

# **OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF UNHCR'S ENGAGEMENT IN SITUATIONS OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT**

**Final Report**

September 2017



## Introduction by the High Commissioner

I am pleased to introduce the final report of the Operational Review of UNHCR's Engagement with Situations of Internal Displacement, prepared by a Review Task Team constituted in November 2016. I am extremely grateful to the Review Task Team and the many colleagues who supported its work.

I launched the Operational Review in line with my commitment to having UNHCR work more predictably, systematically, coherently and effectively across the entire spectrum of displacement, as reflected in our Strategic Directions for 2017—2021. This was also a strong call from Representatives at UNHCR's Global Representatives' Meeting in May 2016.

The Operational Review has concluded that five priority actions are needed to operationalise these commitments. These are:

- prepare and engage early with new or evolving situations of internal displacement;
- change the mind-set within UNHCR so that we become an even more reliable partner within the interagency response to internal displacement;
- create the evidence base to support analysis and protection-centred response;
- remove internal barriers that impede the design and implementation of protection and solutions strategies that address all population groups in an integrated and holistic way; and
- monitor and support field operations to implement UNHCR's policies, guidelines and good practices for response to internal displacement and complex emergencies.

The Operational Review makes a series of important recommendations that support these priority actions. They cover protection delivery across the full displacement cycle – from preparedness and emergency response to responsible disengagement and solutions – as well as the essential enablers of UNHCR's work, including programming and budgeting, information management, workforce management, resource mobilisation and interagency engagement.

I have endorsed the Operational Review's findings and recommendations as the roadmap for UNHCR to make the internal adjustments needed to strengthen our work on internal displacement. The Special Adviser on Internal Displacement, Steven Corliss, will work with a "virtual" IDP Transitional Task Team to refine, elaborate and implement the recommendations, with a strong focus on strengthening delivery in the field.

While the final report speaks mainly to UNHCR organizational and internal questions, I am confident that implementing its recommendations will enable UNHCR to be a better partner and stronger player within the broader humanitarian architecture. During the implementation process, I look forward to the continued engagement of the broad range of partners and other stakeholders who contributed insights and advice to the Review.



Filippo Grandi

## 1. Introduction

UNHCR has responded to the needs of internally displaced persons [IDPs] for many decades. In doing so and deriving from its mandate for refugees and stateless persons, it has drawn from an intimate knowledge of forced displacement – its root causes, the protection risks that arise from it and the requirements for sustainable solutions. Alongside other UN agencies and international organizations, UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations has become more robust in recent years, in particular as a result of the United Nations Humanitarian Reform [2005] and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC] Transformative Agenda [2011].<sup>1</sup> In 2007, UNHCR developed a comprehensive IDP policy,<sup>2</sup> which was strengthened in 2016 with the issuance of Operational Guidelines<sup>3</sup> and an Internal Note on Protection Leadership in Complex Emergencies.<sup>4</sup> Equally important are UNHCR's Strategic Directions for 2017-2021, which amplify the fundamental purpose of protection in the Office's pursuits and make IDPs an integral part of UNHCR's overall response to forced displacement. UNHCR is also an active partner on internal displacement in the IASC, where it leads the Global Protection Cluster [GPC] and co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster and the Global Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster [CCCM].

Nevertheless, as crises around the globe multiply, the magnitude of internal displacement today is such that UNHCR, like other agencies, must continually assess the impact and effectiveness of its work, as well as its institutional capacity and readiness to respond efficiently and appropriately to ongoing and new IDP situations. Despite the progress achieved since the Humanitarian Reform, concerns remain that IDPs still do not receive adequate attention from the international community. Yet IDPs continue to face serious and persistent threats to their well-being and, as the phenomenon of protracted displacement grows, have limited opportunities to find solutions.

## 2. Purpose

In view of the foregoing, UNHCR's Senior Executive Team [SET] met in August 2016 to look specifically at the issue of UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations. Following these discussions, the High Commissioner decided to announce UNHCR's unequivocal commitment to engage with greater predictability in situations of internal displacement. This commitment was subsequently also reflected in UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021.<sup>5</sup> The SET also decided that an operational review would be conducted to: [i] identify key challenges and opportunities for UNHCR in taking up its coordination responsibilities and in planning and implementing activities for IDPs as per its 2007 corporate IDP policy and the accompanying 2016 Operational Guidelines for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement [OG/2016/02] [the "2016 Operational Guidelines"] and Internal Note on Protection Leadership in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies [the "Internal Note"]; and [ii] develop recommendations for systemic changes that UNHCR can consider for its engagement in IDP situations to be more predictable, coherent, effective and sustainable.

## 3. Methodology and Scope

Under the leadership of the Assistant High Commissioner [Operations] and co-chaired by the Deputy Directors of the Division of International Protection [DIP] and the Division of Programme Support and Management [DPSM], an internal reference task team was established in November 2016 to guide a

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-transformative-agenda>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response to Situations of Internal Displacement: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy, June 2007. See also the February 2007 paper for an Informal Consultative Meeting on The Protection of Internally Displaced and the Role of UNHCR

<sup>3</sup> Operational Guidelines for UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, February 2016 [OG/2016/02]

<sup>4</sup> Internal Note on Protection Leadership in Complex Emergencies, February 2016

<sup>5</sup> As per the Strategic Directions issued by the High Commissioner on 16 January 2017, UNHCR will "engage more decisively and predictably in situations of internal displacement, undertaking concerted operational, advocacy and strategic efforts to achieve better protection for internally displaced people."

multi-functional review of UNHCR's past and present engagement in IDP situations [hereinafter referred to as "the review"]. The review itself comprised the following elements:

- Collection and analysis of secondary data related to UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations: policy, guidance and strategy documents; formal operational reviews and real-time evaluations;
- A desk review of six country operations with IDP programmes: Central African Republic, Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, South Sudan and Ukraine;
- An analysis of 2016 global, regional and country budgets and operational plans;
- Semi-structured interviews with UNHCR senior managers, including those with current or former experience as a Representative in an IDP programme;
- Internal consultations with all headquarters Divisions and the Organizational Development Management Service [ODMS]; and
- External consultations with representatives of key partner agencies and stakeholders.

