in this report in Section 4.2), and its role in operational delivery of protection and services (discussed in Section 4.1). "UNHCR strategic directions 2022–2026"<sup>37</sup> states: "We will also step up leadership and coordination of protection, shelter, and camp management and coordination in situations of internal displacement."

Significant steps in scaling up UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement situations have included the appointment in 2019 of an internal Principal Advisor on Internal Displacement, and the establishment in 2020 of a Boost Fund of \$60 million to support promising approaches for IDP situations (discussed further in Section 4.6.5). Also, in 2021 UNHCR introduced a Step-up initiative, which sought to generate examples of good practice, give greater visibility to the impact of internal displacement on those affected, secure more resources for IDP response, inform equitable resource allocation, and strengthen support for operations in nine targeted operations.<sup>38</sup>

Another important internal development that significantly influences UNHCR's work in internal displacement situations is its ongoing transformation process, which extends to all fields of operation. Initiated in 2018, this process aims to foster a more agile and responsive organization.<sup>39</sup> It encompasses various initiatives which are ongoing, including transitioning to multi-year planning, improving results-based management (RBM), and investing in specific areas such as leadership, data management, information and analysis. These areas are examined later in this report.

## 4 EVALUATION FINDINGS BY THEME

Section 4 presents the evaluation findings by thematic role. It includes analysis of UNHCR approaches and adaptation to diverse country contexts (relevance) and results, particularly regarding outcomes for IDPs (effectiveness). Integrated into the sections are findings on the coherence of approaches with UNHCR policy and guidance and also on how UNHCR collaborates with other organizations in a multi-agency response (connectedness). The sections integrate analysis of internal and external factors that enable or constrain UNHCR's approaches and results. Additionally, each section considers the implications of the findings for the over-arching evaluation questions regarding the lessons for the relevance, effectiveness, connectedness and coherence of UNHCR engagement and strategic positioning in situations of internal displacement; these implications are discussed further in Section 5.

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<sup>33</sup> More information on cluster approach can be found online: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/what-cluster-approach>

<sup>34</sup> IASC (2008) "Operational Guidance on Provider of Last Resort" describes the responsibility to mean that a cluster lead should do their utmost to ensure an adequate and appropriate response through calling on all relevant humanitarian partners to address the gaps, possibly committing to fill the gap if urgent and resources allow or, if resources do not allow, work with the Humanitarian Coordinator to mobilize the necessary resources.

<sup>35</sup> More information on cluster approach and cluster coordinators can be found online: <https://emergency.unhcr.org/coordination-and-communication/cluster-system/cluster-approach-iasc>

<sup>36</sup> The aims of the cluster approach are to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and to provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of humanitarian response. At country level it aims to strengthen partnerships, and the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action, by improving prioritization and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations. For further details see [www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters)

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR (2022) "UNHCR strategic directions 2022–2026". Citation from p.6.

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR (2021) "UNHCR's initiative on internal displacement 2020–2021"

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Our Transformation"

## 4.1 Theme 1: UNHCR’s operational delivery of assistance and protection

### 4.1.1 Introduction

UNHCR undertakes a broad spectrum of activities within its operational capacity. The internal guidance document supporting Country Office planning categorizes activities according to the three areas of UNHCR cluster leadership in which UNHCR is also an operational partner as well as the cluster coordinator and lead (the cluster leadership role is discussed further in Section 4.2).<sup>40</sup> In terms of operational delivery, the guidance details the following areas:

- **Protection**, which comprises legal and protection monitoring, analysis and advocacy, community-based interventions and social services, legal services and documentation;
- **Shelter**, which includes shelter response, infrastructure and settlements and non-food item (NFI) response; and
- **CCCM**, which includes UNHCR’s roles in operational field management, mobilization and communication with communities (CWC), and settlement programming.

Various activities are detailed under these headings, with some spanning all three areas, such as community projects aimed at fostering social cohesion. Various intervention methods, including cash-based approaches and a capacity-building approach, feature across all areas. This section of the report focuses on community-level interventions. It includes some findings on area-based and integrated approaches – i.e. approaches that respond to the needs of IDPs, refugees and others, including host communities;<sup>41</sup> these approaches are also considered in Section 4.4 on durable solutions. Some other aspects of UNHCR’s operational role are covered in later sections of the report. The box below summarizes the implications of the main findings from this thematic chapter, organized in line with each of the over-arching evaluation questions.

#### Summary of key findings on operational delivery and their implications

- **Relevance:** UNHCR demonstrated flexibility in tailoring approaches to specific country contexts. The implication of this is that UNHCR should aim to sustain and enhance factors that support flexibility, including decentralized decision-making, flexible resourcing to respond to changes in context, staff skills and preparedness for IDP emergencies. However, differences in the scope of Country Office strategies are producing less predictable decision-making. This suggests the need for clearer guidance on the criteria, factors and prioritization that guide UNHCR’s engagement, given the breadth of needs and the limited resources.
- **Effectiveness:** UNHCR achieved significant results in terms of providing assistance and protection to IDPs through community-based approaches as well as building government and CSO capacity. There is a need to link emergency interventions more effectively to those designed for people in protracted displacement and to build responsiveness for disaster responses. Limitations in available monitoring data highlight the need for enhanced methods to track outcomes for IDPs over time and UNHCR’s contribution to these.
- **Connectedness:** While collaboration with other organizations is generally positive, the findings suggest that UNHCR’s efforts to support localization can be extended beyond cooperation for programme implementation to more shared decision-making.
- **Coherence:** UNHCR’s engagement in internal displacement situations is generally in line with its 2019 policy commitments, particularly in fostering multi-agency collaboration and supporting government responsibilities for IDPs and local actors.
- **Strategic positioning:** UNHCR’s distinctive strength lies in its protection expertise, its field presence and extensive network of partners which enable it to work at community and national levels with local organizations and authorities as well as providing a base from which to scale up operations in

<sup>40</sup> UNHCR (2023) “Implementation Planning for IDP Contexts”.

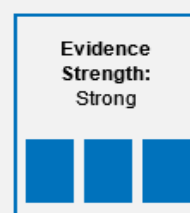
<sup>41</sup> UNHCR’s 2019 IDP policy defines “area-based approach” as: a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach that responds to the whole population living in a specific geographic area; and “integrated programming” as being: i) multi-sector; ii) inclusive of persons of concern (asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people) and host communities; and iii) multi-stakeholder.

emergencies. Evidence of results was most prominent in relation to holistic protection interventions linking awareness-raising and support for IDPs' ability to access rights.

- Further, while UNHCR performs relatively strongly in operational delivery, that is only one element of the broader Country Office strategy. Synergies and complementarities between the different elements of Country Office strategy contribute to results beyond those of a single intervention – such as operational delivery that incorporates resilience and capacity-building approaches which contribute to durable solutions. Operational delivery also generates evidence and helps to build the UNHCR network of partners which support its role in providing evidence and advocacy.

## 4.1.2 Approaches and adaptation to context

**Finding 1:** *UNHCR adapted its operational strategy in response to the specific characteristics of country contexts, including factors related to the political landscape, geographic distribution and settlement patterns of the IDP population, and the security environment. UNHCR tailored both its assistance and protection strategies through: (a) community-based approaches, with a strong focus on outreach to engage dispersed populations; (b) area-based approaches to cater to the needs of mixed populations; (c) localized strategies to tackle complex situations characterized by highly regionalized dynamics. This flexibility was made possible through UNHCR's decentralized decision-making and extensive partner networks.*



Across all the case studies, the evaluation revealed that UNHCR had developed strategies to engage with IDPs based on their location and the nature of their settlements. In camp settings, UNHCR typically drew on its extensive experience in implementing camp-based refugee responses. Interventions included:<sup>42</sup>

- coordinating and managing the camps, often through implementing partners;
- providing essential assistance for basic needs, including the distribution of in-kind and cash-based support, which encompassed emergency and transitional shelter and some livelihood interventions;
- establishing channels for accountability and information dissemination through such means as hotlines, suggestion boxes, community meetings and volunteer networks;
- protection desks and protection risk monitoring;
- conducting awareness campaigns, risk mitigation and responses within the framework of GBV and child protection services.

The evaluation noted that UNHCR is developing new approaches to engage with displaced people outside camp settings, who (as noted earlier) are mostly inurban settings.<sup>43</sup> The approaches were a significant shift in some country strategies over the evaluation time period, as in Myanmar and Nigeria. Catalysed both by government decisions to close camps (as in Nigeria, Iraq and Myanmar) and by the scale of IDPs who are located out of camps, UNHCR adopted modalities such as the use of community-based centres linked with mobile and/or outreach services and volunteers. These were usually implemented by partners to reach dispersed populations.<sup>44</sup>

Further examples of alternative strategies for urban and dispersed IDP populations included a focus on strengthening the security of IDPs' tenure in rental accommodation through civil documentation and strengthened laws as part of shelter assistance, in contrast to the direct provision of shelter in camps.<sup>45</sup> Another strand observed related to support for social cohesion; this was a factor of concern to IDPs and is associated with moving into areas where IDPs are living alongside host communities, where tensions could arise. For example: UNHCR provided mediation skills training for IDPs who were transitioning from camps in Nigeria; integrated assistance benefited host populations when they were considered to be at risk of displacement as

<sup>42</sup> Noted in the evaluation case studies of Iraq, Myanmar and Nigeria.

<sup>43</sup> Evidence for findings based on evaluation data from Nigeria, Somalia, El Salvador; UNHCR "Country Strategy Evaluation – Honduras 2019–2022"; UNHCR (2022) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the 2019/20 Level 3 IDP Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo".

<sup>44</sup> In Iraq, Syria, Somalia and El Salvador.

<sup>45</sup> Noted in Nigeria and Somalia.

well as IDPs in Colombia and El Salvador, as part of social cohesion strategies. Cash-based responses also gained significance in the evaluation time period.<sup>46</sup>

UNHCR exhibited a sensitivity to local dynamics within countries. The evaluation noted that Country Offices developed localized strategies for specific regions in countries, including those in which authority is contested or divided across the territory.<sup>47</sup> As an illustration, the evaluation noted distinct strategies developed by UNHCR in Georgia for Abkhazia – where, given its humanitarian status, UNHCR provides IDP assistance and protection in the form of legal assistance, self-reliance and livelihood support delivered through partners – while in Tbilisi-administered territory, it has shifted to a role focused predominantly on advocacy, with no operational delivery, given the government’s capacity to meet these needs. In Myanmar, UNHCR’s field offices developed distinct localized strategies in response to the regional dynamics and the different levels of access to rights for IDPs of different ethnicities – for instance, Rohingya are categorized as stateless and experience extreme limitations on freedom of movement and access to work, whereas displaced Rakhine people and populations in Kachin have access to their full citizenship rights. Decentralized decision-making was noted as a factor that enabled such customization of country strategies, with case study Country Offices reporting freedom to shape their strategies to local priorities.<sup>48</sup> However, in some regions – notably West Africa – this was within parameters set at the regional level (see discussion for finding 3).

Area-based programming approaches (ABAs), a key element of UNHCR 2019 IDP policy, formed a part of country strategies, noted in the case study countries of Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria and in the evaluation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>49</sup> The evaluation team noted the benefits of the approach as a means to meet the needs of all groups affected by forced displacement, independent of status. This more equitable approach was often found to mitigate against tensions between IDPs and host communities, and to contribute to social cohesion. In particular, this was observed in the Colombia and Iraq case studies (see Box 1 for details on the Colombia’s experience.) These benefits must be weighed against the fact that ABA approaches are comparatively costly, and that UNHCR has often struggled to find development partners with which to share the burden of these costs<sup>50</sup>.

#### **Box 1: Lessons from an area-based approach in Colombia in response to dispersed and mixed populations at risk**

- **Aims:** UNHCR Colombia’s area-based approach aims to promote social integration, strengthen access to rights, reduce the risks of community conflicts and xenophobia, prevent the impact of internal armed conflict and protection risks and incidents, and advance solutions.
- **Targeting:** UNHCR identifies areas for the approach using criteria that include: level of community cohesion, humanitarian access and security, low presence of other actors, and scale of people in need of protection. Priority areas were identified within these geographical areas by a focus on the most conflict-affected municipalities and by a participatory process, involving community mapping of needs and construction of action plans which shape the response.
- **Components:** Assistance provided under this approach includes: the maintenance of information and orientation centres; case management for individual cases with specific protection needs (children, people affected by GBV); humanitarian assistance; promoting access to public services; and multi-purpose grants. In some locations, an intervention is included that seeks to prevent child recruitment by armed groups through work with schools, parents and the community.
- **Strengths** of the approach are that it can engage with IDPs, Venezuelan refugees and host populations and can also contribute to social cohesion. **But the intervention has experienced some challenges** when aiming to link with government services because of the initiative’s community focus, whereas government services focus on individuals rather than addressing issues within the broader communities.

<sup>46</sup> Case studies of Iraq, Nigeria, Myanmar, El Salvador, Somalia; UNHCR (2022) “Evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the 2019/20 Level 3 IDP Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo”.

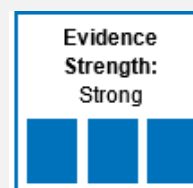
<sup>47</sup> Case study countries in which government authority was contested during evaluation time period were Georgia, Iraq, Myanmar and Syria.

<sup>48</sup> Noted in Colombia, El Salvador, Myanmar and Nigeria.

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR (2022) “Evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the 2019/20 Level 3 IDP Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo”.

<sup>50</sup> For more detail on UNHCR’s policy response to these challenges, see UNHCR “Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors” [internal document, undated].

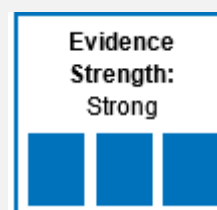
**Finding 2:** UNHCR displayed an ability to adapt its strategy in response to contextual changes, which encompassed both new risk environments and new opportunities, enabled by a willingness to change strategy and scale up operations.



The evaluation identified UNHCR's flexibility and adaptability in responding to changing contexts. In Iraq and Nigeria UNHCR monitored camp closures, assisted relocated individuals with specific needs, and provided information for informed decision-making. They also initiated urban-based programmes in response to people's movement from camps. Influxes of refugees led to expansion of UNHCR operations in Colombia, northeast Nigeria and Sudan although at times with the same resources, at least initially, as those managing the IDP operation (for example, in northeast Nigeria in 2022). Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR adjusted its programming to ensure social distancing and safety, and modified communication content to raise awareness of COVID-19.<sup>51</sup> In response to new opportunities and needs, El Salvador UNHCR developed a new strategy in 2023 to enhance IDP protection in response to the change in the security situation, as well as having scaled up its operational footprint following government approval of a new IDP law in 2020.

UNHCR's organizational responsiveness to emergencies was demonstrated by its declaration of 22 IDP-related emergencies in 15 countries between 2019 and 2021.<sup>52</sup> In addition, case studies found that after the 2021 coup in Myanmar, UNHCR expanded its operations to address heightened protection risks due to increased conflict. In response to drought conditions and increased humanitarian needs in Somalia in 2021–2022, UNHCR shifted to an emergency response mode, providing direct humanitarian aid facilitated by prior emergency experience. In Sudan, UNHCR transitioned from cash-based responses to in-kind assistance during an emergency response.<sup>53</sup> However, the evaluation also noted that there were emergencies to which UNHCR had not responded but there was limited data on the reasons why. Further analysis of the reasons behind this would be beneficial, particularly given the realities of climate change which is likely to mean that UNHCR will be called on to respond to more situations of disaster displacement. It is likely to be important for UNHCR to mainstream monitoring of its preparedness for responses in contexts with disaster-induced displacement.

**Finding 3:** The evaluation found a consistent emphasis across strategies on protection, inclusion and use of community-based and capacity-building approaches. However, the evaluation noted differences in the scope and boundaries of UNHCR engagement in different countries, influenced in part by the resources available but also by the presence of other organizations, which introduced an element of unpredictability in UNHCR's decision-making in internal displacement situations.



The evaluation noted the strength of UNHCR's processes to understand local contexts and differences in the needs of different groups, particularly through the use of participatory assessments and needs analyses.<sup>54</sup> These processes paid close attention to differential needs according to characteristics, including age, ability, gender and other factors, in line with UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy.<sup>55</sup> Interventions designed to address the specific situation of different groups were noted in case studies. They included provision of safe spaces specifically for LGBTQ communities in El Salvador; livelihood interventions for women-headed households in Iraq; and consideration of different ethnic groups' rights in the design of assistance and protection strategies in Myanmar. But there is also evidence that resource constraints limited Country Offices' application of measures to meet different identified needs.<sup>56</sup>

In situations lacking partners, UNHCR sometimes addressed gaps in assistance across sectors beyond the three areas of shelter, CCCM and protection, and responded to multi-sectoral opportunities to aid affected

<sup>51</sup> Case study data for Iraq. UNHCR (2022) "UNHCR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Synthesis of evaluative evidence"

<sup>52</sup> UNHCR (2022) "UNHCR engagement in situations of internal displacement 2019–2021".

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Country Strategy Evaluation Sudan"

<sup>54</sup> Evidence from Colombia, El Salvador, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria and Somalia; UNHCR (2022) "West and Central Africa Regional Shelter and Settlement Evaluation"

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR (2018) "Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity".

<sup>56</sup> Case study data from Somalia, Iraq and Nigeria; UNHCR (2022) "West and Central Africa Regional Shelter and Settlement Evaluation".

populations. For example, Colombia's area-based approach targets areas identified by the limited presence of other agencies and provided a comprehensive response across sectors (see Box 1). In contrast, in Iraq, targeting of UNHCR's area-based approach depended on the presence of other organizations and was linked to a strategy for UNHCR's eventual exit. In other examples, UNHCR is engaged in construction projects, including school buildings in CAR and clinics in Afghanistan. However, in Nigeria and West Africa, UNHCR has a stricter approach, focusing on areas aligned with its designated cluster leadership responsibilities. Another difference noted was in the focus on prevention of displacement which the evaluation noted only in the El Salvador case study as a specific strategy, although other evaluative data points to this in Honduras as well.<sup>57</sup>

The evaluation also identified differences in UNHCR's decisions regarding the adoption of a case management approach.<sup>58</sup> This approach is a crucial element of UNHCR's strategy in El Salvador and is also evident in Syria and Colombia. In other locations, key informants reported explicit decisions against adopting a case management approach, either due to the lack of available services for referrals, as seen in Myanmar, or as a strategic choice, as observed in West Africa.

Opinions varied among UNHCR staff with regard to the appropriateness of UNHCR provision of livelihood interventions.<sup>59</sup> These form an integral part of some countries' strategies, including Nigeria, El Salvador and Georgia. Evaluation focus group discussions (FGDs) found this form of support was highly appreciated by IDPs and was critical for enhancing self-reliance. However, although UNHCR's IDP policy includes livelihoods as a potential intervention, some key informants noted UNHCR's lack of specific expertise in this area; evaluations offer variable results in this regard, suggesting that UNHCR may not be the agency best suited to meet this need.<sup>60</sup>

The evaluation was not able to pinpoint a single underlying reason for differences in Country Office decisions regarding the scope of their strategies. Yet there are indications of several influential factors, including: (a) the extent to which exit strategies were part of decision-making from the start (seen in Iraq, but less evident in Colombia); (b) the presence of returning refugee populations, such as in Afghanistan and CAR, where UNHCR may undertake this wider scope of activity under its refugee mandate; (c) an instinctive response to meet needs;<sup>61</sup> and (d) the employment of community-based approaches which raised a range of needs and priorities (as in Colombia).

*Finding 4: Consistent with UNHCR's policy commitments to a multi-agency approach, to galvanize and support government responsibility for IDPs and to promote localization, the evaluation found that UNHCR worked well with other organizations, particularly authorities at various levels, where conditions permitted, and with local organizations as implementing partners. Although Country Office strategies typically emphasized capacity-building, there is potential for increased cooperation, extending beyond implementation, to involve local actors more in decision-making on strategy and priorities.*



All evaluation case studies found significant levels of cooperation with other organizations operating in areas where UNHCR was active. These partnerships included cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq for cash-based assistance, and in El Salvador engagement with civil society to provide health care, livelihood support and psychosocial assistance to IDPs, and to promote IDPs' awareness of their rights. UNHCR also participated in joint projects with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nigeria and Syria, and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Myanmar. Additionally, UNHCR recognized the crucial

<sup>57</sup> UNHCR (2023) "Country Strategy Evaluation - Honduras 2019-22, Evaluation report", Draft version 24/8/2023

<sup>58</sup> Case management is a way of organizing and carrying out work to address the needs of an individual and/or, as relevant, his or her family/caregiver, including by empowering and building self-reliance, in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through any combination of direct support and referrals.

<sup>59</sup> Survey data indicates mixed opinions on UNHCR's role in livelihood interventions. In response to an open-ended question about what UNHCR should do less of, four respondents suggested that UNHCR should reduce its involvement in livelihood interventions due to lack of expertise and comparative advantage. However, six respondents stated that UNHCR should increase livelihood interventions to support solutions and government cooperation. Evidence from case study interviews with UNHCR staff in Myanmar and Nigeria was also divided.

<sup>60</sup> For example, UNHCR (2020) "UNHCR Country Portfolio Evaluations: Afghanistan, Angola, Iraq, Morocco Synthesis report".

<sup>61</sup> Multiple KIIs refer to UNHCR's instinct to respond when it has presence and resources.

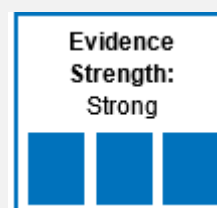
role played by local organizations – both CSOs and government authorities – in reaching affected populations in areas that UNHCR could not access directly in at least two of the case study countries.<sup>62</sup>

The evidence revealed a consistent commitment in UNHCR to encourage government responsibility for addressing the needs of those affected by displacement, in alignment with UNHCR’s IDP policy. The evaluation highlighted UNHCR’s consistent approach of partnering with or closely liaising with government and authorities at various levels. Instances noted include: in El Salvador in the decision of where to locate of services to IDPs; in Nigeria, where the local authorities are partners in a number of shelter, assistance, protection and solutions interventions; in Iraq, where UNHCR’s work with, and capacity-building support for, the authorities was a key element of the transition strategy; and in Somalia, where UNHCR has partnerships with 11 government authorities. In cases where the national-level political environment posed challenges, as in Myanmar, Country Office strategies tended to maintain connections when necessary with local authorities and worked in line with United Nations Country Team (UNCT) agreed principles of engagement with the de facto authorities in the post-coup environment – these largely limit engagement to humanitarian and advocacy purposes.

There are signs of an increasing proportion of UNHCR partnerships being developed with local actors, civil society and authorities, aligning with UNHCR’s commitment to the localization agenda. Capacity-building is integrated into UNHCR’s partner strategy and is seen as a step towards localization. However, case study interviews with UNHCR staff and external partners, including CSOs in two case study countries, highlighted the potential for localization efforts to extend beyond basic implementation agreements, financial support and capacity-building, aiming for a more significant role for local organizations in decision-making. Although global-level initiatives show some progress in this direction,<sup>63</sup> the country-specific evaluation findings provide limited evidence of such changes.

### 4.1.3 Evidence of results

*Finding 5: UNHCR assistance and community-based protection has reached increasing numbers of IDPs each year, although the proportion of people reached varied across regions and countries. The scale of UNHCR’s operational response was influenced by factors such as the availability of financial resources, strategic decisions and assessments of government capacity to address IDP needs.*



Although the number of people reached by UNHCR serves as a limited measure of UNHCR outcomes, it provides some insight into trends in operational scale. The total number of IDPs and the proportion of the overall IDP population assisted by UNHCR have steadily increased each year, rising from 24 per cent of IDPs being reached with assistance in 2019 to 38 per cent in 2022, as demonstrated in Figure 77. The proportion of IDPs assisted relative to the total IDP population varies significantly among regions and countries. It ranges from a coverage rate of 58 per cent of the IDP population in 2021 in West Africa to 19 per cent in East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, and with only 4 per cent in the Americas (see Annex 8 for details). Most case study countries indicated that UNHCR reached approximately one-third of the IDP population, although there were notable exceptions to this trend. For example, UNHCR’s operational delivery achieved 3 per cent coverage of the total IDP population in Colombia in 2022 (215,000 people reached); while in CAR it reached 64 per cent of IDPs with assistance and/or protection.<sup>64</sup> The evaluation noted also that there are a number of countries with forced internal displacement in which UNHCR does not run IDP operations, such as Haiti, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan and Uganda. It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to explore this trend more fully but this data feeds into later discussions on resource allocation and equity in Section 4.6.1.

The evaluation identified some factors influencing these varying levels of coverage – such as increases being associated in some situations with successful resource mobilization for emergency responses, as seen in West

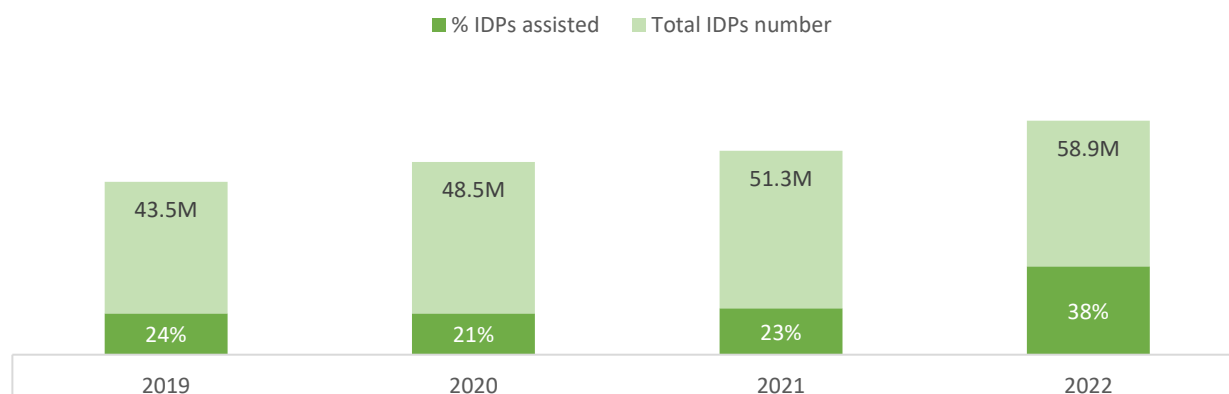
<sup>62</sup> Examples were noted in Myanmar, where UNHCR supported CSOs to deliver assistance in areas it cannot reach, and in Nigeria, where the local government departments delivered UNHCR-provided emergency shelter assistance to more remote areas in northeast Nigeria.

<sup>63</sup> For further discussion, see UNHCR (2022) “UNHCR Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement”, which reports on UNHCR meeting the Grand Bargain target of 25 per cent or more of contributions being channelled to local organizations, as well as consultations with CSOs (such as that with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) at the global level in 2021), and links made with faith-based organizations. These developments were part of UNHCR’s approach to the Global Compact on Refugees, but also have relevance to IDPs.

<sup>64</sup> Based on data provided by UNHCR of assisted and total populations by population group 2017–2022 derived from UNHCR results data portal.

Africa in response to the initially well-supported Sahel emergency appeal. Other factors were strategic decisions to reduce levels of assistance as in Iraq, where UNHCR has been shifting away from direct service delivery as part of its disengagement and transition process; and in Tbilisi-administered territory in Georgia where the government has capacity to meet IDP needs. (See also Section 4.6.1.)

Figure 7: 2019–2022 IDPs total number, and percentage assisted by UNHCR<sup>65</sup>



Another perspective on coverage is provided by analysis of UNHCR’s contribution to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in areas where it holds cluster leadership responsibility, specifically in shelter, protection and CCCM. UNHCR has an internal funding goal of 25 per cent coverage of the HRP budget in these three sectors, but the evaluation interviews found limited awareness of this target among staff and a lack of clarity regarding its scope – i.e. whether it pertains to UNHCR’s operational role or includes investments in coordination, such as the financing and provision of cluster coordinators and information management officers. The available evidence indicates inconsistent approaches to meet this target, with Country Office plans often not aiming for 25 per cent coverage even at the planning stage.<sup>66</sup>

Given the limitation of financial resources to meet all identified needs by UNHCR, targeting is significant. Methods used to target geographically included a focus on areas where UNHCR already had some capacity and presence (seen in Nigeria, where operations were reduced in scale in response to financial constraints) as well as an effort to meet IDP needs in areas where UNHCR was also meeting refugee needs (the Central Belt in Nigeria). Gaps in services were a criterion used by UNHCR in Colombia to focus its area-based work (see Box 1). Access and security played a role in a number of case study countries, limiting the scale of operations, including those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,<sup>67</sup> Myanmar, Nigeria, Syria and Somalia – however, as noted earlier, local partners (both civil society and local authorities) were important in extending UNHCR’s coverage geographically. Targeting within geographical locations has tended to be based on assessments of vulnerability undertaken by partners as part of the provision of assistance and focused protection services – for example, the provision of legal aid or livelihood support, with the intention of reaching the most vulnerable and against criteria agreed locally; but evaluation evidence on this was limited. The evaluation noted challenges for targeting faced by Country Offices in countries with limited data, including those where government provision of transparent data was not forthcoming.

