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The UN Refugee Agency

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# Evaluation of UNHCR's Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation

REPORT ON A LONGITUDINAL,  
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION  
(SEPTEMBER 2018 – MARCH 2021)

VOLUME I: MAIN REPORT

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Conducted by:

**GPPI:** Dr. Julia Steets; Dr. Julian Lehmann  
Contributions: Urban Reichhold; Dr. Alexander  
Gaus; Janika Spannagel

**ISDC:** Prof. Dr. Tilman Brück; Dr. Ghassan Baliki;  
Dr. Neil Ferguson; Laura Peitz, Oscar Díaz

**GPPI**

GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE

**ISDC**

INTERNATIONAL  
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### **Evaluation Service**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Case Postale 2500

1211 Genève 2

Switzerland

[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

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Evaluation manager / contact in UNHCR:	Nabila Hameed, <a href="mailto:hameedn@unhcr.org">hameedn@unhcr.org</a> ; Joel Kinahan, <a href="mailto:kinahan@unhcr.org">kinahan@unhcr.org</a>

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# Executive summary

## Background

This report contains the findings of an evaluation of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation. As part of this cooperation, UNHCR variously acts as a catalyst for development engagement on forced displacement; leverages the influence of development actors for protection and policy advocacy with governments; gradually links services for refugees with national systems; and expands its support for self-reliance. The evaluation was commissioned by UNHCR because recent high-level policy developments and initiatives, such as the 2016 Global Compact on Refugees, support a more comprehensive response to displacement, involving both humanitarian and development actors. UNHCR plays a key role in implementing this reform agenda.

The evaluation was conducted between 2018 and 2021. This relatively long timeframe enabled the evaluation team to trace efforts and their results over time, and to support learning by regularly discussing the emerging findings and their implications with UNHCR colleagues working at different levels. Data collection focused on four UNHCR country operations (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Niger) and involved several country visits, a total of 551 semi-structured interviews, 19 focus group discussions with refugees and host communities, a staff survey and quantitative analyses based on UNHCR datasets.

## UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation

The evaluation found a consistent perception among interviewees that UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has increased over the past five years. UNHCR has systematically built partnerships with a number of multilateral and bilateral development actors. The partnership with the World Bank Group is exemplary and shapes UNHCR's narrative on and approach to humanitarian-development cooperation. Cooperation with the EU, the OECD and some bilateral development actors has become more systematic. Cooperation with individual UN agencies has also increased, but engagement with the UN development system as a whole, other multilateral development banks, NGOs and the private sector has been less systematic.

In most cases considered by this evaluation, UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has focused on influential development donors with a strategic focus on displacement and reflects available opportunities. However, there were also calls for certain strategic adjustments. For example, UNHCR's engagement with the UN development system as a whole was less advanced than engagement with other actors. Examples of cooperation on the rule of law and access to justice were positive, but small in number and scale. Most examples of cooperation covered by the evaluation focused on host communities and refugees, with little apparent focus on issues of internal displacement.

Crucially, most of UNHCR's observed recent efforts to strengthen humanitarian-development cooperation have focused on engaging with external actors, while UNHCR's own programmes often continue to conduct "business as usual" in parallel and provide direct services to refugees without consistently focusing on how to gradually integrate refugees into local and national service systems.

## Factors influencing humanitarian-development cooperation

The level of cooperation between UNHCR and development actors depends heavily on external factors, such as host government policy positions and donor policies and priorities. However, internal UNHCR factors also play an enabling role: UNHCR leadership's clear commitment to humanitarian-development cooperation has translated into a high degree of awareness and agreement across the organization, and new staff positions and units created to support such cooperation have enabled UNHCR's increased engagement with development actors. UNHCR's protection mandate, strong field presence and coordination role are key assets in its cooperation with development actors. Its access to data on refugees and other persons of concern is also critical, and investments in this area are evident.

Internal factors also constrain humanitarian-development cooperation, even as key parts of UNHCR's systems are currently undergoing reform. Firstly, UNHCR's position on mobilizing resources from development actors has been unclear and/or misunderstood, and the time and resources required for engaging with development actors have not consistently been included in UNHCR's core budgets and standard job descriptions. This has created disincentives for managers at the country and sub-national levels to engage in humanitarian-development cooperation, erected obstacles for the effective implementation of programmes funded by development actors, and created gaps in UNHCR's capacity to cooperate with development actors. Secondly, while much of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has been driven by dedicated staff positions within the organization, other staff members' contributions have been more uneven and the role of UNHCR's Regional Bureaux has been unclear. Thirdly, gaps in the organization's capacity to gather, analyse and share relevant data persist, despite recent investments. Finally, there are still gaps in UNHCR's capacity to provide thought leadership on protection issues and to fully leverage its protection expertise for humanitarian-development cooperation.

## Effects of UNHCR's increased engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation

Even though the aforementioned high-level commitments to strengthening humanitarian-development cooperation in displacement contexts are still relatively new, the evaluation found evidence that UNHCR's increased engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation is already having a discernible effect at different levels.

A number of key **development actors** have recently increased their focus on forced displacement, creating dedicated funding instruments for and/or policies on forced displacement. While UNHCR had little influence on the political dynamics underlying this shift, it has helped translate these dynamics

into concrete commitments and agreements. Relevant funding instruments include the World Bank's Window for Host Communities and Refugees and the Global Concessional Financing Facility, the EU's regional trust funds, the African Development Bank's inclusive funding for COVID-19, Germany's special initiative on tackling the root causes of displacement, stabilizing host regions and supporting refugees, as well as the US' and the UK's traditionally strong support for addressing forced displacement. In the four case-study countries examined by this evaluation, these instruments translated into significant investments by development actors in refugee-hosting areas.

There are plenty of examples for UNHCR's practical support in enabling development actors to plan and implement their programmes in areas affected by displacement more quickly and easily. There are also instances in which UNHCR clearly influenced programme designs, including for the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project, the Jordan Compact, the Jordan Health Development Partner Forum's initiative to support the reintroduction of subsidized rates for refugees using public health care, the land development programme in Melkadida, Ethiopia, the Ethiopia Jobs Compact and the international community's joint advocacy agenda with the Government of Bangladesh.

UNHCR and its development partners have little influence on many of the key factors affecting **host government policies** towards refugees. Nevertheless, there is evidence that UNHCR's global engagement helped encourage a small number of host governments to pledge policy changes that will transform key aspects of how they manage refugee responses. The 30 largest refugee-hosting countries made a total of 121 policy pledges related to the Global Compact on Refugees. This includes, for example, commitments by the Government of Ethiopia to expand its out-of-camp policy for refugees, to increase enrolment of refugee children in education and to expand access to social services and documentation for refugees.

In some areas, this engagement with host governments also supported the implementation of those policy changes. This includes, for example, the adoption of a new Refugee Proclamation in Ethiopia, the authorization of several practical changes like the introduction of formal education for Rohingya children in Bangladesh and the issuance of work permits for Syrian refugees in Jordan. At the same time, important investments in host government capacities and relevant service systems and infrastructure were made. Progress in using humanitarian-development cooperation to establish more direct relations between UNHCR and a broader range of line ministries in the case-study countries, by contrast, has been more limited.

Using rigorous quantitative analysis of UNHCR datasets and evidence from focus group discussions, the evaluation team was able to establish the effects of a few select cases of humanitarian-development cooperation on **refugees and host communities**. Work permits had a stronger positive effect on refugees' socioeconomic situations than aid workers or even refugees themselves perceived. Having a work permit also had a positive effect on protection, as it significantly decreased the odds of refugees indicating specific protection needs and of having to send children to work or to accept risky, degrading, exploitative or illegal temporary jobs to meet basic needs. By contrast, the reintroduction of subsidized health-care rates for refugees in Jordan also illustrates the trade-offs of

cooperation. On average, refugees incurred higher costs for and had slightly lower rates of access to health care when using subsidized national public health-care systems, as compared to parallel humanitarian health-care services (which were more readily available when these subsidies were suspended).

In Ethiopia, registration of births of refugee children increased following the government's pledges linked to the Global Compact on Refugees. Other factors being held equal, children with birth certificates were more likely to be enrolled in education than those without certificates. Families with at least one child whose birth was registered were more likely to return to their countries of origin. Other available evidence also points to the predominantly positive effects of humanitarian-development cooperation on refugees and host communities. For example, the construction of photovoltaic power plants in Jordan made electricity more readily available in refugee camps and surrounding areas, while a land transformation project created social housing for both host communities and refugees in Niger. In Ethiopia, a livelihoods programme increased income and consumption levels among both the participating host community members and refugees.

While increased humanitarian-development cooperation had predominantly positive effects on development partners, the policies of host governments as well as refugees and host communities, its impact on **UNHCR and its implementing and cooperating partners** has been relatively limited so far. The most important effect noted by the evaluation team is a largely positive effect on UNHCR's reputation. UNHCR's investments in additional staff capacity and institutional structures have enabled positive effects on refugees and host communities, but they have not allowed UNHCR to hand over many responsibilities to other actors and to substantially reprioritize its activities. The only negative effects on UNHCR and its partners noted are: a strain on relationships with national refugee agencies in some cases where other line ministries become involved in providing services to refugees, as well as an increased degree of uncertainty among staff members as a consequence of increased humanitarian-development cooperation and other ongoing change processes.

## COVID-19 and humanitarian-development cooperation

UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation intersected with its response to the COVID-19 pandemic in several ways. In the short term, the pandemic led to a reprioritization of the humanitarian response, as UNHCR and its partners shifted their focus to responding to the evolving health crisis. In several contexts, the pandemic response benefited from existing humanitarian-development cooperation. In Niger, for example, the COVID-19 response plan covered nationals and refugees alike; in Jordan, similar criteria and modalities were used for the cash facility and the national social protection scheme, and job protections also applied to refugees. In Bangladesh, respective investments in the public health infrastructure benefited both host communities and refugees. In Ethiopia, by contrast, the COVID-19 response was less integrated than the stakeholders consulted for this evaluation had expected.

In the longer term, the pandemic's socioeconomic effects are expected to create challenges that may hamper efforts to achieve more self-reliance among refugees. At the same time, there are also indications that the pandemic has created new opportunities for humanitarian-development cooperation, as some governments have become more open to the idea of pursuing inclusive policies and more development funding will likely be available for emergency situations such as health crises caused by COVID-19.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Based on these findings, the evaluation team concludes that UNHCR's enhanced engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation is a rewarding strategy. UNHCR has implemented a number of relevant, effective institutional measures to support humanitarian-development cooperation and has initiated a range of important reform processes to address the remaining obstacles. For example, UNHCR is introducing multi-annual planning, updating the organization's results framework and aligning it with the Sustainable Development Goals, and reforming aspects of the budget allocation process.

These efforts have contributed to a significant increase in the extent of humanitarian-development cooperation. The evaluation also demonstrates that this increased cooperation has primarily positive effects on both refugees and host communities. At the same time, the evaluation also identified space for certain strategic adjustments of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation as well as internal factors that constrain this cooperation.

The evaluation team makes six recommendations to encourage UNHCR to continue and adapt its focus on and investments in humanitarian-development cooperation. Suggested steps for implementing these recommendations are in chapter 7 at the end of this report:



Recommended actions	Responsible
1. Further invest to strengthen UNHCR's engagement with the UN development system, to expand cooperation with development actors on rule of law and access to justice, to explore opportunities for cooperating on internal displacement and to better prepare UNHCR for its facilitation, supervision, monitoring, reporting and advocacy roles.	Division of Resilience and Solutions and Division of International Protection with support from Division of Strategic Planning and Results, Division of External Relations, Principal Adviser on Internal Displacement, Division of Human Resources and the Transformation and Change Service
2. Systematically pursue the integration of services for refugees with national and local service systems throughout UNHCR's own programmes, focusing multi-year planning on this objective and strengthening incentives.	Division of Strategic Planning and Results and Division of Resilience and Solutions with support from Division of Human Resources, Transformation and Change Service and the Division of International Protection
3. Ensure that UNHCR core budgets that country operations are authorized to spend and standard job descriptions include the time and resources to engage with development actors and processes. Clarify under what conditions UNHCR seeks funding for its own activities from development actors and make these contributions additional to regular core budgets.	Division of Strategic Planning and Results and Division of Human Resources with support from Division of External Relations and the Division of Resilience and Solutions
4. Make UNHCR's support structure for humanitarian-development cooperation more effective by clarifying the role of the Regional Bureaux and strengthening the focus of staff members dedicated to humanitarian-development cooperation on internal change processes.	Division of Resilience and Solutions, Transformation and Change Service and the Regional Bureaux
5. Accelerate efforts to strengthen UNHCR's capacity for and practice of collecting, analysing and sharing data.	Global Data Service with support from Division of Strategic Planning and Results, Division of Resilience and Solutions and the Division of International Protection
6. Make the role of protection in humanitarian-development cooperation more explicit and exercise this role more actively, specifically in terms of planning and analysis, providing operational protection advice, monitoring the situation of persons of concern and cooperating directly with development actors.	Division of International Protection with support from Global Data Service, Division of Strategic Planning and Results and the Division of Resilience and Solutions

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
ARRA	Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
BSRP	Basic Social Service Delivery
CEM	Coarsened Exact Matching
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DIP	Division of International Protection
DRRM	Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service
DRS	Division of Resilience and Solutions
ECHO	European Commission Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GCFF	Global Concessional Financing Facility
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPPi	Global Public Policy Institute
HAUS	Health Access and Utilization Survey
HV	Home Visit
IDA	International Development Association
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INCAF	International Network on Conflict and Fragility
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISDC	International Security and Development Center
JC	Jordan Compact
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency

JRP	Joint Response Plan / Jordan Response Plan
KD	Kinked Design
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
L3	Level 3
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNM	Nearest Neighbour Matching
NPA	National Planning Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PARCA	Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project
ProGres	Profile Global Registration System
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
RDD	Regression Discontinuity Design
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDO	Senior Development Officer
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRAW	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAF	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

# 1. Evaluation background

## 1.1. Context: A changed environment demands more comprehensive responses to displacement.

Forced displacement and development are closely interlinked and there is a growing awareness that responses to displacement need to be more comprehensive, involving both humanitarian and development actors. Many stakeholders involved in recent high-level policy initiatives like the Global Compact on Refugees have expressed their commitment to such humanitarian-development cooperation. This has important implications for UNHCR, as the organization was assigned a key role in this process.

There is a growing awareness that forced displacement is relevant to poverty reduction efforts and development – and that development is relevant to addressing forced displacement. This awareness is based on several trends. Firstly, most of the world's 26 million refugees have fled their home countries to neighbouring or regional host states, many of which are developing countries.<sup>1</sup> Other major refugee-hosting countries are emerging market economies with pre-existing development challenges. Many developing and emerging economies also have to deal with internal displacement. This pattern is likely to remain unchanged, with many donors preferring to assist displaced people locally or regionally and adopting strategies that contain spontaneous movements across borders and between regions.

Secondly, displacement lasts longer than before. Currently, a majority of internally displaced people as well as an estimated 17.4 million refugees find themselves in displacement situations lasting five years or more<sup>2</sup> – significantly more than in previous periods.<sup>3</sup> About half of the refugees in protracted situations stay in countries of asylum for more than 10 years. Local socioeconomic integration or resettlement have therefore become crucial options for a large share of refugees.

Thirdly, growing academic evidence demonstrates that forced displacement has important effects on development. A recent review of such evidence shows that forced displacement can have both positive and negative effects on development outcomes,<sup>4</sup> particularly on the economic well-being of

<sup>1</sup> According to UNHCR Global Trends, in 2019, more than one third of the world's 26 million refugees were living in just five countries near their respective countries of origin: Turkey, Columbia, Pakistan, Uganda and Sudan. 85 per cent of the world's refugees are hosted in developing countries. See UNHCR, "Global Trends 2019", 2020, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Xavier Devictor, Quy-Toan Do, "How Many Years Have Refugees Been in Exile?" World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7810, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Paolo Verme, Kirsten Schuettler, "The Impact of Forced Displacement on Host Communities: A Review of the Empirical Literature in Economics", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8727, 2019, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31231>.

the host community – for example, through effects on prices, employment and wages. The review found that between 12 and 20 per cent of studies showed a significant positive effect on employment and wages. By contrast, between 22 and 25 per cent of studies showed a statistically-significant negative effect, particularly on employment opportunities and the wages of young and informal workers in middle-income countries. The review also found that where initial effects are negative, the situation may develop favourably for development outcomes, depending on the number of refugees as well as the financial investments and policy responses of governments and other actors.

These trends, along with rising numbers of displaced people, have strengthened the case for delivering a more comprehensive response involving both humanitarian and development actors. Humanitarian funding challenges<sup>5</sup> have added to the pressure to change the current way of working and find more sustainable solutions that draw on development resources. At the same time, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires development actors to try to reach those who are furthest behind, following the “leave no one behind” principle. As a result of these two dynamics intersecting, **key stakeholders have expressed their commitment to change the way the international community responds to forced displacement in a number of recent, high-level policy initiatives.**

Such policy initiatives include general commitments to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian and development approaches. At the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, governments, financial institutions and UN agencies as well as non-governmental and private sector entities agreed to cooperate on a new approach that meets the humanitarian needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters, while simultaneously reducing their vulnerability and increasing their as well as their host communities’ self-reliance and resilience.<sup>6</sup> This is intended to amount to a “New Way of Working” that reinforces rather than replaces national and local services, strengthens access to livelihood opportunities and transcends the humanitarian-development divide.<sup>7</sup> A range of UN system reforms support a more joined-up way of working, including a revised common development planning instrument for all UN agencies;<sup>8</sup> common premises for UN agencies; and empowered UN Resident Coordinators. In late 2017, a global Joint Steering Committee was created to push for more coherence and collaboration between development and humanitarian actors, including UNHCR. This committee is co-chaired by UNDP and the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Key stakeholders have also made specific commitments regarding the response to forced displacement. The UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and

<sup>5</sup> While donor contributions have been rising, this increase is not commensurate with the global need. Similar to the global humanitarian funding gap, UNHCR’s funding shortfall was more than 50 per cent in 2020. See UNHCR, “Consequences of Underfunding in 2020”, 2021, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/underfunding-2020/>.

<sup>6</sup> World Humanitarian Summit, “Commitments to Action”, accessed 1 February 2021, [https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2017/Jul/WHS\\_Commitment\\_to\\_Action\\_8September2016.pdf](https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2017/Jul/WHS_Commitment_to_Action_8September2016.pdf). See also the Grand Bargain commitments to “enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors.”

<sup>7</sup> See also UN Economic and Social Council, “Repositioning the UN Development System to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda – Ensuring a Better Future for All”, 30 June 2017.

<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs).

Migrants in 2016, paving the way for the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#) and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). In the New York Declaration, States pledged to provide adequate funding to address both immediate humanitarian needs and the longer term development requirements of host countries and communities, support community-based development programmes and facilitate close cooperation among States, local authorities, UN entities and other actors, including international financial institutions. Similarly, the GCR is intended to foster a fairer, more sustained and predictable distribution of responsibilities and resources among host countries, their local authorities and all other relevant stakeholders in the refugee response.<sup>9</sup> Its objectives are: (i) to ease the pressures on host countries; (ii) to enhance refugee self-reliance; (iii) to expand access to third-country solutions; and (iv) to support conditions in refugees' countries of origin that would enable them to return in safety and dignity. Every four years, the [Global Refugee Forum](#) brings together States and other actors to share good practices and contribute financial support, technical expertise and policy changes to help reach the goals of the GCR.

**These commitments have important implications for UNHCR's role.** UNHCR's mandate is to ensure the international protection of refugees, for example by: promoting and supervising international legal instruments; promoting refugee admission; promoting the implementation of measures to improve the situations of refugees and reduce the number of those who require protection; supporting voluntary repatriation, local integration or inclusion; and cooperating with or facilitating other actors' activities.<sup>10</sup> Due to this mandate, UNHCR is accustomed to working with other partners to support refugee self-reliance and inclusion. UNHCR's 2003 Framework on Durable Solutions, for example, centred on "development assistance for refugees" and "development through integration" as key pathways to finding durable solutions for refugees.<sup>11</sup>

Building on this mandate, the GCR and the CRRF assign UNHCR a central role in supporting a more comprehensive approach. The GCR tasks the agency with convening the [Global Refugee Forum](#), which brings together States and other actors to share good practices and make pledges and commitments through financial support, technical expertise and policy changes. The GCR also designates UNHCR as a support organization for host governments. Among other tasks, this entails:

- Incorporating forced displacement issues into national development plans;
- Assisting governments in developing comprehensive plans;
- Setting out "policy priorities; institutional and operational arrangements; requirements for support from the international community, including investment, financing, material and technical assistance; and solutions";
- Activating a "support platform" for States to facilitate coherent humanitarian and development responses, among other issues;

<sup>9</sup> Including international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, host community members and refugees.

<sup>10</sup> UN General Assembly, Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, A/RES/428(V), 14 December 1950, par. 8, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3628.html>.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, "Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern", 2003, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/3f1408764.pdf>.



- Supporting all government-led efforts to create multi-stakeholder and partnership approaches.

## 1.2. Purpose and scope of the evaluation: Supporting UNHCR in exercising its role in humanitarian-development cooperation.

The evaluation focuses on learning. It covers UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation during the period from 2016 to 2020.

**The primary purpose of the evaluation is to support UNHCR in adapting to the new policy environment** and implementing its new role as effectively as possible. The evaluation aims to generate knowledge on the current scope and effects of cooperation. It also intends to contribute to UNHCR's accountability in how the organization exercises its new role and to foster learning with regard to UNHCR's strategic direction in its engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation as well as the practical steps required to support cooperation.

Since the evaluation focuses on UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation, it does not offer a detailed examination of the contributions made by the many other stakeholders which are relevant to and necessary for implementing the GCR. The evaluation considers institutional changes that are ongoing within UNHCR as well as cooperation experiences gained since the adoption of the New York Declaration in 2016. Thus, the **temporal scope** of the evaluation extends from 2016 to 2020.

To determine the **thematic scope** of the enquiry, the evaluation employs a broad definition of "development actors". These include all actors who assist through development (rather than through relief or recovery) – that is, who do or could support the host government and local authorities in, or work directly on, improving human development within host communities and among displaced populations. These actors include development banks, donors and development agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations and private foundations, private-sector organizations and UN development agencies. Host governments, local authorities and government service providers are often the primary actors in achieving human development as well as in safeguarding the rights of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. The evaluation understands host governments as a different category of actors. Among other issues, the evaluation examines how UNHCR's cooperation with development actors affects host governments' policies and the relationship between UNHCR and host governments.

The evaluation also began with a broad definition of "cooperation" as all forms of working together that reach a certain benchmark in terms of the levels of commitment, time, resources and formality

involved.<sup>12</sup> **The evaluation found that UNHCR has four main modes of engaging with development actors:**<sup>13</sup>

- **Catalysing and facilitating:** UNHCR provides various forms of support to development actors with the aim of increasing or improving their activities in support of refugees or in refugee-hosting areas. This includes logistical facilitation, data and analysis, protection advice, support for government policies and capacities, coordination support and global engagement.
- **Advocating with host governments:** UNHCR advocates for policy changes together with one or more development actors, or encourages development actors to include issues related to forced displacement in their advocacy towards and negotiations with governments.
- **Integrating services:** With the support of development partners, UNHCR makes efforts to link refugee services to national and local systems. These efforts can be gradual, ranging from adapting refugee services to national standards and building water, electricity or protection services that supply both refugees and host communities, to building the capacity of local service providers to cover both host communities and refugees.
- **Mobilizing resources for self-reliance:** Using funding provided by development actors, UNHCR and its partners provide self-reliance programmes either solely for refugees or for refugees and members of host communities. Such programmes can include livelihoods programmes, programmes to strengthen local markets and programmes to enhance the preconditions for self-reliance, such as mobility, education, employment skills or financial inclusion.

<sup>12</sup> Based on the continuum presented in Luz Saavedra, Paul Knox-Clarke's, "Better Together? The Benefits and Challenges of Coordination in the Field for Effective Humanitarian Response", ALNAP Study, 2015, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/alnap-better-together-study-singles-web.pdf>.

