UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR AI APPROACH

Harnessing AI to more effectively and efficiently enhance protection and solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless people and to deliver improved, data-driven responses across humanitarian contexts – people-centred and guided by principles of safety and accountability.

Purpose of Document: To articulate UNHCR's position on the responsible and rights-based use of AI in humanitarian action, highlighting its application to strengthen protection, participation and operational effectiveness, while aligning with global policy and human rights frameworks.

INTRODUCTION

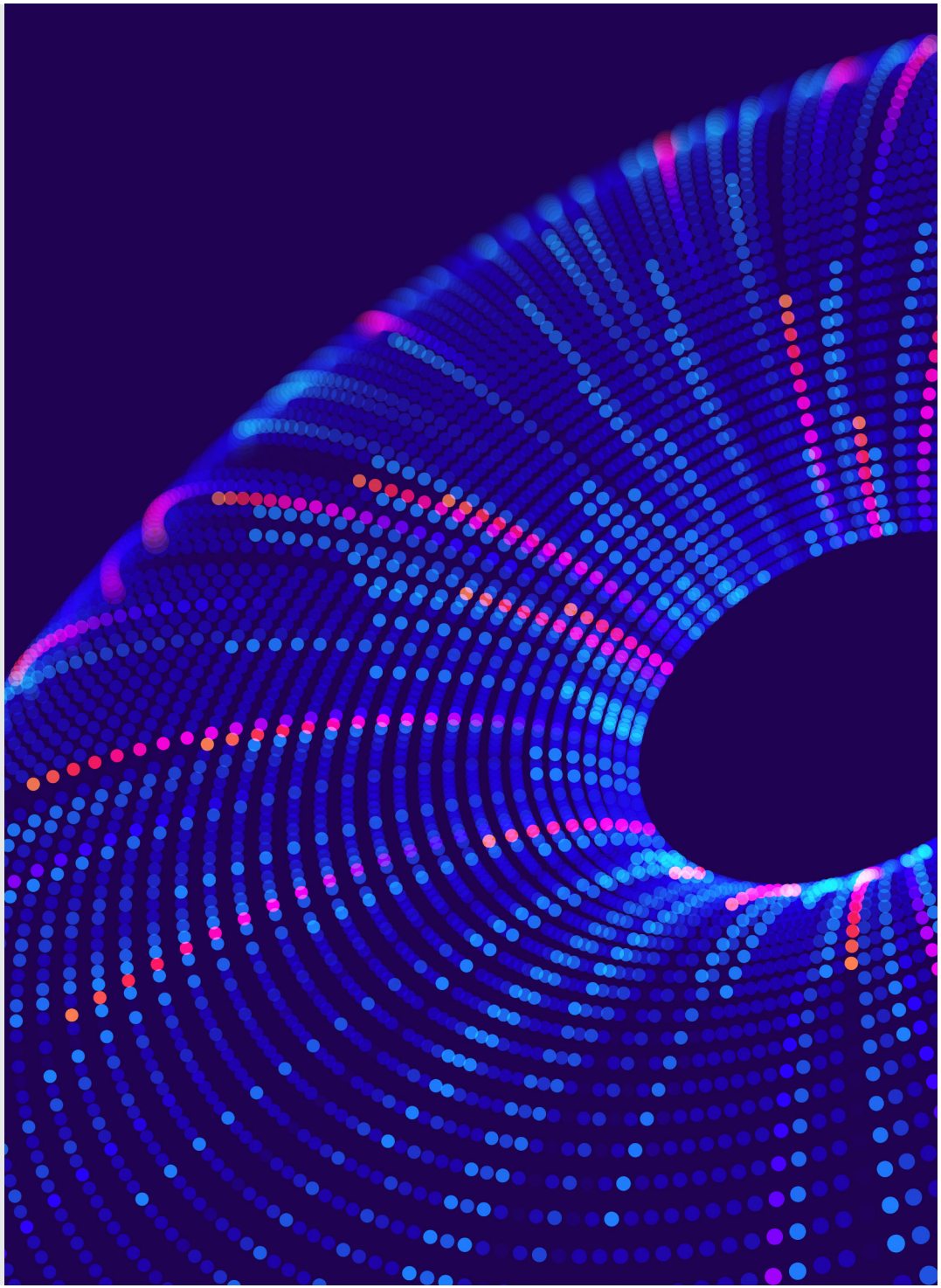
Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers transformative potential for humanitarian efforts. UNHCR aims to leverage AI to improve its ability to ensure protection and deliver solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless people.

It will achieve this by focusing on evidence-based research, policy/governance, and AI-based applications that:

- enhance refugee protection and service delivery;
- inform humanitarian policy, decision-making, and emergency response;
- strengthen in-house efficiency; and
- improve oversight and strategic planning.

