

UNHCR Evaluation Management Response

Evaluation title:	Country Strategy Evaluation for UNHCR South Sudan		
UNHCR evaluation reference:	Evo/2023/04		
Entity that commissioned the evaluation:	UNHCR's Evaluation Office		
Due date of Management Response:	17.10.2023		
Coordinator of Management Response:	Jeremy Hubbard Associate Field Officer		
Management Response approved by (<i>senior manager in commissioning office</i>):	Kristine Hambrouck Marie-Helene Verney	OIC for the Deputy Regional Director Representative	EHAGL Regional Bureau South Sudan Country Office
Date of submission:	Tuesday 8 November 2023		

General comments on the evaluation:	<p>The UNHCR operation accepts all but one recommendation of the report and has taken action to address the areas highlighted.</p> <p>We still cite accessibility issues with the report, the length of the report makes it a niche document that will be inaccessible by the intended audience including donors, UN agencies, and UNHCR staff. There is no search function (CTRL+F) to search the report for key topics, the presentation is difficult to download with a weak internet connection, the document closes every time you switch between tabs and page numbers, sections are unclear, and navigation is inconsistent. The positive and useful findings which should be highlighted, such as comments made on adaptability, agility, and comparative advantages, are not easy to find.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 1:	<p>UNHCR should strengthen the connection between its refugee policy protection work at Juba level and its engagement with authorities at state level to support implementation of South Sudan's progressive policy framework on refugees, while also adapting its approach to funding shortfalls to maintain its track record on refugee protection.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensure stronger coordination between UNHCR protection policy staff at Juba level and its protection officers at state and county level, so that the latter are supported to raise awareness and capacity to implement national policies through CRA and local authorities, while policy staff at Juba level make the case for improved government resourcing at state level, and accountability for policy implementation. b) In order to adapt to funding cuts affecting refugee services and protection, UNHCR to play a more strategic and catalytic role, encouraging and leveraging partners rather than always delivering itself, especially where others have a greater comparative advantage (e.g. on livelihoods), and increasingly working through refugee and host community structures, learning from adaptations made during the Covid-19 pandemic.
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	c) Step up efforts to build protection capacity within South Sudan, particularly amongst national actors, building on experience over the last decade of what has worked, especially long-term accompaniment, ensuring principles of localisation are well-respected e.g. adequate coverage of national NGO overheads.					
Management response:	Agree					
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):	Not applicable					
Unit or function responsible:	Protection					
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Protection workshop	Protection	Convened protection retreat to facilitate coordination between UNHCR protection policy staff in Juba and protection officers in field teams	September 2023		
2	Prioritisation workshop	Protection	Convened Prioritisation workshop to adapt activities to stretched funding as a result of the Sudan crisis. Encouraging and leveraging partnerships rather than direct implementation was a large part.	September 2023		
3	Follow-up support	DRS/RBEHAGL	Follow-up support to be extended to SSD operation by both DRS and RBEHAGL including in the areas of earmarked funding proposals for protection and solutions.	Until end of 2023 and beyond		
RECOMMENDATION 2:		<p>UNHCR should step up its work on protection of IDPs, in particular its key leadership role and its partnerships, to better meet growing IDP protection needs in South Sudan and to align with UNHCR's corporate policy on IDP protection as well as the UNSG's Action Agenda.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Step up its leadership role to ensure protection is better understood and mainstreamed within the HCT, to promote collective advocacy to improve the protection environment within South Sudan, and to draw attention to the impact of funding cuts on exacerbating protection risks b) Build on recent improvements in UNHCR's leadership role, especially through the protection cluster, heightening awareness of protection issues in the CCCM, NFI and other clusters, and more promptly communicating new emergency protection needs as they arise c) Share good practice within some FOs in promoting IDP protection and effective partnership working, with other FOs, with the support of the new integrated IDP Team d) Step up certain partnerships (e.g. with UNFPA, UNMISS) and collaborative ways of working (e.g. working in consortia) within South Sudan and regionally to strengthen protection of IDPs e) Ensure UNHCR senior management in South Sudan is better supported by the RB to step up IDP protection and advocacy, e.g., in high-level negotiations with UNMISS at country level, learning from good practice in other COs 				

