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Update on the global programmes

Summary

This paper reports on UNHCR's global programmes in the areas of public health, education, shelter and settlement, livelihoods and energy. It also highlights key developments in the areas of identity management and information management, as well as UNHCR's efforts to expand the use of cash-based interventions and to strengthen protection and assistance through the pursuit of alternatives to camps.

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I. Introduction

1. Through its global programmes, UNHCR promotes strategies, innovation, good practices, harmonized approaches and strengthened technical integrity and capacity across a wide spectrum of operational activities. The global programmes aim not only to enhance the impact of UNHCR's protection interventions and the quality of its services and support, but also seek to make them more sustainable and cost-effective, both in emergencies and protracted situations.

2. UNHCR's global programmes are managed from headquarters and are guided by a series of five-year strategies for public health,¹ education,² settlement and shelter,³ livelihoods,⁴ and safe access to fuel and energy (SAFE),⁵ which are implemented in collaboration with partners including governments, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations and the private sector. The "UNHCR policy on alternatives to camps",⁶ which incorporates the 2009 "Policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas", also provides strategic orientation for the global programmes.

II. Updates on technical sectors

A. Public health

3. The "Global strategy for public health" for 2014-2018 provides a framework to address urgent life-saving needs and meet minimum humanitarian standards in emergencies, while also promoting the inclusion of refugees in national healthcare services. In 2015, UNHCR responded to public health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs in displacement situations around the world, including in 12 emergencies and in eight epidemic disease outbreaks. Globally, the Office achieved acceptable under-5 mortality rates in 98 per cent of its operations worldwide,⁷ an improvement from 93 per cent in 2014.

4. UNHCR has worked to integrate mental health services within the scope of primary health care in refugee operations. To support non-specialized healthcare providers assisting refugees with mental disorders, UNHCR and the World Health Organization (WHO) developed a guide on the management of mental, neurological and substance use conditions in humanitarian emergencies⁸ and trained 270 government and partner staff in Cameroon, Chad and Ethiopia. Together with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office continued to advocate the rights of forcibly displaced persons living with HIV, including universal access to prevention, treatment and care, with a particular focus on taking HIV-related issues into account in funding and programming decisions during humanitarian emergencies.

5. UNHCR provided conditional cash assistance to Syrian refugees in Egypt to support access to health care services, including for women with high-risk pregnancies. More

¹ Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/530f12d26.pdf>.

² Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/5149ba349.html>.

³ Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/530f13aa9.pdf>.

⁴ Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf>.

⁵ Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/530f11ee6.html>.

⁶ Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/5422b8f09.html>.

⁷ Data collected as of December 2015 through UNHCR's health information system, TWINE (twine.unhcr.org), at a total of 144 monitored sites, including in operations responding to the refugee crises in Burundi, Nigeria and Yemen.

⁸ Available from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55c078284.html>.

generally, a UNHCR review concluded that cash-based assistance for health programmes may be feasible in some contexts, subject, inter alia, to the availability of universal health care for refugees, their pattern of health care utilization, as well as any existing barriers and obstacles to accessing services.

Nutrition and food security

6. Food assistance for refugees remained a challenge in 2015. In August, for example, 63 per cent of operations in Africa and the Middle East faced cuts in food rations for refugees. Working closely with WFP, UNHCR has sought to target those refugees most in need in camp settings through mixed cash and in-kind food assistance.

7. At the same time, UNHCR operations reported acceptable global acute malnutrition (GAM) status at 61 per cent of the locations surveyed in 2015,⁹ and a significant reduction in acute malnutrition was registered in 17 per cent of refugee camps. Dependency on food assistance and limited livelihood opportunities contributed to ongoing high malnutrition levels at the remaining 39 per cent of sites. Efforts by UNHCR and its partners to combat high levels of anemia resulted in significant decreases at 27 per cent of sites where trend data was available. Conversely, high anemia levels among young children remained a concern, with targets met at only 6 per cent of sites. In response, the Office developed and piloted a multi-sector infant and young child-feeding (IYCF) framework in three country operations with encouraging results. Implementation of the framework will be extended to five other operations in 2016.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

8. UNHCR is committed to providing quality WASH solutions that deliver sufficient quantities of clean water while also reducing long-term operational costs and environmental impacts. For example, the conversion of 13 boreholes in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya to solar-hybrid energy reduced fuel consumption by 50 per cent, while maintaining the quantity of water available to refugees. Elsewhere, UNHCR is conducting research with the Gates Foundation to explore innovative, efficient and more sustainable “waste to value” sanitation solutions that convert waste produced in camps into valuable by-products. The Office updated its WASH monitoring system (WMS), which will be rolled out in certain country operations in 2016.