<sup>65</sup> Please note that there are inconsistencies in the IDP total number by year when comparing UNHCR figures to IDMC. See <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2023/> Source: 2019–2021 figures from UNHCR Refugee population statistics database, population type IDPs and people in IDP-like situations. 2022 figures: Orion Analytics Center, Population Planning Figures, figures taken as of 31 December 2022.

<sup>66</sup> UNHCR’s own analysis has found varying levels of coverage in these three areas across countries, which is in line with trends observed by the evaluation country case studies. For example, UNHCR analysis (UNHCR DSPR analysis, 2023) found some countries displaying a strong level of ambition to cover HRP-identified needs, with Yemen, for example, intended to cover between 32 per cent and 54 per cent of the sector needs (protection ambition being highest and CCCM lowest). In Afghanistan UNHCR aimed to cover 6 per cent of HRP shelter needs; 13 per cent of protection in Ethiopia, and 8 per cent of CCCM needs in Somalia, compared to a high of 45 per cent in Ukraine. With regard to protection, the targets ranged from 11 per cent in Ukraine and 13 per cent in Ethiopia to 56 per cent in Yemen and 54 per cent in Afghanistan. Country case studies found low levels of financing allocated to UNHCR’s own operations in shelter in Somalia but a much more significant role in Myanmar, where it reported being the main actor in the provision of shelter. In Nigeria UNHCR fulfilled only 4 per cent of CCCM operational roles in camp management in 2022, contrasting with a more substantial proportion of 27 per cent or more in the previous two years, but played a more significant role in protection coverage in 2022 with 19 per cent funding of the HRP target. This contrasts with a much lower contribution of under 10 per cent in both 2020 and 2021).

<sup>67</sup> UNHCR (2022) “Evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the 2019/20 Level 3 IDP Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo”.



**Finding 6:** UNHCR's reporting, although detailed, offers only limited evidence of its results, especially with regard to outcomes for IDPs, and does not enable comparisons of interventions and countries or assessments of quality. Early evidence from the developments in UNHCR's monitoring and reporting systems indicate the potential for significant improvements to outcome-level tracking but further enhancements are needed to maximize the system's potential in IDP contexts.



UNHCR has developed a new RBM system that includes new outcome areas against which Country Offices report, using core and additional contextualized indicators. The system is still bedding down, so it is difficult to judge at this point. However, evaluation survey data indicate staff confidence that the new system will improve monitoring outcomes and make UNHCR results more visible.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, case study data indicated an appreciation of the flexibility of the new system for Country Offices for designing contextualized indicators – this is seen as particularly important because a view was also expressed that some core indicators are more relevant to refugee contexts.<sup>69</sup> (See also Section 4.6.5.)

A significant development under way since 2022 is the introduction of a results monitoring survey (RMS) that was adopted across 33 countries in 2022. The RMS is a household-level survey which collects data on key areas of interest relating to the rights and well-being of people affected by forcible displacement. The data it has produced so far offers a rich resource in terms of understanding the context and conditions for IDPs as well as other people affected by forcible displacement, and of identifying trends according to place or various demographic characteristics. This includes some indications based on IDP data from three countries of the negative association between disability and outcomes such as feelings of safety. (See Annex 14 for further details.) However, currently the RMS offers limited ability to attribute improvements in IDPs' conditions to UNHCR interventions, but some further adaptations and developments could support its ability to do this (see also Section 4.6.5).

Nevertheless, current reporting – illustrated by the examples in Box 2, drawn from UNHCR annual plans for 2021 and 2022 for case study countries – gives some indication of the scale and relevance of UNHCR interventions in specific outcome areas (in bold in Box 2). The data here represents only a small fraction of each Country Office's annual reported results, but it indicates some results of assistance in terms of UNHCR outcome areas of well-being and basic needs and protection-related outcomes of gender-based violence response, child protection, and safety and access to justice.

**Box 2: Examples of results from case study countries' annual reports against selected UNHCR outcome areas and indicators of results<sup>70</sup>**

- **GBV response.** In Iraq in 2021, UNHCR and partners ensured survivor-centred GBV services by providing specialized case management, including counselling for 4,233 IDP survivors and structured psychosocial support programmes for 2,852 IDPs through 16 static women's centres.
- **Child protection.** In Syria in 2022, UNHCR provided child protection case management services to 12,200 children (5,420 girls, 6,780 boys) and reached 237,000 children (145,600 girls, 91,400 boys) through community-based activities. Training for 1,300 partner staff improved the quality of partners' case management.
- **Safety and access to justice.** In Somalia in 2022, partners supported 6,251 individuals with civil documentation (71 per cent in Somaliland, 16 per cent in Puntland, 13 per cent in Central Somalia); in Iraq in 2022, UNHCR secured 72,178 documents and assisted in the coordination of 57 government mobile documentation units.
- **Access to rights and services.** In Colombia in 2022, UNHCR guided more than 10,000 people to their rights and services through a community volunteer outreach programme. In El Salvador, 48,000 people were assisted through the four Support Hubs and four mobile units administered by UNHCR and its partners, with information on their rights as IDPs or persons at risk of displacement, and of the services available to them from the public services or from UNHCR and its partners.

<sup>68</sup> See Annex 6 for more survey data on RBM.

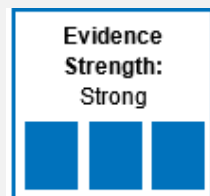
<sup>69</sup> For example, the core indicator for safety and access to justice relates to immigration control and legal status; protection policy and law core indicators relate to the Conventions on refugees (1951, 1967 additional protocol) or statelessness (1961).

<sup>70</sup> Disaggregated data is included when available.

- **Well-being and basic needs, including shelter.** In Nigeria in 2021, UNHCR provided emergency (tarpaulin) and transitional shelter to more than 9,000 people; in Myanmar in 2021, quick-impact projects reached an additional 18,000 people in Kachin; and in Kachin State and Shan State (North), UNHCR and partners assisted more than 41,000 families with core relief items and 4,500 families with shelter material, while in 2021 UNHCR increased its efforts to support the urgent/basic needs of more than 186,000 people who were newly and already displaced. In CAR, UNHCR supported the government in registering an estimated 515,665 IDPs.

Although this data provides valuable evidence of significant achievements in the provision of assistance and measures to promote protection, it is difficult to use the data as a measure of effectiveness, as reporting so far remains at output level rather than outcomes, such as changes in IDPs' lives, sense of security or access to rights. There is little indication of the effect that the assistance or protection provided to IDPs has had, or the difference it has made to them over time. The evaluation noted that the challenge of judging the effectiveness of UNHCR's operational role is a consistent theme across other evaluations.<sup>71</sup> Yet there were also instances of more in-depth reporting – such as post-distribution monitoring in Syria and Myanmar reporting satisfaction levels with assistance and how assistance helped them to avoid debt and to improve food security, for example.

**Finding 7:** *Despite the reporting challenges, the evaluation did find compelling evidence of results that relate to meeting immediate emergency needs, enhanced access to rights and improved services as well as catalysing support from other actors. Key enabling factors were UNHCR's community base, the reach of operational partners, leadership in the organization, and holistic approaches that linked awareness-raising with measures to support enhanced access to rights. Constraints included limitations in preparedness, delays in the delivery of material assistance, and limited adaptability to shift the operations from a refugee focus in disaster contexts and to link emergency assistance to interventions suited to more protracted situations.*



UNHCR's emergency response has provided relevant assistance to IDPs effectively, with a focus on shelter and protection interventions, as highlighted in evaluations.<sup>72</sup> These responses have been influenced by levels of preparedness, but organizational leadership and resource mobilization at different levels have supported Country Offices to gear up responses even when preparedness was limited.<sup>73</sup> Multi-functional teams and community linkages enabled responses to go beyond the provision of material assistance, contributing also to social cohesion and community resilience due to the way they are implemented with communities.<sup>74</sup>

UNHCR's collaboration with other agencies enhanced results. Case study data identifies examples of how UNHCR's cooperation with UNICEF and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in Abkhazia, Georgia catalysed their action on schools, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facility renovations and hot meal provisions for vulnerable IDP women. In Syria, the network of community centres supported by UNHCR served as a resource for other organizations, including UNICEF and WFP, creating in effect a "one-stop shop" for IDPs and other groups, and so minimizing transactional costs for IDPs. UNHCR's sharing of data and advocacy in Iraq contributed to the integration of IDPs into government and other agency social protection systems.

Furthermore, UNHCR has made significant progress in galvanizing government action for IDPs through various strategies. In Nigeria UNHCR works with the Borno state government in the provision of emergency and transitional shelter, which also provides opportunity for capacity development through technical support and monitoring. In Colombia UNHCR strengthened the Ombudsman's office through training and direct financial assistance, enabling it to recruit additional officials, which expands the access to this office for IDPs. In El Salvador, UNHCR's assistance and protection programme, which includes information provision, referrals and some cash-based and livelihood support, is primarily provided under a community-based protection approach, in close cooperation with relevant government departments. In Iraq, advocacy and data-sharing were

<sup>71</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Summary of Evaluative Evidence"; UNHCR (2023) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to multiple emergencies in the Central Sahel Region: Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali"; UNHCR (2022) "Evaluation of UNHCR's Child Protection programming 2017–2019".

<sup>72</sup> UNHCR "Country Strategy Evaluation – Honduras 2019 – 2022"; UNHCR (2023) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the crisis in Ethiopia, 2022"; UNHCR (2022) "West and Central Africa Regional Shelter and Settlement Evaluation". UNHCR (2023) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to multiple emergencies in the Central Sahel Region: Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali".

<sup>73</sup> UNHCR (2023) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the crisis in Ethiopia, 2022"; UNHCR (2021) "Evaluation of UNHCR's Level-3 emergency response to Cyclone Idai"; UNHCR "Country Strategy Evaluation – Honduras 2019 – 2022"; UNHCR (2023) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to multiple emergencies in the Central Sahel Region: Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali".

<sup>74</sup> Evidence from Democratic Republic of the Congo. Case study data in Nigeria.

accompanied by technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. These examples all illustrate a way of working that seeks to strengthen short-term and longer-term government capacity (this is discussed further in Section 4.4 on UNHCR contributions to durable solutions).

Innovations in the use of a participatory evaluation process in Myanmar identified results of community-based intervention relating both to enhanced safety and conditions in camps through lighting and improved sanitation, and to benefits for the youth involved, in terms of increased confidence and trust between the groups and the community.<sup>75</sup>

Evaluation FGDs heard from IDPs that they generally viewed assistance as relevant, effective and of quality. FGD participants highlighted that UNHCR assistance helped to meet emergency needs and their appreciation of cash-based support for flexibility. FGD responses also highlighted the benefits of cash interventions that built self-reliance or livelihoods and measures that increased a sense of security, including civil documentation or access to legal and other protection services. FGD members appreciated UNHCR's consultation with them and IDPs' easy access to accountability systems, often via protection desks and UNHCR-supported volunteers. Other evaluation data also highlights UNHCR's attention to inclusion, accountability and participation of affected people.<sup>76</sup>

There is evidence that UNHCR's positive outcomes result from interconnected interventions that encompass prevention, capacity-building and response.<sup>77</sup> UNHCR's protection approaches in many countries involve raising awareness of rights, including those related to GBV, child protection and civil documentation. In some cases this awareness-raising was coupled with response interventions, including legal representation and also capacity-building for service providers and the legal system to enhance responses to people seeking access to justice and response services. For example, in Nigeria, UNHCR partners reported that linked interventions for GBV awareness-raising, response and capacity-building of service providers led to increased incident reporting and improved response quality, including in legal proceedings. In Iraq, UNHCR's efforts to emphasize the importance of civil documentation were accompanied by support for individuals to obtain this documentation, along with capacity-building for providers. In Myanmar, protection monitoring informed inter-agency assistance strategies and local-level advocacy, resulting in positive outcomes such as the removal of specific roadblocks that were hindering access to work, and changes in the timing of camp closures to avoid disrupting children's education during the school term.

The evaluation also identified shortcomings in the quality of assistance, primarily concerning its scale, timeliness and sometimes relevance, particularly in protracted crises. FGDs consistently noted that the scale of assistance and some protection responses – such as legal aid or livelihood support as part of protection – were limited in comparison to need.<sup>78</sup> Evaluation FGDs and other assessments have highlighted delays in the delivery of assistance, notably in the case of material assistance such as NFIs.<sup>79</sup> One of the limitations on the effectiveness of assistance is the extended duration for which emergency aid, such as emergency and transitional shelter, is employed. In protracted crises, this often exceeds the intended lifespan of the assistance, as evidenced in case studies from Nigeria and Somalia as well as other evaluations.<sup>80</sup>

Levels of preparedness played a significant role and was an area in which the evaluation found inconsistent performance across countries. In Ethiopia, UNHCR's IDP response in 2022 was initially hampered by limited preparedness,<sup>81</sup> a limitation also evident in UNHCR's response to Cyclone Idai, resulting in a response that focused primarily on refugees.<sup>82</sup> UNHCR have noted limitations in preparedness<sup>83</sup> and some measures have been introduced, for instance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a system of a "rolling response approach" was introduced to cope with recurrent disasters.<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, even with this approach, contingency shelter stocks were found to be inadequate in the 2019–2020 response.<sup>85</sup>

Guidance developed over the years since the adoption of the 2019 IDP policy have been appreciated and used by staff, though some documents such as the guidance for UNHCR on protection in disasters and climate

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<sup>75</sup> UNHCR (2023) "Mytkyina Youth Projects", Case study.

<sup>76</sup> UNHCR (2022) "West and Central Africa Regional Shelter and Settlement Evaluation"; UNHCR (2023) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the L3 emergency in Afghanistan, 2021–2022".

<sup>77</sup> Evidence from El Salvador, Iraq, Myanmar and Nigeria.

<sup>78</sup> FGD data from El Salvador, Nigeria and Somalia.

<sup>79</sup> FGDs in Nigeria, Somalia, multi-country shelter assessment.

<sup>80</sup> FGDs in Nigeria and Somalia. UNHCR (2022) "West and Central Africa Regional Shelter and Settlement Evaluation"

<sup>81</sup> UNHCR (2023) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the crisis in Ethiopia, 2022".

<sup>82</sup> UNHCR (2021) "Evaluation of UNHCR's Level-3 emergency response to Cyclone Idai".

<sup>83</sup> UNHCR (2022) "UNHCR engagement in situations of internal displacement 2019–21".

<sup>84</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the 2019/20 Level 3 IDP Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo".

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

change-affected settings were less well known<sup>86</sup> – this limited their utility and influence on the quality of responses (full details in Annex 6).<sup>87</sup> An area for potential development lay in workforce skills and expertise for internal displacement situations. Evaluation case study data and surveys highlighted staff interest in further training and development for programming in IDP situations.<sup>88</sup>

## 4.2 Theme 2: UNHCR’s cluster leadership

### 4.2.1 Introduction

Since the 2005 Humanitarian Reform, UNHCR has been charged with leading or co-leading three clusters at both the global and country levels: protection, shelter (with IFRC, which leads in disaster situations), and Camp Coordination and Camp Management ((CCCM), with IOM, which leads in disaster situations). In its cluster leadership role UNHCR is accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC); its operational response is largely developed by UNHCR’s Country Offices and Regional Bureaux (discussed in Section 4.1). These two distinct ways of working are intended to be complementary. At country level, cluster coordinator responsibilities include the establishment and maintenance of effective coordination mechanisms, preparedness and capacity development, needs assessment analysis, prioritization and planning, transition planning, application of standards, guidelines and good practice, information management, advocacy, and resource mobilization.

#### Summary of key findings on cluster leadership and their implications

- **Relevance:** UNHCR demonstrated effective leadership of clusters and the ability to adapt its role in light of country contexts. The implications are for the organization’s sustained focus on facilitating and enhancing inter-agency coordination through investment in cluster leadership and ensuring the necessary human and financial resources are available.
- **Effectiveness:** UNHCR has achieved significant results in cluster leadership as evidenced in terms of funds mobilized, people reached with assistance and protection through cluster member interventions and contributions to the quality of inter-agency programming. However, the effectiveness in cluster leadership varies by context, with notable inconsistencies especially in mixed-population settings and in disaster preparedness. Moreover, existing challenges related to the capacity and quality of cluster coordinators and the implications of “double-hatting” among staff need to be addressed.<sup>89</sup> Finally, improvements in tracking and reporting of outcomes for IDPs, and efforts to improve the quality of operations, as well as investments in dedicated cluster coordinators would strengthen UNHCR effectiveness in cluster leadership.
- **Connectedness:** Although collaboration with other organizations is generally positive, it would be beneficial to refine co-leadership models – particularly in CCCM – at country level and to ensure equitable approaches in mixed-population settings. In disaster settings, findings suggest the need to raise awareness across the organization of UNHCR’s cluster leadership role, to prepare for this responsibility at country and global levels, and to address tensions with IOM in cluster leadership. A challenge for UNHCR is to ensure a strategic and appropriate alignment between its operational delivery and the priorities identified by the HRP/clusters.
- **Coherence:** UNHCR’s adherence to policy commitments is clear. However, there is an opportunity to institutionalize lessons from closing clusters and responsible disengagement. There is also scope to provide guidance to Country Offices on how to balance resource allocation towards cluster leadership and operational roles when resources for operations are under strain, including in relation to fulfilling commitments to be the “provider of last resort”.

<sup>86</sup> Survey data found that 58 per cent of respondents were not familiar with the guidance for protection in disasters compared to 41 per cent who were not familiar with the overall 2021 IDP guidance package.

<sup>87</sup> Based on the survey data, 55 respondents (47 per cent) had no access to opportunities for training in IDP situations and staff would like to enhance their skills in programming for IDPs especially in coordination skills, including inter-agency and cluster coordination (mentioned by 46 respondents); data analysis skills (mentioned by 10 respondents); and increasing familiarity with local and regional legal frameworks (4 respondents); see Annex 6 for a summary of survey responses.

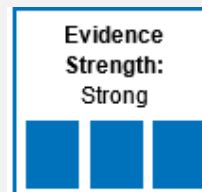
<sup>88</sup> Noted also in case study interviews with staff in Nigeria, Iraq and several UNHCR global KIIs.

<sup>89</sup> The WFP-UNHCR Cluster review (2023, internal document) identified the same problems related to the capacity of cluster coordinators, problems with “double-hatting” and uneven cluster leadership. The recommendations in the review are relevant to the issues addressed in this evaluation and merit further consideration and implementation by UNHCR leadership.

- **Strategic positioning:** UNHCR’s distinctive strength lies in protection expertise, navigating relationships with authorities in conflict-affected contexts, plus its global capacity, field presence and strong relationships with local actors. These strengths position it well to provide cluster leadership – although strategic enhancements are needed to optimize funding distribution, preparedness and leadership styles to enhance its effectiveness. UNHCR’s tri-cluster platform is a useful mechanism for ensuring the organization’s coherent approach to cluster leadership.

## 4.2.2 Approaches and adaptation to context

*Finding 8: Across the country case studies, UNHCR demonstrated creativity and flexibility in responding to different and difficult operational contexts to fulfil its leadership responsibilities in protection, shelter and CCCM. This was enabled by a strong organizational commitment to and investment in the cluster leadership role, although capacity challenges remain. Resource constraints were often addressed by operational staff “double-hatting”, which can present accountability challenges as well as put pressure on individual staff.*



The three UNHCR-led clusters are active across humanitarian crises with IDP populations. In 2022 the Global Protection Cluster (GPC), led by UNHCR, was active in 32 countries; the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) was active in 31 countries, with UNHCR leading in 16 countries; and the CCCM cluster was active in 22 countries, with UNHCR leading in 12 countries and co-leading the clusters with IOM in six countries (see Annex 9 for further details of inter-agency and cluster-level data on IDPs).

Figure 8: Map of active clusters (CCCM, GPC and Shelter) in 2022



In line with UNHCR’s 2019 policy, case study data showed UNHCR fulfilling cluster leadership roles at country level in clusters or cluster-like structures with structures taking different forms in different contexts.<sup>90</sup> The protection cluster in all relevant countries (CAR, Colombia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria) was always a stand-alone cluster, led by UNHCR or co-led with an international non-governmental organization (INGO) partner. In Nigeria and Myanmar the shelter and CCCM clusters were combined. In Somalia, UNHCR is the lead and IOM the co-chair, while in Nigeria the CCCM cluster was co-led with IOM, even though global-level interviews with both organizations indicated that this is not the preferred way to work. In Iraq the cluster system was deactivated in 2022 and UNHCR closed the structures for which it was responsible. Clusters have been termed “sectors” in response to government preference in Syria and Nigeria. Indeed, in Syria the government has prevented formal activation of the cluster system, on the grounds that clusters exclude government officials and in opposition to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) serving as co-leads.<sup>91</sup> Instead sectors were established and they provide an equivalent function. UNHCR provided support to these despite the

<sup>90</sup> Country case studies: CAR, Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

<sup>91</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Oxfam (2020) “Hard lessons: delivering assistance in government-held areas of Syria”.

government's restrictions on its interaction with them – for instance, through working with the NGO-led Northeast Syria (NES) Forum (for further detail on cluster leadership in case study countries, see Annex 9). The issue of UNHCR's role in transitional settings – where UNHCR has phased out of its cluster leadership role – is an important one. While there are examples of ways in which UNHCR has continued its engagement after clusters have been de-activated (as in Iraq, highlighted below), it would be helpful to have more concrete guidance on how this can be effectively managed.

In countries where the cluster system has not been activated, UNHCR most prominently played a leadership role in coordination in the area of protection. Illustrative examples included the Abkhazia Strategic Partnership, which has been an instrumental platform in supporting inter-agency coordination, and in El Salvador, where clusters have not been activated, UNHCR provides coordination through the protection, CCCM and shelter sectors. It might be useful for UNHCR to reflect more on “cluster-like” and non-activated internal displacement situations.

UNHCR has invested in strengthening its cluster leadership role by building UNHCR cluster coordination capacity through partnerships such as with NORCAP, through in-house skills development initiatives,<sup>92</sup> and through the establishment of rosters and talent pools for each of the three areas of cluster responsibility. Supporting measures included internal communication to promote cluster coordination roles and the Step-up initiative in nine target countries.<sup>93</sup> The investments have yielded positive results in enhancing UNHCR's capacity for leadership of clusters,<sup>94</sup> which in turn has enabled it to fulfil the cluster coordination and information management roles in the countries detailed above.

However, not all initiatives have been sustained. The reportedly successful UNHCR roving cluster coordinator roles for CCCM were discontinued in 2023.<sup>95</sup> Despite the positive internal communication regarding cluster coordination roles, several key informants at both global and case study levels raised concerns about disincentives to take on cluster roles in shelter and CCCM, due to limited career advancement opportunities in these areas within UNHCR. These factors likely contributed to the persistent trend of delays and gaps in promptly filling cluster coordination roles.<sup>96</sup>

Country Offices reported dilemmas when faced with the choice between recruiting an operational staff position and a coordination position, highlighting the lack of guidance on how to prioritize coordination.<sup>97</sup> This theme was also picked up in the UNHCR–WFP evaluation of cluster leadership and in some evaluations of UNHCR responses.<sup>98</sup> Capacity and resource constraints have often been raised, particularly in CCCM, shelter, and at sub-national level by staff, with personnel “double-hatting” in UNHCR operational roles.<sup>99</sup> That practice brings accountability issues for the organization and puts pressure on the individuals fulfilling two or more roles. For example, an individual may be the UNHCR shelter officer and also the shelter cluster coordinator, accountable on the one hand to the UNHCR Country Office and on the other hand to the HC. However, the double-hatting approach has facilitated the extension of cluster coordination to more local levels than would otherwise have been possible: in Somalia, Myanmar and Nigeria, UNHCR provided sustained support for cluster coordination, even when funding for operations was limited.

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<sup>92</sup> For example: training programmes such as Inter-agency Coordination in Emergencies; Inter-Agency Coordination Learning Programme (IACLP); Introduction to Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM). Investments were noted in several global KIIs across clusters; also Cocking, J. et al. (2022) “Independent review of the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy”. Humanitarian Policy Group.

<sup>93</sup> The Step-up initiative, launched in 2019, provided targeted support to nine countries (Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan and Ukraine) on specific thematic, strategic and operational issues. See UNHCR (2020) “UNHCR's initiative on internal displacement 2020–2021”.

<sup>94</sup> The most notable enhanced capacity is in Protection Cluster Coordination: it has the highest percentage of staff position growth, with 227 per cent growth in the last six years, as reported in the UNHCR “Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement 2019–2021”. But global interviews, internal and external, also noted increased attention to and capacity in UNHCR CCCM and shelter coordination roles since 2019.

<sup>95</sup> Global KII.

<sup>96</sup> Survey data: of 119 survey respondents to this question, 32 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that cluster coordinator roles were promptly filled in their country or region. Also case study interview data from Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

<sup>97</sup> Country case study data in Nigeria and Somalia.

<sup>98</sup> UNHCR/WFP Cluster Review [internal] Jan 2023; UNHCR (2022) “Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the 2019/20 Level 3 IDP Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo”; “Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the Yemen crisis”; KIIs in two country case studies and global KIIs.

<sup>99</sup> Country case studies for Colombia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

**Finding 9:** Evidence is inconsistent with regard to UNHCR’s performance in cluster leadership in mixed-population contexts involving refugees and IDPs. There are both positive examples and evidence of shortcomings. In disaster situations, some evidence points to a lack of preparedness by UNHCR to assume roles and responsibilities.



In mixed-population contexts – situations where UNHCR is responsible for refugees and, through the clusters, for IDPs – evaluations found some inconsistencies in the way in which coordination was implemented for IDPs. Refugee and IDP coordination are two different models with different mandated roles and accountabilities for UNHCR. For example, in the Sahel,<sup>100</sup> an evaluation of the UNHCR response found that the refugee coordination model functioned more smoothly than the response to IDPs. Other evaluations noted that UNHCR’s coordination capacity in its sectors of responsibility was inadequate.<sup>101</sup> A 2019 desk review found that the multiplicity of coordination mechanisms, specifically between refugee and IDP response, caused confusion particularly in leadership and accountability.<sup>102</sup> A 2021 evaluation of UNHCR’s child protection programming found that UNHCR was more effective at leading or co-leading coordination in refugee settings.<sup>103</sup>

Disaster contexts bring challenges. UNHCR’s role as protection cluster leader in the humanitarian response to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in southern Africa was difficult because of gaps and discontinuity in deployments. UNHCR was not prepared in advance to assume its coordination functions.<sup>104</sup>

Case studies also highlighted effective coordination models in situations of mixed populations, offering valuable lessons for other contexts, based on the OCHA-UNHCR Joint Note. In Colombia, UNHCR key informants emphasized the effectiveness of the approach taken to actively link the separate coordination structures established for refugees and IDPs – namely, through a “back-to-back” meeting process to ensure synergies between the two coordination systems. In another example, the cluster system in northeast Nigeria integrated the coordination of responses to newly arriving refugees, maintaining a single system, albeit for a relatively small refugee population – around 22,000, compared to the IDP population of more than 2 million.

### 4.2.3 Evidence of results

**Finding 10:** UNHCR achieved significant results in cluster leadership in terms of the numbers of people reached with assistance and protection by the members of clusters and in terms of funds mobilized, although there are differences in funding coverage by cluster, with CCCM levels generally being lower. UNHCR’s leadership has also contributed to more harmonized inter-agency cooperation and improved operational quality, including responsible disengagement. However, reporting systems currently hinder a systematic understanding of outcomes and impact for IDPs. Additionally, the evaluation highlighted the need for greater clarity with regard to the meaningful implementation of UNHCR’s “provider of last resort” responsibilities.



