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**Progress toward implementing the “grand  
bargain” commitments**

*Summary*

This conference room paper summarizes the progress made in implementing UNHCR's commitments under the “grand bargain” since the update prepared for the seventy-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2019. Financial figures contained in this paper reflect the closure of the 2019 accounts.

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## I. Greater transparency

*UNHCR's commitment: publish open data allowing traceability of donors' funding throughout the transaction chain.*

1. Since it started to publish data in accordance with the standards of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) in September 2018, UNHCR has worked closely with partners under the transparency workstream, including towards the development of the IATI [humanitarian data portal](#). In May 2020, UNHCR provided the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) with a dedicated staff member to assist the Financial Tracking Service with the increased demand for financial data entry in the context of the COVID-19 response.

## II. More support and funding tools for local and national responders

*UNHCR's commitment: transfer at least 25 per cent of programme expenditures to local and national responders by the end of 2020.*

2. In 2019, UNHCR allocated \$1.376 billion to over 1,100 partners, including national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments and United Nations agencies. Of this, \$752.6 million was allocated to local responders, national NGOs and governments, including \$575 million to over 700 national NGOs. As a result, UNHCR met its target by transferring 25.8 per cent of its annual programme expenditure to local and national responders.

*UNHCR's commitment: expand investment in institutional capacity-building for national partners to support effective emergency preparedness.*

3. As of June 2019, all of UNHCR's local NGO partners receive 4 per cent of their partnership agreement amount to cover indirect support cost. In the past, this was only allocated to international NGOs at a rate of 7 per cent. Furthermore, for the first time and in line with UNHCR's regionalization process, NGO consultations were held at the regional level (Amman in June and in Pretoria in September 2019).

4. In 2019, UNHCR organized 3 situational emergency trainings in Armenia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia, with the participation of local government representatives as well as national and local NGO partners. In 2019, out of the 23 updated contingency plans, 17 (74 per cent) included the participation of local authorities and 18 (78 per cent) included local or national NGOs.

## III. Increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming

*UNHCR's commitment: double the amount of funds programmed for cash-based interventions (CBIs) in aid delivery by the end of 2020 as a proportion of its overall assistance.*

5. In 2019, UNHCR delivered \$646 million in cash assistance, representing 22 per cent of its overall programme expenditure. In so doing, UNHCR met its commitment to double cash assistance from the 2015 baseline of \$303 million<sup>1</sup>. Since 2016, UNHCR has delivered \$2.4 billion in cash assistance. To provide beneficiaries with the choice of how best to meet their needs, 95 per cent of UNHCR's cash assistance is broadly unrestricted, while one third is programmed to meet protection needs. About 80 per cent of UNHCR's cash assistance is distributed through banks and mobile money transfers, facilitating financial inclusion.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR's 2015 CBI baseline was initially reported at \$358 million as per the 2015 financial statement. In 2016, this amount was restated as \$303 million and included both direct and indirect implementations, due to accounts reclassification, as disclosed in the 2016 financial statement, Note 6.6 - Individual and family payments to beneficiaries.

6. Since 2016, institutionalization of the use of cash has enabled UNHCR to rapidly scale up CBIs when required. Arrangements currently exist in almost all UNHCR operations to facilitate CBIs. To date, more than 5,000 UNHCR staff have received training on CBIs. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 65 operations launched or expanded CBIs using a range of approaches, including the increased use of digital payments and monitoring, the frontloading of payments and the testing of new technologies (such as contactless biometrics).

7. Following the [cash assistance statement](#) issued by OCHA, UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in December 2018, common cash systems have been expanded. As a result, joint cash transfer mechanisms are now in place across 25 operations. Collaborative cash arrangements, which improve the effectiveness of the overall humanitarian response are being pursued in the seven focus countries under the Statement: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Niger and Yemen. The activities include the joint or collaborative procurement of financial services, data and system interoperability pilots, joint feasibility assessments, harmonized post-distribution monitoring and joint or harmonized targeting.

#### **IV. Reduce duplication and management costs with periodic functional reviews**

*UNHCR's commitment: expand the use of biometrics for refugee registration to a total of 75 country operations by 2020.*

8. The use of biometrics in refugee registration continued to be expanded in 2019, reaching 69 operations (compared to 62 in 2018). An additional 1.7 million refugees were biometrically registered by UNHCR and government partners, bringing the total to 8.7 million individuals. As a result of these efforts, 8 in 10 refugees over the age of five who have been registered now have a biometric identity.

*UNHCR's commitments: use technology and innovation to reduce the costs of delivering assistance; reduce the costs of procurement and logistics by 10 per cent by the end of 2020 through the use of shared services with partner agencies.*

9. Due to the increase in the number of persons of concern and rise in requirements, the relative procurement cost of goods and services decreased by 10 per cent in 2019, compared to the 2016 baseline. For the COVID-19 response, UNHCR has been working closely with WFP to deliver personal protective equipment (PPE) and other relief items to affected operations. UNHCR has also been benefiting from the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD), which stores and manages part of the PPE stock before it is transferred to UNHCR's global stockpiles in Accra and Dubai.