B. Education

9. A major achievement in 2015 was the inclusion of children affected by conflict in key policy documents associated with the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education – notably the “Incheon Declaration for Education 2030” of May 2015, which contains a specific commitment to education for refugees and the internally displaced. UNHCR has engaged with ministries of education and development partners leading up to the launch of the “Education 2030 Framework for Action” to take forward SDG 4, advocating the inclusion of refugee children and youth in national education sector planning, programming and budgeting.

10. As of February 2016, multi-year, country-specific education strategies were being implemented in 25 priority countries within the framework of UNHCR’s “Education strategy” for 2012-2016, and refugees had access to national education systems in 15 of

⁹ Data collected as of June 2015 through UNHCR’s health information system, TWINE (twine.unhcr.org), at a total of 140 monitored sites, including in operations responding to the refugee crises in Burundi, Nigeria and Yemen.

these 25 countries. The Office supported these efforts through the deployment of education experts, the development of technical guidance notes, technical support missions, and capacity-building. Regional education strategies were also developed for the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Syria emergencies.

11. The Educate a Child (EAC) and UNHCR partnership launched a major three-year initiative in October 2015 that is expected to provide access to education for over 700,000 refugee children who are currently out of school in 12 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This initiative builds on existing efforts by EAC and UNHCR that have brought more than 400,000 refugee children into primary school since 2012. In 2015, the Office also launched an inter-agency working group focused on “accelerated” education programmes for refugee children and adolescents who have missed out on primary education.¹⁰ Over 3,400 refugees in 42 countries were given higher education scholarships through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) and other programmes in 2015, with the number of Syrian refugee recipients doubling between 2014 and 2015. In addition, 1,400 students participated in higher education through certified “connected” e-learning initiatives, bringing to 3,500 the number of refugee students benefiting from these programmes in recent years. In 2015, UNHCR established a “connected learning consortium” of higher education partners to enhance coordination and produce tools to improve learning outcomes for refugees.

C. Shelter and settlement

12. UNHCR’s “Global strategy for settlement and shelter” for 2014-2018 promotes comprehensive shelter and settlement responses that ensure safe and dignified living conditions for refugees. In Rwanda, UNHCR worked with the Government to introduce transitional shelters for Burundian refugees within the first month of the emergency, reducing the costly use of tents. Seventy per cent of UNHCR operations with a shelter budget of over US\$ 10 million have developed shelter and settlement strategies, with the remaining operations to follow in 2016.

13. Over the course of 2015, the Office provided emergency, technical and coordination support for the shelter and site planning response in 30 operations worldwide, including in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cameroon, Djibouti, Greece and Rwanda. UNHCR co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster and leads 11 country-level shelter clusters in conflict-related displacement situations.

14. The Office invested significantly in capacity-building for coordination and technical specialists in shelter in 2015. Fifty-five UNHCR and partner staff received training in site planning and shelter responses, and standardized tools such as a site assessment form and site plan templates are being developed to strengthen the quality of and harmonize UNHCR’s technical shelter response. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and UNHCR also expanded the pool of qualified cluster coordinators through a dedicated training initiative.

D. Information management and statistics

15. In 2015, UNHCR focused on consolidating the achievements made under the now completed information and data management strategy for 2012-2014. Through the strategy,

¹⁰ The working group is led by UNHCR, and includes the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), USAID, Plan International, War Child, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

the Office has established information management as an institutional competency in UNHCR, not only during emergencies and in operations where clusters have been activated, but increasingly in more stable operations.

16. The creation of UNHCR's operational web-based portals was a key deliverable of the strategy. The portal for the Mediterranean situation (<http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>), for example, has become an important resource for coordination with partners and communication with external stakeholders. "Protection information management"¹¹ has also emerged as an important priority for the Office. Together with the Danish Refugee Council and other partners, UNHCR has focused on developing a framework to guide information management in this area, including common terms and principles.