Over a six-month period, the review was able to gather substantial information, which has been captured in extensive supporting documentation. The purpose of this report is to provide an aggregated summary of the review's findings and recommendations.

The review has benefitted from the constructive insights provided by from partners, including their perceptions of UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations and the current-day system-wide architecture for IDPs. Fundamentally, however, the review has been an internal exercise, focusing on identifying the internal operational adjustments that UNHCR must make to strengthen coherence and predictability in its engagement.

The review's findings and recommendations also provide a more evidence-based platform for UNHCR to engage effectively in further inter-agency dialogue on IDP response. This is all the more important in view of the UN management reform process occurring at the time of this report's preparation, with the UN's new leadership and sharper focus on prevention and solutions. It is anticipated, for example, that calls for more coherence and alignment among humanitarian, development and peace and security actors will influence the way UNHCR engages on solutions for IDPs and thus trigger further reflection and dialogue between UN agencies, civil society and States.

## 4. Summary

### 4.1. Key themes

During the analysis of current and past IDP programmes as well as the extensive consultative process supporting this review, several angles were explored with regard to UNHCR's IDP engagement. Three themes in particular thus encapsulate the findings of this report:

- ***Centrality of protection***

As already underscored in its IDP policy framework, UNHCR needs to contribute its protection knowledge and expertise to the humanitarian system while also working with actors across the system to make protection central to humanitarian action. Protection considerations must inform decision-making and drive a solutions-focused response by UNHCR, including through its cluster leadership in the areas of protection, shelter and CCCM. UNHCR must also use its engagement with both refugees and IDPs communities to mobilize action to prevent and resolve forced displacement.

- ***Displacement continuum***

UNHCR needs to build stronger and more systematic linkages between its refugee and IDP responses for the purpose of preventing, preparing for, responding to and finding solutions across the continuum of forced displacement. The Office must capitalize on its presence and proximity to refugees and IDPs to mobilize a more informed, effective and comprehensive operational response to forced displacement, from prevention through to solutions.

- ***Automaticity***

Building on a solid IDP policy framework that is underpinned by Executive Committee and General Assembly resolutions authorizing the Office to engage operationally in IDPs situations, UNHCR needs to strengthen its position as a reliable and predictable actor in IDP settings. More automaticity in decision-making, preparedness, programme design, staffing arrangements and allocation of resources for internal displacement will enable UNHCR to prepare and engage early as well as more fully and predictably in IDP situations, demonstrating protection leadership, its added value in operational delivery of assistance and services and initiating strategic planning for solutions.

## **4.2. Priority Actions**

The review found that, for UNHCR's engagement to continue to be protection driven and, at the same time, more predictable and coherent across the displacement continuum, there are five key areas for priority action around which the recommendations detailed in section five of this report can be grouped:

### ***4.2.1. Prepare and engage early***

In actual or anticipated situations of internal displacement, UNHCR needs to mobilize internally and engage actively with governments, UN and NGO partner, civil society and local actors, initiating protection analysis that is supported by sound information management. In a country where it already has a presence, the Office would review or establish [as appropriate] light and effective coordination mechanisms and engage more effectively and systematically in country-level preparedness. UNHCR should adapt its agency-specific tools for preparedness planning for IDP situations – aligning them closely with the Preparedness Package for Refugee Response [PPRE]<sup>6</sup> and the IASC's Emergency Response Preparedness [ERP] approach.<sup>7</sup> Doing so will enable the organization to assure a timely and relevant operational response when large-scale displacement occurs. In some cases, more proactive preparedness could contribute to efforts to prevent protection risks and minimize threats that can give rise to forced displacement. Equally important, UNHCR can assume its leadership responsibilities more seamlessly when the cluster system activated.

### ***4.2.2. Change the mind-set***

Building upon its expertise in protection and capacity to mobilize quickly in emergencies, UNHCR should aim to be “the first port of call” in inter-agency responses to internal displacement for the areas where the Office has assumed leadership responsibilities: protection, shelter and CCCM. This requires a readiness on the part of the Office to respond immediately to protection risks as they arise while simultaneously enabling others to step in, as and when they are capacitated to do so. Taking on the role of first port of call could also serve to reinforce UNHCR's approach to solutions and responsible disengagement, whereby the Office starts from the outset identifying and enhancing the capacity of national actors to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement.

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<sup>6</sup> The Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies [PPRE], for which UNHCR is the convener, is conceived as an inter-agency tool. See the <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/55576/preparedness-package-for-refugee-emergencies-ppre>

<sup>7</sup> See the IASC Emergency Response Preparedness approach at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/coordination/preparedness>

### **4.2.3. Create the evidence base**

As already stated in the Strategic Directions for 2017-2021, UNHCR needs to continue investing in information management and contribute to the evidence-base needed for analysis and an enhanced operational response to forced displacement that is driven by protection imperatives. In support of a more automatic and, at the same time, coherent and consistent approach to internal displacement globally, UNHCR must reinforce its internal capacity and partnerships for information management in IDP settings, including population data management. Doing so will enable UNHCR to undertake a more comprehensive and sound analysis of protection risks and needs, which in turn can inform its own planning and design of protection and solutions strategies as well as those of the humanitarian system more broadly. At the same time, through a protection focus, UNHCR must seek to complement the information management investments and capacities of other actors as part of a wider effort to reinforce national, regional and global responses to internal displacement.