Management response:		Agree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		Not applicable				
Unit or function responsible:		Protection				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Established IDP unit	Protection CCCM Operations	Established an IDP unit consisting of Protection, CCCM, and Operational field support to more adequately prioritise the protection of IDPs	Q1 2023		
2	Collaboration and advocacy within the cluster system	Protection Unit	IDP protection needs are addressed through the Cluster system. UNHCR collaborates and advocates with partners through the respective clusters.	Ongoing		
3	Implementation of IDP operational strategy	Protection CCCM Operations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emergency IDP response 2. Contingency planning and prepositioning of CRIs. 3. Enhanced protection in protracted displacement 4. Empowerment 5. Solutions 	Q2 2023		
RECOMMENDATION 3:		<p>UNHCR needs to advocate for high level political endorsement and build enhanced cross-government ownership of, as well as broader civil society engagement in, the <i>Durable Solutions Strategy</i>, and play a leadership role in ensuring clearer synergy between the different strands of Solutions in South Sudan.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Lobby and build on progress to date to ensure approval of the SSDSS by the Council of Ministers b) Catalyse and support participation of a broader range of national actors (governmental and non-governmental) in the implementation of the joint roadmap and 5-year Plan of Action contained in the SSDSS c) Ensure ongoing progress in streamlining of the Solutions architecture within South Sudan, with the PfPRR, to ensure the Task Forces for Solutions are recognised and integrated d) Step up the agreed approach to dovetail the Pockets of Hope initiative with wider area-based approaches, especially at county level, with a focus on building local government institutional capacity. e) Advocate to open up refugee and IDP integration options as part of the overall approach to solutions. f) Carry out systematic monitoring of returns, both of refugees and IDPs, to inform programming and ensure that assisted returns are substantive and sustained. 				

Management response:		Agree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		Not applicable				
Unit or function responsible:		Protection				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Adoption of the National Solutions Strategy and enhancement of the solutions architecture	Durable Solutions Unit / Senior Management	Council of Ministers adopted the National Durable Solutions Strategy on 06 October Preliminary organigram for solutions architecture in development, plans underway to engages UN agencies for their inclusion, followed by discussion with Govt to secure by in of an undated structure that puts Government in the lead of solutions	February 2024		
2	Catalyse participation of broader actors in the implementation of the 5 year plan of action in the SSDSD	Durable Solutions Unit / Field Protection colleagues / Senior Management	Durable solutions unit/Snr management develop inclusive solutions architecture for consideration by actors and approval by Govt Field Colleagues and Durable Solutions unit, disseminate and cascade contents of the strategy to relevant actors and support implementation within the solutions architecture to mobilise collective efforts towards solutions	April 2024		
3	Link POH with wider area-based approaches with a focus on building institutional capacity	Field offices / Durable Solutions Unit,	Field offices to identify opportunities for linkages to wider area-based approaches. Ds unit to ensure opportunities are reflected in funding proposals	June 2024		
4.	Advocate for intergraiton as a solution for IDPs and refugees	DS and protection unit	Integration is already a widely accepted and preferred solutions option, however it requires significant resources and allocation of land by Govt which is not always possible, or significant livelihood resources which are scarce.	June 2024		
RECOMMENDATION 4:		<p>UNHCR's work on self-reliance needs to be stepped up, become more strategic, more collaborative and partnership-oriented, in line with its <i>Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion</i> (LEI) strategy (2022-5), and consistently sensitive to protection risks.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <p>a) Strategically scale up livelihood support in the context of funding constraints, disengaging from implementation and focusing on a strong partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture as well as those UN agencies (FAO, IOM and UNDP) that can lead in delivering and diversifying livelihood programming, while concurrently stepping up engagement with the private sector, focusing more on market-based solutions and local value chains</p>				

