



Evaluation of UNHCR's approach to learning and development for workforce and partners

EVALUATION REPORT
DECEMBER 2020

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UNHCR Evaluation Service

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Evaluation information at a glance

Title of the evaluation	Evaluation of UNHCR's Approach to Learning and Development for Workforce and Partners
Timeframe covered	2012–2020
Duration	November 2019 to November 2020 (12 months)
Type of evaluation	Organization-wide strategic evaluation
Case studies covered	Two in-depth country case studies (Nigeria and Bangladesh) and three “light touch” case studies (Peru, Morocco and Djibouti; conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions)
Evaluation commissioned and quality assured by	Evaluation Service
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Abbreviations and acronyms

ADDIE	Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (a model used by training developers)
AFW	affiliate workforce
AI	artificial intelligence
CHS	Critical Systems Heuristic
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CoP	community of practice
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DESS	Division of Emergency Security and Supply
DHR	Division of Human Resources
DIP	Division of International Protection
DRS	Division of Resilience and Solutions
DSPR	Division of Strategic Planning and Results
ePAD	electronic performance appraisal document
ES	Evaluation Service
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	focus group discussion
FLS	functional learning support
FTA	fixed-term appointment
FTPM	field training planning matrix
G Grade	General Service Grade
GCR	Global Compact for Refugees
GLC	Global Learning Centre
GLDC	Global Learning and Development Centre
HPass	Organization supporting the humanitarian sector through learning quality standards and digital badges
HR	Human Resources
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IMAS	Implementation Management and Assurance Service (unit within DSPR)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	information technology
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
KEQ	key evaluation question
L&D	learning and development
LDS	Leadership Development Section (GLDC)
LGB	Learning Governance Board
LLP	Livelihoods Learning Programme
LMS	Learning Management System
LNA	Learning Needs Assessment
LSB	Learning Systems Board
MFT	multi-functional team
MOOC	Massive open online course
Moodle	open source learning platform
MSRP	Managing for Systems, Resources, and People (HR and Finance system)
NO	National Office (Salary grade ranging from NOA to NOD)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OD	Organizational Development
OLF	Organizational Learning Framework
P Grade	Professional Grade
PAMS	Performance Appraisal and Management System
PoC	persons of concern to UNHCR
PPA	project partnership agreement

PSEA	prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
RBM	Results-Based Management
SET	Senior Executive Team
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely
SMC	Senior Management Committee
TA	temporary appointment
TCS	Transformation and Change Service
TOT	training of trainers
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
VSM	viable systems method
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

Background

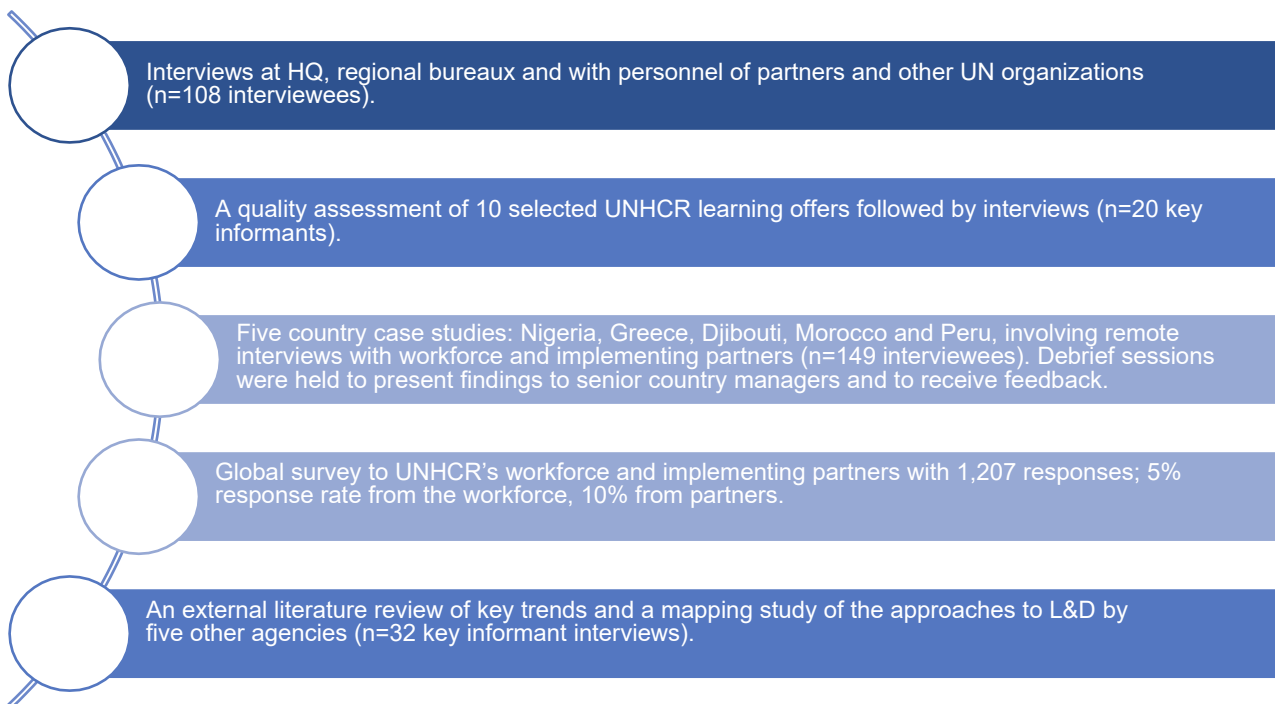
In 2016, UNHCR commissioned a “Rapid Organizational Assessment: Headquarters Review” conducted by Mannet.¹ Findings and recommendations from the review kick-started many fundamental changes within UNHCR, including the Human Resources Review that was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in 2018.² Based on the PwC review, there have been many changes to UNHCR’s human resource management as well as for workforce learning and development. As UNHCR’s 2012 Learning Policy pre-dated these changes, it was thought timely to commission an organization-wide strategic evaluation on workforce learning and development (L&D).

The scope of the evaluation was expanded from an initially more limited assessment of the work of the Global Learning and Development Centre (GLDC), to an assessment of the performance of UNHCR’s overall organizational “learning system” and its capacity to adapt over time to the changing context of UNHCR.

By “learning system”, the evaluation understands this as involving:

1. recipients/beneficiaries – that is, UNHCR’s workforce (staff and affiliates) and implementing partners;
2. suppliers – stakeholders who design, develop and deliver L&D;
3. clients – those who identify and inform learning needs and request L&D; and
4. the interrelationships between recipients, supply- and demand-side actors across different levels of UNHCR.

The evaluation methodology used both qualitative and quantitative data, comprised of the following steps:



The findings were presented to 136 personnel in two validation workshops in the summer of 2020. More refined versions of the key recommendations were considered at greater length with 30 senior-level managers and senior technical staff in two externally facilitated strategy workshops in September 2020. The draft evaluation report was circulated for review and comment to deputy directors at UNHCR Headquarters (HQ) and in regional bureaux – as well as to the director of the Division of Human Resources (DHR) and Senior Executive Team – prior to finalization.

¹ Mannet (2017) “Rapid Organizational Assessment: UNHCR Headquarters Review”, February 2017.

² PwC (2018) “Review of UNHCR’s Division of Human Resource Management”, March 2018.

Context

Prior to 2009, learning and training activities in UNHCR had been spread across six different divisions. An internal review concluded that the overall offer was disparate and poorly coordinated. This led in late 2009 to the creation of the Global Learning Centre (GLC) in Budapest to centralize learning and training within the organization. The Learn and Connect platform for online learning was one of the GLC's first achievements. In 2012 the GLC developed UNHCR's Learning Policy based on the six principles of the UN Organizational Learning Framework. Later, in 2019, the GLC's remit and capability were further increased with the addition of a Leadership Development Section and then a Talent Development and Performance Section; it was renamed the Global Learning and Development Centre (GLDC) to signal the closer integration of organizational learning with staff development. While formal learning offers are managed by the GLDC, HQ divisions play the lead role in content development and even delivery in some instances. Over the years, the GLDC has developed a comprehensive range of hundreds of online, face-to-face and blended learning programmes. It represents the largest centralized L&D capacity among United Nations specialized agencies, in terms of staff size and offer.

The last decade has been a time of considerable change in the L&D field as technical and economic changes have driven rapid transformations in the workplace requiring the substantial reskilling and upskilling of workforces. The L&D discipline itself has also been changing rapidly due to the "explosion" in learning technologies (such as webinars, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and learning management systems); advances in learning theories resulting from developments in the behavioural and neurosciences; and a shift away from longer learning programmes to autonomous "in-the-flow-of-work" learning where learners access their learning faster, more easily and in smaller, more digestible, amounts. Reflecting these developments, the L&D discipline is moving away from the adult-centric education paradigm and is in the process of moving to the self-determined education paradigm.

In this same period there have also been considerable changes within UNHCR and the context in which it operates. To adapt to such changes UNHCR has been undergoing an ambitious suite of change programmes intended to transform the organization's structure and ways of working. A key transformation has been the Decentralization and Regionalization (D&R) process intended to move decision-making and authority "closer to the field". The seven regional bureaux established as part of this process are responsible for overseeing monitoring and management of operations at the country level and for providing technical and capacity-building support, while the role of HQ emphasizes the provision of guidance, norms and standards to ensure coherence and quality across the organization. The regional bureaux began operating in late 2019/early 2020, during the early stages of this evaluation. Other elements of the transformation programme include: renewing the results-based management (RBM) system in support of moves to multi-year programming and results monitoring; a risk management programme to strengthen the organization's risk-benefits analysis; and a people and HR management process intended to provide a more modern, human-centric model of people management.

In addition to these internally determined processes of transformation, UNHCR's goals are now strongly shaped by the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) intended to provide a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing for refugees and the achievement of sustainable solutions to refugee situations. The whole-of-society approach espoused by the GCR requires UNHCR to convene, coordinate and facilitate with an expanded number and range of humanitarian, development and private sector actors, taking a multi-stakeholder coalition-building approach. This challenges the organization to think differently about its role and how it operates within the GCR framework. This in turn reshapes the skill sets and competencies needed in the workforce, which is why this evaluation is timely and contributes important evidence and learning that can inform UNHCR's future approach to workforce learning and development.

Key findings

An important starting point for any systemic inquiry is to identify the mental models and associations that shape the reality of the system's key stakeholders. The evaluation found that the dominant paradigm concerning skill and knowledge development within UNHCR is heavily associated with "training" – with the GLDC as the primary provider of training. However, the GLDC's success in developing a comprehensive "training" offer appears to have contributed to a way of understanding knowledge and skills development that is inappropriate for the future development of learning within UNHCR. To achieve the transformation in knowledge development and skill acquisition that is necessary to create a high-performing organization, it is essential that UNHCR's dominant mental model is challenged and reframed. This is not just a task of providing alternative learning mechanisms; a new *understanding* of learning has to be promoted at all levels of the organization in addition to new *services* provided. When reading the findings, conclusions and recommendations presented below, it is important to broaden our mental model and understand that "learning opportunities" refers to much more than training programmes.

The evaluation's findings are presented in relation to the six key principles of the 2012 Learning Policy, namely: learning is strategic; learning is effective; learning is accessible; learning is a shared responsibility; learning is part of the culture; and learning is more than training.

Learning is strategic

Despite well-meaning statements in the 2012 Learning Policy, learning has not been actively recognized as a strategic means of reaching the organization's goals and addressing critical gaps. Learning is only mentioned twice in UNHCR's Strategic Directions. It is not tracked or monitored in relation to UNHCR's business goals. Learning is not an explicit component of the annual planning and budgeting process. The GLDC's Annual Reports do not provide a comparable, year-on-year picture of the evolution of the overall learning offer and how it is enhancing performance in the organization and filling critical gaps. Learning content has been slow to be developed around critical issues such as the Global Compact on Refugees, new forms of migration, partnership and consortia working, and pandemics. Consequently, the perception of the link between the strategic challenges to UNHCR and the role that learning can and should play in that is not clear to many within the organization. A lack of robust data management and analysis on learning and development of its staff and the non-tracking of key performance indicators are all hampering the organization's attempts to bring clarity over where to prioritize investments and make strategic decisions.

Learning is effective

Overall, there is little evidence of the impact of learning on organizational performance. This is in part due to the lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure learning outcomes and its associated impacts on organizational performance. Though the majority of workforce respondents to the survey were appreciative of the learning offered and were positive about the effectiveness of their learning, the evaluation found that the exploitation of the learning provided is hampered by issues of accessibility, uneven managerial support and competing interests, leading to a de-prioritization of learning.

Utilization rates are low for much of the online learning offer, with more than 40 per cent of the course offers being completed by fewer than 10 learners a year. Two thirds of workforce respondents felt that their learning was poorly timed in relation to the knowledge and skills required for their job, pointing to a lack of synchronization between work needs and the learning accessed. In the course of the evaluation, four career path "moments" were identified where there is a heightened need for specific types of learning but where these needs are not being fully met – namely: those joining the organization for the first time; those moving into supervisory positions for the first time; those moving from national to international positions; and those transferring/rotating from one country to another.

The GLDC was found to be slow and insufficient in its ability to rapidly meet the learning needs created by emergency operations in which large numbers of national staff are often recruited. In Peru many newly recruited staff did not speak English and so were unable to benefit from much of the online offer, and so senior staff were obliged to organize training workshops to fill the gaps. In some cases, they had to assist staff to complete necessary technical courses that were only available in English. In Greece newly recruited national staff felt "thrown in at the deep end" and international staff were too busy to provide the necessary mentoring or support. Some newly recruited staff were not able to participate in technical training vital for their work effectiveness for six months. The centralized learning structure, as currently constituted, was found to lack the necessary nimbleness, agility and adaptability for an emergency response organization.

So-called "soft skills" learning was also found to be significantly less well catered for than technical skills in the overall learning offer. Interviewees and workforce respondents expressed a wish for more, and more effective, learning offers (preferably face-to-face) to develop their communication, negotiation and social skills. These skills are ever more important as a result of the GCR and increasing demands put upon UNHCR staff and affiliates to represent UNHCR's interests, define and communicate its added value and negotiate for space within inter-agency and multi-stakeholder contexts.

Completion rates on e-learning programmes are quite low with 42 per cent of those enrolling on a programme not actually completing it – often for work-related reasons. Insufficient contextualization of learning content was a common complaint among those interviewed in the case study countries. Centrally developed learning content may often not be relevant to, or directly address, the needs of learners who are working in widely differing contexts.

The GLDC in close collaboration with divisions has built a robust suite of certified flagship programmes, which have provided clearance for specific roles in particular functional areas and assisted internal recruitment processes. However, certificated programmes do have a number of drawbacks including: requiring significant financial and

human resources to maintain them while at the same time only benefiting a small proportion of the total workforce; delays in staff being able to rapidly move “up” or “across” into roles; the length of time taken either to get enrolled in a certificated course or to undertake such a course. Though such certificates have value within UNHCR, their value outside the organization is questionable.

Lastly, in order for learning to be effective, it should be informed by a rigorous analysis of learning needs. Learning coordinators at the country level are not functioning as intended by the 2012 Learning Policy. The GLDC estimates that only half of country operations are submitting their Field Training Planning Matrixes (annual collations of their local learning needs). The assessment of learning needs was found to be inadequate in a number of respects – almost half of survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which UNHCR assesses learning needs.

Learning is accessible

Across the organization there is an uneven distribution of learning. Senior cadres and English speakers access a larger portfolio of learning resources and opportunities while those on lower grades and national staff, especially those without good English, are often unable to access blended learning courses or workshops, limiting their career progress.

Despite forming the bulk of learning that is supported and measured within the organization, access to formal learning is restricted by a range of factors.

- Access to blended learning and workshops is in effect rationed, with those in lower grades being denied access to the learning opportunities available to those on higher General Service (G) grades and Professional (P) grades. Access to learning in UNHCR is certainly not open to all and this appears to run counter to the new HR refrain of recognizing “the star in everyone”.
- Apart from the six mandatory courses that can be accessed offline, the Learn and Connect platform does not provide offline access to other e-learning courses. The inability to download and work offline on e-learning courses was an issue frequently cited by interviewees.
- Language is a key barrier to learning. If learners are not competent in English then only a fraction of the overall online provision is available to them – only 10 per cent of learning offers are available in Spanish and only 3 per cent in Arabic.
- Lack of transparency in the process of gaining approval to enrol in learning was a concern for many interviewees with some experiencing repeated refusals but without knowing at what level or by whom their application had been turned down – or why.
- Work pressure significantly limits the accessibility of learning. More than half the survey respondents had failed to complete a learning opportunity because of workload-related reasons. The pressure of work also forces most online learning to be carried out outside of office hours. In part, because so much of the online learning is being accessed from home, internet connectivity and IT equipment issues loom large as factors limiting access – the third most common reason for failing to complete a learning opportunity was internet connectivity.
- The organization appears to have an ambivalent attitude towards provision of learning for its implementing partners – upon whom it relies heavily for the delivery of much of its assistance and protection. The evaluation found that only 20 to 25 per cent of partner staff interviewed in the five case study countries had access to the online offer on Learn and Connect; many partner personnel are unaware of Learn and Connect and several of those who are have found the procedure for gaining access cumbersome. Much of the learning provision for partners comprises locally delivered workshops often focused on procedural requirements of UNHCR rather than the improvement of partners’ wider capabilities and development needs.

Learning is a shared responsibility

Though the evaluation found areas of good collaboration on learning between different parts of the organization and in certain regions and country operations, it also found that the **responsibility for learning is not shared equally between individuals, supervisors and the organization.**

At the organizational level, although some divisions have a good supportive relationship with the GLDC and are satisfied with the service received, others reported that they struggled to get help from the GLDC and were unsure of how to get their needs prioritized. For its part, the GLDC finds it hard to prioritize requests for support coming from different divisions. The disbandment of the Learning Governance Board in 2018 appears to have removed a mechanism for helping the GLDC in making prioritization decisions.

Although UNHCR provides an extensive menu of training (600-plus offers), it is heavily reliant on supervisors to support the learning of their supervisees. Based on the survey, a large percentage of supervisors do support learning by their staff, but a substantial minority do not; 60 per cent of supervisors responding to the survey stated that they monitor and evaluate the learning of their staff annually; 40 per cent do not. In large part this seems to stem from the fact that the 2014 Performance Management Policy dropped the requirement to consider learning and development during the annual appraisal process. The evaluation heard that some managers actually block staff from applying for courses that will take up time and attention or that would increase the likelihood of their promotion or move to another post. Supervisors are not currently held to account by the organization for supporting the learning of their supervisees.

UNHCR undertakes several successful collaborations with fellow UN agencies including several examples of cost-sharing of learning content (e.g. with the International Organization for Migration). However, there remains much unexplored potential for collaboration, partnering and cost-sharing within the UN system.

Relationships with academia at the local levels were also patchy and could offer opportunities for cost-sharing.

Learning is part of the culture

The evaluation found there to be a high level of motivation and enthusiasm for learning within UNHCR's workforce. At the same time however, **learning is not ingrained in the organization's culture** – certainly not to the degree intended by the 2012 Learning Policy. This is attested to by factors such as:

- the lack of large-scale support for informal learning which can more readily take place in the workplace and “in the flow of work”;
- the perception that “learning is the GLDC's responsibility” rather than a shared responsibility across the organization;
- the pressure of work forcing most of the online learning to be undertaken outside of office hours and at home;
- how learning is not seen as critical to the organization's strategic goals and is not an explicit component of the annual planning and budgeting process;
- the organization's so-called “command-and-control” culture and a fear of sharing mistakes;
- the lack of official requirement for managers to support the learning and development of their staff;
- how support from colleagues is often necessary to apply the learning gained; one third of workforce respondents did not feel supported by their colleagues.

Learning is more than training

UNHCR continues to invest the majority of its resources in formal learning (i.e. training) modalities. **Much of the workforce continues to see learning as synonymous with training** whereas learning organizations embed learning, allowing it to become part and parcel of the work and organizational culture.

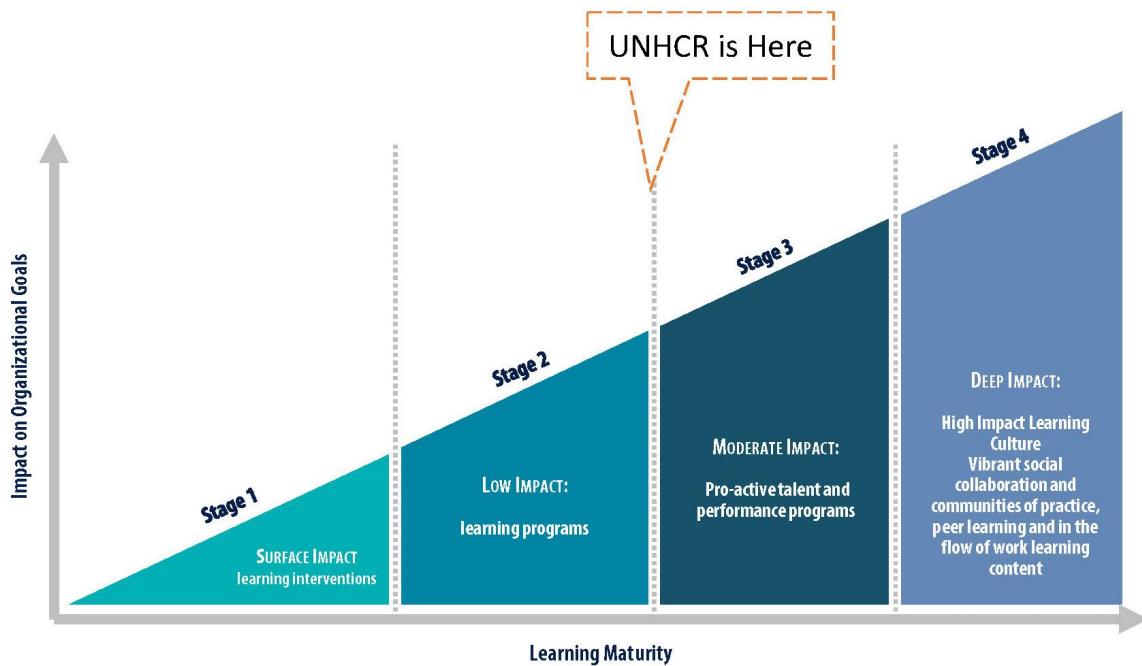
Informal learning (such as coaching, mentoring, on-the-job training and communities of practice) is taking place within UNHCR. However, so far the use of informal approaches to learning has been limited as UNHCR has focused its learning offer on formal learning. Informal learning has not been treated as an area that needs nurturing, support and promotion. However, there are encouraging signs that this has already started to change as a result of new initiatives and steps taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Informal learning activities are not being monitored or

tracked and so the organization is poorly aware of them and their potential benefits are not being realized. International experience indicates that organizations using coaching and mentoring to integrate learning into the flow of work are significantly more likely than the average organization to build a learning culture.

Recent experiences with COVID-19 and the enforced transformation to online working demonstrated how rapidly the organization can change its working practices when it needs to.

Conclusions

The evaluation found that the organization’s wider learning system is not well developed, and it remains a long way from creating a high-impact learning culture. In terms of Jane Daly’s four-stage model of learning maturity and impact,³ UNHCR is currently transitioning from Stage 2, where its main focus is on learning programmes, to Stage 3, with a focus on pro-active talent management and performance programmes.



The principal elements of the 2012 Learning Policy were sound, but the policy has not been implemented as intended and in key respects it has actually been undermined by the organization which has failed to recognize the strategic importance of learning and development for the well-being and future health of UNHCR. For an organization with an emergency mandate, the evaluation found that the centralized learning structure lacked the necessary nimbleness, agility and adaptability. The pendulum that had swung from the disparate, uncoordinated approach to learning prior to 2009 to the highly centralized approach of the past 11 years, now needs to find the right balance between the wholly centralized and the wholly decentralized. A more integrated approach, where the ownership of learning is better distributed across the organization, would see the centre/HQ providing the necessary compass, overarching goals, quality assurance, core content and consultancy-style support, while the regions would be able to adapt and nuance learning content for their particular contextual needs in a timely way and be free to develop new content if none is available to contextualize.

Responsibility for learning is not shared equally among individuals, supervisors and the organization itself. Learning is not ingrained in UNHCR’s culture. Indeed aspects of the organization such as its command-and-control culture and difficulties in admitting to mistakes, work against learning becoming ingrained in its culture. While much of the workforce is accessing learning, a range of factors is limiting the accessibility of learning; these include language, cost, pressure of work and technical factors. Though the majority of the workforce are appreciative of the learning offered, the evaluation found numerous factors limiting the effectiveness of the organization’s investment in learning, including: quite low completion rates; a lack of synchronization between work needs and learning accessed;

³ Daly, J. (2020) in J. Daly and G. Ahmetaj (2020) *Back to the future: Why tomorrow’s workforce needs a learning culture*, Horsham: Emerald Works.

insufficient contextualization; and lack of support from colleagues. The evaluation found that learning resources are overly focused on formal learning and that support to informal learning and methods for integrating learning into the flow of work and for sharing learning across the organization have so far been limited.

For an organization that is significantly reliant on partners to achieve its protection and delivery goals, the evaluation found that the majority of partners are not given access to UNHCR's substantial online learning resources. It found that much of the learning provision for implementing partners comprises locally delivered workshops focused on UNHCR's procedural requirements rather than the improvement of the wider capabilities and development needs of those implementing activities and services to persons of concern to UNHCR.

UNHCR is not alone in this and research points to a small minority of organizations currently having reached a high-impact learning culture. Yet the forecasts for the future are stark: an evolution is insufficient to improve the L&D function. A transformation is necessary – one that focuses on the connection between continuous reskilling and upskilling, on the one hand, and actual work, on the other. The evaluation concludes that if UNHCR is to keep abreast of the rapid changes in L&D and be able to facilitate the critical impact for its workforce, it should leap over Stage 3, and go straight into Stage 4. This does not mean it should abandon formal learning and talent programmes, but it means it should significantly broaden its lens to encompass a much wider learning portfolio and have key learning specialists poised to oversee and address a far greater array of interventions and approaches.

The overall conclusion therefore is that the current centralized provision that focuses on formal learning and training needs to be fundamentally transformed so that the following aims are achieved:

- Learning provision is more nimble and more responsive to the learning needs in emergency operations and to new types of contexts and needs.
- Learning is more firmly embedded and monitored against UNHCR's strategic priorities, annual planning and budgeting processes.
- Responsibility for learning is shared more widely beyond the GLDC with L&D capability also being developed in the regional bureaux.
- The current emphasis on training and formal learning shifts to greater support for “in-the-flow-of-work” learning, with a focus on bite-sized/micro-learning and more mentoring, coaching and communities of practice.
- The GLDC's role evolves to become less focused on formal training provision and more focused on supporting learning at the regional and country levels, advising bureaux and operations and providing quality assurance.
- Learning is more central to UNHCR's recruitment, career planning and performance appraisal processes.
- Managers are required to support the learning and development of their supervisees and this is built-in to all management and leadership programmes.

Kick-starting the transformation to become a modern learning organization requires a fundamental change in mindset. There is a need to shift the focus to the individual employee and design a right-fit learning and support experience that enables organizational goals to be met at the point of need. UNHCR's command-and-control culture represents a significant barrier to learning as it discourages open exchange and admitting to mistakes and poor performance. As part of the transformation, it will be necessary to address cultural barriers to learning.

Recommendations

To achieve such a fundamental transformation, UNHCR needs to focus on achieving six systemic outcomes:

1. Learning becomes critical to the mission.
2. Ownership of learning is distributed across the organization.
3. UNHCR makes data-informed decisions with regards to L&D investments.
4. Learning is championed by individuals, managers and the organization.
5. UNHCR employs agile learning approaches.
6. Critical connections are made among personnel and with partners globally and locally.

To achieve these systemic outcomes, a total of 10 “strategic actions” are proposed.⁴ The recommendations and package of proposed actions are interdependent and all need to be addressed in parallel – to pick and choose is not an option. In order for UNHCR to become a high-impact learning organization, a whole-of-organization approach will be needed in addressing these goals. Some of the specific actions are already being practised in parts of the organization, such as the close working relationships with partners in Peru, the GLDC’s COVID-19 adaptations to online workshops, a new mentoring and coaching programme for locally recruited colleagues, piloting of new collaboration tools and introduction of MOOCs; these all provide examples to be shared and built on.

A key instrument for driving the transformation forward is the recommendation to create a time-limited Learning Systems Board representing all parts of the organization to champion and drive forward the transformation process.

⁴ Section 6 (recommendations) presents 15 strategic actions organized under the six systemic outcomes. For the purposes of this executive summary the 15 strategic actions have been summarized into 10 strategic actions to aid understanding. It should also be noted that these are proposed actions and UNHCR may wish to adopt alternative actions under each systemic outcome.

Systemic outcome	Strategic actions – Next 12 months	Stakeholder
Learning becomes critical to the mission	1. Commission a process to update the 2012 Learning Policy and develop an accompanying implementation strategy. The updated learning policy and implementation strategy will need to address several strategic choices, which are outlined in Annex 3.	SET
	2. Create a time-bound body representing learning interests from across the organization to drive the transformation to a high-impact learning organization. Representation to include HR, L&D, change management/organizational development functions and from local, regional and HQ levels. A suggested working name for this body is the Learning Systems Board (LSB). The purpose of the LSB is discussed in Annex 3.	SET
Ownership of learning is distributed across the organization	3. The new Learning Systems Board in conjunction with divisions and regional bureaux determines the appropriate location and distribution of human and material learning resources so that they better reflect the regionalized and decentralized structure of the organization. This will involve clarifying which learning content/programmatic areas should remain centralized and which can be decentralized; a quality assurance framework that is adequately supported between the GLDC and divisions; roles and responsibilities within the organization and what needs to be done to promote the distribution and ownership of learning within UNHCR. Funding for learning at the country level is significantly increased through a realignment of resources in support of the decentralization of learning. The amounts are to be set in relation to each operation's prioritized actions in the operating level and multi-year plans. Regional bureau directors ensure the presence of senior L&D practitioners in each regional bureau working alongside senior HR partners to provide oversight of L&D support and presence on the ground to reflect the strategic priorities and to drive contextually appropriate capacity-building. Senior L&D practitioners should have a dotted line to the GLDC. Country representatives assign the learning coordination function to an appropriate senior manager with the role reflected in their job title and clearly communicated to all staff. The role will include: identifying learning needs across all functions and their inclusion in the annual planning and budgeting process; ensuring that all staff and partners are informed of upcoming, relevant learning opportunities; and liaise with the senior L&D practitioners in regional bureaux to coordinate country-based learning events.	SET
	4. The GLDC moves from being a “provider of training” to a “facilitator and an enabler of learning”. To facilitate this transition the GLDC undertakes a skills audit to identify the newly required skills already present in its team, identifies the gaps and brings in the necessary consultancy support and expertise; increasingly curates courses and materials from local and regional levels as well as internationally and ensures their availability to the wider workforce. The GLDC facilitates and upskills the workforce on team learning, sharing and exchanges; supports communities of practice and other learning groups and educates others on how to facilitate them. A quality assurance system is developed that will enable the organization to manage learning content that is being created by multiple sources across the organization. The system is to build on current sign-off arrangements by divisions and the GLDC. Responsibility for the quality assurance of key learning activities is to be held and managed by the GLDC.	GLDC

Learning is championed by individuals, managers and the organization	<p>5. A people management system places learning and development front and centre of staff (and affiliate workforce) development, appointment and performance appraisal. This should complement ongoing DHR transformations creating an integrated talent development approach.</p> <p>Learning should be learner-led; staff and affiliates take an active role in their L&D with support from DHR and managers. People management supports individual staff and affiliates so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are provided with guidance on how to self-determine their learning needs in relation to their existing role and future ambitions and how to map their learning; • they are given greater control over building their skills through openly available modules and given the opportunity to build the skills needed for in-the-flow-of-work learning; • they have access to learning – internal cost-effective coaching and mentoring programmes such as alumni, pro bono, “low bono” and external certification, and Learn and Connect offline and in multiple languages; • all decisions made around accessibility and eligibility of learning programmes are transparent and communicated to anyone applying for a workshop or learning programme; • individuals have certain days per year protected for their learning and they are encouraged to share the learning with their teams – e.g. through team meetings, brown bag lunches or blogs. 	DHR
	<p>6. HR, L&D and Change Management/TCS collaborate more closely to support the LSB in driving the process of moving to the new learning paradigm and identify projects that will encourage more joined-up working.</p> <p>The GLDC and the Transformation and Change Service (TCS), supported by the Senior Management Committee (SMC), undertake a joint exploration of how learning can be “championed” within the UNHCR culture and its operations and examine how to address existing challenges/barriers to openness and trust that are required to develop an effective learning culture.</p>	DHR, GLDC and TCS
	<p>7. Championing learning by senior managers becomes an integral part of the organization’s culture where modelling of learning behaviours is witnessed throughout the workforce. Central to establishing a vibrant learning culture is the adoption of “in-the-flow-of-work” approaches. Examples include identifying learning leaders to open flagship and important programmes that are key to driving organizational goals to help signal the importance of learning. Managers model learning behaviours; share their own learning and promote learning activities that they have come across that are relevant to their staff teams. The leadership, senior managers and supervisors model learning behaviours through sharing what they have learned (e.g. posting links to articles, books, blogs and videos to their teams).</p> <p>Managers are equipped to nurture the learning of their supervisees and within their teams, and are held accountable for the provision of that support through the performance appraisal mechanism. Critical learning support content is added to all management and leadership learning programmes. Two-way appraisal mechanisms are to be developed to encourage learning and reflection between managers and their supervisees.</p>	DHR
Create new agile and flexible learning	<p>8. UNHCR moves away from the traditional resource-intensive design approaches to agile and simplified design processes that involve learners in the design. The GLDC upskills the workforce on these processes organizationally. A policy target length for new learning programmes is set at six weeks (or under 30 hours) as a means of enabling more rapid upskilling opportunities.</p>	GLDC

structures and approaches	<p>Certification and longer learning programmes are to be modularized and broken down into levels (introductory, intermediate and advanced) and made accessible to a wider cadre of staff. Micro-learning and other “in-the-flow-of-work” approaches are mainstreamed as modalities to provide learning content rapidly and responsively and at the point of need. Annex 2 provides an infographic on the various ways in which micro-learning can be used to drip-feed content in different ways for different learners. Learning modalities that reach scale more effectively replace the more costly HQ face-to-face workshops, which limit participation. Examples include live online facilitation methods supported by asynchronous methods as used by the Presencing Institute, Geneva Learning Foundation and UN System Staff College.</p>	
Critical connections are made between personnel and with partners globally and locally	<p>9. DHR develops relationships with a range of humanitarian and corporate organizations to learn from them and provide opportunities for job-swapping, shadowing and joint projects. UNHCR becomes an active champion and supporter of a “One UN” approach to learning. It offers to lead learning efforts in those areas such as protection learning where it has a unique and well-developed expertise. The development of “One UN” learning offers in such areas as management learning, partnership working and soft skills learning should be approached as collaboratively as possible. UNHCR becomes an “agency of partnership” that recognizes the vital role played by implementing and operational partners in the delivery and fulfilment of its mandate. It actively supports not only their learning but also seeks to improve its own learning in how to be a “good partner” and collaborate effectively with other organizations.</p>	
UNHCR makes data-informed decisions with regards to L&D investments	<p>10. The indicator framework is reformed to measure outcomes on organizational performance from L&D, and monitor and evaluate to ensure the learning system is functioning effectively. UNHCR as part of its policy update establishes a means of assessing how well the learning system is performing. Five critical areas to be monitored, tracked and evaluated are suggested in Annex 3. Quarterly reports of progress are presented to the SMC by the GLDC and the Chair of the LSB.</p>	

1. Introduction

1.1. Context and purpose of the evaluation

UNHCR's approach to learning and development, the context in which the organization operates, and changes in thinking and approaches within the learning and development profession have all evolved significantly over the past 15 years.