This approach will be grounded in our protection and solutions mandate and guided by the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and a do no harm approach. UNHCR will also focus its efforts on collaboration with stateless and forcibly displaced communities, other international organizations, academia and research institutions, humanitarian partners, governments and the private sector, as well as advocate for affected people on human rights-based and responsible use of AI in the operational contexts in which we work.

This document outlines the key cross-cutting principles of UNHCR's AI approach, which seek to ensure AI is developed and used to its full potential in line with the highest human rights-based standards. It then articulates the four strategic areas and pillars of UNHCR's Approach to AI. Finally, this document outlines how UNHCR aims to strategically engage stakeholders to influence the development of AI.

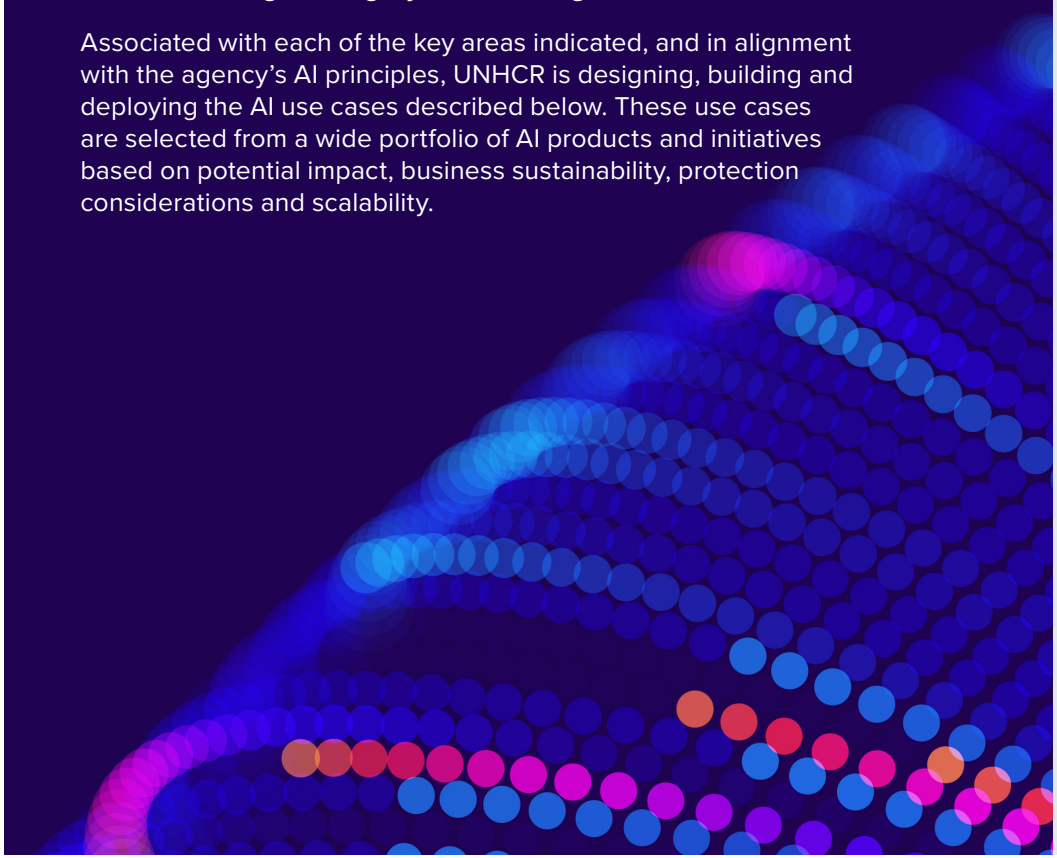


STRATEGIC AI AREAS

In line with its mandate, strategic directions and organizational priorities, UNHCR has identified four key interconnected strategic areas where AI can contribute to more effective, accountable and timely humanitarian action:

- **AI for Protection and Service Delivery;**
- **AI to Inform Humanitarian Decisions and Response;**
- **AI for In-house Efficiencies; and**
- **AI for Oversight, Integrity and Planning.**

Associated with each of the key areas indicated, and in alignment with the agency's AI principles, UNHCR is designing, building and deploying the AI use cases described below. These use cases are selected from a wide portfolio of AI products and initiatives based on potential impact, business sustainability, protection considerations and scalability.



1 AI FOR PROTECTION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Protecting and finding solutions for populations in vulnerable situations is at the core of UNHCR's mission. UNHCR works with a wide variety of stakeholders to build favourable protection environments and advocates strongly for safeguarding the principles of protection, access to asylum, and the rights and dignity of affected communities.

The integration of AI technology in humanitarian efforts can improve the lives of refugees, stateless people and other populations that UNHCR assists by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of services tailored to their unique needs. AI has the potential to improve access to protection and solutions and to enhance protection interventions by identifying risks and facilitating more timely information.

