

**UNHCR Management Response to**  
**Evaluation of UNHCR's Country Operations in Angola, Botswana and Namibia: Assessment of Phasing Down**  
**UNHCR Presence During the Period 2012-2016**

<b>UNHCR Evaluation Management Response</b>	
<b>Evaluation title:</b>	Evaluation of UNHCR's country operations in Angola, Botswana and Namibia: assessment of phasing down UNHCR presence during the period 2012-2016
<b>UNHCR evaluation reference:</b>	ES/2018/01
<b>Entity that commissioned the evaluation:</b>	The Regional Office for Southern Africa / Evaluation Service
<b>Date of Management Response:</b>	06 October 2018

<b>General comments on the evaluation:</b>	<p>The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of and draw lessons from the gradual phasing down of UNHCR presence in three countries in the Southern Africa region all under the coverage of the Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) in Pretoria. The evaluation captures key findings related to the management of this phasing-down exercise such as weaknesses in the strategic planning process; coordination both within UNHCR and with external counterparts, including with the national governments concerned; and administrative, financial and human resources matters.</p> <p>UNHCR takes careful note of the evaluation, its findings and recommendations. A number confirm previous or actually existing organizational experiences and practices of phasing down presence. At large, they will be borne in mind in the process of re-defining UNHCR's regional presence in Southern Africa in the context of the ongoing regionalization / decentralization process. On the other hand, as the evaluation was taking place, the phasing down of UNHCR's operations in Namibia was completed; the Botswana office was already in the process of implementing a time-bound plan, including a review of the phasing down, together with the Government and UNHCR presence in Angola was scaled up significantly as a result of the 2017 influx of DR Congolese refugees. As a result, the recommendation specifically focusing on these three Operations has been partly overtaken by events or already implemented.</p> <p>In the meantime, the process of elaborating the Global Compact on Refugees, the reforms unfolding within the wider UN and the establishment of the Division of Resilience and Solutions within UNHCR have spurred a new impetus to various issues referred to in evaluation report and also impact on some the recommendations. UNHCR takes note of evaluators' view that general conclusions on phasing down of UNHCR's presence throughout the world can be drawn from the findings of this evaluation. Note is also taken of the related (sub) recommendations made in the report. The management response outlined herewith however focuses on the key recommendations and not necessarily on sub-recommendations.</p>
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<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1:</b></p>	<p>Develop a clear, shared, well-articulated, and evidence-based multi-year strategy that focuses on protection of persons of concern in the three countries, with clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders over time, including as needed, a reduced UNHCR presence.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 1.1:</b> Consider opportunities for high-level engagement of Governments in the three countries in order to agree on the overall parameters for UNHCR’s presence in the countries as well as expectations in relation to roles and responsibilities of other actors, including government institutions and development actors in line with international commitments. Based on the NYD and the SDGs, initiate a multi-stakeholder process in each country in order to map and analyse the situation for persons of concern, with a view to establishing shared or sectoral protection and assistance outcomes with line ministries and relevant development actors.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 1.2:</b> Based on the consultations with the government, consider the development of a MYMP plan along three strands. Firstly, an advocacy strategy for achieving international protection goals. Secondly, a strategy for government capacity development in cooperation with development actors, and for the inclusion of refugees in the NDP. And, finally, a plan for any humanitarian response where still required, such as in Angola, or for outstanding operational needs of residual caseloads in other countries.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 1.3:</b> It is recommended that decisions regarding resources, staffing and structures for the countries and ROSA are aligned with such plans and take due consideration of the regionalization policy by building regional capacity where appropriate.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 1.4:</b> The phase down plan, or MYMP plan as mentioned above, would benefit from being based on pre-established and agreed operational milestones on protection, programme, durable solutions, handovers and coordination. Plans should also include milestones for human resources management, financial and asset management. Handing over to new partners with little experience in refugee operations, without a plan for support, capacity development and close monitoring, should be avoided.</p>
<p><b>Management response:</b></p>	<p>Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree</p>
<p><b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b></p>	<p>There is only partial agreement with this recommendation because of, as pointed out already, the closure of UNHCR presence in Namibia already by the time the evaluation report was published. It however bears to be underlined that, in key respects, the closure of that presence was undertaken in keeping with many of the key points underlined in the evaluation. Because of completion of the closure of the UNHCR presence in Namibia accordingly, there is no pending action accordingly, thus there is no need to respond one way or the other to the recommendation. As for other elements of the recommendation, some of the details captured in the sub-recommendations have already been partially implemented in Botswana, are part of the regular multi-year planning exercises, or will be overtaken by decisions regarding regionalization. To these extents, the</p>