Prior to 2009, learning and training activities in UNHCR were spread across six different divisions and an internal review concluded that the overall offer was disparate and poorly coordinated. Consequently, in late 2009, the Global Learning Centre (GLC) was established in Budapest to centralize learning and training within the organization. In 2012 a learning policy was developed and approved for the whole organization that set the overarching goal of learning in UNHCR as being to optimize organizational performance. Key principles of the learning policy included that learning should be strategic, part of the culture and more than training.

In 2016, UNHCR commissioned the "Rapid Organizational Assessment: Headquarters review" conducted by Mannet.⁵ Findings and recommendations from the review kick-started many fundamental changes within UNHCR, including the HR Review that was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in 2018.⁶ Based on the PwC review, there have been many changes to UNHCR's human resource management as well as to workforce learning and development. Now, 11 years after its creation, the GLC (renamed the Global Learning and Development Centre, GLDC, in 2019) has become the principal provider of formal learning⁷ programmes within the organization. It provides a comprehensive range of online, face-to-face and blended learning programmes and has become the largest learning and development capacity among the UN specialized agencies.

Speaking at the first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees characterized the previous 10 years as a "decade of displacement during which refugee numbers have surged". Between 2020 and 2019, conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Iraq, Somalia and elsewhere have partly driven these numbers, as have mixed population flows with refugee and migrants in the Mediterranean and in South America – as the statistics demonstrate:

- The number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate increased by 92 per cent (from 10.6 million to 20.4 million).
- The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) protected or assisted by UNHCR increased by 189 per cent (from 14.7 million to 45.7 million).⁸
- Global numbers for forced displacement increased by 62 per cent (from 43.7 million⁹ to 79.5 million¹⁰).
- Over that same period, the number of staff members in UNHCR increased by 77 per cent (from 7,000¹¹ to 12,400¹²).¹³ The organization's total expenditures increased by 125 per cent (from \$1.878 billion to \$ 4.218 billion).¹⁴

In 2016 the World Humanitarian Summit took place in Istanbul and later that same year the New York Declaration, resulting from the United Nations General Assembly's high-level Summit for Refugees and Migrants, led to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact for Refugees, and to the launch of UNHCR's Transformative Agenda.

Elements of the Transformative Agenda include *inter alia*: a process of renewing the organization's results-based management (RBM) system supporting moves to more multi-year programming; a risk management programme to strengthen the organization's risk culture; a people and HR management process intended to provide a more modern, human-centric model of people management and to foster "an inclusive workplace where a diverse, engaged and skilled workforce can thrive and deliver exceptional results"; and a digitization strategy approved in 2020.

⁵ Mannet (2017) "Rapid Organizational Assessment: UNHCR Headquarters Review", February 2017.

⁶ PwC (2018) "Review of UNHCR's Division of Human Resource Management", March 2018.

⁷ Formal learning refers to learning activities that follow a specified curriculum, are often led by a facilitator and are assessed.

⁸ UNHCR *Global Trends Report 2019*, accessed from: <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>

⁹ UNHCR *Global Trends Report 2010*, accessed from: <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/country/4dfa11499/unhcr-global-trends-2010.html>

¹⁰ UNHCR *Global Trends Report 2019*, accessed from: <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>

¹¹ UNHCR "Update on human resource issues". Standing Committee 49th meeting. 7 September 2010, accessed from <https://www.unhcr.org/excom/standcom/4c99ba3b9/update-human-resources-issues.html>.

¹² UNHCR Human Resources, including staff welfare. Standing Committee 76th Meeting. 28 August 2019, accessed from: UNHCR Human resources, including staff welfare, and safety and security paper. Standing Committee 79th Meeting. 26 August 2020, accessed from: <https://www.unhcr.org/5f6309534>.

¹³ Data were not available on the growth of the affiliate workforce over the whole period 2010 to 2018.

¹⁴ UNHCR Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2019 and "Report of Board of Auditors", accessed from: <https://www.unhcr.org/5f63080b4>.

In 2019, as a later addition to the Transformative Agenda, was the launch of the process of regionalization and decentralization intended to move decision-making and authority “closer to the field” and achieve a balance between agile country operations, empowered regional entities and a strong centre to drive the organization’s mandate and strategic directions. The seven regional bureaux, established as part of this process, began operating in late 2019/January 2020 – so, during the early stages of this evaluation.

In addition to the internally determined processes of transformation, UNHCR’s goals are now strongly shaped by the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Affirmed by the General Assembly in 2018, the GCR is intended to provide a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. The GCR’s four key objectives are to:

- ease the pressures on host countries;
- enhance refugee self-reliance;
- expand access to third-country solutions;
- support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

It is recognized that for UNHCR to support the achievement of these objectives and further international cooperation, this will demand a “whole-of-society” approach that requires UNHCR to partner with a diverse array of stakeholders outside the humanitarian sector, including others in the UN system, development actors, multilateral banks, international financial institutions, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and a broader mix of government line ministries.

As UNHCR’s Learning Policy was created in 2012 and in view of the multiple transformations under way in the organization, the Evaluation Service thought it was timely to commission an organization-wide strategic evaluation on workforce learning and development.

1.2. Scope of the evaluation

The scope of this evaluation evolved significantly during the inception phase. The original Terms of Reference (ToR) had been framed around assessing the performance and future direction of the Global Learning and Development Centre (GLDC), coupled with a mapping study of the approaches to learning and development in the United Nations and other agencies.

The main insights that emerged from the inception phase were these:

- Though the GLDC provides much of the formal learning offered to UNHCR’s workforce, some other parts of the organization were also providing specific formal learning offers.
- Informal learning¹⁵ (e.g. on-the-job coaching, communities of practice, shadowing and job swapping) was clearly taking place throughout the organization but appeared to be taking place with little, if any, involvement of the GLDC. It was important that the evaluation also understood and assessed the various types of informal learning taking place across the organization.
- Learning is inextricably linked to, and affected by, many aspects of UNHCR’s policies and prioritization processes, its systems (particularly its HR systems), its structures, its values and its organizational culture.

Consequently, the GLDC’s role cannot be considered in isolation from these other considerations. UNHCR’s 2012 Learning Policy with its six key principles taken from the UN Organizational Learning Framework remains extant. The six principles still stand as sound criteria for assessing the current approach to learning and development within the organization, by virtue of taking into account the different levels and relationships that need to work together to support learning at the individual, team and organizational levels. It was therefore decided to use the six key principles as a reference frame for this evaluation.

¹⁵ Informal learning takes place independently from facilitator-led activities and can include such things as reading books, shadowing, on-the-job coaching, missions, participating in communities of practice and reflective discussions with colleagues and managers. Also included in this definition is social learning relating to the use of social media in learning activities.

Box 1: The six key principles of UNHCR's 2012 Learning Policy

Learning is strategic: Learning is aligned with UNHCR's goals and objectives and enhances the organization's ability to meet them. Learning is seen as a strategic and essential investment in the workforce.

Learning is accessible: UNHCR strives to increase access to appropriate learning for its workforce, affiliated workforce and, to the extent possible, its partners.

Learning is effective: Learning needs must be met in an effective way and have a positive impact on the quality of the work.

Learning is more than training: Learning is both a process and an outcome. Learning from experience is valued and constantly practised whether in formal or informal approaches. Learning can be individual, team or project-based. Learning is not limited to classroom-based training.

Learning is a shared responsibility: Learning is the responsibility of the learner, the supervisor and the organization. Learning specialists provide support to enable and engage the workforce and managers in learning activities.

Learning is part of the culture: Learning is anchored in the management culture and its support systems.

In the light of the main findings of the Inception Report, it was proposed to significantly broaden the scope of the evaluation to consider UNHCR's learning system as a whole; this was to assess not only the GLDC's role and contribution within that system but also to better understand how other parts of the organization either helped or hindered the GLDC in fulfilling its objectives and those of the 2012 Learning Policy. The key evaluation questions (KEQs) were revised, not only to reflect the significantly broadened scope of the evaluation, but also to make it more strategic and useful to UNHCR's Senior Executive Team and Senior Management Committee. Specifically, the revised KEQs:

- placed more emphasis on the future and on looking forward in support of UNHCR's overall corporate goals within KEQ1;
- used the 2012 Learning Policy as the evaluation's starting point;
- paid greater attention to learning of all kinds (including formal, non-formal and where appropriate informal and social learning) across the organization;
- paid greater attention to the linkages between learning and workforce development;
- paid greater attention to the shared responsibility for learning and development in the organization, thereby broadening the focus beyond the GLDC's offer;
- sought to identify the hallmarks of UNHCR's learning culture.

Box 2: A comparison of the original and revised key evaluation questions

Original key evaluation questions in the ToR	Revised key evaluation questions
<p>KEQ1. What contributions has the GLDC made to UNHCR's ability to learn and develop as an organization?</p> <p>KEQ2. What are the approaches and models that are used by other UN agencies in learning and development? What factors influence successful learning impact? What lessons from peers can be tested or applied within UNHCR?</p> <p>KEQ3. What should the GLDC do to better enable UNHCR to become a learning organization and how? What would the GLDC need to do to be able to scale its learning and development work to be able to offer its services to other UN agencies in the UN reform landscape?</p>	<p>KEQ 1. To what extent is UNHCR's learning system (as framed by the 2012 Learning Policy) functioning effectively and appropriately so that it is contributing to the development of the workforce and the organization to meet evolving operational needs?</p> <p>KEQ 2. How relevant and useful to the UNHCR learning strategy are the structures, approaches, values and processes in other agencies and organizations in the United Nations and the private sector?</p> <p>KEQ 3. What are the implications of the findings for the values, approaches, structures and processes necessary for a strategic approach to learning and development within UNHCR?</p>

To deliver on the significantly expanded scope of the evaluation, data-gathering activities were significantly increased, additional personnel were added to the evaluation team, and the evaluation schedule was extended from June to October 2020.

The evaluation report presented here is therefore substantially different from that envisaged by the original ToR. The evaluation explores the learning system of UNHCR from the perspective of the workforce and implementing partners and the appropriateness of its current learning system and its capacity to adapt over time to the changing context of UNHCR. While the GLDC's performance is assessed and its future direction considered, the evaluation offers a higher-level assessment of UNHCR's learning system and the extent to which it is contributing to the organization's performance and to its current and future objectives.

It should be noted here though, that had resources allowed, the boundaries of UNHCR's learning system could have been drawn much more broadly and more inclusively. For instance, UNHCR is heavily involved in improving the access to education of refugee children and, in many countries, UNHCR and its partners work to meet the learning needs of adults in terms of livelihoods and language. Arguably, if the objective of UNHCR is to ensure that everyone has the right to seek asylum and to find safe refuge in another State, with the option to eventually return home, integrate or resettle, then UNHCR's learning system could potentially be drawn so as to include all those with an influence upon the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge – so potentially not just governments and law-makers but also civil society, electorates and the general public in all countries. Such a wide drawing of boundaries was well beyond the scope of this evaluation, and almost certainly beyond the ability of UNHCR to manage the reality of that systemic viewpoint. Consequently, the evaluation did not look at learning outcomes from UNHCR's operational activities with persons of concern to UNHCR. Thematic evaluations by UNHCR examine the effectiveness of the organization's operational activities in terms of improving knowledge, awareness and adaptive behaviour, in areas such as livelihoods, education, public health, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

2. Evaluation methodology

UNHCR's learning system constitutes an unusually complex subject for evaluation, given that it is made up of a multitude of activities, policies, processes and organizational cultures within an organization operating in 134 countries with a total workforce of 17,464, of whom 12,833 are staff and 4,631 are affiliates.¹⁶

Moreover, as noted in Section 1.1, UNHCR's learning system is undergoing significant changes as a result of internal transformations within the organization and a rapidly changing external environment; it is important that these are understood as they provide the context in which UNHCR's learning system operates now and in the future.

As a centralized evaluation, this evaluation has been managed by UNHCR's Evaluation Service, which assigned two senior evaluation officers to manage and support the team. The evaluation team comprised the three core members but, to manage the expanded scope and data-gathering following the inception phase, four more members were added. A competitive bidding process was conducted, and the team were contracted through KonTerra, a US-based consulting group with substantial experience of working with the United Nations and other agencies.

The evaluation moved through the following phases and principal activities (see Figure 1).

¹⁶ UNHCR Global Report 2019.

Figure 1: Key stages of the evaluation



An **Engagement Group** of 12 staff drawn from across UNHCR was formed to provide the team with a range of perspectives from the organization. It met twice, in February 2020 and again in July 2020.

The principal data collection methods included both qualitative and quantitative approaches, which are described below.

2.1. Qualitative methods

Document review. The collection and review of well in excess of 1,000 documents continued throughout the evaluation.

A quality assessment of 10 selected UNHCR learning offers. A quality assessment of these offers was conducted using a simplified version of the HPass Standards¹⁷ – a set of humanitarian learning standards developed by a consortium of humanitarian organizations, learning providers and the global learning company Pearson. The 10 selected offers were:

- Programming for Protection (P4P)
- Management Learning Programme (MLP)
- MSRP-HR Induction Module (MSRP)
- Core Competency Learning Programme Team Building Module (CCLP)
- CCLP Livelihoods Learning Programme (LLP)
- Age, Gender and Diversity Approach (AGD E-learning)
- UNHCR Induction Online Learning Programme (UNHCR Induction)
- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence L1 (SGBV E-learning)
- ProGres V4 User Training (ProGres V4)
- Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP)

Eight of the selected learning offers were provided through the GDLC and two by other divisions within UNHCR. In addition, 801 documents were submitted as evidence for the HPass Standards and 20 people from the GLDC and Divisions were interviewed during this process, many more than once.

Interviews at HQ, regional bureaux and with personnel of partners and other UN organizations. A total of 108 individuals were interviewed from UNHCR's workforce in HQ (Geneva, Copenhagen, Budapest), in three regional bureaux (West and Central Africa, Americas and Europe) and with personnel in partner and other UN organizations such as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC). These were a mixture of face-to-face and online partly due to COVID-19. Included within this overall group were interviews conducted with the GLDC staff in Budapest during the inception visit in November 2019 and three separate focus group discussions in March 2020 with Geneva-based General Service staff, affiliate workforce personnel and junior professional officers.

¹⁷ Humanitarian Leadership Academy. HPass: Quality standards for humanitarian learning and assessment. Accessed from: <https://hpass.org/>.

Five country case studies. A total of 149 interviews of around one hour each were conducted with 120 workforce members (52 per cent female; 48 per cent male) and 21 staff of implementing partners (48 per cent female; 52 per cent male) in five case study countries and four staff from non-implementing partners. Two case studies (Nigeria and Greece) were “in-depth” in that two team members were involved and a larger number of staff and partners were interviewed, and three (Djibouti, Morocco and Peru) were “light touch”, being carried out by one team member interviewing a small number of staff and partners. The need for some countries to give operational priority to preparing for, and responding to, COVID-19 affected the countries finally included. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, all country and regional bureaux interviews were conducted remotely. The sample of workforce interviewees was purposively selected to ensure appropriate coverage and representation of gender, grade, contract type and functional group and office location (country office, sub-office, field office).

Implementing partners were purposively selected to include different types of partner and functional specialism. Debrief sessions were held at the end of each case study to present findings to senior country managers and to receive feedback.

Mapping study. This included a literature review of macro trends in learning and development followed by a review of the approaches to learning and development by five other agencies (World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Save the Children) as well as by UNHCR. This work was supported by consultations with five “reference organizations” (UNSSC, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva Learning Foundation, Humanitarian Leadership Academy and the HPass Quality Standard) to help triangulate the findings. Selected approaches to learning and development in the corporate sector were also reviewed. In all, 31 people were interviewed. The results of the mapping study were presented to the GLDC and HQ personnel during May and June 2020.¹⁸

Two background notes were prepared on the evolution of performance management in UNHCR and one analysing the eligibility requirements contained in the 41 broadcasts of learning offers issued by the GLDC during 2019.

2.2. Quantitative methods

Analysis of the contents and use of the Learn and Connect platform for online learning. This was undertaken using a mid-2018 to mid-2019 data set and the GLDC’s PowerBi files.

In-depth survey. The survey was disseminated in July 2020 via a broadcast to the entire UNHCR workforce (approximately 17,000 recipients) and to partner personnel via two channels: those from partners registered as users of Learn and Connect (approximately 4,500 recipients) and a separate mailing to the official contact persons in all implementing partner agencies, although this last channel resulted in just 12 responses. A total of 1,207 completed responses were received:

- 572 workforce respondents (approx. 5 per cent response rate) (male 248; female 295; prefer not to answer 22; skipped 7);
- 315 partner personnel respondents (approx. 10 per cent response rate) (male 160; female 148; prefer not to answer 4; skipped 3);
- a further 220 partner respondents did not identify their employer;
- 100 respondents through the Learn and Connect list were working for other UN agencies.

Of the 959 workforce and partner respondents who answered questions about their physical and mental abilities, the following percentages reported the following difficulties:

- 4.3 per cent reported difficulties with seeing even if wearing glasses and/or with hearing even if using a hearing aid;
- 1.6 per cent with walking or climbing steps;
- 3.6 per cent with remembering or concentrating;
- 2.3 per cent with communicating, understanding or being understood in their usual language.

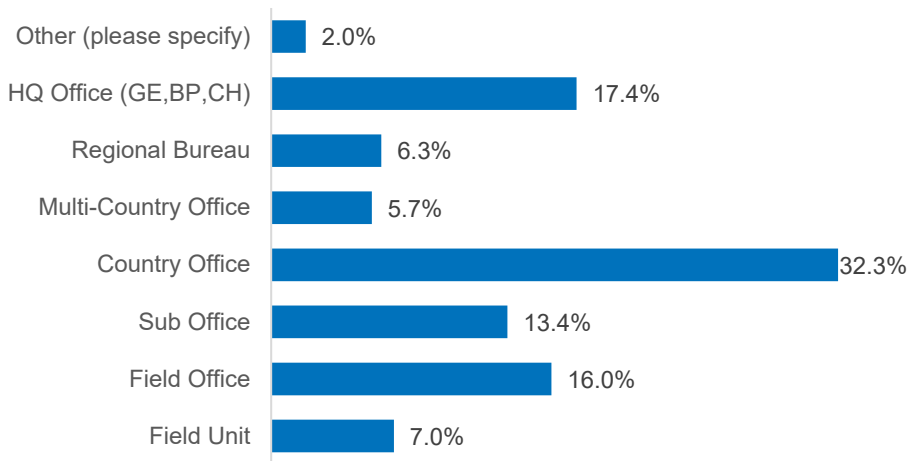
¹⁸ The mapping study was delivered separately in June 2020. Russ, C. (2020) ‘A mapping of approaches to learning and development in the humanitarian and corporate sectors: preliminary findings contributing to the wider evaluation of UNHCR’s approach to learning and development’.

Gender differences were analysed for both the workforce and partner respondents, particularly in relation to issues of accessibility and effectiveness. While some differences were observed in relation to particular questions, further analysis indicated that these were influenced by other factors such as location and could not be specifically attributed to gender. The team concluded that there were no important differences in responses that could be identified as specifically related to gender.

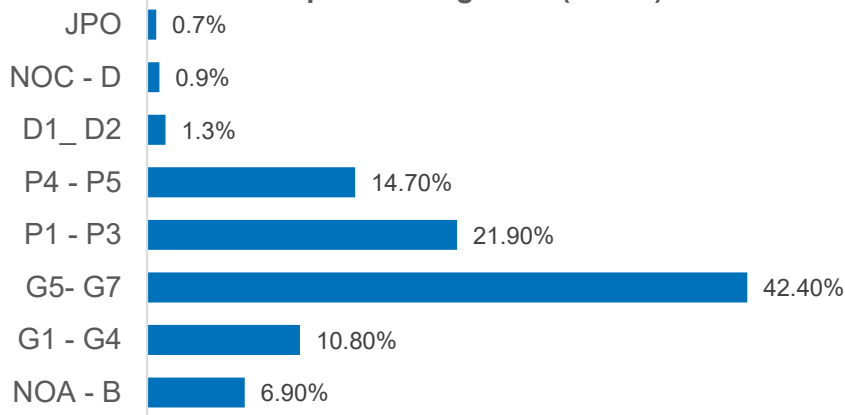
The following graphs indicate the location, grade and characteristics of workforce respondents. More than two thirds of responses came from the field – country offices, sub-offices, field offices and field units, followed by HQs (17.4 per cent) and regional bureaux (6.3 per cent). More than 50 per cent of responses were from General Service (GS) personnel and about 7 per cent from National Officers. International staff comprised 37.9 per cent of responses. About 71 per cent of respondents have a fixed-term appointment (FTA) with UNHCR; 16.7 per cent had a temporary appointment (TA) with UNHCR; and 12.4 per cent were contracted through other mechanisms and are affiliate workforce (AFW).

Figure 2: Characteristics of the workforce respondents to the survey

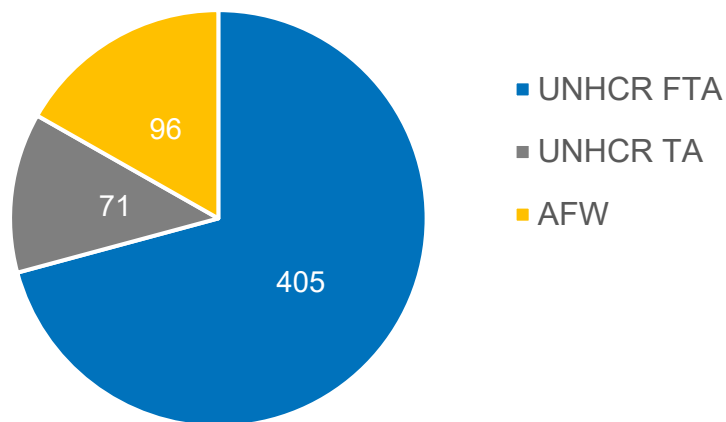
Workforce respondents: office type (n=558)



Workforce respondents: grades (n=504)



Workforce respondents contract type (n=572)



While the purposive sampling of country case study interviewees achieved a range of perspectives that can be seen as reasonably representative of workforce perspectives at the country level, care is needed in interpreting the responses to the survey and their degree of representativeness. Workforce personnel with a particular interest or engagement with learning and development are likely to be strongly represented among those who responded to the survey. Partner personnel respondents are unlikely to be representative of all partners as only 20 to 25 per cent of partner personnel interviewed in the five countries actually had access to the Learn and Connect platform. Consequently the “partner respondents” represent a privileged minority of all partners, i.e. those having access to Learn and Connect and a greater level of engagement with UNHCR’s learning offer.

Overall, a total of 308 people were interviewed during the course of the evaluation and 1,207 people responded to the questionnaire survey.

During the course of the evaluation, more than 60 meetings were held with the UNHCR Evaluation Service personnel and some 15 separate presentations were given of preliminary results and findings from different aspects and stages of the evaluation. Opportunities for feedback provided during the evaluation included: the presentation of preliminary results to country representatives and senior staff in each of the five country case studies; the presentation of the overall preliminary results at two validation workshops in which 136 workforce members participated; and, as described in more detail in Section 6.1, KEQ3 involved a two-stage strategy workshop process for 30 senior-level managers and technical staff (with each workshop being repeated to enable participation by those working in other time zones), and these contributed significantly to the development of the evaluation’s recommendations.

3. Background: Learning and development

3.1. Emerging shifts in learning and development

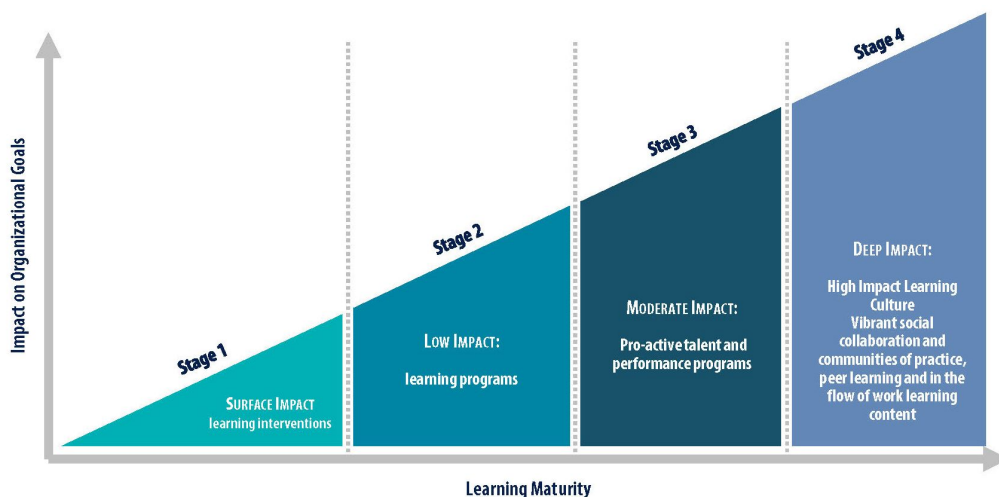
The mapping study included a review of the learning and development (L&D) literature and recent trends in the L&D field, which revealed the following key findings:

- Technical and economic changes are driving rapid transformations in the workplace that require the substantial reskilling and upskilling of workforces.¹⁹
- Profound changes are taking place within the L&D sector itself and these are principally being driven by:
 - an “explosion” in learning technologies including webinars, MOOCs (massive open online courses) and learning management systems (investments in the new technologies are not always generating the anticipated positive results due to a failure to gather the right data and organizations continuing to make their own assumptions about people’s learning needs – identified by some as “the biggest blind spot amongst learning professionals”²⁰);
 - advances in learning theories, resulting from developments in the behavioural and neurosciences;
 - a paradigm shift away from longer learning programmes to autonomous “in-the-flow-of-work” learning where learners access their learning faster, more easily and in smaller, digestible, amounts.²¹

The L&D discipline has experienced paradigm shifts from: **Pedagogy** (teacher-led learning where learning is transferred in one direction from the teacher to the students), to: **Andragogy** (self-directed learning where the teacher facilitates multi-directional learning involving the teacher and students and between the students themselves), to: **Heutagogy** (self-determined education where the approach is agile and learner-centric where the learner is the teacher and the teacher is the learner).²²

A consequence of such trends is an increasing interest in the learning culture of high-performing organizations or what are also known as high-impact learning cultures. The relatively new concept of high-impact learning culture (HILC) is now starting to guide organizations away from a focus on learning and talent and performance programmes to a broader lens, encompassing a whole range of formal and informal approaches “in the flow of work”. Figure 3 outlines the various stages of learning and impact maturity in an organization.

Figure 3: The four stages of learning maturity and impact



¹⁹ WEF (2018) *The Future of Jobs Report*.

²⁰ Daly, J. and Ahmetaj, G. (2020) *Back to the future: Why tomorrow's workforce needs a learning culture*, Horsham: Emerald Works.

²¹ Russ, C. (2020) “A mapping of approaches to learning and development in the humanitarian and corporate sectors: preliminary findings contributing to the wider evaluation of UNHCR’s approach to learning and development”.

²² Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)/Towards Maturity (2015) *L&D: Evolving roles, enhancing skills*, Research report, London: CIPD.

Adapted from J. Daly (2020).²³

Tomorrow's workforce is changing at a rapid pace, so much so that the World Economic Forum (WEF) forecasts that more than half of all employees in the world will require significant reskilling and upskilling in just three years and more than half of employees will need reskilling by 2022.²⁴ This has massive implications for L&D providers to position themselves away from being providers of learning content, to being enablers of continuous learning for a workforce. The literature points to the growing and critical importance of becoming a high-impact learning organization which can be described as a living and learning organizational ecosystem that "intelligently facilitates the performance and learning of its entire people population, continuously transforming itself. It is agile and fluid in nature, with the ability to move beyond learning interventions by learning at an organisational level".²⁵

Successful high-impact learning cultures are found to be more ambitious and better at learning and performing at scale; they focus on less, but do it better and they only focus on learning aligned to their critical capability risks.²⁶ Learning leaders with high-impact learning cultures are 10 times more likely to have a sustainable impact on growth, transformation and productivity. Recent research on assessing the evidence around learning cultures²⁷ suggests that in addition to growth, transformation and productivity there are correlational links among learning culture and motivation to transfer learning; knowledge management and sharing, which in turn can impact on employee skills and organizational performance; job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover.

As Figure 4 shows, where organizations understand learning impact, job productivity increases significantly.

Figure 4: Organizational benefits of learning impact (%)



Source: CIPD (2019) *Professionalising Learning and Development*. CIPD's new profession map and key L&D development needs, p.16.

Furthermore, organizations where L&D facilitates social and collaborative learning are far more successful in facilitating continuous learning, as demonstrated in Figure 5.

²³ Daly, J. in Daly, J. and Ahmetaj, G. (2020) *Back to the future: Why tomorrow's workforce needs a learning culture*, Feb 2020.

²⁴ WEF (2018) *The Future of Jobs Report*, 2018.

²⁵ Daly, J. and Overton, L. (2017) *Driving the New Learning Organisation: How to unlock the potential of L&D*, May 2017, p.16.