### **4.2.4. Remove internal barriers**

Despite the strengths of UNHCR's rights-based planning, the review found a tendency among some operations to develop strategies that are shaped, and constrained, by the Office's population-based four pillar budget structure, rather than holistic strategies that aim to achieve protection outcomes for all populations of concern across the displacement continuum. It is therefore necessary for UNHCR to capitalize on the progressive introduction of "Multi-Year Multi-Partner" (MYMP) planning and the revision of the UNHCR Results-Based Management (RBM) system to develop tools, templates and processes that enable and even oblige operations to design and implement protection and solutions strategies that address, equally and holistically, the needs of all population groups.

Furthermore, current procedures for the transfer of allocated resources between pillars (i.e., from planned activities for refugees to IDPs) should be reassessed to determine whether there are opportunities for further simplification and streamlining, while still ensuring that activities can be fully-funded within overall resource levels and specific donor earmarking. The aim must be to facilitate the design and implementation of strategies that are both rights and needs-based for all persons of concern within countries and regions. Assistance activities must always be anchored in a solid protection rationale and seek to yield a protection dividend. Finally, UNHCR must cultivate a versatile workforce that can respond simultaneously to the needs of refugees and IDPs through a holistic approach across the displacement continuum.

### **4.2.5. Monitor and support**

UNHCR has had a corporate policy on IDPs in place since 2007 and has developed concrete guidance and tools, namely the 2016 Operational Guidelines and the Internal Note. It is now necessary to develop more effective mechanisms to monitor compliance with this policy framework, which can be complemented by a systematic dialogue with Representatives on the challenges arising in IDP programmes and the requisite support from headquarters.

## **5. Findings and Recommendations**

### **5.1. Operations Management**

#### **5.1.1. Protection delivery**

UNHCR has been proactive in the IASC in placing protection at the centre of humanitarian action, including as lead of the GPC, contributing to the statement by the IASC Principals on the Centrality of Protection and the subsequent IASC Protection Policy. Through its leadership or co-leadership of

## UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021

### Working across the entire spectrum of forced displacement

"We will engage across the entire spectrum of forced displacement, with refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people, endeavouring to ensure access to protection, address factors that may contribute to further displacement or onward movement, and give a stronger impetus to both solutions and prevention. In particular, we will ensure a more decisive and predictable engagement with internally displaced people, in collaboration with our partners, and guided by the policy, coordination and operational arrangements established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We will do this in a manner that takes into account our different responsibilities for different categories of forcibly displaced people."

three clusters at the global level, UNHCR has also been a key contributor to methodologies and practices underpinning protection mainstreaming. In doing so, UNHCR has been able to draw from its own expertise as well as its in-house tools for community-based protection.

The determination to reinforce protection as the purpose of humanitarian action has been reaffirmed by the Office in its 2017—2021 Strategic Directions, which states that UNHCR will "strengthen protection across the whole spectrum of forced displacement, ensuring that a protection perspective is central to all aspects of our work with the people we serve – be they asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced or stateless people – and guides broader humanitarian action and engagement by others."<sup>8</sup> UNHCR has also committed "to providing protection expertise and analysis of protection risks

and needs affecting entire crisis-affected populations, and driving and supporting the development of related protection and solutions strategies . . . ."

The review found that protection is unevenly integrated in operations, despite evidence of strong protection mainstreaming. This has resulted in inconsistencies in operational design and impact. The review's findings also confirmed that UNHCR does not always fully capitalize on its leadership of national clusters for protection, shelter and CCCM to achieve protection outcomes – even though this is explicit in the 2016 Operational Guidelines. There is likewise a need for UNHCR to develop the means to measure the protection impact of its assistance, including cash-based assistance, and to invest more in population data management for the purpose of programming and sound protection analysis.

Additionally, partner agencies and senior UNHCR managers have cited variability in the manner in which UNHCR assumes its protection leadership at national level, and this has also been noted in the Operational Peer Reviews organized by the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team [STAIT].<sup>9</sup> In some countries, UNHCR has been at the forefront, using its seat in the Humanitarian Country Team to provide a sharp analysis on protection risks and priorities to mobilize a system-wide response. In other countries, UNHCR is largely absent from the HCT discussion on protection, or only contributes content from the perspective of its refugee programme.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

### Recommendation 1.

Enable operational engagement in IDP situations, and in particular the delivery of material assistance such as shelter and non-food items [NFIs], to have a direct impact on protection, including by:

- a) adapting programming tools and revising the UNHCR Results Framework to measure systematically the protection impact of UNHCR's interventions [e.g., protection-specific indicators];
- b) developing mechanisms to measure and analyse the use of cash-based interventions to enhance protection and solutions for IDPs; and
- c) investing systematically in information management [IM], as a complement to existing inter-agency IM capacity, for sound programming and protection analysis.

<sup>8</sup> See UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021, 16 January 2017 at <http://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The Operational Review took place during the external evaluation of UNHCR's leadership of the global protection cluster and field protection clusters, which is nearing finalisation, and benefited from its findings and recommendations.