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Reorient internal capacity, and ensure adequate senior level expertise to support this more strategic, partnerships-focused approach to sustainable livelihoods, including building expertise to support an enhanced green economy / sustainability focus and a strong emphasis on women's economic empowerment c) Ensure enhanced attention to the protection risks inherent in some livelihood activities, particularly for women, with stronger collaboration between livelihoods and protection colleagues, to ensure risk assessments and mitigation strategies are consistently in place d) Step up progress towards refugee self-reliance, taking advantage of the political will wherever this exists (e.g. in WES), and promoting innovative and climate-smart programming 				
Management response:	Agree					
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):	Livelihoods, economic empowerment and financial inclusion of refugees will be promoted through development and innovative financing partnerships					
Unit or function responsible:	Livelihoods & Economic Inclusion					
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Facilitate the inclusion of refugees in the government-supported economic empowerment initiatives with development financing and facilitate further engagement with Development actors and UN agencies to promote socioeconomic opportunities and employment pathways to build resilience and self-reliance of refugees	Livelihoods and Solutions Units	<p>Closely coordinate and advocate for equitable targeting of the FDSP in the World Bank WHR Government supported projects including the ECRPII, SNSOP and Energy project, the AFDB Projects on women and youth empowerment project to scale-up livelihood and climate initiatives, EU INTPA supporting solutions initiatives the UNHCR-KfW Refugee Environment Protection fund innovative financing initiative promoting climate-smart solutions with strong linkages for protection mainstreaming. Will strengthen collaboration with WFP, FAO and IOM on ongoing initiatives promoting self-reliance.</p> <p>UNHCR is facilitating and strengthening strategic and operational partnerships with a wide range of development and private sector actors to advance and finance economic empowerment and diversify the livelihoods of FDSPs.</p>	2023-2027		
2	Mobilise financial and technical assistance to facilitate solutions including early and sustained engagement of the private sector to invest in local value chain development and	Livelihoods and solutions Unit	Advocate and mobilise financing to facilitate solutions with a focus on development partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms including from the private sector, IFC and UN agencies and strengthen internal capacity to provide strategic support for the implementation and success of economic empowerment and financial inclusion projects targeting Forcibly displaced and stateless persons.	2023-2027		

	government policy initiatives aimed at creating and facilitating access to employment					
RECOMMENDATION 5:		<p>UNHCR should improve its alignment with persons of concern, by strengthening ongoing consultation through two-way flows of communication, and improving UNHCR's and its implementing partners' relationship with, and accountability to affected people.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conduct action research to better understand which population groups use which communication channels (e.g. protection desks, local leaders, local professionals) with UNHCR and its partners, to inform how these communication channels can be strengthened and how to ensure all groups have voice and are heard. b) Put in place clearer and collective action plans, with partners, for communicating with affected people when funding shortfalls result in services and other programming being cut, particularly with refugees and host communities. c) Step up regular communication and engagement with host communities in refugee-hosting areas, to better understand and address current and emerging tensions between refugee and host communities. 				
Management response:		Agree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		Not Applicable				
Unit or function responsible:		Protection				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Communication with Communities (CWC)	Protection & Field Teams	Question on CWC are regularly discussed with POCs and are asked in the annual PA. Key efforts made in 2023 in addition to PA, 1046, IDPs we consulted on the constitutions and election process.	Ongoing		
2	Action Plan	Protection	Action Plan in progress and key messages will be designed to inform POCs, this was discussed during annual prioritization.	Q4 2023		
3	Peaceful Co-existence	Protection & Field Teams	Field colleagues hold regular FGD with host communities to ensure there is peaceful co-existence, UNMISS will also be involved through their Civil Affairs Division and their Protection, Transition and Reintegration team. However, in the context of reduced funding, there is increased fatigue from POC on regular calls for FGDs as they would rather use the time engaging in manual labour to support their basic needs, therefore discussion should be called for regularly or when critical.	Ongoing		
RECOMMENDATION 6:		UNHCR should develop a strategy and roadmap to build government institutional capacity over the medium and long-term, to be reviewed and				