²⁶ Daly, J. and Ahmetaj, G. (2020) op. cit., p. 71. Critical capability risks refer to those gaps in skills and knowledge that if not addressed, will become a risk to the organization. For example, the reported lack of partnering and multi-stakeholder collaboration skills among the workforce are a critical capability risk to fulfilling the implementation of the GCR.

²⁷ Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2020) *Creating Learning Cultures: Assessing the Evidence*, April 2020, p. 9.

Figure 5: Organizational benefits of social collaboration

It is clear in the literature that high-performing learning organizations are achieving greater impact. The performance gap between these organizations and the rest is also widening as most are not leveraging the full potential of their learning strategies or activities. Most leaders who participated in the research reported wanting to drive a learning culture but fewer than one in five organizations were managing to achieve this. Alarming, it is forecasted that “as we look to the next 10 years and the fierce forces of change continuing to come our way, only high-impact learning cultures look set to beat the odds”.²⁸

Findings from the mapping of approaches to L&D were then explored against the backdrop of the current trends to provide the following picture of the emergent approaches in learning and development.

Use of digital technologies to increase reach and offer more agile sharing of learning

- The increased use of online provision and a reduction in use of centrally delivered face-to-face provision: a key area where organizations are reducing their focus and activity is in the provision of centralized/HQ-based face-to-face learning and its replacement by either online learning or more locally provided face-to-face provision. Recognizing the benefits of some combination of online and face-to-face learning, many organizations have been increasing their “blended learning” offers.
- A switch towards agile content design: older models of design such as the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) that often involved months and years of planning and quality assessment are being replaced by agile content designs that can respond to new events and situations within much shorter time frames, potentially as short as days and weeks if developing micro-learning content.

Individually driven learning and learning that is peer-to-peer

- The democratization of access to learning: learning is becoming more accessible at all levels. Universities are opening up their learning portals and large businesses, such as PwC, are opening up their learning management system for anyone to access. We are now in an “age of ubiquitous access” – people from any country in the world can now access degrees and learning content.
- The reduction in top-down learning provision: this trend recognizes the wealth of learning that is going on between colleagues and within teams “in the flow of work”. The focus is now on how learning in the flow of work can be nurtured and fostered.

Shared responsibility for L&D across the workforce

- Although HR and L&D divisions continue to have a key role to play regarding L&D within organizations, they are no longer fully responsible for it. The focus is increasingly on helping learners to recognize that they can take a large part of the responsibility for their own skill and knowledge development.

²⁸ Daly, J. and Ahmetaj, G. (2020) op. cit. p.5.

- Managers play a critical role in supporting workforce learning: the critical nature of the role that managers need to play in supporting learning and development is increasingly recognized. Appropriate support practices and their daily application strongly promote and leverage learning and development.
- Enabling others to share knowledge and insight, encourage peer-sharing and learning from mistakes, and promote the numerous and diverse ways to bring people together to collaborate are all now regarded as a critical role of managers.
- The importance of informal learning from peers and team dynamics. The 70/20/10 model originates from research in the mid-1990s that indicated that individuals obtain 70 per cent of their learning from job-related experiences, 20 per cent from interactions with others, and 10 per cent from formal educational events. While the percentages imply a precision which is not necessarily borne out by reality, the message that “formal training contributes only a small part of what and how people learn” is widely accepted. Teams, peers and individuals are now seen as key learning foci.

Use and availability of L&D data analytics

- A substantial growth in the use of data analysis and impact tracking: the widespread use of online and digital learning provision has increased the ability of organizations to dramatically improve the monitoring, tracking and analysis of their learning offers. It is now much easier for organizations to make changes to programmes in real time and to assess the benefits of their learning offers and to know if they are investing in the right areas.
- A work culture that is open to learning from experimentation.
- A greater recognition of the importance of supporting a culture that acknowledges and leverages mistakes: organizational cultures where the workforce is afraid to acknowledge mistakes has repeatedly been shown to not only prevent learning, but also to contribute to an unsafe workplace.

3.2. Defining L&D in UNHCR

UNHCR’s 2012 Learning Policy defines learning as “the transformation of information and experience into knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes”. Unfortunately, the policy does not define learning and development, so it is necessary to look elsewhere. A widely reproduced textbook on L&D defines it as:

An organisational process to aid the development of knowledge and the achievement of organisational and individual goals. It involves the collaborative stimulation and facilitation of learning and developmental processes, initiatives and relationships in ways that respect and build on human diversity in the workplace.²⁹

3.3. Workforce L&D in UNHCR: An initial overview

The decision to create a centralized learning centre within the Division for Human Resources (DHR) resulted from a 2008 review of learning in UNHCR, which reached these conclusions.

UNHCR’s approach to learning is not optimal. With six different Divisions at Headquarters involved in the design, delivery and coordination of learning, there is a disparate and uncoordinated approach to learning. As a result, learning at UNHCR:

- Lacks coherence and weakens broad view strategic planning and prioritization;
- Does not allow for the benefit of economies of scale, so is potentially more expensive than it need be;
- Leads to a recurring pattern in UNHCR of often uncoordinated end-of-the-year training initiatives (typically costly workshops) which have many of the attributes of the “spend it or lose it” school of last-minute planning and implementation;
- Leads to a multiplicity of often uncoordinated approaches and undermines quality control;
- Makes measuring the impact of learning in a systematic and uniform manner difficult;
- Makes the accurate tracking of all learning initiatives and their total costs virtually impossible;
- Creates confusion among staff with respect to what training is available;
- Is insufficiently linked to levels (or is not “levelled”), particularly in relation to senior managers and those preparing for same; and
- Has been consistently under-resourced given UNHCR’s global context.³⁰

In response to the review, the Global Learning Centre (GLC) was established in Budapest in late 2009 and became operational in early 2010. The centrepiece learning management system Learn and Connect launched later that year.

²⁹ Harrison, R. (2009) *Learning and Development*, 5th edn, London: CIPD.

³⁰ UNHCR (2008) *Toward Becoming a Learning Organization: A review of learning at UNHCR*, November 2008, p.3.

In 2012, two years after it was established, the GLC drew up UNHCR's Learning Policy, which was approved towards the end of the year. The GLC's role was described in the policy as:

... the entity responsible for policy formulation, and for leading the development of a coherent learning strategy aligned with institutional priorities. The GLC is also responsible for the development and coordination of UNHCR's corporate learning. The primary focus of the GLC is to facilitate learning for UNHCR staff. In addition, the GLC endeavours to support those staff who facilitate the learning of partners. ... The GLC shall be staffed with a critical mass of creative and skilled staff who have the capability to develop and deliver learning activities using a broad range of proven methodologies, tools and practices.³¹

As noted by the highlighted text, the GLC's focus was to be on the learning needs of the workforce rather than those of external partners. For an organization whose effectiveness is significantly reliant on the effectiveness of its implementing partners this was a serious strategic omission.

The policy led to the establishment of:

A Learning Governance Board (LGB) comprised of director-level representatives from divisions and bureaux, with the Deputy High Commissioner serving as the chair and the Head of the GLC serving as the secretariat. The LGB's role would be to: provide broad guidance on institutional learning priorities and needs; approve high-level strategy so as to ensure the alignment of learning with the strategic directions of the organization; and provide guidance on the budget allocation for the coming period.

Focal points for learning in each division and bureau. Within divisions the intention was that the focal point would be the deputy director, who would provide the single entry point for all that concerned policy, planning, and content clearance. Within bureaux the intention was that the focal point would be at a "sufficiently senior level" and participate in annual planning sessions to identify learning needs and priorities in their regions.

Learning coordinators in each country office. A system of learning coordinators had already been set up in most countries to assist the country representatives but, as part of the 2012 policy, the system was reinforced so a single learning coordinator would be appointed as overall country learning coordinator. That role would be responsible for: managing the organization and delivery of local learning events for UNHCR's in-country workforce; assisting the GLC in conducting needs assessments and ensuring that any in-country training follows sound learning principles and processes; and assisting local learners in identifying corporate training. Full responsibility for overseeing the learning/training funds allocated to each country by the GLC was to be delegated to the country learning coordinators by the country representatives.

As will be seen in the findings in Section 4, neither the Learning Policy, nor any of these three specific provisions worked out as intended. Many of the aspirations of the policy failed to materialize: the Learning Governance Board was disbanded in January 2018 after not meeting for two years; the focal points for learning in divisions appear to have been delegated to less senior staff (below the deputy director level); and the team were not aware that the term remains in use. At the country level, the evaluation found that the country learning coordinator system is not functioning as planned, the role having been delegated in many instances to junior to mid-level staff members as an additional responsibility to their existing duties with no alteration to their job title.

When the GLC was created, the notion of "staff development" was an explicit element of UNHCR's Performance Management and Appraisal System (PAMS). It required "ongoing dialogue between staff and managers who are required to agree to work objectives, competencies and development plans at the beginning of the cycle, to participate in a mid-year development review and to contribute to the annual appraisal and year-end review of the staff development plan".³² So too was the performance coaching and dialogue responsibilities of the supervisor. There was a clear linkage between learning, development and the annual appraisal cycle. This was part of UNHCR's 2012 Learning Policy commitment to create a learning culture. However, in 2014 the DHR introduced a new performance management system³³ that explicitly removed the performance appraisal of staff from UNHCR's Competency Framework. Thus, two years after the launch of the 2012 Learning Policy, its ability to contribute to the creation of a learning culture was directly undermined by the introduction of the new Performance Management Policy.

Despite such challenges, the GLC continued to develop its learning offers, in particular, its e-learning offer which grew rapidly after 2010 and its blended learning offer which steadily increased (see Figure 6). By 2016 the GLC's learning catalogue reportedly contained more than 1,400 items, generating approximately 105,000 registrations.³⁴

³¹ UNHCR (2012) The UNHCR Learning Policy and Guidelines, November 2012, para 16.

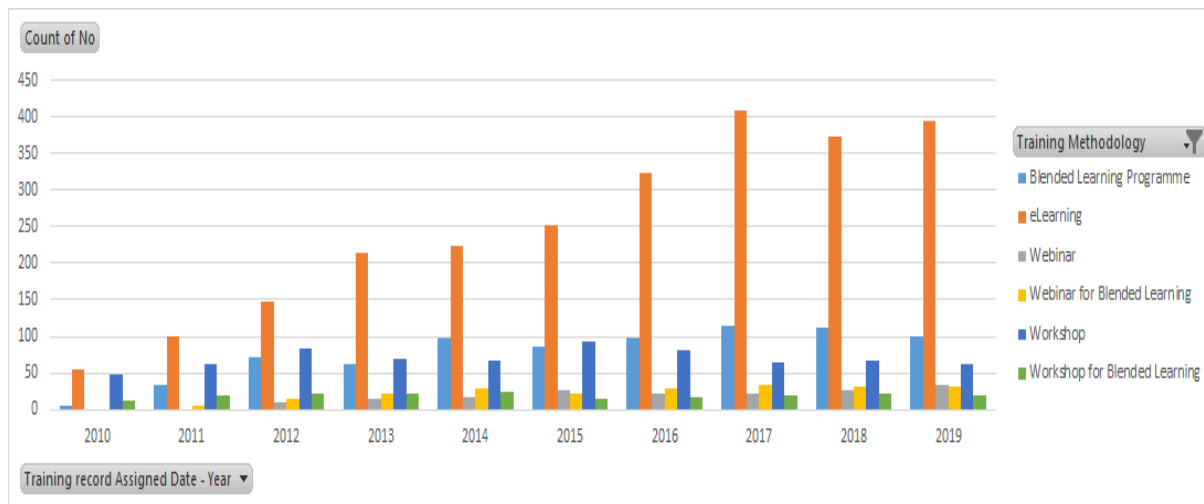
³² UNHCR (2008) Policy Framework for the 2008 Performance Appraisal and Management System (PAMS), Annex 2 p. 1.

³³ Policy on Performance Management (UNHCR/HCP/2014/12) and the associated Administrative Instruction Introducing Procedures on Performance Management (UNHCR/AI/2015/3).

³⁴ PwC (2018) "Review of UNHCR's Division of Human Resource Management Final Report", 16 March 2018, PwC.

By 2018 the PwC HR Review reported that the GLC was struggling to “deprioritize” (i.e. reduce) the number of its learning offers which the PwC Review characterized starkly as “a too massive training offer”.

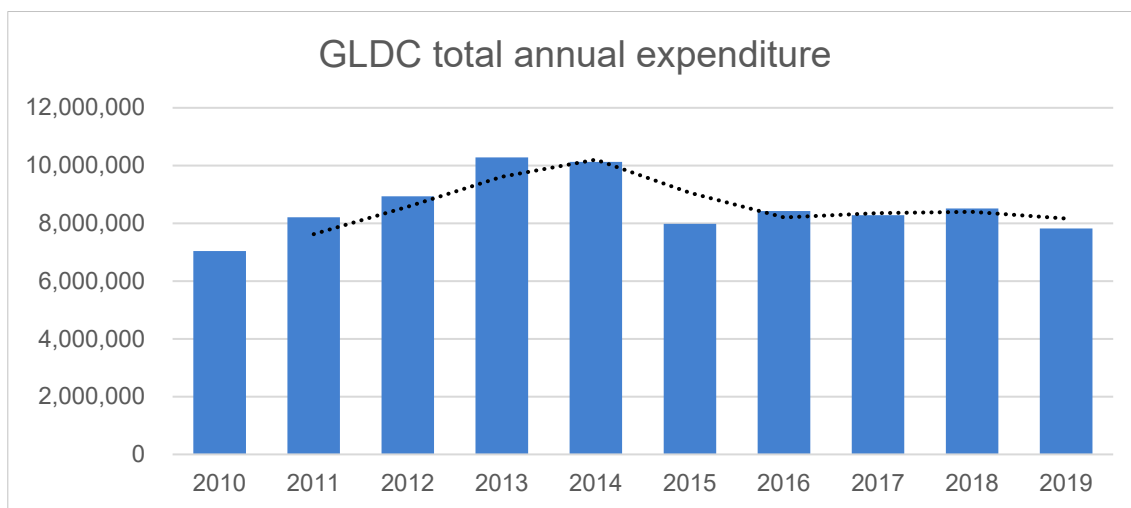
Figure 6: Number of learning offers by modality type



Source: KonTerra analysis of Learn and Connect PowerBi data April 2020

The growth in the GLC’s outputs was achieved despite a significant real-terms reduction in the budget. The total expenditure in 2019 was \$7.8 million. This represented a 24 per cent decrease in nominal terms since the 2013 peak in expenditures when they totalled \$10.28 million (see Figure 7). Once allowance is made for the increased cost of goods and services, the decrease over that period equates to a 37 per cent decrease in real terms.

Figure 7: GLC/GLDC total annual expenditures 2010–2019 (\$)



Source: GLDC expenditure data for 2010–2019 provided by GLDC Admin Unit January 2020

As an action identified in UNHCR’s People Strategy 2016–2021, in 2016, the GLC began developing competency-based learning initiatives and certification programmes in key functional areas such as HR, programme management and supply chain. Certification is conferred following demonstration of functional competencies in an assessment, usually a final test at the end of a specific learning programme. The certification programmes are regarded as a key component of functional career pathways where the required certification must be obtained for staff to be eligible to move to higher grades within that function or for staff to make lateral moves from one function to another.

In developing new courses and learning programmes, the GLDC works closely with subject-matter experts (normally based in the divisions) to develop the content. These “content holders” in the divisions make a significant contribution to the development of learning products and, strictly speaking, most learning products should be seen as the joint products of the GLDC and the content holders in the divisions concerned. In the Division for International Protection, for instance, several technical sections are heavily involved in the development of training products, tutoring and other learning activities.

While most learning products are developed jointly by the GLDC and divisions, some staff in some divisions deliver training either in loose collaboration with the GLDC or in some cases independently of the GLDC. Consequently, while the GLDC has an overview of most of the formal learning provision across the organization, it does not have a complete overview. As a result, some formal learning delivery, such as courses being delivered by divisions at a country level, is taking place without the knowledge of the GLDC and so does not appear within Learn and Connect. This would seem to be at odds with the Learning Policy’s assertion that the GLC was “responsible for coordination of UNHCR’s corporate learning”.³⁵

Among the conclusions of the 2018 PwC HR Review were that “UNHCR is not realising the full potential of its national staff and affiliates; DHRM focus is mainly on international staff”.³⁶ Specific areas identified as to where the GLC’s work could be improved, included:

- thinning its “too massive” learning offer;
- increasing the measurement and monitoring of training effectiveness to assist in the thinning process and assess the impacts of its offers on the workforce;
- improving the strategic alignment with UNHCR’s overall goals and with regional/local challenges.³⁷

It also concluded that the focus of training had come to be seen as a stand-alone solution, notably for behavioural problems. It suggested this was the consequence of poor performance management and/or the lack of development programmes which could upskill and influence the workforce’s behaviours.

Following the PwC HR Review, the GLC continued its “clean-up” and “thinning” exercise of Learn and Connect to remove out-of-date training items from the catalogue and update course information. The GLC’s linkage to staff development was strengthened through the addition of a Leadership Development Section (in late 2018) and a Talent Development and Performance Section (in mid-2019), and its name changed to the Global Learning and Development Centre.

An overview of learning and development within UNHCR would be incomplete without reference to the eCentre in Bangkok. Originally established in Japan in 2000, the eCentre moved to Bangkok in 2015 to co-locate with UNHCR’s Regional Office. The eCentre’s primary objective is building the capacity of UNHCR’s partners, particularly government and national civil society partners, to improve emergency preparedness and response in the Asia-Pacific region. As well as providing courses in Thailand and Japan, the eCentre provides training courses and workshops in countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Philippines and Myanmar. The courses cover subjects such as Peacebuilding, Emergency Preparedness, Safety in the Field, Humanitarian Principles and Protection. The eCentre’s annual budget was just above \$0.4 million in 2018. In that same year, a review of the eCentre was carried out. Its principal recommendations were that the eCentre’s governance and operational direction should be clarified and its work should be more strategically aligned with UNHCR’s regional priorities and its responses in the Asia-Pacific region.³⁸ The eCentre was not included in the scope of this evaluation.³⁹

3.3.1. An overview of the GLDC’s current learning offers and work

Analysis of the learning offers provided on Learn and Connect⁴⁰ enables the following overview.

³⁵ Ibid., para 16.

³⁶ PwC (2018) op. cit. Executive Summary Section 1.2 Summary Findings.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Greenhalgh, L. (2018) “eCentre Review” Final Report, UNHCR.

³⁹ It had been planned that evaluation team members would visit Bangkok following a case study mission to an Asian country. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the expansion in the scope of the evaluation, it did not prove possible to include interviews with eCentre personnel during the evaluation.

⁴⁰ Since 2015 GLDC has not prepared an inclusive hard copy or soft copy catalogue of all the learning offers available on Learn and Connect. Until recently the searchable catalogue on Learn and Connect did not provide an overview of all its contents and even at the time of writing appears to contain offers that have not been updated for several years and so it is not clear if these items are current or historical offers. In addition, the overall learning offers include a large number of offers that are not factsheet recordable, so their satisfactory completion does not add to the learners’ factsheet (effectively a UNHCR CV). In June 2020 GLDC launched MyLearn inside Learn and Connect, which features an improved learning search feature, AI-assisted course recommendations and advanced filtering, which enables learners to tailor the search for their specific needs. Key programmes are indicated on a calendar in Learn and Connect, which also sets out annual bureau learning activities jointly agreed to with bureaux and divisions.

Over the period June 2018 to June 2019, Learn and Connect recorded 313,568 learner entries that had either registered, were in progress or had completed learning offers. Of the different types of learning methodology, by far the most used was e-learning, which accounted for 84 per cent of the total number of participants (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participants and completion rates by learning modality

Learning modality	Registered	In Progress	Completed	No. "participants"	% of total participants	Completion rates (%)
Assessment	109	38	444	591	0.2%	75.1
Blended Learning Programme	51	10155	8646	18852	6.0%	45.9
eLearning	82044	29485	151421	262950	83.9%	57.6
Resource Material	110	309	201	620	0.2%	32.4
Self-Study	1463	3544	6016	11023	3.5%	54.6
Training video	1200	701	2320	4221	1.4%	55.0
Webinar	1115		3975	5090	1.6%	78.1
Webinar for Blended Learning	161		3583	3744	1.2%	95.7
Workshop	581	1	3979	4561	1.5%	87.2
Workshop for Blended Learning	2		1914	1916	0.6%	99.9
Grand Total	86836	44233	182499	313568	100.0%	58.2

Source: KonTerra calculations from June 2018 to June 2019 Learn and Connect data set

A total of 642 learning offers were available on Learn and Connect of which the majority were e-learning offers (394), followed by blended learning offers (101), workshops (62),⁴¹ webinars (34), webinars as part of blended learning offers (32) and workshops as part of blended learning offers (19). This is substantially more than the 300 or so offered by three of the organizations considered as part of the mapping study.

As can be seen, completion rates for those registering for e-learning was 57.6 per cent and for those registering on blended learning programmes it was 45.9 per cent. Table 2 shows the 11 most used learning offers between June 2018 and June 2019.

Table 2: Learning offers in Learn and Connect with more than 1,000 completions between June 2018 and June 2019

No.	Training title	No. of workforce who completed	Status
1.	ICT Information Security Awareness (InfoSec)	17468	Mandatory
2.	BSAFE UN-wide basic security course	15875	Mandatory
3.	Fundamentals of Fraud and Corruption Awareness	11171	Mandatory
4.	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	6092	Mandatory
5.	Protection Induction Programme	5354	Mandatory
6.	Basic Security in the Field (legacy version – since replaced by BSAFE)	3658	Mandatory
7.	UN Course on Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority	3656	Mandatory
8.	Advanced Security in the Field (since replaced by BSAFE)	3197	Mandatory
9.	Operational Data Management (ODM) Modules	2709	Voluntary
10.	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)	1929	Voluntary
11.	Introduction to Cash-Based Interventions	1020	Voluntary

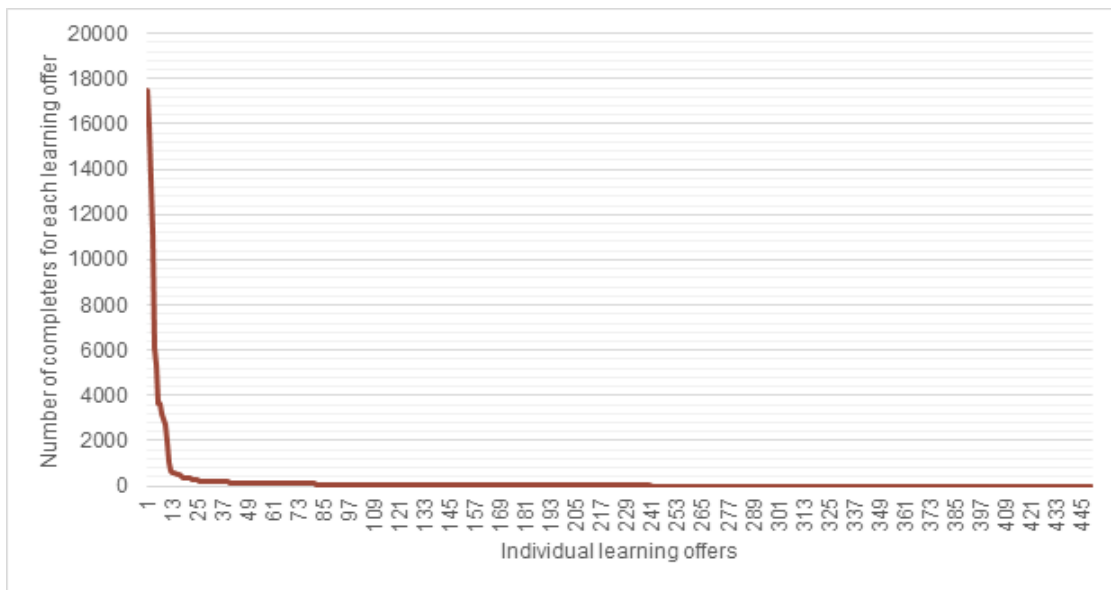
Source: June 2018 to June 2019 Learn and Connect data set

⁴¹ These are the number of workshops recorded in Learn and Connect. It can be assumed that many more workshops take place across UNHCR's operations, but which are not recorded in Learn and Connect.

As would be expected, mandatory programmes that must be completed by all newly joining workforce members and regularly refreshed/retaken by longer serving members of the workforce, are the most frequently used formal learning offers.

A striking feature of the data on Learn and Connect is the very steep decrease in the number of completers for each learning offer and the large number of offers with either small numbers of completers or no completers at all (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Distribution of completers across the learning offer (n= 450)



Source: KonTerra calculations from June 2018 to June 2019 Learn and Connect data set

In fact, 190 learning offers (42 per cent of the total number of learning offers) recorded fewer than 10 completers between June 2018 and June 2019. The large number of little-used, out-of-date or redundant learning offers had been noted by the 2018 PwC HR Review and was followed by a “cleaning” and “thinning” exercise. The data presented above reflect the situation during the period mid-2018 to mid-2019. This suggests that the “clean-up” and “thinning” process following the PwC review needs to be undertaken on a more regular basis.

In September 2020, as the evaluation was in its final stages, the massive resources of LinkedIn Learning was made available to UNHCR’s workforce via Learn and Connect. LinkedIn Learning provides access to more than 16,000 courses in seven languages, which offer relevant, up-to-date content taught by credible industry experts. The service is also provided by a number of other UN organizations for their staff.

In terms of the GLDC’s functional units and sections, Management and Protection units had the largest expenditures, accounting for 40 per cent of the GLDC’s expenditures in 2019 (see table 3 below).

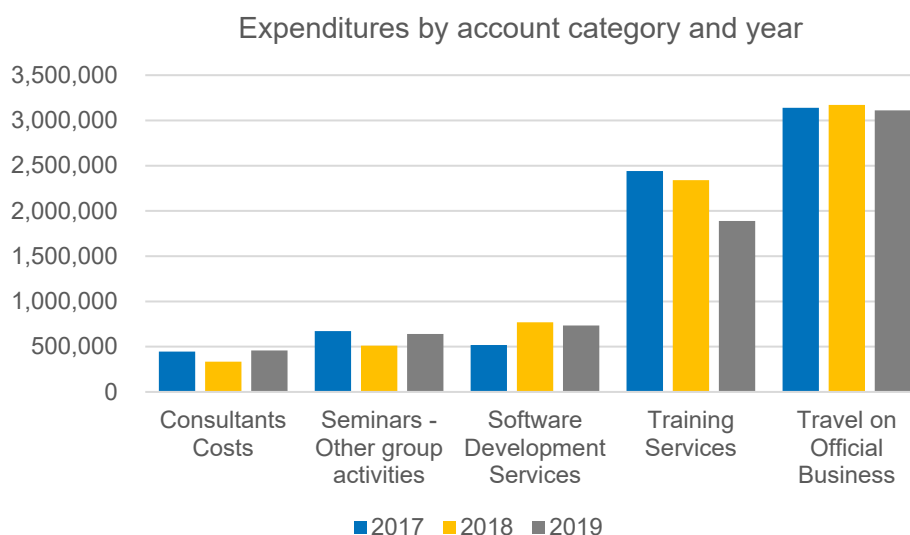
Table 3: GLDC expenditures in 2019 by section and unit

GLDC unit	Total US\$	Percentage
Management	1,587,790	20%
Protection	1,561,159	20%
Programme	980,428	13%
LSU ⁴² Tech	607,039	8%
GLC	727,479	9%
Emergency	604,047	8%
Ext. Study/field	347,860	4%
Finance	134,623	2%
LSU Design	71,257	1%
Security	895,418	11%
Supply	305,072	4%
Grand total	7,822,172	100%

Source: GLDC detailed expenditure data for 2019 provided by GLDC Admin Unit, January 2020

Five budget lines accounted for 87 per cent of the GLDC’s total expenditures in 2019: travel on official business (40 per cent); training services (24 per cent); software development services (9 per cent); seminars – other group activities (8 per cent); consultants’ costs (6 per cent). That 40 per cent of the GLDC’s expenditures are accounted for by official travel is particularly noteworthy. While attesting to the heavy travel schedules and training delivery being undertaken by GLDC personnel, it also points to the significant travel costs incurred by a centralized service within a global organization. Recent trends in relation to these five main budget lines are shown in Figure 9. The steady decline in expenditures on training services is notable.

Figure 9: Expenditures by the five main budget lines 2017–2019



Source: GLDC detailed expenditure data for 2017–2020 provided by GLDC Admin Unit, January 2020

3.4. L&D in other agencies

A central focus of the mapping study was an assessment of the approaches to L&D by UNHCR and five other agencies (WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, IOM and Save the Children) – jointly referred to as the six “principal organizations”. Interviews were conducted with key informants in each organization and, where it was provided, documentation was also used. Generally there was a willingness to share information and insights, though agencies were less forthcoming on some areas such as the resourcing arrangements and spending on L&D. Five “reference


⁴² Learning Solutions Unit

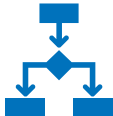
organizations” were also consulted (UNSSC, ICRC, Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Geneva Learning Foundation and the HPass Quality Standard) to help triangulate the findings. Selected approaches to L&D in the corporate sector were also reviewed.


The mapping exercise highlighted the scale of UNHCR’s investment in the centralized provision of learning which set it apart from the other agencies. Even allowing for different arrangements and locations of staff supporting L&D and the difficulties of making direct comparisons, it was apparent that the number of learning offers developed and generated in-house by UNHCR (principally GLDC) was significantly greater than that for other agencies where the offer was smaller or involved a much higher level of curated content developed by external providers. GLDC staffing levels (100+) and budget levels (approximately \$8 million/year)⁴³ were significantly larger than those within other agencies, even those such as WFP and UNICEF with comparable or larger overall total agency expenditures.


While each organization has its own particular requirements, perspectives and approaches, it was possible to identify areas of similarity in their learning structures, processes and methodologies.


These areas of similarity include:


- 

1) Ever-closer union of HR and L&D
- 

2) Decentralization of learning teams (in four of the six agencies)
- 

3) Increased support for informal and social learning sections/departments
- 

4) Lack of investment in the tracking and evaluation of the impact of such learning
- 

5) A narrow, positional approach to leadership development that is now (in three of the six) being opened up to allow wider access
- 

6) Exploration of affordable ways of increasing access to coaching

Areas where most or all organizations were increasing their focus and activity included: coaching; mentoring; the use of external vendors; and the development of learning partnerships with each other and networks such as the Humanitarian Coaching Network, though as yet such partnerships are not well developed.

Key areas of dissimilarity that are worth noting fall into four areas noted below:

⁴³ UNHCR’s staff costs allocated to L&D stands at 0.93 per cent, according to the 2020 JIU report on Learning and Development. While this is above the average for UN agencies, it remains well below the UN Organizational Learning Framework standard of 2 per cent.

Governance

Apart from Save the Children and UNHCR all other organisations have some form learning governance body ranging from Training Advisory Committees to People Strategy and Management Committees with different levels of representation (mostly senior) from the organisation at HQ and regional levels.



Institutional supports


All organisations appear to have struggled achieving a satisfactory balance between HR-driven compliance processes, with a more developmentally-oriented performance management, whereby both managers and staff value and invest in the process. UNICEF was one organisation that had reportedly found a balance between compliance and development with a strong culture of giving and receiving feedback within their organisation.



Decentralised approach

Most work with regular funding for a small core HQ team with dispersed budgets for functional areas in countries and regions. Some central learning teams act like internal consultancies, offering their services to functional areas and Divisions. In one agency the country offices effectively have 'purchasing power' and 'buy in' the learning services that they feel they need. As noted above GLDC's staffing and budget levels were significantly larger than those within other agencies, even those such as WFP and UNICEF with comparable or larger overall total agency expenditures.



An orange square icon with rounded corners. Inside the square, there is a white silhouette of a person standing on the left, pointing with a stick to a white rectangular board on the right. Below the board, there are three smaller white silhouettes of people, representing an audience.

Learning system and approach

UNHCR is alone in offering a suite of internally certificated programmes. Other organisations subscribe to a small number of externally certificated courses such as project management. GLDC explored the option of an open-source platform for use by partners and this is scheduled to be launched in November 2020. Some agencies (such as UNICEF and Save the Children) use open-source learning management platforms offering easy access to content for a wider set of users whilst others (including UNHCR) use commercially contracted platforms where each additional user incurs a cost and so access is restricted to staff and selected others.

Findings from the mapping of approaches to L&D were then explored against the backdrop of the current trends to provide the picture of the emergent approaches in L&D, described in Section 3.1.

