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**Consideration of reports relating to programme
and administrative oversight and evaluation**

Report on evaluation

Report of the High Commissioner

Summary

This report, covering the period from July 2023 to June 2024, is provided pursuant to the decision of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme to consider reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation during its annual plenary session ([A/AC.96/1003](#), para. 25(1)(f)(vi)).



I. Introduction

1. Between July 2023 and June 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) completed 17 evaluations (see annex I) and initiated 10 new evaluations in alignment with the organization's strategic areas of work. This report outlines the progress made in strengthening the evaluation function across UNHCR, including the formulation and approval of a new evaluation strategy. The use of past evaluations in policy formulation and decision-making is also documented.

II. Progress in strengthening the evaluation function

2. To operationalize the evaluation policy approved by UNHCR in 2022, a new evaluation strategy was launched in January 2024. The strategy provides a clear, costed framework for delivering outcomes that improve the coverage and quality of evaluations, strengthening the capacity of managers to evaluate, as well as enhance the culture of evidence generation and its use in results-based planning and management decision-making. The strategy builds upon the lessons learned from the evaluation strategy for the period 2018 to 2022. It also addresses the recommendations and agreed actions following the 2021 Independent Peer Review of the organization's evaluation function. Finally, the strategy considers the key findings from the 2023 assessment undertaken by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network in relation to evaluation and the broader results-based management system within UNHCR.

3. The Evaluation Office has maintained its leadership role within the United Nations Evaluation Group and has supported the creation of new guidance for evaluation norms, standards and related capacities in the United Nations system. Notably, a training course on evaluation for staff members of 12 United Nations agencies was led by UNHCR in the Asia and the Pacific region in early 2024.

4. In 2023, the budget for the Evaluation Office was \$6.7 million, or 84 per cent of its projected requirements of \$7.9 million. Several strategic adjustments were made as a result of this financial shortfall, including narrowing the scope and decreasing the number of evaluations, delaying the first impact evaluation and reducing support for decentralized evaluations. The Evaluation Office's expenditure represented approximately 0.13 per cent of the organization's total expenditure in 2023, which was significantly below the 0.5 per cent to 3 per cent recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations. In 2024, the Evaluation Office is operating with available funds of \$6.5 million. Budget reductions have resulted in the discontinuation of one Senior Evaluation Officer post and the postponement of a major thematic evaluation.

5. UNHCR evaluations, which were completed in 2023, were subject to independent external assessment and achieved an overall quality rating of 67 per cent, compared to 64 per cent in 2022. However, during the first half of 2024, three decentralized evaluations, of which two were carried out jointly with other United Nations agencies, did not meet quality standards and were reclassified as unpublished studies. Remedial measures are being put in place.

6. Numerous initiatives to bolster evaluation skills were implemented over the reporting period, including the dissemination of updated evaluation guidance and training sessions. A strategic review of relevant skills for evaluation among staff members was undertaken with the aim of improving and mainstreaming evaluation knowledge within UNHCR.

7. In the reporting period, evidence from previous evaluations informed the formulation of the regional multi-year strategies for the period 2025 to 2027, through targeted inputs from outposted Senior Evaluation Officers working as part of multifunctional teams. In addition, the communication outreach continues to be emphasized. Examples include a video created by refugees on the Mauritania country strategy evaluation, podcasts on evidence on shelter programming from an evaluation in West and Central Africa, and a blog on the evaluation of the engagement of UNHCR with humanitarian-development cooperation.

8. In 2023, the development of timely management responses remained a challenge. The submission of management responses was delayed for half of the evaluations completed in 2023. Four evaluations were used to test the efficiency of the management's one-year follow-up system. UNHCR is currently designing the tracking and reporting system for documenting management's use of evaluations and recommendations.