17. In October 2015, UNHCR co-organized the first international conference on refugee statistics, together with the Government of Turkey, the National Statistical Office of Norway, EuroStat and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Participants called for more coherence, support and guidance in defining and gathering statistics on forcibly displaced populations. In 2016, the Office will continue to improve needs assessments of populations of concern, with an emphasis on joint assessments, enhanced analysis of assessment results, and the development of new guidance for partners on gathering and sharing data while ensuring appropriate measures for data protection.

E. Registration and biometrics

18. UNHCR launched a new training programme for staff and partners focusing on registration in emergencies in 2015. The Office continued development of the enhanced web-based version of proGres, the organization's principal registration and case management system. The updated version, "proGres in Partnership", was rolled out to the first field locations in 2015 and will be deployed more broadly in 2016.

19. Deployment of the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) also began in 2015. By January 2016, over 600,000 refugees in 10 countries had been successfully enrolled in UNHCR's global biometrics database. Together, "proGres in Partnership" and BIMS will allow the Office to manage the full range of its protection and assistance processes within a unified system in real time, with the potential to bring important protection benefits to refugees.

F. Livelihoods and self-reliance

20. The "Global strategy for livelihoods" for 2014-2018 has introduced new approaches to enabling self-reliance among refugees and others of concern, as well as partnerships with the private sector and development actors. In 2015, UNHCR introduced the "Operational guidelines on the minimum criteria for livelihoods programming",¹² which require livelihoods programming to be grounded in baseline socio-economic and market assessments, supported by qualified experts and implemented through partners with appropriate expertise. Ninety-seven UNHCR operations have compliance plans in place for achieving the minimum criteria, which are mandatory.

¹¹ "Protection information management" refers to a principled, systemized and collaborative process for the collection, analysis, storage and use of data to ensure quality protection outcomes.

¹² Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/54fd6cbe9.html>.

21. In countries including Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia, UNHCR has assisted refugee artisans, pastoralists and farmers to participate in the economy of their host communities and, where feasible, to link them to regional, national and global “value chains”.¹³

22. UNHCR expanded implementation of the “graduation approach”¹⁴ to sustainable livelihoods at rural sites in Burkina Faso and Zambia. Preliminary results from the urban graduation approach pilots in Costa Rica, Ecuador and Egypt have been promising, with 19,980 people securing salaried employment or becoming self-employed. In Burkina Faso, by the end of 2015 UNHCR had incorporated 2,800 refugees into the national milk value chain and some 50 artisans were producing export-ready items. Also in Burkina Faso, some 500 Malian Tuareg refugee artisans received training in business skills and product design and processes. UNHCR is engaged with private sector retailers, several of which have expressed interest in sourcing and selling refugee-produced goods internationally.

G. Energy and environment

23. In line with the “Global strategy for safe access to fuel and energy (SAFE)” for 2014-2018, UNHCR operations in 10 countries have adopted national SAFE strategies to ensure a holistic approach to meeting the energy needs of refugees and host communities. Three more operations will develop country-level strategies in 2016. UNHCR supported a range of environment resilience projects, including reforestation, promotion of clean cookstoves, solar technologies and environmental awareness.

24. UNHCR is partnering with Global Village Energy Partnership (GVEP) International, Practical Action and the Norwegian Refugee Council in the Moving Energy Initiative (MEI). Supported by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the MEI seeks to meet the energy needs of refugees and IDPs in a manner that reduces costs, is safe, and will benefit host communities. Pilot projects during 2016 will aim to enhance access to energy for displaced populations in Burkina Faso, Jordan and Kenya. Renewable energy projects supported through the IKEA “Brighter Lives for Refugees” campaign will be expanded to Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya, Nepal and Sudan in 2016. In Jordan, solar power plants under development in Azraq camp, partially funded by IKEA, and in Za’atri camp, supported by KfW Development Bank, are expected to reduce the cost of electricity by US\$ 8.5 million per year and to lower carbon dioxide emissions from these facilities by more than 18,000 tonnes.