4. Key findings

4.1. Introduction

At the heart of UNHCR's 2012 Learning Policy are the six principles of the UN Organizational Learning Framework that were endorsed by UNHCR in 2003. Namely: learning is strategic, learning is effective, learning is accessible, learning is a shared responsibility, learning is part of the culture, and learning is more than training. As the extant organizational policy on learning, the 2012 Learning Policy provides the critical reference document for the evaluation and the six principles provide an appropriate structure for presenting the evaluation's findings.

4.2. Learning is strategic

Main finding

Despite well-meaning statements in the 2012 Learning Policy, learning has not been actively recognized as a strategic means for reaching the organization's goals and addressing critical gaps. Reporting on the role of learning in meeting the organization's goals is not apparent.

The 2012 Learning Policy states:

The GLC shall ensure that learning is clearly linked to the strategic priorities of the organization and addresses identified gaps. These shall be drawn from the Global Strategic Priorities, formal statements originating from the Executive office, frequent findings of audits and inspections, targeted surveys, and regular and substantive strategic discussions with Divisions, Bureaux and Field Operations.

Although the GLDC has conducted targeted surveys, collected data and liaised with divisions, what is not clear is how the priorities of the learning programmes are being made against the top global priorities of the organization.

The UNHCR 2017–2021 Strategic Directions lists six priority directions, and under the separate heading “Making it work” it states:

We will upgrade our capacity for research and knowledge management in order to strengthen the basis for the policies we develop, the proposals we put forward, and the advocacy that we undertake ... promoting the exchange of lessons across operations and regions and cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences, and will strive to be a learning organization, refining and adjusting our approaches based on analysis, evaluation and peer reviews. We will also actively engage in learning from partners, promoting dialogue and exchange and seeking to identify and build on best practices.

“Learning” is mentioned only twice in the whole document. The statements “we will strive to be a learning organization” and “we will actively engage in learning from partners” do not indicate how and by when these two ambitions would be realized.

The other statement of strategy that is of relevance to learning and development is the People Strategy 2016–2021. Its coverage of learning is quite comprehensive but the evaluation team saw only limited evidence that the document's stated aspirations and operations have so far had operational impact. For instance, one of the actions is to build the skills and capacities of staff, with attention to the needs of national staff as well as international staff. The evaluation found that national staff continue to be excluded from many learning offers, a finding supported by the 2018 PwC HR Review and by the 2020 Arup People Management Framework report.

Despite the intentions of the 2012 Learning Policy, the evaluation team sees learning and development as being poorly connected to UNHCR's main focus of work. L&D is represented at the Senior Executive Team/ Senior Management Committee (SET/SMC) level by DHR. The degree to which L&D issues are aired is uncertain and is likely to be affected by the range and significance of HR priorities. The limited voice of L&D was a sentiment echoed at a recent UN Learning Managers' Forum where, frustrated by the lack of attention to learning issues, learning managers combined to lobby the HR Network Chief Executives' Board to have learning directly represented on that body. The evaluation team were informed that, over the years, attendance at the UN Learning Managers' Forum has seen a reduction of L&D positions across the United Nations, while the status, profile and “voice” of learning has been weakened. An interviewee occupying a senior learning role at the UN System Staff College noted that since 2010 there had been a decline in the resources that are allocated to learning and the types of post that are available for learning; this had resulted in reduced funding for senior positions and strategic roles and placements.

Learning is not tracked or monitored in relation to UNHCR corporate imperatives and goals. They are not reported at senior levels, so the organization is unable, collectively, to assess what is or is not working well. The GLDC Annual

Reports cannot be compared year on year and do not present a coherent picture of the evolution of the overall learning offer. The evaluation team found that learning by those outside the GLDC is widely regarded as a necessary cost to the organization (in terms of money, time, priority), rather than a necessary investment; the evaluation team were told at many points that learning budgets are the most vulnerable within UNHCR during periods of financial retrenchment.

As noted by the PwC HR Review over two years ago: “To enable learning to be strategic it is vital that the organisation fully understands the learning that is being provided and is taking place, the benefits it is providing to learners, operations and the organisation and the impact that it is having on the organisation’s efforts to achieve its strategic goals”.⁴⁴

Despite the apparent strategic disconnect between L&D and the critical goals of the organization, half of the survey respondents felt that the knowledge and skill development provided by UNHCR was “always” or “mostly” appropriate to outcomes associated with UNHCR goals, such as “empowering persons of concern”, “responding to emergencies” and “working at the intersection of the humanitarian and development sectors”. However, in discussions with the workforce during the case studies, this seems to be more at the instigation and motivation of individual workers than an organizational response to strategic learning priorities. While individual motivation should be celebrated and supported, it also requires a coherent framework for linking workforce effort to the achievement of organizational goals, particularly in a context that increasingly requires flexibility and adaptability.

When broken down by work location, country and field staff were slightly more positive than regional and HQ staff. Partners (who had participated in learning opportunities provided by UNHCR) were substantially more positive. Partner respondents were overwhelmingly country-based, so it could be that people closer to the field have a more positive attitude than those in regional or HQ posts as regards the results of UNHCR activity and the contribution of learning opportunities to those results.

4.2.1. Learning governance

The Learning Governance Board was intended to ensure that the learning offer was helping to achieve the organization’s goals. However, it did not function as planned and was disbanded in 2018 after not meeting for the two years. In the absence of a mechanism for ensuring that investment decisions reflect strategic priorities, the GLDC has, for at least the last four years and most probably for longer, struggled to prioritize and manage the many requests coming to it from divisions and other parts of the organization. Pulled in different directions and trying to support as many as it could, the result is that the GLDC’s resources have been stretched thinly and in ways that are not sustainable. The evaluation team were given examples of where requests for support for key programmes could not be met.

4.2.2. Global Compact for Refugees (GCR)

The Global Compact for Refugees is central to the humanitarian response. It is part of the UNHCR future strategy and mentioned in several documents. Yet the evaluation found that awareness of the GCR is low – apart from among interviewees in Djibouti, largely because they are in one of the roll-out countries and had received training around it. Most people who were interviewed were not aware of the GCR resources on the intranet. This was supported by the survey findings. Two specific questions related to the GCR: “supporting a whole of society approach” and “expanding access to third-country solutions”. About a third of survey respondents did not find UNHCR’s approach to developing workforce knowledge and skills on the GCR to be appropriate. About 15 per cent stated “rarely” or “never” to both questions and a further 15 to 20 per cent stated that they did not know.

⁴⁴ PwC (2018) “Review of UNHCR’s Division of Human Resource Management Final Report”, p.52.

4.3. Learning is effective

Main findings

UNHCR's workforce is provided with a range of formal learning opportunities, much of which is generally appreciated. However, the full exploitation of the learning provided is hampered by a range of issues, including low completion rates; the lack of local contextualization; difficulties in applying learning; the appropriateness of modalities; and the distribution of learning expertise.

Effectiveness is also a concern in relation to other aspects of learning provision such as the quality of the learning provided, whether the learning fully addresses the actual needs, the lack of support given to informal learning, support for staff at key transition moments in their career, and in the monitoring and evaluation of learning.

Viewed overall, learning provision, learning by the workforce and the application of that learning are not nearly as effective as they ought to be.

Gender differences were analysed for both the workforce and partner respondents, particularly in relation to issues of accessibility and effectiveness. While some differences were observed in relation to questions, further analysis indicated that these were influenced by other factors such as location and could not be specifically attributed to gender. The team concluded that there were no important differences in responses that could be identified as specifically related to gender.

4.3.1. Results on learning effectiveness

With the caveat that the self-evaluation of learning effectiveness needs to be treated with caution because of the risk of confirmation bias, the majority of workforce respondents to the survey were positive about the effectiveness of their learning.

Table 4: Results of survey question: Thinking back over the past 12 months, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements about the usefulness of your new knowledge and skills? (n=571)

Statement options	Agree/ Strongly agree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree
The learning opportunities increased my leadership skills	83%	17%
The learning opportunities increased my technical skills	93%	7%
I can work more effectively in a team or group because of my new skills and knowledge	87%	13%
The learning opportunities increased my collaboration and partnership skills	84%	16%
The learning opportunities increased my interpersonal skills	79%	21%
The training and learning services provided by the GLDC helped me to improve my performance	86%	14%

4.3.2. Low completion rates

Though participation, particularly in e-learning programmes, is high, it appears that a significant proportion of learners do not actually complete the learning programmes that they register for. According to the data set covering June 2018 to June 2019, completion rates for e-learning programmes were just under 58 per cent, suggesting that more than 40 per cent of those who register do not complete the programmes that they register on. Completion rates are even lower for blended learning programmes at 46 per cent, suggesting that more than half of those who register do not complete the blended learning programme. Given the resource requirements involved in developing, delivering and supporting learners on blended learning programmes (such as administration, accommodation, catering, coaching, mentoring, assessment, and so on) the significant proportion of non-completers represents an inefficient use of resources, particularly if the course is oversubscribed and the participation of other learners (who might well

have completed the course) has been either delayed or deterred. This poses key questions as to why the completion rates are so low.

Drawing on the results of the surveys and the interviews, the following factors are likely to play a role in the high non-completion rates:

- workload and work commitments (including travel on mission);
- the onerous requirements in order to complete the longer learning programmes;
- IT and connectivity issues;
- the lack of an offline capability, resulting in travel or a connectivity interruption resulting in the learner losing momentum and/or interest;
- the realization that the programme may not be what the learner was expecting, or that the programme is too hard (or too easy) for the learner to want to finish it – something about the actual learning programme prompts the learner to lose interest.

Many interviewees in the case study countries raised the issue of the tension between work commitments and giving enough time to learning. Some spoke of the courses that they had wanted to take but had been unable to do so because they knew they had an upcoming work commitment (such as a survey or an extended mission) that would prevent them from following the course. Others spoke of courses that they had been unable to complete because of increased work pressures. One interviewee who was faced with not being able to complete a course because of increased work pressures admitted to having given their course sign-in details to a colleague who had generously offered to help them gain their course certificate. Others spoke of connectivity issues in their field location that had forced them to “give up” on a course. Some of the interviewees with families spoke of the difficulty of undertaking coursework at home while also caring for children.

4.3.3. The application of learning

Alarmingly, two thirds felt that their training was poorly timed in relation to the knowledge and skills required for their job – the implication being that there is a lack of synchronization between their work needs and the training accessed. The evaluation team is not aware of all the factors contributing to this lack of synchronization. However, it could well include delays in being confirmed on a course, limited places on a course resulting in further delays and limited enrolment opportunities during the year.

More than half of workforce respondents to the survey did not feel that the organizational culture had hampered them from applying their new knowledge and skills in the workplace. However, more than one third of workforce respondents did feel that they were hampered in this way.

Other factors limiting the application of learning in the workplace included the demands of their work – a key constraint for just over half of respondents. While most felt supported by their colleagues in applying their learning, just under one third did not.

These results corroborate similar findings from a 2016 GLDC Global Training Follow-up survey⁴⁵ in which three quarters of respondents attributed their inability to apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace to organizational rather than course content or personal reasons.

4.3.4. The challenge of contextualization

A major issue was a lack of local contextualization, where the content was not relevant to people's particular work situation. Interviewees commonly mentioned that the theoretical or conceptual level of many flagship courses was pitched inappropriately and unnecessarily high. Without some bridge between the high-level concepts and the contextual nature of implementation, it was difficult to meet the needs of specific countries. Those in Latin America commented that courses that built on case studies from Asia or Africa were not especially useful to them without such a bridge. The same point was made by respondents in Greece about the lack of relevance of material from Africa for their very particular situation. Also, many of the courses have to cope with different levels of knowledge and expertise whether beginner, intermediate or senior.

The challenge of contextualization is recognized, and some efforts have been made by the GLDC and divisions to address it. An example encountered in Nigeria were the eight-day Protection Induction Workshops coupled with a Situational Protection Learning Programme (SPLP) provided for staff and partners in and around Ogoja in August 2019. This combination of the induction workshop and the SPLP included several site visits and, according to staff

⁴⁵ UNHCR-GLC (2016) “UNHCR Global Training Follow-Up: Results of the 2016 Survey”.

and partners interviewed, was successful in raising awareness of protection issues among state authorities and implementing partners while also providing them with instructional knowledge on how to address issues that were tailored to the particular context. At the end of the process the protection team in Ogoja then reflected on what they had witnessed and learned over the eight days and how to incorporate that learning into their future approach and work. The whole process was supported by a protection specialist from the Division of International Protection (DIP) and a learning specialist from the GLDC.⁴⁶ The GLDC's Protection Unit continues to develop the modular architecture of the Situational Protection Learning Programme in conjunction with DIP and the Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS).⁴⁷

Building on successful approaches such as the Situational Protection Learning Programme, the evaluation recommends the modularization of course materials coupled with the creation of levels for courses to provide learners with the ability to select the level at which they wish to access materials. Such modularization will make it easier for the course materials to be given greater contextual relevance at either the regional bureaux or country level. In this way a more devolved and democratized access to learning processes that are contextually relevant can be achieved. This approach is reflected in the Recommendations, particularly Recommendations 2.1 and 5.2.

4.3.5. Lengthy course development and updating processes

Commissioners of learning courses (primarily e-learning content) commented on the extended length of time taken to develop new offers and update existing offers. Trainers also called for more rapidly updated materials. The prevailing methods for course design and development used by the GLDC have largely been based on the traditional ADDIE approach; they involve multiple sign-off processes and consequently are resource-intensive. Though more agile methods for conducting learning needs assessment and course design such as Articulate Rise were introduced by the GLDC in 2019, they have yet to be mainstreamed. The need for the wider adoption of agile methods is contained in Recommendation 5.2.

Interviewees and survey respondents commented that some of the material was outdated, especially where technology was moving faster than the process of course development. Courses, especially online courses, took a long time to revise, and by the time they had been revised, some were using outdated material. This was especially the case with IT courses where change can happen rapidly (e.g. the rise of R as a programming language). The course then enters a vicious cycle of continuously revising and not being able to keep up with the fast pace of change. Many of the new approaches to learning content development processes such as in-house video and app production, can significantly reduce the time to launch. Furthermore, the breaking down of content into micro-learning can provide a drip-feed approach where new learning content is being made available and is more easily signed off, rather than the heavy lag times in waiting for a whole course to be signed off. The need for the adoption of more agile approaches is contained in Recommendation 5.2.

4.3.6. Learning and psychosocial support for self-care

The issue of trauma experienced by workforce members who are operating in challenging and stressful contexts arose during interviews in Greece, Nigeria and elsewhere. While the treatment for psychosocial issues appears well provided for, some interviewees were not aware of the provision available to them. The evaluation team found that these services were provided reactively rather than preventatively. Learning approaches that support the building of resilience and self-care strategies have an important role to play in such stressful contexts. None of those interviewees who mentioned these issues had been provided with resilience training or been introduced to self-management approaches like psychosocial self-care. It is the team's view that the workforce should be better equipped and prepared to cope and manage in such challenging contexts.

4.3.7. Learning modalities

Based on the survey, the three most popular learning modalities that respondents use to improve their knowledge and skills included face-to-face workshops, blended learning approaches and social learning networks.

Face-to-face was by far the most preferred learning modality. This was identified by the survey where 77 per cent of workforce respondents expressed a "high" preference for face-to-face workshops in response to the question "In general, which ways do you prefer to improve your knowledge and skills?" (n=569). The preference for face-to-face learning also came through strongly from case study interviewees in all five countries. Given the emphasis placed

⁴⁶ UNHCR (2019). "Training report and ways forwards Protection Induction Workshops & Situational Protection Learning Programme Cameroonian refugees' situation in Nigeria August 2019", Report prepared by the Protection Team, Ogoja Sub-Office UNHCR Nigeria.

⁴⁷ Other examples of efforts by the GLDC to provide contextualized learning that were provided to the team at the end of the evaluation include "Leadership Transition for Afghanistan Operation" and "Induction for the Americas".

on online learning in the overall offer by the GLDC, this result was particularly notable and so was explored further in subsequent interviews. Key reasons for its popularity is that a face-to-face workshop provides learners with the ability to question and interact with the workshop facilitator and with colleagues who are participating in the same workshop; these interactions help to reinforce the learning and make it more pleasurable than, for instance, sitting alone in front of a laptop. The benefits of face-to-face workshops extend beyond learning by helping to promote team-building relationships, personal networks, professional friendships and a sense of community – as well as enabling issues completely unconnected to the course to be raised and resolved at the proverbial “water cooler”. Another factor possibly contributing to the preference for face-to-face workshops over online learning is that workshops invariably take place during working hours while most online learning takes place outside working hours.

Having said that, online learning was the third most preferred learning modality with 63 per cent of workforce respondents expressing a “high” preference for it. Interviewees appreciated the ability to “learn at their own pace” and at times convenient to them personally. Though there was a clear preference expressed for face-to-face workshops the reality appears to be that a significant proportion of the workforce also appreciate the characteristics and qualities that online learning can provide. It may be of interest to note that the expressed preference for face-to-face learning is diminishing in some external surveys due to the increased collaboration and interactivity of new online approaches; this could be an interesting line of inquiry for UNHCR as it moves to employ a wider range of online approaches.

Multiple modalities emerged as the second most preferred way among workforce respondents to the survey with 68 per cent expressing a high preference for learning opportunities that provide a mixture of approaches. The onset of blended learning via webinars, pre-recorded self-paced learning and so on were deemed to be really helpful.

Though not a modality specifically asked about in the survey, the popularity of social networks was indicated by the response to the question relating to “groups of people who do the same work as me” which was supported by 80 per cent of respondents. Many interviewees in the case study countries, regional bureaux and HQ referred to the value of the many networks that have been created to support individuals who share particular interests in aspects of their work, either within their particular functional area or extending across functional areas. According to interviewees in the case study countries and HQ, some have become formal “communities of practice” while others remain as networks of WhatsApp contacts.

The popularity of these three modalities is of significance for the organization. Common themes arising from all three were: promoting team-building, personal networks and a sense of community. These could be replicated with technology via social collaboration, learning and peer groups that would enable cross-fertilization of ideas and the sharing of experiences across an even wider section of the workforce.

Least-preferred learning modalities as judged by workforce respondents to the survey were “podcasts”, blogs and online discussion groups which were ranked as “high” by only 16 per cent and 18 per cent of respondents respectively and by a significant margin received the largest proportion of “low” preference responses.

4.3.8. Quality of learning

The quality assessment of 10 selected learning offers used a simplified, but still robust, version of the HPass Standards. The assessment process revealed generally high standards being met by a majority of the learning offers (see Figure 10). One learning offer fully met all eight standards while five more offers fully met at least six out of the eight standards. One of the learning offers assessed, a long-running flagship learning programme, was unable to fully meet any of the eight standards.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Eight of the selected learning offers were provided through the GDLC and two by other divisions within UNHCR. To encourage full and open participation in the assessment process, the “owners” and “co-owners” of the 10 learning offers were assured that although the identities of the offers could be published, the specific results for each learning offer would remain confidential. The anonymized results of the assessment are presented in Figure 14.

Figure 10: Assessment of 10 selected learning offers against a simplified version of the 8 HPass Standards

Key: Level Ratings for the Learning Offer Quality Assessment								
		The evidence presented is insufficient to determine the standard is met						
		The evidence presented is partially sufficient to determine that the standard is met						
		The evidence presented is sufficient to determine the standard is met						
LOs	S.1 Analysis	S.2 Design	S.3 Delivery	S.4 Assessment	S.5 Resources	S.6 Communication	S.7 Administration	S.8 Evaluation & Accountability
LO1								
LO2								
LO3								
LO4								
LO5								
LO6								
LO7				n/a				
LO8								
LO9								
L10								

Source: Wooster, K. (2020) "Quality Assessment of Ten UNHCR Learning Offers: Summary Report", KonTerra team background paper.

Box 3: Strengths of the learning offers

Areas of strongest performance in relation to the Learning Standards were for Delivery, Resources and Communication. For the most part, learning offers were delivered consistently and learners generally felt supported throughout their learning experience. In most cases, the learning offers were supported by competent staff and provided with the necessary physical resources. Communications were also a strength with learners generally receiving clear and accurate information about learning services across communication channels.

Results in relation to the Assessment and Administration standards were mixed. In two of the learning offers there was a lack of timely response to learner queries and inadequate recording and tracking of learner information. Six learning offers received the green rating on Assessment for high-quality management of learner assessments.

The learning offers struggled most with the standards for Analysis (two green, six yellow, one red); Evaluation and Accountability (four green, six yellow); and Design (five green, five yellow). More can be found on this in Section 4.3.9 on learning needs assessments.

There were two challenges to reaching the Evaluation and Accountability standard. The first is a lack of a formalized and holistic process to gather monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data where the learning offers rely too heavily on Level 1-Reactionary evaluations and perceptions of the learning teams. Two learning offers had had a formal evaluation exercise and only one was able to carry out the majority of recommended changes. Under the Design standard, the use of SMART objectives and adult learning principles was a strength of the designs of the learning offers, giving learners opportunities to share experience across the learning modalities used. Among the design challenges were two key issues: 1) keeping the learning offers up to date; and 2) providing the learning offers in all six of the UN official languages to ensure their accessibility by UNHCR staff around the world.

4.3.9. Learning needs assessments

Almost half of survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which UNHCR assessed learning needs. Global needs assessments are only undertaken every few years (common in all the UN organizations interviewed in the mapping study). The high cost and intensive resources required for a global needs analysis is a major factor. Research on needs assessments is revealing the importance of monitoring “need” on a continuous basis. There is an imperative to find less resource-intensive and more agile ways of doing needs assessments that enable rapid, but not superficial, access to the data required.

An over-reliance on divisions and bureaux to identify where new learning offers might be required was reported. The evaluation team found that only half of the divisions are putting forward needs assessments. Not only was there a lack of needs analysis, but people commented that they tended to be “top-down” approaches to identifying the target audience and their particular needs when designing specific learning offers, rather than emerging from the field. The current representation of learning provided through the network of focal points in-country has failed to provide the necessary collation of learning needs, more details of which are laid out in Section 4.3.13 on focal points and learning coordinators.

In the 10 courses selected for closer evaluation, the most common weakness among all was found to be the lack of appropriate learning needs analysis. The learning offers were identified in a “top down” approach rather than being instigated by learning needs of staff identified through a learning needs analysis (LNA). Only one learning offer conducted an LNA. Learning offers were designed and launched and then monitored to make adjustments to any issues with the design if resources were available to do so.

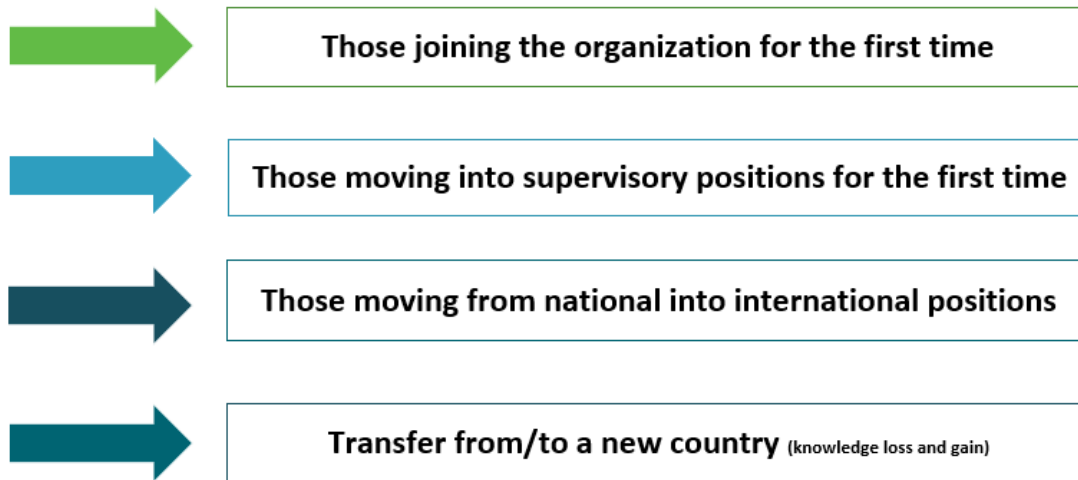
With respect to courses, where functional knowledge and skills needs were determined at divisional levels, it was found that their developments ensued at times without due processes of determining learning needs at different levels of the organization. This led to arbitrary choices being made about the modalities and delivery options, which may not have been the most appropriate or cost-effective. Such a situation occurred with the Livelihoods Learning Programme, which has since been adjusted to be more cost-effective (see Box 4).

Box 4: Example of a more cost-effective learning modality

The Livelihoods Learning Programme (LLP) was provided by the GLDC for one year and consisted of a six-week online module followed by a one-week workshop in Budapest for about 30 participants. The following year, it was replaced by “Live In-Country Trainings” provided by the Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Unit within the DRS. The change in modality arose from a desire to reach larger numbers of staff more rapidly and a shift in the unit’s strategic direction in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and following the creation of the DRS. The content of the in-country trainings was changed to reflect the new strategy which moved away from the minimum criteria approach on which the original LLP was based. Live In-Country Trainings are now delivered in an average of 10 countries each year, reaching around 300 participants and all for approximately the same cost as the original LLP which reached only 30 participants a year.

4.3.10. Career transitions as key moments for learning

The evaluation found that there were four career path “moments” where learning needs are not being fully met, as noted below.



Joining the organization for the first time: One third of survey respondents stated that they were not supported by their supervisor in the first six weeks of moving into a new role.

Induction is a prime opportunity to connect new staff with the necessary people, systems and processes. UNHCR does not have a standardized global induction programme that ensures that all new joiners are similarly equipped with the same foundational knowledge. New joiners are required to complete six mandatory online training programmes within the first three months together with a short e-learning induction package. Some supervisors felt that the mandatory courses were easy “click-through” courses while others noted that the courses were only available in the six official languages and some national staff were not confident in using these languages. Of the interviewees who had recently joined the organization, several felt that the online induction course and the six mandatory induction courses had not equipped them adequately for their role and particular context. While some of this group felt that the locally arranged induction had provided the necessary contextual and background understanding necessary for those joining UNHCR (and indeed a UN agency) for the first time, others felt that the local arrangements had not been adequate. Over time they had “found their feet” and learned what they really needed but looking back, they felt that the induction period had not been as useful and as rewarding as it could have been. Currently, it is up to managers to supplement what they feel is necessary. Not surprisingly, approaches to inducting new staff differed significantly between different offices and locations.

Two thirds of workforce respondents to the survey indicated that they had received the active support of their managers in the first six months in their current role. However, one third disagreed, indicating that for a significant number of staff joining the organization or taking up a new role, the level of support received from managers is not considered adequate.

Moving into supervisory positions for the first time: Case study interviewees reported moving into supervisory positions with very little managerial training. Some felt lucky enough to have received some of the available management training, but in the lower grade transition points, this was found to be less common.

Moving status from national to international: Many people spoken to in the case study countries felt this had been much more of a massive leap than they had anticipated. They felt they lacked the necessary support from others who had also changed their status, via a group or a community of practice who could advise them on the local and work culture, supporting their family members to integrate, find schools and local services.

Rotation: There are substantial learning issues when transferring from and to new country locations. Firstly, there is a loss of knowledge possessed by the person who is leaving a post and a substantial need for information on the part of the person who is arriving. Furthermore, there is a missed opportunity to gain from knowledge being brought into the country. Only 1 per cent of workforce respondents “sometimes”, “rarely” or “never” felt that the organization was successful in managing the loss of knowledge and skills as a result of staff rotation. Consequently, there are considerable opportunities for benefiting from and handling the loss of knowledge from international staff rotation in a more systematic way. In addition, there is a commitment in the People Policy (recently reinforced by the 2020 Arup

report⁴⁹) to better exploit rotations that offer opportunities for staff development in a way that builds skills and experiences which are supportive of career development and aligned with evolving organizational needs.

4.3.11. Team learning effectiveness

About three quarters of workforce survey respondents indicated that UNHCR promotes effective team-working. This result concurs with the results of the team-related questions in the UNHCR 2018 Workforce Survey.

Multi-functional teams (MFTs) are forming an increasingly important way of working within UNHCR's operations. Learning together as a team is regarded as important because it enables the workplace team to support each other through the learning process. The preferred means for learning as a team were "structured sessions for learning as a team" (selected by 55 per cent of respondents); "a course or workshop together" (51 per cent); and "reflective practices and opportunities in teams with a specialist from outside UNHCR" (49 per cent).

Table 5: Results of survey question: In your experience which of these have been important ways of improving learning by your team? (n=552)

Statement option	Response rate
Structured facilitated sessions for learning as a team	55%
The team taking a course or workshop together	51%
Reflective practice, such as sessions that review recent experiences (e.g. after action review)	49%
Opportunities to learn from a specialist from outside UNHCR	45%
Unstructured time put aside for learning together	29%
Other	6%

4.3.12. "Soft skills" learning

"Soft skills" learning has been significantly less catered for than technical skills in the learning offer and was highlighted as important by survey respondents and interviewees; there is a demand for far more opportunities and modalities on topics such as negotiation skills, social skills, crowd control, management and advocacy. In line with research findings, the recommendations in the Working for UNHCR survey (as quoted in the Arup report⁵⁰) also called for more soft skill interventions such as on respect, diversity, open dialogue, communication to improve and strengthen the capability of leaders within the organization. The stronger focus on technical over soft skills in UNHCR is also reflected in the recruitment processes, according to the Arup report, suggesting that the behavioural and emotional intelligence aspects of the workforce is not as prioritized. A participant in the one of the strategy workshops spoke of the need to change the attitude to soft skills, suggesting that they should be re-titled as "hard skills".

As UNHCR's work boundaries continue to expand across sectors and disciplines as a result of the Global Compact for Refugees and as UNHCR's collaboration with other organizations and actors increases, so demand for interpersonal, communication, partnership and collaboration skills will only increase. The rapid changes and evolution in technical skills suggest that investments in soft skills are likely to benefit staff for longer as these skills transfer easily from role to role while what have traditionally been regarded as "hard skills" may, in time, become obsolete.

A soft skills course that was commented on very positively by interviewees across at least three of the five case study countries was the Writing Effectively course.

⁴⁹ Arup (2020) "People Management Framework Final Report".

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.38.

4.3.13. Focal points and learning coordinators

The idea of focal points and learning coordinators was a genuine vision in the 2012 Learning Policy for distributing and embedding the ownership of learning across the organization but in practice, it lacked specific responsibility for ensuring its implementation and effectiveness.

Each division was expected to appoint a focal point “at a sufficiently senior level (preferably Deputy Director)” to provide a single entry point for all policy, planning and content clearance issues and to participate in annual planning sessions to identify learning needs and priorities in their regions.

Learning coordinators were established at the country level but, from what was seen in the five case study countries, they are not supporting learning to the extent intended in the 2012 Learning Policy. Instead the roles have not been made senior enough and appear in some countries to have been “bolted-on” to non-managerial HR roles with no change to the person’s job title. The result of this is that some interviewees in the case study countries were unaware that such a role existed. This caused the network of focal points to shrink and to work beneath its potential. The GLDC estimates that only half of country operations are submitting annual collations of local learning needs.

Unsurprisingly, more than one third of workforce respondents from country locations did not feel that the support being provided by the country-level learning focal points was effective; another third appear not to have been aware of their learning focal point or to not have one in their country.

Although senior HR partner posts have been created in each of the seven regional bureaux in the regionalization process, their job descriptions do not include any responsibility in relation to the general learning needs of the workforce.

4.3.14. Certification

The GLDC has built a robust suite of certificated flagship programmes that have provided functional clearance for particular roles in areas such as HR, protection, programme management, supply chain, security, and management and leadership. These have assisted internal recruitment processes by providing evidence of knowledge and competence to fill functional positions.

While this has provided some benefits and supports the recruitment and the functional clearance process, certification has had a very mixed reception within UNHCR. Some appreciate it for the skills gained and its promotion prospects while others highlighted the following drawbacks of this modality:

- Delays in staff being able to rapidly fill important posts. A number of managers who were interviewed in the case study countries stated that waiting for staff to get certified had left critical gaps in their teams while the necessary skills were being sought and certified as required for a role.
- Certification programmes are time-consuming for learners. For example, three months are needed for the CP-Human Resource Management; six months for CP-Supply Chain Management; and nine months for CP-Programme Management. The certificates have value within UNHCR but outside the organization, their value is questionable as there is no external accreditation mechanism.
- Only a modest proportion of the total workforce benefits from certificated courses: the number of staff participating in certificated courses between mid-2018 and mid-2019 appears to have been just over 1,000.
- Wait times to get on courses can be long as places are limited and there are only one or two enrolment times per year for the majority of them. (Management courses have introduced rolling enrolment points.)
- The resources needed to maintain these courses are believed to be high as they rely on staff time.⁵¹
- The revision processes for programmes are lengthy and keeping them updated is challenging.
- Certificated courses promote linear career paths rather than a career matrix where staff can mix and match modules from different functional areas to suit their learning needs and more easily make lateral moves in their careers.