### 5.1.2. Programming and budget

UNHCR's programming and budgetary framework, in of itself, does not impose an automatic and strict segregation of refugee and IDP programmes. The review nevertheless found that current procedures need to be reassessed so as to facilitate the more efficient shifting and re-prioritisation of allocated resources from one pillar to another, while continuing to ensure that activities in different pillars can be funded within overall resource levels and taking into consideration specific donor earmarking. There also appears, as confirmed in interviews with senior managers, a general perception that UNHCR's refugee programmes need to be given priority owing to UNHCR's mandated responsibilities and because it is often the "go-to" agency for Governments for the entire refugee response.

As a result of the foregoing, the majority of UNHCR's operations take a pillar-based approach to prioritization, thus missing an opportunity to ensure a coherent, strategic and integrated response to refugees and IDPs within a country and across a region. During the 2016 annual programme review, it was observed that IDP programmes undergo more scrutiny when a country operation or region encounters resource constraints, leaving partners with the impression that UNHCR deprioritizes its IDP commitments. This impression is further reinforced by the fact that UNHCR operations do not consistently implement a minimum set of core activities, as was seen when comparing the 2016

operations plans [for example, between South Sudan and Iraq, which have substantial IDP programmes, with Chad and Niger, which have minimal IDP programmes].

#### Centrality of Protection Central African Republic and Iraq

In **Central African Republic**, the protection cluster relied on a network of monitors to develop and update a matrix of persons at extreme risk of physical attack. Within the Humanitarian Country Team [HCT], UNHCR was able to draw on the protection cluster's analysis to mobilize humanitarian evacuations as a measure of last resort for persons at extreme risk. The protection cluster's matrix and analysis was also used in negotiations with the UN mission – to shape the protection of civilians mandate and inform risk mitigation measures by security forces.

In **Iraq**, UNHCR regularly presented to the HCT the protection cluster's strategic advisory notes on, for example, the establishment and management of camps; voluntary return; and access to safety for persons at checkpoints or transit facilities. It also worked to ensure that protection was addressed at each meeting of the HCT. As a function of protection mainstreaming and the centrality of protection, the protection cluster in Iraq also vetted proposals for the Humanitarian Response Plan.

At the same time, there are operations, such as Iraq and Ukraine, which have been able to build up their IDP response by drawing on the expertise, knowledge and partnerships created through the refugee programme. Area-based approaches to programming have also been pursued. These operations were nevertheless found to be the exception rather than the norm, thus indicating a need for guidance on prioritization, as well as the removal of some of restrictions that hinder more holistic and equitable planning for all population groups.

Corporate planning tools also need to be updated to enable more equitable planning. At present, UNHCR organizes assessment and planning around population groups, which can mean that field operations do not sufficiently explore

possibilities for a more integrated and better articulated response of covering multiple populations. As such, there is no stand-alone document that sets out UNHCR's own [agency-specific] comprehensive protection analysis for all population groups.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### Recommendation 2.

Taking advantage of the current review of results-based management and in UNHCR, ensure a fuller programmatic response to internal displacement by:

- a) Reassessing the opportunities for further simplifying and streamlining current internal procedures for the transfer of allocated resources between pillars, while respecting earmarked contributions and overall funding levels;
- b) developing programming tools that guide UNHCR operations to design and implement comprehensive strategies for multiple population groups [i.e., thereby avoiding scenarios whereby one population group is prioritized over another]; and

- c) in new and large-scale IDP situations, ensure closer compliance with the “IDP Footprint,” as per the 2016 Operational Guidelines, as the corporate benchmark for UNHCR’s programmatic response in IDP situations.

### **5.1.3. First port of call**

In taking up leadership of the Global Protection Cluster and co-leadership of the Global Shelter Cluster and Global CCCM Cluster, UNHCR has committed itself to be the “provider of last resort.”<sup>10</sup> The review nevertheless found different operational interpretations of this concept. In some instances, for example, UNHCR has waited for others to act first before determining its own operational engagement. This approach can mean that acute protection risks, such as sexual and gender-based violence or the lack of emergency shelter, go unattended in a rapidly deteriorating security climate.

While the 2016 Operational Guidelines identified the core objectives that UNHCR should prioritize in an IDP situation, application of the IDP Footprint remains inconsistent. The review also came across instances where operations, partly due to pillar restrictions, were unable to use allocated resources in a flexible manner to respond to an IDP emergency. More flexibility in resource allocation, particularly during such IDP emergencies, could potentially allow UNHCR to shift to becoming “first port of call,” whereby the immediate needs of IDPs can be met – in accordance with UNHCR’s areas of leadership [protection, shelter (and NFIs) and CCCM] – pending the operational engagement of others or complementing and reinforcing interventions of those already operationally engaged.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### **Recommendation 3.**

Enable a proactive and predictable response to internal displacement by:

- a) streamlining internal decision-making with regard to cluster activation and leadership, operational response and staffing; and
- b) reassessing whether existing internal procedures that currently enable operations to access resources in response to IDP emergencies can be further simplified and streamlined.

### **5.1.4. Monitoring, compliance and support**

As noted above, UNHCR has put in place a clear policy and operational guidelines for its IDP engagement. Although DIP and DPSM analyse UNHCR’s IDP operations on an ongoing basis, there is no specific mechanism in place to monitor and enforce compliance with either the policy or guidelines. Staff engaged in the IDP response in all six operations reviewed, especially cluster leads, are meanwhile absorbed by the IASC Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), which many staff consider to be overly heavy and process-oriented. As a result, UNHCR operations have two planning processes running in parallel – that of the IASC and UNHCR’s own internal operations management cycle. Resources and capacity are therefore not systematically optimized.