	<p>adapted on a regular basis, supported by organisational assessments, and carried out jointly with government counterparts.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Build advocacy and influencing jointly with other key agencies, to increase political will on the part of government to allocate resources for refugee care and management, to enable a gradual handover of responsibilities b) Ensure any future handover of responsibilities to government is underpinned by thorough capacity and risk assessments, plus ongoing monitoring of conflict sensitivity risks, supported by systematic benchmarking of government capacity requirements and standards c) After handover of responsibilities (e.g. of PoC sites), put in place a significant period of continued support and monitoring by UNHCR, particularly around the provision of protection services and ongoing monitoring of both protection and conflict sensitivity risks. 				
Management response:	Partially agree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):	Multi-year protection and solutions strategy for the South Sudan operations in the recent period has always reflected and incorporated with the medium to long term objective of capacitating government institutions to eventually take the full ownership in providing protection to displaced populations. In close coordination with relevant government counterparts, the interventions and activities by the HCR have been predicated on the long-term objective of the government taking full responsibility in dispensing protection and assistance to affected population despite being the youngest nation in the world.				
Unit or function responsible:	Country Operation South Sudan (Country, Sub- and Field Offices)				
Top-line planned actions	By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
				Status	Comments
1	Advocacy through and with UNCT/HCT and donors	RO Juba and FOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous direct and bilateral advocacy with main government counterparts - Through UNCT/HCT forum to amplify targeted advocacy with the gov't to gradual take up the responsibility in line with the revitalised Peace agreement - Strategic partnerships with major donors particularly to assume more responsibility and allocate adequate resources for protection of displaced - Working with development partners (e.g. with the World Bank on the institutional capacity building of the CRA). 	MYMP2023 - 2025	
2	Close engagement with UNMISS in PoC re-designation transition	RO Juba and FO Malakal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PoC Malakal remains the only one PoC still under the responsibility of UNMISS and FO Malakal is closely engaged in the transition process on a weekly basis; - Equally HCR as the lead protection agency as well as through Protection Cluster lead, is engaged in discussions at the Juba level on the review of UNMISS PoC mandate. 	The timeline will be set by UNMISS transitional review team	
RECOMMENDATION 7:	UNHCR should (i) ensure its operations are systematically underpinned by stronger contextual analysis and understanding and (ii) use this analysis and enhanced understanding to become more systematic and rigorous in applying conflict-sensitive approaches in its programming and				

		<p>operations at all levels.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <p>a) Systematically conduct regular context assessments, internally as well as in partnership with others, unpacking the specifics of local contexts, the local political economy, and the complex dynamics of displacement, ensuring the perspectives of affected people (e.g. youth), are incorporated</p> <p>Make use of the considerable expert support, training and resources available in South Sudan to step up its application of conflict sensitive approaches, aiming to become a model of best practice</p> <p>a) Ensure UNHCR is fully abreast of changing localised patterns of violence and security threats e.g. gang-related violence, trafficking, modern slavery, abductions, working in close partnership with other actors e.g. IOM</p> <p>b) Ensure all aspects of programming and risk management proactively demonstrate enhanced conflict sensitivity e.g. in considering IDP and refugee returns, Pockets of Hope programming, and promoting improved relationships between refugees and host communities</p> <p>c) Regularly review and balance staff allocations in relation to changing patterns of needs on the ground, building on the current staffing review, ensuring the mix of national staff in its offices at all levels represents the diversity of the South Sudanese communities which it serves, which will in turn help in enhancing conflict-sensitive approaches.</p> <p>d) Look for opportunities to consolidate strategy and operations across connected and similar zones within the three greater regions (Greater Upper Nile, Greater Equatorias, Greater Bahr El Ghazal), maximising proactive joint planning and learning between different SOs and FOs within each region to better address local context specificities.</p> <p>e) Ensure national level strategies and SOPs not only reflect global, corporate and regional frameworks and policies (which they usually do), but are also informed by, and adapted to the context in South Sudan, so their strategic aspirations are grounded in the reality of South Sudan, and it is clear how they will be implemented (e.g. multi-year national GBV strategy)</p>				
Management response:		Agree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		Not Applicable				
Unit or function responsible:		Country Operation South Sudan (Country, Sub- and Field Offices)				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Training on Conflict Analysis and Sensitivity	DRS/RBEHAGL	<p>3-day training to strengthen operational capacity in conflict analysis and sensitivity facilitated by DRS and the Regional Bureau (RBEHAGL).</p> <p>South Sudan was selected as a pilot country to roll out the training and methodology in conflict analysis/sensitivity.</p>	13 – 15 September 2023		