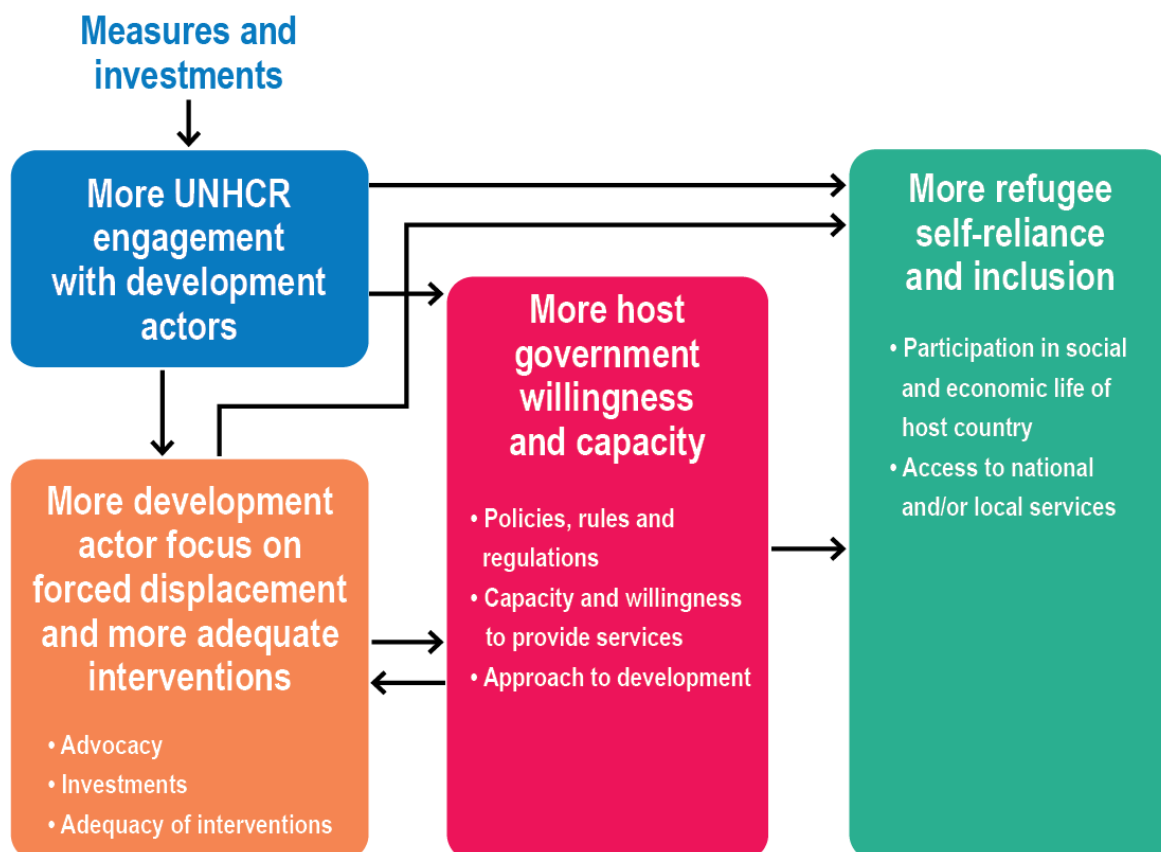
<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Julia Steets, Julian Lehmann, Urban Reichhold's "UNHCR's Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation", Think Piece on Research Phase 1, UNHCR 2019, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5dd3b7bd4.pdf>.

# 2. Evaluation design

## 2.1. Logic model

When this evaluation was commissioned, UNHCR had no explicit definition of the specific objectives it pursues when engaging with development actors. The evaluation team therefore drew on elements of the GCR and the CRRF as well as key informant interviews during the inception phase of this evaluation to develop a logic model for UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation. The initial logic model was refined over the course of the evaluation by conducting interviews, reviewing further documents and observing UNHCR's cooperation practice (Figure 1). While this evaluation covers certain aspects of the GCR, it is not intended to assess UNHCR's implementation of the GCR as a whole and does not cover, for example, the GCR objectives of expanding access to third-country solutions and of supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

Figure 1: A logic model for UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation



The aim of UNHCR's engagement with development actors is to contribute to **refugee self-reliance and inclusion** while strengthening burden- and responsibility-sharing with host countries and communities.<sup>14</sup> Self-reliance and inclusion mean that viable economic opportunities are available for refugees in host countries and that refugees enjoy access to national or local services, such as education, health, justice and social safety nets.<sup>15</sup> Self-reliance and inclusion are also intended to have positive effects on refugees' de facto protection situations by easing tensions with and supporting integration into local communities.

**Host governments** hold the keys to many of the factors that enable refugee self-reliance and inclusion. They determine which rules and regulations apply to refugees – for example, whether they are recognized as refugees, whether they can move freely, whether they are allowed to work and which services they can access. Their capacity and willingness to provide services affect what national and local services refugees and other persons of concern can access. Host governments also decide on their approaches to development – for example, on how much priority to give to refugee-hosting areas and whether to include refugees in development plans. By doing so, they define the scope within which development actors can focus their investments and programmes on refugees and their host communities. A key intermediate objective of UNHCR's engagement with development actors is to increase host governments' willingness and capacity to support increases in refugee self-reliance and inclusion. Advocacy, capacity-building, financial support, investments in national or local service systems and strengthened relationships between UNHCR and host governments at the national and sub-national levels can contribute to this goal.

A direct aim of UNHCR's cooperation with **development actors** is to catalyse and facilitate their engagement on forced displacement. UNHCR is concerned with the level of priority development actors give to forced displacement in their advocacy and investments, as well as with how well their interventions are adapted to the specific situations of refugees and their host communities.

## 2.2. Key evaluation questions

The evaluation set out to answer a specific set of key evaluation questions (EQs). These questions are based on the evaluation's terms of reference and were adapted to cover the main components of the logic model and to reflect the thematic interests of key stakeholders consulted during the inception phase. The questions relate to the standard evaluation criteria as defined by the OECD's

<sup>14</sup> This is a core commitment of the New York Declaration on Refugees and is reflected in CRRF objective 2. Objectives 3 and 4 – expanding access to third-country solutions and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity – are not explicitly covered in this evaluation, which focuses on case studies of refugee-hosting countries. The evaluation also touches on results relating to objective 1 – easing the pressure on host countries – but does not seek to cover this angle comprehensively.

<sup>15</sup> See UNHCR, "Global Compact on Refugees: Indicator Framework", 2019. The indicator framework singles out children's enrolment in education. However, the evaluation found that inclusion in other services – such as health, justice, protection, skill-building and social safety nets – are also highly relevant. Examples of service integration or inclusion in these areas are therefore also considered.

Development Assistance Committee (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability).<sup>16</sup>

**EQ1: What are the levels and types of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation in the case-study contexts?**

Who are the most relevant development and government actors and what are their strategies in each of the case-study countries? How has UNHCR's cooperation with development actors evolved in the recent past and during the implementation of this evaluation? How has UNHCR's cooperation with host governments and local authorities regarding the New Way of Working and GCR objectives evolved in the recent past and during the implementation of this evaluation? Are there additional opportunities for cooperation that UNHCR could explore?

- ➔ Related evaluation criterion: connectedness
- ➔ See Chapter 3

**EQ2: Which internal and external factors facilitate or hinder enhanced cooperation between UNHCR and development actors or host governments in the case-study contexts?**

What do UNHCR, development actors and host governments at the country and field levels perceive to be the most important factors that have affected attempts to enhance UNHCR's cooperation with development actors and host governments in the context of the New Way of Working and the GCR? Which factors do UNHCR, development actors and host governments expect to be the most important going forward?

- ➔ Related evaluation criteria: connectedness, coherence
- ➔ See Chapter 4

**EQ3: How relevant and effective are the recent measures UNHCR has taken to enhance cooperation with development actors and host governments?**

What measures has UNHCR taken in the case-study contexts and at the global level to enhance cooperation with development actors and host governments in the context of the New Way of Working and the GCR? How relevant are these measures? How effective have these measures been and why? Which measures should UNHCR adapt, discontinue or adopt?

- ➔ Related evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness
- ➔ See Chapter 4

**EQ 4: What effects does this cooperation have (or could future cooperation potentially have) on UNHCR, development actors and host governments in the case-study contexts?**

How has enhanced cooperation with UNHCR, as well as between UNHCR and development actors, affected (or how could future cooperation potentially affect) the host government's policies, laws, regulations, capacity and institutional set-up for addressing displacement? How has UNHCR's enhanced cooperation with development actors and host governments affected (or how could future

<sup>16</sup> Development Assistance Committee, "Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance", 1991; Overseas Development Institute, "Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria", 2006; Jyotsna Puri, Anastasia Aladysheva, Vegard Iversen, Yashodhan Ghorpade, Tilman Brück, "Can Rigorous Impact Evaluations Improve Humanitarian Assistance?", *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 9, no. 4 (2017): pp. 519–42.

cooperation potentially affect) key development actors' priorities, activities and advocacy relevant to displacement and protection? How has UNHCR's enhanced cooperation with development actors and host governments affected (or how could future cooperation potentially affect) UNHCR's priorities, activities, advocacy, reputation, staffing and funding? How has UNHCR's enhanced cooperation with development actors and host governments affected (or how could future cooperation potentially affect) partners receiving funding from UNHCR? What effects does failed cooperation or the absence of cooperation have on UNHCR, development actors, host governments and partners receiving funding from UNHCR? What implications do these effects have in terms of UNHCR's strategy for cooperating with development actors?

- ➔ Related evaluation criterion: effectiveness
- ➔ See Chapter 5

**EQ5: What effects does this cooperation have (or could future cooperation potentially have) on affected people in the case-study contexts?**

Can any causal links be demonstrated between cooperation and key indicators for the situation and human development of refugees, IDPs and/or host communities on issues such as income, food security, health, education or perceived well-being (depending on data availability)? Has UNHCR's enhanced cooperation with development actors and host governments affected (or is it likely to affect) the status and statutory rights or access to services of displaced populations and host communities, the quality and cost-effectiveness of services for displaced populations and host communities, the relationship between displaced populations and host communities, and/or other indicators which displaced people identify as crucial? What effects do failed cooperation or the absence of cooperation have on affected people? What implications do the effects or anticipated effects of cooperation have in terms of UNHCR's strategy for cooperating with development actors and host governments?

- ➔ Related evaluation criteria: impact, coverage, efficiency
- ➔ See Chapter 5

## 2.3. A developmental evaluation with longitudinal analyses

The evaluation consisted of iterative phases of data collection, analysis and learning over the course of three years. Data collection focused on country-level data sources, complementing these with document reviews and interviews at the global level. The evaluation followed a developmental approach<sup>17</sup> and incorporated several longitudinal analyses.

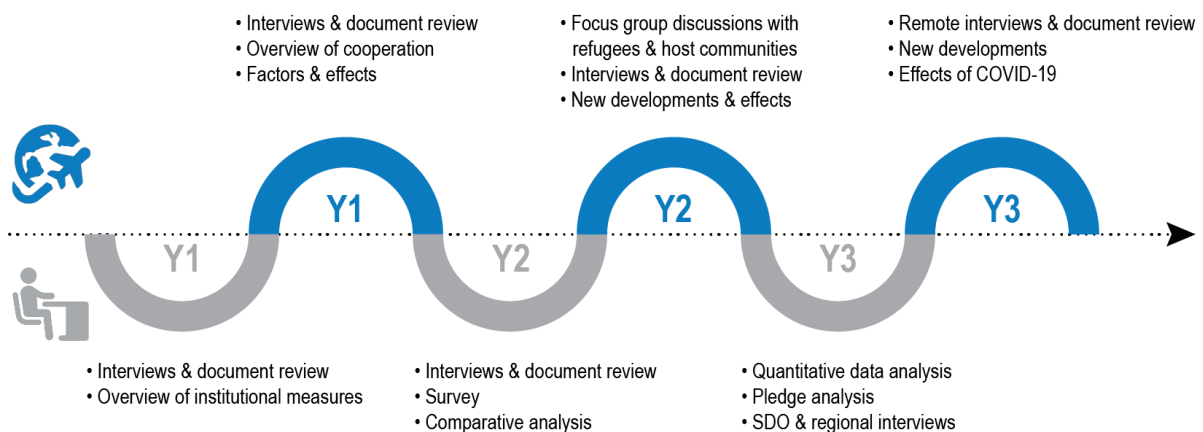
**Sequencing:** The evaluation team sequenced the data collection into different research phases, taking a bottom-up approach that proceeded from the country to the global level (Figure 2). In the first phase, data collection began in the selected case-study countries (see Chapter 2.4). Interviews and document reviews focused on: the levels and types of UNHCR's cooperation with development actors and host governments, the factors affecting this cooperation, collecting hypotheses regarding the effects of this cooperation, and gaining access to relevant secondary data. In the second phase, observations from the country level were complemented with interviews and document reviews at the

<sup>17</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Developmental Evaluation*, New York: Guilford Press, 2010.

global level, focusing on: UNHCR's policies and global activities in humanitarian-development cooperation; institutional factors and measures; and development actors' perceptions of this cooperation. Subsequent country visits focused on updating the observations from phase one and included consultations with affected people as well as a joint interpretation of the results with the country teams. The third phase involved updating the evaluation observations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and other additional interests that emerged as part of the learning formats.

Figure 2: Sequencing of data collection and analysis phases

## FIELD RESEARCH



## DESK RESEARCH

**Longitudinal analyses:** The iterative nature of the data collection enabled the evaluation team to conduct some longitudinal analyses. In particular, the evaluation tracked the following: how the levels and types of cooperation with development actors and host governments in the case-study contexts evolved over the course of the evaluation, which factors were important in influencing changes and whether these factors changed over time, and the extent to which UNHCR adopted new institutional measures for fostering cooperation and whether these proved effective and addressed recommendations from the different research phases.

## 2.4. Methodology: Case studies and mix of methods

### Case study selection

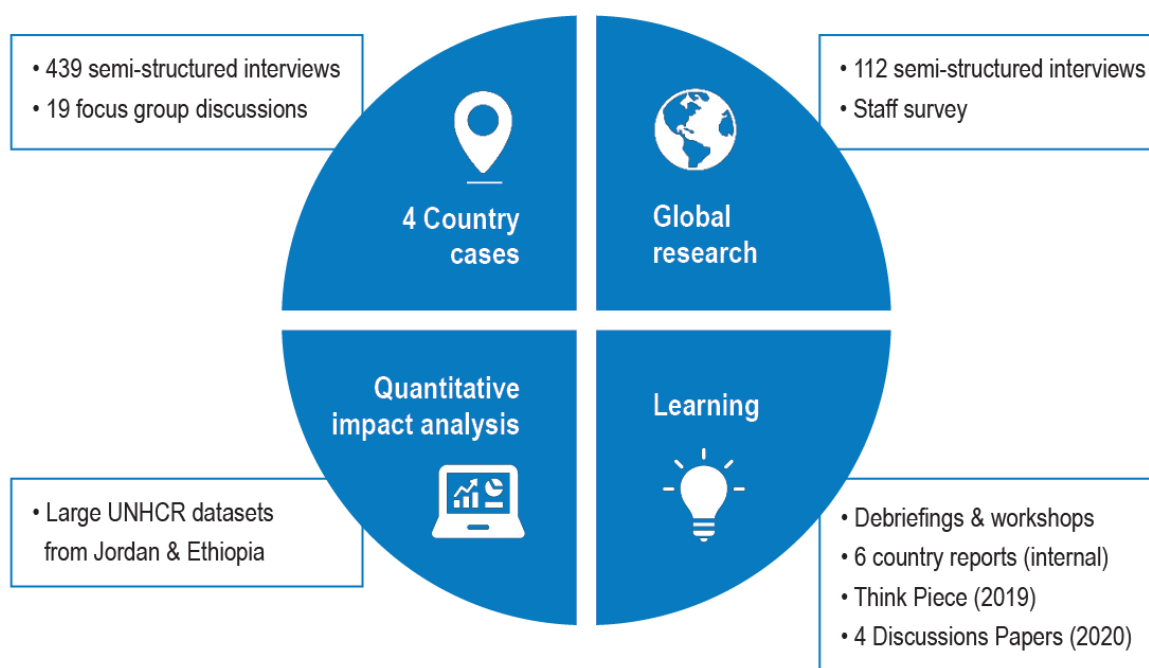
The following four UNHCR country operations were chosen to complete an in-depth analysis of cooperation dynamics, the factors affecting cooperation and its emerging effects: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Niger. The case-study countries were selected so as to include critical cases expected to yield rich information, while at the same time covering variations in key context factors. Thus, the selected sample includes variations in key context variables, such as the displacement situation and type, government policy, geographical location, UNHCR presence and income level. The sample covers countries experiencing a dynamic situation and potential humanitarian-

development cooperation, countries in which the CRRF was explicitly “rolled out” and at least two countries with good availability of micro-level data.

## A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods

The evaluation team used a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods, including document and literature reviews, semi-structured key informant interviews, an online survey, focus group discussions with affected people and a quantitative impact analysis based on existing primary data in two focus countries (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Overview of evaluation methods and sources used, 2018–2020



**Semi-structured interviews:** The backbone of the qualitative data collection consisted of a total of 551 “not for attribution”, semi-structured interviews involving 476 key informants. The team used a purposive sampling approach to select relevant UNHCR staff across all sectors and levels of seniority as well as development actor representatives and government officials from relevant line ministries (see Annex 1 for a list of interviewees.) The evaluation team used an inductive approach to analyse the interview data at the end of each research phase, first analysing the thematic content of the interviews for each country case study separately and then comparing results across case studies as well as with the results of interviews conducted at headquarters.

**Document reviews:** The evaluation team reviewed literature, documents and available data for the analyses on contexts and to formulate hypotheses on the effects of cooperation and key developments. The most important documents are referenced in the text.

**Online survey:** The evaluation team conducted one online staff survey, disseminated by the UNHCR Evaluation Service in 25 countries and made available in English, French and Spanish. 37 staff



members completed the survey. The questionnaire and the results of the survey are provided in Annex 2.

**Focus group discussions:** In two of the case-study countries – Ethiopia and Jordan – the evaluation team collected primary data from affected people through a total of 19 focus group discussions with refugees and members of host communities, including five separate discussions with only women. The focus group discussions addressed the effects of UNHCR's cooperation with development actors on refugees and host communities. In total, 241 purposively selected respondents participated in the focus group discussions (126 women and 115 men). Annex 3 provides an overview of the focus group discussions and their thematic focus.

**Quantitative impact analysis:** The evaluation team used a quantitative impact analysis to establish the effects of specific examples of humanitarian-development cooperation on key outcome indicators, such as on income, food security, health, education, employment and protection. The analysis is based on UNHCR's refugee registration data set in Ethiopia<sup>18</sup> and Home Visit survey data from Jordan.<sup>19</sup> The evaluation team used various quantitative methods, including descriptive statistical analysis and multivariate regression analysis both with and without different matching techniques, to rigorously analyse the quasi-experimental data. Annexes 4 and 5 contain detailed descriptions of the methods and findings of the quantitative impact analysis for Jordan and Ethiopia, respectively.

Figure 4: Sequencing of learning phases

## COUNTRY-LEVEL LEARNING



## GLOBAL LEARNING

**Learning formats:** Throughout the implementation of the evaluation, the evaluation team offered briefings as well as joint reflection and learning workshops at both country and headquarters levels. This included debriefings for management and interested staff following each round of data collection at the country level, as well as disseminating and commenting on the internal country case studies

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR, "Ethiopia Comprehensive Registration", updated 23 January 2021, accessed 9 February 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/58>.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, "Living in the Shadows", Jordan Home Visits Report, 2014, pp. 15–16.

written during the first and second research phases. The evaluation team also offered briefings and learning workshops at the global and country levels based on syntheses of the emerging findings. Following several rounds of comments and input, these syntheses were published as a [Think Piece](#) in 2019 and again as a set of [Discussion Papers](#) on the emerging findings in 2021. Figure 4 provides an overview of these learning formats and their implementation over time.

## Consideration of gender

The evaluation team considered gender issues at critical points during the evaluation process. Interviews were analysed to establish whether the perceptions of the women and men interviewed differed regarding the level of cooperation, the factors influencing cooperation or the effects of cooperation. The evaluation team conducted separate focus group discussions with women to create a space in which to raise potentially sensitive or gender-specific issues and to enable a comparison between the perspectives of women and men. The evaluation team also conducted a disaggregated analysis of available primary data to understand whether UNHCR's engagement with development actors had different effects on households headed by women and those headed by men, as well as for other relevant sub-groups for whom data was available, such as households with chronically-ill members.

## Limitations

The evaluation was designed to track UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation comprehensively in four case-study countries. While this design has crucial benefits, it also entails several limitations. First, the findings are not fully generalizable since the evaluation's insights beyond the case-study countries are limited, particularly in country operations where IDPs constitute the primary caseload. To mitigate potential biases resulting from the limited number of case-study countries, the evaluation team conducted a survey and provided opportunities for validation after each research phase. Second, no baseline data on the extent of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation prior to the GCR was available. The evaluation team based its assessments on the perceptions of key informants as well as the specific examples of cooperation provided to the team. Third, the evaluation focuses on examples of cooperation between UNHCR and development partners and did not systematically assess the extent to which UNHCR's own programmes had changed to reflect the humanitarian-development nexus logic. Finally, the evaluation was primarily designed to support UNHCR and does not assess the performance of UNHCR's cooperation partners.

### 3. How has humanitarian-development cooperation evolved?

There is a consistent perception among the people interviewed and surveyed for this evaluation that UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has increased over the past five years. UNHCR has systematically built partnerships with a number of multilateral and bilateral development actors. While most cooperation patterns reflect available opportunities, there were also calls for certain strategic adjustments.

In this chapter, we assess the scope of UNHCR's cooperation with different types of development actors. This chapter also shows in ways in which this cooperation involves host governments. How humanitarian-development cooperation affects host governments' policy positions and relationship with UNHCR are discussed in Chapter 5.

#### **UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has increased.**

Many UNHCR staff members have been working to integrate refugees into development planning and public services long before the current prominence of the humanitarian-development nexus agenda. However, while this evaluation has no baseline for UNHCR's past level of engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation, **there is a consistent perception among the overwhelming majority of UNHCR staff and external actors interviewed that engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has increased** over the past five years: UNHCR has established more, deeper and more systematic partnerships with development actors. The perception is consistent across the case-study countries visited for this evaluation as well as for headquarters and a number of other country contexts. In a staff survey on UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation, 30 out of 37 respondents who answered a question on this held the view that cooperation between UNHCR and development actors has increased since 2017.

However, there were also critical voices, particularly from outside UNHCR. They pointed to a **dissonance between the commitment made by UNHCR's leadership and the reality in country operations**, particularly those that are not nexus "role models". For example, interviewees interpreted UNHCR's absence in certain development coordination fora and the fact that core facilitation functions were not paid from UNHCR's core budget as signals that the organization's follow-through on their commitments was incomplete (see Chapter 4 for more details).



## The partnership with the World Bank Group is exemplary and shapes UNHCR's narrative on and approach to humanitarian-development cooperation.

The single most advanced case of UNHCR's cooperation with development actors is its partnership with the World Bank Group. This partnership has been a trailblazer for collaboration with other international development actors and continues to shape broader discussions about the objectives, forms and priorities of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation.

The partnership builds on an internal process that led the World Bank to focus more on areas that are affected or threatened by violent conflict and forced displacement.<sup>20</sup> An operational collaboration between UNHCR and the World Bank started in 2015, when UNHCR joined the World Bank's Global Concessional Financing Facility Steering Board. Since then, **the two organizations have steadily expanded their cooperation and have worked together to improve their partnership.**<sup>21</sup> Among other aspects, their cooperation now involves: a formal role for UNHCR in assessing the protection frameworks of countries potentially eligible for funding under the Window for Host Communities and Refugees of the International Development Association (IDA); support from UNHCR for the design and implementation of related projects, particularly via joint missions, shared data and analysis, and logistical support; cooperation with the International Finance Corporation as part of a multi-country, multi-partner project consortium on refugee solutions and support for host communities (the Prospects Partnership); a Joint Data Center founded by UNHCR and the World Bank; and joint or coordinated policy advocacy in many refugee-hosting countries. Annex 6 provides examples of country-level cooperation between UNHCR and the World Bank Group.

### Both UNHCR and World Bank staff highly value the cooperation between the two institutions.

World Bank staff particularly appreciate UNHCR's expertise and information on displacement, as well as its practical support and facilitation. UNHCR staff emphasized the World Bank's large-scale investments in refugee-hosting areas and its contribution to advocacy and policy work with host governments. However, interviewees also highlighted some challenges regarding UNHCR's partnership with the World Bank Group. As discussed in Chapter 4, UNHCR faces some constraints when it comes to providing its expertise, data and analysis to partners. At the same time, a range of interviewees perceive the relationship as unbalanced. They pointed to limitations regarding the World Bank's willingness to share information and coordinate, or to take part in UNHCR-supported coordination mechanisms. Several interviewees also indicated that they continue to feel uneasy with

<sup>20</sup> Relevant World Bank analyses that form the basis of this decision include e.g., World Bank, "World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development – Overview", 2011, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/806531468161369474/world-development-report-2011-conflict-security-and-development-overview>. Later studies which specifically focused on forced displacement underscored the need to shift towards socioeconomic inclusion and self-reliance as a joint development opportunity for host communities and displaced populations alike. See Paolo Verme et al., "The Welfare of Syrian Refugees: Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon", World Bank, 2017, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/23228>; World Bank, "Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and Their Hosts", 2017, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25016>.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the current format and content of the protection framework assessments are the result of a joint UNHCR-World Bank effort to collect lessons learned from the first round of assessments. This involved creating internal guidance and introducing a more forward-looking analysis.

