



# UNHCR 75<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee

Statement by Lori Bell (7-8 minutes)

Head of Evaluation Office

October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (15:00-18:00)

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

**It is my pleasure to address you today as we reflect on the progress and challenges of UNHCR's evaluation efforts in a dynamic humanitarian landscape.** At a time when the demand for protection and humanitarian aid is at an all-time high, and resources are increasingly stretched, the role of evaluation – to help management to decide what to do less of, what to do more of, what to do differently - has never been more critical. Evaluation provides accountability and transparency and is also used as a key tool for learning, enabling UNHCR to prioritize effectively and ensure that every action it takes is grounded in evidence.

The Evaluation Office has started to present findings from each individual global thematic evaluation to Member States as they are completed throughout the year. This year we held informal briefings on the evaluation of UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement crisis and, earlier today, on the evaluation of UNHCR's decentralization and regionalization. Before the end of the year, I will share with you key findings from recent evaluations of major emergency responses. So today I will focus on the performance of the function itself, providing an **overview of the current state of the evaluation system** in UNHCR.

This year, to operationalize the 2022 Evaluation Policy, **a new evaluation strategy** was launched. The strategy provides a clear, costed framework for delivering on outcomes that improve the coverage and quality of evaluations, strengthen capacity to evaluate, and enhance the culture of evidence generation and use in results-based planning and priority setting across the organization.

**The demand for evaluations**, particularly Country Strategy Evaluations, continues to rise, with more requests coming in from regional bureaus and country operations than ever before. Management and resource partners are increasingly recognizing the importance of evaluations for shaping policies and providing assurance. This demand, however, exceeds our current capacity leading to some negative impacts on coverage and quality.

Some of you will be familiar with the **evaluations that UNHCR has conducted over the last year** from the briefings that we have organized. Over the period July 2023 to June 2024 the organization



completed 17 evaluations, 11 commissioned by my office and 6 by regional and country offices. Humanitarian evaluations have been initiated in response to major operational scale ups in Ukraine and in response to the Sudan crisis. The Evaluation Office also completed five Country Strategy Evaluations—covering Mauritania, Honduras, Mozambique, Mali, and Tajikistan, along with 2 joint evaluations. However, while the evaluations completed in the past year achieved a 67% external quality rating, three decentralized evaluations did not meet quality standards and had to be reclassified as studies.

**Budget constraints** have impacted our evaluation efforts. The Evaluation Office has operated with a budget of USD 6.7 million in both 2023 and 2024 and an operating limit of 6.5 million for 2025 - or 84% of our projected needs. This shortfall has required us to narrow the scope and number of evaluations, delay our first impact evaluation, and reduce support for decentralized evaluations. On a more positive note, and in line with the evaluation policy, additional funding was successfully raised for emergency evaluations over the last year. The budget for the Ukraine and Sudan evaluations were secured from the funding received by UNHCR through its appeals for these responses.

The increasing level of **earmarked donor resources** has been accompanied by additional requirements for evaluation and reporting on projects. However, capacity to professionally manage evaluations remains limited at country level – and such evaluations rarely have a strategic value addition. In general, we would like to discourage project evaluations and request donors instead to, wherever possible, approach the Evaluation Office to discuss specific needs for evidence and assurance.

**Despite these challenges**, the Evaluation Office remains committed to driving accountability, learning, and improvement across the organization. It has provided critical insights that have informed the formulation of a number of global and regional multi-year strategies, ensuring that the agency's interventions are impactful in supporting displaced populations and the stateless. Evaluation is contributing to the building of an ever-stronger evidence and learning culture in UNHCR, working towards an environment in which staff routinely use available evidence and apply it in their work. As an illustration, and for the first time, the guidance for the preparation of the Global Report 2023 required the explicit reference to relevant evaluations in results reporting.

**This coming year**, UNHCR's work in several important thematic areas will be evaluated including Gender Based Violence, urban refugee livelihoods, climate action and cash programming. Our just updated and published workplan for 2024/25 flags a number of country strategy evaluations that will be conducted. As per the evaluation policy, all Level 3 Emergency declaration responses are subject



to independent evaluation within 15 months. In this regard, the response in Lebanon and Syria will be evaluated and the Evaluation Office will play an active part of OCHA-led inter-agency humanitarian evaluations as and when they arise. Member state participation in advisory groups is very welcome and I encourage you to approach my office if you have a particular interest in one of our upcoming evaluations.

**Looking ahead, and in line with our strategy, an important focus of our efforts continues to be on strengthening the decentralized evaluation function – where demand is clearly growing-** and enhancing capacity to professionally manage and use evaluations at all levels of the organization. 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 leveraging and advocacy. Increased efforts will also be needed on the part of my office to raise additional external resources for the testing of innovative approaches, such as artificial intelligence and impact evaluations.

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**To conclude, we remain steadfast in our determination to further strengthen the evaluation function so that every action we take is informed by robust evidence. And lastly,** I would like to take this opportunity to **thank member States** who have expressed interest in the work of the Evaluation Office - in particular the US, Japan, the Russian Federation, Burkina Faso, Poland, the EU and Sweden who accompanied some of our major evaluations over the last 12 months.

My office remains at your disposal to provide briefings on any specific evaluations of interest.

**And now I would like to welcome any questions you may have,**

Thank you very much.

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<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Speech time</b>
1079 words	7-8 minutes