RECOMMENDATION 8:		<p>UNHCR should deepen its understanding of the climate-conflict nexus in South Sudan, prioritising environmental sustainability and climate sensitivity in all its operations, as well as systematically looking for conflict reduction and peacebuilding opportunities to strengthen the peace dimension of the HDP nexus in its work, and mainstreaming approaches to gender equality and social inclusion, with a strong focus on building transformational partnerships.</p> <p>Proposed actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strengthen national as well as state and local level partnerships across the HDP nexus to build trajectories out of humanitarian crises and conflict towards peace and development, with a strong focus on development and peace-oriented partnerships, and optimising relationships with key partners such as the World Bank and UNMISS b) Develop an overall strategic framework on climate adaptation at CO level, cascaded to SO/ FO levels, aligned to relevant government and UN strategies on climate change, engaging actively in joint UN and government initiatives on climate change, building climate adaptation objectives into sectors/clusters where UNHCR plays a lead role (e.g. NFIs, CCM) as well as government capacity-building, accompanied by an action plan to assess and reduce its carbon footprint in South Sudan, working towards net zero targets at the level of the CO, and SO/FOs c) Consider creating a small hub/ unit within the CO, with the mandate and expertise to support the operation at all levels in building nexus working, including (i) specialised climate change expertise, (ii) expertise to support conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (as per recommendation 7) and (iii) expertise to underpin stronger approaches to gender sensitivity. 				
Management response:		Agree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		Not Applicable				
Unit or function responsible:		Livelihoods & Solutions units				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Strengthen partnership with South Sudan Climate Resilient Flood Management (CRFM) project and mobilise resources to facilitate climate action in refugee hosting locations	Livelihoods and solutions Unit	Facilitating efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity for water resource management and early warning systems to reduce flood risk in river basins and raise preparedness and adaptation strategies in refugee hosting locations. And stepping up resource mobilisation for climate action	2023 - 2027		
2	Strategic Plan for Climate Action	Regional Bureau, Country Office, Field Offices	To strengthen partnerships and supporting the implementation of the regional climate frameworks to strengthen collaboration, preparedness and anticipatory action for climate resilience	November 2023		

3	Promoting Climate-related innovation and solutions	Livelihoods and Solutions Units	UNHCR have taken a leadership role in responding to the diverse range of climactic challenges across South Sudan through innovative climate-adapted solutions such as hafirs, in drought and climate related conflict affected areas, hydroponic farming solutions in flooded areas, insect farming and community action in climate affected locations.	MYMYP 2023-2025		
RECOMMENDATION 9:		<p>Recommendation. UNHCR should ensure its work is informed by a robust, integrated Theory of Change, which pulls together all the lessons from the CSE to inform the MYSP, as well as building a better and more insightful results management system to develop a strong evidence base, and fostering a reflective learning culture.</p> <p>Proposed Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review and strengthen the ToC for the MYSP (visual plus consolidated narrative), strengthening the contextual understanding, building clearer synergies between thematic pathways, and giving greater emphasis to cross-cutting approaches b) Revisit and review the ToC at regular intervals, e.g. to update assumptions and risks, through a joint, collaborative mechanism involving key partners c) Strengthen the results management framework, specifically to include more robust and disaggregated outcome level indicators pertaining to all key MYSP outcome areas (building on those contained in the UNHCR Results-Based Management (RBM) system where required), and thus more effectively reflect achievements and challenges, evidence of transformational change, and good practice, to support adaptive management d) Experiment with 'light' learning approaches, that encourage reflection and are appropriate to the pressured working environment for UNHCR staff in South Sudan, from 'Real-Time Learning' exercises to After-Action Reviews and Adaptive Management Reviews 				
Management response:		Agree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		Not Applicable				
Unit or function responsible:		Programme				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Detailed planning	Programme	Recently conducted annual Detailed Planning workshop in Juba with participation from field teams, sector leads, and operational colleagues.	October 2023		
2	National Theory of Change	Programme	UNHCR 2023-25 multi-year plan is informed by a national level Theory of Change which feeds into UNHCR global Theory of Change. The Theory of Change is updated annually as part of the Detailed Planning process.	October 2023		
3	Outcome area strategy	Programme	Each outcome area in the 2023-25 multi-year plan has a Theory of Change which align with and feed into the national	October 2023		

			level Theory of Change. Each outcome area is managed by a Results Manager who is responsible for updating their respective Theory of Change annually, or as necessary depending on the context.			
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