UNHCR's role in the eligibility assessments for IDA. Some questioned whether UNHCR should draw conclusions on the adequacy of protection frameworks “for the purposes of IDA,” thereby influencing whether a country is eligible for IDA funding. Others voiced concern that the World Bank might use UNHCR's analysis in its policy dialogue with the host government and thus negatively affect UNHCR's relationships with the host government.<sup>22</sup>

**The partnership with the World Bank has become a model within UNHCR, shaping the broader narrative on UNHCR's role in humanitarian-development cooperation.** For example, it has led to an emphasis on UNHCR's role as a “facilitator and a catalyst” rather than an institution that implements interventions funded by development actors. This orientation is based on the conviction that refugees and other persons of concern benefit more when UNHCR concentrates its efforts on ensuring that the World Bank invests a large portfolio in refugee-hosting areas and on leveraging the World Bank's influence on host governments, rather than focusing on gaining a share of these resources for UNHCR's own programming. This position distinguishes UNHCR from other UN agencies, which entered global transactional partnership agreements with the World Bank (i.e., agreements enabling the agencies to implement with World Bank resources). The partnership has also contributed to the perception among many UNHCR staff that humanitarian-development cooperation is primarily an effort to bring other actors into the response, rather than to change UNHCR's own operations. Finally, the partnership has influenced the profiles of staff members hired to support humanitarian-development cooperation, many of whom have a World Bank background. Since the partnership with the World Bank is in some respects unique, these features of UNHCR's broader narrative on humanitarian-development cooperation also entail challenges. These are further discussed in Chapter 4.

### **Cooperation with the EU, the OECD and some bilateral development actors has become more systematic.**

Among other multilateral actors, UNHCR identified building a strategic partnership with the **EU** as a priority. With the crisis in Syria and the more dynamic agenda on the humanitarian-development nexus, forced displacement has become an area of strategic focus for EU political and development institutions in addition to its humanitarian institutions. The EU adopted a policy on the humanitarian-development nexus addressing forced displacement.<sup>23</sup> It also created funding instruments emphasizing integrated responses to forced displacement, such as the EU Trust Funds<sup>24</sup> and, most recently, the relevant components of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation

<sup>22</sup> See also “Discussion Paper 3: Protection”, in Julia Steets and Julian Lehmann, Discussion Papers 1–4 on Humanitarian-Development Cooperation – Emerging Findings from a Longitudinal Evaluation, UNHCR, 2020, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/research/evalreports/6006feec4/discussion-papers-1-4-unhcrs-engagement-humanitarian-development-cooperation.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, “Lives in Dignity: From Aid-dependence to Self-reliance”, accessed 26 February 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Communication\\_Forced\\_Displacement\\_Development\\_2016.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Communication_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> EU Trust Funds are multi-donor trust funds. They include the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (over EUR 5 billion) and the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (the “Madad Fund”, EUR 2.2 billion).

Instrument. UNHCR has, among other activities, provided input on displacement challenges for a range of European Commission regional and national development plans.

Meanwhile, most examples of humanitarian-development cooperation with the EU (outside its humanitarian Directorate) in the four case-study countries involve UNHCR implementing funding from the EU Trust Funds (see Annex 6 for examples). In some instances, UNHCR has also facilitated EU-funded responses, for example for the Regional Development and Protection Programme in Ethiopia. The evaluation found few examples of engagement with the EU's development institutions in the case-study countries, even though examples from other countries and regions were reported. This suggests that there may be further opportunities to translate the priority partnership with the European Commission's development institutions into operational collaboration at the country level.

UNHCR has also invested in strengthening its strategic partnerships with a number of **bilateral development actors**. At the organizational level, for example, UNHCR prioritized its relationship with the French Development Agency, the German Development Ministry and its implementing entities, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). In the focus countries visited for this evaluation, several of these organizational-level partnerships were also reflected in operational collaboration, with UNHCR contributing to the respective development actors' programming and policy priorities (see Annex 6 for examples).

Most donors continue to place responsibility for cooperating with UNHCR on their humanitarian aid departments. These remain UNHCR's primary points of contact and limited coordination between these departments and their development counterparts often reduces opportunities for partnerships focusing on development issues. Cooperation with development departments is more established in cases in which donors have dedicated development funding instruments for displacement (one example of which is the German Development Ministry's special initiative on tackling the root causes of displacement and reintegrating refugees<sup>25</sup>).

Finally, UNHCR has scaled up its engagement with the **OECD**, particularly the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). In particular, UNHCR contributed to the development of the common position on supporting comprehensive responses in refugee situations,<sup>26</sup> issued by the DAC's International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF). UNHCR supported the OECD in developing indicators for improved data collection on projects and programmes benefiting refugees and also provided protection expertise in developing the eligibility criteria for development interventions on (forced) migration.

<sup>25</sup> See Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Tackling the root causes of displacement, stabilizing host regions, supporting refugees", accessed 1 February 2021, [https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/Sonderinitiative-Fluchtursachen-bekaempfen-Fluechtlinge-reintegrieren/deutsche\\_politik/index.html](https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/Sonderinitiative-Fluchtursachen-bekaempfen-Fluechtlinge-reintegrieren/deutsche_politik/index.html).

<sup>26</sup> OECD INCAF, "INCAF Common Position on supporting comprehensive responses in refugee situations", 2019, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/humanitarian-financing/INCAF-common-position-on-supporting-comprehensive-responses-in-refugee-situations.pdf>.

## Cooperation with individual UN agencies has increased, but UNHCR's engagement with the UN development system as a whole is not systematic.

**UNHCR has a clear policy commitment to strengthening cooperation with the UN development system.** UN agencies were the primary interlocutors for UNHCR in early dialogues on the humanitarian-development nexus – for example, in discussions on collective outcomes. In recent guidance notes, UNHCR also committed to better aligning its operations with the SDGs and set itself the goal of ensuring that UN development plans focus on marginalized populations, including asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs, stateless people and returnees.<sup>27</sup>

**This commitment is reflected in a systematic effort to increase operational cooperation with individual UN agencies.** At the global level, UNHCR formalized partnerships with several development or dual-mandate UN agencies by entering into global agreements. In particular, a Blueprint for Action<sup>28</sup> with UNICEF delineates cooperation in 2020–2021 in the areas of education, WASH and child protection. UNHCR also concluded an updated memorandum of understanding with UN HABITAT, a five-year memorandum of understanding with FAO, a memorandum of understanding and joint action plan with ILO, and a Global Joint Action Plan with UNDP.

In the four case-study countries, the evaluation found numerous, often small-scale examples of operational cooperation with these UN agencies (see Annex 6). The cooperation with UNICEF is particularly systematic, since UNICEF has a comparatively large operational budget and is almost a “natural fit” for humanitarian-development cooperation due to its dual humanitarian and development mandate. Operational cooperation with other UN agencies was more sporadic and ad hoc. Interviewees explained that these examples of cooperation were often labour-intensive for UNHCR, while the results for refugees were sometimes uncertain as UN sister agencies were not always successful at mobilizing the resources required for subsequent programme implementation.

**There is a greater gap concerning UNHCR's role in the UN development system as a whole.** UNHCR's contribution to the reformed UN development system as a whole was, by contrast, perceived to be more limited. At the same time, interviewees emphasized that even a relatively low level of engagement can help to ensure that refugees and protection concerns are given adequate consideration in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks – potentially as an important first step towards the inclusion of refugees in national development plans. Close cooperation with the UN Resident Coordinator can also support consistent advocacy and offer an important complement to advocacy efforts with multilateral development banks. In Bangladesh, UNHCR cooperated closely with the UN Resident Coordinator in its approach to the government. In Ethiopia, UNHCR was much more strongly involved in the latest round of UN analysis and planning. As a result, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2020–2025<sup>29</sup> includes an explicit objective on

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR, “Engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals – Updated Guidance Note”, internal document on file with the authors, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Accessed 26 February 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/media/85846/file/Briefing%20paper.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Accessed 26 February 2021, <https://ethiopia.un.org/en/90108-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-2020-2025>.



displacement and incorporates refugees and IDPs as vulnerable groups in other objectives and activities.

### Cooperation with other multilateral development banks, NGOs and the private sector is not as advanced as with other actors.

Efforts to increase cooperation with other development actors are also evident, but they are not as systematic or successful as those with the actors or actor groups mentioned above. Cooperation with **other multilateral development banks** remains comparatively limited, as these banks do not have the same strategic focus on forced displacement as the World Bank and have no funding instruments dedicated to displacement situations (see Annex 6).

UNHCR's cooperation with **development or dual-mandate NGOs** in the case-study countries primarily consists of facilitative efforts in which UNHCR contributes to or sets up coordination fora or facilitates development actor responses in camps, as well as of more traditional partnerships established for the purpose of implementing livelihoods programmes. However, UNHCR's NGO partners, including those with a dual humanitarian and development mandate, report that UNHCR only rarely involves them in joint discussions on how to develop transition strategies or approaches.

**Opportunities to work directly with the private sector remain rare**, particularly with the commercial sections of private companies. However, examples of such cooperation include a flagship programme with IKEA's philanthropic arm in Ethiopia.<sup>30</sup> This resulted in the irrigation and productive use of 1,000 hectares of land, as well as the establishment of milk and meat retailing businesses for refugees and host communities.<sup>31</sup>

### Most cooperation patterns make sense, but there is space for certain strategic adjustments.

The staff responsible for supporting humanitarian-development cooperation at the country level often remarked that they lack guidance on the forms and types of actors they should prioritize for cooperation. In particular, the country operations visited for this evaluation did not consistently have explicit, medium to longer term strategic priorities for humanitarian-development cooperation in place. Efforts to change this were either not linked to regular planning in the country operations plans and sector strategies (this was the case for multi-year, multi-partner planning processes) or not consistently rolled out (this was the case for so-called "transition strategies" prepared by the Division of Resilience and Solutions – see Chapter 4).

<sup>30</sup> The IKEA Foundation provided USD 50 million in funding to UNHCR and its partners for a programme aimed at improving self-reliance among refugees and host communities.

<sup>31</sup> For an evaluation of this initiative, see Alexander Betts, Andonis Marden, Raphael Bradenbrink, Jonas Kaufmann, "Building Refugee Economies: An evaluation of the IKEA Foundation's programmes in Dollo Ado", University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, 2020, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/building-refugee-economies-evaluation-ikea-foundation-s-programme-dollo-ado>.

**Despite this apparent lack of guidance, the evaluation found that most of the emerging cooperation patterns made sense**, meaning they reflected available opportunities, concerns about gaps in the response and cost/benefit considerations. However, **there are calls for strategic adjustments in the following areas:**

- **Cooperation partners:** There was consensus among interviewees that UNHCR has done well to prioritize its engagement with the World Bank Group and with bilateral agencies that have a strategic focus on forced displacement. Respondents were less consistent in their views when it came to smaller-scale cooperation with UN agencies, with some lauding these initiatives as innovative while others questioned whether their results were worth the effort. Many called for more systematic involvement in the UN's system-wide development analysis and planning processes.
- **Thematic areas of cooperation:** Cooperation most often focused on advocacy, upgrading and integrating basic services, and creating economic or livelihood opportunities and jobs. By contrast, the evaluation observed less cooperation on matters of governance and rule of law or access to justice.<sup>32</sup> The few examples of cooperation in this area at the country level – on community policing and camp security in Bangladesh, and with mobile courts in Ethiopia – demonstrate the potential of such collaborations, leading various stakeholders to call for expanded cooperation in this sector.
- **Types of engagement:** UNHCR's efforts to facilitate the engagement of development actors in refugee-hosting areas and to cooperate on advocacy and policy work with host governments are consistent and uncontroversial. Efforts to successively include refugees in national or local services were less consistent and were often constrained by the policy environment. Practices around and positions on mobilizing development resources for UNHCR's own activities were divergent and controversial (see also Chapter 4). In addition, there were a few cases in which UNHCR helped to facilitate the formulation of local or regional development plans. Several stakeholders questioned whether UNHCR was well-positioned or had the appropriate capacities to play a leading role in such processes.
- **Target populations:** This evaluation focused on countries where refugees are the primary humanitarian concern, but it also included contexts in which internal displacement is an issue. In these mixed contexts, nearly every example of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation focused on refugees. The evaluation team noted less reflection on or awareness of how humanitarian-development cooperation could apply to IDPs, or how relevant programmes could be designed to benefit refugees and IDPs alike.

<sup>32</sup> UNHCR recently reviewed this portfolio; see "Review Report on UNHCR Rule of Law and Governance Portfolio", internal document. Efforts at headquarters to strengthen cooperation with respect to governance and rule of law include, for example, the joint UNHCR-UNDP Programmatic Framework for Rule of Law and Governance for Forced Displacement and Statelessness or a cooperation agreement with the [International Development Law Organization](#) (internal documents).

## 4. What measures and factors affect humanitarian-development cooperation?

The level of cooperation between UNHCR and development actors depends heavily on external factors, such as host government policy positions and donor policies and priorities. However, internal UNHCR factors also play a role: the leadership's clear commitment to humanitarian-development cooperation has translated into a high level of awareness and agreement across the organization. Staff positions and units created to support such cooperation have enabled UNHCR's increased engagement with development actors. UNHCR's protection mandate, strong field presence and coordination role are key assets in its cooperation with development actors. Its access to data is also critical, and investments in this area are evident.

Nevertheless, important guidance is lacking, and progress on incorporation is incomplete. While its protection expertise is highly appreciated, UNHCR has not fully realized its potential to provide thought leadership in this area. Constraints related to data utility, analysis and sharing persist. UNHCR's internal systems and processes – particularly in planning, resource allocation and reporting – have also presented obstacles to closer cooperation with development actors, and many elements of these systems are currently undergoing reform.

This chapter analyses the internal and external factors that influence UNHCR's level of engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation as well as its degree of success.

### 4.1. External factors

#### **The type of cooperation strongly depends on host government policies and UNHCR's relationship with the government.**

In all the contexts analysed for this evaluation, interviewees stressed that the host government's policies and political stance were the main factors shaping UNHCR's engagement with development actors. **Host government policies and political positions differed greatly across the four case-study countries:**

- **Niger** has the most progressive approach to refugee self-reliance and inclusion among the four case-study governments. The country is party to the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and conducts status determination for refugees of all nationalities. Its legal framework asserts that refugees are to be treated equally to

nationals with respect to property ownership, security, access to the courts, access to basic services (including social protection), freedom of expression and freedom of movement. Like other foreign nationals, refugees are permitted to work under contracts approved by Niger's Ministry of Labour. The government is also committed to pursuing the socioeconomic integration of refugees: they are included in development planning documents, and the government is working to close camps for Malian refugees. Naturalization is possible after ten years of residence in Niger.

- **Jordan** is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention. Although the country enacted a number of policies limiting access to its territory during the Syrian crisis,<sup>33</sup> it has a long tradition of accepting refugees and hosts a large refugee population, which amounts to around 8 per cent of the total population. The context is relatively favourable for humanitarian-development cooperation in the areas of education and health. Refugees have access to primary education on par with nationals, as well as privileged access to health services compared to other foreigners (this policy was restricted to Syrian refugees until 2020). Service inclusion in other areas – such as social protection – is not considered desirable. Access to the labour market is restricted to a list of particular professions and sectors, with refugees applying for work permits mainly in the agriculture and construction sectors. A relatively small minority (17 per cent) of refugees live in camps. The different camps' levels of integration into national infrastructures differ, and no initiatives to dissolve camps exist in Jordan.
- **Ethiopia** hosts refugees from several neighbouring countries, some of whom have been in the country for over 30 years. Most refugees (97.5 per cent) live in camps and depend on international assistance. The Ethiopian Government presents itself as one of the international champions of the GCR and the CRRF, and as such has made important pledges to change the situation of refugees in the country (see Chapter 6 for more details). The government also agreed to formally designate Ethiopia as a pilot country in rolling out the CRRF.
- **Bangladesh** has long hosted refugees from Myanmar and witnessed an extraordinarily large, rapidly developing influx of refugees in 2017, when nearly three quarters of a million people arrived within a span of three months. While the government respected the principle of non-refoulement and – together with national civil society actors – reacted quickly and generously to this influx, it maintains a strict political stance. The government does not recognize Rohingyas as refugees and insists that they should return to Myanmar as soon as possible. It therefore rejects any measures aimed at refugee inclusion, integration or self-reliance. Rohingya refugees live in camps and are not allowed to work, receive assistance in the form of cash or receive education following Bangladesh's national curriculum (although the government recently approved the introduction of formal education following

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Maha Yahya, Jean Kassir, Khalil el-Hariri, "Unheard Voices: What Syrian Refugees Need to Return Home", Carnegie Middle East Center, 2018, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2018/04/16/policy-framework-for-refugees-in-lebanon-and-jordan-pub-76058>.

Myanmar's curriculum). However, refugees are able to access national health services when necessary, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Host government policies do not translate directly into more or fewer examples of cooperation.** In Niger, for example, humanitarian-development cooperation is not a high priority for the UNHCR country operation, and the number of examples of such cooperation is relatively low despite the positive policy environment. In Ethiopia, by contrast, humanitarian-development cooperation has resulted in a high number of operational initiatives, even though it takes time to translate the government's general commitment to the CRRF into concrete changes in policy and practice.

Instead, **government policies influence the kind of cooperation that occurs.** Rather than determining how much cooperation takes place, host government policies shape what kind of cooperation happens. In Bangladesh, for example, the government's restrictive stance means that cooperation predominantly focuses on advocacy and policy engagement, while examples of cooperation on concrete development programmes remain rare. By contrast, the policy environment in Niger has enabled UNHCR and its development partners to engage in urban planning. Adopting such a far-reaching development approach would have proven much more difficult in the other case-study countries. Similarly, government policies influence how much cooperation can happen within the different sectors. In Jordan, for example, refugees are fully included in education, but not in the labour market. In Bangladesh, refugees have access to certain national health services, while little progress has been made on education or self-reliance

**Funding modalities are affected by the fact that UNHCR and host governments often have different priorities.** Based on its mandate, UNHCR's main priority in furthering cooperation with development actors is to support enhanced refugee self-reliance and inclusion. Host governments are often more interested in better burden sharing. Since many refugee-hosting areas face acute development challenges, host governments tend to seek to ensure that external investments respond to the needs of host communities as well. Some governments also prefer to use humanitarian funding and delivery modalities to address the needs of refugees, as they fear that international development contributions could decrease once refugees are included in national systems. In Jordan, for example, this led to debates on the future of the Jordan Response Plan – specifically on whether the plan should place greater emphasis on funding disbursed through government channels, whether the relative weight of the refugee/humanitarian versus the resilience pillar should be adjusted, and on the proportion of funding under each pillar that should be allocated to refugees, host communities and institutional capacities respectively.

Finally, **the set-up of government institutions related to the refugee response and UNHCR's relationships with these institutions are key factors that influence opportunities for humanitarian-development cooperation.** UNHCR often has a special relationship with host governments. In many contexts, UNHCR's long-term presence, its reliable support for national refugee agencies and its strong humanitarian delivery have created a trusting relationship that is essential for gaining the government's support for a more comprehensive response. The importance

of protecting this relationship, however, can also impose limitations, making UNHCR reluctant to take steps that could upset its relationship with the host government. As one interviewee said: “In a lot of situations, UNHCR is very careful and oddly soft with host governments.” For example, in many places, UNHCR has a long-standing, strong relationship with the national refugee agency. Refugee agencies are often crucial to delivering quality services – albeit separately from service delivery for nationals – and act as “champions” for refugee affairs within a government. However, where refugee agencies provide direct services and enjoy financial benefits for doing so, they can also obstruct more comprehensive responses involving other line ministries in the provision of services.<sup>34</sup> In one UNHCR country operation, a broad range of interviewees thus identified the national refugee agency as one of the main practical obstacles to implementing the CRRF. Protection concerns may also prevent UNHCR from better aligning its activities with the government’s development priorities. Interviewees mentioned that, in some contexts, this made it difficult for UNHCR to engage in UN development planning processes, which are intended to align with government priorities.

### Donor priorities and funding instruments are major drivers of cooperation.

Donor policies and institutional set-ups strongly influence which organizations UNHCR engages with most actively, the incentives and opportunities for cooperation, and the organizational levels where engagement most occurs.

**UNHCR engages most intensively with donors that have a strategic focus on, and dedicated funding instruments for, forced displacement.** The evaluation found that UNHCR cooperates most systematically with the World Bank Group, the EU and certain bilateral donors and implementing agencies, such as German development institutions. These actors all have an explicit thematic focus on forced displacement, as well as dedicated funding instruments that create the necessary entry points for cooperation. Many interviewees recognized that these instruments played an important role in supporting humanitarian-development cooperation and provided a substantial amount of funding. However, they also pointed to the **downsides of dedicated funding instruments**:

- Most dedicated funding instruments were created ad hoc in response to the political pressure resulting from the large number of refugees arriving in Europe in 2015 and 2016. As a result, there is some uncertainty as to whether these instruments or the same level of resources will continue to be available in the future. EU Trust Funds, for example, will not be available in the future. The instruments do not always focus on supporting development approaches, but they can also be used to cover traditional humanitarian interventions. In Bangladesh, for example, large allocations by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank were used to fund traditional relief operations.
- Thus far, much less progress has been made on increasing the focus on forced displacement in donors’ main development portfolios. This is due both to donor

<sup>34</sup> Julia Steets, Julian Lehmann, “UNHCR’s Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation – Think Piece on Research Phase 1”, UNHCR, 2019, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5dd3b7bd4.pdf#zoom=95>.

policies and to the reluctance of recipient governments to include refugees in their regular development allocations.

**Levels of available funding shape incentives and opportunities for cooperation.** Low or decreasing levels of humanitarian funding make mobilizing development partners and/or their resources more urgent. In Niger, for example, a dire humanitarian funding situation required UNHCR to mobilize development resources as well, even though UNHCR's systems and processes make it difficult to do so (see below). Similarly, steadily decreasing humanitarian funds for the refugee response in Ethiopia increased the pressure to mobilize development programmes. At the same time, opportunities for cooperation depend on available development funding. Both Ethiopia and Jordan – the two country cases with the most examples of cooperation – are “development donor darlings.” Large development donor contributions increase the international community's influence on the government and can provide resources to implement specific programmes for host communities and refugees. The distribution of development resources is also important. In Ethiopia, for example, classic development resources tend to flow to the central areas of the country. Dedicated financing instruments were therefore important in channelling resources to less developed refugee-hosting regions. Many donors chose to focus their contributions on the Somali region, resulting in more cooperation opportunities in that particular region as compared to others. The sectoral allocation of donor resources had a similar effect. Thus, large investments in education facilitated the inclusion of refugees in the national development plan for education, whereas the absence of similar investments in health meant that efforts to include refugees in health sector plans were less successful.

Finally, **centralized or decentralized decision-making processes influence the level at which cooperation takes place.** For example, key decisions on allocating IDA resources related to displacement are taken centrally. Therefore, headquarter-level cooperation between UNHCR and the World Bank is also crucial for the operational aspects of this partnership. By contrast, many bilateral development actors, as well as the EU, have more decision-making authority at the country level. This limits the ability of UNHCR staff at the headquarters level to effectively support the operational components of these partnerships.

## 4.2. Internal measures and factors

**There is a high level of awareness and agreement on the overall humanitarian-development cooperation agenda across UNHCR.**

Since this evaluation focused on a small sample of UNHCR country operations, it is difficult to make general claims about staff agreement. However, in three out of four countries visited for this evaluation, awareness and agreement were high at all organizational levels and across functional areas. This was also true for sub-offices, even though these units have only a few staff members directly responsible for humanitarian-development cooperation.

**General awareness and agreements were facilitated by consistent communication and positioning from UNHCR's top management.** UNHCR's leadership consistently communicated a

clear commitment to engaging in humanitarian-development cooperation. This was reflected in a series of high-level and very visible policy initiatives, from the 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees to the first edition of the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. This commitment is also reflected in recent global sector strategies,<sup>35</sup> in the High Commissioner's speeches and in UNHCR's Strategic Directions (2017–2021).<sup>36</sup>

### **A dedicated support structure at headquarters and in key country operations facilitates UNHCR's increased engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation.**

**Dedicated staff capacity at the country level has been crucial to fostering humanitarian-development cooperation.** At the country level, interviewees consistently identified the creation of new, dedicated staff positions as the most important measure taken to support humanitarian-development cooperation. This includes 25 Senior Development Officers (SDOs) in various country operations, a range of CRRF officers primarily in CRRF pilot countries (deployed at the national and the sub-national levels), and at least 10 recently-created economist positions. UNHCR staffed most of these positions with external experts with development backgrounds, many of whom had previously worked for the World Bank. During the focus period for this evaluation, their primary role was to reach out to and engage with development partners in the country of operation. Their role in supporting internal planning processes and capacity-building was more limited.

**Creating the Division of Resilience and Solutions was a key step in institutionalizing humanitarian-development cooperation** at the headquarters level. Individual senior staff members were instrumental in setting up UNHCR's flagship partnership with the World Bank Group. To institutionalize its approach to humanitarian-development cooperation, UNHCR created a new division in February 2018: the Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS). This measure established an institutional home for humanitarian-development cooperation at headquarters. The division initially included staff working on livelihoods and economic inclusion, education and partnerships with multilateral development actors. Subsequently, sector experts on health, WASH, social safety nets and cash-based interventions were added. Interviewees reported that this step led to better links between technical experts and staff working on partnerships, thus addressing a gap identified early on. In addition, the division includes focal points for key bilateral development actors. They complement the work of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service (DRRM) in the Division of External Relations (DER) by focusing on policy-oriented relationships, including global agreements and action plans. Staff secondments from and to key development partners such as UNDP and JICA as well as to the OECD also support the division's work.