**Coverage.** A significant result of UNHCR’s cluster leadership is the collective reach of cluster members to IDPs with protection, shelter and CCCM assistance.<sup>105</sup> Globally, the numbers of people in need of assistance and those reached through cluster members have both increased significantly in the past few years. In 2019, 61.3 million people were reached as part of the Inter-Agency Plans; in 2022 the equivalent number was

<sup>100</sup> UNHCR (2021) “Evaluation of UNHCR’s Level-3 emergency response to Cyclone Idai”.

<sup>101</sup> “Evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Level 3 emergency in Northern Ethiopia” (November 2020-May 2022); “Evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the Level 3 emergency in Afghanistan (2020–2021)”.

<sup>102</sup> UNHCR (2019) ‘UNHCR’s Leadership and Coordination Role in Refugee Response Settings’, <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/5e3da94e4.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> UNHCR (2022) “Evaluation of UNHCR’s child protection programming (2017–2019)”.

<sup>104</sup> UNHCR (2021) “Evaluation of UNHCR’s Level-3 emergency response to Cyclone Idai”.; see also IAHE (2020) “Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique”. Note that at the country level in disaster situations or in complex emergencies, the three core protection-mandated agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and OHCHR) are expected to consult closely and, under the leadership of the RC/HC, agree which agency will assume the role of Cluster Lead Agency.

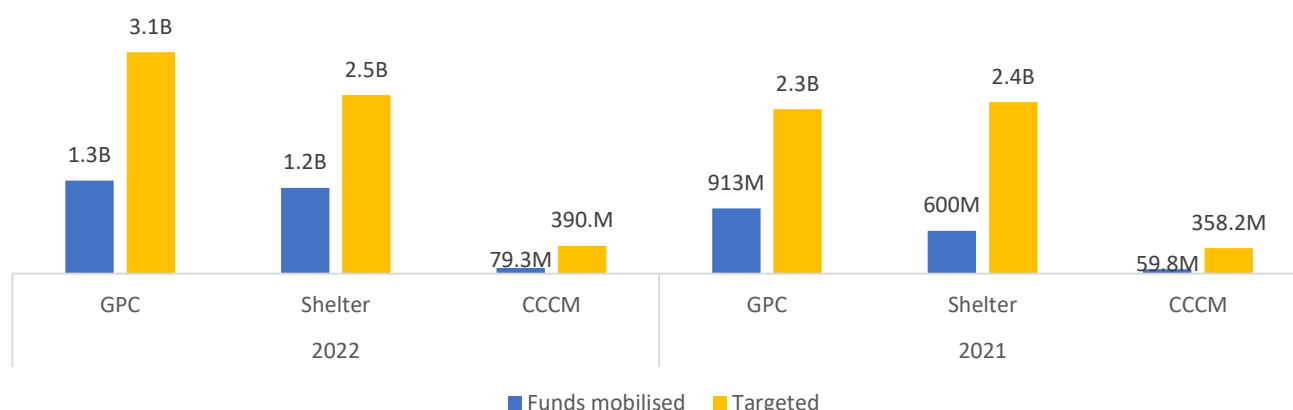
<sup>105</sup> See Global Shelter Cluster (2022) “Achievements report”; see also Global CCCM Cluster (2022) “Global Protection Cluster Annual Report 2022”, produced by UNHCR-led CCCM team [made available to evaluation team].

157 million.<sup>106</sup> Unfortunately there are no easily accessible figures on the numbers of people reached by assistance by cluster, although the Global Shelter Cluster reports that globally the number of people assisted increased from 14 million in 2019 to 19 million in 2022.<sup>107</sup> Relevant data from country case studies gives an indication of protection reach: in Somalia, the CCCM cluster targeted 1 million people and reached 0.8 million, and in Myanmar the protection cluster targeted 2 million people and reached 1.4 million. Shelter and NFI targeted 2.9 million in Syria and reached 1.3 million. (See Table A7 in Annex 9 for more information.) UNHCR’s cluster leadership played a significant role in guiding this assistance in case study countries through regular meetings of members and production of output, with details of gaps and coverage.

Funds mobilized. The scale of funds mobilized for the three areas of UNHCR cluster leadership is significant. There has been a substantial increase in humanitarian appeals over the last five years, nearly doubling the requests made to donors. Although the amount of funds received has also increased, the coverage of appeals has varied, ranging from a high of 64 per cent in 2019 to just over 50 per cent in 2020.<sup>108</sup> However, these aggregated figures disguise wide variations across countries, clusters and years.

In general, the evaluation found that during 2019–2022, protection clusters received more funding in absolute terms and in relation to funding targets, while CCCM funding targets tended to achieve lower levels of coverage, as illustrated in Figure 9. In detail, in 2022 the GPC members mobilized \$1.3 billion (33 per cent of the \$3.1 billion targeted);<sup>109</sup> GSC leadership and members collectively mobilized \$1.2 billion (50 per cent of the \$2.5 billion identified as needed in HRPs);<sup>110</sup> and the CCCM raised \$79.3 million (17.1 per cent of the \$390 million identified as needed in HRPs).<sup>111</sup> This is an increase in absolute and proportionate levels of funds against targets on the previous year (2021).<sup>112</sup> In comparison, in 2022, 33.6 per cent of the target for WASH was received; 48.8 per cent for health; and 30.4 per cent for education.<sup>113</sup>

Figure 9: GPC, Shelter and CCCM cluster funds mobilized and targeted in 2022 and 2021 (US\$)



A more variable pattern of financial coverage emerged across countries, as Figure 10 shows, although the lower rate of funding for CCCM is consistent. Case study data revealed UNHCR cluster coordination teams actively engaged in analysing needs, raising awareness about funding gaps, and proactively seeking funds.<sup>114</sup> The clusters’ analytical work benefited from UNHCR’s investment in information management staff, and there have been established career paths for information management officers within UNHCR. Case study data indicates that financial targets for shelter and protection tend to have been covered at rates of between 30 per cent and 50 per cent, with corresponding coverage of needs. On the other hand, CCCM financial target coverage is often much lower, with levels below 10 per cent coverage in Iraq and El Salvador (see Annex 9 for further details).

<sup>106</sup> OCHA Services (n.d.) “Humanitarian Action”.

<sup>107</sup> Global Shelter Cluster (2023) “2022 Achievements Report”.

<sup>108</sup> Financial Tracking Services (n.d.) “Coordinated plans 2019”; “Coordinated plans 2020”.

<sup>109</sup> Global Protection Cluster (n.d.) “Global Protection Cluster Annual Report 2022”.

<sup>110</sup> Global Shelter Cluster (2023) “2022 Achievements Report”.

<sup>111</sup> Financial Tracking Services (n.d.) “Global Sector Overview 2022”.

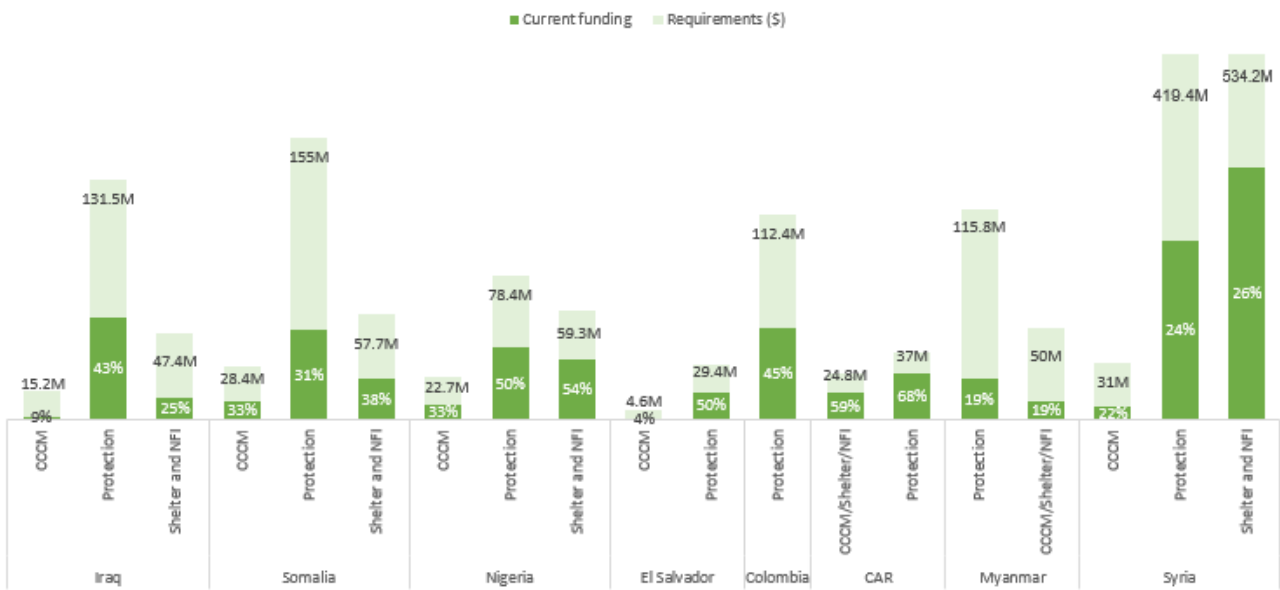
<sup>112</sup> In 2021, GPC mobilized \$913 million of funds (23.1 per cent of the \$2.3 billion required), GSC funded \$600 million (19.2 per cent of the \$2.4 billion required) and CCCM raised \$59.8 million (15 per cent of the \$358.2 million required). Financial Tracking Services (n.d.) “Global Sector Overview 2021”.

<sup>113</sup> UNOCHA (2022) “Financial Tracking Service”, <https://fts.unocha.org/home/2022/plans>

<sup>114</sup> El Salvador, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, CAR, Colombia, Georgia, Myanmar and Syria.



Figure 10: Funding requirements for clusters (US\$) and current funding coverage (%)<sup>115</sup>



Global KIIs indicate that the trend of low coverage for CCCM reflects global priorities for support to material measures – that is, shelter and an awareness of the importance of protection in humanitarian crises. But there is a misunderstanding that CCCM is about promoting use of camps, at a time when the humanitarian community and governments seek to avoid promoting camps. CCCM interviewees were vocal in explaining that promoting camps was not their role; indeed, their role in contributing to non-camp solutions was illustrated in the case of Iraq, where clusters contributed to responsible disengagement as camps closed and people moved. This also raises the question of the need for shelter and CCCM to be separate clusters.

Provider of last resort. The funding gaps for clusters raise the issue of fulfilling the role of “provider of last resort”.<sup>116</sup> The extent to which UNHCR plays the role of provider of last resort is unclear, but so is the benchmark from which to judge the role. In spite of IASC guidance on the concept of provider of last resort, some ambiguity still exists in the way it is understood in the field. Although UNHCR’s commitment to leadership of the clusters was sustained over the years, its own contribution to these sectors in its operational delivery role varied considerably in terms of the significance of the role UNHCR played in operational delivery in the three clusters across countries and years. (This is highlighted in Section 4.1 in discussion of progress against a target to support 25 per cent or more of HRP budgets in areas of cluster responsibility.)

A recent review of UNHCR’s response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo found divergent views within UNHCR as well as different views as to the extent to which UNHCR could be expected to act as a provider of last resort for the protection cluster.<sup>117</sup> In Yemen, an evaluation found that the cluster system generally worked well but the UNHCR-led protection cluster faced challenges. Only 22 per cent of IDP sites were receiving humanitarian assistance and the weakest point was the lack of protection mainstreaming across the board – which, as the evaluation pointed out, was the responsibility of all agencies.<sup>118</sup> The limited consideration across agencies to protection is also relevant to UNHCR’s promotion of, and the Humanitarian Country Team’s

<sup>115</sup> Please note that figures for the Protection Cluster and Shelter and NFI in Syria extend beyond the vertical axis of the chart, causing a visual mismatch. Nonetheless, the reported figures in the chart are accurate, with the Protection Cluster (including all areas of responsibilities) requiring \$419.4 million and achieving 24 per cent coverage, and with Shelter and NFI requiring \$532.3 million and achieving 26 per cent coverage. To ensure the chart’s readability, the axis was capped at a maximum of \$200 million. Source: OCHA Services Humanitarian Action Analysing needs and response, 2022 Country Cluster data, population and financial figures for 2022. Available at [humanitarianaction.info/overview](https://humanitarianaction.info/overview)

<sup>116</sup> Full definition of “provider of last resort” from IASC operational guidance is that, “Where there are critical gaps in humanitarian response, it is the responsibility of cluster leads to call on all relevant humanitarian partners to address these. If this fails, then depending on the urgency, the cluster lead as ‘provider of last resort’ may need to commit itself to filling the gap. If, however, funds are not forthcoming for these activities, the cluster lead cannot be expected to implement these activities, but should continue to work with the Humanitarian Coordinator and donors to mobilize the necessary resources.” IASC (2008) “Operational Guidance – Provider of Last Resort”, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/documents-public/operational-guidance-provider-last-resort>

<sup>117</sup> UNHCR (2022) “Evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the 2019/20 Level 3 IDP Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo”.

<sup>118</sup> “Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis”, July 2022. The issue of collective responsibility for protection is explored in the independent review of the IASC protection policy, 2022. It found, among other points, a lack of consistent understanding of protection across agencies and a lack of collective ownership for protection, compounded by overly complicated coordinator structures.

responsibility for, the centrality of protection (discussed in Section 4.3). It also raises questions about the meaning of “provider of last resort” with particular regard to protection.

As mentioned earlier, the role of provider of last resort is not necessarily to fill the gaps but to exert all efforts to ensure that gaps are filled. In case study countries, cluster leads were found to be active in highlighting the resource gaps to donors and within the relevant Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and were supported by the UNHCR Country Office management in their efforts. But it is clear that significant gaps remain – as evidenced by the review of the populations identified in HRPs and cluster documentation as being in need of humanitarian assistance and those that receive assistance. Obviously, this is due largely to insufficient funding of appeals (a fact recognized in IASC guidance), but it raises the question, both to the evaluation and to UNHCR and beyond, of whether “provider of last resort” is a meaningful expectation of cluster leaders and how to judge whether this aspect of the cluster leadership role has been adequately fulfilled. As this issue was also raised in the UNHCR-WFP Cluster Review, it would seem appropriate to consider a broader discussion of how the concept is being applied in other clusters.

Outcomes for IDPs and enhancement of quality of responses. All three clusters that UNHCR leads or co-leads issue regular reports on their activities, both at the global and country levels. These include reports on such indicators as number of protection interventions, number of shelters built, number of capacity-building initiatives, and number of shelters rehabilitated or winterized. The tri-cluster platform provides important sharing of information between the UNHCR cluster leads in protection, shelter and CCCM. However, there are virtually no regular reports of outcomes, such as with regard to whether safety levels have been raised or whether shelters are sustainable, nor are the protection outcomes of shelter and CCCM interventions discussed, although it is clear that provision of adequate shelter and strong camp management affect the security of IDPs. Although development of outcome indicators is a difficult task and not unique to the UNHCR-led clusters, it is important for both programming and fundraising.

An important result of UNHCR cluster leadership has been the development of measures that can enhance the quality of the inter-agency response. At the global level, relevant initiatives have included the GSC’s important work on ‘Greening the Response’ to reduce the environmental impact of its activities. Together with the global co-lead IFRC, UNHCR has also developed a Shelter Severity Classification system, a process that took many years to facilitate. The GPC has developed technical tools, such as “Methodology for calculating protection severity and estimating people in need (PiN) at a household and area level” (August 2023) as well as a Protection Advocacy Toolkit for use by a wide constituency. The CCCM cluster launched the handbook “Minimum standards for camp management” in 2021 and provides training in camp management. There is limited evidence from the data collected for this evaluation with regard to the extent to which some of these initiatives have contributed to enhanced quality, but they certainly have the potential to do so. The GPC’s annual reports, updates and factsheets provide important information and analysis, disseminated to a broad array of stakeholders.

Furthermore, at country level, UNHCR cluster coordinators led relevant training initiatives for cluster members, as seen in protection and CCCM in Somalia, Nigeria and Myanmar. Cluster coordinators have also developed harmonized approaches, such as in protection risk monitoring in Nigeria and Myanmar.

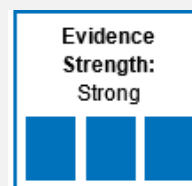
Strong evidence exists that UNHCR cluster leads played an effective role in advocacy by providing analysis and collective messages on issues such as camp closures and conditions (in Myanmar, Nigeria and Somalia). The collective voice helped to protect the individual agencies’ operational space, particularly in politically sensitive environments. In El Salvador, UNHCR through its sector leadership, notably in the protection sector, has facilitated dialogue between sector members with the government; civil society members strongly appreciated this.

Results in facilitating coordination beyond clusters. A result of good cluster leadership has been a contribution to the sustained inter-agency coordination beyond the cluster system and, more generally, to a process for responsible disengagement from direct humanitarian assistance. The evaluation found evidence of clusters resulting in “spin-off structures” which grew out of UNHCR-led cluster coordination. For example, in Myanmar the Kachin Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG), co-led by UNHCR and UNDP, grew from being a subgroup of the protection cluster. In Iraq the inter-agency protection platform evolved from the protection cluster, following deactivation of the cluster system, and the clusters contributed in other ways to the transition as IDPs moved from camps to communities – for example, by providing information for IDPs to make informed decisions about their future. The responsible approach to disengagement evolved despite the limited guidance to clusters on how best to manage their deactivation. (See Box 3, and further discussion in Section 4.4.)

### Box 3: Lessons from Iraq on responsible disengagement

- A particular challenge to clusters is how to disengage and assure a smooth transition as responsibility is handed back to governments. In December 2022, the UN deactivated the cluster system in Iraq as part of the transition towards greater focus on development interventions, and it strengthened public authorities' ownership. In previous years UNHCR had provided significant support to all three clusters, and its leadership was widely appreciated.
- The CCCM cluster, with its extensive experience with IDPs living in camps and informal settlements, possessed vital insights on IDPs' solution intentions and their perceptions of obstacles to their return. CCCM worked closely with the DSWG, established in 2020, and its subgroups to develop meaningful ways of sharing CCCM's information and experience with both community engagement and coordination. At the same time, IOM and UNHCR committed to continue camp management support through 2023.
- UNHCR also set up a Protection Platform, co-chaired with the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), to provide strategic guidance, advice and technical support to the UN and actors supporting the UN's development, and technical support to the UN and other stakeholders on key protection issues. While the clusters were deactivated, UNHCR found a way to continue its engagement.
- A key lesson related to the lack of guidance on the deactivation of clusters meant that the clusters had to "learn by doing", indicating a need for more practical guidance on deactivation.

**Finding 11:** *The evaluation found general satisfaction with UNHCR's leadership of the three clusters, although some evidence pointed to reservations about the style of leadership. The evaluation found that some co-leadership arrangements have contributed to some tensions and inefficiencies, reducing effectiveness.*



Evaluation evidence<sup>119</sup> indicated overall satisfaction with UNHCR's cluster leadership role. GSC surveys found that 95 per cent of stakeholders were satisfied with the performance of shelter clusters in 2022.<sup>120</sup> Country case studies found high levels of satisfaction among UNHCR-led or co-led clusters (or cluster-like) systems, including in Nigeria, El Salvador and Somalia.

There were inefficiencies and challenges with regard to UNHCR's co-leadership of the CCCM cluster in Somalia and Nigeria, with slow decision-making by the two co-leads and competition between them over resources and profile. More broadly, this competition and the tensions surrounding it were mentioned by multiple interviewees in the evaluation. They were characterised by one senior official as an important obstacle to collective outcomes, and "the elephant in the room" in terms their adverse impact on inter-agency coordination and governance. Lack of clarity in the division of labour between IOM and UNHCR is not a new issue.<sup>121</sup> There was evidence of efforts in some countries by each organization to improve the relationship, such as regional-level and country-level agreements for cooperation in West Africa and Nigeria respectively. Tension between UNHCR and IOM also affects HCT dynamics and given the expansion of IOM's humanitarian engagement, improved relations between the two agencies would be beneficial.

A 2022 independent review of the IASC protection policy was critical of IASC members and of the GPC, led by UNHCR, including in relation to the limited application of policy commitments to strengthen protection and the overly complicated coordination structures.<sup>122</sup> Key informants in this evaluation complimented UNHCR's leadership of clusters in general, but several global and country-level key informants also noted that UNHCR sometimes treated other members of the clusters, particularly NGOs, as junior – rather than equal – partners. Several key informants used the word "arrogant" in describing UNHCR's relationships with other agencies. Country case study interviewees in two countries as well as the 2019 review of UNHCR's role in refugee

<sup>119</sup> Case study interviews and data in Nigeria, Somalia and Syria. Several global-level KIIs.

<sup>120</sup> Global Shelter Cluster (2023) "2022 Achievements Report".

<sup>121</sup> See for example, "UNHCR Country Portfolio Evaluations: Afghanistan, Angola, Iraq, Morocco. Synthesis Report"; "Evaluation of UNHCR's Country Operation, Afghanistan (2012–2019)". Also in two global KIIs.

<sup>122</sup> Cocking, J. et al. (2022) "Independent review of the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy", Humanitarian Policy Group.

response<sup>123</sup> noted the need for UNHCR to adopt a more facilitative style to cluster leadership, noting in particular the importance of such skills in contexts where UNHCR's financial support to operations in that sector is limited. There was also some, albeit limited, evidence of UNHCR, in its operational role, operating in ways that were not supportive to its cluster leadership by not following cluster guidance or participating fully as one member among others.<sup>124</sup>

Having staff work in a double-hatted way, a strategy used in challenging funding environments when resources are scarce, can raise accountability challenges. It can cause tension between operational and cluster leadership roles, most noticeably when mobilizing funds for the cluster and for UNHCR's own work. Furthermore, in some locations clusters have wanted to adopt a strong advocacy role. This has not always been matched by UNHCR's own advocacy, given different assessments of the political environment for advocacy messages. Although this illustrates how UNHCR is providing full independent space to cluster coordinators, it also reduces UNHCR's weight in support of the cluster action. However, in Nigeria the evaluation found that this dual approach (with the cluster being more outspoken than the Country Office) was seen as a strength, with the dual roles enabling strong advocacy, such as on camp closures in Borno, northern Nigeria, and also enabling UNHCR to sustain its relationships with authorities and operational space.

## 4.3 Theme 3: UNHCR's promotion of the centrality of protection

### 4.3.1 Introduction

In 2013 the IASC Principals issued a statement on the centrality of protection; this was followed in 2016 by the IASC policy on protection in humanitarian action.<sup>125</sup> These documents underscore that protection is the outcome of all humanitarian work. For UNHCR, "the centrality of protection means more than protection mainstreaming. For UNHCR, it includes ensuring that leadership, coordination, and engagement in protection and all sectors is more strategic, aligned and directed toward a stronger protection response."<sup>126</sup> Centrality of protection is highlighted in most of the documents as being a principal focus of UNHCR's work with IDPs.<sup>127</sup> UNHCR activities include technical support and advice to the HCT to fulfil its roles for centrality of protection and also advocacy and support for the development of laws, policies and practice to strengthen the protection of IDPs. Although centrality of protection goes beyond protection mainstreaming,<sup>128</sup> another essential component of UNHCR's efforts to advance the centrality of protection are the support and guidance that the organization gives to its own staff and other humanitarian actors on how to incorporate protection mainstreaming principles into humanitarian work. This section considers UNHCR's work in promoting the centrality of protection, focusing on UNHCR's efforts to support HCT responsibilities and UNHCR's work in supporting the development of relevant laws and policies, which contribute to the enabling environment for protection at the country level.

#### Summary of key findings on UNHCR's promotion of the centrality of protection and their implications

- **Relevance:** UNHCR's adaptability has enabled appropriate approaches to strengthen laws and policies to protect IDPs in different country contexts. UNHCR's provision of data and analysis through its operational and cluster leadership roles to support HCT responsibilities for the centrality of protection is consistent with its policies, although HCT action has been inconsistent. UNHCR's approach to advocacy in complex environments, including use of quiet diplomacy, enables the organization to protect operational space, although this opens it up to some criticism, particularly when governments commit human rights abuses.
- **Effectiveness:** UNHCR has effectively mainstreamed protection in both its operational response and cluster leadership roles and advocated for the centrality of protection within the HCT with contributions to HCT strategies. However, the effectiveness of its efforts is hindered by ambiguities in the concept

<sup>123</sup> UNHCR (2019) "UNHCR's leadership and coordination role in refugee response settings"

<sup>124</sup> One country case study and one global KII.

<sup>125</sup> IASC (2013) "Statement: the centrality of protection in humanitarian action"; IASC (2016) "Policy: protection in humanitarian action"

<sup>126</sup> Global Protection Cluster (2023) "The Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action – Questions and Answers" page 1, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/centrality-protection-humanitarian-action-questions-and-answers#:~:text=The%20centrality%20of%20protection%20means,toward%20a%20stronger%20protection%20response> .

<sup>127</sup> See for example, UNHCR (2022) "UNHCR Emergency Handbook" (currently under revision), <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-principles/policy-unhcr%E2%80%99s-engagement-situations-internal-displacement-%E2%80%98idp-policy%E2%80%99>

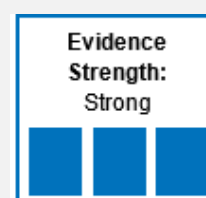
<sup>128</sup> Global Protection Cluster (2023) "The centrality of protection in humanitarian action - questions and answers".

and limits of UNHCR’s human capacity. UNHCR’s efforts in promoting the centrality of protection have also strengthened laws and policies on internal displacement, but gaps remain in their implementation. This suggests a need for more focus on supporting and tracking the application of strategies, laws and policies. In 2024, UNHCR’s Rights Mapping Tool will be adapted for IDP contexts which will help to promote a more consistent analysis of IDP laws and policies and monitoring of their implementation. Strengthening UNHCR’s internal capacity to provide technical experts on IDP law and also Country Office advocacy skills would be beneficial.

- **Connectedness:** There are varying interpretations of the centrality of protection within and outside UNHCR, as well as inconsistencies in its application by the HCTs across countries. UNHCR can play an important role in building cross-organizational understanding and commitment to the centrality of protection but needs to use language that is clear and accessible to other partners. UNHCR presently co-leads the IASC Task Force on Centrality of Protection (CoP) with InterAction. The High Commissioner is Co-Champion of CoP within the IASC to support implementation of the IASC action plan on CoP. Work is under way to finalize tools which will guide its implementation. UNHCR should clarify internally how it responds to inconsistent application of centrality of protection commitments by the HCTs.
- **Coherence:** UNHCR is working largely within the parameters of the UNHCR 2019 IDP policy as well as the IASC Protection Policy. Guidance to individual staff on the role they can play in advocacy and promotion of the centrality of protection would be beneficial.
- **Strategic positioning:** Protection is a core mandate for UNHCR, and it has comparative advantage in this area, including through its legal expertise, relationships with authorities and consistent advocacy for the centrality of protection. Strategic positioning vis-à-vis the international community can build on these strengths to support UNHCR’s technical advisory role in protection, advocacy for IDP protection and encouragement within HCTs for more consistent application of commitments to the centrality of protection. While UNHCR’s advocacy for the protection of IDPs has had successes, the organization could benefit from clearer communication of protection concepts and strengthened human capacities to implement its strategies better.

### 4.3.2 Approaches and adaptation to context

**Finding 12:** Evaluation evidence highlights that UNHCR’s strategies and approaches to protection are developed to respond to the opportunities and risks in the specific operational and political contexts. This occurs particularly through measures to strengthen the legal and policy framework, and to some extent through advocacy and support to HCT responsibilities for the centrality of protection. But there are some inconsistencies in the extent to which the centrality of protection has been applied across all countries by the HCTs.



The evaluation case studies found that UNHCR Country Offices responded well to their specific contextual circumstances to promote the centrality of protection by adapting advocacy and approaches to strengthen law and policy that protect IDPs.<sup>129</sup> UNHCR provided a receptive government in Somalia with technical assistance and legal expertise on drafting IDP laws and policies; it provided technical assistance in Colombia to the government and CSOs; it supported application of a new IDP law in El Salvador in 2020–2021, having already supported its development; it worked with authorities in Syria on protection issues and took a visibly active role in advocacy for the civilian character of IDP camps; in Georgia it worked on issues ranging from tax policy to IDP travel; in Nigeria it provided technical assistance to the government in domesticating the Kampala Convention; and in Iraq it supported government efforts to incorporate IDPs into development plans and programmes.