The functional clearance process through certification has not been formally evaluated and it is therefore difficult to ascertain the degree of success it has had in ensuring the workforce are appropriately skilled. The evaluation does note that there are functional areas that are cleared without certification, such as data and information management, evaluation, subject matter expertise (e.g. public health, WASH, nutrition).

⁵¹ Data on the costs of specific courses were not available to the evaluation team.

Considering the significant resources required in developing and providing certification programmes, these drawbacks suggest this is reducing the fluidity and agility of staff movements and is creating both gaps in role-filling and blockages to accessing the courses.

While certification clearly has “quality assurance” benefits, the length of certificated courses runs counter to the need for agility and adaptability within the organization. A modular approach with shorter completion time frames to reach certification and the creation of levels could allow for a more stepped and agile approach that could also increase access to those members of the workforce who might want to move laterally into other functional areas. Competency-based recruitment interviews and skills-based tests could allow those individuals to build up the necessary skills through completion of the modules and on-the-job experience without necessarily having to gain a certificate.

4.3.15. Factsheets

For a learning opportunity to be recorded in a factsheet (i.e. to be “factsheet recordable”) it has to meet the criteria set by the GLDC, which include objectives that can be measured and verified, designed and delivered in accordance with adult learning principles and some form of assessment.

While the team received few negative comments about factsheets per se, they appear to present significant problems. As a quality assurance tool, factsheets are incomplete. They do not record non-assessed learning, which may well contribute to learner development. It was reported to the team that the process by which a completed course is actually registered on a factsheet can take a significant amount of time. As a learning monitoring tool, the evaluation team heard instances of managers and supervisors being unable to actually access their staff’s factsheets. From the June 2018 to June 2019 Learn and Connect data set it appears that there were some 650 learning titles that are not “factsheet recordable” and that these accounted for more than 127,000 separate learner entries.

There are different perceptions as to the value of factsheets. Some people believe that decisions regarding promotions are based largely on factsheet records – and thus this motivates them to focus only on those opportunities which can be entered into their factsheet. Yet supervisors and managers interviewed asserted that factsheets were just one of many factors considered in the recruitment and promotion processes. This may be an example of “goal displacement”, where the learning that is factsheet recordable drives people’s decisions over their learning strategy rather than learning that addresses skills and experience gaps as the main motivating factor.

In modern workplace learning, factsheets do not capture the full richness of learner achievement that is gained both within UNHCR and externally from other sources. Level of effort and hours completed and innovative contributions to learning within UNHCR ought to be recognized in the requirement criteria for factsheets and the existing systems modified to verify level of effort and hours completed even if the learning does not meet all the criteria.

4.3.16. Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness

As noted earlier, the requirement to consider learning and development needs specifically was dropped from the annual appraisal process in 2014. As a result, only 60 per cent of UNHCR supervisors who responded to the survey stated that they monitored and evaluated the learning of their staff annually. The evaluation team is not aware of how data from e-PADs are collated and analysed by DHR.

With its large number of learning offers provided through the Learn and Connect Management System, the GLDC has the potential to closely monitor many aspects of how Learn and Connect is being used. In terms of formal learning and participation in courses, the GLDC focuses on basic indicators of registrations, completions and satisfaction rates. Though these are displayed by variables such as country, grade, gender and type of learning modality, the real-time monitoring of learners and content monitoring do not appear to be taking place. The evaluation team are not aware of continuous monitoring and analysis being carried out of other insightful indicators and trends of organizational significance such as: low completion rates of courses; the level of unmet demand for particular blended learning offers; the number of learning offers available in languages other than English; and financial information on different blended learning offers that would enable the monitoring of cost/benefit ratios.

Challenges experienced by the evaluation team in obtaining usable data on key metrics with regards to learning outcomes, or indeed even having a clear indication of the actual number of learning offers provided on Learn and Connect, suggest that the GLDC is not analysing the data generated by Learn and Connect. It is understood that these challenges result in part from technical issues with the current LMS platform (Cornerstone) and that it is planned to upgrade the system at some point in the future, resources permitting.

As well as its monitoring of learning offers provided through, and recorded on, Learn and Connect, the GLDC undertakes evaluations of selected learning offers. Approximately two thirds of the evaluations are undertaken by

GLDC personnel and one third by external consultants. Over the period 2010 to mid-2019 the GLC/GLDC undertook 19 evaluations of individual or thematic groupings of learning programmes, equating to two evaluations/year.

With reference to Kirkpatrick’s four-level model for evaluating formal learning programmes⁵², of particular interest is Level 3, which focuses on “behaviour” and the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back at work; and Level 4, on “results” and the degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training. The team found that it was not possible to categorize particular evaluations exclusively to one category or the other. An intermediate Level 3.5 was devised where the evaluation reported on successful outputs from what had been learned but even then it was found that several evaluations contained elements of Levels 3, 3.5 and 4. The overall results were that many evaluations contained elements from two of the levels and some from all three, with more at Levels 3 and 3.5 than at Level 4. We are not aware of any learning offer that has been re-evaluated at Level 3 or 4, or where a follow-up has been conducted of an earlier evaluation to assess the impact of any changes to the offer or the context within which it operates (e.g. availability in more languages). Considering the large size of the GLDC’s formal learning portfolio, the proportion of formal learning programmes being subjected to robust evaluation is low. This ultimately hampers the organization’s ability to make informed decisions about what is working and to cut investments that are not having an impact.

Until early 2020, information on active (and inactive) communities of practice (CoPs) across the organization was not centrally held. In many different contexts, CoPs are important forums and mechanisms for the sharing of information and knowledge and for innovation and the creation of new knowledge and approaches. When sensitively supported and monitored, CoPs can make a significant contribution to the knowledge resources of an organization. In not supporting and monitoring CoPs, UNHCR misses an opportunity to capture and share such knowledge for use elsewhere in the organization.

With the spread of COVID-19 during the course of the evaluation and the rapid shift to online working practices across UNHCR from March 2020 onwards, the number of community-sharing networks increased significantly. It is understood that the GLDC and the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications and the Division of External Relations now have dedicated staff who are mapping these communities to identify and start tracking those that are effective. Currently there are 14 official CoPs listed on the intranet.

While this evaluation did not assess the effectiveness of mechanisms and procedures to facilitate reflection and the capture and sharing of lessons gained from experience and operations across the organization, these mechanisms nonetheless appear poorly developed in the organization. Significant opportunities for learning from experience appear to be lost. For example, opportunities for capturing and retrieving learning are being lost through the lack of systematised after-action reviews, rotation handovers, staff moving from national to international positions and long-term staff leaving the organization. The team were particularly struck by the fact that the 2015–2016 emergency response in Greece, containing rich learning for the organization, has not yet been evaluated – although at a late stage of the evaluation the team was informed that review workshops had been held in Athens and Serbia (see also 4.7.4).

4.4. Learning is accessible

Main findings

UNHCR’s workforce accesses a wide range of learning opportunities, both internally and externally. While the scale of the overall formal learning offer is impressive, a number of organizational and cultural factors restrict access to formal learning, most notably: language; grade and status; workload; technology and internet connectivity; and lack of transparency.

A heavy emphasis on “training” (i.e. formal learning) has resulted in informal learning not being treated as an area that needs nurturing, support and promotion. Informal learning activities are not being monitored or tracked and so the organization is poorly aware of them and their potential benefits are not being realized. Access by partners to UNHCR’s online learning resources is limited. Assessed overall learning is not as accessible as it ought to be.

Gender differences were analysed for both the workforce and partner respondents, particularly in relation to issues of accessibility and effectiveness. While some differences were observed in relation to particular questions, further analysis indicated that these were influenced by other factors such as location and could

⁵² <https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/Our-Philosophy/The-Kirkpatrick-Model>

not be specifically attributed to gender. The team concluded that there were no important differences in responses that could be identified as specifically related to gender.

4.4.1. The learning being accessed

For learning to be accessible, it must first be available and then “be readily reached, entered and used”.⁵³

As indicated by the survey responses and the case study interviews, UNHCR’s workforce is accessing a wide range of learning opportunity types (internally and externally), with internet-based learning types (online courses, webinars and videos counting for the most frequently used types over the previous 12 months) (see Figure 11). The survey results imply that other types of learning opportunities are used less often, in some cases significantly so. Less frequently used types include a mix of formal learning opportunities such as face-to-face workshops and blended learning and informal learning opportunities such as communities of practice, WhatsApp groups, mentoring, coaching, on-the-job training and job shadowing. Other types of informal learning such as coaching, mentoring and one-on-one on-the-job training were used even less frequently. Job shadowing is rarely used by survey respondents.

Figure 11: Results of survey question: In the past 12 months, what types of learning opportunities have you accessed? (n=571)



The team observed that some links had been developed with local universities as a source of learning, and in one case to help to develop humanitarian courses for students (and thus encourage recruitment). These are impressive initiatives, but in the absence of any system of monitoring they are only locally known and thus UNHCR misses the opportunity to share and reflect on these good practices and, where appropriate, replicate or adapt them to other contexts across operations and regions.

Workforce members in HQ and other locations where they are able to access face-to-face language learning classes are supported in language learning to help improve their competency in one or more of the six official languages of the United Nations. All workforce members are able to access the online language learning offers on Learn and Connect.

Communities of practice (CoPs) – or to be more precise “conversations with a group of people who do similar work to me but do not work in my workplace” (so, also including WhatsApp groups and peer-to-peer networks) – had been

⁵³ The Concise Oxford Dictionary 9th edn (1995).

used by 29 per cent of workforce respondents in the previous 12 months. CoPs are focused on social and collaborative learning.⁵⁴

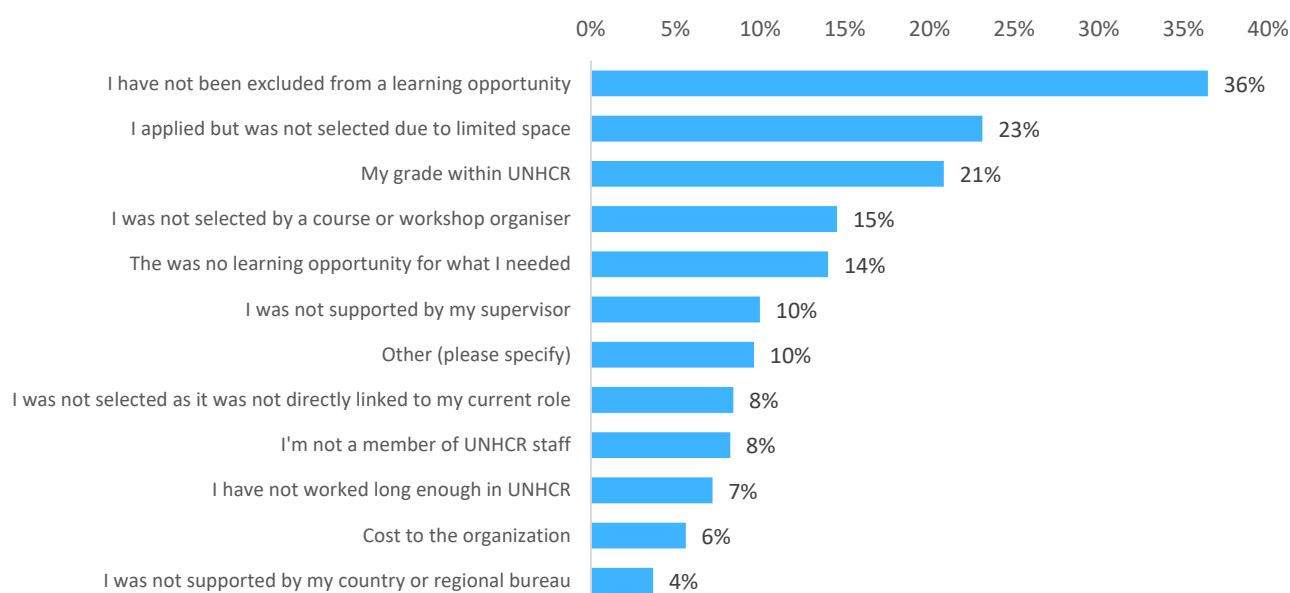
The survey also indicated that a significant majority of workforce respondents access “about half”, “most” or “all” of their learning opportunities from within UNHCR, while fewer than one third of respondents access either “none” or “a few” of their learning opportunities from within UNHCR.

In the context of the GLDC’s declining budget (see 3.3.1), a major problem has been that it has not had the resources to meet all the demand for learning, especially for emergent short-term assistance and specific emergency training needs. Training budgets at the local level have usually been only a few thousand dollars per year and in the words of one interviewee “could easily be spent on a single person on a single course”. Another example of insufficient resources is that one of the flagship programmes deemed to be an organizational priority was, over a period of years, unsuccessful in getting the necessary financial and human resource support.⁵⁵

4.4.2. Survey results on accessibility

Two of the survey questions provide insight into the complex issue of accessibility. While one third of respondents had not been excluded from a learning offer in the past year (see Figure 12) this implies that the other two thirds of respondents had been excluded from a learning opportunity. Only 10 per cent said that they had participated in every opportunity that was open to them.

Figure 12: Results of survey question: In the past 12 months have you been excluded from an opportunity to develop your knowledge and skills, and reason? (n=571)

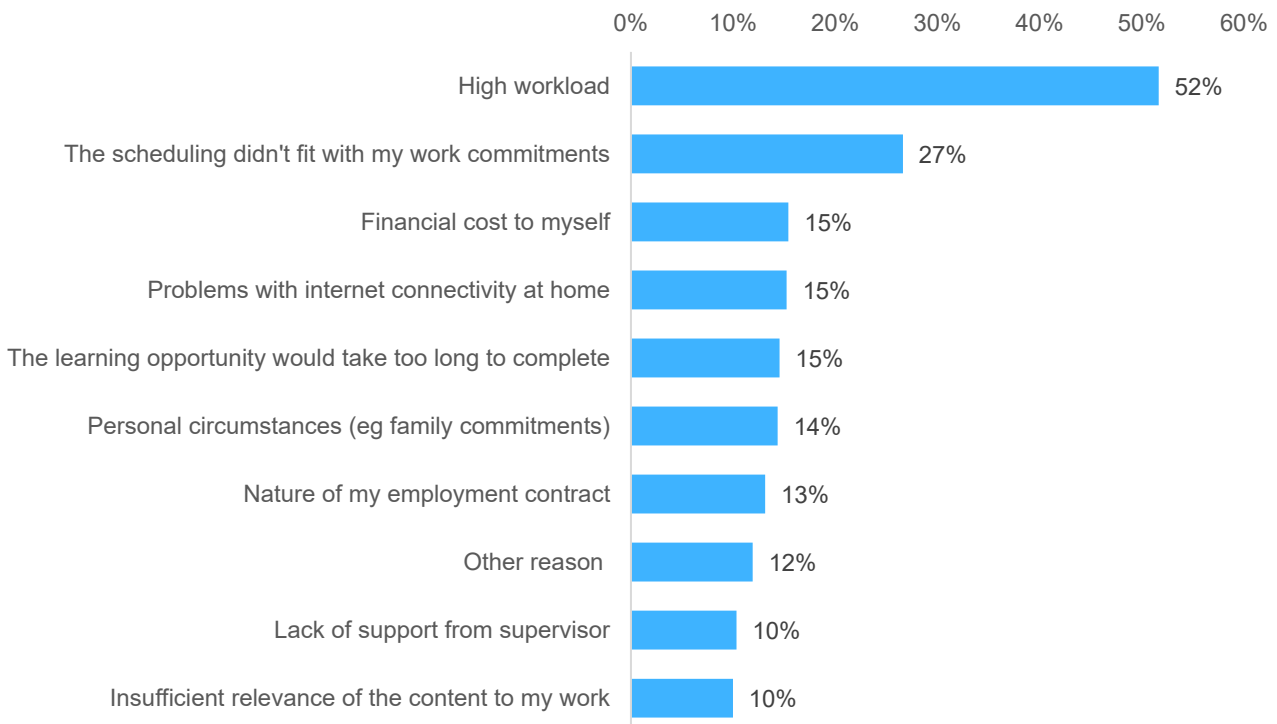


More detailed insight into the factors that stop respondents from taking up or completing learning opportunities is provided in Figure 13.

⁵⁴ The evaluation team found that there appears to be no single understanding within UNHCR about what constitutes a community of practice (CoP), and the term is used generically rather than specifically. In the evaluation team’s distinctions, CoPs differ from networks because members behave actively as part of a community, not passive members of a network. They differ from regular meetings because the focus is specifically on improving the practice of community members. They are not constituted to develop policy or exchange information. CoPs are generally accountable only to their communities, whereas meetings and networks more commonly can have broader accountabilities. Hence the evaluation, management and support of CoPs tend to be different than other forms of group practice.

⁵⁵ The learning programme in question has been the Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP).

Figure 13: Top 10 results of survey question: What reasons stopped you from taking up or completing an opportunity for skill development in the past 12 months? (n=572)



The survey results on accessibility were largely supported by interviewees. Key issues limiting accessibility are eligibility and exclusion from formal learning (in which grade and status and the role of supervisors in approving applications to access learning are critical); workload; technology and internet connectivity; language; and a lack of transparency in the application and approval process. Access to learning by partners is also limited. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

4.4.3. Eligibility and exclusion from formal learning

A key finding of the evaluation is that a significant proportion of the workforce is being excluded from learning offers in which they would like to participate.

Fixed-term appointment (FTA) staff were more likely to give “limited number of places” as a reason for exclusion – 26 per cent as compared with 16 per cent for both affiliates and temporary appointment (TA) personnel, presumably because they were more likely to qualify for those kinds of courses. FTA staff were also less likely to have been excluded from a learning opportunity than those on a TA.

Affiliates were more likely to have been excluded from participating in a learning opportunity because they were “not a member of UNHCR staff” – 33 per cent were excluded compared to 13 per cent for TA and 2 per cent for FTA. They were also more likely to have been excluded because of the length of time they have worked for UNHCR.

Access to advanced formal learning was found to be, in effect, rationed, with priority given to more senior grades, as well as to permanent and international members of the UNHCR workforce. The evaluation team found there was a hierarchy for learning opportunities that favours higher grades and permanent workforce for blended learning workshops over affiliates and lower grades. Consequently, the affiliate workforce and those working on lower grades feel disadvantaged, especially those who have been working for UNHCR for many years or are on repeat contracts – this is not a new issue as it was found in the UNHCR 2018 Workforce Survey as well; where affiliates feel training is limited to a select group of employees.”⁵⁶

In the evaluation survey, those more likely to be excluded were found to be in the National Office (NO) grades NOA/B, the General Service (G) grades G1 to G7 and the Professional (P) grades P1 to P3. The same trend is seen for those who have been working for less than two years in UNHCR and those on temporary contracts. The strong hierarchical

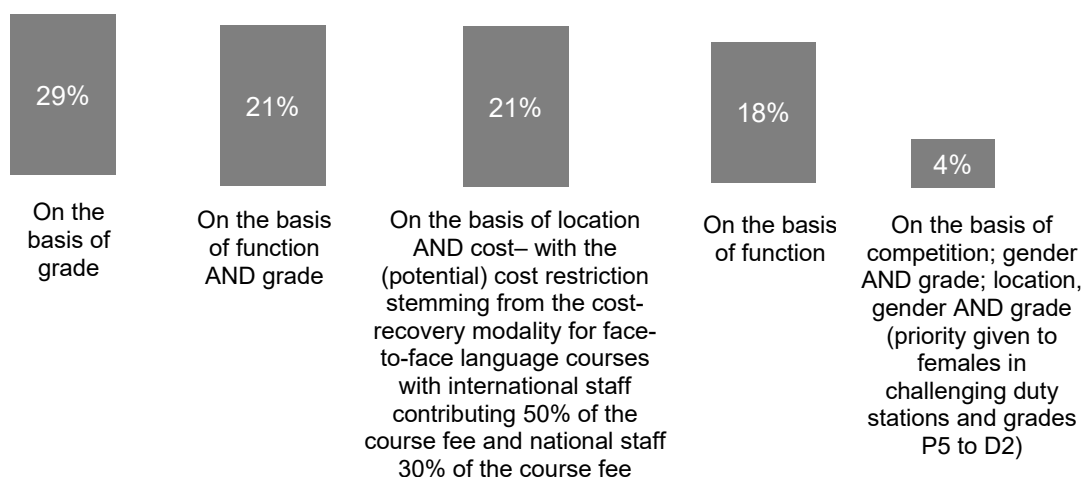
⁵⁶ UNHCR (2019) Global Workforce Survey 2018, p.9

culture appears to be endemic within UNHCR rather than just related to access to learning opportunities. The 2018 Workforce Survey also stated: “Some respondents believe the hierarchical grading system leads to a devaluation of lower grades. They believe individuals in lower grades are ‘not valued or respected’.”⁵⁷

Interviewees in the case study countries provided examples of how they had been unable to access learning offers. For instance, one G5 Programme staff member had to apply three times to take the Programme Management Level One Learning Programme. Their first application was turned down because they were not on a fixed-term contract and their second application was turned down because there were more senior and experienced staff wanting to do the course and so they were given preference. The staff member was successful in their third application. This experience was not uncommon.

To explore such issues in more detail, a background review was undertaken of the GLDC’s “broadcast” messages emailed to the workforce during 2019 to announce a new course or inviting applications to a new cohort of an existing course.⁵⁸ The review found that of the 41 broadcasts reviewed, 14 (34 per cent) required approval by the applicant’s supervisor while 28 (68 per cent) had eligibility requirements of some sort, whether in terms of grade or geographical location. Only 12 (29 per cent) of the 41 broadcasts had no eligibility restrictions and so were genuinely open to all staff and affiliates.

Of the 28 that had eligibility requirements, these were the breakdown of requirements by percentage:



Grade therefore played a role (in whole or in part) in no less than 57 per cent of the 28 offers with eligibility requirements. Of these 28 courses, 32 per cent were limited to or prioritized participation to International staff on P grades (generally P4 and above). While 21 per cent allowed participation by G grades, all of these prioritized those at G6 and above. Lower G grades were eligible, but the criteria indicated that priority would be given first to those at G6 and above.

The professional grade level emerged as a critical barrier to accessibility, as did the requirement for supervisors to give their approval in one third of the broadcasts. Interviewees revealed instances where applications to participate in a learning programme were refused by supervisors on the grounds that the person was “too valued as a member of the team” or that the applicant would apply for another post on completing the course.

4.4.4. Workload limiting time for learning

The 2012 Learning Policy states that supervisors must ensure that all staff have access to some form of learning opportunities and that a minimum of 5 per cent of total work time (or just over two weeks per year) is allocated to formal and informal learning. However, this must be done bearing in mind:

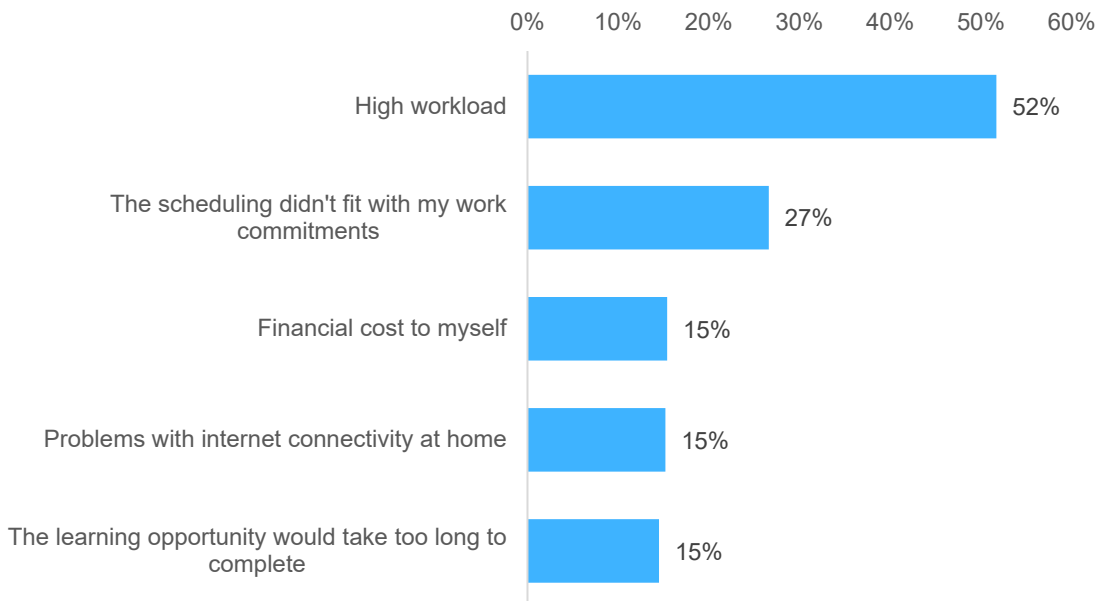
- that learning needs should be properly assessed;
- that learning needs and the impact of learning on performance should be linked to and documented in the performance appraisal process.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.9

⁵⁸ Borton, J. (2020) “Review of broadcast messages issued by GLDC during 2019: Background note”, 9/8/20.

The pressure of work was a major factor in reducing the accessibility of learning. More than half the survey respondents had failed to complete a learning opportunity because of reasons related to workload – the largest reason by 25 percentage points. The next most common reason for non-completion was also related to workload; that is, scheduling of the learning opportunity did not match the work commitments. In terms of non-completion, work-related factors were by far the most commonly stated reasons, followed by internet connectivity issues.⁵⁹

Figure 14: Top five reasons preventing workforce respondents from taking up or completing an opportunity for skill development in the past 12 months (n=572)



These issues are not only major barriers to learning but an inefficient use of resources if half of those entering into a learning opportunity then fail to complete it.

4.4.5. Technology and internet connectivity hindering access

In the survey, the third most common reason for failing to complete a learning opportunity was internet connectivity. Internet connectivity is a very significant issue. Survey respondents based in field and country offices were significantly more likely than their regional and HQ counterparts to identify internet and technology-related reasons for non-participation in and non-completion of learning opportunities.

In the survey, the second most common technology used to access learning opportunities was via personal mobile phones. The cost of data in many countries may explain the popularity of low bandwidth social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, which are often free and excluded from data restrictions. Recent updates to the Learn and Connect platform now allow for use on mobile devices and provide new search and filtering options and the mandatory courses are now available offline on devices. The large size of many course files, however, make it difficult for most learning programmes to be made available in the offline modality, especially given the significant use of mobile phones for accessing learning opportunities.

4.4.6. Language as a barrier to accessing learning

The 2012 Learning Policy states: “Efforts shall be made to provide all learning activities in both English and French. As much as possible, the organization shall strive to provide learning activities in additional UN languages.”

The evaluation found that language is a significant barrier to accessing learning (especially formal learning) across a wide range of learning opportunities. Effectively it creates disparity within the workforce not because of any deficit

⁵⁹ The percentage experiencing internet issues is likely to be understated in the survey because the issue may affect people's ability to complete an online survey.

in ability to learn but solely because of English language ability. The evaluation team also heard in the case study interviews how team leaders selected mostly only those who could speak English to travel to regional or HQ workshops, thereby disadvantaging local staff without English proficiency. This runs counter to the organizational values of diversity and inclusion.

In terms of the formal learning available via Learn and Connect, the vast majority of offers were available in English only, as can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Proportion of Learn and Connect titles accessible if learner only speaks one of the official UN languages

If the learner speaks	Proportion of Learn and Connect titles accessible to them
English	94%
French	22%
Spanish	10%
Russian	4%
Arabic	3%
Chinese	3%

Source: Calculated from Learn and Connect June 2018 to June 2019 data set

In addition to the six official UN languages, in reality, many, perhaps a majority of national staff, will speak only local languages and will need to learn in their local language rather than in the official UN language used in the office. Indeed, through case study interviews the evaluation team came across instances of senior managers (who invariably speak English) having to spend time translating courses for their staff, or of staff returning from regional or international workshops (which are almost exclusively conducted in English) having to organize local workshops to pass on their experience. The team were informed that broadcast emails advertising courses are being deleted without being read by many national staff simply because they cannot be understood. Non-English-speaking regions were put under significant pressure when faced with sudden growth due to an emergency. A case in point is South and Central America, which has had to recruit and train up nearly 1,000 workforce members in just two years due to the emergency situation in Venezuela. Many of these recruits did not speak English.

It was made clear to the team from case studies that many implementing partners and government officials do not speak English and are thus cut off from UNHCR's learning system, despite the fact that UNHCR depends on the ability of the staff of such organizations to achieve its goals. The team were informed that the provision of UNHCR documentation in English often requires translation into national languages for use with local and national officials, and that this can create problems with legal documentation, which can only be given official approval when written in the relevant national language.

The addition of LinkedIn Learning to the resources accessible via Learn and Connect in September 2020 not only massively increased the size of the overall learning offer accessible via Learn and Connect, it also significantly increased the number of offers available in the UN official languages – particularly French and Spanish.

4.4.7. Lack of transparency in enrolment processes

Because of the way the learning offer is structured, it is inevitable that access to certain courses is limited. The evaluation team heard from workforce members who had experienced repeat refusals, were applying for courses three, four and five times and then were left feeling demotivated. Complaints regarding refusals are reportedly increasing. A more significant concern was a lack of transparency about reasons for refusal. Many interviewees and more than half of survey respondents (55 per cent) were unaware of the reasons why their applications for a learning offer had not been approved. In such an environment of closed information, the evaluation team heard interviewees' theories emerge about favouritism and insecure managers who feared losing skilled staff or even fear having skilled staff. The consequences of UNHCR appearing to favour "specialism" over "generalism" is discussed later (Section 4.6.3), but it was clear from the interviews that many people felt that their wish to develop generalist skills was being thwarted by a selection process oriented towards those wanting to improve their specialist skills.

4.4.8. Access to learning by partners

UNHCR relies to a significant degree on "partner" organizations in the delivery of its assistance and protection and in achieving its objectives. Consequently, partners were included in the survey and in case study interviews. Some

interviewees believed that partners should be considered as part of UNHCR's learning system, and in one case study country described how they achieved this.

Several hundred partner personnel responded to the survey, but the vast majority were responding to the questionnaire disseminated via the Learn and Connect partner email list. Only 12 responses resulted from the questionnaire sent to the key contact person in all partners by the Division of Strategic Planning and Results unit Implementation Management and Assurance Service (DSPR/IMAS). The survey results for partners reflected only a small segment of the partner landscape – those who were fortunate to have access to Learn and Connect. Partner responses were in most cases almost identical to UNHCR workforce responses, although in general, partners appeared to have a rather more positive attitude to UNHCR than the UNHCR's own workforce. Learning by partner respondents also appears to be marginally better managed. However, given that the two cohorts were quite distinctive, direct comparisons between the UNHCR workforce, and the partner workforce have to be interpreted cautiously.

Of the 22 partner staff interviewed across the case studies, only five (23 per cent) had access to Learn and Connect. In those partner organizations that did have access, it was often only a few colleagues who had been granted access. One issue is that many partner staff are simply unaware that Learn and Connect, with all its resources, exists, presumably because UNHCR as a whole and locally based programme personnel do not advertise the existence of Learn and Connect. Another issue is the cumbersome process that partner personnel have to go through in order to gain access – a process that involved a sympathetic member of staff writing a letter or email of recommendation to the GLDC together with the email addresses of the partner personnel to be added. During the evaluation the team learned that the Learn and Connect provider (Cornerstone) charges \$10 for every additional external user added, so this may act to discourage country staff and the GLDC from widely advertising that Learn and Connect is available for partner personnel. Finally, partner staff who are not confident in English are significantly limited in the number of learning offers that they can use. For many partners, their workforce commonly only speaks the local language and therefore most formal learning opportunities provided by UNHCR are not open to them.

To address the issue of partner access to Learn and Connect, during the course of the evaluation, the GLDC and DSPR/IMAS developed an open-access Moodle platform specifically to provide relevant learning offers for partners. The pilot phase is scheduled for launch in November 2020 and it is planned to provide the service to UNHCR partners and all those interested in the courses offered by UNHCR (developed by UNHCR and other UN agencies). This partner-focused learning management system is not based on price per licence so partners can register to use it without limitations and without extra clearance requirements; access and use will be via a direct registration managed by the user with validation of their email account.