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR, "Global Strategy for Settlement and Shelter", 2014, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/530f13aa9.pdf#zoom=95>; UNHCR, "Global Strategy for Livelihoods", 2014, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf#zoom=95>; UNHCR, "Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion 2019–2023, Concept Note", accessed 26 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/5bc07ca94/refugee-livelihoods-economic-inclusion-2019-2023-global-strategy-concept.html>.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, "UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021", 2017, accessed 26 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5894558d4.pdf>.



**The role of UNHCR's Regional Bureaux in humanitarian-development cooperation remains unclear.** UNHCR recently underwent a major decentralization and regionalization process.<sup>37</sup> As part of this effort, the Regional Bureaux were re-located to the regions and six regional SDO positions were created. Interviewees at the country and regional levels agreed that the roles and responsibilities of UNHCR's Regional Bureaux in humanitarian-development cooperation require further clarification and streamlining. Towards the end of 2020, when these interviews were conducted and some of these positions had only recently been filled, various interviewees at the country level perceived the regional structure as an additional layer of bureaucracy. With regard to humanitarian-development cooperation, they described overlaps between headquarters and the Regional Bureaux in terms of roles and requests. Regional Bureau staff tended to see their main role as supporting country operations. By contrast, staff in country operations felt that the Regional Bureaux could best contribute by focusing on cooperation with development actors at the regional level and by facilitating exchange and learning between country offices.

### **Guidance on key aspects of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation is lacking.**

The evaluation found that guidance on important aspects of humanitarian-development cooperation is missing. Thus, despite the generally high level of agreement with the humanitarian-development cooperation agenda, many of the staff members interviewed for this evaluation said that they were unsure what UNHCR's facilitator and catalyst role entailed for their own work and what specific contribution to humanitarian-development cooperation they were expected to make. The evaluation identified a lack of clarity or divergent views on the following issues:

**Some stakeholders are overly optimistic about the transformational potential of humanitarian-development cooperation.** Part of UNHCR's narrative at headquarters is that development actors' increased engagement in refugee-hosting areas will allow UNHCR to reduce the services it provides and to focus more on acute emergency situations. A range of the donors interviewed for this evaluation echoed this narrative, expecting reductions in UNHCR's service delivery costs. The reality observed in the case-study countries, however, suggests that the path to service inclusion is fraught with political obstacles, that the breadth of humanitarian needs will often justify continuous engagement, and that efforts to strengthen refugee self-reliance will take a long time to bear fruit. Most of the staff members interviewed in the countries of operation were very aware of the political hurdles as well as the constraints imposed by the socioeconomic conditions in refugee-hosting areas – which were acutely aggravated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in countries like Jordan. Therefore, most country-level interviewees did not believe that humanitarian-development cooperation will enable UNHCR to significantly scale down its services and reprioritize its engagement in the short to medium term.

**The implications of humanitarian-development cooperation for UNHCR's own programmes have not been spelled out.** A related aspect of UNHCR's narrative on humanitarian-development

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., <https://www.unhcr.org/5d81f9620.pdf>, accessed 26 February 2021.

cooperation is its focus on UNHCR's role as a catalyst and facilitator – namely, its external engagement with development actors. However, the guidance is less clear regarding what this agenda means for UNHCR's own operations. The evaluation found that while some sectors and individuals in charge have strategically pursued the gradual integration of refugee services into national service systems, others have not. Some of the donors interviewed criticized UNHCR for continuing its direct service provision, running large “legacy operations” in protracted displacement contexts such as Jordan and Ethiopia.

There were also divergent views on UNHCR's own activities supporting refugee livelihood and self-reliance. Some argued that UNHCR and its current partners did not have the required capacities for successful livelihoods programmes and should concentrate on facilitating other organizations' activities in this area. Others pointed out that there were often no other actors available, or that such actors took a long time to begin operations. They argued that it was important for UNHCR to increase its focus on livelihoods as well as its capacities, and to work with more specialized partners in such situations. This evaluation also found evidence that UNHCR's own activities supporting refugee livelihood and self-reliance contribute to its ability to act as a facilitator and catalyst for development actors.

**UNHCR's position on mobilizing resources provided by development actors is ambiguous and internal opinions on the issue diverge.** Another implication of UNHCR's current narrative on humanitarian-development cooperation is that the extent to which it seeks to mobilize resources provided by development actors for its own activities is unclear. This issue is rooted in UNHCR's partnership with the World Bank Group (see Chapter 3). UNHCR's management made a conscious decision to enter into a partnership agreement with the World Bank that does not foresee UNHCR implementing programmes financed by the Bank. UNHCR's leadership went to great lengths to communicate this position internally. In many places, this created the impression that UNHCR was only meant to be a facilitator and catalyst, and not to mobilize resources provided by development actors. This is difficult to reconcile with a reality in which many other partnerships include a financial component, such as the collaboration with GIZ in Niger and various initiatives funded by EU Trust Funds.<sup>38</sup> Development actor contributions support UNHCR's facilitator role and enable investments in livelihoods and self-reliance. Moreover, in some situations, development actors also fund traditional humanitarian interventions and approaches – for example, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in Bangladesh or the African Development Bank in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ambiguity of UNHCR's position on mobilizing resources provided by development actors has several negative effects. Firstly, it has led to inconsistent messaging to donors. UNHCR has focal points for some key donors in both the DRS and the DRRM. Several of these donors complained that different UNHCR divisions had approached them with different messages. Secondly, as mobilizing resources provided by development actors for UNHCR programming was explicitly a low priority, there was little momentum behind efforts to adapt UNHCR's internal systems and processes to better

<sup>38</sup> Since UNHCR reports all the funding it receives as humanitarian, it is not possible to quantify the total amount received from development sources.

manage development resources (see below for further details). Finally, different UNHCR divisions have different interests in this debate, and the lack of clarity on UNHCR's positions has created misunderstandings and tensions. Thus, important stakeholders at the headquarters level were keen to limit fundraising focused on development actors. They feared that project-based development funding could create disproportionately high transaction costs and that being seen as an implementer could undermine UNHCR's strategic, policy-level partnerships with development donors. By contrast, most interviewees at the country level had a clear interest in mobilizing funds provided by development actors. Country operations were facing shrinking humanitarian budgets and therefore saw the need to mobilize additional resources to cover the costs of UNHCR's role as a facilitator and catalyst – including, for example, the costs of data management and analysis, as well as advocacy and coordination – among other needs.

### **National service systems' potentially lower standards hinder efforts to integrate services.**

UNHCR and development actors have different policies, with UNHCR focusing on refugee protection and development actors taking national standards and the SDGs as their reference points. While the obligations enshrined in the 1951 Convention mostly relate to national standards, UNHCR's service delivery is guided by international humanitarian standards, such as the Sphere standards.<sup>39</sup> In areas with poor service delivery, including refugees in national or local service systems can conflict with the goal of ensuring international service standards, even when efforts are made to increase the existing service systems' capacities and standards. At the same time, separate service systems for refugees are often expensive and limit opportunities for the social integration of refugees. In some instances, the evaluation found that the dilemma of potentially lower service standards was preventing UNHCR from pursuing service integration as systematically and forcefully as it could have.

UNHCR has begun to provide more guidance and tools to help staff members navigate this dilemma. Most importantly, this includes the ongoing overhaul of UNHCR's results framework. The new results framework will be aligned with the SDGs and will include a results chain that mirrors the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (see below for further details on planning). UNHCR has also issued new guidance and operational instructions on its engagement with the SDGs,<sup>40</sup> and there are ongoing discussions at headquarters about using average national service standards as benchmarks for determining acceptable service standards. UNHCR operations practice is beginning to reflect these changes, for example in Jordan, where the Jordan Response Plan and its vulnerability assessment tools are aligned with the SDGs.

### **Staff engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation varies across UNHCR's functional areas.**

Due in part to the lack of guidance noted above, **the evaluation found that efforts to incorporate the humanitarian-development agenda have not been entirely successful.** There was a widespread perception, both within UNHCR and among external partners, that SDOs and CRRF

<sup>39</sup> Accessed 26 February 2021, <https://spherestandards.org/>.

<sup>40</sup> Accessed 26 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5ef33d3f4.pdf>. See also UNHCR, "Operational How-to Guide on UNHCR Engagement with SDGs and UNSDCF", 2020 (internal document).

officers carried a lot of UNHCR's efforts to increase engagement with development actors. For example, various development actors stated that they would appreciate receiving more specific gap analysis and guidance on how they could best contribute to the various sectors of the refugee response. Similarly, they would also appreciate more UNHCR analysis on the links between protection and socioeconomic development. Moreover, the evaluation team observed that senior management's support for humanitarian-development cooperation varied and that systematic efforts to pursue service integration across the different sectors were inconsistent.

**Limited progress on mainstreaming is linked to the design and use of specialized support functions for humanitarian-development cooperation.** As discussed above, the dedicated staff positions created to support humanitarian-development cooperation have enabled much of UNHCR's increased engagement in this field. By the same token, these positions have made it easier for other staff members to delegate responsibility for humanitarian-development cooperation to the SDOs or to CRRF officers. This unintended effect is inevitable and is a typical trade-off of implementing a major institutional change process. However, these positions could have been designed and used differently to better support efforts to incorporate humanitarian-development cooperation. In line with the emphasis on UNHCR's role as a catalyst and facilitator for other organizations' engagement, the main priority for SDOs and CRRF officers has been to engage with external actors. As a result, they have little time to support internal change processes. Moreover, SDOs and CRRF officers are not often part of an operation's overall management structure, but rather organized as a separate unit or included in an existing functional area. This limits their ability to offer support to other sectors and functional areas. In addition, most SDOs and CRRF officers are new to UNHCR, and while they contribute important external expertise to the organization, they are not as well-versed in the internal systems and processes as their longer-term UNHCR colleagues.

**Current incentive structures also limit UNHCR's progress on incorporation.** UNHCR has made efforts to strengthen the engagement of staff members throughout the organization in humanitarian-development cooperation through changes to staff terms of reference, performance assessments and promotion criteria, including at the P5, D1 and D2 levels. However, several of the staff members interviewed felt that UNHCR's internal incentives were not well-aligned with the humanitarian-development cooperation agenda. Firstly, there is a perception that managers who maintain or increase UNHCR's presence are rewarded. As one interviewee noted: "We send the best representatives to the operations where we have the biggest budgets, not the ones where there are the most development actors [...]. What should you do to be a fantastic representative – should you close down a country operation or keep it as it is?" This issue is particularly acute since UNHCR does not have clear benchmarks or criteria on how to transition out of providing services directly. Secondly, some staff members felt that efforts to invest in service integration can "backfire" if operation managers are not sufficiently committed to humanitarian-development cooperation. Finally, a range of UNHCR managers, including those working at the sub-national level, pointed to UNHCR's current budget allocation process as a major disincentive for engaging in humanitarian-development cooperation. They have to cover many of the costs for such cooperation out of their existing budgets, sometimes requiring a reduction in humanitarian service delivery.



## UNHCR's protection mandate and field presence are key assets in cooperating with development actors.

The development actors consulted for this evaluation all saw similar UNHCR features as key assets in their cooperation with the organization. UNHCR's mandate is to ensure refugee protection and supervise adherence to the 1951 Convention. This makes UNHCR the “go-to” organization for anything related to refugees. This status played a role in the first steps leading to UNHCR's cooperation with the World Bank, for instance.

In practical terms, **UNHCR's facilitation of access to refugee sites is essential to many development actors.** Thanks to its mandate, UNHCR is often the main partner and interlocutor for national refugee agencies. It also plays a key role in managing refugee camps in many contexts. Therefore, development actors often depend on UNHCR's support to get authorization for their programmes and access to camps. Interview partners in Ethiopia, Jordan and Bangladesh emphasized this role. The flipside of this is that development actors are concerned when these processes do not work smoothly. In Ethiopia, for example, development actors were disappointed when the national refugee agency did not grant permissions or delayed authorization despite UNHCR's interventions.

**Development actors also highly appreciate UNHCR's logistical facilitation.** In many countries of operation, UNHCR maintains a strong field presence in refugee-hosting areas. As part of its role as a facilitator and catalyst, it has been very open to making its capacities available to development partners, often free of charge. In Bangladesh, for example, UNHCR provided office space, transportation and security advice to UN development agencies and the Asian Development Bank following the large influx of Rohingya refugees in August 2017, which helped these agencies kick-start their operations in Cox's Bazar. UNHCR staff also joined World Bank and Asian Development Bank assessment missions and provided administrative and logistical support. Similarly, in Ethiopia, UNHCR facilitated assessment missions for UN development agencies such as FAO. There are many examples of similar forms of cooperation in other contexts as well. In all of these cases, UNHCR's partners highly appreciated its generous, effective support, which draws on its strong field presence. They also emphasized the crucial role assessment missions play in these partner organizations' decision-making and planning processes.

## UNHCR's protection expertise is key, but the organization could provide more thought leadership on related issues.

**Another key factor enabling UNHCR's cooperation with development actors and underpinning its role as a catalyst and facilitator is its expertise in protection.** This is particularly evident in the eligibility process under the IDA (sub-)window for refugees and host communities, in which UNHCR plays a formal role in providing assessments of potential host countries' protection frameworks for refugees. Many of the development actors interviewed for this evaluation also emphasized UNHCR's knowledge of protection problems and gaps on the ground as an important reality check for them, or they said it helped them to better prioritize their programmes.

Meanwhile, **a range of development actors requested that UNHCR deliver more, or more useful, analyses on protection issues.** These actors would appreciate more thought leadership from UNHCR – for example, on the underlying political and economic reasons why host governments adopt certain laws and regulations related to refugees, how the legal and regulatory environments for refugees influence their socioeconomic conditions, and how regulatory environments link to issues of conflict prevention and management.

**Development actors have also approached UNHCR to ask for advice on the operational implications of the protection situation.** During the first two phases of this evaluation, several development actors felt there was a gap in the advice on checking programme design and implementation against protection concerns. Since then, lessons on how to provide such operational protection advice have started to emerge. When development actors asked UNHCR for formal statements, they were sometimes disappointed, as UNHCR was hesitant or slow to issue such statements. Interactions were more constructive and helpful when UNHCR was able to share reflections, either by providing comments on development partners' draft documents or by discussing observations and reflections, particularly when such exchanges took place regularly. However, such interactions are not yet established as common practice.

## UNHCR's investments in data are evident, but constraints related to data utility, analysis and sharing persist.

One key asset that underpins UNHCR's role as a catalyst and facilitator is its knowledge of and data on refugees and other persons of concern. Recognizing that such data play an important role in planning and decision-making for some development actors, **UNHCR began making significant investments in its data collection capacities.** This included adopting the Data Transformation Strategy 2020–2025 in September 2019,<sup>41</sup> creating a global Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement with the World Bank in October 2019,<sup>42</sup> and making targeted investments at the country level, such as creating an economist position and conducting a panel survey of host communities and

<sup>41</sup> Accessed 26 February 2021, [https://www.unhcr.org/5dc2e4734.pdf#\\_ga=2.141059376.362065841.1610614500-1808594674.1597821240](https://www.unhcr.org/5dc2e4734.pdf#_ga=2.141059376.362065841.1610614500-1808594674.1597821240).

<sup>42</sup> See <https://www.jointdatacenter.org/>, accessed 26 February 2021.

refugees in Bangladesh, implementing a comprehensive registration exercise in Ethiopia,<sup>43</sup> and conducting regular household surveys in Jordan. In some cases, this investment involved efforts to include refugees in national data systems, for example in the Ethiopian Education Management Information System. While UNHCR's partners recognize these investments, a number of challenges persist – or, at least, they did in late 2019 and early 2020, when most of the partner interviews were conducted.

**One challenge is that development actors have very different data needs and requirements.**

For example, some development implementers mainly require reliable statistics on overall refugee population numbers and basic needs profiles. For them, UNHCR's standard overviews and published statistics<sup>44</sup> are entirely sufficient. They were concerned when new data collection efforts resulted in major, unanticipated changes to these statistics.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, other organizations require very specific types of information – for example, information on refugee skills to support the design of adequate skill-building or job-creation measures. Yet others are interested in detailed data sets on interventions and broad sets of socioeconomic indicators collected at regular intervals to enable impact analyses. It is obviously difficult for UNHCR to satisfy all of these demands while ensuring that its data gathering efforts remain manageable.

Nevertheless, relatively small changes could make UNHCR's data sets much more useful for external actors. The household surveys in Jordan, for example, would be more useful if the questions and answer codes were more consistent over time and if it was easier to match answers provided by the same individuals over time to create panel data. The registration data in Ethiopia would be more useful if it covered more variables and if information on respondent locations was easier to interpret. The Joint Data Center aims to strengthen these data systems and should support UNHCR in its efforts to make its data more useful for development actors.

In addition to the question of which data UNHCR gathers, however, **many partners criticized UNHCR for being hesitant and slow to share available raw data.** UNHCR prioritizes data protection concerns, examining and deciding on each individual data-sharing request on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, concluding a data-sharing agreement often takes many months, if not several years. Most development partners supported this effort to protect refugees' personal information but did not understand why anonymized data sets were not more readily available. Since this critique was articulated, UNHCR has taken a key step in making anonymized raw data publicly available by creating a microdata library.<sup>46</sup> Data began to be added to the library around mid-2020, and by January 2021, it contained 99 surveys. This constitutes only a portion of the available data sets. While taking time to anonymize data sets before publication is understandable, in the meantime, the library should include an overview of the data sets that exist and still need to be anonymized.

<sup>43</sup> See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/58>, accessed 26 February 2021.

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>, accessed 26 February 2021.

<sup>45</sup> In Ethiopia, for example, the comprehensive registration exercise resulted in the total number of refugees recorded by UNHCR decreasing from over 900,000 in 2018 and 2019 to just over 750,000 in 2020.

<sup>46</sup> See <https://microdata.unhcr.org/index.php/home>, accessed 26 February 2021.



**The way UNHCR analyses (or fails to analyse) available data constitutes a final challenge.**<sup>47</sup> To date, UNHCR has very limited capacity to analyse available data. Moreover, its organizational culture often results in reports being published only after a lengthy review and revision process, which makes it difficult to share preliminary results or draft papers with partners. A range of interviewees, both within UNHCR and among its partners, said they would expect UNHCR to exercise more thought leadership in this area, such as by conducting and sharing more analyses of available data. This criticism will become somewhat less pertinent as UNHCR's sharing of anonymized raw data improves, thus enabling others to conduct relevant analyses.

### **While key aspects of UNHCR's planning, resource allocation and reporting systems are being reformed, they still present major obstacles to cooperation.**

UNHCR's internal systems and processes were designed to optimize the organization's humanitarian response. UNHCR mobilizes resources based on annual needs assessments. Headquarters develops a projection of the expected donor contributions and authorizes country operations to implement core aspects of their country operations plans even before UNHCR receives financial contributions. These spending authorizations are updated throughout the year as financial forecasts evolve. This centralized, annual resource allocation system allows UNHCR to respond early and to direct resources where they are needed most, including to countries that attract little donor interest. While this system also works well for UNHCR's most important humanitarian donors, it has created challenges when it comes to increased engagement in development cooperation. Certain aspects of this system are currently undergoing reform.

**Annual planning cycles encourage short-term thinking. These will be replaced by multi-year planning, but resources will continue to be allocated annually.** During the period covered by this evaluation, UNHCR worked with annual planning and budgeting cycles. There was a widespread perception among interviewees that this contributed to short-term mindsets and hindered focus on medium-term objectives, including humanitarian-development cooperation. Short-term planning made it difficult for UNHCR to contribute effectively to multi-year inter-agency and national development plans. It also made it impossible to enter into binding, multi-year financial agreements. This forced partners into short-term planning and limited the credibility of UNHCR's multi-annual, multi-partner donor proposals.

To address these issues, UNHCR launched multi-year, multi-partner planning pilots across 22 operations, including in two of the case-study countries for this evaluation.<sup>48</sup> These strategies cover 3–5 years and are developed with national and international partners. However, echoing the results of a lessons-learned exercise, the evaluation found that these strategies had a limited impact, primarily because they came on top of the detailed, time-consuming process of developing UNHCR's annual country operations plans. An audit conducted in Ethiopia confirmed this finding, stating that UNHCR's

<sup>47</sup> See also <https://www.unhcr.org/5dd4f7d24.pdf>, accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., UNHCR, "UNHCR Global Report 2017", 2017, p. 23, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5b30bbe67.pdf>.

programme offered limited self-reliance opportunities and did not reflect the multi-year, multi-partner strategy's vision of including refugees in national service structures.<sup>49</sup>

A current reform process – the results-based management revision project<sup>50</sup> – envisages multi-year planning as the norm, rather than an add-on process. By 2022, country operations will replace their current country operations plans with multi-year results frameworks aligned with the SDGs and the GCR, with implementation plans to be updated annually. These implementation plans will be accompanied by indicative budgets for a planning period of 3 to 5 years, while binding resource allocations will continue to be made on a yearly basis.

While many staff members are concerned about whether operations will be able to implement multiple, far-reaching change processes simultaneously, most see the upcoming changes as an opportunity to improve the quality of planning and monitoring processes. Since the new system will allow country operations to define indicators related to the respective government and other development partners, the staff members interviewed anticipated that it will enable operations to better reflect humanitarian-development cooperation. However, some interviewees voiced their fear that these changes are not fundamental enough to remedy short-term thinking, since budgets will continue to be allocated annually. As one donor said: “If the [single-year budget] system is not changed, then I do not understand what the relevant change is. Maybe the indicators will fit better, but the fundamental problem will not be resolved.” Interviewees also realized that this situation is difficult to address since most donors continue to make annual contributions to UNHCR.

**UNHCR's new resource allocation framework is not expected to make it much easier to work with earmarked, multi-annual contributions for humanitarian-development cooperation.** In a number of countries, UNHCR receives strictly earmarked funding for humanitarian-development cooperation, covering, for example, CRRF facilitation, joint programmes with development partners and projects funded by development actors. Working with such contributions is challenging for country operations. They do not often include activities related to humanitarian-development cooperation in the part of their country operations plan covered by UNHCR's central resource allocations, as they consider these contributions additional to the donor's regular UNHCR contribution, which is reflected in the organization's financial forecast. Thus, country operations have to request additional allocations from UNHCR's budgetary oversight body. This has resulted in several difficulties. Firstly, the processes for requesting changes and additional allocations are often time-consuming, creating delays in project implementation. Secondly, these requests are not always granted. Country operations then have to reallocate funding internally in order to implement the relevant activities, creating a trade-off between more development-oriented programming on the one hand and humanitarian activities on the other. This creates a disincentive for staff and management at the country level to mobilize resources from development actors and to engage in humanitarian-development cooperation.

<sup>49</sup> Office of Internal Oversight, “Report 2020/036: Audit of the Operations in Ethiopia for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”, 2020, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://oios.un.org/audit-reports>.

<sup>50</sup> See UNHCR, “Update on UNHCR Reform”, 2019, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5d81f9620.pdf>.

In 2020, UNHCR revised its resource allocation framework to create more flexibility for country operations. Certain funding categories are no longer part of the High Commissioner's income projections or the centralized resource allocation process. This includes UN-administered funds and funds from regional inter-governmental financial institutions. These changes are widely acclaimed in country operations and have already facilitated new examples of cooperation with development actors in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Chapter 6 on COVID-19 below). However, these exceptions do not include some of UNHCR's most important development donors, such as the EU or bilateral donors. Additionally, even when contributions are covered under these exceptions, country operations are expected to exhaust their options for reprogramming their centrally-allocated budgets before adding additional funding.

Many staff members in country operations and Regional Bureaux therefore believe that further changes are necessary. In particular, they advocate making it easier to use centrally-allocated budgets to cover the upfront investments necessary to support service integration and also excluding funding provided by development actors from the global income projections and the centralized resource allocation process. By contrast, several of the staff members interviewed at headquarters argued that the contributions provided by development actors are small and do not warrant changing a system that has many advantages. They also believe that headquarters should continue to be involved in this process to ensure that country operations do not engage in programmes with disproportionately high administrative costs or activities that could put a strategic, policy-focused relationship with a development actor at risk.

**Development actors' reporting demands are onerous.** UNHCR reports on country programmes rather than on individual projects. However, most development actor contributions focus on specific projects. This has created challenges, as staff members involved in humanitarian-development cooperation have to create additional reports outside UNHCR's main reporting system. Moreover, some development donors have very specific reporting requirements or ask for more reporting at the outcome rather than the output level. Some of the development donors interviewed were concerned about the quality of UNHCR's project reporting. They feared this could entail reputational risks for UNHCR and negatively affect their strategic partnerships.