UNHCR has demonstrated flexibility in adapting its approach when contexts changed.<sup>130</sup> In Myanmar UNHCR changed its advocacy strategy following the 2021 coup, shifting more of its activity to collective UNCT

<sup>129</sup> Evidence from Colombia, El Salvador, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

<sup>130</sup> Other cases where UNHCR adapted its approach in response to the changing context include Georgia, Syria, El Salvador, Colombia, Iraq and Somalia.

approaches and increasing its local-level advocacy. When Iraq implemented camp closures and the cluster system was deactivated, UNHCR focused on mainstreaming protection in new laws and policies and promoted protection during camp closures.

UNHCR showed its flexibility by adapting its strategy in countries where advocacy for protection is politically sensitive. In Myanmar and Syria, for example, where governments and de facto authorities are less favourably disposed towards IDPs, key informants highlighted the risk associated with public advocacy by international actors: UN agencies that pursue this may find themselves being limited in their access, or may face the risk of expulsion as has occurred in recent years. In those circumstances, UNHCR's advocacy work is less focused on law and policy, and diplomacy is carried out quietly and privately, including through support of civil society actors, quiet interventions at the local level, or in conjunction with cluster advocacy efforts. For example, in a challenging environment in northeast Nigeria, where an assertive state-level government went ahead with camp closures and was resistant to advocacy, UNHCR promoted adherence to principles of voluntary return, primarily through cluster-based advocacy. It was thereby able to protect its own operational space – although some external stakeholders were critical of this approach.

UNHCR has played an important role in some countries in assisting the HCT to develop a strategy on centrality of protection; this has included providing data on protection needs and technical expertise on advocacy strategies. In both Nigeria and Somalia, UNHCR provided technical support to the design of HCT strategies on the centrality of protection. In Myanmar, UNHCR shares protection monitoring data and other analyses with the HCT and makes recommendations to other members about actions they could take. In El Salvador, on the other hand, the focus of UNHCR's promotion of inter-agency responsibility for the centrality of protection has been through ensuring that protection is reflected in the UN Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). Presently it is unclear what "success" means in the context of HCT engagement with IASC Task Force on Centrality of Protection and it would be helpful if the IASC could provide further guidance on this.

There is, however, other evidence of a more mixed picture. Many evaluations considered that UNHCR had been successful in advocating for protection in IDP-only responses but that the situation was more complex in mixed situations.<sup>131</sup> In Sudan (2018–2021), for example, protection of IDPs was not given commensurate attention by UNHCR compared to refugee-related emergencies, despite the scale of some IDP crises. This finding links to the question of equity in UNHCR programming, discussed in further detail in Section 4.6.1. It also highlights the importance of understanding the disparate conditions faced by different groups whom UNHCR assists, which some new monitoring methods such as the RMS have the potential to identify (discussed further in Section 4.6.5).

UNHCR's approach to the promotion of the centrality of protection through advocacy has been supported by relationships with CSOs and, at times, its role and experience with refugees as well as its cluster leadership role. In some case study countries, the evaluation found that UNHCR relations with CSOs played a key role in advocacy on protection issues. Evaluation case studies in Myanmar, El Salvador, Syria and Colombia found that UNHCR had made connections with some of the civil society initiatives that were already promoting protection. The El Salvador case study, for example, found strong evidence that UNHCR established an important role as an independent facilitator of dialogue between civil society and the government, enabling UNHCR to provide a distinct and appreciated role that built on and enhanced civil society advocacy efforts. However, there was also evidence in some countries, including in Nigeria, that CSOs, particularly those that were not part of clusters, were unaware of UNHCR advocacy or felt excluded by it.

UNHCR also employed "quiet approaches" to advocacy such as supporting civil society actions or through private meetings with authorities. These are, by definition, less visible; UNHCR might be perceived as working closely with the government and in tension with some humanitarian principles, particularly those of independence and impartiality. In El Salvador, the case study noted that government, but also noted the risks associated with being perceived as closely aligned with the government in the increasingly complex environment. In Nigeria, UNHCR's co-led protection cluster has been more outspoken on camp closure and risks to IDPs' protection than UNHCR has on its own; some external stakeholders thought that UNHCR should be more outspoken. But this approach enabled UNHCR to maintain its operational space and relationships with the authorities as well as to provide inputs to cluster-led advocacy. External stakeholders also highlighted the importance of collective approaches by the HCT in difficult conditions, as was the case in Myanmar.

However, tensions remain in complex conditions when it comes to balancing these roles, raising questions about UNHCR's independence, as noted in interviews with both internal and external actors. For example, in Syria

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<sup>131</sup> Betts, J. and Elo, S. (2022) "UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement (2017–2022)": "Summary of Evaluative Evidence" [internal report]

UNHCR followed the government's restrictions on humanitarian actions in order to deliver assistance and protection to IDPs. Some staff want UNHCR to be more outspoken generally; for example, 17 respondents (a significant proportion on open-ended questions)<sup>132</sup> wanted UNHCR to take a stronger stance on addressing the violation of IDPs' rights and to actively involve local staff expertise in advocacy efforts organization-wide.

UNHCR's role in relation to refugees has provided some leverage for its advocacy for IDPs. Case study interviews, for example in Iraq and Nigeria, found that UNHCR's activities on behalf of refugees gives the organization greater leverage to negotiate with the government and to exercise influence on behalf of IDPs. UNHCR's legal expertise and history of support for the Kampala Convention have been important enabling factors in African countries such as Nigeria.

**Finding 13:** *Work by UNHCR to mainstream protection within its programmes was complementary to the promotion of the centrality of protection. However, the scope of UNHCR approaches in some contexts was limited due to uncertainty among some UNHCR staff regarding the meaning of the term "centrality of protection" and how to implement it as well as restrictions posed by the multiplicity of demands on UNHCR's human capacity.*

Evidence  
Strength:  
Moderate



There was no common understanding of what centrality of protection means in practice.<sup>133</sup> Key informants both from within and outside UNHCR were often unclear as to how UNHCR's promotion of the centrality of protection differed from UNHCR's specific and/or specialized protection activities for IDPs. There was also uncertainty as to how to approach the difference between these aspects. While there were commitments to the role, evaluation data has found differing interpretations of whether the term referred to HCT approaches only, protection mainstreaming or all of UNHCR's protection advocacy efforts.<sup>134</sup> Key informants stated that discussions organized around the importance of keeping people safe, as a result of UNHCR's actions, were understood more clearly, particularly with external stakeholders.

UNHCR has worked to mainstream protection in all of its programmes and has supported protection mainstreaming in the broader humanitarian community, in government and in humanitarian sector activities. Although other agencies have responsibility for mainstreaming in other sectors, UNHCR has provided training and capacity development on protection in other settings, both through its own operational role and through its cluster roles in Iraq, Somalia, Myanmar and Nigeria. Activities included provision of guidance notes, training, and close cooperation with key partners, including government actors and others. However, in Yemen it was found that mainstreaming of protection in other sectoral interventions had not received the necessary attention or funding, and also that the protection cluster had not provided the necessary support for mainstreaming.<sup>135</sup> Another review<sup>136</sup> criticized HCTs' addressing of protection and referred more broadly to the challenges and gaps in leadership and accountability. Key informants indicated that the effectiveness of HCT strategies is heavily influenced by the role of the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator, although there is limited systematic evidence on this issue.

UNHCR, together with the Global Protection Cluster and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, established the International Protection Expert Group in 2021 which carries out protection support missions, post-mission targeted follow-up and global-level advocacy. Missions have been carried out in Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Honduras.<sup>137</sup>

A constraining factor on UNHCR's efforts to promote the centrality of protection has been limited human resources. For example, in Nigeria there is a complex set of national political processes and numerous inter-agency and inter-governmental initiatives; staff rotation policies put a strain on continuity of UNHCR advocacy on legal issues. Similarly, evaluations of UNHCR's responses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Cyclone Idai found that the turnover of UNHCR-led protection cluster coordinators had created gaps.<sup>138</sup> KIIs within UNHCR showed that staff at many levels feel less well equipped to advocate for protection in IDP contexts

<sup>132</sup> Data from an open-ended question about how UNHCR Country Offices or Regional Bureaux could better advocate for the rights of IDPs and the centrality of protection. Out of the 59 responses to the question, 17 respondents (29 per cent) suggested that UNHCR should adopt a stronger approach to address violations of IDPs' rights, especially engaging local staff.

<sup>133</sup> Global KIIs and country-level KIIs.

<sup>134</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Evaluation of UNHCR's response to multiple emergencies in the Central Sahel Region: Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali"

<sup>135</sup> IASC (2022) "Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the Yemen crisis".

<sup>136</sup> Cocking, J. et al. (2022) "Independent review of the implementation of the IASC Protection Policy", ODI.

<sup>137</sup> See UNHCR, "International Protection Expert Group on IDPs", <https://www.unhcr.org/us/idp-protection-expert-group>

<sup>138</sup> UNHCR (2021) "Evaluation of UNHCR's Level-3 Emergency Response to Cyclone Idai".

than they do in refugee contexts given their experience and training. The survey also called on the development of simple messaging on the centrality of protection to support individual staff in their roles.

### 4.3.3 Evidence of results

**Finding 14:** UNHCR’s work in promoting the protection of IDPs through advocacy has resulted in clear, tangible, measurable results in terms of governments’ development and adoption of laws and policies on IDPs. Results of other advocacy initiatives have been less clear, reflecting general difficulties in measuring protection outcomes, particularly when many actors are engaged in advocacy.

Evidence  
Strength:  
Moderate



Evaluation country case studies<sup>139</sup> found strong evidence of results, or at least progress towards results, in the form of new IDP laws and policies incorporating protection. Although implementation of these laws and policies is often weak, the adoption of normative frameworks is important. It is a tangible sign of governmental commitment to IDPs and provides a tool which advocates can use to hold governments to account. The development of national laws and policies is an essential step in protecting IDPs, and thus is an important result.

Examples of progress in laws and policy to which UNHCR contributed with technical support or advocacy included the following:

- In Iraq, policy and strategy documents were adopted at the national and local levels, such as: the National Development Plan (2018–2022) third strategic goal; the National Plan for Getting the Displaced Back to their Liberated Areas (in 2020); the (Female) Survivor Law (passed in 2021); the legal decree to formalize occupancy certificates for Yazidis’ land rights (in 2021); and the Provisional Plans (2019–2022).
- In El Salvador the government passed an IDP law in 2020.
- In Nigeria significant progress was made in the domestication of the Kampala Convention, which provides protection to IDPs. Although the extent of UNHCR’s contribution to these is hard to quantify, there was strong evidence from external and internal stakeholders of the significance of UNHCR’s contribution through advocacy, technical advice, convening roles and sustained support to processes, often over many years.

These results have derived partly from UNHCR’s legal and protection expertise at country, regional and global levels that for external stakeholders means UNHCR has a unique strength and capability for supporting the development of IDP laws, policies and strategies. In the examples above, UNHCR Country Offices, sometimes bolstered by Regional Bureau and headquarters (HQ) capacity, supported advocacy and technical advisory efforts. UNHCR’s position as GPC lead also gives weight to its role and provides additional resources and initiatives that support work with partners at country level. For example, in 2022 the GPC made available a global database on IDP law and policy<sup>140</sup> and published a comprehensive report, assessing the status of national IDP laws and policies as well as regional normative developments. In June 2023, in collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, the GPC organized a cross-regional forum on the implementation of laws and policies on internal displacement.

UNHCR has devoted substantial energy to supporting national governments, both to adopt IDP-specific laws and policies and to incorporate IDPs into legislation and policies on broader issues, such as national development plans. For example, in Nigeria, UNHCR played a key role in the development of law and policy, providing protection for IDPs for more than 15 years. This included supporting the domestication of the Kampala Convention through provision of technical assistance, convening relevant actors to work together, coordination with regional initiatives (the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Regional Bureau), and relationship-building with the evolving government architecture. In El Salvador, in early 2023 alone, in partnership with the Supreme Court of Justice, UNHCR held a series of conferences for 600 community judicial

<sup>139</sup> El Salvador, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Colombia and Georgia. In some cases, such as El Salvador, new laws were adopted; in others, such as Iraq, UNHCR advised on incorporation of IDPs into development plans.

<sup>140</sup> See more about the global database on IDP law and policy at:

<https://www.gpcdata.im/cms/node/380#:~:text=As%20of%20July%202022%2C%20the,applied%2C%20read%20the%20methodology%20here>



facilitators, which resulted in a community-based network to raise awareness on displacement issues, identify protection cases and support conflict mediation in remote regions.

UNHCR is able to draw on its different roles, including its operational role and its role in data, analysis and evidence production. Two examples identified in evaluation case studies that illustrate this are the use of data to support advocacy in Myanmar and combining operational delivery with advocacy in Georgia (see Box 4).

#### **Box 4: Lessons on synergies between UNHCR roles for advocacy – examples from Myanmar and Georgia**

**Use of data to support advocacy in Myanmar.** In a durable solutions perspective, landmine contamination is a major yet sometimes overlooked issue that can prevent the safe return of displaced people. This is the case in Kachin, Myanmar (and other areas). In that province, rather than directly advocating for mine clearance to enable safe returns, UNHCR carried out an intention survey that provided systematic evidence that the lack of a sense of safety among IDPs is a key impediment to their safe and voluntary return. Knowing that camp closures and returns are key government objectives, UNHCR drew on the evidence from the survey to engage with the government, shaping the discussion to be in line with both the core normative principles governing returns, and with the authorities' own interests and priorities. These discussions are ongoing.

**Combining operational delivery with advocacy in Georgia.** In Georgia UNHCR was part of successful negotiations, organization and support of the establishment of a humanitarian corridor, particularly benefiting pensioners. This achievement improved freedom of movement and provided better access to essential services, enhancing the quality of life for vulnerable individuals. Since the opening of the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) for general crossing in July 2021, UNHCR shuttle buses have provided transportation for older, infirm and other vulnerable people to cross the ABL. More than 82,000 passengers were transported by UNHCR shuttle buses in 2021. In addition, a group of NGO youth volunteers was engaged by UNHCR to help to organize the humanitarian corridor.

## 4.4 Theme 4: UNHCR provision of data, analysis and evidence of internal displacement situations and protection risks

### 4.4.1 Introduction

The 2019 IDP policy outlines UNHCR's goals for data and information management, emphasizing proactive collaboration to improve protection-sensitive data in IDP situations. This aligns with the Secretary-General's Action Agenda, which underscores the importance of high-quality, trusted data as the basis for action in situations of internal displacement. The UN commits to assisting states in collecting, managing and using internal displacement data according to international standards. This section of the report focuses on UNHCR's provision of data, analysis and evidence to the sector rather than its own use of data.

#### **Summary of key findings on the provision of data, analysis and evidence, and their implications**

- **Relevance:** The relevance of UNHCR's approach has been bolstered by a focus on identified evidence gaps and by leveraging UNHCR's extensive network of partners and rich operational data sources. This suggests a need for continued and increased emphasis of such a focused approach, informed by analysis of evidence gaps and collaboration with other actors that are active in different country contexts.
- **Effectiveness:** UNHCR's investment in data and analysis capabilities has proven valuable, but capacity limitations persist. These underscore the need for ongoing investment in staff as well as financial resourcing of Country Offices to conduct regular, systematic data collection. Furthermore, although UNHCR's evidence is appreciated and used, its potential can be enhanced by more engagement with the intended users of products and monitoring of such interactions.
- **Connectedness:** Effective working relationships with other agencies have been enhanced by data-sharing agreements and have been hampered where they do not exist, implying the need to develop such agreements with other agencies. UNHCR strengths in data and evidence have been enhanced by combining forces with agencies, building on their comparative advantages. Despite effective

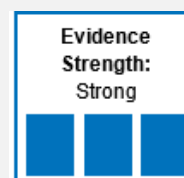
collaboration with agencies to address evidence gaps, UNHCR's data and evidence provision is affected by relationship tensions and capacity limitations. In particular, UNHCR should increase cooperation with IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to ensure synergies in data collection and analysis. Current initiatives such as the RMS have the potential to be a valuable resource at an inter-agency level to contribute to contextual understanding and to monitoring area-based approaches. UNHCR should consider sharing this data (for example, with cluster members, or other organizations involved in durable solutions at country level). It should also make the data available as open source data for other analysis. Such sharing is in line with the RMS guidance.<sup>141</sup>

- **Coherence:** There is a clear willingness to fulfil policy commitments to be a provider of data, analysis and evidence, but this is not always feasible in practice due to financial and human resource constraints. This implies the need for more resourcing for this role or clarity on when to prioritize it.
- **Strategic positioning:** UNHCR's comparative advantage for data collection lies in its extensive field presence and the richness of the operational data it collects. The advantage is enhanced when data is collected systematically, when it is shared with others and when used to strengthen government data management. UNHCR is strategically positioned as a key data provider in internal displacement situations; however, to maximize influence, it must address internal capacity challenges, and resource data and evidence processes adequately and predictably,. These are strengths to inform future strategic positioning.

UNHCR has invested in strengthening data collection and analysis, including the creation of Data Information Management and Analysis (DIMA) units in Regional Bureaux. UNHCR's "Data transformation strategy 2020–2025" declares an aim to make UNHCR a trusted leader in data related to refugees and affected populations, promoting collaboration and transparency. UNHCR has also developed relevant data-related partnerships, including with the World Bank for collaboration on the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC),<sup>142</sup> with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) on harmonization of global IDP estimates, as well as several partnerships at country level to enhance IDP data collection and analysis.<sup>143</sup> Data collection and analysis is a key component of the UNHCR cooperation agreement with IOM.<sup>144</sup> Other notable initiatives with which UNHCR cooperates include the Joint Internal Profiling Service (JIPS)<sup>145</sup> and hosting the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS).<sup>146</sup>

#### 4.4.2 Approaches and adaptation to context

**Finding 15:** *There is clear evidence that UNHCR has developed and tailored effective approaches at country level to address data, analysis and evidence deficiencies. UNHCR's extensive network of partners and government relationships serves as the foundation for a range of roles.*



The evaluation identified a number of ways in which UNHCR has been addressing this role in different country contexts.<sup>147</sup> Roles and examples included: sharing relevant data collected as part of its operations, such as assessments; setting up dedicated systems to collect data for collective use, such as protection monitoring, and also systems for accountability to affected people (AAP), through both UNHCR's own and cluster roles; support to government systems; facilitation of harmonized inter-agency data and evidence systems in-country; contributing resources, expertise and as part of inter-agency initiatives; and specific studies as part of UNHCR solo and joint initiatives.

<sup>141</sup> UNHCR (2023) "Results Monitoring Surveys: Design and implementation management guidance"

<sup>142</sup> JDC was established by UNHCR and the World Bank to enhance timely and evidence-based decision-making regarding forced displacement, focusing on socioeconomic data and international standards.

<sup>143</sup> IDMC monitors and provides data and analysis on internal displacement globally, synthesized in the annual Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID).

<sup>144</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Serving and protecting together: IOM/UNHCR Framework of Engagement". IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) gathers and analyses data on the mobility, vulnerabilities and needs of displaced and mobile populations in 93 countries.

<sup>145</sup> JIPS provides support to improve information and analysis about displacement situations through collaborative profiling exercises.

<sup>146</sup> EGRISS is a multi-stakeholder group that developed the 2020 International Recommendations on IDP Statistics.

<sup>147</sup> Case studies: El Salvador, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, CAR, Myanmar and Nigeria; West Africa RB KII.

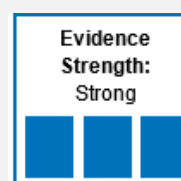
In five of the country case studies the evaluation found that UNHCR had established a significant role in data, evidence and analysis provision in contexts where there were gaps and limited activity from other data actors.<sup>148</sup> In Somalia, UNHCR has led the Protection and Return Monitoring Network (PRMN) for many years. The PRMN data is used for analysis and data development by various stakeholders, including other UN agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which oversees the Somalia Protection Monitoring System (SPMS) portal. In other countries UNHCR's protection monitoring, undertaken through a range of partners with widespread reach, has contributed to inter-agency protection risk monitoring such as in Myanmar, Iraq and Nigeria. Protection monitoring also provides a valuable resource – for example, providing some indication of whether solutions are being achieved (see Section 4.4 for details of a further example from CAR).

UNHCR plays a significant role in inter-agency initiatives, evidenced in four of the country case studies.<sup>149</sup> Drawing on its network of partners, UNHCR has made valued contributions to initiatives such as inter-agency needs assessments – for example, in Nigeria post-floods to support response planning<sup>150</sup> and as part of responding to camp closures, and in Myanmar as part of documenting protection conditions in camps in Rakhine. The 2022 GCS Achievements Report noted that 79 per cent of cluster partners found UNHCR's evidence-based response strategy with the shelter cluster appropriate.<sup>151</sup>

An approach that UNHCR has sometimes taken is to seek to strengthen government systems for data management.<sup>152</sup> It provided technical and financial support for the drafting of the El Salvador government's 2018 IDP Profiling study, which remains the key reference for IDP data. In 2023 it supported the El Salvador's National Office of Statistics and Censuses (ONEC) with the incorporation of an IDP module in its annual Multi-Purpose Household Survey (EHPM). In Georgia, UNHCR has acted as the chair of the IDP working group, and the government occasionally requests their support for collection of data on IDP needs; for example, UNHCR will have an advisory role on the upcoming needs assessment of IDPs that will support the government's IDP policy reform. This is in line with UNHCR and inter-agency policies for internal displacement situations, which seek to promote the leadership of government in its responsibilities to citizens and thus make government responsible for the management of transparent, accurate data on IDPs.

However, political sensitivities influenced the extent to which an approach of working through government was feasible or sufficient to build high-quality data.<sup>153</sup> For example, in El Salvador the evaluation found that the limitations of government data on internal displacement are widely acknowledged by humanitarian agencies active locally. This contributes to a narrative that has underscored the need for greater clarity from government entities on this issue. It is noteworthy that in 2023, the government of El Salvador committed to conducting a study on forced displacement, which is a step towards greater understanding and transparency. In the views of several interviewees, an important part of UNHCR's role as protection lead is to fill the data gap and to help document the contextual situation of IDPs. In response to this, UNHCR has conducted its own data collection and analysis, with annual participatory assessments since 2021, as well as seeking to support the quality of government data. Political sensitivities around data collection were found also in country case studies in parts of Iraq and Myanmar, influencing what data can be collected or published.

**Finding 16:** *UNHCR has focused its data, analysis and evidence provision in collaboration with other agencies in areas that address identified evidence gaps, leveraging the strengths and extensive network of partners and rich operational data sources. Nevertheless, certain relationship tensions have impeded some initiatives.*



UNHCR has cooperated with other actors where they are already active in data collection, although the evaluation found that the extent and success of cooperation was variable. In Nigeria and Iraq, as well as among external stakeholders, IOM's DTM, rather than UNHCR, was seen as the key source of data on trends in numbers and, to some extent, conditions of IDPs; indeed, IOM's data is used also by UNHCR. The DTM gathers and analyses data on the mobility, vulnerabilities and needs of displaced and mobile populations in 93 countries,<sup>154</sup> and there are some overlaps in data collection areas with UNHCR.<sup>155</sup> UNHCR has worked with

<sup>148</sup> Case studies: CAR, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria and Somalia.

<sup>149</sup> Case studies: Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

<sup>150</sup> "Joint Assessment on CCCM Response Report – UNHCR, IOM, NEMA & SEMA – 2019".

<sup>151</sup> 2022 GCS Achievements Report.

<sup>152</sup> Evaluation evidence from case studies in El Salvador, Iraq, Myanmar and Colombia.

<sup>153</sup> Evaluation evidence from case studies in El Salvador, Iraq, Myanmar and Colombia.

<sup>154</sup> More info on DTM available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/about-dtm>

<sup>155</sup> Multiple global internal and external KIIs.

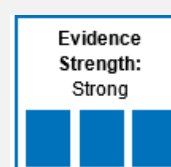
IOM to differing degrees to streamline their efforts. An important development is a global framework agreement, established in 2022 between the two agencies, to collaborate on various aspects, including on data; this is being adapted at the regional and country levels. At country level there were examples of close cooperation on a practical level: in Syria UNHCR and IOM work closely on data collection and analysis, and in Nigeria UNHCR and the protection cluster had provided training to IOM DTM data collectors on data collection related to protection.

Another important partnership in this area is UNHCR's cooperation with the World Bank in setting up the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC). The JDC partnership aims to address data gaps in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility for populations such as IDPs, returnees and host communities, that are often overlooked in national statistics. It plans to conduct 60 activities over four years and in more than 30 countries for \$34 million. UNHCR stakeholders commented that the value-add of the JDC was that it focused exclusively on socioeconomic data, filling a gap when compared to the data collected by other actors such as IOM and IDMC.

UNHCR has also worked to respond to the data gap for longer-term monitoring and measuring of durable solutions. UNHCR hosts EGRISS, a multi-stakeholder group mandated by the UN Statistical Commission to develop international recommendations, standards and guidance for improved forced displacement and statelessness statistics – the 2020 International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS), which detail the data needed to determine when internal displacement ends. The work of EGRISS also focuses on developing IDP statistical standards and supports national statistical office capacity-building. The mid-term review of the JDC reported that stakeholders acknowledged the fundamental contributions by the JDC in the IRIS, in that they supported the establishment of standards and methods for transforming the forced displacement data landscape.<sup>156</sup>

IDP data collection in internal displacement situations presents challenges, including difficulties in tracking IDPs, who are not registered by UNHCR, which in turn exacerbates accurate data collection, particularly when people move repeatedly. Definitional issues around who is an IDP, when internal displacement ends, and with regard to durable solutions also cause difficulties. Access to IDPs in highly insecure areas can also cause difficulties. UNHCR is working with organizations such as IDMC and through EGRISS to contribute to efforts to address these challenges.

***Finding 17:*** *UNHCR's investment in its data and analysis capabilities has yielded benefits for its current and potential roles in multi-agency efforts to develop evidence. Nevertheless, there are still limitations in capacity.*



Investments in UNHCR's capacity in data, analysis and evidence production influenced Country Offices' engagement in data, analysis and evidence. UNHCR has recruited economists and development officers, who facilitate data utilization in conversations with governments and partners on the ground. Country case studies<sup>157</sup> found that Country Offices had benefited to some extent from UNHCR investments in building data capacity over the past few years. This has included through access to Regional Bureaux' Data Information Management and Analysis (DIMA) units and participation in training. Benefits were also seen in the sustained provision of information management officers to cluster roles.

The RMS being rolled out across a number of countries to track changes in the well-being and other indicators of people affected by forced displacement (further discussed in Section 4.6.5) will also have the potential to contribute to tracking changes in internal displacement situations. They can also support analysis of conditions of IDPs in relation to other groups including host communities. However, the extent to which this data will be shared is not yet clear, and some external stakeholders noted a reluctance at times by UNHCR to share some data, either for ethical or reputational reasons – for instance, if results were not positive.

However, UNHCR's own direct role in data, analysis and evidence was constrained by limitations of financial and human resources. Indeed, there was some tension regarding the contribution that UNHCR made to cluster information management. This was particularly so when staff were "double-hatting" with their own role, with UNHCR staff keen to use the capacity for more in-depth analysis but with information management officers

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Country case studies: Iraq, Nigeria and Syria.

often occupied with the provision of cluster products. Case study countries in Colombia, Nigeria and Somalia found that there were limitations in research and data analysis capacity in-house in-country (financial and human) which affected UNHCR's role in this area and limited the ability to produce and use rich data.<sup>158</sup>

The roles undertaken by UNHCR are in line with its 2019 IDP policy in terms of its attention to data as part of IDP responses, initiatives to work in multi-agency approaches and efforts to support governments in improving their data capacity in countries such as Georgia, which is part of supporting a state to assume its responsibilities to IDPs. But capacity challenges at country level constrain the extent of the commitment being put into practice.