While the much easier access provided by the new, parallel platform is welcome, the evaluation team hope that it will be a temporary “stop-gap” measure necessitated by the contractual obligations with Cornerstone. In time it will hopefully be possible to return to one overall platform serving both the workforce and partners. A lengthy separation of the two, significantly overlapping, learning communities is not conducive to the necessary exchange that needs to happen between them.

In the absence of Learn and Connect, much of the learning accessed by partners until now has been via workshops organized by UNHCR's country offices, sub-offices and field offices. A common comment from partner interviewees was that most of the UNHCR material they have access to is focused on procedural processes required by UNHCR (e.g. log frames, reporting and finance requirements) rather than a true learning partnership that improves partners' capability and development needs. Partners expressed a desire for subject areas like leadership and project management training to be provided by UNHCR.

On the other hand, the evaluation team also interviewed staff of relatively small partner organizations that had been able to develop and grow thanks to the capacity and capability development support given to them by UNHCR. One of the case study countries was particularly committed to involving partners in all country and field-based learning opportunities.

Partner personnel interviewed expressed a desire to actively engage in mutual learning activities with UNHCR. In its Strategic Directions 2017–2021 UNHCR commits to “actively engage in learning from partners, promoting dialogue and exchange and seeking to identify and build on best practices”. On the basis of the evaluation team's evidence, this has yet to be realized.

4.5. Learning is a shared responsibility

Main findings

The responsibility for learning is not shared equally among individuals, supervisors and the organization. Although UNHCR provides an extensive menu of training, it is heavily reliant on supervisors supporting the learning by their supervisees. Though the majority do so, a substantial minority do not, thereby limiting the learning and development of a sizeable portion of the workforce. Moreover, the organization does not take responsibility for ensuring that adequate learning support occurs.

“Learning needs to be individually led, manager supported and organizationally enabled.” Dumitriu, P. (2020)⁶⁰

As described in the next section on UNHCR culture, the commitment to learning is really high. One of the striking features of UNHCR is that so many workforce and partners want to learn; the evaluation team was deeply impressed by the enthusiasm and intrinsic desire for learning. But the team also found that the responsibility for learning is not yet shared equally across the individual, their supervisor and the organization.

4.5.1. Working alone

As stated earlier, while face-to-face team learning is common and is a preferred modality by many, most online learning is undertaken by individuals who are working alone (unless assisted by colleagues and supervisors around language issues). Although learning alone suits many, some do find it challenging. One interviewee trying to follow an online language learning course described how the process “can eat you” because they did not have someone to learn with.

There are no developed processes for sharing what people learn with their colleagues or across their teams. Some workplaces have a tradition of those returning from workshops to bring back their learning and share it. However, with UNHCR colleagues, team members and partners, it is not standard practice; it is essentially up to the particular workplace or country.

4.5.2. Support to divisions

Some divisions had a good collaborative and supportive relationship with the GLDC, were very satisfied with the service received and felt that the support had helped them to build a solid foundation to their specialist courses. In contrast, there were some units that reported struggling to get help from the GLDC, were unsure how to get their needs prioritized and how to carry forward planned learning programmes. Three separate offices and sections within UNHCR confidentially shared instances of where their requests for support in developing a course was not met, despite one area being deemed a priority need within the organization.

The fact that such examples arose reflects a reality that the GLDC cannot satisfy every need. The lack of a transparent mechanism for prioritization leaves some divisions feeling under-supported as well as being unaware of the GLDC’s priorities or how to get on to the priority list. The team sensed, from different interviews, that the GLDC is fielding more requests than it can meet.

4.5.3. The critical role of managers

Overall, most of those interviewees responding to the survey felt that their learning was supported by their supervisors and managers. However, it was clear that this is largely down to the commitment by individual managers rather than as a result of an organizational policy.

Across all five case studies, a significant number of the UNHCR workforce made the same point that “in terms of learning, a lot depends on who your manager is”. If you have a manager who is supportive and wants you to learn, they will open the doors and make it happen; if they’re not supportive, there is no imperative for the supervisor to support the learning of those who report to them and many learners claimed they could fall through the cracks.

Three quarters of survey respondents agreed that overall, their learning opportunities are supported by their supervisor. On the other hand, only half had their learning reviewed annually by their supervisor, and one third claimed to have an annual learning planning session with their supervisor.

⁶⁰ Dumitriu, P. (2020) “Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination and convergence”, Geneva: Joint Inspection Unit.

On the other side of the divide, a quarter of supervisor respondents stated that they did not discuss learning with their supervisees every year and 40 per cent stated that they did not prepare an annual learning plan for their staff.

The team were also frequently told how managers could block staff from learning opportunities, especially those that were costly or would remove staff from the workforce for extended periods. The team also heard examples of supervisors who were suspected of feeling threatened by the knowledge and skills obtained by staff during learning opportunities or were concerned that they might go and work elsewhere. If learning is to be a shared responsibility, these dynamics need to be opened up, acknowledged and addressed.

The Training of Trainers (TOT) evaluation revealed a well-developed and robust programme for skilling facilitators and building up trainer capacity across the organization.⁶¹ However, some of the biggest barriers to benefiting from this investment were identified as:

- the release of staff to run training workshops, where the priority is on completing daily tasks rather than building the capacity of staff;
- management support to learning being dependent on the manager where some managers do not perceive conducting training to be part of work;
- a lack of support from colleagues and a general perceived lack of appreciation for trainers;
- the onus being on the GLDC to request that trainers are released by managers to carry out duties.

This is all against a backdrop of an estimated 80 per cent staff who have capacity-building as part of their role, according to the TOT evaluation.

4.5.4. Outside of UNHCR

UNHCR undertakes a number of successful collaborations with fellow UN agencies including several examples of cost-sharing and sharing of learning content (e.g. with IOM). However, there remains much unexplored potential for collaboration, partnering and cost-sharing within the UN system. The UNHCR protection mandate makes it unique within the UN system, but it can also encourage UN “exceptionalism” as it no doubt does with others, which may explain the limitations to collaborative capacity in other areas with other agencies. The mapping study found this to be replicated across the UN system where there was general agreement that between the agencies, they have not succeeded in developing a strategic programme of collaboration to achieve a significant degree of cost-sharing and intermobility of learning programmes. Yet great willingness and enthusiasm were expressed to try to overcome the internal bureaucratic boundaries to improve joint working. This “open door” suggests that overtures on behalf of UNHCR to other UN organizations would be very welcome; and this is strongly encouraged by the 2020 JIU report.⁶²

As part of the GCR and the “whole of society” approach, UNHCR is working to improve its collaboration with a wide range of actors and partners. Survey respondents’ and interviewees’ awareness of and preparedness for the GCR was generally quite low. Learning offers are not yet appearing to reflect the strategic importance of the whole area of collaboration, with gaps noted in the provision on partnership working, collaborative leadership, UNHCR’s role in mixed migration and IDP situations where a collaborative approach is vital. UNHCR was found to have an ad hoc approach to its relationship with universities. It supports and covers a portion of the costs for staff to study for higher education courses such as diplomas and degrees, which is very welcome by those who have benefited. UNHCR does not appear to have exploited potential opportunities to partner with a wide range of universities to have its learning provision, such as its certificated courses, recognized locally, which could greatly assist a wider number of local staff with achieving local affordable and transferable qualifications. In one case study country, the local university was a formal partner and the link was seen as beneficial to both parties; UNHCR contributed to the training of students in the law and social science faculties, and in return recruited from that university. In addition, the university was providing technical legal expertise for UNHCR dealings with the government, as well as beginning to develop a joint programme of study. Clearly such relationships are worth assessing and exploring as a possible vehicle for widening learning opportunities.

As the evaluation was in its final stage, the team were informed of recent initiatives with the University of London to provide bursaries to UNHCR’s workforce who were selected to participate in the university’s Masters on Refugee Protection and Forced Migration distance learning programme. There were also plans to offer the university’s MOOC on Refugee Protection and Forced Migration to the workforce via Learn and Connect. Though such initiatives are positive, the organization’s approach to its relationship appears to remain ad hoc and lacking an overall strategy.

⁶¹ UNHCR-GLC (2020) “Final Report for Review of Training of Trainers (ToT) Approach and Model”, prepared by Sajida Shroff, Altamont Group

⁶² Dumitriu, P. (2020) op. cit.

4.6. Learning is part of the culture

Main finding

There is a high level of motivation and enthusiasm for learning among individuals within UNHCR's workforce.

Overall, however, the organization does not have a full understanding of how to build a thriving learning culture. The top-down structures and practices; unwillingness to consider "learning" as part of work activities; lack of commitment to learning in performance management; valuing "specialism" more than "generalism", and a fear of sharing mistakes, are all indicators of this.

As highlighted in Section 3, UNHCR's sustainability and future success depends on developing a high-impact learning culture. The 2012 Learning Policy interpreted making learning part of the culture through the lens of the responsibilities of staff and supervisors – for example, "To remain effective, and deliver quality protection and assistance staff members must embrace learning as a continuous process to update existing skills and acquire new ones" (para. 51); and "Managers shall reach agreements with the staff they supervise to ensure that formal or informal learning is incorporated into the staff member's performance appraisal documents" (para. 52).

4.6.1. Motivation

At the individual staff and affiliate level, there is certainly a desire for learning. Those who responded to the survey were likely to be more engaged with learning than those who did not take time to participate in the survey. Nevertheless, the commitment to learning for intrinsic (personally led) as opposed to extrinsic (organizationally led) motivations is striking. Table 7 lists the top 10 reasons why respondents participated in a learning opportunity in the past 12 months. The top five reasons were due to intrinsic reasons. This can be compared with much lower percentages for extrinsic (organizationally led) motivations such as "instructed by supervisor" (6 per cent), accreditation (10 per cent) and factsheet recording (23 per cent). This intrinsic enthusiasm was clear from many of the interviews and indicates that the UNHCR workforce is highly motivated to learn – despite the many challenges this report identifies.

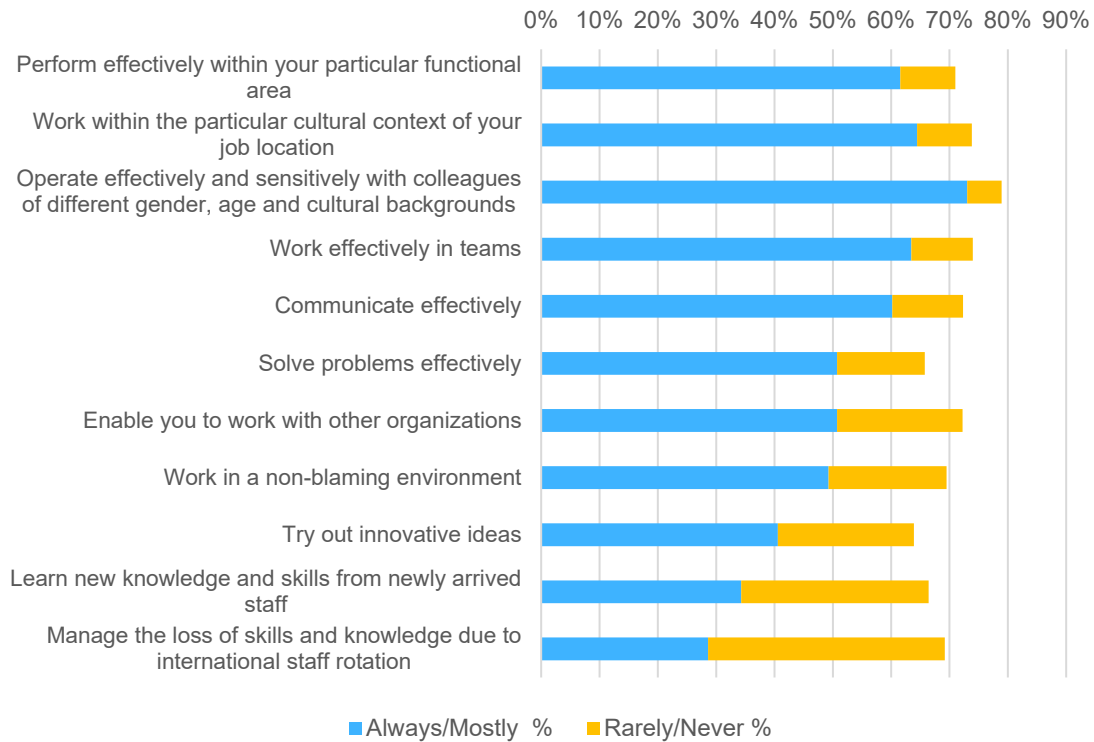
Table 7: Results of survey question: In the past 12 months what were the main reasons for participating in an opportunity to develop your skills and abilities? (n=572 and people could select up to five options)

For my career development – Intrinsic motivation	70%
It would help me do my job better – Intrinsic motivation	66%
For my personal development – Intrinsic motivation	59%
I enjoy learning new things – Intrinsic motivation	43%
The programme content and objectives – Intrinsic motivation	42%
It was a mandatory course – Extrinsic motivation	30%
My organization needed the skills – Extrinsic motivation	27%
The opportunity would be recorded on my factsheet – Extrinsic motivation	24%
Opportunity to network with colleagues from other parts of the world – Intrinsic motivation	20%
Recommended by supervisor or manager – Extrinsic motivation	14%

4.6.2. The influence of UNHCR's workplace culture on learning and development

The survey included a series of questions about aspects of the working culture within UNHCR. Figure 15 presents the results in the form of those responding "Always/Mostly" and placing them in direct relation to those responding "Rarely/Never". Presenting them in this way facilitates the identification of those aspects where the workforce is generally positive and those aspects where the workforce is less than generally positive or is indeed negative. As can be seen, the workforce is broadly positive about a range of aspects of working in UNHCR and are particularly positive about the organization making it easy to operate effectively and sensitively with colleagues of different gender, age and cultural backgrounds.

Figure 15: Results of survey question: To what extent do you feel that UNHCR as a whole makes it easy to do the following? (n=567)



Of concern though are those aspects of working in UNHCR where less than 50 per cent responded positively and where the numbers responding “Rarely/Never” comprise a significant percentage. The least positive aspects are those of “managing the loss of skills and knowledge due to international staff rotation”; “learning new knowledge and skills from newly arriving staff”; “trying out innovative ideas” and “working in a non-blaming environment”. Each of these aspects is of concern from the perspective of learning.

The definition of a “blame culture” is one in which people are reluctant to speak out, take risks or accept responsibility in their workplace because they fear criticism, retribution or worse.⁶³ The near-identical results for “trying out innovative ideas” and “working in a non-blaming environment” suggest some corroboration and overlap between these two aspects.

The organizational culture of UNHCR has been the subject of earlier studies⁶⁴ that highlighted its tall hierarchical structure and identified tensions between the organization’s (outwardly incongruent) “crisis/short term” and “bureaucratic/organized” modes of operation as contributing to certain behaviours. Barbara Wigley’s more comprehensive study found that organizational defences such as splitting and projection, blame, competition and contempt were all found to be prevalent throughout the organization. While allowance has to be made for the study being carried out 15 years ago and the possibility that organizational changes since then have contributed to a different analysis now, the workforce and, seemingly to a lesser extent partners, remain very aware of these particular aspects of UNHCR’s organizational culture.

Although few interviewees used the term “blame culture”, many spoke about the challenges of the hierarchical culture, the fear of making mistakes and a lack of formal reflection on experiences. Interviewees who spoke appreciatively of good managers in their career frequently mentioned the fact that the manager had given them the freedom to make their own mistakes and learn while assuring them of support should any problems arise. The team concludes that a

⁶³ Karten, N. (2013) “What to Do about a Workplace Culture of Blame”, *TechWell Insights*, <https://www.techwell.com/techwell-insights/2013/06/what-do-about-workplace-culture-blame>.

⁶⁴ Wigley, B. (2005) “The state of UNHCR’s organization culture”, Geneva: Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR; Gottwald, M. (2010) “Competing in the humanitarian marketplace: UNHCR’s organizational culture and decision-making processes”, Geneva: Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR.

significant change is needed in the way in which the organization deals with these core cultural issues if it is to optimize the benefits of learning.

Partner responses to the question on working in a non-blaming environment were more positive than those from the workforce. Nevertheless, while 64 per cent responded “Always/Mostly”, 14 per cent responded “Rarely/Never”, suggesting that there is room for improvement in the perception of UNHCR’s organizational culture among some of its partners. The primary focus of the annual UNHCR–NGO Partnership Survey led by InterAction⁶⁵ appears to be the Project Partnership Agreements (PPAs) rather than broader questions about how UNHCR’s culture is perceived. The team is not aware of other regular surveys seeking the views and perceptions of persons of concern to UNHCR being served by the organization and its partners. Some other development and humanitarian organizations are understood to undertake such “perception surveys”, which they find of value to themselves as an organization and which provide “voice” for those whom they are seeking to serve.

Generational issues around cultures of learning were apparent among interviewees. Some of the interviewees who identified themselves as “millennials”⁶⁶ appeared to be more critical about technical glitches with Learn and Connect, while “boomers” seemed to be more forgiving as they had seen progress in Learn and Connect’s capability over the past 10 years. Boomers appeared more comfortable with traditional learning approaches and methods. One interviewee commented that the organization was “managed by ‘boomers’ but delivered by ‘millennials’.” A senior manager observed that the millennials whom she supervised were more focused on the short term, were more willing to innovate, had less respect for hierarchical ways of approaching issues and preferred to learn quickly in “bite-sized” pieces.

4.6.3. Specialism versus generalism

Interviewees described the UNHCR as very siloed and programmatic and that one rises through the ranks by being a specialist. Thus, the eligibility criteria for learning courses tends to favour those with the specialism associated with that course, making it difficult to make sideways moves. This also resulted in what was described to the evaluation team as the “hourglass” phenomenon – that is, when you start you are pushed into an area of specialism that narrows your options. There is then a point when you become a manager with a need to understand much more about the organization; so having been squeezed into a particular area of specialism there is then a need to widen again by acquiring generalist skills in management and cross-discipline skills to be able to supervise others – not forgetting the soft skills needed to be a good manager.

Naturally, the team recognizes the critical need for well-trained specialists in an organization who are providing such specialist services. For instance, the workforce working in Protection have to deal with complex individual cases and take decisions around the provision of Protection services in highly complex, often emergency, contexts. While the need for specialists is incontrovertible, the organization also needs to ensure that it has a workforce that includes a sufficient supply of personnel able to cover a broader range of functional areas to ensure that the organization is able to respond quickly and flexibly to changing needs. It also needs to ensure that, within an organization that values specialism so highly, it has established adequate structures and processes for the development and support of generalist knowledge and skills. While the team did not explore the adequacy of the supply of “generalists” within the workforce, it gained the impression that the hourglass phenomenon may not be sufficiently recognized as an issue that requires tailored approaches by HR and the GLDC, and that structures and processes are not sufficiently present to ensure that generalists are developed and supported.

A second issue is those who want to be able to move around the organization and experience the breadth of roles and activities are also excluded from courses outside their area. In other words, the courses tend to be very transactional. The recent growth of courses that focus on “soft skills” only partly addresses this strong cultural force towards specialism. It is difficult to be a generalist in an organization that celebrates specialism. While this has been categorized here as a cultural issue, it also affects issues concerning “accessibility” and also, in broad terms, the “effectiveness” of the learning system. Given the World Economic Forum forecasts mentioned earlier, of more than half the world population needing reskilling and upskilling within three years, there is a need to promote generalist skills that will supersede changes in technical skills and improve transferability.

4.6.4. Lessons learned

⁶⁵ InterAction (2020) “UNHCR-NGO Partnership Survey 2019 Report”, https://www.unhcr.org/2020-unhcr-annual-consultations-with-ngos/2019-UNHCR-NGO-Partnership-Survey-Report_Final.pdf

⁶⁶ “Boomers” is the term ascribed to those born between 1944 and 1964 who are currently between 56 and 76 years of age. “Millennials” (Gen Y) are those born between 1980 and 1994 and are currently between 26 and 40 years of age. “Gen X” are those born between 1965 and 1979 and are currently between 41 and 55 years old.

Learning processes do not appear to be integrated into organizational processes. The evaluation team did not come across any teams that were carrying out after action reviews, peer learning groups, action learning sets or other common reflective practices. It is understood that the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) conducts real-time reviews of emergency responses, but this occurs only for Level 3 emergencies. It surprised the evaluation team to learn that no formal evaluation was conducted of the 2015–2016 emergency response in Greece. Interviews with members of the workforce who had experience of that period pointed to the potential for rich learning to be gained from an evaluation or at least a reflective review of the experience of what was a very particular emergency in the unusual context of Europe.

In the final stages of the evaluation the team were informed that lesson learning workshops, organized by the DESS and the Europe Bureau, had taken place in Serbia and Athens and a lessons learned report was issued in 2018. Surprisingly, none of the interviewees in Greece, many of whom had been present during the emergency, was aware of or mentioned the existence of this report.

4.6.5. Performance management

As noted in [Section 3](#), in 2014 the previous PAMS system was replaced by a new performance management system that significantly reduced the role and attention paid to learning and development within the process. Coming two years after the launch of the 2012 Learning Policy, this change significantly weakened the organization’s ability to weave learning and development into its fabric. The organization’s ability to create a genuine learning culture was significantly undermined by this change in the performance management system.

4.6.6. The relationship between “work” and “learning”

The relationship between “work” and “learning” is a major unresolved tension within UNHCR. It was mentioned as a significant issue in virtually every interview and was reflected in the 2020 Arup report.⁶⁷

The tension is significant when considering only “formal learning”. More than two thirds of survey respondents undertook their online courses mostly or entirely outside of work time. Their coursework had to be balanced with personal, household, childcare and other out-of-work demands. Although the domestic demands on women are likely to be higher, both male and female survey respondents experienced similar constraints. Some interviewees said that not only was formal learning during work time frowned upon (and sometimes criticized by their supervisors), the sheer pressure of work meant that undertaking study at home was the only option since they would be constantly interrupted if they sought to do it in work time. As stated elsewhere, half of the survey respondents stated that they were hindered from applying their learning because of the demands of their job, and more than half the survey respondents had failed to complete a learning opportunity because of the workload. These are major cultural impediments to efficient and effective use of the considerable investment that UNHCR makes in learning.

4.7. Learning is more than training

Main findings

Despite its Learning Policy, UNHCR broadly continues to invest the majority of its resources in training modalities and the majority of its workforce continues to see training as being synonymous with learning.

The organization has a narrow interpretation of the breadth and variety of ways in which learning can be acquired and shared.

4.7.1. How learning is perceived and accessed

Although the 2012 Learning Policy includes “learning is more than training” as one of its six principles, the distinction between the two is not articulated in the policy. The difference is essentially that learning is an internal individual process that can occur anywhere at any time, while training is something that people receive. Previously training was received at a specific place and time but with the advent of online delivery, training has become less bound by time and place.

It was found that learning, by and large, is still seen as synonymous with training by the workforce. Even if they were engaging in other forms of learning, they were not valuing these as they were valuing training. It is apparent that

⁶⁷ Arup (2020) “People Management Framework Final Report”.

many within the workforce still do not fully appreciate the different ways in which they can learn. This may be largely attributable to the organization not actively promoting or supporting other forms of learning until quite recently. As a result, when asked about access to learning opportunities, many responded in terms of the training that they had received.

As noted in Section 4.4, UNHCR's workforce is accessing a wide range of learning opportunity types: online courses and webinars were the most used with videos coming some way behind. Significantly these three most used types of learning opportunity are all internet-based. Other types of learning are much less prevalent, such as face-to-face workshops and blended learning and informal learning opportunities such as communities of practice, WhatsApp groups, mentoring, coaching, and on-the-job training. The fact that UNHCR does not collect data on informal or other means of learning or track their impacts has already been noted in Section 4.3.

4.7.2. Informal learning

The GLDC has introduced modalities such as coaching and mentoring as part of its formal learning portfolio; however, it was only during the course of the evaluation that a Knowledge Management and Communications position was created to provide central support to informal learning activities elsewhere in the organization.

On the few occasions in which the team were made aware of modalities such as communities of practice, coaching and mentoring, self-directed learning and engaging in networks, these appear to have been the result of local and individual initiatives rather than centrally encouraged and supported. The team found that informal learning opportunities are increasing and need to be broadened and recognized. Internal learning opportunities such as work shadowing, stretch assignments and job-swapping have been noted but for the most part, remain ad hoc and have not been mainstreamed.

Most coaching is offered as part of management and leadership programmes aimed primarily at senior cadres of staff. The same was found for mentoring where a new internal mentoring programme was introduced for externally recruited P4s and P5s. Survey respondents who had benefited from coaching rated it very highly. Those who have not yet been able to access it requested that it be made more widely available to other cadres. International experience indicates that organizations using coaching and mentoring to integrate learning into the flow of work as a development approach are significantly more likely than the average organization to build a learning culture.⁶⁸

Cost has been a significant barrier to UNHCR and other organizations in offering coaching to wider numbers of staff. Approaches that other organizations are using include working with corporates who offer pro bono or "low bono" coaching to humanitarian organizations, and Save the Children, which is certifying internal coaches who in turn agree to offer an agreed amount of hours of coaching to staff per month.

4.7.3. Online facilitation

Online facilitation and collaboration methods are not fully exploited. Although in the survey, "webinars" were the second most commonly accessed learning modality (60 per cent), UNHCR is not routinely accessing methods such as MOOCs and online facilitation, which are capable of reaching hundreds of people at once and being revised or modified at speed. In the mapping study of organizations similar to UNHCR, it was found that the UN Staff System College and the Geneva Learning Foundation are reaching 200 to 300 people on a five-week course where respondents claim that the effectiveness has not been lessened by having large numbers of people online because of the methods being used. Learners are being broken down into synchronous and asynchronous peer learning and working groups and are meeting again for lectures or webinars, for example.

Recent experiences with COVID-19 and the enforced shift to online working have demonstrated how rapidly the organization can change its working practices when it needs to. In the GLDC's case, more than half of its planned face-to-face and on-site workshop modalities planned for 2020 were either partially modified with reduced days and new virtual components or were entirely replaced by online delivery modalities including methods such as e-learning, online tutoring, virtual workshops and webinars. Some new virtual workshops have also been added to the 2020 plan.

The cost of the virtual modalities is significantly less than those for face-to-face and on-site workshops as a result of the removal of travel and accommodation costs. However, a downside of the shift to virtual modalities is that it has become easier for workforce members to "drop out" of learning opportunities due to pressing work demands and this reduction in the protected space for learning now appears to be increasing as a factor that is limiting learning. It would

⁶⁸ CIPD (2019) 'Professionalising Learning and Development Report: The CIPD's new profession map and key L&D development needs', February 2019, p.12.

be worthwhile assessing both the impact of the changed modalities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic on the costs and the new challenges presented by the new learning modalities within UNHCR.

5. Conclusions

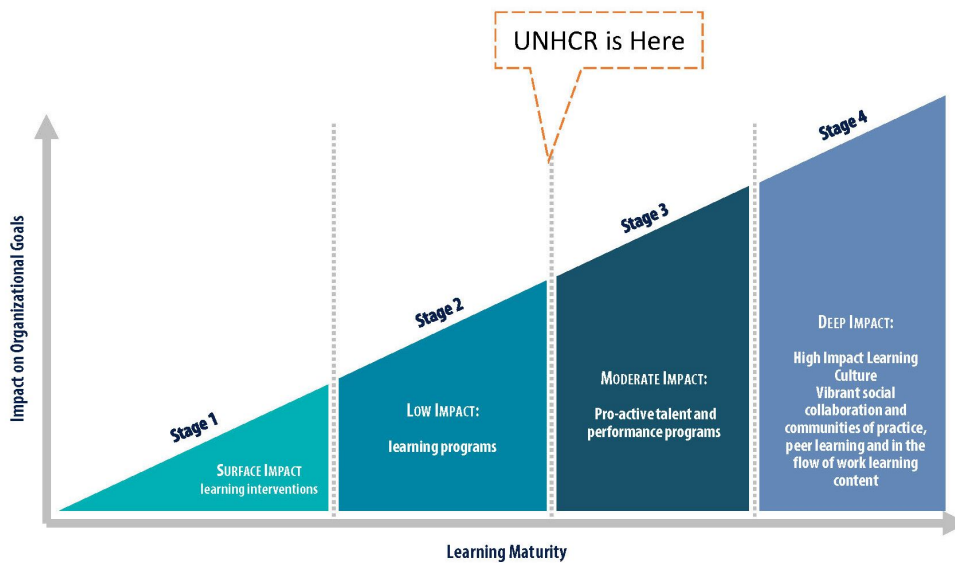
5.1. The health of UNHCR's learning system

For a learning system to operate optimally its purpose, benefits, structures, processes, values, sustainability and context need to be synchronized. The findings presented in Section 4 reveal a learning system that outwardly appears purposeful and impressive, but closer inspection shows how key components of that system are imbalanced and not sufficiently aligned. UNHCR's learning system is overly focused on training and relies almost entirely on one part of the organization, which is centrally located in Budapest, to meet the needs of the whole organization. Within the system, the mechanisms for capturing and sharing learning from experience are not well developed.

As shown in Section 3 and the mapping study carried out as part of this evaluation, rapid developments in learning theory, neuroscience and behaviourism are pushing the boundaries of how learning is being applied in organizations. The relatively new concept of high-impact learning culture (HILC) is now starting to guide organizations away from a focus on learning and talent and performance programmes towards a broader lens, encompassing a whole range of formal and informal approaches in the flow of work.

Figure 16 outlines the four stages of learning and impact maturity in an organization. The evaluation assesses UNHCR's current position as transitioning from Stage 2, where its main focus is on learning programmes, to one in Stage 3 of pro-active talent and performance programmes.

Figure 16: UNHCR's position in the four stages of learning maturity and impact



Source: Adapted from Daly, J. and Ahmetaj, G, (2020) *Back to the future: Why tomorrow's workforce needs a learning culture*, Horsham: Emerald Works

As many corporations and businesses operating in commercially competitive environments are realizing, their overall performance, organizational health and longer-term sustainability are weakened when learning is not properly encouraged, supported and exploited in and by their organizations. UNHCR operates in a different environment from most businesses, but it is an environment that also has competitive elements and significant pressures to maximize the benefits from its finite resources for refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. For UNHCR not to be fully encouraging, supporting and exploiting learning, in effect, translates into the organization not doing its best for the people its mandate is designed to protect.

This evaluation has found that learning is viewed too narrowly in the organization. Learning is much, much more than "training". It is about learning from colleagues; having the space to learn; feeling supported to learn; being allowed to try out new ways of doing things; not being criticized or "knocked back" for trying and failing; learning from experiences and actions at the individual, team, country and organizational levels; promoting and exchanging lessons

across operations and regions; enabling the exchange and cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences; and viewing partners as organizations to be learned from as well as being “used to deliver”. Learning needs to be everyone’s responsibility and not just that of the GLDC. The fact that all the opportunities for learning are not being exploited, supported and more clearly linked to the organization’s overall performance and goals is a major missed opportunity for UNHCR.

The GLDC’s efforts and achievements should of course be recognized. From a previous situation of ad hoc, dispersed and often uncoordinated formal learning, UNHCR has, through the creation and work of the GLDC, developed a centralized and coordinated learning structure, which has been providing an impressive array of formal learning opportunities principally in the form of e-learning and blended learning offers which benefit the workforce and some of the organization’s implementing partners. Since its creation, the GLDC has developed and maintained a robust learning design unit that is stronger than that found in other comparable organizations.

The GLDC has also taken a lead on the development of blended learning ahead of comparable organizations in the United Nations and outside the UN system where many still make much heavier use of face-to-face modalities. The GLDC has created a suite of courses and flagship learning (certification) programmes and also introduced a number of informal learning opportunities and initiatives, particularly in recent months, including coaching, mentoring and the encouragement of some communities of practice. The addition of the Leadership Development and Talent Development and Performance Sections to the GLDC in 2018–2019 is enabling it to integrate more with broader workforce learning and development. These are all excellent bases upon which to build the new learning system.

The evaluation team concludes that learning now needs to move away from the provision of continuous training and embody a move towards supporting continuous “in-the-flow-of-work” learning. In terms of the learning maturity model (Figure 16), to stay abreast of the rapid changes and be in a position to facilitate the critical impact for its workforce, the evaluation team’s view is that UNHCR should be seeking to leap over Stage 3, and move straight into Stage 4. This does not mean it should abandon formal learning and talent programmes, but it means that it should significantly widen its lens to encompass a much wider learning portfolio and have key learning specialists poised to oversee and address a much wider array of interventions and approaches.