	recommendation and its relevant sub-components are thus accepted accordingly and, as just highlighted, are being implemented or have been implemented.				
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>	ROSA and the Regional Bureau for Africa				
<b>Top line planned actions</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
				<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1.1 to 1.4	Regional Representative	The task force will be established to start the planning process and initiate the relevant activities. The ROSA will be impacted by the on-going regionalization and decentralization initiative	30 June 2019	Botswana and Namibia are already annexed to the Regional Office (ROSA). Angola was up scaled because of the emergency from April 2017	The recent Change Management Initiative (on regionalization) will have an impact on the structures and processes of UNHCR. These will also have a direct impact on the respective offices in the region. In 2019, UNHCR will therefore have skeleton staff in Botswana and we plan to second one staff to either UNDP or Refugee Commissioner's Office responsible for overseeing refugee welfare in Osire Camp.
<b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b>	<p><b>Provide policy guidance on responsible, thoughtful phasing down as a natural part of operational management.</b></p> <p>UNHCR should consider the issue of responsible phasing down of its country presence in all of its operations as a natural part of the life cycle of its operations by engaging continuously with the relevant governments on respective roles and responsibilities taking into consideration existing international refugee protection frameworks. Meaningful planning for phasing down and the closure of office presence should be considered from the outset by UNHCR, from the time of opening a country presence.</p>				
<b>Management response:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>	As a matter of principle and standard practice, UNHCR is engaging sustainably with refugee hosting countries on international refugee protection frameworks, as well as on the respective roles and responsibilities. This takes place by senior managers and staff at national, regional and Headquarters levels including through strategic and/or theme-specific "bilaterals" or				

		<p>“dialogues”. Furthermore, the intensive consultations on the Global Refugee Compact over a two year period provided a further unique opportunity for policy dialogue in which the said refugee hosting countries provided extensive and rich inputs. UNHCR therefore fully endorses the first part of the recommendation. It also understands why the evaluators state that meaningful planning for phasing down and closure of office presence should be considered from the time of establishing a country presence. At the same time, attention is drawn to the fact that in many countries the presence of refugees is prolonged, often for decades, in the absence of durable solutions or as a result of new or recurring new refugee influxes. The importance of resilience and solutions is fully acknowledged by UNHCR, including bringing in a solutions perspective from the beginning of an emergency approach. However, considering planning for phasing down and closing of a country presence from the outset may not always be practical or feasible at all.</p>				
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>		Senior Management, UNHCR HQ				
<b>Top line planned actions</b>		<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
					<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2.1	<i>Regular engagement and dialogue with governments on the situation of refugees in their country with a view to achieve resilience and solutions, and supporting the governments in this respect. This also in the spirit of the New York Declaration, and the Global Refugee Compact, and the renewed call for burden- and responsibility sharing.</i>	All senior staff at different levels (national, regional and Headquarters)		Continuous / Ongoing		
<b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b>		<p><b>Develop clear organizational planning guidance and tools on how and when to phase down presence.</b></p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 3.1:</b> Consider a review of existing planning tools and guidelines to ensure that they provide sufficient guidance to offices on how to plan—even from the outset of opening a country presence—for an eventual phase down approach. The guidance should consider phasing down processes in relation to different aspect of UNHCR’s work, such as advocacy for international protection, capacity development for government counterparts and partners, for protection and assistance responses, and for work in relation to finding durable solutions. To benefit from the organizational accountability steps and existing resource allocation framework, such planning should be fully reflected in the operational plans, using the relevant Results Framework and planning processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The guidance could also cover how to ensure close involvement of External Relations staff and the development of an appropriate communications strategy, including with affected people and communities, in support of the phasing down process.</li> <li>➤ Administrative and financial management guidance for closure could include various risk management areas including due diligence, oversight of partners, assets and inventory, as well as how to strengthen warehouse management and monitoring during transition phases and other controls and financial oversight mechanisms.</li> </ul>				