In response, UNHCR has hired dedicated project managers in some contexts, thus increasing the transaction costs of cooperation. At the organizational level, UNHCR attempts to strike a balance between preparing for more project-based reporting and choosing to remain generally programme-based. As part of UNHCR's results-based management revision, tools will be introduced to enable earmarked funds to be more easily traced and to standardize project-based reporting. Moreover, the new results framework will enable country operations to integrate donor indicators and separate outcome areas for different partners and sources of funding. In general, however, UNHCR will continue to operate on the basis of country programmes.

# 5. What are the effects of humanitarian-development cooperation?

As shown in the previous chapter, UNHCR has significantly enhanced its engagement and cooperation with development actors in recent years. This chapter examines the effects of these efforts. Following the logic model presented in Chapter 2 (Figure 2), this chapter analyses the effects of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation on the different actors targeted. Specifically, it explores the available evidence on these effects, first concerning development actors, then host governments, and finally refugees and host communities. The chapter ends with observations on the side effects of this new approach on UNHCR itself.

## 5.1. Effects on development actors

Key development actors recently increased their focus on forced displacement, creating dedicated funding instruments for and/or policies on forced displacement. However, this shift is difficult to quantify and remains limited to a relatively small number of core actors, such as the World Bank and select bilateral donors. While UNHCR had little influence on the political dynamics underlying this shift, it helped translate the dynamics into concrete commitments and agreements. There are abundant examples of UNHCR's practical support enabling development actors to more quickly and easily plan and implement their programmes. There are also some examples in which UNHCR clearly influenced programme designs.

In its role as a catalyst and facilitator, UNHCR aims to encourage development actors to give more priority to forced displacement in their advocacy and investments. This section first discusses the extent to which shifts in development actors' priorities are apparent and then analyses the extent to which these shifts can be linked to UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation. It then focuses on the extent to which UNHCR has been able to facilitate and influence the quality of development programmes in refugee-hosting areas.

**Key development actors visibly increased their focus on forced displacement, and UNHCR helped to translate existing political dynamics into concrete commitments and agreements.**

The examples of cooperation discussed in Chapter 3 show that a number of **key development actors** have increased their focus on forced displacement in recent years. Not only is this reflected in

policies on forced displacement and integrated responses,<sup>51</sup> but a number of development actors have also **created new funding instruments dedicated to forced displacement**. These complement the traditionally strong support for addressing forced displacement on the part of key donors, such as the United States or the United Kingdom (see Table 1 for examples).

Table 1: Examples of key development actors' funding instruments on forced displacement

Actor	Funding instruments
World Bank – IDA	IDA 18 Regional Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities: USD 2 billion, 14 eligible countries. IDA 19 Window for Host Communities and Refugees: USD 2.2 billion (of which USD 1 billion is earmarked for operations responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic). <sup>52</sup>
World Bank, UN, Inter-American Development Bank	Global Concessional Financing Facility, supporting middle-income countries hosting refugees. The facility received pledges of more than USD 695 million.
EU	EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis (MADAD): EUR 2.2 billion, which prioritizes fostering refugee self-reliance and bridging the gap between humanitarian and development financing. EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey: EUR 6.6 billion for supporting Turkey in hosting its refugee population. EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: EUR 5 billion from the EU and its member States, allocated to 26 African countries for refugee management as well as a range of other measures on return, migration management and stabilization. <sup>53</sup> Migration issues included in the geographic and thematic components of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI, EUR 79.5 billion across all components).
African Development Bank	In June 2020, the African Development Bank approved USD 20 million in grant funding to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in five countries in the Sahel. It targets particularly vulnerable populations such as refugees, IDPs and host communities.
Germany	Special initiative on tackling the root causes of displacement, stabilizing host regions and supporting refugees. <sup>54</sup> Development allocation of over EUR 12 billion to displacement-related development issues in the period 2017–2021.

**In the four case-study countries, these global instruments translated into significant development actor investments in refugee-hosting areas.** In Ethiopia, development actors committed investments of over USD 1 billion to host communities and refugees, focusing on job

<sup>51</sup> E.g., the EU's Lives in Dignity Communication (2015), outlining a nexus approach to forced displacement; or Germany's 2016 Strategy and Action Plan on Migration and Development, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/216858/6c2b8d4f6eb95c507f0b6244d8cc32e1/migrationentwicklung-data.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> See <https://ida.worldbank.org/replenishments> for details, accessed 11 January 2021.

<sup>53</sup> See EU, "Factsheet on the EUTF for Africa", 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Tackling the root causes of displacement, stabilizing host regions, supporting refugees", accessed 1 February 2021, [https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/Sonderinitiative-Fluchursachen-bekaempfen-Fluechtlinge-reintegrieren/deutsche\\_politik/index.html](https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/Sonderinitiative-Fluchursachen-bekaempfen-Fluechtlinge-reintegrieren/deutsche_politik/index.html).

creation and economic development as well as access to basic services.<sup>55</sup> In Bangladesh, the World Bank allocated USD 590 million in grants under IDA 18, and there is a potential allocation of up to USD 200 million under IDA 19. The Asian Development Bank announced up to USD 200 million in grant financing and has committed USD 100 million in response to the refugee crisis so far. These investments largely support classic humanitarian interventions. Global initiatives like Education Cannot Wait and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance also started programmes focusing on refugees and host communities in Bangladesh. In Jordan, major general investments from development actors such as the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and the World Bank have also benefited refugees. There were also investments directly related to displacement, for example, from the German development implementers KfW and GIZ, the Islamic Development Bank, UNDP and UNICEF (each above USD 100 million), among others. In addition, development donors created multi-donor accounts in the ministries of education and health to finance the additional costs of including refugees in national service systems and supported the Jordan Compact. In Niger, development actors made significant investments related to displacement, including those made by the World Bank (USD 80 million under IDA 18) and GIZ.

While the funding instruments and policies mentioned above are significant, there are also important caveats. Firstly, **it is difficult to quantify the extent of this shift.** The OECD reports that the share of funding to refugee-hosting areas increased from 23 per cent of all official development aid (including humanitarian assistance) in 2015 to 30 per cent in 2017.<sup>56</sup> However, these data points only cover members of the OECD's Donor Assistance Committee. Data on other donors, including multilateral development banks, and on the period after 2017 are not readily available.

Secondly, **there is no conclusive evidence on whether these investments represent additional funding that was made available.** This can only be determined on a case-by-case basis, which is beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, a cursory analysis of pledges made by the main donors which relate to the GCR and describe funding arrangements shows that most of these pledges do not seem to be additional, but seem to reallocate existing funding envelopes. While this finding indicates that the amount of additional funding is limited, it is not possible to determine with certainty.

Finally, **the most visible commitments and examples of investment all relate to a relatively small number of key development actors.** Many other development actors have not – or at least not visibly – increased their focus on forced displacement, although some key donors have a traditionally large portfolio of investments in refugee-hosting areas.

It is very difficult to pinpoint exactly how much of a role UNHCR has played in catalysing this policy shift among the core group of development actors for whom such a shift is visible. For the World Bank

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR's country office in Ethiopia produced a compilation of development partner projects and programmes related to the GCR and the CRRF, which covers 18 projects and programmes: UNHCR, "R3D Ethiopia: Refugee Displacement Development Digest," December 2019, accessed 3 March 2021, [https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/19\\_12\\_12%20ETH%20R3D%20Digest%20FINAL.pdf](https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/19_12_12%20ETH%20R3D%20Digest%20FINAL.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> OECD, "Financing for Refugee Situations", OECD Development Policy Papers no. 24, 2019, accessed 3 March 2021, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/financing-refugee-situations\\_02d6b022-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/financing-refugee-situations_02d6b022-en).

Group, the main driver – according to interviewees from the World Bank – seems to have been internal analyses on the links between poverty reduction, fragility and forced displacement. For other development actors, the arrival of a large number of refugees in Europe and North America in 2015 and 2016 put forced displacement at the top of the political agenda.

While UNHCR had little influence on these central political dynamics, there was a consistent perception among the development actors interviewed that **UNHCR was well-prepared to support development actors when political dynamics took hold and was also able to help translate these dynamics into concrete agreements and commitments**. Thus, key partnerships with the World Bank and the OECD were established early on. UNHCR's global diplomacy and engagement with political and development actors then helped to translate political attention into a landmark global agreement, the GCR. The negotiations, meetings and pledging conferences related to this process supported champions for a comprehensive refugee response within different development institutions and encouraged development actors to make public commitments. Interviewees saw follow-up events like the biannual Global Forum on Refugees as worthwhile investments in maintaining the momentum behind this agenda. A vast number of actors – including host governments, donors, development implementers, civil society actors and the private sector – are involved in these events and are encouraged not only to make commitments and pledges, but also to report on the progress made in implementing them.

### **UNHCR's support often accelerated and facilitated the planning, design and implementation of development interventions in areas affected by forced displacement.**

There is stronger evidence on UNHCR's facilitator role when it comes to implementing development actors' policies and commitments. **Examples of situations in which UNHCR provided practical support to enable development actors to more quickly and easily plan and implement interventions abound.** All the development actors involved in cooperation with UNHCR praised the organization's generous and, in most cases, effective support in facilitating missions, gaining authorizations for access to and programmes in refugee-hosting areas, and establishing their presence in these areas. Many development actors also highly appreciated UNHCR's protection expertise and the opportunity to use UNHCR's data or analysis for their planning, although there is still room for improvement in these areas (see Chapter 4 for details).

In addition, the evaluation also collected some examples of **UNHCR's influence on the design of development actors' interventions** (although the evaluation did not assess the details or the quality of individual development actors' projects or programmes):

- In Niger, UNHCR's contribution to the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project (PARCA) helped to define the programme's priorities in terms of targeted regions and sectors. UNHCR also developed the model for urban planning and land development interventions, which was initially funded by the EU and later replicated by GIZ.

- In Jordan, UNHCR and ILO helped to shape the design of the Jordan Compact, a cornerstone of humanitarian-development cooperation in the country. In particular, both organizations helped to define indicators for the disbursement of Compact funds, including the number of work permits issued and working conditions in the garment industry. UNHCR's initiative to create a livelihoods working group encouraged more actors to engage in livelihoods at a time when refugee self-reliance was still politically contentious. UNHCR also helped to shape the Jordan Health Development Partner Forum's initiative to support the reintroduction of subsidized rates for refugees using public health care.
- In Ethiopia, UNHCR was directly involved in implementing flagship initiatives such as the land development programme in Melkadida, supported the replication of this approach in Gambella and was instrumental in shaping advocacy linked to the Jobs Compact. UNHCR's recent engagement in UN development planning processes resulted in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, including an objective on displacement and incorporating refugees and IDPs as vulnerable groups.
- In Bangladesh, UNHCR played a key role in shaping the joint advocacy agenda with development actors.

## 5.2. Effects on host governments

UNHCR and its development partners have little influence on many of the key factors affecting host government policies towards refugees. Nevertheless, there is evidence that UNHCR's global engagement helped encourage a small number of host governments to pledge policy changes that will transform key aspects of how they manage refugees, that engagement with host governments supported the implementation of those policy changes in some areas, and that important investments in host government capacities and relevant service systems and infrastructure were made. At the same time, progress has been limited in using humanitarian-development cooperation to establish more direct relations between UNHCR and a broader range of government offices in the case-study countries.

**Factors other than UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation are the primary drivers of host government policies towards refugees, although global diplomacy has encouraged some host governments to pledge policy changes.**

Host governments hold the key to many factors enabling refugee self-reliance and inclusion. Therefore, one aim of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation is to increase host governments' willingness and capacity to pursue a more comprehensive approach to addressing forced displacement (see Chapter 1).



As discussed in Chapter 4, the policies and political positions of the governments in the four case-study countries, as well as the protection frameworks underpinning them, differed substantially. A complex mix of factors affects governments' decisions on these general positions. These factors include: the relationship between the host government and the country of origin; the economic situation and dynamic in the country; the domestic political environment and public attitudes towards specific groups; cultural and linguistic "proximity" or distance between displaced populations and nationals; security considerations; and the governments' regional and international political positions and ambitions.<sup>57</sup>

UNHCR and development actors have little or no influence on most of these factors. It is therefore unsurprising that **UNHCR's increased engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation often could not fundamentally alter host governments' general positions regarding refugee self-reliance and inclusion.** Nevertheless, this engagement has made a difference in three areas: encouraging host governments to make pledges related to the GCR and the CRRF; working with host governments to implement these pledges; and making investments to strengthen the capacities of host governments and relevant service systems to better absorb refugees.

As discussed above, UNHCR and its partners were able to channel the political dynamics created by the events in 2015 and 2016 into **the GCR**. In December 2018, 181 countries voted in favour of the legally non-binding compact, with only two countries voting against it. The diplomacy around this process **encouraged some host governments to make pledges that entail a significant departure from their previous practice.** These commitments were renewed and in some cases expanded during the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019. For this evaluation, most of the respondents – including those outside UNHCR – perceived the outcomes of the Forum positively, particularly in terms of reinforcing the agenda to support more comprehensive responses. As one interviewee said: "Many things were said that you would not have heard five years ago. There was greater coherence in the room [...], it was impressive to hear the language used." However, interviewees were more cautious when it came to the prospects for putting these pledges into action, not least because, for many States, implementation hinges on international financial resources.

**Ethiopia provides a prime example of progressive policy commitments.** The [pledges](#) the Ethiopian Government made at the 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees include commitments to:

- expand its out-of-camp policy to benefit 10 per cent of the total refugee population in Ethiopia;
- give priority to refugees when providing work permits in areas in which foreign workers are permitted to work;
- increase the enrolment of refugee children at all levels of education;

<sup>57</sup> K. Jacobsen, "Factors Influencing the Policy Responses of Host Governments to Mass Refugee Influxes", *International Migration Review* 30, no. 3 (1996): pp. 655–78; A. Lamis, "Rivalry, ethnicity, and asylum admissions worldwide", *International Interactions* (2020); S. Moorthy, R. Brathwaite, "Refugees and rivals: The international dynamics of refugee flows", *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 36, no. 2 (2019): pp. 131–48; E. Yoo, J.-W. Koo, "Love thy neighbor: Explaining asylum seeking and hosting, 1982–2008", *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 55, no. 1 (2014): pp. 45–72.

- make 10,000 hectares of land available to refugees and host communities for cultivation;
- allow for the local integration of at least 13,000 refugees who have lived in Ethiopia for 20 years or more;
- cooperate on building industrial parks that could employ up to 30,000 refugees; and
- expand access to social services and documentation.

As one of the co-convenors of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the Ethiopian Government then complemented these pledges with [additional commitments](#) related to skills training, socioeconomic opportunities, energy solutions and the government's asylum system and social protection capacity. Interviews conducted with UNHCR, partner organizations and the Ethiopian Government confirm that these pledges amount to a significant change compared to previous practice and that the diplomatic processes and global events coordinated by UNHCR and its partners, as well as the reciprocal commitments of development actors to increase investments benefiting host communities and refugees, played an important catalysing role.

Regional processes also played an important role in this context. In December 2017, governments participating in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) adopted the [Djibouti Declaration](#) and the Action Plan on Refugee Education. As part of this process, the Ethiopian Government committed to integrating its education systems for refugees and host communities. While UNHCR only played a marginal role in this process, the commitment became an important reference point for subsequent policy dialogue.

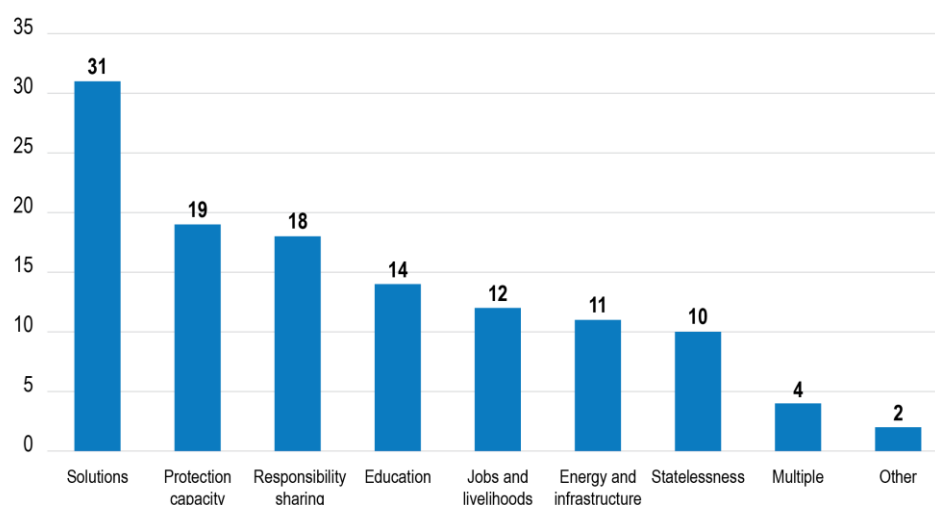
**Uganda is another frequently mentioned example.** As another CRRF pilot country, it created a CRRF Steering Group and shifted the responsibility for leading the response in different sectors to the respective line ministries. The CRRF thus helped to encourage the inclusion of refugees in the government's planning and implementation, for example through the development of comprehensive sector response plans and the inclusion of refugees in development plans at the national and local level. Progress on meeting these goals has been reported, particularly regarding education and health.<sup>58</sup>

Beyond these specific examples, an analysis of the GCR-related pledges reveals that collectively, **the 30 largest refugee-hosting countries made a total of 121 pledges categorized as relating to "policy"**.<sup>59</sup> Of these, the largest number addresses solutions (Figure 5).

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/uganda>, accessed 3 March 2021.

<sup>59</sup> The analysis is based on the data contained in UNHCR's Pledges & Contributions Dashboard, accessed 15 January 2021, <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/channel/pledges-contributions>.

Figure 5: Policy pledges distributed by focus area (top 30 refugee-hosting countries)



However, the fact that the governments of States hosting the largest numbers of refugees made an average of almost four policy pledges per country does not necessarily mean that these governments have committed to transformative policy change (or vice versa, that governments which made no pledges have not changed their policies). Among the 10 States hosting the largest numbers of refugees, countries such as Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia each made a significant number of policy pledges, including some transformative pledges. However, others made no policy pledges at all (Pakistan, Iran and Jordan), while still others made no substantial or new policy pledges (Bangladesh and Lebanon).<sup>60</sup> Thus, engagement around the GCR clearly did not have a consistent effect on host governments.

### Joint engagement with host governments supported the implementation of policy changes in some areas.

Advocacy and policy work with host governments has always been a key aspect of UNHCR's mandate and activities. Interviewees expected UNHCR's increased engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation to contribute to advocacy in two ways: Firstly, they expected that development actors would increase the leverage of joint advocacy efforts through the weight of their overall financial contributions, their ability to make targeted contributions supporting the implementation of specific policies, and by adding a different perspective that focuses on the socioeconomic consequences of and the opportunities presented by displacement situations (rather than on refugee protection and rights). Secondly, they expected cooperation with development actors to increase UNHCR's own access to and influence on host governments, enabling it to establish working relationships with the top levels of government, line ministries and agencies, as well as sub-national levels of government.

<sup>60</sup> Bangladesh made a generic policy pledge to "design innovative refugee solutions," without providing specifics. Lebanon reiterated its commitment to its prior pledges. Turkey and Germany both made pledges regarding their position on the 1961 Convention on Statelessness and on expanding existing education programmes for refugees, and Germany made additional pledges regarding its development policies.

While international actors' ability to influence governments is always limited, **the evaluation found several examples of specific policy achievements that benefited from increased cooperation with development actors:**

- In Ethiopia, the adoption of a new Refugee Proclamation in January 2019, followed by the adoption of three related Directives<sup>61</sup> by the end of 2019, are recognized as important milestones for implementing the government's pledges. In both cases, taking these steps was a pre-condition for moving forward with the Ethiopia Jobs Compact, which is financed by the World Bank, the United Kingdom and several other donors.
- In Bangladesh, the diplomatic efforts made by the UN, the World Bank and important bilateral partners were intense. The Government of Bangladesh has not changed its stance on key aspects of its refugee policy, such as planning to relocate a large number of Rohingya refugees to the remote island of Bhasan Char, fencing refugee camps to restrict movement, and prohibiting cash payments to refugees. However, it has authorized several practical changes. These include: introducing formal education for Rohingya children based on Myanmar's national curriculum; restoring telecommunication services in the camps; planning two-storey buildings in some camps; increasing international actors' engagement in skill-building activities for refugees; and implementing home-gardening projects throughout the camps.
- In Jordan, diplomatic activities supported the government's agreement to issue work permits to Syrian refugees for certain economic sectors (primarily agriculture and construction). The number of work permits issued is one of the indicators required to implement the large, multi-donor Jordan Compact.<sup>62</sup> Another key achievement was the government's decision to reintroduce subsidized rates for Syrian refugees accessing public health-care facilities. This was related to a joint diplomatic effort by UNHCR with the World Bank, USAID, the Islamic Development Bank and others, resulting in the creation of a multi-donor account at the Ministry of Health to cover the costs of the subsidy. Another policy achievement relates to education: in addition to opening schools to registered refugees, the government also agreed to open schools to unregistered refugee children.

**These experiences offer important lessons. Firstly, progress is possible even in very challenging political environments.** As discussed above, international diplomatic efforts were unable to ease some of the most restrictive aspects of Bangladesh's refugee policy. Nevertheless, progress was made on lower-level issues, especially when it was possible to demonstrate how the proposed measures related to central government interests, such as security. Conversely, efforts to

<sup>61</sup> These include the *Directive to Determine the Conditions for Movement and Residence of Refugees Outside of Camps* (Directive No.01/2019); the *Directive to Determine the Procedure for Refugees Right to Work* (Directive No. 02/2019); and the *Refugees and Returnees Grievances and Appeals Handling Directive* (Directive 03/2019). See UNHCR, "Ethiopia Summary Pledge Progress Report 2019", July 2020, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019%20ETH%20Summary%20Pledge%20Progress%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., ODI, "The Jordan Compact: Lessons Learnt and Implications for Future Refugee Compacts", February 2018, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://www.odi.org/publications/11045-jordan-compact-lessons-learnt-and-implications-future-refugee-compacts>.

implement policy pledges made by very cooperative governments, such as Ethiopia, may encounter many obstacles and setbacks in practice. Host governments' political positions are therefore less black-and-white than they may initially seem.

**Secondly, multilateral development banks often link programme implementation to progress on policy issues.** While this form of advocacy can be powerful, it also has limitations:

- Multilateral development banks typically will not adopt all advocacy issues, but only focus on a select few.
- The extent of leverage multilateral development banks have with host governments depends on the significance of the funding offered under instruments such as the window for host communities and refugees, as well as the appeal of the related financing conditions. For example, both the Government of Ethiopia and the Government of Bangladesh have rejected funding that includes loan components (as opposed to pure grant financing).
- There is a risk that host governments will narrowly fulfil the letter of the conditions without following their broader spirit. In Bangladesh, for example, telecommunication services in camps were formally restored, but de facto connectivity remains patchy. In Ethiopia, the government issued the required number of directives to translate the new Refugee Proclamation into practice, but did not disseminate them to regional governments and line ministries.

For these reasons, more comprehensive, norms-based **advocacy with other UN agencies remains an important complement to joint advocacy with multilateral development banks.**

Finally, in several different contexts, UNHCR staff did not have a realistic understanding of the contributions different development actors would make to a joint advocacy agenda, which led to disappointed expectations. At the same time, several development partners said they would appreciate more strategic direction from UNHCR on advocacy, including suggestions on how different actors' efforts could best complement each other. Both impressions suggest that **joint advocacy efforts could benefit from a more strategic approach and clearer communication between partners.**

**Progress in establishing direct relations between UNHCR and a broader range of government offices in the case-study countries has been limited.**

**So far, establishing direct relations between UNHCR and a broader range of government offices and ministries has played a much more limited role than some had hoped.** The evaluation found that only a modest increase in the working-level relationships between UNHCR and relevant line ministries in the four case-study countries was linked to increased humanitarian-development cooperation. At the same time, a number of examples emerged in which UNHCR's humanitarian delivery, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, improved relationships with local governments and government line ministries, and in which local government offices were more open to cooperation than national ones. Linked with humanitarian-development cooperation,

direct relationships evolved mainly in areas where UNHCR was involved in designing relevant programmes, for example in cooperation with the Syrian Workers Unit in the Jordanian Ministry of Labour, and with municipalities and the government's Social Safety Net Unit in Niger. In Uganda, strong relationships with line ministries were also reported to have had beneficial effects on humanitarian-development cooperation. In other areas, government offices sometimes lacked interest in intensified cooperation with UNHCR, either because they did not expect the organization to make financial contributions, because they faced opposition from their national refugee agency, or because their readiness to cooperate was based on the (unrealistic) expectation that UNHCR would make significant resources available to them.

### **There are numerous examples of development investments in host government capacities, relevant service systems and infrastructure for host communities and refugees.**

The four countries analysed for this evaluation have very different levels of socioeconomic development and government capacities. Yet, in each country, refugees tend to be hosted in comparatively underdeveloped areas, and public providers lack the necessary capacity to offer effective services to large numbers of refugees. As discussed in Chapter 3, many examples of UNHCR's cooperation with development actors involve investments in these capacities or related infrastructure to improve service coverage and quality for both host communities and refugees.