For learning at UNHCR to remain relevant over time and to be in a position to adapt quickly to the changing and contextual needs, it must allow for an expansion beyond largely ensuring competence, compliance and conformance to one of enabling and supporting individuals to learn to:

- solve their own performance problems;
- equip themselves with the knowledge and skills for the future;
- keep up to date with the fast pace of change;
- stay inspired and motivated.

This will require a “whole-of-organization” approach with every member of the workforce and every part of the organization actively participating. The range and scope of the changes require a fundamental change in mindset and approach to learning and development. The evaluation team sees this as a paradigm shift, the key features of which are presented in Figure 17. The learning culture at UNHCR requires a more targeted and adaptive model for learning at organization, function, team and individual levels. This requires integrated leadership and learning professionals who possess the expert capability of leading transformative learning at scale, and the following changes in approach:

- individuals become more self-determining in their learning;
- managers become mentors and stewards of their staff’s learning;
- learning and development professionals grow a wider set of consultancy-related skills.

Figure 17: Paradigm shift “at a glance”

Paradigm shift at a glance		
Current UNHCR Learning system	Systemic Actions to Move to New Learning system	New Learning system
Learning and training is seen as a cost centre	MAKE LEARNING CRITICAL TO THE MISSION	Learning and training is an integral investment in the org.
Employees are told what to learn by their manager or the career model		Employees decide what to learn based on their team’s needs and individual career goals
Learning system channels upward career pathways	DISTRIBUTE OWNERSHIP OF LEARNING	Learning system supports a career matrix with multiple directionality
GLDC is the primary owner and driver of development and training		L&D is owned across the organisation and driven by the workforce supported by L&D specialism
People access most of their learning content online or in the training room	CREATE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LEARNING	People learn all the time, through peer learning, social collaboration, after action reviews etc.
Learning technology focuses on course catalogue and compliance training		Learning technology creates an always-on, collaborative, curated learning experience
Learning design is resource and time intensive leading to lag times between need identification and completion	CHAMPION LEARNING	Agile learning designs provide speedier and more cost-effective approaches at the point of need
Learning is rationed for certain grades and people are excluded		Learning is available to most on demand
Languages for learning primarily provided in English	FACILITATE CRITICAL CONNECTIONS	All learning offers are available in multiple languages
Lack of operational contextual relevance of learning content		Learning is refined and adapted at regional and country levels
Partners are not seen as integral to the organisation’s learning system	MAKE DATA INFORMED DECISIONS	All partners are valued and included in UNHCR’s learning system
A hierarchical culture promotes compliance resulting in a lack of trust and fear of owning mistakes		New approaches in UNHCR value mistakes and how they add to reflective learning
UNHCR’s collaboration with other UN organisations is opportunistic and not strategic		UNHCR provides leadership on UN collaboration with other organisations

5.2. Presenting the conclusions in a forward-looking frame

The evaluation team developed six essential elements or “Systemic Actions/Outcomes” necessary for the organization to achieve the paradigm shift required in UNHCR’s approach to learning and development. These draw on the rapidly developing literature on high-impact learning organizations,⁶⁹ the evaluation’s findings about learning and development, the understanding of UNHCR gained by the team, and the team’s own complementary professional backgrounds and experience.

All six Systemic Actions are foundational and should be implemented simultaneously as they reaffirm one another and should not be sequenced. These systemic actions were first presented to staff at the two validation workshops at the end of August 2020 and then were further developed with senior staff at the two externally facilitated strategy workshops in September.

In place of summarizing the conclusions of the evaluation in relation to the “old paradigm” (i.e. the six principles of the 2012 Learning Policy), the conclusions are presented below in relation to the “new paradigm” using the six Systemic Actions. It is hoped that this provides a clear logical flow from the findings forward to the evaluation’s proposals for action by UNHCR.

5.2.1. Systemic Action 1: Make learning critical to the mission

Learning is made integral to UNHCR’s Strategic Directions and organizational goals/priorities as well as treated as a leadership priority (that is, being connected to the critical business capability problems).

UNHCR’s mission is critical. It seeks to protect the rights, safety and well-being of millions of forcibly displaced people. Wars, climate change, increased nationalism, future pandemics and the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) increase the demands on that critical mission. Responding to these uncertainties requires the capacity to rapidly adapt with the right type of flexible and agile modalities as opposed to those that are time- and resource-intensive. Agile learning, more than in most organizations, has to be at the front and centre of UNHCR’s mission.

Explicit connections between the learning offer and the critical mission of the organization are not apparent. The Strategic Directions 2017–2021 does not indicate how learning provision is envisaged as helping the organization meet its goals.

The organization is still struggling to achieve its vision of becoming a learning organization; its organizational learning efforts to date have been largely focused on top-down, generic formal learning. For a fast-responding organization, formal learning is at odds with learning that is available at the point of need.

Had the aspirations of the Strategic Directions 2017–2021 been more actively promoted, integrated into operations, tracked and reported on, the team would have expected to witness more of the following behaviours and practices: more promotion and exchanging of lessons; more cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences; more evaluation and peer reviews feeding into the refining of approaches; and a more active engagement with partners in learning.

⁶⁹ For example, Daly, J. and Ahmetaj, G. (2020) *Back to the future: Why tomorrow’s workforce needs a learning culture*, Horsham: Emerald Works; CIPD (2020) “Creating Learning Cultures: Assessing the evidence”, CIPD Report April 2020; Hart, J. (2020) “Modern Work Place Learning”; Lancaster, A. (2020) “Driving Performance through Learning: Develop employees through effective workplace learning”, London: CIPD.

5.2.2. Systemic Action 2: Distribute ownership of learning

Learning roles and responsibilities are embedded throughout and across the organization.

The maxim highlighted in the 2020 JIU report that “learning should be learner-led, manager-supported and organisationally-enabled” was one that could have been realized in UNHCR were it not for the removal of the manager’s responsibility to oversee the learning and development of their staff in the 2014 Performance Management policy change. This change effectively upset the balance of responsibility by leaving it up to supportive managers to carry on providing support to their staff but without any organizational imperative or accountability for doing so.

The Strategy and Action Plan envisaged by the 2012 Learning Policy has not translated into the sharing and owning of learning across the organization and this effectively put the onus on the GLDC to look after all the organization’s learning needs. The redistribution of human resources as part of the regionalization and decentralization process has not yet included specialist learning capacity which has remained centralized with support to bureaux coming from Budapest.

There is also an uneven distribution of learning content itself with senior cadres and English speakers accessing a larger portfolio of resources and courses while lower grades and national staff are often hitting barriers to progressing their careers through blended learning courses or workshops. The learning content from certificated courses could be democratized and modularized for all to access as currently only a tiny minority of staff can do so.

5.2.3. Systemic Action 3: Make data-informed decisions

Reliable and credible business intelligence is accessed through data that allows for more informed decisions with key stakeholders within the organization.

UNHCR’s current systems for monitoring and reporting on L&D activities are limited to formal learning; the majority of its learning system, peer-to-peer and informal learning, goes unrecorded, uncaptured and there is no way of knowing what, and how much is being learned and shared.

The GLDC’s systems for generating metrics to enable effective management of their formal and informal learning offers are very limited. The GLDC’s presentation of its data lacks analysis of indicators and larger trends of organizational significance such as the level of unmet demand for particular blended learning offers; the reasons for low uptakes of courses; the number of learning offers available in languages other than English; and financial information on different blended learning offers that could indicate cost/benefit ratios. HR and L&D data are not analysed jointly, limiting UNHCR’s ability to plan and forecast talent management and leadership succession.

Considering the large size of the GLDC’s formal learning portfolio, the proportion of formal learning programmes being subjected to robust evaluation is low. This ultimately hampers the organization’s ability to make informed decisions about what is working and to cut investments that are not having impact.

5.2.4. Systemic Action 4: Create new learning structures and approaches

Appropriate learning structures and approaches are created that enable scaling, nimbleness and agility.

UNHCR’s current learning infrastructure is overly centralized and overly focused on training. Informal learning is not sufficiently supported or integrated. Consequently, it cannot properly support new and emerging learning and collaboration.

The organization’s learning management system:

- does not have the capability to support collaboration and communities of practice;
- does not yet have the capability to provide access to offline learning;
- cannot track what learners are accessing outside the organization’s offer and what they are learning from the system;
- imposes a cost per user which may explain why few partner staff are advised of and provided with access to Learn and Connect.

UNHCR’s processes:

- have no mechanism for recording, collating and analysing learning in action and on action at an individual, team or institutional level;
- do not support learning in the workplace due to overload and/or lack of manager support;

- have not yet mainstreamed agile learning design methods to improve the flow of up-to-date learning content;
- are hampered by the top-down hierarchical nature of UNHCR which makes information flowing upwards and sideways difficult.

The new infrastructure should be about gaining and sustaining knowledge (not just collecting data). It should also enable a much closer relationship between learning practice, learning quality, learning management and learning strategy, and keep a close eye on changes in the humanitarian and learning environments. It should also maintain and review the boundaries of the learning system and make adjustments to it as necessary.

The new infrastructure should also increasingly move towards greater “openness” in the use of data, in the sharing of learning content and ideas and in the creation of communities of practice; this requires a shift in culture and practice as learners increasingly help to shape learning content. It is about learning outside of institutions, peer learning, professional learning and learning for impact.

5.2.5. Systemic Action 5: Champion learning

Ways to actively engage, align, optimize and influence a culture for learning are developed.

Despite the challenges of accessing learning opportunities during working hours, and work pressures pushing learning opportunities down the priority list, UNHCR has a vibrant workforce which displays high motivation and enthusiasm for learning. The fact that these motivations appear to be overwhelmingly intrinsic (personally generated) rather than extrinsic (organizationally generated) implies that workforce members are all natural champions for learning. Three quarters of survey respondents and many interviewees felt that their learning was supported by their supervisors and managers, a trend that was also reflected in the last learning survey in 2018. However, currently there is no organizational imperative for supervisors to support the learning of their supervisees and therefore only half of survey respondents stated that their learning was reviewed annually by their supervisor, and only a third claimed to have had an annual learning planning session with their supervisor.

It is critical that supervisors fully buy into the culture of learning. In order to do so, they must see for themselves that investment in supporting their staff to self-determine their learning, know where to access available learning to solve problems and to gain key skills all “in the flow of work”, ultimately saves both parties time and resources.

It was apparent from interviews that so-called “millennials” have a different idea of what “learning” constitutes and how it occurs, than so-called “boomers”. “Millennials” appear to be more short-term focused, willing to innovate, have less respect for hierarchical ways of approaching issues and wish to learn fast in bite-sized pieces. The consequence is that those aged from their mid-20s to 40 years differ in their preferences for learning from those of their managers – with the former preferring to access at the point of need and be self-directed while the latter prefer organized and coordinated modalities such as face-to-face workshops and traditional learning programmes.

The GLDC has played, and continues to play, an important role in promoting, marketing and providing learning opportunities across the organization, but it needs wider support from the rest of the organization if UNHCR is to tangibly move towards becoming a high-impact learning culture. In order to effectively champion learning, UNHCR needs to address the necessary structural and process reforms to facilitate easier and speedier access to learning. This includes addressing how its culture neither engenders trust nor makes the owning of mistakes easy. With trust being a building block in creating and fostering a conducive learning environment, it will be fundamental to address this.

5.2.6. Systemic Action 6: Facilitate critical connections

Learning environments are created that allow people to connect, collaborate and share knowledge when and how they need to.

Internal: The emphasis on functional competence is limiting the critical connections being made in a number of areas. Mechanisms for fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the organization are disparate and ad hoc. This means that for individual staff it is difficult to know what is available and how to access it, and for groups it is difficult to connect with other parts of the organization to take advantage of the evolving knowledge and expertise that exists among its workforce. Opportunities are also being missed to connect with and learn from its operational partners.

External: Collaboration between UN agencies tends to take place on an opportunistic and ad hoc basis. UNHCR undertakes a number of successful collaborations with fellow UN agencies but has so far not succeeded in developing

a strategic programme of collaboration to achieve a significant degree of cost-sharing and joint development of learning programmes. UNHCR and its fellow UN agencies collectively recognize the need for much greater collaboration, cost-sharing, mutual exchange, joint strategies and creation of intermobility of learning programmes – which was also strongly encouraged by the 2020 JIU Report.⁷⁰

Finally, UNHCR must sustain critical learning connections with factors such as climate change, new forms of migration, pandemics and other non-institutional factors.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Developing the recommendations: the role of validation and strategy workshops

Preliminary findings of from the evaluation and organisational mapping were presented to the Engagement Group at the end of July 2020. Towards the end of August and the beginning of September, fuller key findings were presented to a total of 136 participants in two validation workshops. Included in those presentations were the team's emerging ideas about the transformation, referred to as the "Paradigm Shift", needed for UNHCR's new learning system. Feedback received from the validation workshops proved helpful in refining the six "Systemic Actions" that formed the basis for the two strategy workshops held in mid-September.

The purpose of the strategy workshops was to bring together some 30 or so senior-level managers and technical staff, ranging from P3 to D2 grades spanning country operations, regional bureaux and HQ, to work through the six Systemic Actions and detailed actions being proposed by the evaluation team. A specially recruited, Swiss-based external facilitator helped design and run the workshop. Members of the evaluation team and their Evaluation Service managers supported the break-out group discussions. Morning and afternoon sessions lasting two hours were held for each of the two workshops to facilitate participation across time zones ranging from Peru and Panama to Bangkok.

The first workshop introduced and considered all six Systemic Actions, building on pre-read materials provided to participants. The second workshop, held three days later, focused on identifying "what success would look like" if the Paradigm Shift were to be implemented, plus two specific Systemic Actions: "Distributing ownership of learning" and "Championing learning" that following the first workshop, were felt to need more deliberation. The evaluation team then analysed the outputs from the break-out groups, transcripts of feedback presentations and plenary discussions.

The strategy workshops confirmed the evaluation team's central proposal that UNHCR needs to fundamentally transform its approach to learning and development. This new learning system would require learning to be more firmly embedded in the organization's strategic priorities, annual planning and budgeting processes and its recruitment, career planning and performance appraisal processes. There was unanimous recognition of the need to transform the current centralized provision focused on formal learning and training, much of which takes place outside of office hours.

In this transformed learning system, learning provision is decentralized with regional bureaux playing a key role supported by the GLDC; learning becomes much more integrated "in the flow of work"; access to learning is democratized and provided in more languages; managers are required to support the learning and development of their supervisees and are equipped with the skills to nurture learning; informal learning is embraced and supported; lesson learning and the sharing of learning are more widely practiced; and there are improved systems for the monitoring, tracking and evaluation of formal and informal learning. Making learning more central to the organization's way of working was seen as attracting and retaining a talented workforce.

Each of the six Systemic Actions gained broad support, although some differences were expressed over precisely how best to achieve some of them. For instance, how to balance the inevitable tensions between allowing more locally led learning and the need to maintain quality and consistency; and the precise relationship between divisions, bureaux, country operations and the GLDC.

The break-out groups provided a rich source of ideas including the following:

- Everyone is held accountable for their learning and for sharing what they have learned.
- Effort and resources should be focused on the relationship between managers and supervisees. Managers should be accountable for supporting the learning and development of their supervisees.

⁷⁰ Dumitriu, P. (2020) "Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination and convergence".

- The organization needs to develop a healthier relationship with failure.
- All levels of the organization need to have a clearer understanding of the importance of learning in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization.
- “Soft skills” such as communication and negotiation should be regarded as “hard skills”; they are difficult to learn and practise and should be recognized alongside technical knowledge and skills as a basis for moving up within the organization.
- The organization needs to develop a more effective knowledge management system to support the capturing and sharing of learning and lessons learned.
- Learning needs to be far more “bottom-up”, contextual, shorter, quicker and led by the bureaux as part of moving learning “closer to the field”.
- Communities of practice have a key role to play in capturing and sharing learning.

Such ideas and the overall feedback from the strategy workshops have helped in shaping and orienting the final set of recommendations presented in Section 6.3 below.

6.2. The implications of tackling a paradigm shift

A paradigm shift is not a step-by-step process with easily identified actions that lead to predictable results. UNHCR’s new learning system will be a complex arrangement of interacting parts that will need to accommodate many different perspectives and be the result of many difficult boundary decisions in a highly turbulent and unpredictable environment. Thus developing the new learning system will rely on introducing new ideas, sensing their impact, seeing what works, and adapting the strategy. There will also be contradictions to be managed, between the old system and the new one – with both predictable and unpredictable results.

Establishing a new learning system can be regarded as a “wicked problem”. According to Rittel and Weber, “Wicked Problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan”.⁷¹

The following recommendations encompass a range of actions to achieve the new paradigm, yet they should be considered as initial options to address this “wicked problem”. Their sequencing, impact and worth will depend on many factors; some will prove more valuable than others. A viable complex system needs to be constantly under review and interventions and consequences assessed regularly.

The recommendations are proposed as six systemic outcomes/actions that are fundamental to a transformational shift:

1. Learning becomes critical to the mission.
2. Ownership of learning is distributed across the organization.
3. Learning is championed by individuals, managers and the organization.
4. UNHCR employs agile learning approaches.
5. Critical connections are made between personnel and with partners globally and locally.
6. UNHCR makes data-informed decisions with regards to L&D investments.

Each outcome has a subset of strategic actions that are proposed as options that UNHCR could consider. All six are interdependent and will need addressing in order for a healthy learning culture to emerge and for UNHCR to become a high-impact learning organization. Failure to significantly address each of the six systemic outcomes will hamper the realization of this goal.

⁷¹ Rittel, H.W.J. and Webber, M.M. (1973) “Dilemmas in a general theory of planning”, *Policy Sci* 4: 155–169 (1973).

6.3. The six systemic outcomes and proposed actions

Recommendation 1. Learning becomes critical to the mission

SET takes a strategic decision to make UNHCR a high-impact learning organization and undertakes a series of systemic, structural and process-related measures, to embed learning in the organization.

Strategic action	Proposed specific actions	Responsibility	Timing
1.1 Learning priorities are based on clear line of sight to operational needs and realities	<p>a. SET/SMC creates a body to represent learning interests from across the organization to monitor, guide and steer the shift to the new paradigm and ensure the adoption of all six systemic recommendations.</p> <p>A suggested working name for this body is the “Learning Systems Board” (LSB). The LSB to include representation from HR, L&D, Change Management/ Organizational Development functions, country, regional and HQ levels and also selected external specialists. The purpose of the LSB is discussed in Annex 3. Once the objectives of the LSB have been achieved, the justification for its continuation should be reviewed. (See also 2.1 below.)</p> <p>b. SET commissions a process to update the 2012 Learning Policy and develop an accompanying implementation strategy. The updated Learning Policy and implementation strategy will need to address several strategic choices, which are outlined in Annex 3.</p>	SET	Within 12 months
1.2 Incentives are institutionalized for the promotion of L&D	<p>a. DHR reforms people management so as to place learning and development at the front and centre of staff development, appointment and performance appraisal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ePADs require L&D objectives by staff that directly link with team goals or address skills gaps. • Make factsheets flexible to incorporate: skills and capacities received externally; innovative contributions to learning within UNHCR; learning sharing activities led by staff; recognition for learning hours completed (e.g. 30 hours) covering both formal and informal learning activities. <p>b. LSB and country offices to create incentives for team/office-level learning and communicate its importance for the organization’s future fitness and survival to the whole organization. Learning incentives and rewards should take into consideration different cultural approaches; where appropriate, competitions for new ideas generate more enthusiasm for amplifying the organization’s intentions around learning.</p>	DHR	Within 12 months
1.3 Messaging from leadership signals the criticality of learning to successful protection and delivery	<p>a. Establish a robust induction programme for newly joining staff that provides them with the core knowledge and skills needed for them to be an effective member of the workforce. The core programme would need to be complemented by locally or functionally tailored induction procedures to enable them to carry out their role within the office they work in. These arrangements should apply for international and national staff and affiliates. The importance of learning in contributing to the organizational goals and objectives is to be clearly communicated to all newly joining staff.</p>	LSB and country offices	Within 12 months
		LSB with DHC and GLDC	Within 12 months

	b. LSB puts in place a mechanism to ensure that SMC identifies and communicates at the beginning of each year the learning needs and priorities to address operational goals. Critical skill gaps are widely shared with the workforce to stimulate upskilling or reskilling to fill the gaps.	LSB	Within 12 months
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Recommendation 2. Ownership of learning is redistributed across the organization

The organization ensures that learning roles and responsibilities are embedded throughout and across UNHCR

Strategic action	Proposed specific actions	Responsibility	Timing
2.1 Regionalize and decentralize the learning function to bureaux and countries	a. The new Learning Systems Board in conjunction with SMC determines the appropriate location and distribution of human and material learning resources across the organization. This will involve: clarifying what learning content/programmatic areas should remain centralized and what can be decentralized or devolved; clarification of the roles that content/business owners play vis-à-vis the GLDC and those learning functions that are decentralized/devolved; the development of a quality assurance framework to be managed by the GLDC and divisions to be responsible for signing off any L&D content developed at the regional bureaux and country office levels; clarification of what further actions are necessary to promote the distribution of the ownership of learning across UNHCR. Ideally this process should be preceded by the study on cultural barriers to learning proposed in Recommendation 4.1.	LSB	Within 12 months
	b. Three years after the LSB's determination of the location and distribution of learning, a review is conducted to assess the effectiveness of the distribution and the appropriateness of further moves to decentralize and devolve learning. The review to consider the establishment of regional LSBs.	LSB	Within 12 months
	c. Regional bureau directors ensure the presence of senior L&D practitioners in each regional bureau working alongside senior HR partners to provide oversight of L&D support and presence on the ground to reflect the strategic priorities and drive contextually appropriate capacity-building. Senior L&D practitioners should have a dotted line to the GLDC, as do the bureaux-based functional specialists who have dotted lines to their divisions. Collaboration between the bureaux-based specialists in liaison with their HQ-based colleagues to consult with respective divisions over matters of content and content approval. It is expected that the closer proximity and working relationships between the proposed L&D specialists in each bureau and their functional specialist colleagues will enable more rapid development of content and subsequent sign-off.	Regional Bureau Directors	Within 12 months
	d. Country representatives assign the learning coordination function to an appropriate senior manager with the role reflected in their job title and clearly communicated to all staff. The role will include: identifying learning needs across all functions and their inclusion in the annual planning and budgeting process; ensuring that all staff and partners are informed of upcoming, relevant learning opportunities; liaising with the senior L&D practitioners in regional bureaux to coordinate country-based learning events; and providing advisory support to HR staff and supervisors in promoting the ownership of learning by managers and individuals (see also 2.2b).	Country Representatives	Within 12 months

	e. Managers are equipped to nurture the learning of their supervisees and are held accountable for the provision of that support. Critical learning support content is added to all management and leadership learning programmes.	DHR, GLDC	Within 12 months
	f. Funding for learning at the country level is significantly increased through a realignment of resources in support of the decentralization of learning. The amounts to be set in relation to each operation's prioritized actions in the Operating Level and multi-year plans.	LSB Regional Bureaux, Country Offices	Within 12 months
2.2 People management system that promotes ownership of learning by managers and individuals	a. Managers are held accountable for learning within their team and as part of their performance appraisal. Two-way appraisal mechanisms to be developed to encourage learning and reflection between managers and their supervisees.	DHR	Within 12 months
	b. People management system supports individual staff and affiliates so that they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided with guidance on how to self-determine their learning needs in relation to their existing role and future ambitions and how to map their learning. • Given greater control over building their skills through openly available modules and given the opportunity to build the skills needed in the flow of work. Individuals have certain days per year protected for their learning and they are encouraged to share the learning with their teams e.g. through team meetings, brown bag lunches or blogs. • Have access to internal cost-effective coaching and mentoring programmes such as alumni, pro bono, "low bono" and external certification. 	DHR and GLDC	Within 12 months

Recommendation 3. Learning is championed by individuals, managers and the organization

UNHCR develops a whole organization approach to actively engage, align, optimize and influence a culture for learning.

Strategic action	Proposed specific actions	Responsibility	Timing
3.1 Foster a robust learning culture where managers model learning behaviours and learning is encouraged across all levels of the organization.	a. The GLDC and the Transformation and Change Service (TCS), supported by the SMC, undertake a joint exploration of how learning can be "championed" within the UNHCR culture and its operations, and examine how to address existing challenges/barriers to openness and trust that are required to develop an effective learning culture.	GLDC and TCS	Within 12 months
	b. Championing learning by senior managers becomes an integral part of the organization's culture where modelling of learning behaviours is witnessed throughout the workforce. Central to establishing a vibrant learning culture is the adoption of "in-the-flow-of-work" approaches. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning leaders are present to open flagship and important programmes that are key to driving organizational goals to help signal the 	Regional Bureau Directors, Division Directors and Country Representatives	Within 12 months

	<p>importance of learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers model learning behaviours; share their own learning and promote learning activities they have come across that are relevant to their staff teams. The leadership, senior managers and supervisors model learning behaviours through sharing what they have learned (e.g. posting links to articles, books, blogs and videos to their teams). 		
	c. Managers are made responsible, held accountable for, and equipped to support their supervisees to lead on their own learning, through for example: supporting independent self-paced learning in the office; participation in CoPs; shadowing and job swaps; and participation in selected workshops.	DHR	Within 12 months
	d. The GLDC to develop tools and guidance that support learning approaches to be integrated and embedded in planning and organizational processes. GLDC works with L&D specialists in the regional bureaux who will liaise with and support learning coordinators in-country to ensure that these approaches are incorporated into organizational processes. Regionally developed CoPs are to be coordinated with existing and new CoPs to avoid duplication and facilitate cross-regional exchange and learning.	GLDC, Regional Bureaux and Learning Coordinators	Within 12 months
	e. Reflective learning practices such as after action reviews, peer learning group evaluations and lessons learned mechanisms are developed and mainstreamed within the organization. Methods for capturing, sharing and transferring learning in and from ongoing operations are improved.	Divisions, Regional Bureaux, Country Representatives, GLDC	Within 12 months and ongoing

Recommendation 4. UNHCR employs agile learning approaches

UNHCR creates appropriate learning structures and approaches that enable scaling, nimbleness and agility.

Strategic action	Proposed specific actions	Responsibility	Timing
4.1 Improve the accessibility, availability and transparency to formal learning offers	a. The time-limited Learning Systems Board delineates the purposes of the new infrastructure, the constraints and necessary priority investments.	LSB	Within 12 months
	b. The GLDC upgrades Learn and Connect at the earliest opportunity to a system that provides the following capabilities: offline working; multiple collaborations (collaborative capabilities); identical content across multiple languages. Integration with the new human resource and financial management system being developed by HR and Finance to replace MSRP should be considered.	GLDC	As soon as feasible given current contracts
	c. All decisions made around accessibility and eligibility of learning programmes are transparent and communicated to anyone applying for a workshop or learning programme.	GLDC, DHR, Regional Bureaux, Country Representatives	Within 12 months

4.2 Make learning content development and delivery agile and scalable	a. The GLDC and content owners move away from the traditional resource-intensive design approaches to agile and simplified design processes, which involve learners in the design, such as Minimum Viable Product (MVP), and the GLDC upskills workforce on these processes organizationally. A policy target length for new learning programmes is set at six weeks (or under 30 hours) as a means of enabling more rapid upskilling opportunities.	GLDC	Within 12 months
	b. Micro-learning and other “in-the-flow-of-work” approaches are mainstreamed as modalities to provide learning content rapidly and responsively and at the point of need. Annex 2 provides an infographic on the various ways that micro-learning can be used to drip-feed content in different ways for different learners.	Divisions, GLDC Regional Bureaux	Within 12 months
	c. Certification and longer learning programmes to be modularized and broken down into levels (introductory, intermediate and advanced) and made accessible to a wider cadre of staff.	GLDC	Within 12 months
	d. Learning modalities that reach scale more effectively such as live online facilitation methods supported by asynchronous methods as used by the Presencing Institute, Geneva Learning Foundation and UNSSC, replace the more costly HQ face-to-face workshops which limit participation.	Regional Bureaux, GLDC, Divisions	Within 12 months
4.3 Establish feedback mechanisms and capacity assessments that inform strategic workforce planning	New methods and approaches for the rapid diagnosis of learning needs are defined and rolled out; e.g. focus groups, sampling new starters and other forms of qualitative employee feedback data can help to understand how and when people learn, and what are the barriers to their learning, and provide rapid feedback mechanisms that do not need comprehensive learning needs assessments.	GLDC and Strategic Workforce Planning in DHR	Within 12 months

Recommendation 5. Facilitate critical connections

The organization creates learning environments that allow people to connect, collaborate and share knowledge when and how they need to.

Strategic action	Proposed specific actions	Responsibility	Timing
5.1 Join up between people management, learning and change processes to ensure that L&D aligns with organizational goals and emerging needs/priorities	a. HR, L&D and Change Management/TCS collaborate more closely to support the LSB in driving the process of moving to the new paradigm and identifying projects that will encourage more joined-up working.	LSB, DHR, GLDC, Regional Bureaux, TCS	Within 12 months
5.2 Amplify learning and good practices across the organization through	The GLDC moves from being a “provider of training” to a “facilitator and an enabler of learning”. To facilitate this transition, the GLDC does the following:	GLDC	Within 12 months

a central hub that promotes and curates learning	a. It undertakes a skills audit to identify the newly required skills already present in its team, identifies the gaps and brings in the necessary consultancy support and expertise.	GLDC	Within 12 months
	b. It expands Learn and Connect to serve as a central hub promoting and curating learning for the workforce and partners and increasingly curates courses and materials from local and regional levels as well as internationally and ensures their availability to the wider workforce and partners.	GLDC	Within 12 months
	c. It facilitates and upskills the workforce on team learning, sharing and exchanges; supports CoPs and other learning groups across all divisions, regional bureaux and country offices, and provides training and support on how to facilitate them; anchors any regional CoPs in the existing global ones (where they exist) in order to avoid the potential proliferation of separate regional platforms that could not benefit or let others benefit from cross-regional exchanges.	GLDC	Within 12 months
	d. The quality assurance system to be developed by LSB in conjunction with SMC (Recommendation 2.1a) enables the organization to ensure the quality of learning content being created by multiple sources across the organization. This will require the clarification of the roles that content/business owners play vis-à-vis the GLDC and those learning functions that are decentralized/devolved. The system to build on current sign-off arrangements by divisions and the GLDC. Responsibility for the quality assurance of key learning activities to be held and managed by the GLDC and the divisions.	LSB, GLDC, Divisions	Within 12 months
5.3 Form strategic partnerships and actively champion learning within the UN system	a. DHR develops relationships with a range of humanitarian and corporate organizations to learn from them and provide opportunities for job-swapping, shadowing and joint projects.	DHR	Within 12 months
	b. UNHCR becomes an active champion and supporter of a “One UN” approach to learning. It offers to lead learning efforts in those areas such as protection learning where it has a unique and well-developed expertise. The development of “One UN” learning offers in such areas as Management Learning, Partnership Working and Soft Skills Learning should be approached as collaboratively as possible.	DHR and GLDC	Within 12 months
	c. UNHCR becomes an “agency of partnership” that recognizes the vital role played by implementing and operational partners in the delivery and fulfilment of its mandate. It actively supports not only their learning but also seeks to improve its own learning in how to be a “good partner” and collaborate effectively with other organizations.	Divisions, GLDC	Within 12 months
	d. UNHCR seeks university validation for its key flagship course in Protection in order to provide recognition and transferability of the qualification, and supports bureaux to develop relationships with local universities for the validation of UNHCR learning for the local workforce and the joint development of short courses.	GLDC, Regional Bureaux and Country Offices	Within 12 months

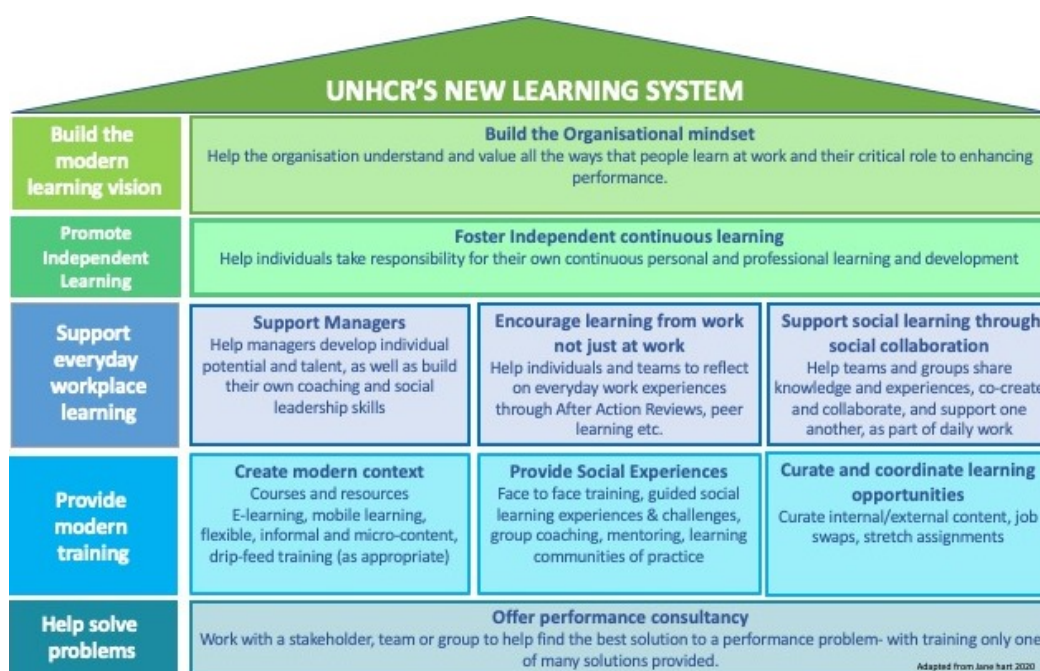
Recommendation 6. UNHCR makes data-informed decisions with regards to L&D investments

UNHCR ensures that reliable and credible business intelligence and data are available to key stakeholders to enable them to make better informed decisions about learning and development.