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<sup>10</sup> The IASC requires cluster leads to call on relevant humanitarian partners to address critical gaps in a humanitarian response. When such gaps cannot be filled, the cluster lead, as ‘provider of last resort,’ may commit itself to filling the gap. When resources are not available, the cluster lead should continue to work with the Humanitarian Coordinator and donors to mobilize the necessary resources. IASC guidance on the provider of last resort is available here: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/IASC%20Guidance%20on%20Provider%20of%20Last%20Resort.pdf>

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### **Recommendation 4.**

Monitor and enforce compliance with UNHCR's corporate IDP policy, the accompanying 2016 Operational Guidelines [e.g., IDP Footprint] and the Internal Note Protection Leadership in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies by:

- a) re-issuing the Internal Note as Operational Guidelines so as to assure UNHCR-wide compliance;
- b) organizing annual discussions with Representatives and Bureaux management to gather feedback on UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations [e.g., internal and inter-agency systemic and operational challenges, emerging opportunities, etc.] for the purpose of providing more timely and tailored operational support and, where possible, influencing IASC improvements to the HPC; and
- c) developing and monitoring compliance with an internal template and tool for stakeholder analysis [Note: IASC related guidance can serve as a best practice] to enable a more systematic determination and decision with regard to UNHCR's operational role [as first port of call] in an inter-agency IDP response.

## **5.2. Response Cycle**

UNHCR has made a concerted effort to meet its accountabilities to IDPs, including those emerging from the Humanitarian Reform and Transformative Agenda. The High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in 2013 was exclusively dedicated to IDP protection and resulted in renewed commitments by the organization and its partners to stepping up the IDP response. UNHCR's Global Learning Centre works together with the GPC, Global Shelter Cluster and Global CCCM Cluster focusing on coordination, protection and other dimensions of response in IDP settings several times a year, targeting operations with the greatest need. There is meanwhile a dedicated IDP Section in DIP that works closely with DPSM, DESS, DER and the Bureaux on the development of relevant policy and guidance in addition to ongoing support to the field, including with respect to compliance.

The IASC has declared six L3 emergencies in the last five years – Central African Republic, Iraq, the Philippines, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, with UNHCR in each instance ensuring a timely protection response and sizeable deployment of material assistance and staff with the right profile and seniority. Today, alongside its leadership of the Global Protection Cluster and co-leadership of the Global Shelter Cluster and Global CCCM Cluster, UNHCR leads 25 out of 33 national protection clusters, 11 out of 15 national shelter NFI clusters and 9 out of 12 CCCM clusters.

Despite important progress, the review nevertheless found, when comparing 2017 operational plans, significant inconsistencies in UNHCR's response persist across current-day operations. In the majority of the large-scale IDP programmes, such as South Sudan, Ukraine and Iraq, operations have selected objectives that align with the IDP Footprint set out in the 2016 Operational Guidelines. Conversely, there is less coherence among longstanding IDP programmes where the focus has, in most countries, shifted towards solutions [e.g., Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Myanmar, Pakistan and the Philippines] as well as those with comparatively smaller IDP populations or mixed [refugee and IDP] populations [e.g., Cameroon, Chad and Niger]. According to the review's findings, UNHCR's operations require more detailed guidance with regard to UNHCR's contribution to preparedness and solutions in IDP settings. UNHCR is not alone in facing these challenges. Recent external studies have confirmed that the broader humanitarian system has not sufficiently invested in addressing protracted displacement nor a consistent approach to disengagement, hence the need for UNHCR to promote broader discussions with in the IASC and bring its own experience and challenges to the table.

### 5.2.1. Preparedness and early engagement

The 2016 Operational Guidelines stipulate that UNHCR's default position is to assume leadership of the protection, shelter and CCCM clusters at country level in conflict-induced crises. The review nevertheless came across instances where this leadership was not taken up at the time of the cluster activation [e.g., South Sudan] or when sectorial working groups were set up [e.g., Nigeria]. According to the review's findings, UNHCR's failure to assume cluster leadership is often the result of its failure to engage effectively in country-level preparedness as well as in the early phases of a crisis. OCHA normally leads contingency planning, with UNHCR participation being variable from country to country. At the same time, before clusters are activated, sector working groups are often established and working relationships with the relevant national authorities and institutions, which may differ from UNHCR's traditional governmental counterparts, are defined. Experience in Myanmar, the Philippines and Ukraine has shown that, where UNHCR leads sector working groups, it can transition more seamlessly to cluster leadership once clusters are activated. Conversely, UNHCR often struggles when it does not lead the sector working group and engage at the onset of an IDP situation.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### Recommendation 5.

Engage automatically in situations of internal displacement, including in preparedness activities and in anticipation of cluster activation, when UNHCR perceives a clear protection imperative and when the requirements set out in relevant UN General Assembly Resolutions<sup>11</sup> and Executive Committee Conclusions are met.

In support of the foregoing:

- a) reissue the corporate policy on IDPs so that it is fully aligned with UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021 and enables a more automatic response to internal displacement, from preparedness through to solutions;
- b) set up and lead sector-level coordination for protection, shelter and CCCM, including with local and national authorities, as a preparedness measure and in anticipation of cluster activation;
- c) streamline decision-making to ensure more automatic engagement by UNHCR in country-level preparedness; and
- d) adapt agency-specific tools to strengthen preparedness in IDP situations – aligning closely with the Preparedness Package for Refugee Response [PPRE] and the IASC's Emergency Response Preparedness approach.

### 5.2.2. Solutions

Enshrined in UNHCR's mandate is a responsibility to cooperate with governments to seek permanent solutions for refugees. It is, in fact, through the return of refugees to Sudan in the 1970s that UNHCR began to engage directly in IDP situations. The Secretary-General's Decision on the Durable Solutions [2011] furthermore makes explicit reference to the role of UNHCR, as the protection cluster lead agency, in coordinating and contributing technical expertise for the development of national durable solutions strategies.<sup>12</sup> State responsibility is an underlying principle for the UN's approach to durable solutions, with organizations like UNHCR working in support of national actors.

