

UNHCR Evaluation Management Response

Evaluation title:	Basic Needs and Livelihoods Evaluation Costa Rica		
UNHCR evaluation reference:	EvO/2023/06		
Entity that commissioned the evaluation:	UNHCR Costa Rica		
Due date of Management Response:	30 June 2023		
Coordinator of Management Response:	Gabriela Vargas Selva, Esteban Sanchez Castillo		
Management Response approved by (senior manager in commissioning office):	Name: Elena Cibeira	Job title: Representative, a.i. Elena Cibeira	Country/Office: Costa Rica
Date:	10 October 2023		

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General comments on the evaluation:	<p>This evaluation of the Basic Needs and Livelihoods programmes has been key to improve the CO's programmatic response toward the people we serve. With its findings and recommendations, we have been able to identify precisely and accurately, the areas of improvement and challenges of both programmes, regarding their internal and external coherence, relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness. They have guided the strategic approach toward cash-assistance and livelihoods interventions in planning and coordination with internal and external stakeholders and counterparts. In all, our Country Operation values this effort very positively and considers it useful and applicable in our day-to-day work.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 1:	<p>Improve coordination with public institutions in their field of work that can have a favorable impact on the well-being of PwS such as the DGME, IMAS, SINIRUBE, MTSS and INA. UNHCR should seek agreements to include and monitor PwS participation in public programs and raise awareness about the importance of registration and attention in a differentiated way for refugees and asylum seekers so that they do not compete for services in a group with the entire target population of the institutions. Other supporting public institutions can be involved in the UNHCR programs, like INDER, DINADECO and Banco Popular y Desarrollo Comunal. In addition, UNHCR should resume the Area-based Approach with the government for the Northern region to access potential new allies and financing in the fields of agribusiness, tourism, and rural services.</p>
Management response:	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree</p>
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):	<p><i>The Costa Rica CO agrees that it should improve coordination with the mentioned above public institutions. However, it does not determine the activation of an Area-Based Approach in the Northern Region. This approach depends entirely on the GoCR and the UNHCR supports the leadership of the UN Country Team in assisting the initiative. The current administration is not following through with this effort, proposed by the previous administration.</i></p>
Unit or function responsible:	CBI, and Livelihoods

Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Strengthen the agreement with IMAS through a process of evaluation of areas of opportunity.	CBI subunit, Costa Rica CO	The CBI unit holds meetings with all the local offices where the agreement is implemented to identify needs and areas for improvement. An improvement plan is created to implement in the first quarter of 2023.	March, 2023	Completed	Periodic monitoring of the agreement will be carried out.
2	Strengthening the Vivir la Integración Framework through a new Multi-sectorial memorandum of understanding.	Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion subunit, Costa Rica CO	The livelihoods subunit has planned and is currently implementing a re-branding consultancy to co-produce and re-launch the Vivir la Integración framework and generating, as a result, a new multi-sectorial MoU.	July 2024	In progress	The first part of this action will be completed in December 2023.
RECOMMENDATION 2:		Promote a "qualitative leap" in work both with private companies and civil society partners. Firstly, together with business partners and allies (AED, business chambers, etc.) and perhaps through a Public-Private Alliance, promote the "Vivir la Integración" Program as a permanent national-based Corporate Social Responsibility effort, establishing annual quantitative and qualitative goals regarding the labor inclusion of PwS. Secondly, diversify the partner agencies, particularly taking advantage of good experiences at the national level, especially in the northern region. UNHCR should support their development and strengthening, particularly in managing resources.				
Management response:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):						
Unit or function responsible:		Livelihoods, Costa Rica CO				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Revision of the methodology and activities of the Vivir la Integración Seal, with the help of the Alianza Empresarial para el Desarrollo (AED)	Livelihoods subunit, Costa Rica CO	Currently, the livelihoods subunit, in parallel with the Vivir la Integración rebranding action, mentioned above, is revising the Vivir la Integración Seal's methodology, with the help of the AED, with the purpose of improving Private Sector engagement and inclusion actions, as well as the visualization and communication of those actions.	December 2024	Ongoing process	The first part of this revision should be completed by December 2023.