III. Evaluation highlights

A. Global strategies and focus areas

9. In 2023, the final year of the longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of the organization's 2018 policy on age, gender and diversity was completed. It concluded that while there is a relatively strong focus on girls and women in UNHCR programming, some core actions, including registration, are better addressed than others aimed at promoting broader gender equality, such as equal access to economic opportunities. Although UNHCR is increasing support for persons with disabilities, limited resources and technical expertise remain obstacles to inclusion. The evaluation found a relatively strong focus on the rights and needs of unaccompanied children and adolescents, but no comprehensive approach for supporting older persons. The evaluation recommended that UNHCR reinforce and adapt existing data systems, strengthen commitment and action from leadership and management on age, gender and diversity, apply an intersectional lens in its programming, and continue investing in partnerships with key stakeholders.

10. In early 2024, a strategic thematic evaluation of the engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement was completed. The evaluation found that while UNHCR adapts well to operating in diverse contexts, inconsistencies exist, particularly in situations of mixed populations of refugees and displaced persons. Gaps remain in linking emergency and solutions-oriented interventions, addressing climate displacement in a predictable manner, and ensuring equitable needs-based programming and budgeting. Although UNHCR plays a key role in legal and policy solutions, questions arose on the role of UNHCR in programming areas such as livelihoods and infrastructure in situations of internal displacement. The evaluation highlighted a lack of clarity in core policy provisions in the context of situations of internal displacement. This included policies such as the provider of last resort, whereby UNHCR, in its role as a cluster coordinator, may need to ensure the provision of services when relevant humanitarian partners are unable to address critical gaps, as well as the principle of durable solutions from the start, which embeds the pursuit of durable solutions in all UNHCR emergency preparedness and response activities from the onset of an emergency. The evaluation recommended clearer guidelines for resource allocation and a renewed focus on the core protection expertise of UNHCR, and urged the Office to set boundaries for interventions outside its core areas, especially those related to durable solutions for internally displaced persons.

B. Emergency responses

11. In 2023, an independent evaluation assessed the protection response in Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia following the refugee crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. The evaluation examined the provision of services; inter-agency coordination under the refugee coordination model; internal emergency protocols; and emergency preparedness and support to national governments. The evaluation also gathered the views of over 1,300 refugees from Ukraine through an online survey on the work of UNHCR. The evaluation underlined the effectiveness of the organization's action, particularly its engagement with national governments and the timely deployment of resources to meet emergency needs, despite the scale and speed of the crisis. The evaluation's recommendations stressed the importance for UNHCR to invest in emergency preparedness and to capitalize on the lessons learned in engaging with a technologically proficient target population.

12. UNHCR supported two inter-agency humanitarian evaluations in Afghanistan and northern Ethiopia during the reporting period. The findings of the joint evaluations were consistent with those of UNHCR evaluations which were shared in the report to the Executive Committee in October 2023.¹ In Afghanistan, the evaluation concluded that the inter-agency response, despite significant constraints, had been effective in meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable Afghans. In Ethiopia, international humanitarian assistance was delivered under extremely difficult circumstances, and the lack of a coordinated strategy and an inter-agency humanitarian country team impacted effectiveness. Both evaluations observed that there were important challenges faced in relation to preparedness and rapid scale-up, the adherence to humanitarian principles and the upholding of human rights.

C. Country strategies

13. The country strategy evaluation in Mauritania found that the close partnership between UNHCR and the Government improved the protection environment for refugees, and that the country operation demonstrated responsiveness and flexibility to adapt to challenging circumstances. While progress was made in including refugees in social protection and the national health care system, refugee inclusion in the education and finance sectors remains in the early stages. The evaluation recommended that the role of the Malian refugee community in the management of the Mbera camp be further strengthened in the transformation of the camp into an urbanized, integrated settlement. This vision could be enabled by sustainable medium-term financing from the Window for Host Communities and Refugees mechanism of the World Bank's International Development Association, and through enhanced engagement by UNHCR with development actors.