<sup>11</sup> See UN General Assembly Resolution 48/116, 20 December 1993, para 12, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f2151c.html>. See also UNHCR Note on the Mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees and His Office [DIP, 2013], which states that "[t]he requirements for the High Commissioner's activities in favour of internally displaced persons are: a specific request/authorization from the Secretary-General or a competent principal organ of the UN; the consent of the state or other entities concerned; assurance of access to the internally displaced; availability of adequate resources and the Office's particular expertise and experience; complementarity with other agencies; and adequate staff safety." (available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/526a22cb6/mandate-high-commissioner-refugees-office.html>)

<sup>12</sup> See Secretary General's Memorandum to the Policy Committee, Decision of the Secretary General on Durable Solutions for Displacement [4 October 2011], <http://earlyrecovery.global/documents/decision-secretary-general-durable-solutions-displacement>

The review nevertheless found that, although UNHCR is actively working at the corporate level with partners like UNDP to develop inter-agency guidance on solutions [drawn from pilot studies on the implementation of the Secretary General's 2011 Decision], Representatives cited ambiguity with regard to how to ensure UNHCR's predictable engagement in identifying and advocating for solutions for IDPs. At the same time, some Representatives noted that the 2016 Operational Guidelines are of particular relevance in L3 and large-scale IDP operations and less so when operations shift towards solutions. Additionally, and as explained earlier in this report, UNHCR needs to ensure a situational approach to its planning, maximizing its contribution towards solutions for both refugees and IDPs.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### **Recommendation 6.**

Catalyse country-level solutions planning for IDPs, informing and influencing the direction of national solutions strategies by:

- a) bringing in a sound protection analysis drawn from UNHCR's presence and proximity with refugees and IDPs;
- b) spearheading dialogue on solutions between refugees and IDPs and local and national actors, with the aim of enabling refugees and IDPs to engage meaningfully in decision-making on solutions; and
- c) leading efforts, from a protection perspective, to mobilize engagement by a broader network of national and international actors in facilitating solutions.

#### **5.2.3. Responsible disengagement**

Historically, UNHCR has encountered challenges in disengaging responsibly from IDP operations. In some countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNHCR maintained a long-term presence, decades after the conflict that triggered large-scale internal displacement was resolved. In other countries, such as Cote d'Ivoire and Kenya, UNHCR has withdrawn more abruptly due to a sudden shortage of resources among other reasons. According to the review's findings, such inconsistencies show the need for clearer and more concrete guidance, at the corporate and IASC level.

The 2016 Operational Guidelines emphasize that UNHCR's engagement with IDPs is not open-ended, and it is therefore incumbent on the Office to capacitate national and local actors to assume their responsibilities towards protecting and finding solutions for them. In doing so, UNHCR must be a catalyst for protection and solutions, developing early on the necessary strategies to disengage responsibly from IDP situations and ensuring handover to national or development actors.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### **Recommendation 7.**

Disengage responsibly from IDP situations when a national entity can meaningfully take over sector delivery and coordination by:

- a) making financial and other resources available for operations to implement multi-year strategies for strengthening local and national engagement that aligns with and is integral to the protection and solutions strategy;
- b) initiating inter-agency discussions on cluster de-activation as a step towards responsible disengagement; and
- c) piloting a disengagement process in real-time to derive lessons learned and provide corporate-wide guidance [e.g., a checklist and benchmarks to measure progress in implementing a responsible disengagement strategy].

## 5.3. Organizational set-up

### 5.3.1. Workforce management

For each of the six L3 emergencies declared in the last five years, UNHCR was largely able to rapidly deploy staff with the right profile and rank to fill cluster coordination positions. According to senior managers consulted during the review, however, the greater challenge is to create and fill positions over time in IDP programmes, for shelter and camp management positions specifically and for cluster coordinator positions more generally. The review also revealed shortfalls in IM staffing in all but three operations – Iraq, Nigeria and Syria. While not substantiated by the review, it is assumed that IDP programmes encounter more difficulties attracting staff because of the volatile and insecure environments in which they take place [e.g., open hostilities restrict capacity to deliver while, at the same time, exposing staff to more personal risks].

During the review, some senior managers reasoned that UNHCR needs a larger pool of staff with the skillset necessary for an effective engagement in an inter-agency response to a humanitarian crisis. More and more, however, the competencies required for an IDP situation are equally relevant to refugee situations, such as coordination and information management. UNHCR therefore needs to build a versatile workforce able to perform in a variety of contexts [e.g., refugee, IDP or mixed situations] in support of prevention, response and solutions to forced displacement. At the same time, a smaller cadre of staff with specialized expertise in international humanitarian law as well as experience in situations of conflict and in UN Mission settings is needed for rapid deployment to complex emergencies.

The review furthermore confirmed the tendency of UNHCR operations in countries with both significant IDP and refugees situations to create parallel staffing structures – one for the refugee programme and the other for the IDP programme. Parallel staffing structures result, in part, UNHCR's decision to deploy fully-dedicated cluster coordinators to fulfil IASC commitments. Coordination structures need to be managed in a more coherent and integrated manner to avoid reinforcing a "siloed" approach to programming and implementation, thereby hindering a holistic response to displacement. Experience has shown that partnerships and knowledge gained by the organization through its refugee programme are less likely to inform and support the IDP programme when operations where parallel structures exist. Costs are also higher, while the difficulties in filling positions, particularly in an insecure operational context, are multiplied.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### Recommendation 8.