The photovoltaic power plants built next to the refugee camp in Zaatari in Jordan, for example, increased the power available through the national grid and thereby increased power availability in the camp. The multi-donor accounts in the ministries of education and health provided the necessary resources to expand public education and public health facilities to Syrian refugees in Jordan. Cooperation with development actors in Ethiopia allowed for the expansion of legal services and access to justice for refugees and host communities in Gambella, the creation or upgrade of integrated water management systems in several regions, and the expansion or upgrade of secondary education and technical and vocational training facilities in some areas. Moreover, a recent project aims to expand social protection systems to cover some urban refugees. In Bangladesh, investments made by UNHCR and its development partners significantly increased the public health system's capacity to address the COVID-19 pandemic, benefitting both host communities and refugees. In Niger, successful land development has become a source of revenue for the relevant municipalities, creating the basis for a potential expansion of services for host communities and refugees.

### 5.3. Effects on refugees and host communities

The evaluation was able to establish the effects of a few select cases of cooperation on refugees and host communities through rigorous quantitative analysis. Even more than aid workers and refugees perceived, work permits had a considerable positive effect on the socioeconomic and protection situations of refugees in Jordan. By contrast, the reintroduction of subsidized health-care rates for refugees in Jordan also illustrates the trade-offs of cooperation. On average, refugees incurred higher costs for and had slightly lower rates of access to health care when using subsidized public health-care systems, as compared to parallel humanitarian health-care services (which were more readily available when these subsidies were suspended). In Ethiopia, providing birth certificates to refugee children has resulted in several positive effects. Other available evidence also points to the predominantly positive effects of humanitarian-development cooperation on refugees and host communities.

UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation is a means of improving refugees' lives by strengthening their self-reliance and inclusion, while bolstering support to host communities. As foreseen in the evaluation design, only in select cases was it possible to identify the causal effects that humanitarian-development cooperation has had on refugees. The anticipated constraints on assessing the effects on refugees are as follows: Firstly, changes in the policies and practices of host governments and development actors can take a long time to generate the desired effects. Secondly, proving the link between UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation and the situations of refugees can be challenging. Thirdly, the primary data available in UNHCR country operations is not always sufficient to allow for an impact analysis. Fourthly, it is difficult for statistical approaches to causally attribute outcomes to the effects of programmes that, by design, should benefit the entire population. Finally, the evaluation encountered some unexpected difficulties in collecting primary data from refugees and host communities: due to security issues and movement restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team was able to conduct focus group discussions with refugees and host communities in Jordan and Ethiopia, but not in Niger or Bangladesh.

These difficulties notwithstanding, the evaluation team was able to identify a range of effects that can be linked to UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation based on one or more of the following methods or data sources: a quantitative analysis of the available microdata; focus group discussions in Jordan and Ethiopia; and a review of the available evaluations. This section begins with a detailed discussion of the examples that are supported by rigorous quantitative analysis. It then provides an overview of other effects and the evidence supporting them. While **most of the examples document positive effects on host communities and on refugees' well-being and/or protection situations, some also involve negative side effects**. This section ends with a discussion of these (potential) negative effects.

## Work permits had a strong positive effect on the socioeconomic and protection situations of refugees in Jordan.

As discussed in Chapter 3, UNHCR was involved in an example of humanitarian-development cooperation that led to a crucial policy change in Jordan. As part of the 2016 Jordan Compact, the Jordanian Government agreed to issue 200,000 work permits to Syrian refugees, primarily in the agriculture and construction sectors. The evaluation team analysed home-visit data on non-camp refugees collected by UNHCR between May 2017 and November 2019 to understand what effects the work permits had on refugees' well-being and protection situations. Annex 4 provides a detailed description of the methods used and the results of this analysis.

One finding from this analysis is that **not all refugees were equally likely to obtain a work permit**. Refugees who had entered Jordan legally and had a service card issued by the Ministry of the Interior were more likely to receive work permits than those who did not. By contrast, households headed by women, households with a single caregiver or with members who had serious medical conditions, as well as refugees who had previously worked at the professional level in Syria, were less likely to have work permits. Additionally, refugees were more likely to receive work permits in 2017 than in subsequent years.

Crucially, the analysis also shows that **having a work permit has a much stronger positive effect on refugees' socioeconomic situations than either refugees themselves or aid workers perceive**. Refugees who participated in focus group discussions explained that work permits played an important role for refugees living in camps. Work permits were recognized as exit permits, and thus made it easier for refugees to leave the camp. Beyond this advantage, however, participants felt that having a work permit did not really make it easier to find a job. Most of the aid workers interviewed held similar views, given the high proportion of refugees working in the informal economy. They felt that work permits increased mobility for refugees living in camps and might help to protect them from harassment and exploitation. However, most did not believe that work permits improved refugees' chances in the job market.

Against this background, the quantitative analysis shows the surprisingly strong effects work permits have on refugees' economic situations. When comparing cases in which the characteristics are otherwise extremely similar, those with a work permit had an average of JOD 44 more monthly income than those without a permit. This was both because refugees with work permits had higher odds of having a job (an effect that is slightly higher for households headed by women than households headed by men) and because they earned more when they held a job. When comparing households in which the same proportion of members were employed, those with a work permit had an average of JOD 40 more income than those without a permit. The difference in income is significant, considering that the households included in the matched sample had a median total income of JOD 150 (across the total database, the median total income was JOD 100). This is the result of a significant increase in earnings from work (by an average of JOD 45), somewhat balanced by a slight reduction in other forms of income, such as donations or remittances. When using self-reported expenditures (rather than self-reported income) as a measure, the effect is smaller, but still



highly significant: households with work permits on average reported expenditures that were JOD 23 higher, compared to similar households without work permits. This effect is similar for all sub-groups analysed (households headed by men and women, households below and above the poverty line and households with many and few dependents).

Consequently, having a work permit in Jordan significantly decreases the risk of refugees living below the poverty line (both the absolute and the abject poverty lines) and of having to reduce expenditures for essential non-food items. The results of this analysis indicate that some of the effects of having a work permit may be stronger for households headed by women as compared to households headed by men, but not all such differences were statistically significant.

In addition – and more in line with aid workers' perceptions – the analysis shows that **work permits have a positive effect on refugees' protection situations**. Households with work permits were significantly less likely to have specific legal or physical protection needs. This effect was stronger (at a statistically significant level) for households with more dependents, households living above the poverty line and households headed by men. Thus, having a work permit decreases the odds of having specific protection needs by 86 per cent for households headed by men (which, in the data set, are generally much more likely to have specific protection needs than households headed by women), but only by 41 per cent for households headed by women. The effect of decreasing the odds of having specific protection needs is also slightly stronger for households living below the poverty line. Holding a work permit also significantly decreases the prospects of having to accept risky, degrading, exploitative or illegal temporary jobs to meet basic needs as well as of having to send children to work. Households with work permits spend an average of JOD 1.7 more on education. All of these effects – except educational spending – are statistically significant even when controlling for the effect work permits have on income.

### Including refugees in public health-care systems in Jordan indicate trade-offs with higher service costs and lower service accessibility for refugees.

Important changes were made to the Jordanian Government's health-care policies linked to UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation (see Chapter 3):

- Before 2014, Syrian refugees were granted free access to Jordan's public health system;
- From November 2014 until early 2018, Syrian refugees were charged 20 per cent of the fees applicable to other foreigners, while vulnerable refugees and refugees in camps also had access to free health-care services offered by UNHCR and its partners;
- From early 2018 until early 2019, Syrian refugees were charged 80 per cent of the full fee<sup>63</sup> and UNHCR and its partners expanded the free health-care provided through the humanitarian system;<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Dajani Consulting, "Health Access and Utilization Survey: Access to Healthcare Services Among Syrian Refugees in Jordan", December 2018, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68539>.

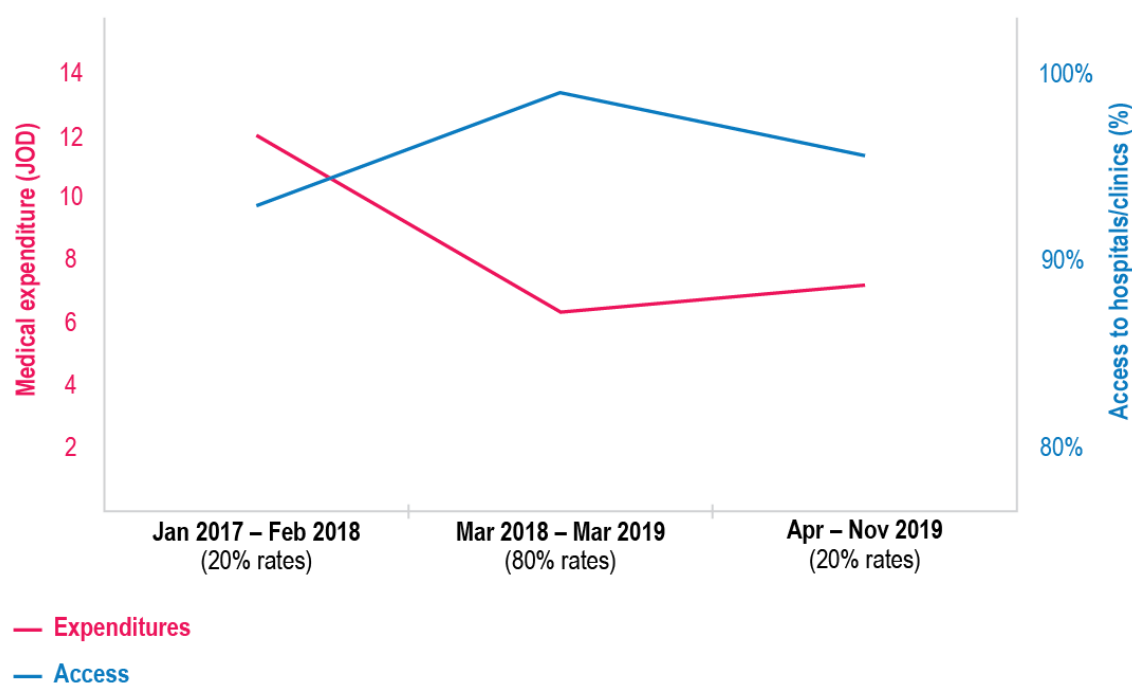
<sup>64</sup> In 2018, UNHCR's total expenditure on health rose to over USD 32 million. In previous years, it had been relatively stable, between USD 24.8 million and 26.3 million. In 2019, health expenditures started to decline

- In early 2019, the government reintroduced the 20 per cent rates, following joint advocacy by UNHCR and its development partners, as well as the establishment of a multi-donor fund at the Ministry of Health to cover related costs.

To gain an insight into the possible effects of this policy shift, the evaluation team discussed the issue in focus group discussions with refugees and conducted a descriptive statistical analysis of UNHCR's home-visit data collected between January 2017 and November 2019 (see Annex 4 for the full analysis). While the data do not allow for a more rigorous causal analysis, they do demonstrate important trends. Firstly, they show that **refugees' overall health expenditures declined significantly when they were charged higher rates of 80 per cent for using public health services** (Figure 6). When they were again able to use public health services at a cost of 20 per cent, refugees' health-care expenditures slowly began to rise. However, the share of "catastrophic medical expenditures" amounting to over 10 per cent of overall expenditures<sup>65</sup> was similar during both periods.

At the same time, **refugees reported greater access to health services during the time when they were charged the higher rates of 80 per cent for using public health services**. This suggests that more free humanitarian health services were available during this period. Correspondingly, access to health services started to decline again when the cheaper rates of 20 per cent were reintroduced and the availability of humanitarian health services reduced.

Figure 6: Medical expenditures and access to hospitals and clinics for all refugees, 2017–2019

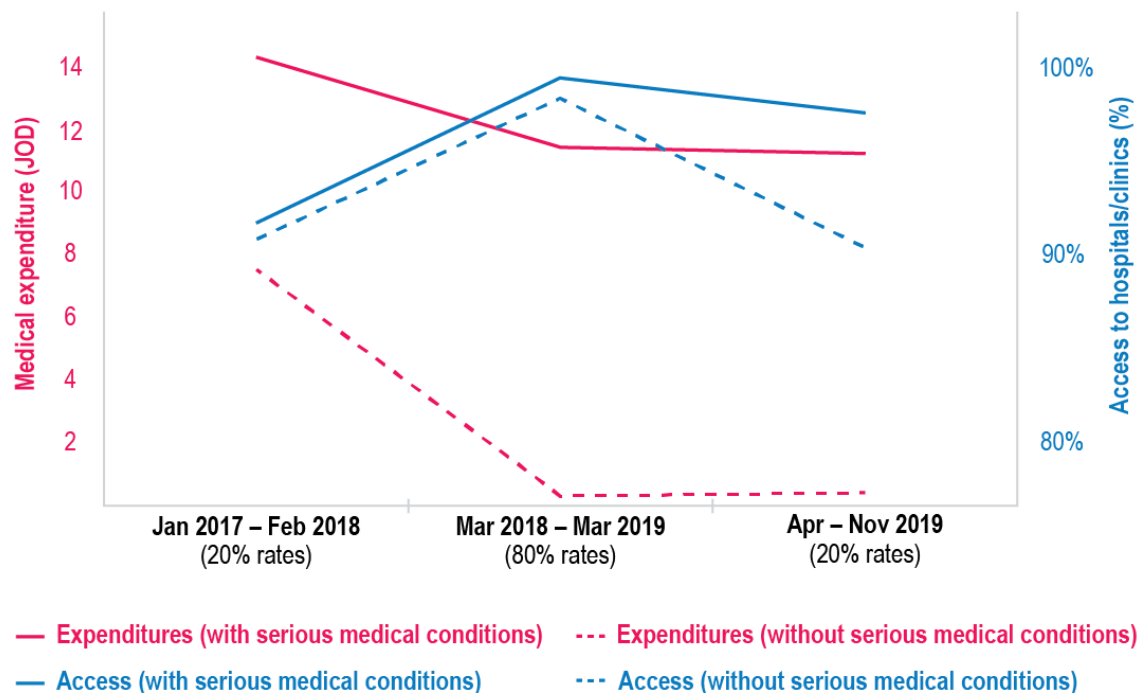


again, coming in at 29 million. See UNHCR's annual reports for Jordan, "Global Focus: Jordan", accessed 3 March 2021, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2549>.

<sup>65</sup> As defined by WHO. See e.g. Jonathan Cylus, Sarah Thomson, and Tamás Evetovits, "Catastrophic Health Spending in Europe: Equity and Policy Implications of Different Calculation Methods," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 96, no. 9 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.18.209031>.

Secondly, the data indicate interesting differences when they are disaggregated for different groups: **households with members with serious medical conditions reacted much less to the policy changes than those without** (Figure 7). While both groups benefited from increased access to hospitals or clinics when public health care was more expensive and more humanitarian health services were available, access decreased much more sharply for families without serious medical conditions once they were again expected to use public health services, paying 20 per cent of the rate. At the same time, expenditure levels remained lower for both groups. Focus group discussion participants and respondents in other health surveys explained that many refugees were not able to afford even the 20 per cent of the public health services fees in 2019.<sup>66</sup> They also explained that public health facilities often have long wait times, especially for refugees, and that the service quality was not as good as that provided by private or humanitarian facilities. While households without serious medical conditions used fewer health services, those with serious medical conditions seem to have continued to enjoy better access to humanitarian health facilities.

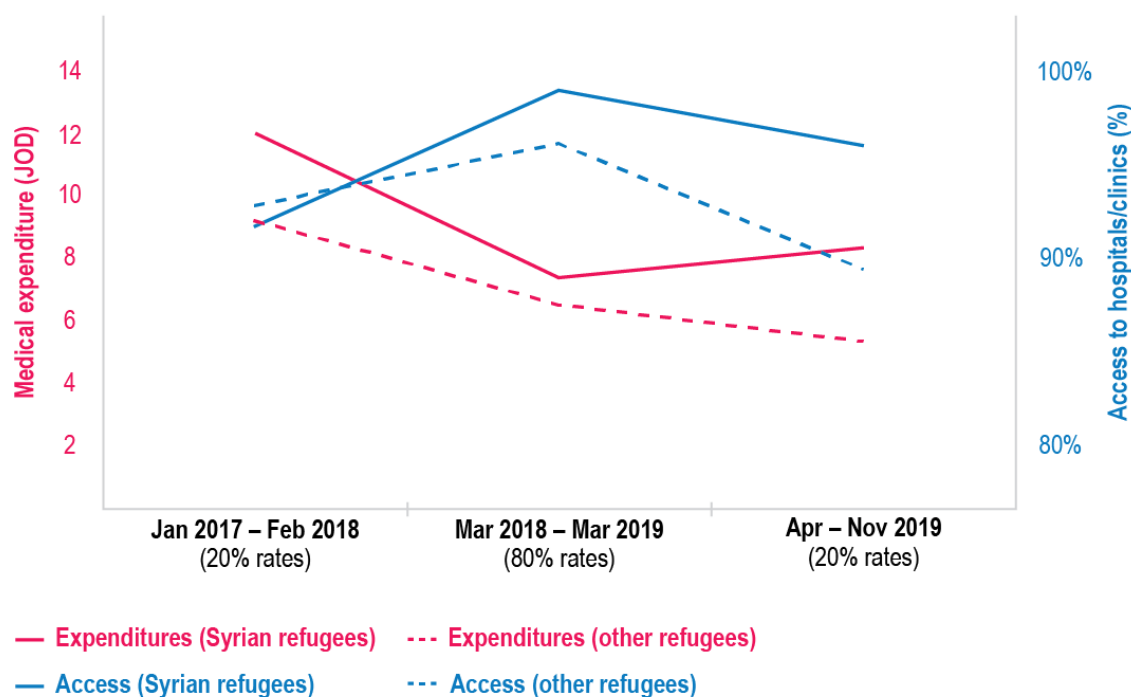
Figure 7: Medical expenditures and health-care access for households with vs. without serious medical conditions



**The effects were also different for Syrian as compared to non-Syrian refugees** (Figure 8). During the period covered by the data, non-Syrian refugees always had to pay the full rates for foreigners to use public health facilities. Both Syrian and non-Syrian refugees benefited from the expansion of humanitarian health services at the time when public health subsidies for Syrians were reduced, and enjoyed both higher levels of access and lower costs. However, as Syrian refugees were able to once more use public health services at 20 per cent of the cost, humanitarian health services were also reduced for non-Syrian refugees, resulting in a sharp decline in their access to health services.

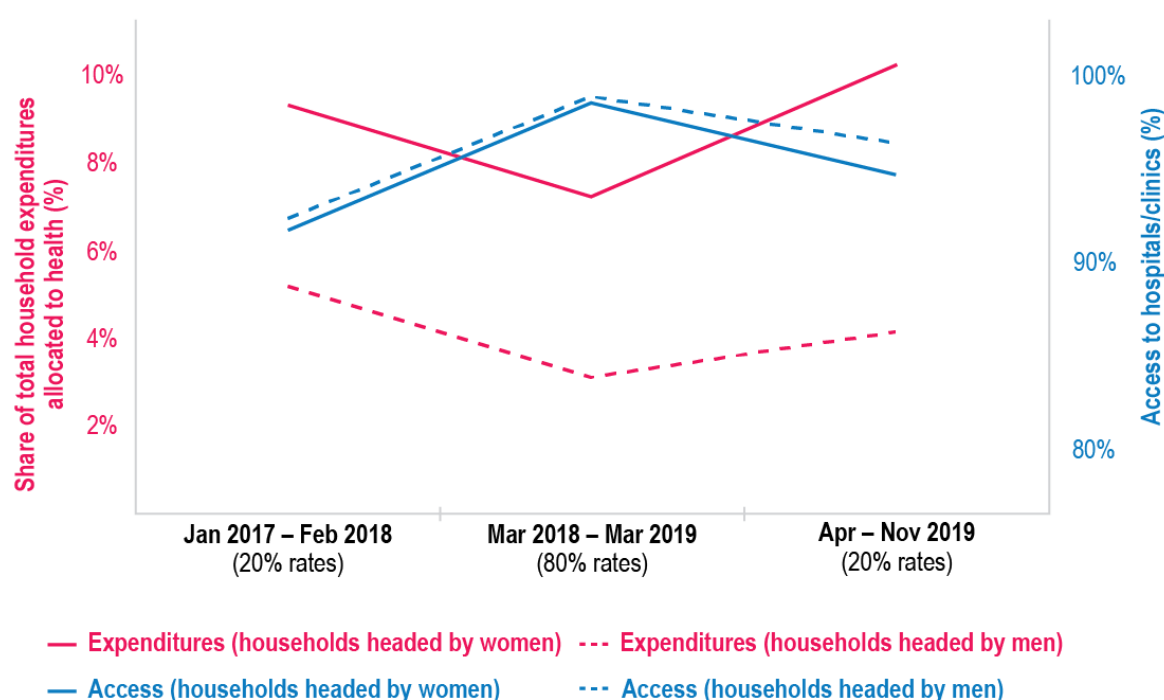
<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Figure 8: Medical expenditures and health-care access for Syrian vs. non-Syrian refugees



Finally, there were differences between households headed by women and those headed by men (Figure 9). As 20 per cent rates were reintroduced in 2019, households headed by women experiences a much sharper increase in expenditures and a steeper decline in access to health services than households headed by men. Related to their low income, female-headed households also allocated the highest share of their total resources to health care out of all the sub-groups considered, on average exceeding the threshold for “catastrophic medical expenditures” defined by WHO (average expenditures of female-headed households amounted to 10.2 per cent, compared to 4.2 per cent for male-headed households).

Figure 9: Medical expenditures and health-care access for female- vs. male-headed households



## Birth certificates for refugee children in Ethiopia have demonstrated several positive effects.

In 2016, related to the GCR, the Ethiopian Government made a pledge to improve the registration of vital events – such as births, deaths and marriages – for refugees. The [2019 Refugee Proclamation](#) promises: “Every refugee or asylum-seeker shall be treated in the same circumstances as nationals with respect to the registration and issuance of certificate of registration of vital events.” For both 2018 and 2019, UNHCR reported that over 8,000 refugees had benefited from vital events registration each year (out of a total refugee population now estimated at around 790,000).<sup>67</sup> In focus group discussions in February 2020, refugees in six of the seven camps visited for this evaluation confirmed that it had become easier to register vital events and that a more complete set of events could now be registered.

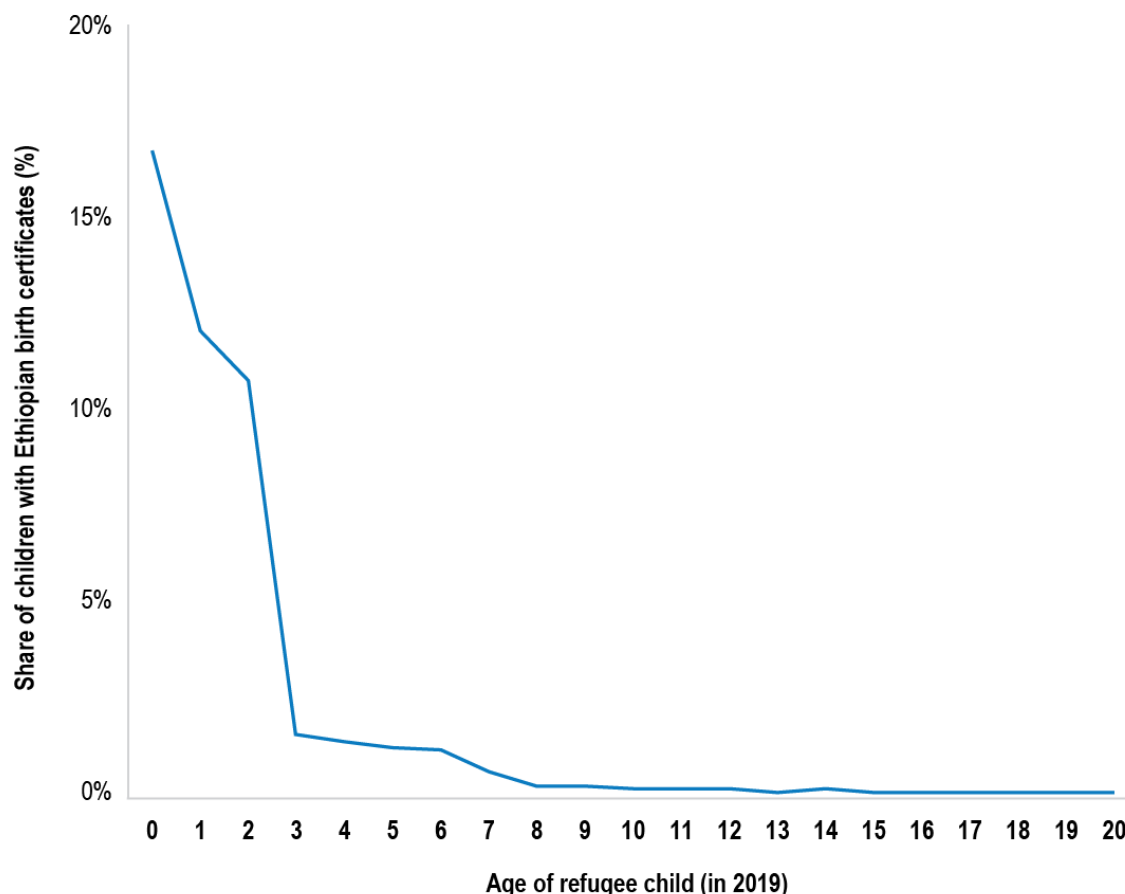
The evaluation team analysed the effects of the registration of vital events based on 2019 data from a comprehensive registration exercise conducted by UNHCR. Full details of the methods used and the results of the analysis are available in Annex 5.