UNHCR is designing and developing the following AI use cases:

Faster and context-specific services for refugees

The Digital Gateway is transforming how displaced individuals interact with UNHCR to access critical information, register with UNHCR for services such as cash assistance, and make appointments. This innovative quasi-e-Government platform leverages the advanced capabilities of Large Language Models (LLMs) to provide a seamless, user-friendly omnichannel experience with an AI Assistant that understands user needs and guides them through available services, rights and procedures in simplified language, with voice or low-data modes for greater accessibility. Imagine a world where individuals in disorientating, distressing and unfamiliar environments can instantly and quickly find vital, reliable information, easily navigate complex UNHCR registration procedures, and receive services such as cash assistance, school enrolment and health-care appointments. The Digital Gateway will offer tailored support services based on individual needs, providing linguistically sensitive help and guidance.

Access to life-saving and tailored information

An example of other potential use cases in this area is Help.AI from help.unhcr.org. This initiative involves the development of an ethical, responsible and people-centred GenAI-powered multilingual assistant across UNHCR's refugee-facing websites. This tool is built upon UNHCR's extensive and trusted network of Help websites and other refugee-facing informational materials. Its purpose is to provide timely, accurate and easily understandable information on rights and services, featuring voice functionality, which is particularly crucial for users with low literacy levels or visual impairments. Rigorous user-centred design principles and comprehensive human rights due diligence are embedded throughout its development lifecycle to prevent the generation of misinformation, mitigate biases, and ensure the safety and privacy of users. This service is especially critical during emergency and crisis situations.

Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process optimization

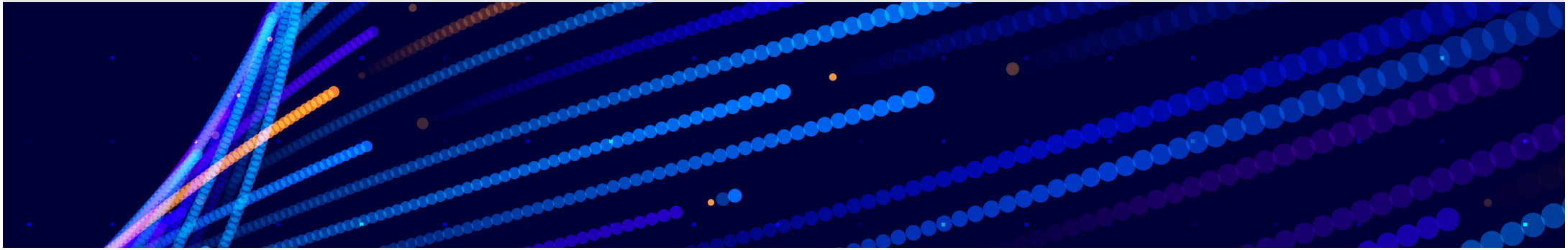
To address significant delays and variations in UNHCR-mandated RSD, UNHCR is developing an AI-powered tool to analyse and enhance the efficiency of RSD procedures. Process mining and machine learning techniques are being used to analyse process flows and identify factors that contribute to bottlenecks and delays across key stages – interviewing, transcription, assessment and review. Importantly, the tool, once developed, is not aimed at automating eligibility decisions. Instead, it will provide evidence-based insights to support RSD managers in optimizing workflows, allocating resources more effectively (e.g. interpreters in certain languages during interviews), and implementing targeted strategies that make the case management process fairer and more efficient, ultimately facilitating more timely access to protection.

Information integrity and digital risk identification/mitigation

Employing AI to detect potential threats to forcibly displaced and stateless people through bias detection in algorithms, detection of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech (MDH), as well as to identify and respond early to risks, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), deep fakes and identity (voice, face) theft. Further, AI can be leveraged for data security scans, ensuring the data of groups in vulnerable situations is safe, including leveraging AI and differential privacy techniques to protect their data.

Understanding participatory feedback

Participatory assessments, interviews, focus group discussions and other forms of feedback can be analyzed efficiently with AI. This innovative tool will enhance how UNHCR gathers, processes, and analyses community feedback – the cornerstone of accountable and effective programming. Efficiently recording, transcribing, translating and analysing anonymized qualitative data from refugee interviews and focus group discussions, it ensures that the diverse voices, perspectives and priorities of affected populations directly and meaningfully shape humanitarian programming and strategic decision-making. This tool will deliver significant time and cost savings compared to manual methods, enable the rapid generation of rich, actionable insights from qualitative data, and ensure that UNHCR's programmes and strategies are genuinely community-driven, context-specific and responsive to evolving needs.