14. The country strategy evaluation in Honduras showed that the collaboration between UNHCR and the Government significantly advanced systemic and policy changes regarding refugee protection, reinforcing protection priorities at all levels. UNHCR contributed to key legal and policy reforms, including the 2023 Law for the Prevention, Care and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons. Nevertheless, challenges remained in terms of strengthening the capacity to implement this law and related reforms on international protection and asylum. The evaluation highlighted the adaptability of the Office's approach to internal displacement amid generalized violence and instability. It also observed that UNHCR effectively addressed the needs in mixed movements by ensuring greater presence in key areas and by assisting returnees and people in transit. While progress was made in the areas of protection and integration, a comprehensive approach to the prevention of gender-based violence and age, gender, diversity was found to be lacking.

15. The country strategy evaluation in Mozambique found that the operation had gone through significant changes in response to evolving needs and contexts, showing significant agility. From 2020 to 2022, the country office grew from a small operation, focused on refugees and asylum-seekers, into a large and complex operation that also addressed a major emergency and recurring climate-induced situations of internal displacement. This transformation positioned UNHCR as a strategic and responsive partner in providing protection and solutions. The operation enhanced its technical and operational capacities, but it still needs to better articulate its role within the inter-agency response and in advocating the prioritization of protection in the wider response. It was recommended that UNHCR further leverage opportunities for localization through partnerships with the Government, and international and national non-governmental organizations.

16. The evaluation in Mali found that the strategy of the country operation aligns with global and regional priorities and that the operation carried out an effective protection and humanitarian response. The collaboration among UNHCR, the Ministry of Justice, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Save the Children helped improve the access of refugees to civil status documentation. UNHCR faced challenges in meeting the growing needs of the internally displaced population and urgently needed stronger partnerships to enhance its own response capacity. UNHCR expanded coverage and adapted its operations in Mali, especially during the coronavirus disease pandemic and the

¹ See [A/AC.96/74/9](#).

humanitarian emergency in the central Sahel region. However, the withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali compelled UNHCR to find alternatives for security services previously provided by the peacekeeping mission. The evaluation found that addressing climate change needed additional focus and that the operation would benefit from a clearer resource mobilization strategy.

17. The findings of the evaluation in Tajikistan showed that despite facing a number of challenges related to limited resources, UNHCR has made significant progress in advancing protection for refugees and asylum-seekers in recent years. UNHCR provided legal advice on the development of a new refugee law and advocated harmonizing asylum legislation. In addition, UNHCR supported the construction of a temporary accommodation centre for asylum-seekers. Capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening government institutions showed promise but lacked a long-term strategy. The evaluation recommended that UNHCR prioritize shared goals with the Government, develop a comprehensive livelihoods strategy, ensure cohesive and sustainable initiatives to strengthen capacity-building for government institutions and local authorities, and improve monitoring and evaluation for better policy and operational responses.

D. Decentralized evaluations

18. In 2023, the highest-scoring decentralized evaluation by the external quality assurance was the livelihoods and energy project in Ethiopia. This evaluation assessed a multiphase project, funded by IKEA, targeting Somali refugees and host communities. The final phase focused on enhancing the capacity of host and refugee cooperatives, market linkages and sustainability through livelihood, energy and environmental projects. The evaluation found that the project's business model served as a visible proof of concept and prompted a shift in the mindset of targeted communities. The analysis revealed that cooperatives, which were supported, increased productivity, generated income and achieved better social cohesion. Recommendations emphasized the importance of strategic transition planning, government capacity-building and an enhanced focus on sustainability to ensure long-term benefits. The other five decentralized evaluations completed over the last 12 months are indicated in annex I and can be found on the Evaluation Office's webpage.

E. Joint and system-wide results

19. Proposed in 2020 by the Secretary-General as part of the broader reform agenda, an Evaluation Office under the United Nations Sustainable Development Group was established in the second half of 2023. The first priority of the Office is the finalization of a comprehensive, system-wide evaluation policy. At this time, it is unclear what remit this new Office has and whether the new policy will include humanitarian evaluations.