Reinforce a strategic staffing capacity for IDP response and, at the same time, cultivate versatility in the organization's workforce so that UNHCR can respond simultaneously to the needs of refugees and IDPs through a holistic approach across the displacement continuum by:

- a) undertaking a more in-depth study [including with other agencies facing similar challenges] to determine and address the root causes and solutions for the high number of vacant positions in IDP situations;
- b) determining and recording the knowledge, competencies and skillset necessary for UNHCR's work in an IDP and inter-agency context [e.g., protection in active conflict, coordination, information management] to inform career development programmes as well as the expansion of "talent pools";
- c) investing senior level staff with competencies and skills necessary for protection leadership as well as coordination in complex emergencies;

- d) while maintaining a cadre of specialized staff for complex emergencies, revising the competency requirements for all field positions [e.g., sector specialists, protection officers, field officers, coordinators, information management officers, programme officers] are fully relevant to our engagement with refugees, IDPs and all other persons of concern; and
- e) revising staffing benchmarks to encourage more versatility in operations in fulfilling a commitment to ensure a holistic and integrated approach to protection and solutions that includes refugees, IDPs and all other persons of concern.

### 5.3.2. Strategic tri-Cluster leadership

As already noted above, it is widely recognized in international fora today that protection drives all humanitarian action. The statement of the IASC Principals on the Centrality of Protection and the IASC Protection Policy affirm that all humanitarian actors have a responsibility to make protection central to humanitarian action.<sup>13</sup> It is thus incumbent on UNHCR, as per its own policy and guidance, to leverage its leadership of the protection, shelter and CCCM clusters strategically to achieve protection outcomes and to work with all clusters to instil protection knowledge and expertise across the humanitarian response.

#### Synergies between UNHCR-led Clusters

##### Ukraine and CAR

In **Ukraine**, cluster coordinators and their teams were co-located in the same offices and there was evidence of close coordination at the operational level. A recent external evaluation of UNHCR's cluster coordination role in Ukraine observed multiple examples of joint work:

- Housing, Land and Property Working Group working group set up jointly by the protection and shelter clusters;
- the protection cluster developed the vulnerability criteria used for initial shelter/NFI/cash distribution;
- field monitoring was usually carried out by multi-function teams involving protection and shelter cluster members [and sometimes others]; and
- shelter assistance served as a means for UNHCR to gain access and thus provide protection support to communities and households.

In **Central African Republic**, all three cluster leads reported to the Deputy Representative [Protection]. This enabled closer synergies between the clusters as well as protection to be the purpose and aim of UNHCR's interventions.

The review nevertheless found that, in operations where UNHCR leads protection, shelter and CCCM clusters, communication and coordination across these clusters is often “siloe” with the coordinators themselves having different internal reporting lines. Strategic alignment of clusters is particularly an issue at the beginning of a crisis [e.g., Ukraine and Myanmar]. Structurally, UNHCR's cluster coordinators are not systematically grouped together, thereby missing opportunities to align strategies for a protection outcome. The review also found that communication and guidance from headquarters, where leadership of the global clusters sits in different divisions, is not always aligned or coordinated, reinforcing the disconnect that occurs at the field level. Finally, UNHCR can do more to integrate the institutional learning and knowledge gained from its cluster leadership in IDP settings [e.g., coordination, leadership, protection mainstreaming/integration] into its own programming guidance.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

### Recommendation 9.

Make UNHCR's protection, shelter and CCCM leadership more strategic, nationally and globally, by:

- a) exploring options to leverage better the global clusters for a stronger protection focus and impact, including through a task team approach to tri-cluster leadership with regular meetings, joint work plans updated quarterly to ensure coherent and coordinated support to the field, the reinstatement of an IDP working group, and/or co-location in a single division to form an IDP Service;

<sup>13</sup> See the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, October 2016, at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/protection-priority-global-protection-cluster/documents/inter-agency-standing-committee-policy>

- b) bringing national clusters together under a single manager to strengthen protection leadership and purpose; and
- c) designating the IDP Section in DIP to lead corporate policy development working in collaboration with other divisions including DPSM, DESS and DER, and especially the Global Protection, Shelter and CCCM Clusters.

## 5.4. Information Management

Accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive and quality population data is the starting point for effective protection and assistance, and it is likewise essential for programming, monitoring, analysis and advocacy. While UNHCR is a major provider of population figures in refugee situations, and often leads the collection and management of data, it has not established a clear population data management [PDM]<sup>14</sup> approach or role for itself in IDP situations. In most instances, UNHCR's tools and methods for PDM in refugee situations are not relevant or appropriate for an IDP response.

In undertaking its assessment and developing recommendations on PDM, the review was able to draw from a more detailed study led by DIP and DPSM. This study found that UNHCR's limited engagement in PDM in IDP situations hampers the organization's ability to be more proactive in inter-agency fora with protection analysis. It also limits the scope for UNHCR to develop holistic protection and solutions strategies across population groups [and hence the displacement continuum] as the evidence-base for such strategies is not immediately available. At the same time, however, a number of partners have already developed PDM systems in support of inter-agency response, and it is thus essential for UNHCR to complement what is already in place.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

### Recommendation 10.

Build and expand in-house information management capacity, and in particular PDM capacity, in IDP situations by:

- a) developing and piloting a standardized PDM package that can be rolled out in countries where UNHCR has an IDP engagement;
- b) identifying partners that can collaborate with and complement the work of UNHCR on PDM in IDP situations, taking the current partnership with the Joint IDP Profiling Services [JIPS] as a valuable benchmark; and
- c) reinforcing the partnership with JIPS, including by developing a more systematic and predictable process for operations to request profiling services for situations of protracted internal displacement, working with and through interagency processes and partners.