	<b>Sub-Recommendation 3.2:</b> Develop capacity of Bureaux and operations on how to prepare phase down plans, including considerations on how to involve not only Governments, UN agencies and other stakeholders, but also how to plan for human resource management, advocacy and communication, as well as financial closure of country presence.				
<b>Management response:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>	As indicated above, strengthening resilience of and solutions for refugees is a key strategic objective of UNHCR that is reflected in the UNHCR Strategic Directions 2017-2021. UNHCR also advocates for inclusion of refugees in national systems and national development plans (NDPs) and has fully embraced the 2030 Agenda and its dedication of "leaving no one behind". In addition, achieving the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) requires enhanced partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders in the spirit of burden and responsibility sharing. UNHCR plays a critical role in this, as a facilitator and in support of the government in defining comprehensive responses and support to the communities hosting them. All this obviously goes beyond a specific UNHCR phase-down plan. UNHCR however agrees that if a specific phasing-out of UNHCR's presence is under consideration, it has to be appropriately and comprehensively managed including in regard to the admin, financial and other aspects highlighted in the recommendation and sub-recommendations. UNHCR also agrees that planned phase down should also, where relevant, be reflected in the multi-year planning. UNHCR will thus review whether the lack of specific guidance is an obstacle to any of this.				
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>	Senior Management UNHCR HQ				
<b>Top line planned actions</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
				<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
3	Conduct a quick review of experience with other examples of UNHCR's phasing down presence, and see to what extent there is a gap of guidance and tools.	Focal points in each Bureau in coordination with relevant Divisions and services including, notably, the Change Team		June 2019	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 4:</b>	<p><b>Develop organization-wide roles and responsibilities with areas of authority, accountability and decision making clarified, and clear processes for which stakeholders need to provide input or be consulted on decisions on the closure of country presences.</b></p> <p>Clarify authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities of the various levels of management involved in decisions on the closure of country presences and their implementation, particularly between the Senior Executive Team, Regional Bureaux and Regional Offices. UNHCR should examine how the regionalization is expected to inform phase down decisions and further review ARAs in relation to phasing down processes. This should include clarified process steps and decisions points with related documentation kept for central record keeping of the process.</p>				

<b>Management response:</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree			
<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>		Part of the recommendation is already incorporated in existing guidance documents. In the context of the ongoing regionalization process, the ARAs of various entities will be revised and fine-tuned and pertinent elements of this recommendation will be taken into consideration.			
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>		Senior Management, UNHCR HQ			
<b>Top line planned actions</b>		<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>
					<b>Status</b>
4.1	Revised ARAs in place for different entities at different levels.	Director of Change		December 2019	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 5:</b>		<p><a href="#">Develop a model for technical support and guidance to country and regional entities as they phase down.</a></p> <p>UNHCR should consider creating dedicated specialized multi-functional transition teams tasked with the preparation and implementation of phasing down office presence, while ensuring continued delivery against UNHCR's international protection mandate. Considerations in relation to the assessments and management of various risks, to monitoring, supervisory responsibilities and standards for protection and assistance delivery, as well as how to partner with development actors could be included in the team's TOR.</p>			
<b>Management response:</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disagree			
<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>		UNHCR agrees that the closure or draw-down of its presence should always safeguard the Office's ability to deliver on its international protection responsibilities. Accordingly, the Office has accepted recommendation 7 that there should be a risk-informed approach in preparing for and implementing phase down of UNHCR's presence. The disagreement is with the recommendation that for each phase down, there should be a dedicated, specialized multi-functional team. In view of the significantly different operational situations and contexts, UNHCR capacities and expertise in the country or region concerned, the support, guidance and mechanisms needed in implementing closure in each will also differ greatly. A standard and mandatory model for guidance, support or implementation of closure, in particular the creation of a dedicated "specialized team" is not considered as the apt way to go although, again depending on the particular situation at stake, special or additional expertise can indeed be factored into the process. With respect to the final part of the recommendation, it is confirmed that UNHCR's engagement and partnership development continues to be strengthened exponentially while at the same time reminding that they are not necessarily driven by or limited to the question of the phasing out of UNHCR's presence.			
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>		Senior Management, UNHCR HQ			
<b>Top line planned actions</b>		<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>
					<b>Status</b>