### 4.4.3 Evidence of results

**Finding 18:** *UNHCR's evidence is utilized by other stakeholders, but its full potential is hindered by limited engagement with key users. Additionally, the lack of close monitoring of data, analysis and evidence usage weakens the demonstration of its effectiveness.*



At country level, drawing on its rich data sources from its operations, UNHCR has shared some of its own operational data with other agencies, which has informed the inter-agency IDP responses.<sup>159</sup> For example, in Iraq UNHCR was able to produce a rich databank of information on IDPs through its database, as well as the participatory assessments that were conducted through community-based activities. UNHCR collaborated with partner agencies and national stakeholders to share IDP data from its ASSIST database to support IDP inclusion and avoid duplication. These efforts have, in part, led to the Chief of Central Statistical Office agreeing to include all IDPs, refugees and stateless persons in the next census.<sup>160</sup> A recent evaluation of the Honduran Country Office found that there was unanimous recognition of UNHCR's contribution to the development and production of evidence used by the Internal Forced Displacement Unit (UDFI) of CONADEH, the National Commission of Human rights in Honduras, with the objective of monitoring forced internal displacement at the national level.<sup>161</sup>

Another use of UNHCR data has been in the development of HRPs: 46 per cent of the evaluation survey respondents reported that UNHCR-produced data needs assessments, analysis and research were very useful for HRPs, and case studies found the data being used in the HRPs.<sup>162</sup>

Data, analysis and evidence produced through UNHCR's protection cluster data has supported inter-agency advocacy at field and national levels.<sup>163</sup> For instance, in Myanmar UNHCR led the design and collection of data on protection risks in camps in Rakhine and Kachin, which was used by both UNHCR and cluster members in advocacy at the local level – for instance, to remove road blocks, to try to stop extortion and to engage in dialogue on mine clearance.

UNHCR Country Offices worked closely with IDMC's monitoring teams on data collection and analysis. Between 2019 and 2022 UNHCR provided data directly to IDMC on 21 countries and was their key data provider in Somalia, Myanmar, Niger, Kosovo and (until 2023) the Philippines.<sup>164</sup> The cooperation, which is part of IDMC and UNHCR's broader collaboration on global monitoring and qualitative research, strengthens its role as a data provider by linking it to other skills, expertise, analytical products and dissemination channels. However, this relies on having capacity in-country. In some other contexts, particularly where DTM was present, UNHCR's role was less prominent.<sup>165</sup>

There is mixed evidence of results associated with the UNHCR partnership with the World Bank through the JDC, which, some evidence suggests, is constrained by limited engagement with potential key users of its evidence.<sup>166</sup> In addition, external stakeholders for this evaluation commented that there is scope for more

<sup>158</sup> Country case studies: Nigeria, Somalia, Colombia and El Salvador.

<sup>159</sup> Country case study data: Iraq, Nigeria and Somalia.

<sup>160</sup> See announcement here: <https://www.cosit.gov.iq/ar/2020-12-28-07-22-88>

<sup>161</sup> UNHCR Country Strategy Evaluation – Honduras 2019 – 2022.

<sup>162</sup> Survey respondents were asked how useful UNHCR-produced data needs assessment, analysis and research are for inter-agency HRPs. Out of the 124 respondents to this question, 46 per cent found UNHCR analysis and research very useful and 31 per cent moderately useful. Only 10 per cent of respondents found it slightly useful or not useful at all. See Annex 6 for full survey response.

<sup>163</sup> Evidence from country case studies: Myanmar, Nigeria.

<sup>164</sup> Global KII – external.

<sup>165</sup> Global KIIs – external; case study country data: Somalia, Nigeria.

<sup>166</sup> KPMG (2023) "Mid-Term Review of the World Bank – UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC)", March 2023.

collaboration between the JDC and other actors outside UNHCR and the World Bank, as currently it seemed to be focused on serving the needs of each parent organization rather than the wider sector. This area would warrant further attention by UNHCR, given the limited nature of the evidence of this evaluation.

An observation of UNHCR's role in the provision of data, analysis and evidence is the absence of clear aims relating to this beyond the quite general ones in the IDP policy and in support of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda as detailed at the beginning of this chapter. The formulation of clearer aims at country or other levels may be aided by consideration of UNHCR's strengths as identified in the evaluation. Areas of comparative advantage emerge for UNHCR in data provision, analysis and evidence. UNHCR's extensive field presence enables it to collect a wealth of protection-related data, which is recognized as a strength that should be further leveraged.<sup>167</sup> UNHCR's commitment to engaging governments in IDP management, despite challenges related to data accuracy and manipulation, is significant given that it is instrumental in ensuring coordinated responses and building government capacity and ownership of IDP data. UNHCR's cooperation with other agencies, including in establishing global data-sharing agreements, notably with the World Bank through the JDC, demonstrates its ability to address challenges related to data-sharing and to collaborate on a global scale. But capacity constraints and meeting the multiple demands of clusters and operations, along with some overlap with other agencies, suggest the need for a clearer articulation of UNHCR's niche in this area, supported by sustained investment in it.<sup>168</sup>

## 4.5 Theme 5: UNHCR's contribution to durable solutions

### 4.5.1 Introduction

This section examines key approaches and results of UNHCR's contribution to durable solutions in areas referenced in UNHCR's 2019 IDP policy, including early engagement, responsible disengagement, and the deployment of UNHCR technical know-how through the protection, CCCM and shelter clusters, most notably in highly specialised areas such as Housing, Land and Property (HLP), and the civil documentation of IDPs. For definitions of key thematic areas and criteria for progress towards solutions, the discussion below draws on the IASC framework on durable solutions for IDPs.<sup>169</sup> According to the IASC, durable solutions are achieved when IDPs no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. It also references key internal policy orientations such as "UNHCR strategic directions 2022–2026"<sup>170</sup> and the 2023 "UNHCR institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement".<sup>171</sup> It sets these against the backdrop of system-wide initiatives such as, most recently, the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on internal displacement.<sup>172</sup>

#### Summary of key findings on UNHCR's contribution to durable solutions and their implications

- **Relevance:** UNHCR's approach to durable solutions is based on strategies tailored to specific contexts, including consideration of security, government capacity and inter-agency coordination. This flexibility is based on understanding that no single approach fits all situations. It highlights the importance of political analysis and strategic decision-making for UNHCR's approach to durable solutions in different countries.
- **Effectiveness:** UNHCR has effectively contributed to normative frameworks for inter-agency solutions, supported government leadership and capacity for solutions and has contributed effectively in multi-sector area-based approaches. However, the scale of outcomes for IDPs can be limited by the costs of area-based approaches and contextual factors such as government commitment and the strength of inter-agency cooperation. Protection risk monitoring can play a significant role in monitoring IDP safety in solution sites. The deployment of UNHCR technical capabilities in HLP, as well as in the civil

<sup>167</sup> Global KII – external.

<sup>168</sup> Nigeria and Somalia case studies; global KII – internal and external.

<sup>169</sup> Brookings Institution, University of Bern (2010) "IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons", April 2010. The framework establishes the centrality of the state and the importance of IDP participation. It establishes criteria which may guide assessment of durable solutions: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; access to effective remedies and justice.

<sup>170</sup> UNHCR (2022) "UNHCR strategic directions 2022–2026".

<sup>171</sup> UNHCR (2023) "UNHCR institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement".

<sup>172</sup> United Nations (2022) "Taking forward the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Joint Statement by the Principals of DCO, IOM, OCHA, UNDP and UNHCR", 24 June 2022, [www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/assets/pdf/Joint-Statement-Action-Agenda-on-Internal-Displacement.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/assets/pdf/Joint-Statement-Action-Agenda-on-Internal-Displacement.pdf)

documentation of IDPs, can also yield positive outcomes in a solutions perspective, and UNHCR's know-how in these areas is core to its comparative advantage. More attention is needed to assess UNHCR's contributions to solutions in multi-agency settings. Workforce capacity to operate in multi-agency, solutions settings also needs to be enhanced.

- **Connectedness:** UNHCR's collaboration with other organizations is hindered by the absence of a shared paradigm on solutions and the roles of humanitarian and development actors, despite various international frameworks meant to clarify this<sup>173</sup>. Durable Solutions Working Groups (DSWGs) at the operational level have proven valuable, providing a country-level forum to develop a common understanding of solutions. UNHCR's Focus Area Strategic Plan for Engaging Development Actors sets out helpful guidance for working together but knowledge and application of it could be enhanced.<sup>174</sup>
- **Coherence:** In terms of protection, UNHCR's concept of durable solutions aligns with its policy and other key normative frameworks. Yet there is a need for policy and guidance to aid Country Offices in applying aspects of the policy, particularly in contexts of sustained insecurity and when government capacity, interest or approach to solutions diverge from UNHCR's protection and humanitarian principles.
- **Strategic positioning:** UNHCR's primary added value in solutions is its protection expertise, including stakeholder engagement, and ranging from technical areas to system-wide strategic planning, as well its role as a cluster lead or participation in inter-agency working groups. This implies the necessity for focused investment in protection roles as the primary driver of UNHCR's contribution to solutions in internal displacement situations. The evaluation findings here have found that implications encompass: a) the development of context-appropriate normative frameworks; b) field-level protection of vulnerable IDPs, including through monitoring and appropriate specialized services (e.g. civil documentation); c) system-wide mainstreaming of protection, including in solutions and development-type programmes; and d) political engagement in support of UN-wide protection efforts driven at HC/RC level. Alongside this, and in adherence with the UNHCR Focus Area Strategic Plan for Engaging Development Actors, the implications are that UNHCR's role should focus on that of catalyst and facilitator for the stepped-up engagement of development partners. These orientations are consistent with the emerging consensus that IDP solutions should be primarily development-led.

## 4.5.2 Approaches and adaptation to context

UNHCR's contribution to durable solutions in IDP contexts is anchored in its protection mandate and draws heavily from technical expertise, legal doctrine and conceptual frameworks derived from refugee situations.<sup>175</sup> Similarly to refugee situations, UNHCR envisions durable solutions for IDPs in terms of three operational scenarios. The first entails their voluntary return; the second involves their resettlement (also termed relocation) in other parts of the national territory; the third consists of their local integration in the areas where they are displaced. In line with protection norms,<sup>176</sup> a core principle in UNHCR's support of durable solutions is that IDPs should be able to opt for any one of these three options in an informed and voluntary manner.<sup>177</sup>

Unlike refugee contexts, UNHCR's support for solutions in internal displacement situations does not derive from an exclusive mandate, which means that development partners in particular have a major role to play in solutions and incorporating IDPs into national development plans.<sup>178</sup> As IDPs are citizens of the countries in which they are displaced<sup>179</sup> and are subject to the sovereignty of states, governments have a decisive role to play in solutions intended for IDPs.

<sup>173</sup> Such as the IASC durable solutions framework, the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, and institutional plans from various UN agencies. Additionally, the UN Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement has requested agencies to develop agency offers, which are currently being compiled. Other inter-agency collaboration frameworks relevant to UNHCR in achieving durable solutions include those with UNDP, IOM, and UNHabitat.

<sup>174</sup> UNHCR (n.d.) "Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors", [internal document].

<sup>175</sup> See for example the approach to durable solutions set out in UNHCR (2010) "Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons", Part IV: Durable Solutions, March 2010.

<sup>176</sup> See for example the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, April 2010.

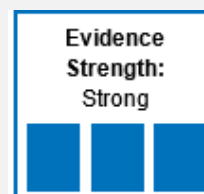
<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> See for example UNDP (2021) "From Durable Solutions to Development Solution – What Role for Development Actors in Addressing Internal Displacement?" Submission for the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, March 2021.

<sup>179</sup> For a discussion on state sovereignty and IDP protection, see for example Cohen, R. (2003) "Sovereignty as Responsibility: The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement", Brookings Institution-Johns Hopkins SAIS Project on Internal Displacement.

The evaluation identified three approaches that UNHCR has pursued to durable solutions in internal displacement situations: (a) support for the development and adoption by governments of normative frameworks for solutions in IDP situations; (b) interventions to build the capacity of governments to pursue solutions for their IDP populations; and (c) specific operational interventions to support solutions, particularly through area-based programming. These are discussed in turn below, and the following section considers evidence of their results.

**Finding 19:** *The evaluation found strong evidence of UNHCR contributions to durable solutions. This included support for the development of normative frameworks for inter-agency approaches to solutions in internal displacement situations and support for their adoption by host governments. UNHCR contributions have been enabled by UNHCR legal and other technical expertise, and effective relationship-building with governments. They have been influenced by the viability of coordination systems and inter-agency platforms.*



UNHCR has played a key role in the development of national and regional frameworks for durable solutions. As described in Section 4.3 of the report, UNHCR’s legal expertise has supported the development of laws and policy for providing protection to IDPs, which provides a foundation for durable solutions.

Furthermore, UNHCR has supported specific frameworks for durable solutions in six of the nine case study countries examined. In El Salvador it provided the incoming government with technical advisory support as it joined the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) in July 2019.<sup>180</sup> El Salvador’s MIRPS commitments relate to IDPs as well as refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees with protection needs;<sup>181</sup> they span protection, education, jobs and livelihoods and health, and relate to the development of government capacity to protect and assist IDPs and other groups. UNHCR in El Salvador has also sought to use the UNSDCF as a platform for solutions.<sup>182</sup> The framework now includes an outcome on IDPs, refugees, returnees and migrants<sup>183</sup> and provided the basis for a UNCT concept note on solutions that was drafted in large part by UNHCR and has been presented to the government for discussion.<sup>184</sup>

Likewise in Iraq, UNHCR as protection lead in 2020 was instrumental in achieving the incorporation of normative elements in the federal government’s strategy to return IDPs to their places of origin – for example, in its assistance in drafting the National Plan for Returning IDPs. Alongside the protection cluster’s release of operational guidance relating to sudden camp closures and evictions,<sup>185</sup> UNHCR, as a member of the Durable Solutions Task Force (DSTF) and the DSWG, engaged with the federal government to assert the right of IDPs to take part in the planning of durable solutions, to enjoy freedom of movement, and to make informed and voluntary choices on where to live. A 2021 national plan<sup>186</sup> acknowledges that safe and voluntary returns may not always be possible, commits the government to exploring other solutions with IDPs where this is the case, and recognizes freedom of movement as a right for IDPs. The Inter-agency Durable Solutions Strategic and Operational Framework,<sup>187</sup> released six months later with inputs from UNHCR, likewise clarifies that IDP returns must be voluntary, safe and dignified, and must be envisaged alongside local integration and resettlement elsewhere in Iraq.

Although these were part of inter-agency initiatives, UNHCR leadership was often found to have been instrumental.<sup>188</sup> This leadership has contributed to national laws and policies, and have supported the application of these legal and policy frameworks by government partners. In Iraq, for example, as discussed in Finding 21 below, UNHCR has played an important role in including IDPs in the country’s social protection system. In Iraq, El Salvador, Nigeria, Colombia and Somalia, UNHCR’s advocacy and technical assistance in the delivery of civil documentation or land titles to IDPs has, in principle, improved their access to property and basic services in a durable solutions perspective. However, whether this has translated into improved social and economic security for IDPs depends largely on the context. In Somalia and Nigeria, for example, civil

<sup>180</sup> UNHCR Factsheet, El Salvador, November 2022.

<sup>181</sup> MIRPS homepage at <https://mirps-platform.org/en/>

<sup>182</sup> UNHCR “Strategy Report, El Salvador – Multi-year 2023-2026”, [internal document for Country/MCO Operations].

<sup>183</sup> United Nations “El Salvador, Marco de cooperación de la Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Sostenible 2022–2026”.

<sup>184</sup> United Nations (2023) “El Salvador, Nota Conceptual Aceleración de Soluciones, 14 April 2023”.

<sup>185</sup> CCCM Cluster and Protection Cluster (2020) “Iraq, Operational Guidance on Response to Sudden Camp Closure and Evictions – Actions in Camps, During Transfer and in areas of return or secondary displacement”, December 2020.

<sup>186</sup> Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Migration and Displaced and Ministry of Planning (2020) “The National Plan for Returning the IDPs to their Liberated Areas”, November 2020.

<sup>187</sup> Iraq Durable Solutions (2021) “Resolving Durable Displacement in Iraq: Inter-Agency Durable Solutions Strategic and Operational Framework”, June 2021.

<sup>188</sup> Evidence drawn from case studies of CAR, Colombia, Iraq, El Salvador and Somalia.



documentation obtained with UNHCR support gives IDPs access to public services which, in some cases, may fall short of minimum requirements in key areas, such as health care and education. In Iraq the same UNHCR support has yielded better results, given better performing public services. In Colombia and Somalia, UNHCR's support of legislation and administrative processes to improve the access of IDPs to land appears to have yielded some modest durable benefits.<sup>189</sup> The degree of success attained in these efforts is largely because of factors specific to each context.

**Finding 20:** *The evaluation found that UNHCR implemented an approach to durable solutions by supporting the leadership and capacity of governments to pursue solutions for their IDP populations through provision of technical and financial assistance. The feasibility of this option has been influenced by the capacity and political commitment of host governments.*



UNHCR has supported the principle of the primary responsibility of the state by developing the technical capacity of host governments to pursue solutions and assert ownership of them.<sup>190</sup> This support has generally been intended to secure government ownership of a national solutions agenda and to build state-led governance and programme-level management systems for its implementation.

Examples include El Salvador and Somalia, where UNHCR has provided salaries and capacity-building support to public institutions involved in working towards solutions for IDPs. In Somalia, UNHCR support was key in the establishment of the Durable Solutions Unit at the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs (NCRI) as well as the Durable Solutions Secretariat at the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development (MoPIED). UNHCR also supports public governance capacity for solutions at federal and state levels. In El Salvador it worked closely with the full range of public institutions involved in the provision of assistance to IDPs, including, notably, the National Directorate for Social Cohesion, for livelihoods programmes,<sup>191</sup> and the Constitutional Court, for the training of community-based facilitators whose role includes conflict mitigation.<sup>192</sup>

UNHCR has also helped governments build technical capacity critical to the delivery of solutions for IDPs, including access to justice and public services. As detailed earlier in the report (Section 4.1), UNHCR has supported IDPs' access to civil documentation and also governments' capacity to provide documentation. This enables IDPs access to both justice and services – a key component of solutions. A significant area of UNHCR support to government services with direct relevance to solutions is in the area of Housing, Land and Property (HLP). In Somalia it has supported the delivery of land deeds for IDPs and the adoption by the authorities of eviction guidelines to enhance security of tenure. In Colombia its approach to durable solutions has focused on the legalization of informal settlements and urban integration, providing the authorities with assistance in the development of public policies related to transitional justice, access to land and land restitution. In 2020 it supported the legalization of 16 settlements in the country, benefiting 6,159 households. These activities continued the following year, progressing towards the legalization of 42 settlements and improving the fulfilment of IDP rights and access to services.<sup>193</sup>

UNHCR support has involved the development of a governance architecture that places the state at the centre of solutions.<sup>194</sup> In El Salvador, all UNHCR activities aimed at supporting solutions, including those conducted by NGO partners, are placed under the aegis and oversight of the government. In Georgia the government has, since 2015, gradually assumed responsibility for service provision and assistance to IDPs, particularly in the Tbilisi-administered territory, which it now administers largely on its own, with some UNHCR technical advisory support. Elsewhere, in Iraq, Nigeria and CAR, state-led governance mechanisms have likewise been established with the aim of operationalizing the centrality of the state in durable solutions for IDPs. In Iraq, solutions governance has generally been successful in enabling alignment and consistency across the range of UN and government efforts.<sup>195</sup>

However, this approach to promote state centrality has met with challenges in some country contexts, making it a difficult approach to pursue consistently. For example, in Nigeria UNHCR and other aid actors were able to

<sup>189</sup> Evidence drawn from case studies of Colombia, El Salvador, Nigeria and Somalia.

<sup>190</sup> Evidence drawn from case studies of El Salvador, Somalia, CAR, Nigeria, Georgia (Abkhazia) and Colombia.

<sup>191</sup> UNHCR "Strategy Report, El Salvador – Multi-year 2023-2026", [internal document for Country/MCO Operations].

<sup>192</sup> UNHCR (2023) "El Salvador Operational Update n. 3", March 2023.

<sup>193</sup> UNHCR (2023) "Ficha Proyecto Tierras y Vivienda", June 2023, [internal document].

<sup>194</sup> Evidence drawn from case studies of CAR, Iraq, Nigeria and El Salvador.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

work towards solutions under state government leadership in Adamawa state but not in Borno state. In Myanmar, the UN HCT adopted a set of principles of engagement with the de facto authorities installed following the coup, which limited all UN agencies to engagement for humanitarian and advocacy purposes. In CAR, the key obstacle to state-led governance arrangements was a lack of funding. Although concerted decision-making was always sought actively by all parties, activities that were intended to come under joint governance arrangements were impacted by financial shortfalls. Notably, the Project for the Support to Return and Reintegration (PARET), which was meant to be the main vehicle for solutions programming under the government's leadership, secured only limited donor support.

**Finding 21:** *An important approach to durable solutions particularly relevant in mixed-population contexts has been through area-based approaches, which have enabled UNHCR to meet the needs of a range of population groups together. But the scale of this approach is limited in terms of the numbers of IDPs who benefit.*



A third key approach that UNHCR has undertaken is area-based approaches. The term is defined as “a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach that responds to the inter-related needs of all population groups living in a defined geographic area”.<sup>196</sup> Evaluation interviews confirmed that area-based programming has gained recognition as a model of programme delivery with the potential to yield solutions outcomes on the ground from multi-sector and multi-agency inputs.<sup>197</sup>

The evaluation identified examples of area-based approaches that enable integrated inputs from multiple partners and that have also been conducted under UNHCR coordination or with its participation. In CAR, UNHCR and other agencies have worked with the district authorities to relocate IDP communities in Bria and Pladama Ouaka. As well as basic services and infrastructures, UNHCR's support included shelter and protection. In Labondo in the northeast Nigerian state of Adamawa, UNHCR successfully set up a pilot project to locally integrate IDPs and refugees in the local population, and to provide them with housing and access to other services. In this case, UNHCR successfully negotiated access to land for IDPs in Adamawa state; importantly, this also entailed negotiation with community structures. In Myanmar, ABA was launched in Kachin in 2022 as part of a broader strategy of incremental solutions in response to spontaneous returns. In Colombia, the variant of ABA used by UNHCR is geared heavily towards community-based protection, including access to justice and the development of governmental capacity as mechanisms for protection against armed violence (see Box 1).

Furthermore, ABA lends itself well to solutions in protracted crisis contexts, because it can address urgent humanitarian needs while also contributing to longer-term objectives geared to sustainability and the resilience of affected populations through the development of local capacity. For example in Iraq, UNHCR's roll-out of an area-based model of programming known as A2PS<sup>198</sup> has allowed it to apply a rights-based approach to facilitating the voluntary return of IDPs or supporting their local integration. The physical presence of UNHCR on programme sites and its direct engagement with the local authorities have allowed it to conduct protection activities with a strong community-based and participatory dimension. Alongside this, joint appraisals with local government counterparts and local communities have identified needs relating to solutions, which may range from small infrastructure improvements to health or education facilities. In the town of Shirqat, Salah-al-Din, the A2PS model has enabled the integrated delivery of multiple programme strands, including the rehabilitation of water treatment plants and electricity infrastructure, the reconstruction of a National Identification Documentation Centre, the provision of housing, land and property (HLP) legal assistance to returned IDPs, and the delivery of peaceful coexistence activities through the town's community centre. UNHCR is also advocating for the inclusion of Shirqat returnees in livelihoods programmes undertaken locally by other actors, including IOM and UNDP.

However, the potential to scale up these types of intervention is limited. In Labondo, the cost of the project has been estimated at \$4,000 per household, a figure that excludes costs such as UNHCR staffing, future service provision by local government and transitional costs following this first year's budget. Costs were similarly high in the cases of Bria and Pladama Ouaka in CAR. In both countries, these programmes cover only a small fraction of the national IDP population.

<sup>196</sup> UNHCR (2022) “Area-based Programming and Early Recovery Factsheet”, UNHCR Syria, December 2022.

<sup>197</sup> Also noted in UNHCR 2022 internal review – “Area-Based Approaches – Desk review of UNHCR's operational experience and existing literature”.

<sup>198</sup> A2PS: Area-based Programming for Protection and Solutions.

There is also the challenge of mobilizing these resources. In Iraq, securing the participation at scale of development actors in localities covered by area-based coordination was challenging. In Myanmar there was a concern that ABA in that context often required development expertise that was outside UNHCR's remit and was difficult to secure.

### 4.5.3 Evidence of results

UNHCR's results in durable solutions, particularly in terms of outcomes for IDPs, are difficult to assess, because they are usually influenced by contextual factors and result from inputs from multiple actors.<sup>199</sup> But the evaluation identified some important results.

**Finding 22:** *UNHCR has contributed to strengthened alignment, convergence and harmonization of approaches across a range of stakeholders. Despite achievements in this area, there is scope for further convergence between UNHCR and other UN actors.*



UNHCR has made significant contributions to the establishment of solutions frameworks at national and regional levels, although whether those frameworks have actually been applied and to what extent varied from context to context. In Iraq, the solutions options inserted in the government's official strategy for IDP returns have provided a viable basis for relocation and local integration in cases where IDPs were unwilling to go back to their places of origin.<sup>200</sup> UNHCR has otherwise assisted returns, while ensuring that they were voluntary and in line with the established normative standards (see in next paragraphs). Evidence indicates that UNHCR's actions were most likely to contribute to results relating to IDPs' ability to make an informed choice, and possibly to their safety, and that interventions such as the development of inter-agency durable solutions frameworks and shared protection strategies did contribute to alignment, convergence and harmonization across the range of stakeholders involved (this is discussed further in the next paragraphs).

In other countries, the evaluation found that observers have concerns that gains achieved to date may be affected by changing security or political conditions.<sup>201</sup> In El Salvador, for example, a landmark was the adoption of an IDP law in 2020, but the by-laws required for the enforcement of the law have yet to be developed and passed. In CAR, the solutions strategy adopted by the government (with significant UNHCR input in the years before this evaluation time period) proved overly ambitious in terms of both the capacity and the funding required. Continued conflict has kept development donors at bay and has hampered the implementation of programmes, although the government maintains its commitment to the strategy.

At country level UNHCR has contributed to the articulation of collective protection strategies to ensure the safety of IDPs in response to government policies or actions that departed from established normative principles. This is enabled in some locations by its protection cluster lead and membership in dedicated inter-agency platforms, such as DSWG in CAR and Iraq.

Notably, UNHCR played a role directly and as cluster lead in Iraq, Myanmar and Nigeria, where the closure of IDP camps has given rise to diverse and complex protection risks. In each of these cases, UNHCR actively sought, through its cluster leadership role as well as directly, to shape a system-wide protection response aimed at protecting the rights of IDPs, while keeping dialogue open with the authorities on alternative avenues for solutions. For example, in Nigeria an important UNHCR initiative, particularly through its cluster leadership role, has been to engage stakeholders on the protection risk involved in camp closure and involuntary returns in the northeast and on the need to adhere to the relevant international standards in the pursuit of durable solutions. This placed UNHCR (and other humanitarian actors) at odds with other UN actors, who favoured a stance more supportive of the local government's pro-returns policy.

In Myanmar in 2022, more than 300,000 IDPs returned spontaneously – and in many cases temporarily – to often unsafe areas. In this context, UNHCR's main success has been in rallying aid actors around common transitional or incremental solutions strategies that are firmly undergirded by core protection principles, such as

<sup>199</sup> See for example the Joint IDP Profiling Service's (JIPS) (2018) "Durable Solutions Analysis Guide", which is designed to measure progress towards durable solutions for IDPs. More recently, the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS), produced by EGRIS, have provided the basis for progress measurement methodology developed by the Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement Taskforce (DSID), under the UN inter-agency Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement. Source: DSID (2023) "Proposal for Improving Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement", March 2023.

<sup>200</sup> Protection Cluster Iraq – National Protection Cluster in Iraq – Transition 2022.