## 5.5. Funding

Key to predictable engagement in IDP situations is adequate and sustained donor funding. Over the past three years, and despite solid support from donors, the funding shortfall for UNHCR's IDP programmes has been around 50-60 per cent against total requirements. As shown in Myanmar and Ukraine, initial donor support is often strong at the outset of an emergency yet becomes harder to sustain as an IDP situation becomes protracted, something also seen in DRC. The shortfall for longstanding IDP programmes in Africa, for example, is particularly acute [e.g., 70-75 per cent from some IDP programmes] whereas it is less dramatic – albeit still significant – for more high profile IDP programmes such as those in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine [e.g., 40 per cent]. Meanwhile, the support UNHCR receives from pooled funds like the CERF meets only around five per cent of requirements.

<sup>14</sup> For UNHCR, population data management comprises the systematic recording of the size and characteristics of a population in a specific place and time.



The review nevertheless found that such funding shortfalls are not exclusive to IDP programmes. They also affect refugee programmes. Over the past three years, for example, UNHCR's shortfall for its refugee response has averaged 50 per cent. Again, initial funding is strong during the emergency phase and then drops off significantly when the refugee crisis is protracted.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that UNHCR:

#### **Recommendation 11.**

Mobilize increased funding for UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations by:

- a) investing in the fund raising capacity of operations with protracted IDP situations; and
- b) increasing submissions to different funding sources, including pooled funding.

### **5.6. Inter-Agency Engagement**

Inter-agency responses to emergencies have improved with the Humanitarian Reform, Transformative Agenda and introduction of the cluster system. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified, which in turn has strengthened accountability among humanitarian actors within the IASC framework. At the same time, the IASC Protocols and the work of the global clusters has resulted in a higher level of agreed standards and approaches among humanitarian actors. Importantly, duplication and overlap among actors has been reduced.

Notwithstanding the improvements to the inter-agency response, the review found that the systems and processes evolving out of the Humanitarian Reform are heavy. Oftentimes, agencies that lead clusters are obliged to focus foremost on process and mandatory procedures at the expense of effective operational delivery, as was the case in CAR. The workforce also tends to be concentrated in capitals, to coordinate and report, rather than to coordinate and respond closer to the point of delivery. There is likewise duplication and overlap between the coordination mechanisms within the IDP response [e.g., cluster coordination vs. inter-cluster coordination], even if the overall set-up has reduced duplication in the response.

The same concerns relate to leadership, where more can be done to distinguish between the accountabilities and authorities ascribed to Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and mandated agencies. The cluster approach places a heavy emphasis on international organizations, inadvertently downplaying a meaningful engagement with national and local actors. In natural disaster settings in particular, agencies like UNHCR can do more to reinforce and support local or national coordination and response.

Equally important is the need to define better the cooperation between humanitarian and development actors, starting with the current tendency to rely on separate coordinating structures that do not maximize economies of scale. In the absence of a common approach to responsible disengagement among humanitarian actors, the risk of "over staying" is high, and possibly contributes to a less predictable engagement by development actors as well as missed opportunities to invest early in the necessary foundation for solutions.

In conducting the review, UNHCR organised extensive consultations with key partners and other stakeholders. UNHCR also briefed the IASC Working Group on the preliminary findings of the review. Consultations sought to determine whether UNHCR's self-assessment of its engagement in IDP situations aligned with the perceptions of its partners. Consultations were also an opportunity to identify points of synergy with other Global Cluster lead agencies, as well as to learn from their experiences developing in-house capacity for leadership and operational response in IDP situations.

Building on the review and other discussions to date, it is recommended that UNHCR:

## Recommendation 12.

Engage proactively in a reform-focused inter-agency discussion on IDP response that seeks to:

- a) establish lighter cluster coordination arrangements and structures, to be determined at the IASC level, including through concrete instructions to field colleagues limiting number of products produced, the frequency and/or detail of reporting, etc.;
- b) forge agreement on simplified planning and reporting procedures ;
- c) ensure national level coordination arrangements are coupled with more flexible arrangements for delivery at field level, for example, through area-based leadership in IDP situations;
- d) enable a greater focus on “collective outcomes”<sup>15</sup> in the design of humanitarian response programmes [rather than a mere alignment of each organization’s activities] and the humanitarian-development nexus;
- e) enable a more prominent focus on the “centrality of protection,” as the driver of system-wide operational response as well as sector specific strategies and cluster plans;
- f) facilitate a stronger government involvement and engagement of local capacities, wherever possible, without compromising humanitarian principles;
- g) ensure compliance by OCHA and UNHCR with the April 2014 UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations,<sup>16</sup> which maintains the accountability of both the Humanitarian Coordinator and the UNHCR Representative, with the aim of avoiding parallel operational delivery mechanisms;
- h) develop a more coherent inter-agency approach, with the sharing of existing tools and best practices, to the issue of disengagement of humanitarian partners and gradual transition to a government managed response supported by development partners; and
- i) promote a standard maximum timeline for an HRP (for example five years, one initial year, plus two two-year cycles) after which agencies programmes should transition into more holistic or joined-up humanitarian and development instruments (i.e., 3RPs, UN development plans supporting the national development plan, with a humanitarian component, or other approaches).

IDP Operational Review Team  
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<sup>15</sup> Collective outcomes can also be multi-cluster, population or geographically specific, and can be agreed upon and carried out by a smaller number of actors.

<sup>16</sup> The April 2014 UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations is available here: <http://www.unhcr.org/53679e679.pdf>