Improving access to protection and basic services

AI can help strengthen services that are critical to operationalize our mandate. An example is RIMAP (UNHCR's Rights Mapping and Analysis Platform), which provides information on access to rights and legal policies for forcibly displaced and stateless people. RIMAP maps international legal instruments, domestic laws and policies, and provides an analysis of these laws and policies and their implementation. By building a virtual legal agent, an AI tool that will enable querying and summarizing of refugee protection-related legal documents, UNHCR will augment the capacity to process complex legal queries and conduct nuanced policy analyses with speed and precision

Automated transcription technologies

In Iraq, UNHCR is building a large language model to support transcription of interviews for local languages such as Kurdish (Sorani), a minority and low-resource language. Another high-potential use of AI is to support asylum and resettlement procedures. With 25,000 RSD interviews conducted annually, each lasting an average of three hours, as well as thousands more resettlement and protection interviews, manual transcription poses significant challenges to accuracy, interview flow and staff workload. Automated transcription offers the potential to save up to 25,000 hours annually in RSD procedures alone, improve the accuracy of interview records – a key safeguard in ensuring fair decisions – and strengthen interviewer-interviewee rapport, especially when handling sensitive information. The solution would need to be tailored to UNHCR's unique operating context, which presents technical challenges including multi-language interpretation, variable audio recording hardware, inconsistent audio quality, and diverse field environments.

2 AI TO INFORM HUMANITARIAN POLICY, DECISIONS AND RESPONSE

As a leading humanitarian actor, UNHCR works to anticipate emergencies and, when they occur, respond rapidly and stay the course to ensure that people are safe from harm, their fundamental rights are respected, and that they can meet their needs.

UNHCR strives to ground its emergency preparedness and response, supply strategies, risk mitigation and anticipatory decisions, as well as its direct responses in humanitarian contexts, on the best and most recent available data. The wide availability of big data and advances in machine learning algorithms and AI have democratized the power to analyze large multi-model datasets. The use of computer vision to process vast amounts of satellite data in Geospatial information systems has contributed to our ability to model needs. Using these technologies, UNHCR will be able to better predict displacement patterns, optimize resource allocation, and improve service delivery and its direct impact on forcibly displaced populations.

UNHCR is designing and developing the following AI use cases:

Early warning systems

UNHCR is pioneering an advanced Global Early Warning System on forced displacement powered by a sophisticated alert-based system and AI. By analysing a wide range of real-time data, including conflict, climate and socio-economic indicators, paired with anonymized UNHCR data on refugees, the system delivers high-resolution forecasts on the potential scale, timing and direction of displacement. This critical insight enables UNHCR and our partners to shift from a reactive to a proactive stance, ensuring that life-saving aid and resources are positioned ahead of a crisis. This forward-looking approach enhances preparedness, optimizes our humanitarian response, and ultimately helps protect lives and reduce suffering for the world's most vulnerable people.

Climate and population risk modelling

In response to the growing threat of climate-related displacement, UNHCR is developing an AI-powered climate risk and population modelling approach. This work will be paired with UNHCR's displaced population mapping models and complements the global Early Warning System. This innovative tool provides a detailed, grid-level risk index for displacement driven by slow-onset climate hazards, such as drought. This approach will help UNHCR model remote refugee settlements in hard-to-reach areas more efficiently. This proactive approach strengthens preparedness, optimizes resource allocation, ultimately providing better protection for communities at risk of climate-induced displacement.

Computational modelling and predictive analytics

To ensure life-saving assistance reaches displaced people faster and more reliably, UNHCR's Supply Division is developing advanced approaches for predictive modelling to improve planning, inventory and supply chain optimization. This AI-supported approach transforms our supply chain from reactive to proactive. By using predictive forecasting and optimizing our warehouse network, UNHCR ensures that essential aid is positioned where it's needed most before a crisis unfolds. Separately, UNHCR has a long-standing history of using predictive analytics tools, such as Project Jetson in Somalia and Brazil, to anticipate humanitarian needs. In Ukraine, UNHCR is working with Brunel University to develop computer simulation models that explore future refugee return scenarios, supporting strategic planning. Finally, nowcasting techniques – outlined in UNHCR's refugee statistics resources – provide real-time insights into displacement trends, enabling more agile and informed decision-making.

3 AI FOR IN-HOUSE EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is critical for maximizing the effectiveness of humanitarian operations and supporting services, especially in resource-constrained environments. AI can replace certain manual tasks with more efficient and accurate alternatives, streamline standardized back-office processes, reduce operational costs, and enhance decision-making.

The use of LLMs has enormous potential to transform the agency's knowledge management principles, making institutional knowledge, best practices and policies more accessible to our staff. UNHCR will be using AI in standard tasks and processes such as document and policy management, drafting of standardized documents, translation, summarization and data analysis to achieve efficiencies in back-office processes. UNHCR will also use generative AI in communications, content production and supporter engagement.