<sup>201</sup> Evidence drawn from case studies of CAR, El Salvador, Iraq, Nigeria and Myanmar.

the right to safe and voluntary return.<sup>202</sup> Most notable among these is the need to assert the freedom of movement of IDPs and to ensure the safety and voluntary nature of their returns in a highly volatile context. In Kachin and Rakhine states, progress towards solutions has been slow and uncertain, due to continued conflict. Within the limited opportunities that this presents, UNHCR has worked with UNDP to support targeted solutions-oriented interventions, such as HLP and social cohesion projects, where feasible.<sup>203</sup>

**Finding 23:** *There is evidence that UNHCR has made significant contributions towards durable solutions in terms of: IDPs' safety and security; restoration of HLP; access to documentation; and access to effective remedies and justice. These have been achieved through community-based interventions, often in cooperation with implementing partners. Protection risk monitoring also makes a significant contribution.*



UNHCR operational activities have contributed to durable solutions by building individual, community and service providers' capacities. As highlighted above (Section 4.1), significant numbers of IDPs have been assisted to access civil documentation, and government capacity has been supported for more sustainable provision in Nigeria, Syria and Iraq. In 2020 UNHCR annual reports detailed that a number of IDPs were assisted in obtaining civil documentation in Nigeria (33,000) and Colombia (32,000). In Nigeria this number increased to 220,000 in 2022. In Aleppo, Syria, UNHCR rehabilitated seven of the 11 civil registries that currently deliver civil documentation to Syrian citizens, most of them IDPs. Likewise in Iraq, it facilitated the delivery of 72,128 civil documents in 2022 through the provision of legal assistance to IDPs, the rehabilitation and establishment of local branches of the Civil Affairs Directorate (CAD), and the provision of other forms of support to the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). Civil documentation enabled IDPs to access their rights, including public services.

UNHCR access to justice programmes in some countries interfaced closely with local transitional justice mechanisms.<sup>204</sup> For example, in Nigeria, UNHCR supported mobile courts and legal representation for IDPs. In El Salvador it cooperated with the Constitutional Court in training 600 community-based facilitators, whose role includes conflict mitigation in remote areas. Although these activities are geared to peacebuilding and the mitigation of communal violence, they provide a valuable complement to interventions that relate more specifically to HLP, such as those aimed at the legalization of land deeds and illegal settlements in Somalia and Colombia.

In area-based approaches, the evaluation found some evidence of results linked with the IASC criteria for IDPs. The example of the A2PS from Iraq described above demonstrates results in terms of enhanced conditions in places where people are settling. These were the result of interventions spanning peacebuilding and social cohesion, social welfare (youth and women's centres), governance and institutional strengthening,<sup>205</sup> and small infrastructures (water and electricity).<sup>206</sup> Initial results of the Labondo durable solutions settlement in Nigeria indicate positive results, including evaluation case study focus groups with relocated IDPs and host communities, who expressed satisfaction with the project process and assistance received through this arrangement. IDPs shared their sense of safety as well as satisfaction with housing, land and access to services.

Evidence from the case studies suggests that UNHCR can play an important role in some locations in tracking the longer-term effects of area-based approaches.<sup>207</sup> The evaluation found that UNHCR has some relevant experience from protection monitoring to track the sustainability of solutions. This is especially relevant given the non-linear nature of progress in durable solutions, which is now widely acknowledged.<sup>208</sup> In CAR, for example, districts once viewed as fit for solutions programming have seen an ebb and flow of violence in recent years. One of the main districts where IDPs have resettled was also the one where UNHCR protection monitoring identified the highest number of reported protection incidents in the first quarter of 2023.<sup>209</sup> During that period, returnees (IDPs and refugees) were the second-largest group affected by protection incidents (14 per cent), ahead of IDPs, who continued to be displaced (9 per cent), and second only to resident populations

<sup>202</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Annual Results Report 2022, Myanmar".

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Evidence drawn from case studies of Nigeria, El Salvador, Colombia and Somalia.

<sup>205</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Iraq 2022 Achievements Fact Sheet".

<sup>206</sup> UNHCR, ABC Activity Plan Form Final (Excel document), undated.

<sup>207</sup> Evidence drawn from case studies of CAR and Myanmar.

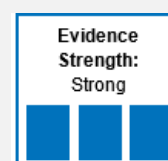
<sup>208</sup> For example, the non-linearity of durable solutions is acknowledged in "Durable Solutions, Preliminary Operational Guide", UNDP, UNHCR, GCER and Global Protection Cluster, with ECHO support, January 2016.

<sup>209</sup> UNHCR (2023) Monitoring de Protection, République Centrafricaine, Incidents Individuels de Protection, Premier Trimestre 2023.

(71 per cent). Although 39 per cent of the alleged perpetrators of these incidents were state and non-state arms carriers, 28 per cent were local community members, and 24 per cent were relatives of the victims.<sup>210</sup>

In terms of coherence with policy, the evaluation found that UNHCR's approaches to durable solutions were consistent with UNHCR and IASC key normative frameworks, including the "Guiding principles on internal displacement" and the IASC framework on durable solutions, which both assert the right of IDPs to make informed and voluntary choices and to be involved in programming and other decisions concerning them.<sup>211</sup> In practice, however, the evaluation found that the consistency of UNHCR programmes with solutions frameworks, including its own,<sup>212</sup> can sometimes be affected by contextual or material constraints or a lack of benchmarks to guide actions on the ground. Durable solutions for IDPs are typically pursued in contexts of protracted instability, where acceptable and appropriate conditions for their safe and voluntary return, relocation or local integration can be very difficult to achieve in a lasting manner. As illustrated above with the cases of CAR and Myanmar, solutions-oriented interventions are sometimes pursued in areas where the required security conditions cannot be guaranteed over time. In these circumstances, operational guidelines and principles may warrant further clarification, to ensure that they yield the intended outcomes on the ground.

**Finding 24:** *UNHCR's contribution to results in durable solutions has been enabled by its evolving abilities to work collaboratively within multi-agency arrangements such as DSWG's. This has allowed UNHCR and its partners to pool often scarce resources, to fill capacity gaps, and to build linkages between their respective areas of interventions.*



An important aspect of UNHCR's approach to durable solutions has been its collaboration with other agencies in a multi-agency approach. In the UNHCR staff survey conducted for this evaluation, most respondents felt that UNHCR worked well in multi-agency approaches.<sup>213</sup> In interviews, external key informants also noted UNHCR's positive role and collaboration at the global level. At country level, as discussed above, UNHCR has contributed actively to the development of state-led governance systems that enable policy-level and programme-level coordination across government and international aid actors. Within the UN and broader aid community, inter-agency platforms for solutions have also become commonplace; they enable both internal harmonization of policies and programmes and a unified interface with the national authorities. For example, variants of these exist in CAR, Iraq and Syria. In Nigeria, alongside the state-led three-tier governance system put in place for solutions, UNHCR has worked with the Resident Coordinator's Office to open a space internal to the UN for learning, dialogue and information exchange. In El Salvador, these consultations take place as an integral part of the UNSDCF process.

These platforms and system-wide governance arrangements attest to the fact that in recent years, considerable progress has been made in the ability of UN agencies to work together on durable solutions. For example, in the case of CAR, UNHCR and UNDP, the two original co-chairs of the DSWG, now report constructive cooperation. This is in contrast to 2020, when differences of approaches between the co-chairs had prompted the Resident Coordinator to intervene and request a new iteration of the Working Group's Terms of Reference. More broadly, and just as positively, UNHCR and UNDP's partnership on forced displacement has developed further since 2020, within the framework of their Joint Initiative for Inclusion and Solutions.<sup>214</sup> This has since been subsumed in a Global UNHCR–UNDP Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions, covering the period 2023–2025.<sup>215</sup> Joint programmes under this partnership span IDPs as well as refugees, host communities and stateless persons, and have covered multiple countries, including Afghanistan, Myanmar, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Colombia.

With the World Bank, too, UNHCR has identified common ground and developed close working relations in a solutions perspective. Alongside their JDC, which serves to inform programming by both actors and is detailed in the previous section of this report, UNHCR and the World Bank have pursued policy-level consultations on internal displacement and have actively sought to align approaches and achieve synergies in their country programmes. Although this cooperation has taken place primarily in the context of refugee responses, it has also extended in some cases to IDPs, or has benefited them indirectly. In Chad and Iraq, for example, both

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Evidence from case studies of CAR, Colombia, El Salvador, Nigeria and Iraq.

<sup>212</sup> Such as UNHCR (2023) "UNHCR institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement".

<sup>213</sup> Asked about UNHCR's main contribution to durable solutions, 81 per cent of 107 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: "UNHCR collaborates or works effectively with other organizations in multi-agency approaches to support durable solutions." Source: UNHCR staff survey conducted for the evaluation between 10 July and 3 September 2023.

<sup>214</sup> UNDP-UNHCR (2021) "Partnership on Forced Displacement".

<sup>215</sup> UNDP-UNHCR (2023) "Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions, 2023–2025".

agencies supported government work to develop social protection systems that are accessible to displaced populations, including IDPs.<sup>216</sup> In Chad, the resulting National Strategy for Social Protection is funded in large part by the World Bank. In Iraq, similarly, the World Bank in recent years has been supporting the federal government in ambitious social protection reforms.<sup>217</sup> These have provided the backdrop for UNHCR's long-standing and eventually successful efforts to include IDPs on the country's social registry.<sup>218</sup>

These examples illustrate the importance of collaboration, given the complementarity of development interventions with UNHCR's areas of expertise. UNHCR solutions-oriented programmes have included livelihoods, small infrastructure projects, and the construction of health or education facilities – for example, in Syria and Afghanistan, although often primarily targeting refugees, they benefit IDPs and host communities too in integrated or area-based approaches. However, their effectiveness and UNHCR's competence in this area are debated internally. At the global as well as the local level, where ABA takes place, multiple interviewees attested to the internal debate in UNHCR on whether these development-type interventions are really within UNHCR's remit and area of competence; this was also echoed in the evaluation survey findings. A recurrent observation among UNHCR interviewees was that UNHCR should only engage in these activities by default, when the resources or local operational footprint of development actors do not enable them to do so themselves. Even then, some interviewees doubted the appropriateness of UNHCR intervention and considered an advocacy role for development actors to be involved as more appropriate.

Furthermore, at national level the evaluation consistently found a view that the know-how and leadership of development actors are needed to address development gaps that affect the welfare of IDPs – such as gaps that might exist in national social protection systems or, more broadly, in the inclusion of IDPs in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-based national development plans. This is true even as UNHCR has demonstrated its added value in the provision of highly targeted technical expertise in solutions, such as that relating to beneficiary selection and the inclusion of IDPs in social safety net registries, or to the development of government capabilities in HLP and the delivery of civil documentation. It should be noted that for impact-level results, these UNHCR inputs often rely heavily on broader policy, regulatory, administrative and economic environment building, which is well outside its area of competence.<sup>219</sup> The experience of Iraq (see Box 5) illustrates how UNHCR, as a specialized sectoral expert, can usefully complement macro-level development outcomes achieved by actors such as the World Bank.

#### **Box 5: Lessons from Iraq – complementarity of UNHCR and development actors' interventions: the case of social protection**

In Iraq, UNHCR contributions were able to complement World Bank systems development in social protection to ensure benefits for IDPs. Social protection reforms in Iraq have been taking place since 2014, with substantial support from the World Bank to upgrade aspects of the social safety net system relating to information and communication infrastructure, security, effectiveness and responsiveness.

Alongside this comprehensive work, UNHCR, as a member of the Technical Working Group on Targeting of Social Protection Systems in Iraq, has successfully advocated for the inclusion of IDPs in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) upcoming 2024 census, seen as a way of giving IDPs access to the country's social protection system.

The extension of the system to this group would not have been possible without the broader technical work conducted upstream by the World Bank. IDPs who meet the vulnerability criteria are now set to benefit from monthly cash payments that will help them to meet their basic needs. Vulnerable IDP families and individuals, including female-headed households and individuals with disabilities, will receive cash top-ups. The inclusion of IDPs in the system will ensure the coverage of the most vulnerable among them, and will provide them with greater, longer-term and more predictable support.

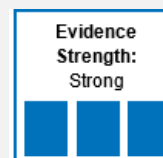
<sup>216</sup> UNHCR (2020) "Refugee Policy Review Framework, Country Summary as at 30 June 2020".

<sup>217</sup> IBRD, IFC (2021) "Country Partnership framework for the Republic of Iraq for the Period FY 2022–2026", July 2021.

<sup>218</sup> UNHCR (2023) "The Inclusion of Internally Displaced People in Iraq's Social Safety Net – From Short-term humanitarian cash assistance to Durable Social Protection", August 2023.

<sup>219</sup> See the examples of Somalia, Nigeria and Iraq provided as part of the discussion in Finding 20 above.

**Finding 25:** *The full potential of UNHCR’s contribution to inter-agency approaches has at times been constrained by the lack of a common paradigm on solutions.*



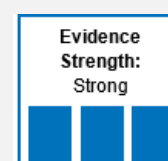
UNHCR and development actors do not have a shared paradigm on solutions. Despite the significant progress made towards this in recent years, substantive differences remain between UNHCR’s approach to durable solutions and that of its development counterparts. In external stakeholder interviews, development sources generally recognized the critical role of UNHCR in protection and in developing a rights-based approach to solutions, centred around freedom of agency and informed choices for IDPs, and their right to participate directly in policy and programme decisions that affected them and their families. Nonetheless, three senior development sources interviewed at HQ level felt that UNHCR’s conception of solutions was too narrowly confined to protection. In their view, solutions needed to incorporate elements relating more centrally to development and be built around the aim of bolstering the role and capacity of the state in IDP governance. On this latter point, they noted the distinction between refugee and IDP situations, and argued that the latter provided pressing and legitimate grounds for states to be given broad support and latitude in the management of their IDP populations.

Although UNHCR has formally endorsed the principle of the primary responsibility of the state in IDP situations, as articulated in the IASC Framework and the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda, its approach to doing so is informed by its protection mandate. This can produce tensions in both UNHCR’s approach and relations with development actors. The clearest illustration of this can be found in situations of IDP camp closures that raise the risk of involuntary returns. In these situations, UNHCR has consistently sought to provide IDPs with options other than return, even if this differed from government priorities.<sup>220</sup> In contrast, the position of development agencies in these situations has tended to conform more to the established development model, which is geared towards the empowerment and capacitation of the state.<sup>221</sup> In these instances, as in Iraq and Nigeria, UNHCR has at times distanced itself from its development partners to varying degrees.

There is an important distinction between the rights-based conception of durable solutions advanced by UNHCR and the paradigm supported by development actors. Given its protection mandate, UNHCR is stringent on adhering to normative standards in the pursuit of solutions. This can put it at odds with development actors, whose priority is to support the state in the facilitation of large-scale IDP returns, posited as part of a broader recovery and normalization effort; in some cases this difference in approach has hampered cooperation.

In its Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors, UNHCR asserts a vision of its role as catalyst rather than direct actor in the development dimension of durable solutions. The strategy provides welcome clarity in an area that was sometimes viewed by interviewees, both internal and external, as in need of more consistency in UNHCR’s approach and orientations.

**Finding 26:** *Several indicators emphasize that constraints to UNHCR’s durable solutions are linked to difficulties in securing sufficient financial and human resources. Additionally, there is a need to improve specific skills, particularly in the context of multi-sector and multi-stakeholder initiatives.*



A consistent challenge for UNHCR has been to mobilize resources for durable solutions for IDPs. It has co-chaired (with UNDP) a Financing Task Force for Durable Solutions under the Action Agenda and has had exploratory talks with the World Bank on establishing a dedicated financing facility for IDPs, similar to the Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR).<sup>222</sup> UNHCR handed over its leadership of the Financing Task Force to the office of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement..

As with programme governance for IDPs, resource mobilization for durable solutions must address the profound conceptual differences in the way in which IDPs are envisioned by the humanitarian and development communities. Three development sources stated that although the categorization of IDPs as a rights-based interest group may be sound from a protection or humanitarian perspective, it is less compelling from a

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> On the position of development actors in durable solutions and their relationship with the state, see for example UNDP (2021) “From Durable Solutions to Development Solutions – What Role for Development Actors in Addressing Internal Displacement? Submission to the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement”, March 2021.

<sup>222</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/10/28/10-things-to-know-about-the-window-for-host-communities-and-refugees>

development point of view. Although refugees no longer enjoy the protection of their home countries, all citizens who are still within their borders remain under a social contract with their home states. Several development sources explained that their aim was not necessarily to assist IDPs as a special interest group, but rather to help states to honour their obligations to all citizens, including IDPs, through overall improvements in the machinery of national governments and markets. From an operational perspective, aligning development goals and programme boundaries with outcomes specific to IDPs was, in their view, neither feasible nor always appropriate.

In large part, this distinction in approach to durable solutions explains why development funding for IDPs has traditionally been difficult to secure, as attested by interviewees for this evaluation in Somalia, Iraq, CAR and Nigeria. Development donor actors were reluctant to invest in dynamic contexts still experiencing conflict and instability. This is not least because their partners are national governments which, in situations of conflict, are likely to generate limited fiscal revenue and are more likely to spend on conflict.

The challenge of funding for durable solutions is especially difficult for UNHCR, given that its mandate is humanitarian and geared to refugees. Some of UNHCR's traditional donors are unable to support long-term development activities, as such support does not fall within their own mandates. Since 2019, UNHCR's income for development activities has added up to slightly more than \$900 million, or only about 4 per cent of total income. While this modest amount is consistent with UNHCR's essentially humanitarian mandate, it is notable that only \$37 million of this, or 4 per cent, was allocated for IDPs.<sup>223</sup>

The evaluation found shortfalls in UNHCR's capacity in some areas that are important for durable solutions. Despite progress referenced above, case studies heard of challenges for Country Offices – they have to be able to work in multi-agency settings and they need more understanding of other agencies' ways of working. Furthermore, some solutions approaches require more people who understand how to work with the government planning and budgeting systems that are necessary to ensure sustainability of service provision of some durable solutions initiatives, such as new settlement or relocation initiatives.

## 4.6 Operational enablers: How do UNHCR organizational systems and processes enable or constrain UNHCR's approaches and results in situations of internal displacement?

The evaluation focused on five main organizational processes: resource mobilization and resource allocation; workforce management; policy and guidance; decision-making in the context of decentralization; and the evolving RBM system. These are discussed in turn.

### Summary of key findings on operational enablers and their implications

There is strong evidence that developments in UNHCR's organizational processes and systems have improved its engagement in situations of internal displacement but challenges and limitations persist with implications for future development.

- **Resource mobilization and allocation:** Developments at Country Office, Regional Bureau and global levels have successfully mobilized and allocated increased financial resources to internal displacement situations. But the challenging funding environment, scale of needs and range of roles that UNHCR can play has led to an urgency to clarify UNHCR priorities which will support consistency in resource allocation. As part of this, there is a need for an explicit rationale and strategy to support equitable, needs-based resource allocation between refugees and IDPs.
- **Workforce management:** Recruitment and training initiatives have enhanced workforce capacity for internal displacement situations, yet challenges persist in capacity, knowledge and attitudes. Continuous investment in workforce development is essential to maintain high levels of expertise, address skill gaps and to adapt to evolving operational requirements in IDP situations.
- **Decentralization of decision-making:** Decentralization allows Country Offices the flexibility to adapt to local contexts, but it may also hinder oversight to ensure consistent quality across operations. There is a risk of fragmented approaches and missed opportunities for cross-learning and best practice

<sup>223</sup> Source: Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service, UNHCR.



replication, suggesting the need for enhanced methods for oversight and greater opportunities for internal knowledge-sharing.

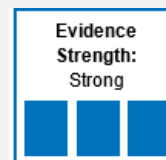
- **Policy and guidance:** While UNHCR has invested in the development of relevant policies and guidance, there are challenges and inconsistencies in their application. There is a need for practical and accessible guidance on how to operationalize some policy commitments in specific contexts as well as the resolution of policy tensions.
- **Results-based management:** Advancements in RBM are promising but require adjustments to address inconsistencies and for use in internal displacement situations. This would ensure that UNHCR can track progress towards outcomes for IDPs over time and be able to demonstrate its contribution and significance in multi-agency settings and initiatives.

#### 4.6.1 Resource mobilization and resource allocation

Since 2021, UNHCR has sought to align its resource mobilization and resource allocation strategies for IDPs more closely, and to increase the visibility of this group in advocacy and fundraising.<sup>224</sup> Along with these efforts, UNHCR's decentralization initiative, launched in 2019, has moved much of the decision-making authority involved in resource management to Regional Bureaux and Country Offices.<sup>225</sup> Notably, the authority of Bureaux Directors and Country Representatives to reassign resources to internal displacement was simplified and expedited, removing the need for most HQ clearance.

**Finding 27:** *In the past five years, the proportion of flexible funding in UNHCR revenue has increased steadily, thanks in part to its proactive engagement with donors. There is some evidence that this has benefited its programming for IDPs. Alongside this, UNHCR has successfully pursued other avenues to fund its IDP operations, such as pooled funds.*

Evidence  
Strength:  
Strong



In recent years, a priority for UNHCR's resource mobilization has been to secure more flexible funding, such as funding that is either unearmarked or softly earmarked. Flexible funding can often – although not always – be used for IDP interventions. Such funding supports operational responsiveness and flexibility. UNHCR initiatives to promote flexible funding have included advocacy to donors through papers highlighting its benefits, and efforts to give donors' profile even when their funding is not earmarked.<sup>226</sup> There have also been ongoing complementary global humanitarian reforms working towards a similar objective.<sup>227</sup>

These efforts have yielded good results. Of the \$5.5 billion contributed to UNHCR operations globally in 2022, 41 per cent consisted of flexible funding,<sup>228</sup> compared to only 30 per cent in 2019.<sup>229</sup> Some of the increase has been due to the steady rise in private sector contributions, which are largely unearmarked or only softly earmarked.<sup>230</sup> For example, of the \$1.2 billion received from private sector donors in 2022, almost \$1 billion was unearmarked or softly earmarked.<sup>231</sup>

UNHCR's flexible funding has been a significant source of UNHCR resources for IDP contexts. In the case of both refugees and IDPs, the gap between earmarked contributions and programme requirements has been filled with unearmarked or softly earmarked funds. In the past four years, flexible funding covered, on average, 51 per cent of resources allocated to IDP programmes and 54 per cent of the considerably larger refugee operating budget.<sup>232</sup> One relevant use of these flexible funds appreciated internally was the establishment of a

<sup>224</sup> UNHCR (2021) UNHCR's Transformation, Executive Committee Note, 18 June 2021.

<sup>225</sup> UNHCR (2023) "UNHCR institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement".

<sup>226</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Report on the Use of Flexible Funding in 2021", June 2022; UNHCR (2022) "Global Report 2022".

<sup>227</sup> Reducing earmarking and improving the quality of humanitarian funding has been an objective of the Grand Bargain since its launch in 2016.

<sup>228</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Global Report 2022".

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> For example, more than 75 per cent of private sector donations were composed of flexible funding in 2022. That year, the amount of private sector support to UNHCR almost doubled to slightly more than \$1.2 billion, or 21 per cent of its total income. UNHCR (2022) "Global Report 2022".

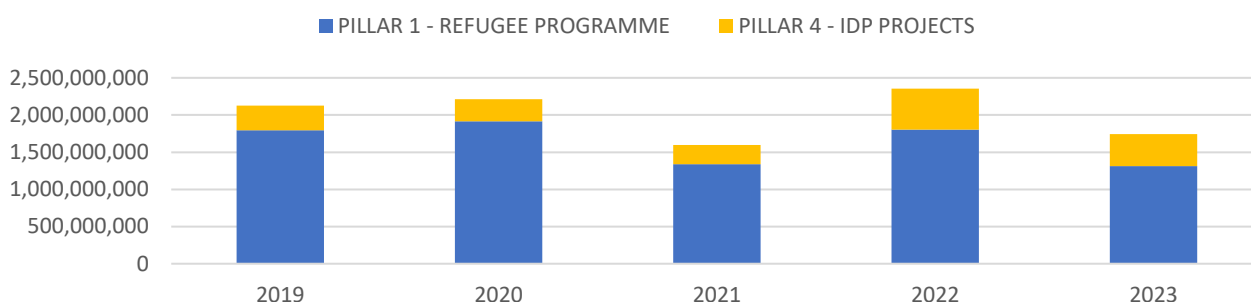
<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

three-year, \$60 million UNHCR Boost Fund, which was used to support promising initiatives in internal displacement situations.<sup>233</sup>

However, it is important to note the continued disparity in earmarked funding between refugees and IDPs. The earmarked donor support that UNHCR secures for IDPs is significantly more limited, especially given the much larger size of the IDP population. In terms of donor-earmarked funding, resources destined for refugees make up the largest share by far of the total contributed to UNHCR operations from 2019 to 2022, with \$8.1 billion in total over that period<sup>234</sup> (see Figure 11). In the same period, contributions earmarked for IDPs have totalled \$1.4 billion on average, or only 23 per cent of those earmarked for refugees. Hence, on a per capita basis, donor earmarked income received by UNHCR for refugees between 2019 and 2022 has amounted to \$81 per person annually on average (based on total refugee population), while total donor earmarked funding for IDPs has amounted to only \$10.70 (based on total IDP population).<sup>235</sup>

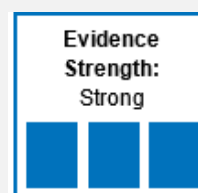
Figure 11: UNHCR earmarked resources for Pillar 1 (Refugees) and Pillar 4 (IDPs) in US\$



It is worth noting the growing significance of direct private sector support to IDP programmes. Between 2019 and 2021, for example, three of the top 10 UNHCR donors for IDPs were private sector actors.<sup>236</sup> During that period, private sector contributions to UNHCR projects in support of IDPs increased from \$23 million to \$76 million.<sup>237</sup>

In other moves, UNHCR revised its fundraising guide for humanitarian, transitional and development funds in 2019 and 2020 to facilitate Country Offices' access to pooled funding. In 2020, UNHCR also published a guide intended for its operational staff, on how to secure funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).<sup>238</sup> In recent years, the CERF has accounted for a growing share of funding received for IDPs. Of the total \$213 million CERF contributions received by UNHCR between 2019 and 2021, \$133 million, or 62 per cent, was earmarked for IDPs.<sup>239</sup>

**Finding 28:** *There is strong evidence that refugees remain, by far, the population group receiving the most UNHCR resources. This is a function of UNHCR's specific mandate and unique competencies in the provision of protection and assistance to refugees. Nonetheless, it highlights the need for a rationale, which this evaluation could not find, to underpin its approach to equity and to frame the notion of needs-based assistance.*



There is strong evidence that refugees rather than IDPs remain, by far, the population group receiving the most UNHCR resources. This is a function of UNHCR's specific mandate, and the extent to which it takes financial responsibility for assistance and protection services to this group.

UNHCR's coverage of refugee populations is much more extensive, on a per capita basis, than its coverage of IDPs. In the four years since 2019, UNHCR programme requirements (i.e. OP needs-based budget) for refugees

<sup>233</sup> UNHCR (2023) "UNHCR institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement"; case study evidence, Nigeria.

<sup>234</sup> Source: figures provided by Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service (DRRM), UNHCR.

<sup>235</sup> Per capita figures provided by DRRM, UNHCR. Populations figures provided by DRRM, UNHCR from Global Trends Reports, excluding Palestinians under mandate of UNRWA.

<sup>236</sup> UNHCR (2022) "UNHCR Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, 2019-2021".

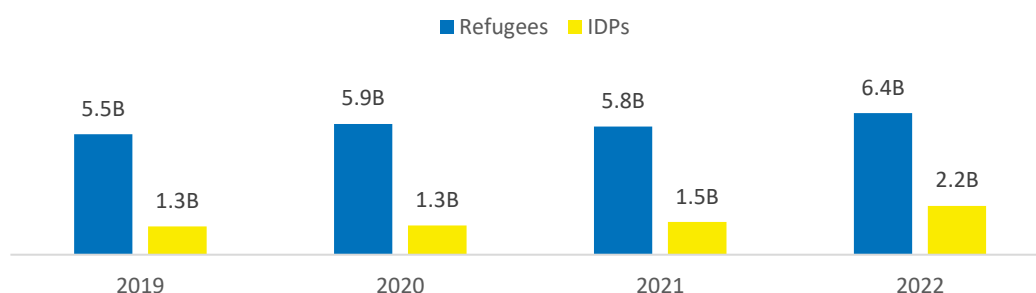
<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> UNHCR (2020) "Fundraising from CERF – A Guide for UNHCR Country Operations", March 2020.