25. UNHCR is updating its energy and environment indicators and setting minimum standards for cooking technologies, in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves and Berkeley Air Monitoring. The Office is also working to broaden its potential funding base for environmental management, renewable energy and climate risk adaptation by seeking accreditation to the Green Climate Fund, as well as through carbon financing¹⁵ schemes, which are being expanded to Ethiopia and Uganda.

¹³ A “value chain” describes the full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the intermediary phases of production, and on to delivery to final consumers, including disposal after use.

¹⁴ Pioneered by BRAC and piloted by the World Bank’s Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) and the Ford Foundation, the graduation approach enables refugee and local families to progressively move out of extreme poverty and access sustainable livelihood opportunities.

¹⁵ See further: <http://www.unhcr.org/55005b069.pdf>. UNHCR’s “carbon credit” project involving a stove programme in Rwanda generated EUR 50,000 in 2015.

III. Other initiatives

A. Alternatives to camps

26. UNHCR's policy on alternatives to camps aims to create opportunities for refugees to live lawfully, peacefully and independently in host communities. UNHCR developed the "Diagnostic tool for alternatives to camps," which is a simple self-assessment tool designed to assist field operations in identifying gaps in implementation of the policy and in setting priorities. The tool was introduced in 2015 to support planning for 2016, providing the Office with a global baseline to assess implementation of the policy. The self-assessment exercise will be repeated annually by UNHCR operations to monitor progress. UNHCR also launched the "Alternatives to camps – making it work: good practice and guidance series"¹⁶ in 2015 to promote useful approaches, tools and good practices in implementation of the policy.

27. At the field level, UNHCR continued to promote settlement alternatives through the "master plan" approach,¹⁷ which seeks to ensure the holistic and comprehensive design and development of refugee settlements and to incorporate refugees into national and local development plans, as well as basic services, infrastructure, society and the economy. The new approach is influencing the development and rethinking of refugee sites in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique and Rwanda. There has been encouraging progress, with the mainstreaming of refugees into national healthcare and education systems in several countries. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo are including refugees from the Central African Republic in local schools. In Egypt, over 133,000 Syrian refugees have access to the same national primary health care services as nationals at a nominal fee.

28. UNHCR is conducting research on the economic impact of refugees in Rwanda and South Africa to support evidence-based policy-making. UNHCR's growing collaboration with the World Bank has also contributed to the World Bank lending programme to finance development responses to displacement in Africa. In Uganda, the United Nations and the World Bank will jointly develop area-based development programming benefitting refugees and host communities.

B. Cash-based interventions

29. UNHCR has continued to pursue the expanded and systematic use of cash-based interventions (CBIs)¹⁸ to deliver assistance to refugees. As part of the ongoing CBI institutionalization process, UNHCR is progressively integrating CBIs into functional areas - including through the launch of "Operational guidelines for cash-based interventions in displacement settings"¹⁹ and the adoption of internal financial procedures for CBIs - and building the capacity of field operations to use CBIs. UNHCR operations budgeted an estimated US\$ 487.5 million for the delivery of assistance through CBIs in 2016, compared to US\$ 465 million in 2015.

¹⁶ Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&comid=55fff7896&cid=49aea9390&scid=49aea939b&tid=49ec6f172a&keywords=atc>.

¹⁷ For further details see the "Global strategy for settlement and shelter: a UNHCR strategy 2014-2018", available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/530f13aa9.pdf>, p. 19.

¹⁸ See further UNHCR, "Innovation: cash-based interventions", EC/66/SC/CRP.13, 3 June 2015, available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/5596441c9.html>.

¹⁹ Available from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54d387d14.html>.

30. With the assistance of the European Union Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), UNHCR deployed CBI experts to Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Liberia, Myanmar, Rwanda, Ukraine and the United Republic of Tanzania in 2015. The Office also worked with partners to conduct studies on CBIs, explore delivery mechanisms and harmonize implementation approaches. For example, in Jordan, UNHCR began using “EyeCloud”, an iris scan database, which will in turn support the operationalization of a “common cash facility” to allow UNHCR and partners to work with and through a bank, without an agency serving as intermediary. In 2016, UNHCR will pilot new tools to determine the feasibility and risks of implementing CBIs in different operational contexts.