**The analysis of vital events registration shows that more refugee children received birth certificates following the Ethiopian Government’s GCR pledges, although overall registration rates remain low** (Figure 19). Even for children born after the policy change, the issuance of birth certificates remained the exception rather than the rule. On the whole, families who were younger,

<sup>67</sup> UNHCR, “Ethiopia 2019 Summary Pledge Progress Report”, July 2020, accessed August 2021. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/79240>

had arrived in Ethiopia more recently, had more members and were more highly educated were more likely to register their children's births.

Figure 10: Share of children with birth certificates by age



Data source: UNHCR Ethiopia comprehensive registration exercise, data from July and December 2019

When controlling for these factors, the quantitative analysis – based on a method that matches individuals who otherwise have very similar characteristics – shows that having a birth certificate is, beyond a human right, associated with positive outcomes. In particular, refugee **children with birth certificates were around 20 per cent more likely to be enrolled in education than those without certificates. Families with at least one child whose birth was registered were also around 7.5 per cent more likely to return to their countries of origin.**<sup>68</sup>

The data set also includes a number of refugees who hold “out-of-camp permits”. These are highly relevant for humanitarian-development cooperation, since one of the Ethiopian government’s GCR-related pledges is to increase the out-of-camp population to 10 per cent of the total number of refugees. Unfortunately, it is unclear how well the data set captures refugees living outside of camps,

<sup>68</sup> In this case, the refugees returned to South Sudan. Between July and December 2019, approximately 40,000 South Sudanese refugees were actively deregistered from the database, indicating that they had returned to South Sudan during that period. The quantitative analysis analysed the effects of having birth certificated on different outcomes, including that of return.

and the recorded numbers of non-camp residents is too small to conduct a rigorous quantitative impact analysis. However, a simple regression analysis indicates that refugees with an out-of-camp permit are likely to be worse off than refugees without such a permit. This finding is unexpected and would need to be corroborated with additional data and analysis. However, in the meantime, it suggests that UNHCR should ensure that it pays sufficient attention to refugees living outside of camps and that it makes adequate preparations to support a rising number of such refugees.

The evaluation team also conducted other analyses based on the primary data provided by UNHCR's country operation in Ethiopia. These analyses identified, for example, interesting differences in the effects of in-kind and cash assistance for refugees. In Ethiopia, both forms of assistance were provided as humanitarian aid and did not involve cooperation between UNHCR and development actors. However, the related insights may be useful when considering how UNHCR could make its own activities more development-oriented, for example by providing more assistance in cash (a modality that is considered to strengthen local markets and encourage economic activities among refugees). These and other findings that could not be related to specific examples of cooperation are also included in Annex 5. The analysis demonstrates the benefits of cash assistance: **while receiving cash had no effect on the likelihood that a family would send its children to school, in-kind assistance was associated with a negative effect on enrolment.** There is no difference between cash and in-kind assistance in their effects on employment, but it is important to note that both forms of assistance increase the likelihood that family members will work. The most pronounced difference relates to the rate of return. While both forms of assistance increase the likelihood that a family will return to its country of origin, this effect is much stronger for cash than for in-kind assistance. **The data on cash and in-kind assistance indicated as “additional sources of income” in the survey also raise some questions regarding targeting: respondents who indicated that they had received such additional sources of income were on average better off than those who did not.**

### **The other documented effects on refugees and host communities are predominantly positive.**

Table 3 provides an overview of other examples of humanitarian-development cooperation, specifying the available evidence of their effects.

Table 2: Effects of humanitarian–development cooperation on refugees

Example	Effects on refugees and host communities	Evidence/data sources
<p>Providing electricity for refugees in Zaatari and Azraq camps in Jordan:</p> <p>In projects financed by KfW and the IKEA Foundation in cooperation with UNHCR, photovoltaic power plants were built to strengthen power supplies for both the refugee camps and the surrounding areas in Zaatari and Azraq.</p>	<p>The main effect was to make more electricity available to refugees living in the two camps. In Zaatari, the shelters for the estimated 79,000 inhabitants were all connected to an electrical grid, and the average electricity provided increased from 6–8 to 12 hours per day. In Azraq, a portion of shelters was connected to the grid, and electricity provision increased to 16 hours a day.</p> <p>Increased access to electricity has positive effects on food security and nutrition (through better food storage and less food waste), health (through improved medicine storage and better conditions for reading) and protection (through increased community engagement and better connectivity with the outside world).</p> <p>In addition, some refugees benefited from training and livelihood opportunities in photovoltaic engineering.</p>	<p>UNHCR conducted a participatory impact assessment of electricity access in the two camps in 2018.<sup>69</sup></p> <p>Interviews with UNHCR staff and development partners confirmed that the power plants were successfully completed and that they had increased access to electricity throughout Zaatari camp and in some areas of Azraq camp.</p>
<p>Creating an integrated water system for refugees and host communities in Itang, Ethiopia:</p> <p>A cooperation between UNHCR and UNICEF resulted in the creation of an integrated water supply system in Itang from 2014 onwards. The system was handed over to the local water utility at the end of 2018, and UNHCR continued to cover the costs of water delivery to refugee camps.</p>	<p>After the handover to the local utility, serious technical issues with the water system emerged. The local utility lacked the capacity, tools and equipment for maintenance. The system's capacity was overstretched, leading key components such as generators to fail. Additionally, parts of the system were vandalized. As a result, water provision became unreliable and water supply dropped below standard (to between 3 and 11 litres per person per day). This caused health problems linked to the use of unsafe water sources and contributed to intercommunal tensions over scarce water resources.</p>	<p>Interviewees from UNHCR, UNICEF and the organization providing technical support to the local utility confirmed the nature and severity of the technical issues.</p> <p>Refugee and host community participants in focus group discussions described the effects of the decreased availability of water on their health and on community relations.</p>
<p>Developing land for social housing in Diffa and Tillabéry, Niger:</p>	<p>The collaboration targets 2,100 households in Tillabéry and 10,000 households in Diffa. Implementation was ongoing at</p>	<p>The effects of the programme were only explained by interviewees and UNHCR monitoring data. Triangulation</p>

<sup>69</sup> UNHCR, "Participatory Impact Assessment of Electricity Access in Zaatari and Azraq Camps", December 2018, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67947>.



<p>In separate projects with the German development organization GIZ and the EU, UNHCR works with municipalities to develop land for social housing for host communities and for refugees outside of camps. Transforming land into building plots and selling them creates revenue for the relevant municipalities.</p>	<p>the time of the evaluation. The first intervention phase in Diffa has created social housing for 5,000 households. This helped to meet the shelter needs of those benefiting from the project. With residents reportedly using their own spaces and the surrounding areas for meetings and economic activities, the programme is also believed to have a positive effect on social cohesion and economic development.</p> <p>Beyond shelter needs, two municipalities in the Diffa region have been able to sell plots, with significant increases in their municipal budgets.</p>	<p>with local actors, refugees and members of the host community was not possible due to security constraints.</p>
<p>Providing cooking gas in Diffa region, Niger:</p> <p>Funded by an EU Trust Fund, UNHCR cooperated with a private sector company to establish cooking gas as an alternative to charcoal for refugees and host communities.</p>	<p>The cooperation established cooking gas as an economically viable, cleaner and more secure alternative to charcoal. Thanks to this programme, the price of gas refills decreased by half. As a result, the proportion of the population using gas increased from 1 to more than 20 per cent. This reduced exposure to health risks from burning charcoal and helped reduce deforestation in the area. It also led to cost savings for users, as refills cost less than wood and UNHCR supports the purchase of the initial bottle of gas.</p>	<p>The effects of the project have been documented by internal monitoring reports and an evaluation. They were confirmed by UNHCR interviewees.</p>
<p>Implementing a livelihoods and self-reliance programme in Dollo Addo, Ethiopia:</p> <p>As part of a longer-term partnership, the IKEA Foundation funded UNHCR to implement a livelihoods and self-reliance programme for refugees and host communities in Dollo Addo. The programme involved creating mechanisms to irrigate 100 hectares of farmland and supported the establishment of cooperatives working in agriculture, livestock value chains, energy and prosopis firewood. The programme also includes a microfinance initiative.</p>	<p>By the end of 2018, the programme was providing income-generating activities for more than 2,050 cooperative members, as well as loans to 525 individuals.</p> <p>This resulted in a self-reported increase in income and consumption levels for the participating households. It also made a clear contribution to improving refugee-host community relations.</p>	<p>A detailed evaluation of the programme was conducted and documented these effects.<sup>70</sup></p>

<sup>70</sup> A. Betts, A. Marden, R. Bradenbrink, J. Kaufmann, *Building Refugee Economies: An evaluation of the IKEA Foundation's programmes in Dollo Ado*, Oxford: RSC, 2020.

## There are some caveats to the overall finding that humanitarian-development cooperation has predominantly positive effects on refugees and host communities.

Most of the examples provided above indicate clear, positive effects of humanitarian-development cooperation on refugees and host communities, often on both their socioeconomic and protection situations. While this finding is very positive overall, the evaluation identified the following limitations or caveats:

- Four years after the adoption of the GCR, **many examples of humanitarian-development cooperation on forced displacement have yet to demonstrate effects** on refugees and host communities; alternatively, gathering or analysing relevant evidence on these effects has been impossible. Many aid workers understand that policy changes and development interventions can take a long time to produce effects, particularly in terms of creating viable economic opportunities for refugees and host communities in regions facing development challenges. However, in at least one case – Ethiopia – this led to a sense of disappointment about the CRRF among refugees and host communities. As a formal pilot country for the CRRF, UNHCR and the Ethiopian Government had proactively communicated the planned change in approach to refugees and host communities. Development actors subsequently decided to make significant investments in refugee-hosting areas and began to plan and implement them. However, when consulted in early 2020, refugees and host communities had seen few notable changes. This created a palpable sense of disappointment about the CRRF.
- Refugees consulted in Jordan and Ethiopia were also **concerned that development interventions would replace the humanitarian assistance** they had been receiving, without enabling them to be fully self-reliant. The evidence available to date on whether such a displacement effect exists is inconclusive. The donors interviewed for this evaluation were adamant that their development interventions on forced displacement did not affect their humanitarian contributions. However, in Ethiopia and Jordan, the shift to a more comprehensive approach to the refugee response coincided with significant budget cuts for UNHCR. In Ethiopia, for example, budget cuts led to a decline in important basic services in some camps, such as reduced food rations, discontinued incentive programs and reduced cooking gas distributions. This added to the refugees' disappointment about the CRRF. At the level of refugee households, the quantitative analysis on the impact of work permits for refugees in Jordan showed that the effects of displacing other forms of income were small (see the beginning of this section). For example, possessing a work permit had little effect on the multilateral assistance received from UNICEF or WFP. However, households with work permits were around 20 per cent less likely to receive cash assistance from UNHCR than households without work permits. While this is fully understandable as part of an approach that targets the most vulnerable, the refugees consulted for this evaluation saw this as a major concern.

- Finally, there are some examples in which integration into local or national service systems led to a **decline in the standards of services received by refugees**. The integrated water system in Itang, Ethiopia (see Annex 6) was designed to increase the amount of clean water available to refugees and local communities while also reducing costs. In practice, however, technical problems meant that the water supply became much less reliable, regularly undercutting the international standard of delivering 15 litres of drinking water per person per day. In response, international actors have once again stepped in to try to address the problem. The public health services in Jordan are another such example (see above in this section). For refugees, these services are both more expensive and of lower quality than humanitarian health services. Integrated education in Ethiopia is a final example. The refugees consulted for this evaluation felt that education standards in refugee schools in the Somali region were, at times, higher than those in host community schools. Nevertheless, they clearly favoured integrated approaches to schooling because of their social benefits. They advocated for integrated schools at the earliest educational level possible, including for pre-primary and primary education.

## 5.4 Side effects on UNHCR and its implementing and cooperating partners

Thus far, UNHCR's increased engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has had relatively limited effects on the organization itself. The most important effect noted is a largely positive effect on UNHCR's reputation. However, the evaluation also notes little effect on UNHCR's ability to reprioritize its activities, a strain on some relationships with national refugee agencies and uncertainty created by change processes.

The main focus for both UNHCR staff and this evaluation was to establish the effects of humanitarian-development cooperation on refugees. Nevertheless, it is also important to ask what side effects this cooperation has on UNHCR itself. Overall, based on country case studies and interviews conducted at the headquarters and regional levels, the evaluation found that UNHCR's significantly increased engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has had relatively limited effects on the organization as a whole to date – at least, when compared to narratives which anticipated a transformational shift.

### Humanitarian-development cooperation has a largely positive effect on UNHCR's reputation.

The overwhelming majority of stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation highly appreciated UNHCR's active engagement in support of a more comprehensive refugee response. In particular, partners and donors valued UNHCR's focus on its role as a facilitator and catalyst for the engagement of others, rather than on mobilizing as many development resources as possible for its own

operations. This adds to the existing perception that UNHCR prioritizes the best interests of refugees rather than promoting narrow institutional self-interest. There are only three instances in which the evaluation also noted negative effects on UNHCR's reputation:

- Despite UNHCR's positioning as a facilitator and catalyst, a small number of the stakeholders consulted believed and criticised that the organization was also using the GCR and CRRF agenda to expand the scope of its own activities and implement more development programmes.
- In contexts such as Ethiopia, where UNHCR sought to promote the coordination of activities linked to the CRRF, important stakeholders such as local government officials, refugees and host communities came to see UNHCR as responsible for delivering the comprehensive response as a whole. Therefore, delays or implementation problems on the part of development actors had a negative effect on UNHCR's reputation, even though UNHCR had no control over them.
- In various instances, UNHCR agreed to implement activities or programmes funded by development actors. The organization's internal planning, resource allocation and reporting processes have not been well-adapted to manage these kinds of resources (see Chapter 4). The ensuing problems in the implementation of development-funded programmes have negatively affected UNHCR's reputation among some of the development donors involved.

### **Humanitarian-development cooperation has not enabled UNHCR to substantially reprioritize its activities.**

According to the prevailing narrative, humanitarian-development cooperation should over time reduce the need for UNHCR and national refugee agencies to provide services in protracted refugee situations. This would enable UNHCR to focus more attention and resources on acute emergency situations. The evaluation documented some cases in which development actors' engagement did reduce UNHCR's costs. For example, it was anticipated that the implementation of the integrated water project in Itang, Ethiopia would significantly reduce the cost of water provided to refugees, but in practice, extra resources were required to address technical problems and provide continued capacity support to the local utility. In Jordan, the reintroduction of subsidized public health-care services for Syrian refugees reduced the need for humanitarian health services. However, this is only gradually having a visible effect on UNHCR's budget: the resources required for health care doubled in the year after the subsidies were suspended, but were only reduced by about 10 per cent the year after the subsidies were reintroduced.<sup>71</sup> In Niger, however, initially higher investments in the construction of integrated public health centres will pay off with savings in disbursements to UNHCR's health partner.

Meanwhile, cost savings are seldom as extensive as some interviewees expected. Amid high levels of need, the effects of cooperation in reducing the costs of providing basic services and assistance were

<sup>71</sup> See UNHCR, "Global Focus: Jordan", accessed 3 March 2021, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2549>. The indicated budget for health increased from USD 34 million in 2018 to USD 70 million in 2019, declining to USD 62 million in 2020.

not substantial enough to allow UNHCR to shift its resources elsewhere. All the stakeholders consulted expect that this will remain the case in the short and medium term. In the meantime, UNHCR also lacks clearly defined thresholds on when it would be able to reduce its interventions in protracted emergency situations (see Chapter 4).

### **Shifting to a new approach can strain relationships with national refugee agencies.**

UNHCR typically works closely with host countries' refugee agencies. This often involves supporting these agencies' capacity, including by paying for salaries, office space and/or equipment. In some cases, UNHCR also implements programmes and provides services through national refugee agencies. In Ethiopia, for example, UNHCR covers the full costs of the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA). In 2019, this included staff costs of USD 16.9 million and an operational budget of USD 28 million.<sup>72</sup>

Since the CRRF was introduced in Ethiopia, more initiatives have emerged to support refugee integration into national or local service systems. When implementing these initiatives, most development actors work with and through the Ethiopian Government's technical line ministries and bureaux. This changes the allocation of resources related to the refugee response, which affects ARRA's institutional interests. As a result, there have been numerous reports of ARRA blocking processes related to the CRRF or making them more difficult. This has strained UNHCR's relationship with the agency. At the same time, UNHCR's progress in establishing stronger relationships with other host government branches has been slow, as discussed above (Section 5.2).

### **Institutional reform processes have created some uncertainty among staff.**

Finally, UNHCR's most senior management strongly endorsed the shift to a more comprehensive response and hired a cadre of development specialists to support the organization's new role as a facilitator and catalyst (see Chapter 4 for further details). At the same time, UNHCR implemented a [regionalization reform](#). This involved discontinuing many staff contracts at headquarters and shifting important functions to the regions. Taken together, these reform processes created uncertainty among staff members.

<sup>72</sup> See UN Office for Internal Oversight Services, Internal Audit Division, "Report 2020/036", 2020, accessed 3 March 2021, [https://oios.un.org/fr/search\\_page?page=2](https://oios.un.org/fr/search_page?page=2).

## 6. How do COVID-19 and humanitarian-development cooperation affect each other?

UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation interacted with the COVID-19 pandemic in several ways. In the short term, the pandemic led to the reprioritization of the humanitarian response, as UNHCR and its partners focused on responding to the evolving health crisis. This response benefited from existing humanitarian-development cooperation in several contexts. In the longer term, the pandemic's socioeconomic effects are expected to create challenges around achieving more self-reliance for refugees. At the same time, there are also indications that the pandemic has created new opportunities for humanitarian-development cooperation, as an emergency affecting host communities and refugees alike has made some governments more open to pursuing inclusive policies and because more development funding is likely to be available for such comprehensive emergency situations.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has strongly affected the situations of refugees and host communities, as well as the operating conditions for humanitarian and development organizations. The evaluation team therefore adapted the last research phase to investigate how the pandemic affected humanitarian-development cooperation and whether UNHCR's response to the pandemic benefited from prior cooperation with development actors. These questions were covered in remote interviews with UNHCR and partner staff in the four focus countries, as well as with Senior Development Officers in Regional Bureaux and in different country operations around the world.

### The COVID-19 pandemic led to a reprioritization of the humanitarian response.

An immediate effect of the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the first months of 2020 was that aid actors – including UNHCR – for the most part shifted into “crisis mode” to respond to an imminent health crisis in refugee-hosting countries. **The reprioritization of the humanitarian response was due to a number of interlinking factors:**

- **Urgency of health measures:** The pandemic called for urgent measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 among refugees and host communities, and to treat those who contracted the virus. Both humanitarian and development actors working with refugees and host communities focused their attention on addressing the immediate need for preventative health measures. In most of the operations analysed for this

evaluation, UNHCR supported strengthening hygiene measures and promoting social distancing; provided protective equipment and helped to scale up testing facilities; and provided resources to create or strengthen isolation and intensive care capacities in refugee camps, host communities and IDP areas.

- **Reallocation of resources:** Humanitarian and development actors reallocated resources to meet the acute needs created by the pandemic. In most contexts, UNHCR reprioritized its budgets. In Niger, for example, UNHCR deprioritized core-funded programmes for vocational training and the environment. Other activities were not affected, however, because they were funded by strictly-earmarked contributions, at the same time protecting certain types of activities and reducing the flexibility of the operation to react to unforeseen shocks like COVID-19. Similarly, in Bangladesh, parts of the Joint Response Plan were reallocated to cover many aspects of the COVID-19 response for host communities as well. While the reallocation of humanitarian resources mainly has short-term impacts, the reallocation of development resources could also have longer-term consequences. The World Bank Group, for example, decided to dedicate USD 1 billion of its USD 2.2 billion window for host communities and refugees under IDA 19 to respond to the impacts of COVID-19.<sup>73</sup> This means that significantly fewer resources will be available for other development investments in refugee-hosting areas in the future.
- **Access and mobility restrictions:** In a number of instances, governments imposed movement restrictions on UNHCR and/or on refugees and activities in refugee camps to limit the spread of the virus. In one country context, for example, refugees were no longer allowed to leave UNHCR-operated camps at all. Where restrictions on UNHCR were introduced, the normal continuation of existing programmes was often severely limited, and UNHCR and its partners tended to prioritize life-saving interventions over programmes with a longer-term orientation. In Bangladesh, for example, UNHCR and its partners used their remaining limited access to refugee camps to provide COVID-19 response efforts, health services and food assistance, among other activities.
- **(Generally) fewer opportunities to coordinate with development actors:** Many development actors scaled down their in-country presence, resulting in fewer opportunities for UNHCR to engage with them in the usual way. Across different locations, interviewees reported that many of the international staff who worked for UNHCR's development actor partners had left the country. This resulted in far fewer coordination meetings and in-person exchanges, which had characterized the practical side of humanitarian-development cooperation prior to the pandemic. In some cases, it took many months to revitalize these fora. In one context, however, remote meetings became more inclusive, and development actors increased their presence and participation in such meetings.

<sup>73</sup> See, e.g., <https://ida.worldbank.org/replenishments/ida19-replenishment/windows-host-communities-refugees>, accessed 3 March 2021.

## Humanitarian-development cooperation supported an integrated response to the pandemic in many contexts.

While it is difficult to establish what the response to the COVID-19 pandemic would have looked like without UNHCR's prior efforts to engage with development actors, the stakeholders consulted for this evaluation provided a range of examples suggesting that the **pre-existing humanitarian-development cooperation supported an integrated response in some (but not all) cases:**

- In Niger, refugees were already included in key government plans and had access to public health facilities. The COVID-19 response plan and the revised humanitarian response plan were integrated to cover nationals and refugees alike. UNHCR collaborated with international development actors to create isolation facilities and support the production of masks. UNHCR uses funding from the African Development Bank to provide support to the public health infrastructure for both refugees and host communities as part of the G5 Sahel initiative (see Chapter 3 on the scope of this cooperation). UNHCR was also in talks with the Niger Government's Social Safety Net Unit to explore the potential for extending support to vulnerable individuals who have lost income due to the pandemic.
- In Jordan, the Jordan Response Plan was adapted to include a COVID-19 window, and the UN's COVID-19 plan includes refugees.<sup>74</sup> One-off cash payments to refugees were provided through the humanitarian cash facility. Based on previous efforts to harmonize systems, the cash facility and a national social protection scheme use similar criteria and modalities. Instructions issued by the Government of Jordan to protect jobs and support socioeconomic recovery also apply to refugees (but they only cover formal employment).
- In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 response built on previously integrated aspects of the health response. The main planning instrument was an adaptation of the Joint Response Plan, which was expanded to cover refugees and host communities. On this basis, key investments were made in the public health infrastructure, including expanding the intensive care unit at the main hospital in Cox's Bazar, creating isolation and treatment centres, expanding testing capacities and providing protective equipment. In addition, humanitarian actors provided cash assistance for host communities. Conversely, the local government's vaccine working group includes humanitarian agencies, and vaccination rollout is planned for both host communities and refugees.
- In Ethiopia, the COVID-19 response was less integrated than the stakeholders consulted had expected, given the previously strong track record of humanitarian-development cooperation. Thus, many interviewees were disappointed that separate COVID-19 response plans were developed for refugees and for nationals. As a result, refugees were not given equal priority when protective equipment was allocated; they were not included in the cost plan for COVID-19 vaccinations; and the COVID-19-related reprogramming of key development interventions, such as the One WASH

<sup>74</sup> UN, "UN Socio-Economic Framework for COVID-19 Response in Jordan", 2020, accessed 3 March 2021, [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/JOR\\_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan\\_2020.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/JOR_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf).



programme, did not consider refugees. NGOs also faced different authorization procedures depending on whether they were responding to the COVID-19-related needs of refugees or members of the host community. Nevertheless, other important aspects of the response were integrated, especially at the regional level: health facilities were used jointly; the same protocols and processes for testing, contact tracing, isolation and treatment were used; and the local government in Gambella deployed considerate, conflict-sensitive communication regarding refugees and the pandemic.

- Other examples in which UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation supported an integrated response to the pandemic include Pakistan (where the UN's socioeconomic response framework includes refugees and was translated into a national response plan), Cameroon (where the existing practice of including refugees in national plans was extended to the COVID-19 response plan) and Uganda (where UNHCR supported the World Bank in adapting its programmes to the pandemic).