20. At the end of 2023, UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) published the final report of the iterative evaluation of the Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children. The independent findings emphasized the important role that leadership from both agencies play in ensuring that priority is given to the partnership at country level. Lack of alignment between the two agencies' systems for planning, resource mobilization, budgeting and monitoring was found to be a challenge. However, the evaluation documented progress made with respect to reporting and data, noting that joint advocacy successfully resulted in changes in policy and practice. The results of the evaluation have informed the new 2024 global framework agreement between UNHCR and UNICEF.

IV. Innovation

21. In line with the Evaluation Office's commitments, the principles of accountability to affected people is prominently reflected in its evaluations. In addition to interviews and focus group discussions with refugees in Mauritania, the country strategy evaluation also engaged the refugee community in Mbera camp through innovative participatory approaches, such as a workshop held with 29 refugee leaders, representatives of volunteer associations and

different ethnic groups in which the evaluation results were presented and priority recommendations were discussed.

22. In line with its new evaluation strategy, UNHCR has initiated work on identifying appropriate contexts and programmes for carrying out rigorous quantitative impact evaluations within the organization. These efforts include an assessment of existing impact evaluations and the identification of potential partnerships with key academic institutions, as well as protection-focused opportunities to pilot work in 2025.

23. During the reporting period, the Evaluation Office has piloted the use of artificial intelligence in the production of evidence synthesis, with generally positive results. As UNHCR refines its guidance on the use of artificial intelligence, the Evaluation Office will continue to explore the use of such tools for enhanced efficiency.

24. The assessment carried out by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network identified the need for UNHCR to be better able to demonstrate cost effectiveness. In response, as a starting point, centralized evaluations will work to present more information on the financial investments made in specific areas under evaluation.

25. UNHCR is committed to promoting the testing of new approaches and tools in its work. Within the context of the organization's conceptual framework for incubating, validating and scaling up innovation, the Evaluation Office and the Innovation Service have agreed to rigorously evaluate promising innovations.

V. Relevance and utilization of evaluation insights

26. Management response to evaluations, in terms of the implementation of recommended actions, is an important measure of the successful uptake of evaluation learning. Management is required to report on the implementation of accepted recommendations in the first and second year following the completion of the evaluations. In the reporting year, management reported on several evaluations.

27. The recommendations from the 2022 independent evaluation of the organization's support for strengthening national asylum systems have directly informed the preparation of the new UNHCR strategy on strengthening national asylum capacity as well as many key initiatives and products, such as the asylum capacity assessment tool, the risk management tool on asylum systems and the learning strategy on asylum capacity development.

28. Recommendations from the 2022 evaluation of the organization's repatriation programmes and activities included the necessity to generate good quality data and analysis to understand enablers and barriers to progress. In response, UNHCR has sought to modernize and standardize its work on measuring refugees' intentions to return.

29. In response to recommendations made in the evaluation of the regional refugee and resilience plan for follow-up to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries, a conceptual framework and operating model were developed to clarify the regional plan's mandate and scope of work.

30. UNHCR consistently uses findings of evaluations of crisis responses, such as those carried out in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and in the Sahel countries, to inform and improve the organization's preparedness, response and reporting on emergencies. Emergency roster membership has been reformulated to strengthen middle management membership and to ensure sufficient capacity to steer refugee coordination and clusters for which UNHCR has lead roles.

VI. Future outlook

31. Looking ahead, more investment is needed in strengthening the decentralized evaluation function. The increasing level of earmarked donor resources has been accompanied by a demand for additional requirements for evaluation and reporting. However, experience over the reporting period has demonstrated that the capacity to professionally manage evaluations remains limited at country level.