UNHCR is designing and developing the following AI use cases:

Everyday assistants

We will develop a suite of integrated, GenAI-powered assistants, accessible through a unified hub, designed to provide intelligent support to staff across all programmatic, operational and support functions. These assistants will help with a wide range of tasks, from reviewing initial versions of reports and financial, policy and guidance documents to analysing complex datasets, summarizing lengthy texts, and handling routine HR and finance queries. These tools are expected to yield significant efficiency gains, estimated at between 10 and 30 per cent, depending on the specific task and assistant. This will reduce administrative burdens, accelerate workflows and allow staff to dedicate more of their valuable time and expertise to strategic planning, direct engagement with affected populations, and complex problem-solving.

AI knowledge hub

Implementing AI-driven solutions that seamlessly integrate knowledge and data into daily workflows, enhancing UNHCR's ability to deliver timely, informed and coordinated humanitarian action.

AI for communications and supporter engagement

To maximize our impact in an increasingly resource-constrained environment, UNHCR is integrating AI to enhance the quality and efficiency of our communications. By adopting AI with human oversight, in line with our Guidelines on Ethical and Impactful Use of AI in UNHCR Communications, staff can focus on strategic, creative and high-value work that directly supports our mandate to assist forcibly displaced and stateless individuals. This enhanced effectiveness is particularly critical for fundraising and supporter engagement, where leveraging predictive analytics and real-time personalization can significantly optimize donor outreach, retention and the financial support necessary for our life-saving operations.

Back-office intelligence

To optimize back-office functions, UNHCR is deploying AI-powered tools to automate routine administrative and support tasks, thereby increasing operational efficiency. This includes automating invoice processing through our cloud ERP platform. By reducing the time spent on repetitive administrative work, these tools lower operational costs and, critically, free our staff to dedicate their expertise to more strategic, mission-critical activities in support of our mandate.

4 AI FOR OVERSIGHT, INTEGRITY, AND PLANNING

By enhancing decision-making through AI-driven insights, UNHCR has implemented digital assistants to harmonize programme planning. In the future, UNHCR will leverage generative AI to drive more strategic planning, ensure data reliability and integrity, and reinforce beneficiary data financial accountability in future humanitarian operations.

UNHCR is designing and developing the following AI use cases:

GenAI for planning

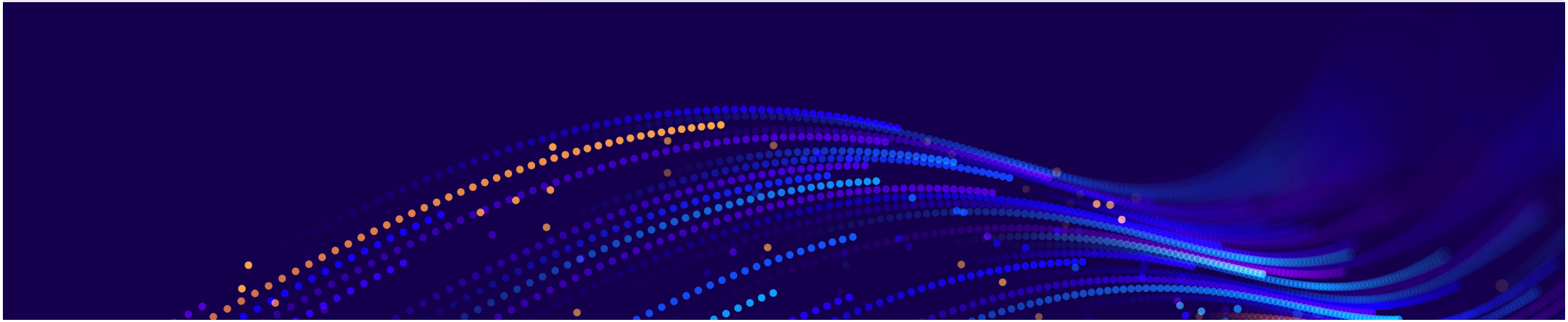
Introducing a generative AI platform to support more integrated planning, analysis and policy navigation, enabling more efficient and informed operational decisions. These tools work to address inefficiencies stemming from complex and varied planning systems. By enabling staff to easily interact with relevant data and generate strategy-focused insights, these tools automate routine tasks like data entry and information retrieval, freeing our teams to concentrate on high-value strategic work and strategic decision-making. This improved oversight and standardization reduces the need for extensive manual reviews and accelerates decision-making, enabling more effective and localized planning.

AI for data anomaly detection

The misrepresentation of refugee needs and unintentional duplication of data can mean resources may be inefficiently allocated, reducing the impact of our work. To address this, UNHCR is using AI-powered anomaly detection models to check registration, beneficiary and resettlement data. UNHCR interviews and registers an average of 100,000 refugees per month. While these interviews provide reasonable safeguards, adding proactive AI tools that identify irregularities in real time enables us to better detect beneficiary-driven misrepresentation. This ensures vital humanitarian aid reaches those who need it most.