<sup>239</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, 2019-2021".

have totalled \$23.5 billion, or \$5.9 billion per year on average. In contrast, programme requirements for IDPs have amounted to \$6.3 billion over the same period, or an average of \$1.6 billion annually. On a per capita basis, this amounts to \$257 per refugee per year on average, against \$31 per IDP.<sup>240</sup>

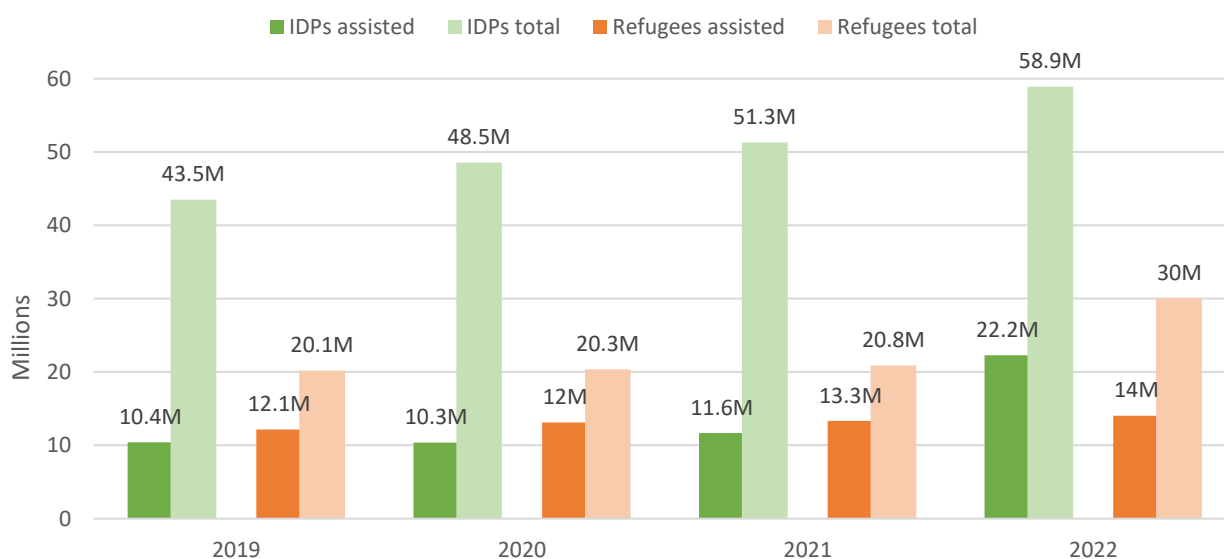
Figure 12: 2019–2022 OP needs-based budget for refugees versus IDPs in US\$<sup>241</sup>



Multiple interviewees noted that some of the reasons for this ninefold difference in programme requirements between refugees and IDPs related to UNHCR’s refugee mandate. In contrast, IDPs can benefit from the support of a broader range of actors, including their governments, whose responsibility to assist them is a central tenet of the international frameworks developed for their protection.

Furthermore, and as a possible result of this, the evaluation found that a significantly lower proportion of IDPs were assisted than refugees. In 2020, 21 per cent of the total number of IDPs were assisted by UNHCR, compared to 64 per cent of refugees. This proportion remained broadly unchanged in 2021 and 2022 <sup>242</sup> (see Figure 13 and Annex 8 for further details, see also Section 4.1 for regional and country variations). The disparity between allocations to refugees and IDPs is all the starker when the sizes of global refugee and IDP populations are taken into account, given that the number of IDPs worldwide is much higher.<sup>243</sup>

Figure 13: 2019–2022 IDP total and assisted vs refugee total and assisted<sup>244</sup>



<sup>240</sup> Populations figures from Global Trends report 2019–2022 (excluding Palestinians under the mandate of UNRWA), OP needs-based budget figures from Business Intelligence Reporting tools, Global Analysis and Reporting Power BI, version 2.6 2023 June 28 - OverAll view; Budget Years from 2019–2022, retrieved 12 July 2023 from Global Analysis Reporting (2019–2023).

<sup>241</sup> Source: Business Intelligence Reporting tools, Global Analysis and Reporting Power BI, version 2.6 2023 June 28 - OverAll view; Budget Years from 2019–2022, retrieved 12 July 2023 from Global Analysis Reporting (2019–2023).

<sup>242</sup> UNHCR, 2019–2021 figures from UNHCR Refugee population statistics database, population type: IDPs and people in IDP-like situations, and refugees, including people in refugee-like situations. 2022 figures Orion Analytics Center, Population Planning Figures, figures taken as of 31 December 2022.

<sup>243</sup> Refugee and IDP populations fluctuate over time. Between 2020 and 2022 (latest available estimates) they averaged 23.3 million refugees and 52.2 million IDPs annually. Source: UNHCR, Global Trends Forced Displacement, 2020 to 2022.

<sup>244</sup> Source: 2019–2021 figures from UNHCR Refugee population statistics database, population type: IDPs and people in IDP-like situations, and refugees, including people in refugee-like situations. 2022 figures Orion Analytics Center, Population Planning Figures, figures taken as of 31 December 2022.

The evaluation team could find no evidence of a formal or explicit policy or rationale for deciding the comparative scope of its assistance to refugees and IDPs.<sup>245</sup> The fact that this remains subject to pragmatic decisions taken collectively and on a regional basis by Country Offices, Regional Bureaux and HQ is consistent with the adaptiveness called for by a globally fluid environment. But this does not contribute to predictable decision-making, and there is some evidence that it may not be conducive to optimal resource mobilization for IDPs. Among the donors interviewed for this evaluation, some indicated that although they welcomed UNHCR's engagement in IDP operations, they were not clear on what basis the scope of this engagement was determined, relative to that of UNHCR's refugee operations. Two interviewees questioned whether there was a risk that UNHCR's IDP engagement might be at the expense of its refugee coverage.

Although UNHCR's resource allocation prioritizes refugees over IDPs in line with its mandate, resources available to it are allocated consistently with targets set (see Annex 11). Hence globally, OL financial coverage of UNHCR's OP needs-based budgets for refugees and IDPs since 2020 has amounted, respectively, to roughly the same proportions (54 per cent and 51 per cent). However, there are large variations in coverage of IDPs at country level. In Syria and Iraq, for example, only 30 per cent and 40 per cent of the budget targets for IDPs were achieved in 2022, compared to 79 per cent and 93 per cent for El Salvador and Myanmar during the same period (see Annex 11 for details).<sup>246</sup>

Yet, as with donors, the evaluation team found that UNHCR staff at country level were not always clear about a rationale to inform the apportioning of resources between refugee and IDP populations. Survey findings indicate some division of views internally with regard to UNHCR's equitable approaches. Out of 102 respondents, 55 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that Country Office resource allocation to different groups is equitable, i.e. it is allocated according to need rather than status. However, an almost equal proportion took the opposite view, with 45 per cent of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, possibly seeing other factors as important in considerations of equity. When breaking down the data by gender, it is noteworthy that 67 per cent of male respondents believe that Country Office resource allocation is equitable, in contrast to 58 per cent of the female respondents who strongly disagree or disagree with this statement.<sup>247</sup> Both case study KII and survey respondents commented that in the context of severe underfunding, Country Offices needed better guidance on establishing priorities across IDPs and refugees, in particular to balance humanitarian responses in a context where donor focus is on one population to the disadvantage of other similarly circumstanced groups.

Several external informants also perceived a reluctance on the part of UNHCR to prioritize in the face of rising needs and dwindling funding. These informants suggested that UNHCR, like other humanitarian agencies, is inclined to target an excessively high level of needs, which they regarded as unrealistic. Survey respondents echoed these concerns, emphasizing that trying to cover too many needs diminishes the impact and quality of UNHCR's work. However, there were conflicting views among informants with regard to how UNHCR should prioritize its efforts. Some argued that UNHCR's focus on IDPs should not detract from its commitment to refugees, underlining the need to concentrate resources there, but others criticized this approach.

Case study interviews found that Country Offices were considering equity in decision-making. For example, in Myanmar the evaluation found that resource allocation is approached with nuance, considering the distinct rights and requirements of various displaced groups, such as stateless individuals lacking freedom of movement versus those with citizenship rights and social networks, like the Rakhine community. In Colombia the area-based approach, widely acknowledged internally as successful, concentrates funding within specific localities benefiting refugees, IDPs and host communities alike. Furthermore, a move to more integrated programming and area-based approaches may be one way of allocating funding more equitably, given their ability to integrate responses to different population groups according to needs. Country case studies, such as Colombia, Myanmar and Nigeria, illustrate the potential: in Nigeria the UNHCR Labondo pilot project for IDPs' relocation allocated 20 per cent of assistance to the host population and enhanced shared services for all. However, as highlighted earlier, the comparatively high cost of area-based approaches tends to confine them to a small proportion of overall populations in need.

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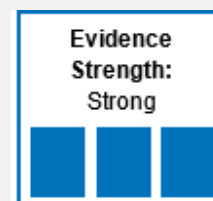
<sup>245</sup> As well as stateless persons. This population group is not included in the discussion, as its impact on resource allocation is minimal.

<sup>246</sup> This is based on analysis of UNHCR Pillar 1 (refugee) and Pillar 4 (IDP) budgets. It is acknowledged that these figures do not necessarily cover all expenditure on each group, as noted in the UNHCR (2022) report "Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement 2019–2021", but they are judged to be a robust basis to identify trends, according to the evaluation team (based on discussions at country and global level).

<sup>247</sup> Survey data by gender: 42 per cent of female respondents (19 female respondents) agree or strongly agree with the statement that UNHCR resource allocation to different groups is equitable, while 58 per cent (26 female respondents) disagree or strongly disagree. This contrasts with the male respondents' perspective, where 67 per cent (34 male respondents) strongly agree or agree that UNHCR resource allocation is equitable, compared with 33 per cent (17 male respondents) disagreeing with this.

## 4.6.2 Workforce management

**Finding 29:** UNHCR's initiatives to enhance capacity for internal displacement situations encompassed recruitment drives, the establishment of training and development opportunities for UNHCR and partner staff, and efforts to foster a cross-organizational understanding of UNHCR's responsibilities and role in IDP situations. There is evidence that these initiatives have yielded some improvements in skills, attitudes and staffing for IDP situations. Nevertheless, ongoing work is required to address knowledge gaps, shift mindsets and keep staff informed about current approaches.



UNHCR's 2019 IDP policy commits the organization to support staff and partners' staff to acquire skills and competencies needed to work in situations of internal displacement, including in coordination and information. To this end, UNHCR rolled out training and development initiatives. Those initiatives being rolled out as part of the Business Transformation Programme were found to be relevant to internal displacement situations – for instance, the plans to train operational staff in development, climate, preparedness planning and response.<sup>248</sup> Also, since 2019 UNHCR has developed a number of courses specifically for working in situations of internal displacement, including specialized courses on IDP protection, cluster roles and management of programmes in IDP situations. Based on UNHCR's own monitoring and the evaluation survey data, satisfaction levels were high among people who successfully completed the courses. However, only a small proportion of UNHCR staff have so far followed IDP-specific courses; available data from UNHCR indicated that fewer than 10 per cent of staff have completed one of the centrally run courses,<sup>249</sup> a finding in line with that of a wider review of learning in 2019–2020.<sup>250</sup> Case studies also gave some indication that staff in sub-offices felt that they did not have the same access to training and development opportunities as those in the central Country Office; this is worth further investigation.

Despite enhanced training opportunities, the evaluation found skills and competency gaps. Worryingly, the evaluation also found that UNHCR's capacity for training has been reduced. Multiple evaluation participants at country, regional and global level in KIIs and the evaluation survey flagged areas for further development. These areas include: the need to expand understanding of the cluster system; knowledge of the legal framework around IDPs and implications for UNHCR advocacy; skills for working in multi-agency settings; political analysis skills; monitoring and evaluation skills to establish UNHCR's contribution to outcomes in multi-sector and multi-stakeholder programmes; and development-related skills including enhanced understanding of development actors; and how best to work with government systems on durable solutions.<sup>251</sup>

Evaluation evidence from multiple KIIs at global and country levels indicated that efforts to elevate the internal visibility of UNHCR's work in internal displacement situations and to position it as a shared responsibility across the organization have influenced a more positive attitude among UNHCR staff towards working with IDPs. Nevertheless, interviews with personnel throughout the organization also highlighted that substantial work remains to be done in this regard. Several internal key informants from three case study countries reported that some UNHCR staff continue to view work with IDPs as a lesser priority, reverting to "refugees-first" approaches when faced with challenging resource allocation decisions. Some even express a sense that staff are "feeling as if they are betraying the organization by focusing on IDPs".<sup>252</sup>

These attitudes link to the earlier resource allocation discussion. They reflect the challenging context of how needs outstripping resources requires difficult choices. They also reflect the ongoing debate within UNHCR of its identity in relation to IDPs, identified in the summary of key findings of 29 evaluations undertaken by UNHCR in 2022, which concluded that "a lack of strategic and political clarity – both externally and internally – regarding UNHCR's role vis-à-vis IDPs, has fed down into ambiguity or uncertainty in operational activity and coordination".<sup>253</sup>

<sup>248</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Our Transformation", July 2022.

<sup>249</sup> UNHCR data made available to the evaluation team.

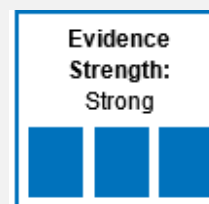
<sup>250</sup> UNHCR (2020) "Evaluation of UNHCR's approach to learning and development for workforce and partners".

<sup>251</sup> UNHCR (2022) "Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement 2019–2021" also notes the need for further training and development. For survey data and breakdown of areas for development highlighted by survey respondents, see footnote reference 103 mentioned above.

<sup>252</sup> Key informant interview

<sup>253</sup> Betts, J. and Elo, S. (2022) "UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement (2017–2022): Summary of Evaluative Evidence". Internal Report. September 2022.

**Finding 30:** *There is compelling evidence that UNHCR staff constitute a substantial asset, highly regarded by external stakeholders, partners and affected individuals for their knowledge, expertise and dedication. This reputation has been cultivated, in part, through their on-the-ground presence at the local level. Nevertheless, attempts to shift a greater proportion of resources towards operational costs, at the expense of staff, have placed UNHCR personnel individually and UNHCR’s community-level presence under significant pressure.*



External stakeholders at national<sup>254</sup> and global levels commented frequently on the expertise and commitment of UNHCR staff and the value they placed on their contextual knowledge and specialist expertise.<sup>255</sup> Community members valued staff accessibility, which also fed into community trust of UNHCR.

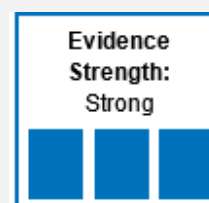
Staffing makes up a significant proportion of UNHCR budgets (see Annex 10), but the evaluation found in country and global interviews that this funding is under pressure. Pressure to reduce staffing costs has resulted in some positions being unfilled and in staff double-hatting some roles.

At the same time significant gaps exist, with one senior-level key informant estimating unfilled cluster coordination roles to be in the range of 15 to 20 per cent. Changes in context such as influxes of new populations in need are often managed by the same resource in a sub-office for some time while new budgets are negotiated or scale-up takes place.<sup>256</sup> These findings are in line with other evaluations’ results, such as in Sudan, where an evaluation found a sense of overload among staff as UNHCR’s portfolio expanded.<sup>257</sup>

Global KIIs revealed that UNHCR intends to rebalance budgets to increase the proportion of funds being allocated to operations rather than staff. The implications of this for UNHCR’s presence, profile and operations in internal displacement situations are not clear at this point, given that protection is by nature heavily labour-intensive. But overall, they suggest a need to prioritize to maximize the skills and capacity of staff.

### 4.6.3 Decentralization and decision-making

**Finding 31:** *The evaluation found that a key benefit of UNHCR’s decentralized decision-making systems was the flexibility it provided to Country Offices to design and adapt country strategies relatively freely to suit their context. In some countries this decentralized model was replicated internally on the regional or field and sub-office level, helping to deal with the very specific dynamics of IDP contexts in different parts of a country. However, the evaluation uncovered indications that, in conjunction with capacity limitations, this approach could pose challenges related to oversight, consistency and opportunities for learning.*



Country Offices have reported having the flexibility to create strategies that suit their specific situations. In countries with regional variations, the authority to develop localized strategies might be delegated to area and sub-offices, as seen in Myanmar and Nigeria. This approach allows for quick responses to local context changes and greater customization of strategies. However, a challenge associated with decentralization, particularly in countries with highly localized strategies at area offices, is that it can hinder consistency across different areas and a comprehensive response. This was noted by Country Offices and mirrored by HQ informants who commented on the challenges of decentralization for their efforts to maintain an overview across countries.

Regional Bureaux consistently took responsibility for IDP contexts in their region with oversight and advisory support, but their capacity to support the number and diversity of Country Office contexts is often stretched.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>254</sup> Evidence from country case studies: Georgia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria.

<sup>255</sup> Also highlighted in Betts, J. and Elo, S. (2022) “UNHCR’s Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement (2017–2022): Summary of Evaluative Evidence”. Internal Report. September 2022.

<sup>256</sup> Evidence from Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia.

<sup>257</sup> UNHCR (2022) “Country Strategy Evaluation Sudan

<sup>258</sup> Evidence from country case studies of El Salvador, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria; Regional Bureau KII for West Africa and Middle East and North Africa (MENA), plus several global KIIs. UNHCR, 2022, Evaluation of UNHCR’s response to L3 emergency in Afghanistan.

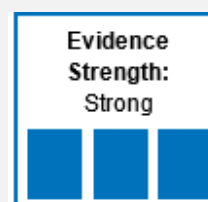
There were some variations between regions in the strategies adopted for internal displacement. A noticeable example was in West Africa, where the Regional Bureau adopted a strong focus on UNHCR roles in shelter, CCCM and protection, and applied this to resource allocation to countries for its operational delivery and other roles as well as cluster coordination. In this region, external relations staff noted the benefit of this stance in communicating UNHCR's role and identity in internal displacement situations to external audiences.

The evaluation found examples where the Regional Bureau had played a significant role in supporting Country Office IDP operations, with the areas of law and policy, DIMA-related support and external relationship management highlighted.<sup>259</sup> However, there were also examples of IDP-specific issues that Country Offices were dealing with where they found that Regional Bureaux had not provided as much support. Examples from two case studies referred to the limited support in the design of approaches to durable solutions for IDPs, in dealing with the arrival into IDP communities of former combatants from insurgency groups, and in building on global-level partnerships with other organizations, such as the World Bank.

Limitations stem from the range of technical issues and capacity constraints at Regional Bureau level. The evaluation found some indications from Regional Bureau interviews that upcoming changes in staff budgets may place some constraints on bureaux' capacity to support Country Offices. Evidence on this is limited, but the scope and scale of operations they are supporting, along with the range of diverse contexts, were cited as part of the challenge.

#### 4.6.4 UNHCR policy and guidance

**Finding 32:** *UNHCR has made a substantial investment in formulating policies and guidance pertinent to operating in internal displacement situations. Although these policies and guidance have established a valuable reference framework for IDP operations, there is compelling evidence to indicate a need for more proactive dissemination of this material and the provision of technical advisory support to ensure its consistent application. Additionally, there are indications of certain tensions between policies and frameworks.*



During the period 2019–2023, the body of UNHCR policy and guidance relevant to IDP operations grew substantially (see Section 3.2 for details). Evaluation survey data found strong familiarity with UNHCR IDP policy, although this was highest among those who had followed UNHCR training programmes, which have had limited reach so far.<sup>260</sup> One case study also indicated that international staff had higher levels of awareness of the range of policy and guidance documents than national staff.

Previous sections of the report have highlighted some of the areas where there are some gaps in the policy and guidance on how to apply UNHCR's policy commitments. They included a need for guidance on the practical steps associated with responsible disengagement and also what "solutions from the start" look like in specific contexts – particularly those that have ongoing conflict and instability (as discussed in Section 4.4 on durable solutions). Other evaluations have also pointed to a mixed picture across the staff regarding familiarity with policies and confidence with their application.<sup>261</sup> A constraining factor on the use of data and guidance identified in the case studies was the sheer weight of guidance and policies that staff – many of whom are already stretched with heavy operational duties – are expected to read. This is resulting in a stated interest to have more practical support for applying policy commitments in their specific country locations.

The evaluation also noted some tensions between IDP-specific policy and other strategies that have emerged since, such as regarding UNHCR's engagement in integrated and area-based programming, as called for in its 2019 IDP policy, and its objective to "step back" from such actions and hand them over to development actors, as detailed in its 2022 Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors.<sup>262</sup> Such tensions in policy

<sup>259</sup> Evidence from El Salvador, Iraq, Nigeria and West Africa, East Africa and MENA Regional Bureaux.

<sup>260</sup> Survey results show that 83 per cent of respondents (52 respondents) who participated in UNHCR training are familiar with the UNHCR IDP policy. In comparison, among respondents who haven't participated in training, 64 per cent are familiar with the policy (35 respondents).

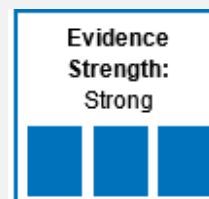
<sup>261</sup> Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and Brigham and Women's Physician Organization. "Evaluation Report of UNHCR's Response to Multiple Emergencies in the Central Sahel Region: Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali. April 2022". Quotations from pp.8–9. [Internal document made available to the evaluation team]

<sup>262</sup> UNHCR "Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors" [internal document].

orientations may be contributing to a lack of clarity within UNHCR with regard to its role in internal displacement situations, as highlighted in the evaluation survey and other evaluations.<sup>263</sup>

#### 4.6.5 Results-based management systems

**Finding 33:** Evaluation evidence found that the ongoing advancements in UNHCR's results-based management (RBM) systems hold promise for improving UNHCR's management and reporting of the effectiveness of operations in internal displacement situations. The systems focus on multi-year planning and outcome-driven reporting. Some potential adjustments were observed, such as accommodating the multi-stakeholder nature of work in IDP situations and addressing certain inconsistencies in the implementation of the new RBM system – resolving these would help to maximize the potential of the new system for internal displacement situations.



UNHCR has introduced a new multi-year strategy and planning process as part of a new RBM system known internally as COMPASS, in line with the platform supporting it. This shift recognizes the importance of aligning multi-year strategies with national and UN planning frameworks in the humanitarian and development sectors, moving away from annual programme cycles towards multi-year strategic planning.<sup>264</sup>

A benefit for internal displacement situations is that the multi-year strategy and planning system will enable progress to be planned and tracked towards some of the longer-term goals of UNHCR's programme. As earlier sections have noted, many of UNHCR's interventions achieve results only after sustained approaches, such as in the development of law and policy. In addition, a significant proportion of internal displacement situations are protracted crisis contexts, so multi-year planning towards outcomes is appropriate and more feasible with this system.

Interviewees at country and global levels welcomed the flexibility of the new system. In cases where HRPs are multi-year, they saw its potential to enable aligned planning cycles where appropriate – a significant development given the importance for fundraising for activities to be visible in the HRP.<sup>265</sup> But there were also some indications, backed by case study interviews, that despite the multi-year strategies there is still some way to go in an organizational shift towards “multi-year thinking”.<sup>266</sup> The continuity of indicators and the fact that UNHCR planning is conditioned by the availability of annual funds were also highlighted as issues in an evaluation of Honduran Country Office strategy.<sup>267</sup> Further roll-out of the new system towards multi-year budgeting and partnership agreements could help move this forward.

The new RBM system has the potential to provide more meaningful reports on UNHCR's results by increasing the focus on outcomes and also by enabling customization of indicators at Country Office level. This can help address some of the shortcomings in UNHCR reporting that the evaluation identified, such as the focus on outputs. The majority of evaluation survey respondents were positive about the use of COMPASS in terms of its support for working in internal displacement situations. In fact, 48 per cent of respondents said it makes visible or has the potential to make visible the important achievements or results of UNHCR in IDP situations, and 52 per cent reported that it enables the Country Office to better define its planned outcomes for IDPs that are relevant to the country context. However, there were also challenges with the system being viewed as designed predominantly for refugee contexts and Country Offices having to “retrofit” it to IDP contexts. In particular, some core indicators are specific only to refugee contexts but are still compulsory to report on, such as those relating to status determination and also indicators for protection law and policy. Furthermore, there is no specific requirement to report on IDP populations or to have a specific IDP outcome or indicator in countries with IDP populations.

There are some indications that the new RBM will be supportive to needs-based and also area-based approaches, thereby potentially supportive to equitable programming. The RBM system recognizes the increased mixed-population situations in which UNHCR operates and it bases planning and reporting on needs rather than on the previously used pillars. COMPASS now considers a single results chain for all people assisted

<sup>263</sup> UNHCR (2022) “Summary of Evaluative Evidence” highlights the lack of consistent clarity across UNHCR regarding its role in IDP situations.

<sup>264</sup> UNHCR global KIIs.

<sup>265</sup> Evidence from four country case studies (Nigeria, Syria, Georgia and Myanmar) and one global UNHCR KII.

<sup>266</sup> Case study evidence from Colombia and Nigeria.

<sup>267</sup> UNHCR Country Strategy Evaluation – Honduras 2019 – 2022.



by UNHCR. It removes budgetary controls based on specific pillars but now focuses on outcome-based budgeting, which provides space for more needs-based planning. However, as a number of interviews<sup>268</sup> highlighted, a continued ability to track results for different population groups will remain important for internal results management, for some donor reporting and to ensure that any differences in needs between population groups are identified and addressed.

However, the evaluation found some early inconsistencies in how the system is being operationalized. This relates to consistency in reporting on the core indicators and in how baseline populations, targets and progress were calculated. Also, there were differences in whether data for different population groups was reported or not – an issue possibly exacerbated by integrated approaches.<sup>269</sup> These issues warrant attention to ensure a consistent approach across countries.

A significant development for UNHCR's results monitoring is the introduction of a new standardized results monitoring survey (RMS). The surveys, which are carried out at scale – for instance, involving 1,800 households in Burkina Faso, 1,599 in Iraq and 1,477 in Somalia – have the potential to generate rich data on the conditions and well-being across population groups, forming an evidence base for planning and understanding operational contexts. The RMS can enable comparison between IDPs and other groups including refugees and potentially host communities which could support tracking of progress towards durable solutions – i.e. that people “no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement”.<sup>270</sup> However, the initial experience reveals that data is not consistently gathered in a manner conducive to such comparisons although this is in part due to the RMS' context-appropriate approach and its focus on specific population groups in order to enable identification of any changes for that population group over time.<sup>271</sup> The process is also at an early stage. It is a potentially valuable resource.

A further limitation of the RMS in terms of supporting UNHCR's reporting of its results is that it tracks conditions and potentially changes over time but it does not attribute those changes to any specific organization's interventions or other contextual changes. The evaluation notes that such attribution of change is not the current purpose of the RMS but sees its potential to support such analysis, with some adaptations. Given the multi-stakeholder nature of IDP situations, as well as the complexity of the contexts, additional steps will be needed if the RMS is to play a role in supporting the understanding and reporting of UNHCR's effectiveness in internal displacement situations. Furthermore, the value of the RMS rests on being repeatedly implemented in order to be able to track change. The evaluation found Country Offices uncertain as to whether they would be implementing it regularly.<sup>272</sup> (See Annex 14 for further details on RMS.)

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the evaluation's conclusions against the overarching EQs. The conclusions derive from the findings and analysis across the earlier sections considering UNHCR's roles in situations of internal displacement and also how organizational processes and systems enabled or constrained them. The five conclusions feed into the targeted recommendations in Section 6.

### 5.1 Relevance: What lessons are there for how UNHCR ensures the relevance of its approaches in internal displacement situations?

UNHCR's willingness to develop context-specific country strategies enabled it to provide appropriate interventions at country level. UNHCR has crafted responses to very different situations across and sometimes within countries in response to contextual variations. UNHCR responses have been relevant in meeting

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<sup>268</sup> UNHCR global and case study KIs.

<sup>269</sup> Discrepancies were found in figures reported at the country level compared to those available at HQ, as well as gaps in indicator reporting against outcome areas. Across the case study countries, the evaluation found indicator reporting to be hugely variable. Some countries (Somalia and Nigeria) had reported quite consistently on the indicators relating to IDPs, whereas other countries (El Salvador) had limited reporting. Additionally, within Country Offices, target populations varied between indicators. For instance, some baseline figures were reported for the whole population while others were focused on UNHCR's target population. This made it difficult for the evaluation team to analyse UNHCR's contribution to changes reported, as well as being a limitation for UNHCR's own management of interventions. The issue is also highlighted in the UNHCR Country Strategy Evaluation – Honduras 2019 – 2022.