### **The expected longer-term effects of the pandemic present challenges to refugee self-reliance and inclusion.**

Analysts expect that the COVID-19 pandemic will have many negative, long-term effects.<sup>75</sup> Not only are humanitarian needs expected to rise sharply, but the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic will leave a mark on efforts to foster self-reliance. These effects are already evident in the focus countries used for this evaluation. In Jordan, for example, UNHCR and its partners had been making headway in graduating some beneficiaries out of cash assistance by supporting their efforts to become self-reliant, but the pandemic led to a drastic deterioration in the general economic conditions, reducing job opportunities for both Jordanians and refugees. What is more, COVID-19-related restrictions for camp inhabitants reduced their ability to work outside of the camps. People working in the informal sector, as refugees often do,<sup>76</sup> were particularly hard hit by the socioeconomic fallout of the pandemic. In Jordan, for example, only those in formal employment were covered by the Jordanian Government's measures to protect jobs. In Niger, although the security situation remains the biggest challenge to supporting self-reliance, the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic have already led to more refugees and host community members moving within the country in search of better economic opportunities. The pandemic's impact on UNHCR operations appears to be more critical in countries that are more advanced on the path to refugee self-reliance than in countries where the organization is still operating in a largely humanitarian mode.

### **At the same time, there are also indications of new opportunities for humanitarian-development cooperation.**

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., Munich Security Conference, "Poly-pandemic: Munich Security Report Special Edition on Development, Stability, and Conflict in the Era of COVID-19", 2020, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://securityconference.org/en/publications/msr-special-editions/stability-2020/>.

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Roher Zetter, Héloïse Ruaudel, "Refugees' Right to Work and Access to Labour Markets – An Assessment", KNOMAD 2016, accessed 3 March 2021, [https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/KNOMAD%20Study%201%20Part%20I-%20Assessing%20Refugees'%20Rights%20to%20Work\\_final.pdf](https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/KNOMAD%20Study%201%20Part%20I-%20Assessing%20Refugees'%20Rights%20to%20Work_final.pdf).

Despite these challenges, the pandemic also presents new opportunities for humanitarian-development cooperation. Most critically, **some governments have opened up their policies on service integration for refugees as a result of the pandemic.** Across the four country case studies, this was most pronounced in Jordan, where UNHCR and a variety of other actors had long been advocating to expand the government's policy of granting Syrian refugees access to public health services at subsidized rates to refugees from other countries as well. With financial support from development actors, the government agreed to this change during the pandemic. UNHCR and its partners in Jordan also supported the Ministry of Health to recruit a small number of qualified refugees from different nationalities into their COVID health response. Although the government has not opened the health sector for refugees, the recruitment drive was seen by UNHCR as a positive sign and opportunity to showcase positive effects of inclusion. Some stakeholders hope the government will maintain this policy once the pandemic is over. Finally, the pandemic resulted in the general expansion of Jordan's social protection system. While it is too early to evaluate the ramifications of this development, some stakeholders hope it may enable the inclusion of refugees in the system in the future.

In other contexts, like Bangladesh and Ethiopia, the effective response to COVID-19 for both host communities and refugees strengthened the reputation of UNHCR and its partners. However, at the time of the last round of data gathering for this evaluation at the end of 2020, this had not translated into any concrete policy changes. In Ethiopia, the stakeholders interviewed perceived the response to the pandemic as a missed opportunity to promote a more integrated approach to health more generally.

**Development actors have increased their investments in humanitarian approaches and are seeking capable implementation partners.** The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic led some development actors to allocate funding to more traditional humanitarian programmes and approaches, in part because failing to address immediate humanitarian needs would undermine the sustainability of ongoing, long-term investments. As indicated above, the World Bank Group decided to allocate USD 1 billion of its window for host communities and refugees to addressing the impact of the pandemic. Similarly, the African Development Bank made USD 20 million available for the COVID-19 response to strengthen medical centres in the Sahel region.

The implications of this new situation for UNHCR will depend on its stance regarding mobilizing resources from development actors. During the pandemic, UNHCR was not able to access World Bank resources or to become an implementer in the World Bank's COVID-19 response. Since UNHCR focuses on its "non-transactional partnership" with the World Bank, it does not have the necessary partnership agreement in place to ensure its adherence to the Bank's governance standards. By contrast, UNHCR became a technical and implementing partner for the African Development Bank, giving the organization access to the African Development Bank's COVID-19 response budget for the Sahel region. The country operations staff interviewed said they were benefiting from the new flexibility in UNHCR's Resource Allocation Framework, as it was easier to update country operations plans. Whether the development actors' increased funding for emergency

situations will translate into more resources for UNHCR is thus contingent on UNHCR's own policies and processes.

# 7. Conclusions and recommendations

Enabling refugees and other persons of concern to become more self-reliant and to enjoy access to public services is a gradual process that requires the support and contributions of many different stakeholders: host governments, development donors and organizations, and other actors, including UNHCR. These stakeholders have a shared responsibility. **This evaluation focuses on how UNHCR can advance cooperation with development actors on forced displacement towards this goal.** For UNHCR, this means: facilitating or catalysing development actors' responses; leveraging such actors for advocacy support; promoting the integration of refugee services with national service systems; and/or mobilizing development resources to expand UNHCR's own support for self-reliance and inclusion.<sup>77</sup>

The evaluation found that **UNHCR has implemented a number of relevant, effective institutional measures to support humanitarian-development cooperation.** The UNHCR leadership's messaging on the importance of enhanced humanitarian-development cooperation was strong and consistent, contributing to a high level of awareness concerning the agenda within the organization. UNHCR has created institutional units and staff positions which have driven much of its engagement with development actors. Moreover, several reform processes targeting key aspects of UNHCR's internal systems and processes are underway – for example, in the form of introducing multi-annual planning and reforming the organization's results framework as well as aspects of the budget allocation process.

Taken together, **these efforts have contributed to a significantly increased level of humanitarian-development cooperation.** UNHCR has used the political dynamics created by the arrival of a large number of refugees in Europe and North America in 2015 and 2016 and increasingly long-lasting displacement worldwide to strengthen the international debate on more integrated responses to forced displacement. While the evaluation did not have a baseline for UNHCR's past engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation, both UNHCR and development actor respondents, as well as respondents from various countries and sectors, felt that the level of cooperation between UNHCR and development actors had significantly increased. UNHCR's flagship partnership in humanitarian-development cooperation continues to be with the World Bank Group. Cooperation also covers a range of other relevant partners and forms of cooperation, with an emphasis on UNHCR's facilitator role and on cooperating with development actors on advocacy.

The evaluation shows that **increased humanitarian-development cooperation had primarily positive effects on refugees, with host communities also benefiting from related investments.**

<sup>77</sup> See Julia Steets, Julian Lehmann, Urban Reichhold, "UNHCR's Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation", Think Piece on Research Phase 1, UNHCR 2019, accessed 1 February 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/5dd3b7bd4.pdf>, pp. 7–8.

Humanitarian-development cooperation that aims to support refugee self-reliance and inclusion often encounters obstacles, and the effects of development initiatives typically take a long time to manifest. It is also difficult to prove cause and effect with regard to facilitation efforts. Nevertheless, the evaluation was able to identify a number of specific examples of cooperation which are already having visible effects. In several of these cases, the evaluation team was able to conduct rigorous quantitative impact analyses based on UNHCR's existing data. In others, focus group discussions with refugees and host communities and/or a review of existing evaluations provided evidence on the effects of such cooperation.

In several cases, cooperation between UNHCR and development actors encouraged or supported host governments in changing policies or regulations that affect refugees. In Jordan, for example, UNHCR and development actors supported the government's policy decision to provide work permits to a range of refugees. The quantitative impact analysis demonstrated that having a permit has a much more positive effect on the economic situations of the refugees concerned than is perceived by either aid workers or refugees themselves. The analysis also confirmed that having a work permit improves refugees' protection situations. In Ethiopia, the government agreed to make it easier for refugees to register vital events, such as births, as part of its GCR-related pledges. The quantitative impact analysis showed that possessing a birth certificate has various positive effects on refugees, including on children's enrolment in school and families' likelihood to return to their countries of origin.

In many other cases, cooperation between UNHCR and development actors has led to investments in infrastructure, services or opportunities for host communities and refugees. These investments did not necessarily depend on the inclusion of refugees in the governments' development plans. In Jordan, for example, investments in an integrated energy infrastructure led to more available electricity in refugee camps, which had several demonstrable, positive effects. In Niger, investments enabled the creation of social housing, which is perceived to have positive social and economic effects for both host communities and refugees. In Ethiopia, investments enabled the implementation of a large-scale project on agricultural livelihoods, with demonstrable economic and social benefits for host communities and refugees. In Bangladesh – as well as in many other countries of operation – investments in public health infrastructures enabled a more effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, thus benefitting both host communities and refugees.

The evaluation found only a few examples in which humanitarian-development cooperation had negative effects on refugees. In Jordan, joint advocacy and financial support from development actors led the government to reintroduce subsidized rates for (initially only Syrian) refugees using public health services. Since this went hand-in-hand with a reduction in the availability of free humanitarian health services, it led to increased health expenditures and slightly reduced levels of access to health services among refugees. In Ethiopia, a collaborative effort to build an integrated water system for refugee camps and host communities was met with severe technical difficulties when it was handed over to a local utility. As a result, the water supply became irregular for some time, which led to several issues, including health problems among refugees. While many UNHCR staff members were concerned about such declines in service standards, they were also very aware that setting higher

standards for refugees than for host communities can hinder refugees' social integration and jeopardize their protection situations.

At the same time, the changes observed have so far had less of an impact on UNHCR's operations than some stakeholders expected. Part of UNHCR's narrative on humanitarian-development cooperation is that advances in refugee self-reliance and inclusion will generate significant cost savings and allow UNHCR to scale down its activities in protracted contexts, concentrating instead on acute emergency situations. Some key donors share this expectation. However, these effects have not materialized in the contexts covered by this evaluation, and on the ground, most of the stakeholders interviewed do not anticipate that this will come to pass in the short to medium term.

**The evaluation also identified space for strategic adjustments to UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation.** Firstly, UNHCR's engagement with the UN development system as a whole emerged as important, but it is less advanced than engagement with other actors. Secondly, there were good examples of cooperation on the rule of law and access to justice, but these instances were small in number and scale. Most examples of cooperation covered by this evaluation also focused on host communities and refugees, with only little apparent focus on internal displacement issues. Thirdly, it was not clear to many stakeholders what the long-term implications of humanitarian-development cooperation would be for UNHCR's role and mandate. Finally and crucially, most of UNHCR's observed engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has focused on engaging with external actors. UNHCR's own programmes in parallel often continue to conduct "business as usual" and provide direct services to refugees without consistently focusing on how to transition to integrated service systems.

Some of the key factors constraining more (or more effective) humanitarian-development cooperation are external, and thus beyond UNHCR's control. For example, UNHCR has limited influence on development actors' strategic decisions regarding how much priority they give to forced displacement. Its influence on host governments' policies is also limited, although this evaluation shows that opportunities for humanitarian-development cooperation arise in all policy environments and during all phases of the response to forced displacement.

**Internal factors that UNHCR can address also constrain humanitarian-development cooperation.** Firstly, UNHCR's position on mobilizing resources from development actors has been unclear or misunderstood. This created disincentives for managers at the country and sub-national levels to engage in humanitarian-development cooperation and erected obstacles for the effective implementation of development-funded programmes. Secondly, while much of UNHCR's engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation has been driven by dedicated staff positions within the organization, other staff members' contributions have been more uneven and the role of UNHCR's Regional Bureaux has been unclear. Thirdly, UNHCR has started to make crucial investments in data and analysis. However, gaps in the organization's capacity to gather, analyse and share relevant data are still apparent. Finally, UNHCR adds major value to humanitarian-development cooperation through its mandate for and expertise in protection. Yet, there are gaps in its capacity to provide

thought leadership on protection issues and to fully leverage its protection expertise for humanitarian-development cooperation.

Based on these findings, **the evaluation team concludes that UNHCR's enhanced engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation is a rewarding strategy.** The team makes the following recommendations to encourage UNHCR to: maintain its focus on and investments in humanitarian-development cooperation; strengthen its strategic approach to such cooperation; manage expectations more carefully; and to address the remaining obstacles and limitations with regard to humanitarian-development cooperation.

**Recommendation 1: Further invest to strengthen UNHCR's engagement with the UN development system, expand cooperation with development actors on rule of law and access to justice, explore opportunities for cooperating on internal displacement, and better prepare UNHCR for its facilitation, supervision, monitoring, reporting and advocacy roles.**

While UNHCR country operations should remain able to react flexibly to context-specific priorities and opportunities, UNHCR should clarify the following general positions and priorities regarding humanitarian-development cooperation in its updated Strategic Directions, in the guidance on multi-year planning and on the new Results-Based Management Framework, in global sector strategies, and in the Partnership Strategy:

- a) **Strengthen engagement with the UN development system and with national and local development planning, but refrain from taking on responsibility for leading development planning processes.** UNHCR should ensure that its long-standing policy commitment to participation in the UN development system is systematically treated as a priority at the country level. Where possible, UNHCR should also participate in national and local development planning processes to ensure due consideration is given to the concerns of refugees and other persons of concern. However, where no such processes exist, UNHCR should not take on the responsibility for leading comprehensive development planning. Instead, it should encourage other actors with more capacity in this area to take on the role and contribute to their efforts.
- b) **Enhance cooperation with development actors on rule of law and access to justice.** UNHCR should more systematically explore opportunities for working with development actors on issues relating to the rule of law and access to justice. It should strengthen institutional support for cooperation in this area, for example by designating a rule of law focal point in the Division of Resilience and Solutions, and by using the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law platform to identify concrete opportunities for cooperation at the country level.
- c) **Assess and explore opportunities for cooperation addressing internal displacement.** In the case-study countries examined for this evaluation, cooperation with development actors focused predominantly on refugees and their host communities. UNHCR should also systematically

assess its current practice of cooperating with development actors when addressing internal displacement and explore additional opportunities in this area.

- d) **More clearly define and prepare for UNHCR's long-term roles.** The evidence collected in the course of this evaluation shows that, while UNHCR can play a crucial role in advocacy and in facilitating the engagement of development actors on forced displacement, humanitarian-development cooperation is unlikely to lead to full refugee self-reliance and inclusion in the short or medium term. Based on its mandate for protection and solutions, UNHCR is therefore unlikely to see substantial cost savings or to be able to reprioritize its activities in the short to medium term. In the longer term, UNHCR's supervisory function entails a shift from providing services to monitoring refugees' situations to ensure they do not suffer from discrimination where they are included in national or local service systems. The new results-based management framework also requires more reporting on the comprehensive response to displacement. These roles will require continued investment in facilitation and advocacy capacities, as well as an expansion of UNHCR's capacity to monitor the protection and socioeconomic situation of refugees and other persons of concern, as well as of their inclusion in development interventions.

**Recommendation 2: Systematically pursue the integration of services for refugees with national and local service systems throughout UNHCR's own programmes, focusing the ongoing introduction of multi-year planning on this objective and strengthening incentives.**

While refugee self-reliance and inclusion are best served when host governments formally include refugees in their development plans, all policy environments offer opportunities for gradual steps towards harmonizing systems and preparing for an eventual integration of service systems. The following measures would help ensure UNHCR uses the ongoing roll-out of multi-year planning to consistently identify these opportunities and to shift from conducting “business as usual” to systematically pursuing refugee self-reliance and inclusion in its own programmes and in its engagement with development actors, as well as by fully using opportunities to strengthen inclusion, such as when responding to emergencies like the recent COVID-19 pandemic:

- a) **Make self-reliance and inclusion a key component of multi-year plans.** Multi-year plans should outline which gradual steps will be taken to strengthen refugee self-reliance and inclusion in national services across the different sectors of intervention. In doing so, multi-year plans could encompass different scenarios, depending on how host government policies and development actor interventions evolve. All measures supporting the roll-out of multi-year planning – including, for example, support missions, templates, guidance and training – should emphasize this requirement. Country operations that will introduce multi-year planning at a later date should already start preparing plans to outline the steps to strengthen refugee self-reliance and inclusion. However, such separate “transition plans” will no longer be necessary once multi-year planning is in place throughout the organization.



- b) **Strengthen knowledge and information management on self-reliance and inclusion.** UNHCR should strengthen its internal knowledge and information management on issues relating to refugee self-reliance and inclusion to support country operations in developing multi-year plans. For example, this could include: creating an inventory of potential opportunities to foster self-reliance and inclusion across the different service sectors and in protection; completing the implementation of knowledge management tools such as the Rights Mapping tool; and replicating exercises such as the survey on the [state of inclusion in the health sector](#) for other sectors.
- c) **Strengthen incentives for focusing on self-reliance and inclusion.** UNHCR's country operations need to ensure that the objectives regarding refugee self-reliance and inclusion are apparent in their results frameworks and throughout the sector strategies. They also need to ensure that these issues are reflected in the performance assessment processes for management and staff. The organization should emphasize achievements in supporting refugee self-reliance and inclusion when communicating staff assignments.

**Recommendation 3: Ensure that UNHCR core budgets that country operations are authorized to spend and standard job descriptions include the time and resources to engage with development actors and processes. Clarify under what conditions UNHCR seeks funding for its own activities from development actors and make these contributions additional to regular core budgets.**

UNHCR should include the following considerations in the ongoing adjustment of its resource mobilization and allocation systems to strengthen incentives for country operations to engage in humanitarian-development cooperation, and to ensure development-funded programmes can be effectively implemented:

- a) **Include core facilitation costs for engaging with development cooperation in UNHCR's core budgets and standard job descriptions.** UNHCR should clearly define the responsibility of its country operations and representatives to deliver core facilitation activities, such as outreach and engagement with development actors, participation in development coordination fora, data gathering and analysis, and the provision of protection expertise for development processes. Country operations should include the required human resources and facilitation costs in the prioritized parts of their budgets that receive secure, up-front funding through the organization's internal resource planning and allocation process. They should reflect these tasks in the standard job descriptions of staff members. Country operations should also be encouraged to include investments in support of self-reliance and inclusion that are expected to amortise through equivalent cost savings within a period of 3 to 5 years in the prioritized parts of their budgets.
- b) **Clarify under what conditions and for what UNHCR seeks financial contributions from development actors.** UNHCR should continue to focus primarily on its role as a catalyst and facilitator strengthening the involvement of development actors in displacement contexts. As long as this role is not threatened, it should clarify that it also welcomes financial contributions from development actors and clearly define for what kinds of activities and under what conditions it

seeks such contributions. UNHCR activities supported by development actor funding could include: emergency interventions; costs associated with UNHCR's role as a catalyst and facilitator that go beyond core facilitation tasks; and investments as part of a transition strategy that no other actor is willing or able to make. Conditions for accepting financial contributions from development actors could include: a requirement that UNHCR has or can easily obtain the required expertise and partnerships for delivering programmes effectively; the condition that UNHCR has a comparative advantage for delivering related programmes; and a requirement that related administrative costs are proportionate to the level of additional funding or the expected impact. Where several country operations plan to apply for funding from the same development instruments, UNHCR's Regional Bureaux should coordinate these efforts. Focal points for cooperation with important development actors in the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization (DRRM) Service as well as the Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS) should communicate this position consistently to UNHCR's development partners. They should also help point potential donors to country operations that seek additional funding from development actors for particularly promising and transformational investments.

- c) **Make the financial contributions from key development actors additional to regular core budgets and include them in exemptions from global income projections.** Key development actors like multilateral development banks, the EU's department for international partnerships or the development branches of important bilateral donors like the US, Germany, the UK, France and Japan should not be included in UNHCR's global income projections, so that the authorized budgets of country operations can be readily increased when they manage to raise resources from these actors.

**Recommendation 4: Make UNHCR's support structure for humanitarian-development cooperation more effective by clarifying the role of the Regional Bureaux and strengthening the focus of staff members dedicated to humanitarian-development cooperation on internal change processes.**

Staff members and institutional units focusing on humanitarian-development cooperation have made crucial contributions to UNHCR's engagement in this area. UNHCR should take the following steps to make their contributions even more effective:

- a) **Clarify the role of UNHCR's Regional Bureaux in humanitarian-development cooperation,** including for regional directors, staff positions dedicated to humanitarian-development cooperation and sector specialists. The Regional Bureaux's main priority should be to engage with development actors and relevant political institutions as well as processes at the regional level, and to support country operations that do not have staff capacity dedicated to humanitarian-development cooperation. Headquarters and the Regional Bureaux should coordinate more closely to reduce the number of times they request information from country operations and to avoid duplicating these requests. To support a clearer division of labour between its different institutional levels and to support country operations in identifying potential entry points for working with specific development actors, UNHCR should compile a mapping of key development

actors and their internal organization, particularly related to their decision-making structures and planning cycles.

- b) **Strengthen the focus of staff members dedicated to humanitarian-development cooperation on internal change processes.** In country operations, staff focused on humanitarian-development cooperation should continue to engage with external actors, but shift more attention to supporting UNHCR's internal change processes. In close collaboration with sector colleagues, they should support the formulation of multi-year plans and sector strategies outlining gradual steps to strengthen refugee self-reliance and inclusion. They should also advise sector and protection staff on opportunities and priorities for engaging with development actors and relevant coordination processes.<sup>78</sup> They can best exercise this function if they are part of UNHCR's management structure at the country or sub-national levels. Some may need to strengthen their knowledge of UNHCR-internal processes and their sectoral expertise.

### **Recommendation 5: Accelerate efforts to strengthen UNHCR's capacity for and practice of collecting, analysing and sharing data.**

Providing development actors with relevant data and analysis is not only a key part of UNHCR's role as a catalyst and facilitator – better data collection and analysis are also crucial for reinforcing UNHCR's link to persons of concern and strengthening UNHCR's position as a thought leader on issues related to forced displacement. UNHCR should take the following steps to build on and reinforce its [Data Transformation Strategy \(2020–2025\)](#):

- a) **Strengthen data collection.** UNHCR should further increase its investments in the data collection and analysis capacities needed to ensure that basic statistics on refugees are accurate and up-to-date, and to enable continuous monitoring of the protection and socioeconomic situations of refugees and other persons of concern, including through gathering feedback from affected people. Among other aspects, this would enable systematic assessments of the effects of humanitarian-development cooperation, such as, for example, on the introduction of policy changes, the inclusion of refugees in national services or development investments in economic opportunities. Ideally, data and analysis should also allow for comparisons between the situations of refugees and those of their host communities.
- b) **Strengthen data analysis.** UNHCR should form joint analysis teams made up of data and analysis experts and protection experts. This would help ensure that analyses are relevant to UNHCR's protection mandate and that they reflect the organization's unique expertise in refugee protection. UNHCR's analysis teams should, from the beginning, include stakeholders interested in data collection and analysis processes, thus inviting input on the types and exact specifications of the data collected as well as on sampling strategies, analysis designs, data interpretation and

<sup>78</sup> See also <https://www.unhcr.org/5e3da94e4.pdf>, accessed 22 March 2021.

draft versions of analyses. Country operations and Regional Bureaux should consistently ground their advocacy efforts in the available data and analysis.

- c) **Strengthen data sharing.** UNHCR should request the [Joint Data Center](#)'s support in identifying and implementing feasible changes to its data collection practices that would increase opportunities to analyse the data – for example, by making it easier to match anonymized entries for the same individuals or households over time, and by increasing the consistency of the indicators used to create more panel data. UNHCR should also accelerate efforts to populate the [Microdata Library](#) and include an inventory of data sets that have not (yet) been anonymized and published.

**Recommendation 6: Make the role of protection in humanitarian-development cooperation more explicit and exercise this role more actively, specifically in terms of planning and analysis, providing operational protection advice, monitoring the situation of persons of concern, and cooperating directly with development actors.**

UNHCR's protection experts can play a key role in strengthening refugee self-reliance and inclusion as well as in cooperating with development actors. They also provide the foundation for UNHCR's thought leadership on these issues. UNHCR should take the following steps to ensure these roles are well-understood and actively exercised:

- a) **Planning and analysis:** Protection staff in countries of operation should play a key role in the formulation of multi-year plans and sector strategies focusing on refugee self-reliance and inclusion. In particular, they should contribute an analysis of the political context in which this agenda will be pursued as well as an analysis of the underlying interests and dynamics that are likely to influence how this context will develop.
- b) **Operational protection advice:** UNHCR should proactively offer operational protection advice to key development actors. Protection staff could, for example, offer comments on draft planning documents for major interventions to highlight where these interventions might inadvertently cause harm to refugees and how that harm could be avoided or mitigated. They could also advise on the conditions that need to be in place to enable refugees to fully participate in the planned interventions.
- c) **Monitoring:** Another key role for protection staff is monitoring the situations of refugees and other persons of concern, including individuals who have “graduated” out of UNHCR assistance, are included in national or local service systems, and live outside the camps. As suggested in Recommendation 5b), protection staff should form joint analysis teams with UNHCR's data and analysis experts to ensure relevant data is collected and relevant analyses are conducted, and that the results are interpreted from a protection perspective.

- d) **Direct cooperation:** Finally, there is potential to expand the direct cooperation between UNHCR's protection teams and development actors – for example, on access to justice and the rule of law.