AI for financial anomaly detection

To ensure the highest standards of financial integrity and maximize the impact of every donation, UNHCR is exploring safeguards for donor contributions with AI-powered anomaly detection. This advanced tool strengthens our financial oversight, particularly in cash programmes, by instantly flagging any irregularities for review. By preventing anomalies at the earliest stage, this technology ensures resources are used exactly as intended, eliminates future investigation costs, and empowers our compliance teams to focus on strategic oversight, guaranteeing the responsible stewardship of funds.



UNHCR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A cross-cutting objective of UNHCR's AI Approach is the establishment of baseline AI and digital literacy across the organization and the incremental adoption of a set of core AI tools into our workflows.

The objective seeks to equip all employees with the core competencies needed to understand the practical applications and limitations of AI within the UNHCR context. This knowledge will also enable staff to identify opportunities for AI-driven efficiencies and improvements in their respective functions, from document and data analysis to internal self-service knowledge management and communications tools, thereby fostering a culture of informed and critical engagement with these emerging technologies.

The successful integration of AI into core business processes necessitates a structured change management approach, particularly for the adoption of highly scalable solutions that create internal efficiencies. To support the transition to new tools, such as the suite of GenAI-powered assistants or the GenAI platforms enhancing strategic planning, UNHCR has developed tailored learning tools to cultivate specialized in-house expertise through dedicated Intranet pages, webinars and communities of practice. This ensures staff can fully leverage these technologies to reduce administrative burdens and focus on high-value work.

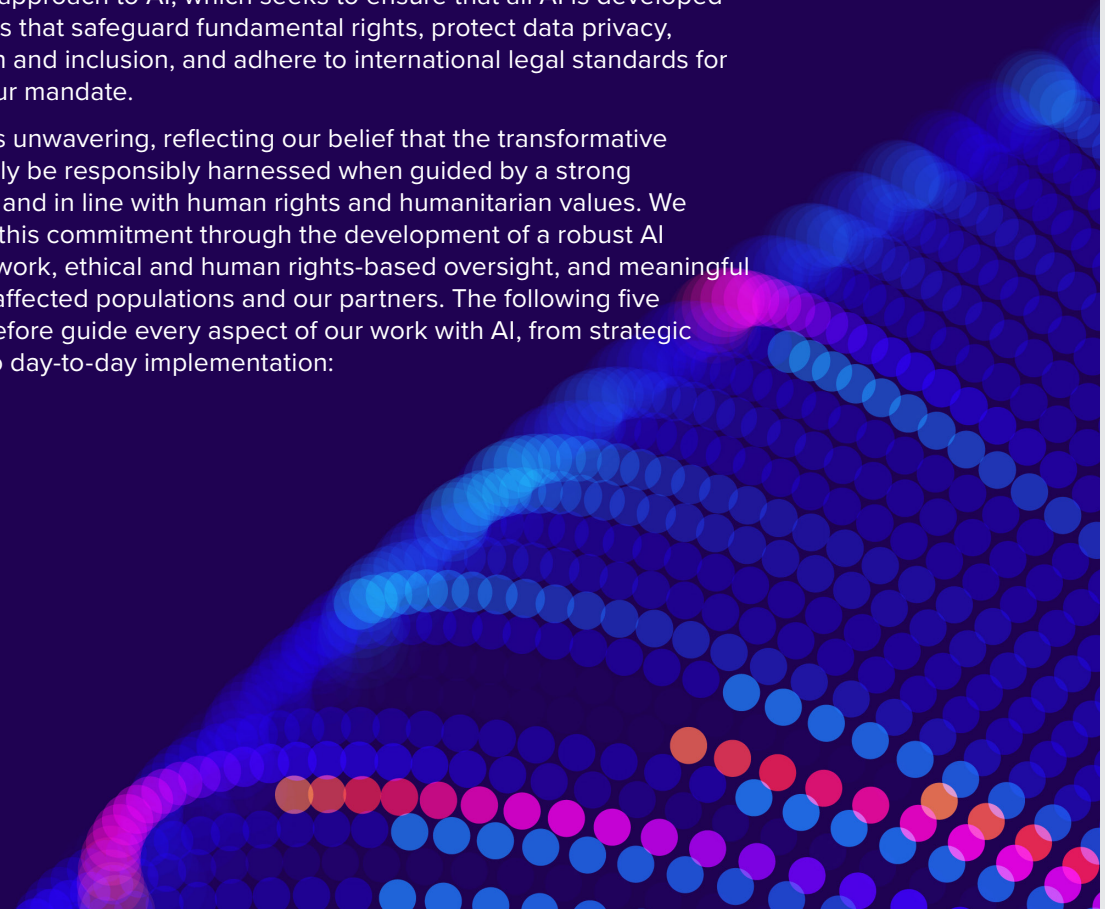
All capacity-development initiatives will be grounded in UNHCR's commitment to responsible and ethical AI adoption. Training programmes will complement existing modules on the organization's robust data protection and privacy policies and be expanded to include a focus on human rights due diligence and human-centric governance frameworks. By providing staff with the skills to identify and mitigate potential ethical risks, biases and privacy infringements, UNHCR ensures that the development and deployment of AI systems strictly align with its core protection mandate and, critically, that staff can trust the tools they are using. Training programmes – adapted to everyone's level of knowledge of AI – will also encourage staff to make use of approved AI tools to enhance efficiency and the quality of their work. This reinforces a framework of institutional accountability where technological innovation is pursued in a manner that is secure, ethical and principled.