32. Methodologically, and in line with the organization's increasing focus on sustainable solutions and inclusion, UNHCR will need to continue to develop relevant tools and approaches for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on its efforts related to policy advice, coordination and advocacy. Increased efforts will also be needed to raise additional external resources for innovative approaches, such as artificial intelligence and impact evaluations.

Annex I

Overview of completed evaluations from July 2023 to June 2024

<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Countries concerned</i>
(a) Centralized	
<i>Organizational policy, strategy, thematic</i>	
Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of the age, gender, and diversity policy (final report)	Chad, Greece, Kenya, Mexico, Thailand
Engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement (2019-2023)	Central African Republic, Colombia, El Salvador, Georgia, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, Syrian Arab Republic
<i>Country strategy</i>	
Honduras	
Mali	
Mauritania	
Mozambique	
Tajikistan	
<i>Emergency response</i>	
Regional refugee emergency response of UNHCR to the Ukraine level-3 emergency	Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia
<i>Joint/inter-agency evaluations</i>	
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan	
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the crisis in northern Ethiopia	
UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children	Global
(b) Decentralized	
<i>Regional and multi-country level</i>	
UNHCR-UNICEF joint impact evaluation on the effects of the regional water, sanitation and hygiene programme in East Africa on social cohesion: Baseline report (<i>Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau/Credit Institute for Reconstruction</i>)	Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan
Support of UNHCR to health, education and economic inclusion in West and Central Africa	Cameroon, Chad, the Niger
UNHCR-UNICEF joint summative evaluation of the European Union's global promotion of best practices for children in migration 2020-2023 (funded by the European Union)	El Salvador, Mexico, South Africa, Zambia

<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Countries concerned</i>
<i>Country level</i>	
Evaluation of the Refugee and Migrant Advice Service's alternative to detention pilot programme	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Evaluation of cash-based interventions for livelihoods and economic inclusion in Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso
Performance evaluation of the phase 3 livelihoods, energy and environment projects among Somali refugees and host communities in Ethiopia (funded by IKEA Foundation)	Ethiopia

Annex II

Overview of ongoing and planned evaluations from July 2024 to June 2025

<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Countries concerned</i>
(a) Centralized	
<i>Organizational policy, strategy, thematic</i>	
Evaluation of the regionalization and decentralization reform in UNHCR	
Approach to prevention, risk, mitigation and response to gender-based violence in UNHCR	Central African Republic, Ecuador, Kenya, Republic of Moldova, United Republic of Tanzania
Longitudinal evaluation of the approach to climate action in UNHCR	
Urban refugee livelihoods	
Cash programming and coordination	
<i>Country strategy</i>	
Australia (strategy of the UNHCR Regional Representation)	Australia, New Zealand
Brazil	
El Salvador	
Peru	
Senegal (strategy of the UNHCR Regional Representation)	Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Sierra Leone
Somalia	
<i>Emergency response</i>	
UNHCR response to the level-3 crisis in Ukraine	
Response to the regional refugee emergency in the Sudan	
<i>Inter-agency/joint</i>	
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the earthquakes in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye	
Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia	
IOM/UNHCR joint evaluation (to be confirmed)	
(b) Decentralized	
<i>Regional and multi-country level</i>	
Multi-country evaluation of phone-based centres in the Middle East and North Africa region	

<i>Evaluations</i>	<i>Countries concerned</i>
Multi-country water, sanitation and hygiene programme in the Horn of Africa	Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan (the)
Multi-country livelihoods evaluation in the southern Africa region	To be confirmed
Evaluation of progress of the inclusion of refugees in national education systems in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Member States	
<i>Country level</i>	
Welcome programme: Refugee economic inclusion in Italy	
Protection and solutions programme for internally displaced persons in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (2010-2022)	
Climate smart agriculture endline report, Rwanda	
Evaluation of the livelihood youth graduation project, Rwanda	
Safe access to fuel and energy plus programme, Bangladesh	
Emergency transit mechanism in the Niger	