2	Increase the number of livelihoods partners.	Livelihoods subunit, Costa Rica CO	In 2023, the Costa Rica CO increased the number of livelihoods partners to two, and is currently searching for options to increase partnership with other organizations to promote peaceful coexistence, communal organizations competencies and resilience with groups of people in the Northern Region and Great Metropolitan Area of Costa Rica	December 2024	In progress	The Costa Rica CO has already signed a Program Partnership Agreement in the livelihoods sector with two organizations for 2023.
RECOMMENDATION 3:		Elaborate a comprehensive strategy that connects the Basic Needs Satisfaction and Livelihood programs based on a theory of change that reflects the logic of intervention and determines objectives and indicators at the level of effects and impact. The strategy must differentiate population segments of PwS that should receive specific treatment. The strategy must contemplate a sensitive approach to gender, seeking specific opportunities for women and LGBTIQ people. It would be advisable to set up a multifunctional team made up of different UNHCR units.				
Management response:		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		Because of the way the Cash-Assistance at the UNHCR is managed globally, this recommendation can only be implemented partially. The operational aspect of the Cash-Assistance Basic Needs programme is overseen by the CBI subunit. The recommended multifunctional team could only oversee aspects of procedures and evaluations but could not manage cash-assistance distribution systems and data processing.				
Unit or function responsible:		CBI and Livelihoods subunits, Costa Rica CO				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Programmatic Response Theory of Change	Costa Rica CO	The Costa Rica CO will conduct an exercise to develop a Programmatic Response Theory of Change, that encompasses the strategic direction of the operation and the expected changes that it envisions in the response toward the people it serves.	July 2024	Planned	Not started
2	Improve the referral process of the most vulnerable cases to the livelihood program.	CBI subunit, Costa Rica CO	When the CBI unit identifies cases that due to their profile, conditions or needs require more urgent or specialized attention, they will refer specifically to the Livelihoods unit when necessary.	December 2023	Ongoing	Started in January
3	[continue as needed]					
RECOMMENDATION 4:		UNHCR should advocate to expedite DGME procedures. It should also promote that IMAS assume the responsibility for asylum seekers from the moment they enter the country. In cases that require permanent social assistance such as elderly, PwS with chronic illnesses and severe levels of disability, UNHCR should coordinate with other public and private institutions				

	such as CONAPAM, CONAPDIS and the Food Bank. Also, in addition to evaluating the way cash aid is calculated, UNHCR should consider extending assistance to 5 months. With more restrictive economic vulnerability criteria, the number of qualifying PwS can be reduced, and work can be done within the same budget limit.					
Management response:	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree					
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):	<i>The recommendation linked to the DGME will be explored with Protection, which is the unit that leads the coordination of this issue. The mentioned coordination with CONAPAM and CONAPDIS already exist and are part of the interventions of the partner agencies. The relevance of coordinating with the Food Bank will be explored with Protection. Regarding extending the assistance for 5 months, there is not a sufficient technical justification to make this change.</i>					
Unit or function responsible:	Protection Unit, CBI subunit					
Top-line planned actions	By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress		
				Status	Comments	
1	Multi-functional team to review the frequency of the assistance.	CBI subunit, Costa Rica CO	A multi-functional team was organized to review the frequency and amounts of assistance. It is decided to maintain the assistance for 3 months, due to issues of context of the country and budget.	March 2023	Finished	No changes are made in the frequency of the assistance.
2	Promote the inclusion of the people we work for in all IMAS programs	CBI subunit, Costa Rica CO	Identified barriers to access IMAS programs, especially in offices where there are no agreement staff.	August 2023	Ongoing	In coordination with the partner agency in charge of implementing the IMAS-UNHCR agreement.
3	Advocate with DGME to expedite procedures	Protection subunit, Costa Rica CO		December 2023	Ongoing	Permanent process
RECOMMENDATION 5:	UNHCR should develop an information system that reflects data from different periods, visualizing them in a consolidated manner in a single table or graph and limited to semi-annual or annual reports as documents of reference. The reported data must show consistency of indicator variables and include reference information from previous periods to facilitate comparison of information in the Post-Delivery Monitoring Reports of monetary assistance, differentiated by population segment. For more complete and meaningful monitoring, the quantitative data should be complemented with qualitative information from sources such as focus groups or interviews. The qualitative information will facilitate a better understanding of data obtained with the quantitative instrument.					
Management response:	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree					

Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		<i>The Costa Rica CO doesn't currently have the resources to construct such an information system, as recommended in the Evaluation. It can create different dashboards for the different programmes, which it already does, but not at the level of detail or complexity suggested by the evaluation.</i>				
Unit or function responsible:		<i>Operations Unit, IM, CBI and Livelihoods subunits</i>				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	<i>Dashboard CBI Livelihoods</i>	<i>CBI, Livelihoods, IM subunits</i>	<i>There are existing dashboards for each programme. This action will seek to integrate data and visualization of both programmes.</i>	<i>July 2024</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>This activity would be subject to the development of the Theory of Change</i>
2	<i>Dashboard- Multiyear Post Delivery Monitoring</i>	<i>CBI and IM subunits, Costa Rica CO</i>	<i>Design a dashboard with the results of the PDM of all the years.</i>	<i>September 2023</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>--</i>
3	<i>Carry out post-delivery monitoring focus groups to complement the quantitative information.</i>	<i>CBI subunit, Costa Rica CO</i>	<i>Conduct focus groups to broaden the information collected about the program and identify areas for improvement. Include the north zone.</i>	<i>December 2023</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Focus groups will be held every 4 months</i>
RECOMMENDATION 6:		UNHCR should improve the seed capital instrument to facilitate development and strengthening of livelihoods, micro, small and medium-sized business. This includes specific evaluations of the amount according to investment needs, even establishing different ranges for this support. In addition, the economic assistance offered to small business can be soft loans that feed a revolving fund to further support other small business. UNHCR, in conjunction with partner organizations and specialized actors, can motivate creation of associative production initiatives (associations and cooperatives) of PwS, perhaps most feasibly in the northern region. Considering the above and seeking to transcend a welfare approach, the comprehensive strategy proposal mentioned in point 2 must consider development strategies that promote training on savings, and investment for small business, particularly with PwS that seek their own subsistence.				
Management response:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		[add only if partially agree or disagree was selected]				
Unit or function responsible:		<i>Livelihoods subunit, Costa Rica CO</i>				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments

1	Modify the Livelihoods business start-up grant evaluation procedure, to increase the flexibility of amounts to consider business size and sectors.	Livelihoods subunit, Costa Rica CO	The livelihoods subunit is in the process of examination of all livelihoods cash-grants, to increase efficacy of the support.	December 2023	Ongoing	
RECOMMENDATION 7:		<p>UNHCR should build a Comprehensive Livelihood Monitoring System that is based on the Multi-Year Strategy and Livelihoods Theory of Change. This should encompass the entire program with its various components, implemented by the UNHCR and partner agencies. The collection and analysis of data for monitoring must be done rigorously with differentiation by variables of sex/gender, nationality, and geographic location, as a minimum. Program monitoring should have at least the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Project performance monitoring reports that include qualitative analysis. ➤ Focus on effects and impacts covering a period of several years, including economic variables and psychosocial ones carried out preferably by an external specialist entity. ➤ Carry out a separate monitoring study related to the effects of the training processes that provides useful elements for a future capacity building strategy. ➤ Partner organizations must build a monitoring plan that defines data collection, information sources, procedures and mechanisms for data recording and analysis and identifies a responsible person within the organization; as well as a regular critical assessment regarding training and advice to PwS. ➤ Monitoring carried out by the implementing organization should expand by selected variables related to the achievements of the program in the areas of waged employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship. The partner organization must build a Monitoring Plan that defines the periods for data collection, information sources, procedures and mechanisms for data recording and analysis, and responsible staff within the organization. The system must include mechanisms that allow a regular critical assessment regarding the training and advice by the PwS, the results of which are reflected in partner reports. 				
Management response:		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		<p>The above-mentioned system already exists. However, despite repetitive indications to the Evaluation team to revise and recommends improvement of this system, they did not attend this indication. On the other hand, the proposed monitoring system did not consider the existing (programme) monitoring system, by which all PPAs and direct implementation activities are evaluated and monitored.</p>				
Unit or function responsible:		Program, Livelihoods				

Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	<i>Pilot an external monitoring alternative, different from the Livelihoods Information System monitoring implemented globally.</i>	<i>Livelihoods subunit, Costa Rica CO</i>	<i>In 2023, in addition to the LIS monitoring, the Costa Rica CO decided to pilot an external service monitoring alternative, included in the PPA of partner Fundación Omar Dengo.</i>	<i>December 2023</i>	<i>Implemented</i>	
RECOMMENDATION 8:		UNHCR should clarify terminology used for its Livelihoods and “ <i>Vivir la Integración</i> ” programs. It is recommended that all initiatives related to economic and labor insertion be implemented in a single program. Since “ <i>Vivir la Integración</i> ” functions as a brand, it is recommended that this term be used to name the program in all communications with public and private actors.				
Management response:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		[add only if partially agree or disagree was selected]				
Unit or function responsible:		[add name of divisions, bureaux, and/or country operations to which recommendation is addressed]				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	<i>Include the discussion about the terminology in Rebranding Consultancy for Vivir la Integración.</i>	<i>Livelihoods subunit, Costa Rica CO</i>	<i>The livelihoods subunit and the Costa Rica CO have launched a rebranding consultancy for Vivir la Integración, with the objective of aligning purpose, responsibilities, and terminology of the framework, and renovating sectoral commitments with the initiative.</i>	<i>December 2023</i>	<i>In progress</i>	