UNHCR'S CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES FOR AI AND GOVERNANCE

UNHCR is committed to the use of AI that is grounded in principles that reflect our mandate to protect and assist refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, stateless individuals and others.

This is paramount as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded in humanitarian operations and protection systems. These principles form the basis of our institutional approach to AI, which seeks to ensure that all AI is developed and applied in ways that safeguard fundamental rights, protect data privacy, promote protection and inclusion, and adhere to international legal standards for all people under our mandate.

This commitment is unwavering, reflecting our belief that the transformative power of AI can only be responsibly harnessed when guided by a strong ethical framework, and in line with human rights and humanitarian values. We will operationalize this commitment through the development of a robust AI governance framework, ethical and human rights-based oversight, and meaningful engagement with affected populations and our partners. The following five principles will therefore guide every aspect of our work with AI, from strategic decision-making to day-to-day implementation:



1 ETHICAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED

UNHCR's AI approach will be rooted in ethical and human rights-based frameworks that guide the use of AI in complex crises and humanitarian settings.

This foundation ensures that AI adoption strengthens protection outcomes while safeguarding the rights and dignity of displaced and stateless populations. UNHCR will actively align with, and support, the establishment of guidelines for AI design, development and deployment that build upon established international frameworks, such as the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021), the Principles for Ethical Use of AI in the UN system agencies (2022)[1] and the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on Emerging Technologies (HRDD, 2024).

UNHCR will also engage in the development of new policies and guidelines generated under humanitarian law frameworks, aligning them with our refugee protection legal frameworks, including regional instruments and the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), to ensure AI-based tools, systems and applications respect human rights, maintain transparency and preserve accountability.

1 The Principles for Ethical Use of AI in the UN system are: 1) do no harm, 2) safety and security, 3) fairness and non-discrimination, 4) sustainability, 5) human autonomy and oversight, 6) defining purpose, necessity and proportionality, 7) right to data privacy, 8) data protection and data governance, 9) transparency and explainability, 10) responsibility and accountability and 11) inclusion and participation

2 EMBRACE AI RESPONSIBILITY BY DESIGN

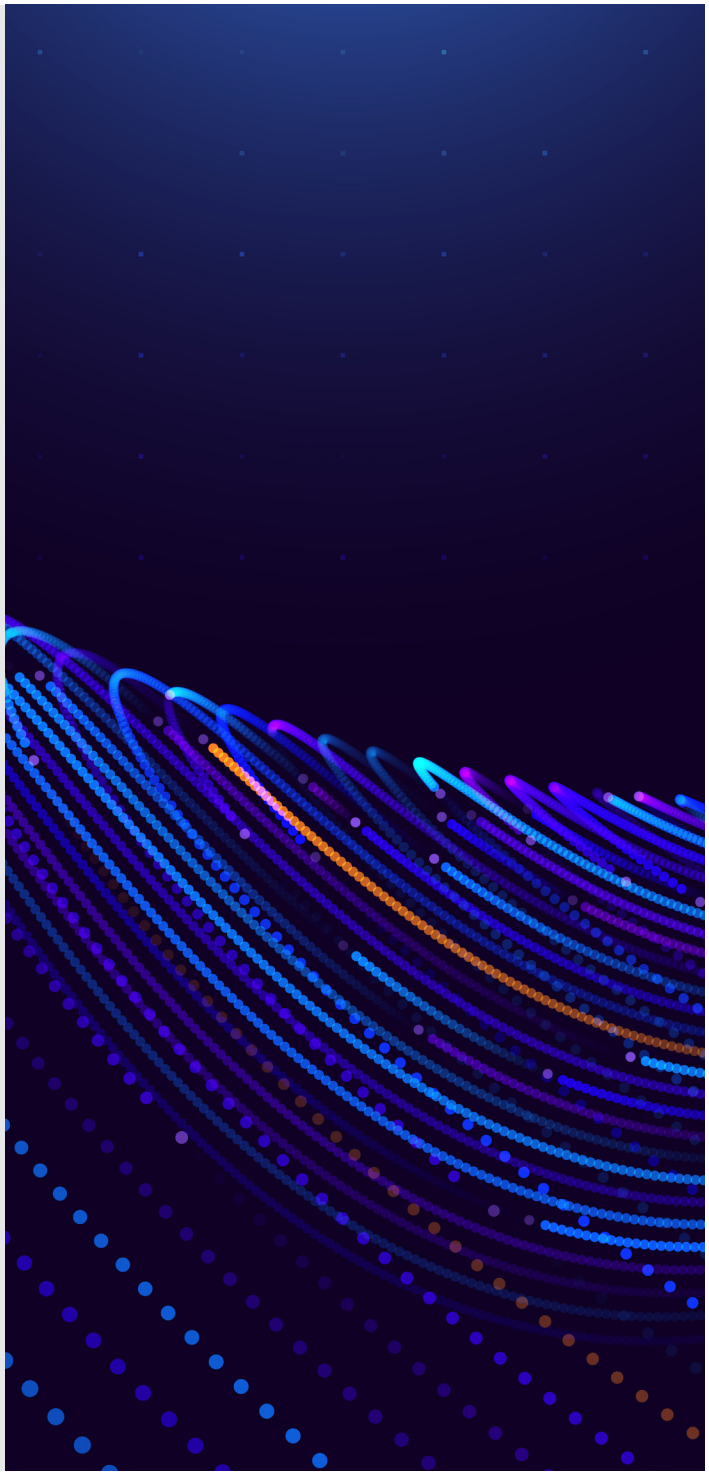
Maintaining the integrity of AI-assisted processes is essential to upholding the trust placed in UNHCR and ensuring institutional accountability.