10. Effective January 2020, UNHCR reduced its indirect support cost from 7 per cent to 6.5 per cent against all voluntary earmarked financial contributions, with the exception of those for the operational reserve and Junior Professional Officers (JPOs).

11. From mid-2018 to June 2020, UNHCR and WFP co-chaired the Business Innovation Group (BIG), which was established to simplify, harmonize and consolidate system-wide practices, including through the establishment of global shared service centres, and common back offices and premises. UNHCR's responsibility for co-chairmanship of the BIG was handed over to the United Nations Development Coordination Office in June 2020. In July 2020, UNHCR established the Global Mobility and Infrastructure Service, which will focus on implementation of the BIG's work within UNHCR.

12. The COVID-19 response accelerated the ongoing process aimed at simplifying UNHCR's NGO partnership arrangements. Adjustments include flexibility for NGOs to make greater discretionary budget reallocations and the acceptance of electronic signatures. The UN Partner Portal launched in November 2018 by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, was expanded in 2019 with the inclusion of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as

well as the addition of French and Spanish versions. By mid-2020, some 12,000 partners had been registered on the portal.

13. In early 2020, UNHCR commissioned an independent review of individual donor assessments to capture the extent of their impact on operations. Based on data from the five largest humanitarian organizations, the exercise revealed a rising trend in the number of assessments carried out, the vast majority having been conducted by individual donor governments and taking place at the field level. The review will be finalized shortly and will be used as a reference to explore ways to reduce individual donor assessments.

## V. Improve joint and impartial needs assessments

*UNHCR's commitment: undertake coordinated joint needs assessments and continue sharing evidence-based needs assessment data.*

14. UNHCR has played a key role in establishing the COVID-19 Global Information Management, Assessment and Analysis Cell (GIMAC), which is co-led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), OCHA, UNHCR and the World Health Organization (WHO). With a dedicated inter-agency multifunctional team to respond to requests for multisectoral humanitarian needs assessments and situation analyses, the GIMAC has customized the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) for the COVID-19 response, optimizing it for the analysis of risk, protection concerns, health needs and the impact of government measures.

15. In 2020, UNHCR and WFP established a Joint Programme of Excellence and its Targeting Hub to strengthen joint programming and better meet the needs of vulnerable populations. The hub, composed of a remote joint expert team, will assist operations in conducting assessments that will feed into joint targeting strategies. Joint missions are planned to take place in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia.

16. In Colombia, UNHCR took part in a joint rapid multisector needs assessment in May 2020 to inform the revision of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Venezuelans, and carried out a second round in June to inform the COVID-19 response in this operation. In Turkey, UNHCR led the development of a harmonized, inter-agency comprehensive needs assessment tool to understand the impact of COVID-19 on refugee access to services, information and coping mechanisms. In Lebanon, UNHCR conducted two multisectoral assessments, with the support of its partners, to the impact of the deteriorating economic conditions linked to the pandemic.

## VI. A participation revolution

*UNHCR's commitment: ensure equal (50 per cent) and meaningful participation of women and adolescent girls in all decision-making processes and structures in forced displacement contexts by 2020.*

17. Guided by the five updated commitments to women and girls, as outlined in its 2018 [policy on age, gender and diversity](#), UNHCR continued to promote and strengthen gender equality in its operations. Progress made until the end of 2019 towards the policy's implementation was documented in the "[Putting people first](#)" report.

*UNHCR's commitment: continue to strengthen engagement with and accountability to the communities affected by crisis.*

18. In the context of COVID-19, UNHCR has supported displaced communities to empower them in leading prevention and responses to the pandemic. In Nepal, the number of female community workers was increased to facilitate case referral and to provide continuous hotline access to survivors of gender-based violence. In Cameroon, a network of 110 community focal points supported social workers to provide remote gender-based violence case management. In Mauritania, community volunteers helped UNHCR reach refugees with

specific needs and those in remote areas. In Lebanon, more than 450 refugees with a medical background were mobilized to work as community health volunteers. In India, enterprises run by refugee women are producing cloth masks to be used in UNHCR operations.

19. UNHCR promoted global-level participation and leadership by supporting [a gender audit of the Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#). Led by refugee women from different backgrounds and regions, the audit drew attention to gender-equality related challenges in refugee situations, ensuring the commitments made to refugee women and girls in the Global Compact on Refugees were reflected concretely within the GRF pledging process. Throughout the preparatory meetings and the GRF in December 2019, the audit team documented the ways in which gender equality, age, diversity and sexual and gender-based violence were addressed by different stakeholders. The team also provided specific recommendations on how to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of pledges focusing on these areas.