<b>RECOMMENDATION 6:</b>	<p>Ensure that there is early alignment with government and national stakeholders on the parameters for phasing down presence.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 6.1:</b> Ensure dialogue at the highest level between UNHCR and the government to agree to the overall parameters for a responsible phase down of UNHCR presence. Where responsibilities are expected to be transferred to State institutions this is aimed at ensuring ownership by governments, and, as appropriate, other stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 6.2:</b> Provide sufficient time for high-level meetings between government, other partners and development actors, and UNHCR senior managers to communicate, discuss and explain the decision and steps moving forward. This could include leveraging other actors in the international community, such as donors and ExCom members. Do the same for communication with UNHCR staff, donors, partners, and persons of concern.</p>				
<b>Management response:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>	The recommendation overlaps with recommendations 2, 6 and 7				
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>	Senior Management, UNHCR HQ, Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices				
<b>Top line planned actions</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
	Engage key stakeholders early on in discussions on parameters for possible scaling down of UNHCR's presence. This includes but is not limited to the Government, the Resident Coordinator and members of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), and key national and governmental organization (NGO) partners	Snr. Management in country, region and Headquarters	Depends on the specific country situation if and when applicable.	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
				For example, in Botswana, there are agreed action points (with timelines) between the government and UNHCR.	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 7:</b>	<p>Ensure that there is an analytical, evidence based plan with clearly defined, shared outcomes, a risk assessment, and standards for protection and assistance.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 7.1:</b> Dedicate time and resources for a comprehensive assessment of the situation, using for instance research and evaluation data for analysis of political and longer term ramifications of phasing down, so as to minimize tensions with persons of concern, partners and the host government. This should include a risk assessment in relation to, for instance, reputational risk, relational risk and legal or mandate accountabilities. Engage development actors, in particular the UNRC, in dialogue around the longer term plans to</p>				

	<p>ensure that international protection is provided to refugees and that their needs are included in National Development Plans, as also supported by the UN.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 7.2:</b> Articulate clear objectives for the phase down and incorporate a thorough, transparent analysis of underlying assumptions in a participatory manner and agreed with the government and other stakeholders as appropriate. This should include clarity in relation to agreed standards for protection and assistance, and use consistent and thoughtful language in relation to the final situation (e.g. “phase down” vs. “disengagement” vs. “closure” etc.). A better analysis and reasoned decision reflected in clear objectives may further mitigate effects of subsequent senior staff rotation during the implementation.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 7.3:</b> When preparing for the closure of country presence, UNHCR should support an historical account of its presence and accomplishments as a lasting testimony to its involvement in the country and its partnerships with the government and national civil society.</p>				
<b>Management response:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>	UNHCR agrees with this recommendation while clarifying that the investments and steps called for in the recommendation would be undertaken concretely and specifically in the relevant phase-down instances at stake or being envisaged or implemented.				
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>	Senior Management in Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices				
<b>Top line planned actions</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
				<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
7.1 to 7.3	Put together a comprehensive, yet concise, risk-informed plan for the phase-out of UNHCR’s presence in the country. This plan should include key elements included in the relevant recommendations of this evaluation report, as appropriate in the specific context. Implementation of this plan will be reviewed and adjusted as appropriate.	Country Representative, with support from and management oversight of Bureau Director		As and when applicable	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 8:</b>	<p><b>Ensure that the process of phasing down is well-managed, monitored and accountable to all stakeholders concerned.</b></p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 8.1:</b> Ensure the proper functioning of an agreed mechanism of joint monitoring of implementation and adjust course if needed. The process should be flexible enough to change plans as needed, including delaying reductions in staff or changing hand-over plans. Likewise, when governments or others raise</p>				



	<p>concerns, UNHCR should adequately respond to these concerns by considering the adjustment of plans, particularly in relation to ensuring the continued protection of persons of concern.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 8.2:</b> Senior managers need to take appropriate steps to promote that staff, whose positions are eliminated, will continue to be advocates for refugees as well as for the interests of UNHCR after they have left the Agency by actively supporting their welfare, active participation and future employment.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 8.3:</b> Consider placing a UNHCR-funded staff member with the government office to ensure a smooth handover during the phasing down period. This was done in Namibia, where a staff member was embedded in the Refugee Commissioner’s Office during the final six-months prior to the full closure of the Office. This model could be reviewed for lessons learned.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation 8.4:</b> For accountability, ensure the systematic documentation and archiving of all relevant communications, correspondence and reports in relation to the phasing down process. Expert support should be provided to ensure proper archiving and backing up of all data.</p>				
<b>Management response:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>	<p>This recommendation is accepted. It is once again underscored that the actions called for in the recommendation would be considered and included specifically and concretely as already explained in the comment with respect to Recommendation 7. Accordingly, there are no specific “top line planned actions” foreseen as called for in the recommendation.</p>				
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>	Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices				
<b>Top line planned actions</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
	No further specific and detailed comments as mentioned above.			<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>