Strategic action	Proposed specific action	Responsibility	Timing
6.1 Track progress made against the implementation strategy	UNHCR as part of its policy update establishes a means of assessing how well the learning system is performing. Five critical areas to be monitored, tracked and evaluated are suggested in Annex 3. Quarterly reports of progress are presented to the SMC by the GLDC and the chair of the LSB.	SET	Within 12 months
6.2 Reform indicator framework to measure outcomes on organizational performance from L&D	The GLDC adds to its existing set of indicators more incisive learning performance indicators such as productivity gains, agility improvements, engagement rates and “time to competency”. Learning dashboards incorporating a range of indicators are developed to support informed decision-making at organizational, regional, country and sub-office levels.	GLDC	Within 12 months
6.3 Conduct evaluations to ensure the learning system is performing optimally	The GLDC’s evaluation function is enhanced to enable more decentralized evaluations to be carried out. As well as using more robust impact measurement and more follow-up evaluations of organizationally critical learning programmes, evaluations are to link more directly to the enhanced monitoring and tracking of learning offers outlined in 6.1a above. The GLDC’s evaluation function to include the capacity to support and train functional learning units, content owners and regionally based L&D specialists to rapidly evaluate learning offers and approaches to enable mid-course modifications in line with 3.2a and b above. The revised policy should stipulate that the Evaluation Service conducts at least one or two centralized evaluations on critical organizational learning issues per year and necessary funding is allocated for this.	LSB	Within 12 months

Through addressing the six Systemic Actions the necessary conditions will be set to allow for a free-flowing, whole-of-organization approach to learning. Figure 18 illustrates what a healthy, modern workplace learning system could look like for UNHCR.

Figure 18: UNHCR's new learning system



Source: KonTerra team adaptation of original by Hart, J. (2020) “Modern Workplace Learning 2020”.

Annex 1. Evaluation Matrix

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
KEQ1- To what extent is UNHCR's learning system (as framed by the 2012 Learning Policy) functioning effectively and appropriately so that it is contributing to the development of staff and the organization to meet evolving operational needs.				
<p>1.1 How appropriate and effective is the broad content, quality and accessibility of the learning and development opportunities provided to staff, affiliates and partners, to the creation of a learning culture and to the future strategy and needs of UNHCR?</p> <p>(Relates to UNHCR Learning Policy principles 'learning is accessible, effective and strategic', 'learning is part of the culture' and 'learning is more than training'.)</p>	<p>The evaluation needs to get an oversight of a sample of the general structure, quality and accessibility of the learning and development provided to staff, affiliates and partners. This would entail looking at processes such as needs analysis, design, assessments, evaluation, communication and administration.</p> <p>We take 'strategy' to mean what the organization does to stay relevant and alive. Strategy is a mixture of espoused strategy (e.g. HR and Learning policies) and emergent strategy to deliver realized strategy (i.e. what it actually practices). In other words, 'strategy' is primarily the way in which an organization handles uncertainty. Therefore, we need to explore how well UNHCR in general, and HR/GLDC in particular, has responded strategically to changing circumstances. By learning culture we refer to all learning that goes on at all levels across the organization at all times which includes formal, non-formal, informal and social learning. We will need to consider how learning is recognized, nurtured and promoted.</p>	<p>1.1.1 How appropriately are learning needs identified by GLDC? By Regional Bureaux, by Divisions?</p> <p>1.1.2. Measures of the quality of the learning and training offers provided by GLDC, specifically the mandatory trainings and a sample of learning programs needed for functional clearances and are seminal to the work (such as for example ProGres V4, WEM, Integrity, Protection, Program, Finance, HR, SLM/MLP).</p> <p>1.1.3. The degree to which the learning offers provided by GLDC vis-à-vis others (Regional Bureaux, Divisions) contribute to organizational needs and UNHCRs strategic priorities?</p> <p>1.1.4. Attitudes to the nature and quality of skills and abilities within and outside UNHCR and how effectively and appropriately these are developed.</p> <p>1.1.5. Evidence of how widely UNHCR is promoting a learning culture and/or learning that is not training?</p> <p>1.1.6. Evidence of learning need and learning carried out being recognized and acted on in the performance appraisal process</p> <p>1.1.7 Staff perception on existence of a learning culture across the organization.</p> <p>1.1.8. Degree of linkage and integration between the formal learning provision and informal learning taking place within the organization.</p>	<p>Staff survey</p> <p>In-country focal group discussions and interviews</p> <p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Analysis of learning reviews conducted by GLDC</p> <p>Desk sample survey of learning content and curricula</p> <p>In-country FGDs and interviews</p>	<p>Key informant interviews</p> <p>Interviews and FGDs with staff, affiliates and partners</p> <p>Quality assurance indicators for humanitarian sector learning and development (HPASS)</p> <p>Staff survey data analysis</p> <p>People Strategy 2016-21</p> <p>Data analysis from HR</p> <p>Learning policy and guidelines</p> <p>Reviews/evaluations</p> <p>Learning and development operational plans</p> <p>Sector mapping study (KEQ2)</p>

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
<p>1.2. How appropriate are the purpose, users and development of the learning offers by GLDC and also those of Divisions and Regional Bureaux. How appropriate are their measurement and reporting processes for UNHCR's corporate priorities and future context? (Relates to UNHCR Learning Policy principles 'learning is strategic' and 'learning is effective'.)</p>	<p>This forms the bedrock of the evaluation. It requires collecting data on both the espoused and 'in practice' purposes of promoting learning in UNHCR, as well as who does and does not benefit from them. It also covers inquiring into motivations and values, since purpose implies these dimensions. The beneficiaries can be at several levels, individual, workplace, organizational and the humanitarian sector. Given the time and budget constraints, the focus will be on individual and workplace learning.</p> <p>As well as considering the current systems for measuring and reporting learning and development this sub-question also considers to the measurement and reporting required for UNHCR in the future. This requires the exploration of the values and assumptions that underpin data collection about 'learning' and how it is applied.</p>	<p>1.2.1. Evidence of multiple types of promotion of learning</p> <p>1.2.2. Identifying who benefits and doesn't benefit from learning in UNHCR taking into consideration age, gender, diversity (race, ethnicity, disability status).</p> <p>1.2.3. Contributions to motivations and values in individual and workplace learning.</p> <p>1.2.4. Evidence of supply and demand of learning and development and evidence of gaps</p> <p>1.2.5. Alignment of GLDC learning offers to the 2012 Learning Policy (this includes any promotion of formal, non-formal, informal and social learning).</p> <p>1.2.6. Performance management procedures and practices (both at an individual and organizational level)</p> <p>1.2.7. Evidence of the performance of the learning system in terms of monitoring, measuring and assessing.</p> <p>1.2.8. How well-informed senior managers are of the effectiveness of the learning opportunities provided and their alignment with the strategic objectives of the organization.</p>	<p>In-country Focus Group Discussions (FGD)</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>Desk survey</p> <p>Analysis of advertised learning from GLDC against the 2012 Learning Policy.</p> <p>Analysis of measurement and reporting systems</p>	<p>Marketing documents, newsletters, circulars</p> <p>Analysis of staff demographics</p> <p>HR policies, People Strategy 2016-21, GLDC Learning Policy and guidelines</p> <p>Learning Needs Analysis</p> <p>UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021</p> <p>Learn & Connect Data</p> <p>HR annual performance evaluations</p> <p>GLDC's measurement and reporting procedures and systems</p> <p>GLDC evaluation reports and learning reviews</p>

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
				Local, regional, or global LNAs
<p>1.3. How appropriate and effective are the coordination, management and support systems to ensure that learning and development is a shared responsibility within UNHCR? (Relates to UNHCR Learning Policy principle 'learning is a shared responsibility'.)</p>	<p>This will look at how available resources (people, things, money, skills) for learning and development are coordinated and managed within the environmental and organizational constraints facing UNHCR. Some of these constraints are 'givens' (refugee trends, UNHCR culture, staff rotation) – so we need to know how well these givens are managed. Some of the constraints will be under the control of UNHCR (e.g. budgets, governing boards, standards of practice), largely to ensure that those managing the system are focused on the purposes and the needs of persons of concern.</p> <p>The degree to which learning supports, and is integrated with, staff development will be considered. Learning provision that is not integrated into the needs and work of teams and is not followed-up by managers is unlikely to be of real benefit to the work of those teams and to the overall effectiveness of the organization. Learning has to be a shared responsibility to be effective. HR and management need to incentivize and encourage desirable behaviours and the completion of beneficial learning.</p>	<p>1.3.1. Degree to which managers feel that the learning offered and accessed aligns with and supports the work of their teams</p> <p>1.3.2. Degree to which managers follow-up with staff who have completed courses to assess how they are applying their learning in the workplace</p> <p>1.3.3. Degree to which operational units collaborate and cooperate with each other in learning and development (e.g. sharing expertise, liaising with GLDC)</p> <p>1.3.4. Local and regional evidence of knowledge sharing about L&D between divisions or departments</p> <p>1.3.5. How it is affected by and affects the norms and standards of UNHCR</p> <p>1.3.6. How well the learning and development resources are managed and the appropriateness of the balance between management and control based on corporate priorities and future context?</p> <p>1.3.6. What are the Authorities, Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities (ARRA) within UNHCR with regards to the management and control of resources for staff learning and development?</p>	<p>Key stakeholder interviews</p> <p>In-country FGDs and interviews</p> <p>Desk survey</p> <p>Analysis of budgets and expenditures</p>	<p>Interviews with managers, international and national staff as well as affiliate workforce at HQs and the field</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>Management briefings and audit reports by UNHCR's Inspector General's Office and the UN Office of Internal Oversight Service.</p> <p>Management responses to reviews/evaluations of learning i.e. audit trail.</p> <p>Lessons learnt documentation</p> <p>Learning policy and guidelines</p>

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
		<p>1.3.7. How certain key institutional realities (e.g. staff rotation, resource limitations, sudden onset of emergencies) are affecting the controlling and managing of resources for learning and development.</p> <p>1.3.8. The degree to which resource allocations to GLDC align with organizational policy goals</p>		<p>GLDC's budget and expenditure data between 2012-2019 and divisional spending on learning and development if easily accessible.</p> <p>Learning Governance Board minutes 2010-18 and ARRA mechanisms that have superseded the LGB since its 2018 disbandment.</p> <p>Steering Group minutes</p> <p>Standards and practices docs such as the Learning Guidance doc.</p>
<p>1.4. How appropriate are the different approaches to learning and how effective are these in context of UNHCR's regionalization/decentralization? How appropriate is the learning design, development and delivery expertise in the GLDC in relation to the current and future needs of UNHCR?</p>	<p>The cadre of learning design, development, and delivery specialists that is largely concentrated in GLDC represents a significant and valuable resource. It is necessary to understand how staff involved in learning design and delivery are trained and deployed and how fit for purpose these methods and arrangements are for UNHCR in the future such as the working relationship between the design and development specialists in GLDC and the subject matter experts located in the other divisions.</p>	<p>1.4.1. Efficiency and effectiveness of GLDC's approach to learning design, development and delivery per the different learning processes</p> <p>1.4.2. Managers' and staffs' satisfaction with the curricula, learning modalities and other supports provided by the learning specialists.</p>	<p>Desk survey and key stakeholder interviews</p> <p>Results of the Training of Trainer evaluation</p> <p>Staff survey</p>	<p>Learning governance meeting minutes.</p> <p>Learning Review of ToT report</p> <p>Training of Trainers documentation</p>

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
(Relates to UNHCR Learning Policy principle 'learning is strategic'.)	Furthermore, it is important to understand how UNHCR recognizes when the expertise is not appropriate, how it identifies these situations and what mechanisms it has to address this and how it responds.	1.4.3. Trainer/facilitator satisfaction with support and development they personally receive on a regular basis.	Analysis of staff time and deployments	End of course evaluations on trainer performance in relation to the chosen sample of courses. Internal future scoping documents, external forecasting such as WEF workforce forecasting, State of the Humanitarian System Reports etc
<p>1.5. How appropriate and effective are UNHCR's current policies, standards and procedures for enabling future learning and development within the organization?</p> <p>(Relates to UNHCR Learning Policy principles 'learning is accessible, effective and strategic'.)</p>	Essentially this covers issues of the standards and values that underpin the development and assessment of skills, knowledge, attitudes and broader learning issues. These will include organizational culture, formal policies espoused standards of ethics, HR monitoring, recruitment and promotional practices, the formal and unspoken operational rules and practices. Basically, to what extent does UNHCR 'walk its talk' when it comes to learning and development.	<p>1.5.1. Staff perception on issues of skills, knowledge, attitudes and broader learning issues in relation to organizational culture, formal policies, eligibility criteria, recruitment and promotional practices, the formal and unspoken operational rules and practices.</p> <p>1.5.2. How well UNHCR in general, and HR/GLDC in particular has responded strategically to changing circumstances and the evolving learning and development landscape.</p> <p>1.5.3. What are the major limitations in addressing the future learning and development needs of the organization?</p>	<p>Desk survey and key informant interviews with HR and GLDC,</p> <p>Staff survey</p> <p>In-country FGDs</p>	<p>Learning and HR policies and guidelines</p> <p>GLDC's learning and development budgets and expenditures between 2012-2019</p> <p>People Strategy 2016-21</p> <p>Country case studies</p>
KEQ 2: How relevant and useful to the UNHCR learning strategy are the structures, approaches, values and processes in other agencies and organizations in the UN and private sector?				
2.1. What are the important similarities and differences in the approach to learning and	The proposed set of comparator/related agencies includes UN agencies, the ICRC and INGOs operating in the humanitarian	2.1.1. Methods employed by UNHCR and comparator agencies on building learning cultures	Desk survey and key informant interviews	GLDC Annual reports

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
development between UNHCR and comparator/related agencies and in particular their approach to the tension between centralized and decentralized structures as they equip themselves for the future?	sector and also private and corporate sector organizations that have developed innovative approaches that may be highly relevant to UNHCR as it equips itself for the future. How they approach and address the tension between centralized and decentralized learning provision will be explored in terms of drawing out lessons relevant to UNHCR.	<p>2.1.2. Comparison on how increased numbers of staff are being reached due to new approaches by UNHCR and comparator agencies.</p> <p>2.1.3. Trends amongst comparator agencies on localising L&D functions.</p> <p>2.1.3. Comparison of types of learning partnerships formed for delivering learning activities.</p> <p>2.1.4. Comparison on adherence to learning and development quality standards</p>		<p>Comparator agency L&D reports and policy docs</p> <p>Cornerstone staff survey data reports</p> <p>Interviews with comparator agencies</p>
2.2 How successfully is GLDC monitoring and analysing external developments relevant to its work/mission? How successfully is GLDC/UNHCR adopting new approaches and methodologies to address scale and reach?	What innovative practices are happening outside of UNHCR that it can benefit from? How effectively is GLDC monitoring and analysing external developments relevant to its work/mission? How effectively is UNHCR/GLDC adopting new approaches? What factors limit GLDC from monitoring its external environment and being innovative?	<p>2.2.1. How aware UNHCR has been about innovative practices and how it has responded.</p> <p>2.2.2. Evidence of GLDC analysing the external landscape.</p> <p>2.2.3. The existence of relevant 'innovative' practices within the humanitarian sector and elsewhere.</p> <p>2.2.4. How other organizations are creating learning cultures within their organizations and the factors that are affecting their cultures - positively and negatively.</p> <p>2.2.5. Innovative synergies between HR and L&D systems that help orgs reach their goals.</p>	Mapping survey, desk survey	<p>Reports on attendance at HR or L&D conferences or other related events.</p> <p>Sector survey interview analysis, future forecasting documents</p> <p>Commissioned reports and scoping studies, excerpts of learning evaluations, PEST analysis</p>

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
2.3. How successfully is UNHCR/GLDC in partnering and cost-sharing learning activities with other UN and non-UN agencies and what opportunities are there for partnering and cost-sharing?	<p>Which other UN and non-UN agencies is UNHCR collaborating with in terms of partnering and cost-sharing in relation to learning and development activities?</p> <p>How successful are these efforts? The perspectives of donor organizations on these issues will be explored.</p>	2.3.1. Numbers of partnerships and cost-sharing between GLDC and external partners: Trend analysis between 2016-2019	Key stakeholder interviews, desk survey	<p>GLDC Annual reports, evaluation reports</p> <p>Stakeholder interviews with GLDC, Divisions and Regional Bureaux</p> <p>Interviews with key stakeholders in donor organizations</p>
KEQ 3. What are the implications of the findings for the values, approaches, structures and processes necessary for a strategic approach to learning and development within UNHCR?				
3.1 What should UNHCR be doing to become more strategic in its learning and development and what role could an organization-wide learning strategy play in this?	How appropriate would it be for UNHCR to develop a Learning and Development Strategy and what frameworks and elements might it include? (Strategy subsystem). In addition to the above, addressing this question will require exploring the dynamics, and trends around capacity and capability development in INGOs	<p>3.1.1. Identification of gaps in key components of learning & developments in current learning documentation</p> <p>3.1.2. Trends in other UN orgs and INGOs around capacity and capability development</p>	<p>Desk survey</p> <p>Staff interviews and staff survey</p> <p>Interviews with comparator agencies</p>	Learning policy and guidelines and operational documentation
3.2 What could be an effective GLDC role and structure to support effective learning and development within UNHCR as the organization adapts itself to better face the future?	This question will require exploring the dynamics, constraints and trends within the broader humanitarian system.	<p>3.2.1. Degree and type of unmet needs of UNHCR's staff cadres</p> <p>3.2.2. Comparison of current role and structure with other org's structures.</p>	Staff survey, focus group and key stakeholder interviews, sector mapping	Staff survey, sector mapping and stakeholder interview data analysis
3.3 How feasible is GLDC's aspiration of offering learning and development services to other UN agencies and how does it need to adjust its offer in order to be considered a centre of excellence?	How feasible is GLDC's aspiration of offering learning and development services to other UN agencies and how does it need to adjust its offer in order to be considered a centre of excellence?	3.3.1. Identification of its unique learning offer in the UN system	Key stakeholder interviews, sector mapping, desk survey	Sector mapping and stakeholder interview data, quality assurance indicators for humanitarian sector

Assessment Question	Issues to be explored (assuming adequacy of resources and time)	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Sources
		3.3.2. Extent of adherence to recognized quality standards for being a learning centre of excellence		learning and development

Annex 2: Additional information in support of the six systemic recommendations

Role description for the Learning Systems Board

The purpose of the LSB is to monitor, guide and steer the shift from the old paradigm to the new paradigm and to ensure the adoption of all six systemic recommendations in their first years of implementation. The LSB will identify the necessary priority investments and track risks to achieving a successful transition to the new paradigm. The LSB to be accountable to and report to SMC. The LSB would need to include global expertise in modern workplace learning approaches which could be brought in externally.

Strategic areas for consideration in updating the Learning Policy

1. Where the boundaries of UNHCR's Learning System are set in order to clearly identify who and what needs to be included and excluded so as to ensure that the system is feasible within identified constraints and is able to deliver the anticipated benefits. Key questions here will be how Implementing and Operational Partners and Persons of Concern should be included.
2. Identify the specific beneficiaries of the Learning System and how they are intended to benefit and the priority to be given to different beneficiaries of the learning system i.e. workforce, implementing and operational partners
3. Determine how the Learning System will be promoted and sustained within UNHCR, key partners and stakeholders;
4. Articulate clear ambitions as to how learning will link to and enable organizational performance.
5. Identifies the critical inter-connections within the learning system that are necessary to sustain it.
6. Key investments in learning are added to UNHCR's Strategic Risk Register.
7. Critical skill gaps are widely shared with the workforce to stimulate upskilling or reskilling to fill the gaps.
8. identifies the key learning programmes to be provided in at least French, Spanish, Arabic as well as English
9. Determine ways to break down silos and ensure that key staff within HR, L&D and Change Management/OD functions can be brought together regularly to drive and support the process of moving to the new paradigm.
10. Clarify the roles that content/business owners play vis-a-vis GLDC and the decentralized learning functions.

Five evaluative questions to be used in monitoring, tracking and evaluating learning in the new paradigm

1. Are the anticipated benefits of each of the six systemic actions being sufficiently realized? If not are the observed benefits appropriate?
2. How significantly are the management and control procedures helping or hindering the achievement of these benefits?
3. Is appropriate knowledge and skills being applied within these management and control procedures
4. How well do the strategic, operational, management, external relations and core principles of the learning system work inform and support each other

5. Does the learning system and its six components receive sufficient support from influential internal and external stakeholders to ensure its long-term sustainability, adaptability and resilience?

Annex 3. Survey questionnaire

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

Thank you for participating in this survey.

This survey is about your views on the opportunities for learning provided by UNHCR. By 'opportunities for learning' we mean opportunities that are both external to UNHCR and internal to UNHCR. They include on-line and off-line courses, webinars, locally organized workshops, management supervision, mentoring, coaching and other kinds of on-the-job learning.

Your participation will contribute to future decisions that will help improve workforce learning and development, with the aim of ultimately strengthening our ability to deliver results for persons of concern.

When reporting the results of the survey, we will ensure that you cannot be identified.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

ARE YOU ABLE TO ACCESS AND PARTICIPATE IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING?

1. In the last 12 months, where have you found out information about opportunities to improve your knowledge and skills? Select all that apply.

- Courses and material listed on Learn and Connect
- Internet sources other than Learn and Connect
- Suggestions from my managers
- Suggestions from my local colleagues
- Suggestions from non-local people who do similar work to me
- Email invitation or notice from Global Learning and Development Center (GLDC)
- UNHCR Intranet
- Other (please specify)

2. In the past 12 months, what types of learning opportunities have you **participated** in? Select all that apply to you.

- Webinar
- Job shadowing Job
- exchange

- An opportunity that was a mixture of approaches (eg workshops and on-line course)
- Face-to-face workshop
- Podcast
- Mentoring by a person who was not my supervisor
- Coaching by my supervisor
- A group of people who do similar work to me but do not work in my workplace (eg Community of Practice, whatsapp group, pee to-peer network)
- Coaching or mentoring of my whole team Audio
- book, ebook, interactive PDF
- One-on-one on the job training
- Video (eg YouTube, Instagram, Blogs) On-
- line course
- Blogs, on-line discussion group
- I have not participated in any learning opportunity Other (please specify)

7. What proportion of these learning opportunities were provided by UNHCR?

- All
- Most
- About half
- A few
- None or N/A

8. In the past 12 months what were the **personal reasons** for not taking up or completing an opportunity for skill and knowledge development? Indicate all that apply to you.

- High workload
- Personal circumstances (eg family commitments)
- Problems with internet connectivity at home
- Problems with internet connectivity at work
- Lack of access to appropriate equipment in the office
- Lack of access to appropriate equipment at home
- Poor quality of the learning opportunity
- Lack of the ability to work offline and then upload my work when I am next online
- Lack of support from supervisor
- Lack of support from colleagues
- Opportunity only available in English
-

Cost to myself

- The learning opportunity would take too long to complete
- I didn't like the type of learning opportunity (eg workshop, video, webinar)
- The scheduling didn't fit with my work commitments
- Insufficient relevance of the content to my work
- Personal impairment (eg sight, hearing, mobility, reading)
- Nature of my employment contract
- I did not complete the opportunity because I had learned all I needed to know
- I participated in every learning opportunity open to me

Other (please specify)

9. In the past 12 months have you been **excluded from** an opportunity to develop your knowledge and skills because :

- There was no course or learning opportunity for the knowledge and skill I needed My
- grade within UNHCR
- I'm not a member of UNHCR staff
- I have not worked long enough in UNHCR I was
- not supported by my supervisor
- I was not supported by my country or regional bureau I was
- not selected by a course or workshop organizer
- I applied but was not selected due to limited number of places available
- I applied but was not selected as the opportunity was not directly linked to my current functions Cost to
- the organization
- I have not been excluded from a learning opportunity

Other (please specify)

10. When have you typically studied on-line courses?

- Entirely during work time
- Mostly during work time
- About 50/50
- Mostly outside of work time
- Entirely outside of work time
- I have not studied a course on-line

7. What devices do you use for on-line learning? Click all options that apply to you.

	Office Property	Personal Property	Shared with colleagues	Shared with others
Desktop Computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laptop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smartphone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tablet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. and Connect is UNHCRs website that contains information on courses, video, workshops, webinars etc. Please state whether **in general** you **agree or disagree** with the following statements

	Agree	Disagree	No opinion or N/A
I am aware of Learn and Connect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have never used Learn and Connect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the past 12 months I have used Learn and Connect to find a course, video etc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The description of the learning opportunity gave me enough information to make an accurate choice of study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the past 12 months I have used Learn and Connect to enroll in a course, watch a video etc	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the past 12 months I have used Learn and Connect to submit feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn and Connect is easy to navigate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn and Connect is difficult to use because the descriptions are in English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any other comments about Learn and Connect?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

APPROPRIATE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

This section explores how appropriate the learning opportunities were to your job, your personal motivations and the ways you prefer to develop your knowledge and skills.

9. In general, which ways do you prefer to improve your knowledge and skills.

	High Preference	Medium Preference	Low preference	Zero preference
Webinar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job exchange	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An opportunity that is a mixture of approaches (eg workshops and on-line course)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Face-to-face workshop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentoring by a person who is not my supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching by my supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A group of people who do similar work to me but do not work in my workplace (eg Community of Practice, whatsapp group, peer-to-peer network)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching or mentoring of my whole team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Video (eg YouTube, Instagram, blog)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One-on-one on the job training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-line course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blog, on-line discussion group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please make any comments about your preferences

* 10. In the past twelve months what were the **main reasons** for participating in an opportunity to develop your skills and abilities. **Select no more than 5**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The location of workshop/course/event | <input type="checkbox"/> Because I was instructed by my manager or supervisor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The facilitator or presenter has a good reputation | <input type="checkbox"/> For my personal development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The timing was appropriate | <input type="checkbox"/> For my career development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The programme content and objectives | <input type="checkbox"/> My organization needed the skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition/accreditation by academic or professional organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> It would help me do my job better |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Delivery method (eg on-line, off-line, workshop, blended) | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to network with colleagues from other parts of the world |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended by supervisor or manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to travel outside my country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It was a mandatory course | <input type="checkbox"/> The opportunity would be recorded on my Factsheet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended by other colleague | <input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy learning new things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

USEFULNESS OF THE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

We have asked questions about how accessible and appropriate your learning opportunities were. Now we are interested in how useful your improved knowledge and skills have been to you.

11. Thinking back over the past 12 months, how true are these statements about the **usefulness** of your new knowledge and skills

	Completely true	Mostly true	Occasionally true	Not at all true
The learning opportunities increased my leadership skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The learning opportunities increased my technical skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can work more effectively in a team or group because of my new skills and knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The learning opportunities increased my collaboration and partnership skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The learning opportunities increased my inter-personal skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The training and learning services provided by the UNHCR Global Learning and Development Centre helped me to improve my performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. In your experience which of these have been important ways of improving **learning by your team**.

- Unstructured time put aside for learning together
- Structured facilitated sessions for learning as a team
- Opportunities to learn from a specialist from outside UNHCR
- Reflective practice, such as sessions that review recent experiences (eg after action review)
- The team taking a course or workshop together
- Other (please specify)

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNING

This section covers organizational factors, including those that helped and hindered you applying your newly acquired knowledge and skills.

13. back over the past 12 months, how true are these statements about how your learning opportunities were managed. If the question doesn't relate to you then select N/A.

	N/A	Completely true	Mostly true	Occasionally true	Not true at all
Overall my learning opportunities are supported by my supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was told of the reasons for rejecting my application for a course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I developed a learning plan with my supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My learning is reviewed every year in my performance review	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a supervisor I prepare a learning plan for all my staff every year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a supervisor I review my staff's learning every year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have someone who gives me advice about my work from time to time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had active support from my manager in the first 6 months of my employment in my current role	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The in-country Learning Coordinator supports effectively local training and learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have had difficulty applying new knowledge and skills because of the organizational culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My training was poorly timed in relation to the knowledge and skills required for my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The demands of my job hindered me applying my new knowledge and skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support from my colleagues helped me apply my new knowledge and skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the organization's methods for identifying learning needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please add any comments about the management of your learning?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

LEARNING CONTEXT

It is be important to match knowledge and skills development with the context of your job. This section explores wider issues that may affect the ability to apply your knowledge and skills.

14. extent do you feel UNHCR *as a whole* makes it easy to :

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely
Perform effectively within your particular functional area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work within the particular cultural context of your job location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operate effectively and sensitively with colleagues of different gender, age and cultural backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work effectively in teams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicate effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Solve problems effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enable you to work with other organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work in a non-blaming environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Try out innovative ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn new knowledge and skills from newly arrived staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manage the loss of skills and knowledge due to international staff rotation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. From your experience do you feel that the *overall approach* of UNHCR to knowledge and skill development is appropriate to :-

	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't know
Providing sufficient protection to persons of concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responding to emergencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empowering persons of concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing solutions for persons of concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responding to changes in the humanitarian sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working at the intersection of the humanitarian and development sectors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting a whole-of-society approach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expanding access to third country solutions (eg resettlement)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please add anything you would like to say about the context of your learning

16. this evaluation made only one recommendation to the UNHCR Senior Executive Team about improving the development and application of relevant knowledge and skills, what would that recommendation be?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

Some personal details that will help us analyse your response more precisely

17. Which languages do you understand sufficiently to be able to participate in a learning opportunity in that language? Mark all that apply.

- Arabic Chinese English French Russian
 Spanish

18. Who is your contract with

- UNHCR - National
 UNHCR - International
 Another UN agency
 A UNHCR Partner organization
 UNHCR affiliate workforce (eg UNOPS, Deployees, Individual Consultants/Contractors)
 Other (please specify)

19. If you are employed by a UN agency, what is your grade?

20. What is your area of work?

21. Where is your work for UNHCR based?

- Field Unit
- Field Office
- Sub Office
- Country Office
- Multi-Country Office
- Regional Bureau
- HQ Office (Geneva, Budapest, Copenhagen)
- Other (please specify)

22. In which country are you currently based?

23. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

24. To which age group do you belong?

- Under 25
- 25-30
- 31-40
- 41-55
- 55+

25. In total, how long have you worked for or partnered with UNHCR?

- Less than a year
- 1 -2 years
- 3- 5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

26. **Because of a health issue** do you have difficulty (check all that apply to you)

- Seeing, even if wearing glasses?
- Hearing, even if using a hearing aid?
- Walking or climbing steps?
- Remembering or concentrating?
- Communicating, understanding or being understood in you usual language?
- None of the above

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

Thank you for spending time on this survey.

Your answers will provide important information for improving opportunities for learning in UNHCR..

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact the Lead Evaluator John Borton johnborton@ntlworld.com If you have questions about the evaluation, please contact Mr. Henri van den Idsert vandenid@unhcr.org and Dr. Christine Fu fu@unhcr.org.

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