## **VII. Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding**

*UNHCR's commitment: pursue the institutional changes needed to facilitate multi-year protection and solutions strategies, as well as programming in partnership with humanitarian and development actors.*

20. Building on the lessons learned from the multi-year multi-partner (MYMP) strategies piloted in 22 operations, UNHCR will move to a multi-year planning approach as of 2022. This will be rolled out sequentially over three years and will become UNHCR's default planning process. As part of this approach to results-based management, UNHCR will apply a new global results framework accompanied by a new information technology tool.

21. Regarding the amount of multi-year funding, UNHCR was able to draw from over \$542 million in 2019 (representing 11 per cent of total income), including \$221 million in unearmarked funds (a four-fold increase over previous years).

22. Since 2019, UNHCR operations can enter into multi-year partnership agreements, regardless of whether multi-year funding is available. During 2019, 17 multi-year agreements came into effect as a result. As of June 2020, there were a total of 35 active multi-year partnership agreements.

## **VIII. Reduce the earmarking of donor contributions**

*UNHCR's commitment: increase the visibility of unearmarked and softly earmarked funding, recognizing the contributions made by donors.*

23. In 2019, UNHCR raised a record \$4.174 billion in funding. However, the year was characterized by a marked drop in softly earmarked contributions and a continued increase in earmarking at the country level. At \$1.257 billion, flexible funding comprised of unearmarked and softly earmarked funding amounted to 30 per cent of voluntary contributions (compared with 33 per cent in 2018 and 52 per cent in 2012). Unearmarked funding increased by 7 per cent to \$659.5 million, including \$242 million from the private sector.

24. Donor response to address the COVID-19 pandemic has been generous. As of the end of June 2020, 44 per cent of the funding received was softly earmarked. This high level of flexibility has meant that it has not been necessary to allocate unearmarked funding for the response.

25. UNHCR's "[Report on the use of flexible funding in 2019](#)", published in June 2020, provided enhanced visibility on how flexible funding (unearmarked and softly earmarked), was allocated by quarter and by region. For the first time, the 2019 report included analysis of flexible multi-year contributions.

26. In 2019, UNHCR continued to increase the visibility of government donors. Data available for the last two quarters of 2019 shows that news content and web stories containing

donor visibility language increased by 160 per cent compared to the previous year, while social media posts from global and country accounts almost doubled. Messaging about unearmarked contributions and flexible funding continues to increase. Furthermore, video content explaining the importance of unearmarked funds was circulated, reaching audiences in several donor countries. In relation to the COVID-19 response, significant efforts were made to recognize the early flexible contributions from key donors that helped kick-start the response.

## **IX. Harmonize and simplify reporting requirements**

*UNHCR's commitment: harmonize and simplify reporting requirements by the end of 2018.*

27. UNHCR is one of the six organizations that has fully adopted the harmonized “8+3” narrative reporting template for its partners. To provide the most current funding data in a user friendly manner, UNHCR continued to upgrade its [Global Focus](#) reporting and transparency portal, which now includes: a range of dashboards offering information on budget and income, including a dedicated dashboard on flexible funding; augmented donor profiles showing the quantity and quality of contributions as well where contributions were allocated; and a new operational and situational reporting tool for some 40 operations and 13 situations.

## **X. Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors**

*UNHCR's commitments: cooperate with multilateral development banks (MDBs) to facilitate their active engagement in situations of forced displacement where their technical and financial comparative advantages can contribute to improved socio-economic outcomes for refugees, IDPs and affected host communities; support efforts that enable economic participation of forcibly displaced persons and access to finance, in collaboration with partners.*

28. During the GRF in December 2019, members of the Multilateral Development Bank Coordination Platform on Economic Migration and Forced Displacement affirmed their commitment to the operationalization of the Global Compact on Refugees.

29. UNHCR's partnership with the World Bank was expanded significantly around programmatic aspects of the International Development Association sub-window for refugees and host communities (IDA18) as well as the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF). UNHCR helped facilitate the World Bank's engagement in the 14 countries eligible for the IDA18 refugee sub-window and the four GCFF countries, providing operational support, protection advice and sharing relevant data and analysis.

30. UNHCR's cooperation with the World Bank has also impacted policy dialogue on protection and refugee inclusion in national systems and local economies. In addition to allocating \$2.2 billion under the IDA19 replenishment (July 2020 to June 2023), the World Bank committed to systematically reviewing refugee policy and institutional environments for the eligible countries under the IDA19 refugee sub-window in order to support the creation of socio-economic development opportunities for refugees and host communities.

31. The UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center established in Copenhagen in October 2019 has become fully operational and is implementing a comprehensive work programme aimed at generating and analysing data on forced displacement and making this information accessible to relevant stakeholders to inform their programming.