<sup>270</sup> IASC definition of durable solutions as quoted in the UNHCR (2019) “Policy for Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement”.

<sup>271</sup> Based on data analysis of RMS from Georgia, Iraq and Somalia.

<sup>272</sup> Country case study data from Iraq, Nigeria and Somalia.

immediate needs but also in contributing to longer-term results when they integrate approaches such as capacity-building, support to community structures or IDP resilience and also strengthening the normative framework for IDP protection. Approaches contributing to longer-term results have been more effective when UNHCR works closely with other organizations including local and development actors. UNHCR's adaptability has been supported by decentralized decision-making and when flexible resources are available.

While such customization is a strength enabling UNHCR's strategies to respond to needs and other contextual factors, UNHCR's responsiveness has resulted in some differences in scope in Country Office strategies which challenge commitments to be predictable and consistent. In spite of difficulties for predictability with context-based approaches, tailoring responses to specific contexts should be maintained. However, more consistency and transparency in the decision-making process around strategy would be beneficial.

An important variation relates to how Country Offices and regions manage their limited resources to address the competing needs of refugees and IDPs in an equitable way, taking into account UNHCR's responsibilities in relation to each group. Some differences in scope and approaches are due to the lack of an explicit rationale that guides decision-making for the application of UNHCR's intentions to allocate resources based on needs.. Another constraint has been limitations in UNHCR emergency preparedness over the evaluation time period with effects including the timeliness of responses.

Country contexts presenting specific challenges to UNHCR include those where humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality are challenged as well as protection principles of IDPs' rights to safe, dignified and voluntary return. In these contexts UNHCR's approach has been a careful balancing of roles and priorities, usually to prioritize maintaining the organization's operational space and relationships with authorities while working through inter-agency mechanisms to advocate for humanitarian principles and protection. This approach highlights the importance of UNHCR's role in supporting inter-agency implementation of responsibilities for the centrality of protection. UNHCR has crafted a role in providing evidence and technical support to HCTs' efforts to implement these responsibilities but it has been challenged in how to respond to inconsistent applications of these responsibilities at the inter-agency level.

## 5.2 Effectiveness: What lessons are there for how UNHCR articulates and achieves its intended results in internal displacement situations?

**UNHCR achieved significant results** in terms of providing increasing numbers of people affected by internal displacement with assistance and protection each year; strengthening laws and policies that aim to protect IDPs; supporting government leadership of IDP responses including in solutions; and enhancing authorities' and civil society capacities, such as through the provision of legal and policy technical advice and training. This has been achieved through both operational and cluster leadership roles. UNHCR's effectiveness has been facilitated by its legal and technical expertise, effective cooperation with authorities at different levels, collaboration with other organizations and its sustained presence and support over time. The inter-relationship and complementarity of UNHCR's roles also contributed to effectiveness with, for example, operational roles providing data and credibility for evidence provision to other actors in inter-agency initiatives and advocacy.

While successful resource mobilization initiatives have enhanced the scale of UNHCR's resources available for internal displacement situations, needs still vastly outweigh resources. Furthermore, UNHCR has committed to a wide range of roles in internal displacement situations, making multiple demands on Country Offices' capacity that are also, in some countries, challenged by contextual factors of insufficient government commitment and variable inter-agency cooperation. In particular, the absence or small operational footprint of development actors in protracted displacement settings impedes the ability to hand over to partners. The costs of implementing area-based approaches when development actors are not engaged is also a constraint for UNHCR interventions. Staff and Country Offices are stretched in trying to meet the range of UNHCR commitments.

There is a clear need for UNHCR to prioritize and then focus investments on interventions to ensure their effectiveness. Some areas that need increased investment to maximize their potential results include dedicated cluster coordination roles, regular data collection for an effective role in provision of evidence, sustained advocacy and technical support to strengthen normative frameworks for IDP protection and greater focus on their application by governments, HCTs and others. Other commitments require clarity, particularly relating to fulfilment of UNHCR's responsibility as provider of last resort in the three areas of cluster leadership.

UNHCR has enhanced workforce capacity through recruitment and training initiatives but gaps remain in capacity and skills. Areas include skills for engagement with development actors, advocacy for promotion of the centrality of protection, data analysis and understanding of internal displacement situations for the design of programmes given the primary role of governments in the care of IDPs.

UNHCR's evolving systems for planning and monitoring show promise to improve the organization's articulation and tracking of outcomes for IDPs. New initiatives such as RMS demonstrate potential to produce rich data and analysis but these and other aspects of the RBM need some adjustments for IDP situations and to ensure consistency across Country Offices. Adjustments are needed also to ensure they capture results that are less visible and can track IDP protection-related outcomes over time and different interventions including relative to host communities. Also important and currently lacking in the RBM, is the ability to assess the significance and results of UNHCR's contributions through leadership of CCCM, shelter and protection clusters as well as operational contributions to multi-agency initiatives, a significant feature of internal displacement situations.

### 5.3 Connectedness: What lessons are there for UNHCR on how to work in multi-agency internal displacement situations?

**UNHCR has evolved effective ways of working in multi-agency** internal displacement situations. UNHCR worked well with other organizations in a range of roles including operational delivery, cluster leadership, evidence provision, policy and contributions to durable solutions. Cooperation included work with government authorities at different levels, civil society, sister UN agencies and international organizations to meet more immediate humanitarian needs but also to build environments more conducive to longer-term well-being and safety of IDPs. UNHCR has contributed to and benefited from participation in inter-agency forums, including durable solutions working groups, although the time-intensive participation in these has stretched resources.

There has been clear progress in the way UNHCR and other actors, including UN agencies and civil society organizations, cooperate both at country level and globally but there are some limitations. Some specific relationships are marked by tensions which reduce joint performance and can have an adverse impact at country level. These were most notable in CCCM coordination at country level in instances where a co-leadership model was applied with both UNHCR and IOM present and also in evidence production when synergies with other evidence initiatives such as IOM's DTM were not maximized. While partnerships with local actors are growing there is also potential for these local actors to play a greater role in UNHCR strategic decision-making as part of the localization agenda.

Despite significant progress in working with development actors to achieve solutions for IDPs, challenges remain. Differences are at their most apparent in the tensions that arise in reconciling the primary role of the state for IDP solutions with protection priorities and humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence that guide UNHCR. While a consensus seems to be emerging that durable solutions for IDPs are a long-term process requiring a development outlook, many stakeholders still agree on the importance of protection as a key element of solutions to ensure the sustained safety of IDPs and thus a need for UNHCR protection expertise.

Some organizational constraints to closer cooperation also exist, such as UNHCR's shorter-term planning and budgeting cycles (although these are evolving), and staff capacity to engage in planning for multi-sector and multi-year initiatives.

Competencies that UNHCR has acquired through its refugee role are both a strength and a weakness in internal displacement situations. UNHCR's authority and convening power developed through its refugee mandate and expertise serve it well in its engagement with political actors. However, unlike in refugee responses where UNHCR exercises sole leadership, in internal displacement situations it is one of multiple agencies involved in operational governance. In those situations, UNHCR needs to exercise a collegial form of leadership and cooperation that is more participatory and inclusive, including in HCT and inter-cluster governance and RC-led approaches to the promotion of the centrality of protection. This is particularly the case if UNHCR aims to take on more of a facilitatory role catalysing other agency activity in the transition to development for durable solutions, as UNHCR's Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors suggests.

## 5.4 Coherence: To what extent is UNHCR working in line with its 2019 UNHCR IDP policy?

**UNHCR has worked in line with its 2019 IDP policy and associated guidance although gaps remain.**

Policies and guidance have been appreciated for increasing the clarity around UNHCR's role and commitments in internal displacement situations, although further work is needed. UNHCR's operational delivery, commitment to and investment in cluster leadership, developments in UNHCR data, analysis and evidence capacity and partnerships, promotion of the centrality of protection and an active role in inter-agency efforts for solutions all reflect efforts to put policy commitments into practice.

There are some inconsistencies in the application of the policy. These derive from the limitations of existing guidance to provide practical advice for how Country Offices should prioritize the multiple potential roles and needs to be met in a resource-constrained environment and also how to apply some commitments in specific country contexts. There are a number of areas where greater clarity is needed to support the application of policies. These include the following:

- How to prioritize competing demands for scarce resources between UNHCR roles and policy commitments including those linked to operational delivery and cluster leadership. This should be based on a clear analysis of where UNHCR adds the most value so that Country Offices have the tools for prioritization and disengagement.
- Application of UNHCR intentions towards equitable programming, based on clear and consistent allocation principles that are more reflective of a needs-based approach, and consistent with the different mandates and responsibilities of UNHCR in relation to IDPs, refugees and others.
- Meaningful implementation of “provider of last resort”, particularly when resources are insufficient.
- Reinforcement of government responsibilities in internal displacement situations when humanitarian principles are challenged.
- Responsible disengagement, including during the deactivation of clusters.
- Application of “solutions from the start” in dynamic and insecure contexts.
- Practical support for staff's approach to promote the centrality of protection including in contexts where HCT approaches are not consistent with policy commitments.

## 5.5 Strategic positioning: What are the implications for UNHCR's strategic positioning on IDPs at country, regional and global levels?

**UNHCR's expertise and capacity in protection is at the heart of its comparative advantage.** UNHCR's distinctive strength in internal displacement situations lies in its protection expertise, its field presence and extensive network of partners which enables its work to span from community roles to national capacity development and strengthening of normative frameworks. UNHCR has a strong role in operational delivery which complements other roles.

In internal displacement situations, a wide range of organizations is typically involved in responses and at the same time there is an increasingly adverse global environment for resource mobilization. Given this context, the evaluation findings suggest that UNHCR would gain from consolidating and focusing its IDP operations around its core area of competence in protection. Such prioritization can also inform the development of both evolving internal systems and processes to enable UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement and its external communication to clarify its identity and contribution in these contexts.

The distinctiveness of UNHCR's protection expertise runs through its comparative advantage in each of the roles considered:

- In operational delivery UNHCR has distinct expertise in community-based approaches that include protection risk monitoring and addressing issues identified through local-level advocacy and partnerships. Such advocacy and partnerships enable synergies with local peacebuilding and access to justice interventions including where solutions are pursued.

- In terms of cluster leadership, UNHCR's protection expertise combined with skills in navigating relationships with authorities in conflict-affected contexts, its field presence and its relationships with local actors all position it well to lead the protection cluster. It is also well placed to integrate a distinct protection lens to its approach to leadership of shelter and CCCM clusters and participation in other clusters.
- To promote the centrality of protection, UNHCR can build on strengths of legal expertise, relationships with authorities and sustained support for UNHCR's technical advisory role in protection as well as advocacy to encourage a more consistent approach across HCTs to fulfil responsibilities for the centrality of protection.
- In terms of data, analysis and evidence, UNHCR's comparative advantage lies in its extensive field presence and the capacity of local partners as well as the richness of the operational data it collects. This advantage is enhanced when collaborating with other evidence-actors to address identified gaps and, when conditions permit, to strengthen the quality of government data management.
- In solutions, UNHCR's primary added value is its protection expertise, ranging from technical areas to system-wide strategic planning and in support of government leadership of solutions. In particular, the findings of this evaluation highlighted UNHCR's comparative advantage in:
  - development of context-appropriate normative frameworks;
  - field-level protection of vulnerable IDPs, including through monitoring and appropriate specialized services (e.g. civil documentation, HLP);
  - system-wide mainstreaming of protection, including in solutions and development-type programmes;
  - political engagement in support of UN-wide protection efforts driven at HC/RC level.

These roles are complementary to a role as catalyst and facilitator for the stepped-up engagement of development actors as outlined in UNHCR's Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors and consistent with the emerging consensus that IDP solutions should be primarily development-led.

In situations where inter-agency approaches to durable solutions are pursued in the absence of viable political governance and the rule of law, there was wide recognition of the importance of UNHCR's continued engagement and leadership in protection. In these contexts, protection monitoring was key to understand ongoing or new risks that people affected by displacement face as well as to support the development of an environment conducive to their longer-term well-being and safety.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are divided between strategic-level recommendations and more technical, enabling recommendations that support the strategic direction and implementation. The evaluation recognizes the constrained financial environment in which UNHCR, like all humanitarian organizations, is operating and recommendations are made with these pressures in mind.

### 6.1 Strategic-level recommendations

The findings of the evaluation highlight UNHCR's strengths and comparative advantages, notably its leadership in protection that seeks to ensure safety from harm for people who are affected from internal displacement. The recommendation suggests ways to build on this strength to strategically position UNHCR in the future, including through practical steps.

#### Recommendation 1: Strategic positioning

**Promote UNHCR's comparative advantage in protection as the key element in how UNHCR is positioned in situations of internal displacement. Operationalize UNHCR's strategic positioning through the consistent provision of protection technical expertise and advocacy at global and country levels, through operational delivery of services and through its cluster leadership roles.**

**Who responsible:** DIP, DRS, and DER in support of the AHC-P and the AHC-O

#### Proposed actions:

- Support Country Offices to ensure that protection is central to all aspects of UNHCR engagement with IDPs.
- Sustain and expand UNHCR's in-house human resource capacity in IDP law and policy as well as through partnerships to enable technical support and advocacy at country and regional levels.
- Provide IDP protection monitoring and analysis in all contexts where feasible, including in relation to solution initiatives, and link this monitoring to concrete action and advocacy. Clarify the relationship of protection monitoring to other data monitoring processes, particularly DTM. Consider how to increase cooperation with IOM'S DTM to ensure synergies in data collection and analysis, building on good practice examples, such as the country and regional-level agreements already established, as well as UNHCR's comparative advantages in protection data and analysis.
- Ensure a consistent approach to Country Offices' leadership role when promoting the centrality of protection for IDPs within HCTs. Use the IASC Benchmarks for HCTs on Centrality of Protection and Aide Memoire as a guide.
- Consistently develop an IDP advocacy and communication plan at country level with clear, short messages for all staff to understand and use in their respective contexts. In the formulation of advocacy messages, use accessible language drawing on the importance of keeping people safe. To support the advocacy and communication plan, ensure better knowledge and broader use of UNHCR's advocacy toolkit among staff.
- Within Country Office advocacy strategies, clarify the distinctive roles of UNHCR and cluster-level advocacy as well as the appropriate balance between UNHCR's public advocacy for protection and maintaining operational space. Through its cluster leadership roles, UNHCR can

also explore the possibilities for tri-cluster and intercluster advocacy efforts on protection and other cross-cutting themes relevant to IDPs.

- Ensure Country Office readiness to respond to IDP crises in line with the UNHCR 2023 policy on emergency preparedness and response through regular contextual analysis and as part of Country Office and inter-agency planning processes.
- Develop a communication strategy at global level to articulate UNHCR's strategic positioning and communicate this widely both internally and externally.

The evaluation highlighted the challenge of UNHCR's application of a commitment to equitable programming and the associated allocation of resources across population groups, particularly taking into account UNHCR's mandate for refugees. The following recommendation suggests steps towards more consistent and predictable decision-making in UNHCR's approaches to IDPs and other groups of concern.

## **Recommendation 2: Equity and working across population groups**

**Enhance UNHCR's approach to equity and needs-based programming across population groups with practical guidance for Country Offices to support consistent and equitable resource allocation and decision-making processes in country and regional plans and strategies, bearing in mind UNHCR's mandate for refugees.**

**Who responsible:** DSPR, DER, DRS in support of the AHC-O

### **Proposed actions:**

- Develop a working definition of what equity means for UNHCR and integrate into planning guidance how to apply this in planning and resource allocation in various internal displacement situations. To provide a basis for formulating this definition, develop a paper outlining alternative ways of approaching equity in resource allocation to IDPs and refugees which can then serve as the basis for UNHCR guidance on the issue. This may include consideration of factors such as: resource allocation a) by number of IDPs/refugees; b) by needs assessments; c) mandated responsibilities for refugees and then a needs-based approach for other population groups; d) by presence of other assistance providers.
- Within the limits set in the Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors (Internal Version) and where possible, continue to mainstream area-based approaches including in mixed population settings. In line with the UNHCR internal review of its experience in ABA, promote lessons and good practice examples from UNHCR experience. Promote awareness of priority roles for UNHCR within ABA with a focus on protection-related interventions. Continue to develop and refine models for ABA that are consistent with, and enable better operationalization of, the joint UNHCR-OCHA note on mixed situations.
- Develop guidance to clarify differences in UNHCR programming (operational delivery) for IDPs and refugees – for example, how the design of programmes takes into account the government's primary responsibilities for IDPs including in data management.

A strength of UNHCR is its responsiveness to specific contextual needs but differences in the scope of country strategies undermines predictability. Furthermore, Country Office efforts to meet the wide range of UNHCR policy commitments with limited and subsequently stretched resources reduces their effectiveness and the impact of interventions. The following recommendation is for a more consistent approach to decision-making across countries supported by clearer priorities for driving Country Office decision-making in order to enhance UNHCR effectiveness through a more focused approach.

### Recommendation 3: Prioritization

**Streamline Country Office decision-making on programming priorities by establishing a standardized process with transparent criteria. This approach should adapt to the unique needs and challenges of each operational context. Focus investments on impactful areas identified through this process, leveraging dedicated national cluster coordinators and continuous engagement in long-term initiatives like policy advocacy and evidence-based program design. Ensure strong strategic alignment with inter-agency priorities outlined in HRP/cluster strategies and UNHCR's specific contributions towards those goals.**

**Who responsible:** DSPR, DER, DIP, and DRS in support of the AHC-O

#### Proposed actions:

- As part of the prioritization process within the development of the Focus Area Strategic Plan to grow engagement with IDPs, develop criteria to support consistent approaches to decision-making by Country Offices in relation to the scope and limits of UNHCR engagement in internal displacement situations, bearing in mind resource constraints. Suggested priorities to include are interventions that: a) produce protection dividends; b) build on UNHCR's comparative advantage, particularly interventions that other agencies cannot implement; c) enable synergies across UNHCR activities and roles; d) are in line with inter-agency priorities, including provider of last resort responsibilities consistent with IASC guidance, ensuring that UNHCR can continue to contribute to HCT and other inter-agency responsibilities; e) contribute to IASC and UNHCR definitions of durable solutions.
- Act on the recommendations of the UNHCR-WFP review of clusters including the recommendation to invest in cluster coordination roles at national level which are dedicated, independent positions (rather than double-hatting roles), in line with other review recommendations including the IASC protection policy and its evaluation.
- Ensure that roles reliant on sustained activities over years are taken on only if they can be sustained over time, such as the production of evidence on IDP protection risks which may rely on tracking longitudinal trends.
- Guided by the UNHCR Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors, communicate clearly the role of UNHCR as a catalyst and supporter in the transition to development as part of a nexus approach that also recognizes links to peace.
- Given uncertainties in interpreting the provider of last resort role, particularly given funding limitations, consider seeking clarity from IASC on how this role can be responsibly carried out, including in relationship to the Areas Of Responsibility Leads for GPC. Consider developing additional guidance for Country Offices on how to apply this role in different operational settings including in area-based approaches.



UNHCR has clear contributions to make to the longer-term well-being of people affected by displacement. Greater clarity on how UNHCR's protection contributions can fit with and enhance multi-agency responses would support the articulation of the role in durable solutions. The following recommendation builds on the work of the strategic plan for engagement with development actors and suggests steps to define ways of working together.

#### **Recommendation 4: Durable Solutions**

**Implement clearer programme and thematic boundaries for UNHCR's role in durable solutions for IDPs. Provide UNHCR staff with consistent guidance on the intended scope and content of UNHCR's engagement in this area, with the aim of consolidating UNHCR's contribution to solutions for IDPs around its protection know-how. Beyond UNHCR's core area of competence in protection, set clear conditions and criteria for its engagement in solutions for IDPs.**

**Who responsible:** DRS, DIP, DESS, and DER in support of the AHC-O

#### **Proposed actions:**

- Ensure that Country Offices are acquainted with UNHCR's strategy for engaging with development actors and reflect it in their country programmes. In line with the strategic plan, phase out from solutions-oriented interventions that do not derive from UNHCR's protection mandate and core area of competence.
- Consider issuing a leadership memo affirming that UNHCR will play a role, based on its protection expertise, in durable solutions.
- Conduct a lessons-learned exercise with development actors to extract best practices on ways in which UNHCR can enable and promote direct programme-level engagement of development actors in support for solutions.
- Using theory-of-change tools at Country Office level, establish causal pathways linking UNHCR protection activities with key building blocks of durable solutions, including peacebuilding, governance, the rule of law and access to justice.
- Advocate for the systematic incorporation of the protection of IDPs in national development plans, national durable solutions plans and UNDAF/UNSDCF frameworks.
- Review UNHCR's strategy on livelihoods alongside the 2019 IDP policy and strategy for engagement with development actors to support clearer guidance on if, when and how UNHCR should engage in livelihood interventions for IDPs.
- Refine certain aspects of the operative definition of solutions for UNHCR programmes as part of the Focus Area Strategic Plan to grow engagement with IDPs, including the following actions:
  - Formulate benchmarks and criteria to help guide decisions on the appropriateness, or otherwise, of UNHCR's engagement in solutions support. Draw on operational experience of efforts to do this in challenging conditions (e.g. CAR, Myanmar, Syria).
  - Issue further guidance on the principle of "solutions from the start", clarifying how to reconcile it with the principle of "do no harm", in the event of IDP returns or relocations in areas still exposed to armed violence.
  - Promote lessons and practical steps on how to disengage responsibly and what this means for UNHCR's different roles and approaches.

## 6.2 Key Enablers

The evaluation conclusions on UNHCR's effectiveness highlight areas that warrant attention to maximize the potential of UNHCR's evolving RBM systems. The following recommendation presents suggested steps to take this forward.

### **Recommendation 5: Learning and tracking results at outcome level**

**Enhance UNHCR's RBM with a consistent focus in all internal displacement situations on monitoring outcomes for IDPs in UNHCR operations including in multi-agency initiatives. Build into the system the means to track less visible results including protection dividends of UNHCR interventions and results of UNHCR roles in convening, cluster leadership, advocacy and evidence provision.**

**Who responsible:** DSPR, DRS (GDS), DER, and DIP in support of the AHC-O

#### **Proposed actions:**

- Develop methods to assess UNHCR's contribution to multi-stakeholder initiatives for consistent use across countries – for example, using contribution analysis to assess UNHCR's contribution to changes, such as IDP well-being identified through monitoring, including RMS.
- Invest in operational monitoring systems that establish indicators to understand outcomes over time. Specifically these should consider the difference that interventions make for people affected by displacement, and whether and how these are sustained, including contributions made through the promotion of centrality of protection; capacity-building; preventive measures aiming to reduce risks; protection dividends of activities such as community resilience-building; and non-transactional results for IDPs. Non-transactional results could be success in catalysing resources from other agencies to people affected by internal displacement, either through direct assistance or through financial support to government and others. Share good practice examples such as the participatory evaluation undertaken in Myanmar.
- Guide operations to assess the need to conduct RMS for IDP populations based on operational context as well as data availability, and to prioritize RMS and related capacity in their multi-year strategies where these are required.
- Review COMPASS as it beds down, to ensure that IDP outcomes are consistently considered in all internal displacement situations and that less visible results are being profiled – for example, progress in law and policy or advocacy; results of convening activities or those that support harmonization of multi-stakeholder approaches; capacity-building; support to government leadership of IDP responses; and protection dividends from UNHCR's core areas of intervention.
- Review core indicators for relevance to internal displacement situations and amend as appropriate those that are refugee-specific.
- Consider ways to enable the comparative assessment of conditions between IDPs and non-displaced groups, to allow better insights into UNHCR's contribution to durable solutions and its alignment with IASC standards.

The evaluation's findings and conclusions on connectedness highlight the progress made in enhancing cooperation with other organizations in internal displacement situations but they also highlight some specific relationships and skill sets that could be strengthened. The following recommendation suggests steps to address these areas.

### **Recommendation 6: Connectedness with other organizations**

**Build on UNHCR's progress in multi-agency approaches to internal displacement and resolve areas of tension at the international and country levels. Enhance ways of working with local organizations to support the localization agenda.**

**Who responsible:** DER and DRS in support of the AHC-O

#### **Proposed actions:**

- In collaboration with IOM, develop criteria and a process to move towards either IOM **or** UNHCR leadership of the CCCM cluster in countries where co-leadership involving both IOM **and** UNHCR has been established.
- In internal displacement situations, continue to build on progress achieved so far to develop a style of leadership that is more participatory and inclusive.
- Revitalize UNHCR's localization agenda, with a focus on inclusion, including in UNHCR decision-making, local ownership and leadership of solutions, capacity development for local partners, engagement with IDPs and the improved sustainability of community-led interventions that contribute to peacebuilding and local governance (i.e. community-based protection, transitional justice, conflict mitigation).
- Engage with CSOs (beyond implementing partnerships) as part of advocacy strategies for people affected by displacement.
- Build staff skills and understanding of government and local authority ways of working to enhance the sustainability of capacity development and solutions-focused initiatives supported by UNHCR.
- Develop data-sharing agreements with more organizations to enhance UNHCR's role in data, analysis and evidence.
- Consider sharing of RMS data as a contributor at inter-agency level to support collective understanding of contexts and monitoring of progress in durable solutions and in line with the RMS guidance.

The evaluation findings and conclusions highlight progress made but also challenges to resource mobilization for situations of internal displacement. In particular, uncertainty internally and externally around UNHCR's role with IDPs and difficulties to access multi-sector funding opportunities were identified as constraints. The following recommendation suggests steps to address these areas.

### **Recommendation 7: Resource mobilization**

**Enhance resource mobilization efforts for situations of internal displacement, both through communicating to current and potential donors regarding UNHCR's role in internal displacement situations, and through addressing internal constraints to accessing resource mobilization opportunities.**

**Who responsible:** DER in support of the AHC-O

#### **Proposed actions:**

- Review internal systems to enable Country Offices to respond better to opportunities to access multi-sector, multi-agency, multi-year funds including by clarifying UNHCR's potential contribution to these initiatives in terms of protection and through enhanced staff capacity to participate in their development.
- Establish a clear narrative and external communication strategy, including corporate messaging to explain UNHCR's role in situations of internal displacement. Include communication about boundaries to the role as well as its relationship to UNHCR's refugee mandate. Proactively communicate this to donors.

The evaluation noted the progress made in the development of skills and capacity for work in internal displacement situations, but also noted that this is an area of work in progress and one where there is staff interest for more support to develop relevant skills, knowledge and expertise. The following recommendation suggests steps to take skills development forward and to enhance UNHCR capacity through learning and guidance processes and products.

### **Recommendation 8: Workforce management**

**Enhance UNHCR staff accountability, capacity, skills and expertise for internal displacement situations through training, guidance, recruitment and management processes.**

**Who responsible:** DHR, DER, DIP, DESS, and DRS in support of the AHC-O

#### **Proposed actions:**

- Develop peer support systems for senior-level staff including Country Office leadership in countries affected by internal displacement to build skills for UNHCR's advocacy and technical advisory roles and also to support effective government liaison, multi-agency initiatives, HCT engagement on internal displacement and cluster leadership roles.
- Review the performance appraisal process for Representatives and Senior Management (where relevant) to ensure it includes appraisal of engagement and accountability towards the commitments laid out by the High Commissioner and UNHCR's IDP policy, namely those in inter-agency coordination, advocacy for the centrality of protection, and support for Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators.

- Make it mandatory for all staff to have basic training on and an understanding of legal frameworks and UNHCR's role and contribution to situations of internal displacement. Review capacity for training and development to ensure consistency between scale of UNHCR ambition and operations in internal displacement situations with support mechanisms for staff skills development so they can work effectively in these situations.
- Build on current initiatives to establish communities of practice between staff in similar positions and contexts of relevance, including those in senior and cluster leadership positions.
- Review existing guidance and revise this to tailor for specific IDP situations and issues – e.g. protracted displacement, prioritization and disengagement. Promote and support use of the guidance.
- Consider the establishment of three specific talent pools for each of the three clusters of UNHCR responsibility in line with the UNHCR-WFP review of clusters.
- In both emergency and protracted internal displacement settings, consider placing the cluster and operational delivery roles under one supervisory line to maximize synergies between coordination and operational delivery with outcomes as well as potential tri-cluster synergies.