UNHCR defines "Responsible AI" as the design, development, operation and scaling of AI systems that promote benefits for individuals and societies while safeguarding against harm. To this end, UNHCR will invest in the capacity to operationalize the ethical and human rights standards articulated in the above-mentioned principle, ensuring sustainability, safety, data protection and risk safeguards across the AI lifecycle from discovery and planning, design, development, deployment to scale, monitoring and iteration.

Responsible AI by Design means embedding safeguards into every stage of the AI lifecycle. This includes conducting risk and AI impact assessments (AIIA) at the initial planning stage; applying bias detection and mitigation measures during data preparation and model training; ensuring explainability and transparency in both inputs and outputs feeding models; maintaining human oversight for AI processes; and setting up monitoring and feedback mechanisms to evaluate performance and address unintended effects. It also means engaging affected populations and partners at the initial design stage and during testing to strengthen inclusivity and trust.

Our design approach is built on prioritizing open-source solutions whenever feasible, and on procuring systems that integrate robust risk, safety and data protection frameworks. These are anchored in institutional policies such as: UNHCR Strategic Directions (2022-2026), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action, UNHCR Policy on the Protection of Personal Data (2015), the UNHCR Data Protection Guidance (2018), the General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy (2022), and the Policy on Information Security (2023).

Recognizing the rapid evolution of AI, UNHCR will continue to engage in global research and governance initiatives that inform responsible design. We will draw on platforms such as the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and its Inter-Agency Working Group on AI (IAWG-AI), as well as the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) and its Digital Technologies Network (DTN), which serve as vital arenas for inter-agency cooperation and knowledge exchange. In addition, UNHCR will follow the recommendations of the UN Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and actively contribute to the Global Dialogue on AI Governance. These engagements will help UNHCR adopt an agile design approach – continuously adapting frameworks, updating safeguards, and developing targeted guidance to address emerging risks. This way, all AI innovations will be implemented securely and transparently, with global guardrails and in full alignment with UNHCR's core protection mandate.



3 CHAMPION PEOPLE-CENTRED AI

As part of UNHCR's commitment to responsible innovation and to UNHCR Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (AAP, 2020), Human Centricity is being embedded into the core of all AI initiatives, through the testing of new products with communities, designing different human centered processes, a commitment to shifting power dynamics, or adapting proven approaches to fit local needs and realities.

AI solutions need to be centered on the lived experiences, needs and rights of the people served, especially the most vulnerable. UNHCR will ensure that, forcibly displaced, stateless and other affected communities are co-designing AI initiatives.

Secondly, participatory co-design approaches are prioritized, with affected communities actively engaged in the implementation of AI tools for protection and service delivery. People centered AI applies to UNHCR's workforce, ensuring that AI tools designed to increase staff capacities and efficiency and improve workflows are co-designed with relevant affected teams. It also means ensuring a human-in-command approach (HIC) and accountability are maintained at all stages, ensuring transparency and continuous feedback throughout the AI lifecycle. By centering on human dignity, inclusivity and agency, UNHCR's use of AI aims to be a force for empowerment.

4 ENSURE ROBUST INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

Effective governance is essential to ensuring the responsible, rights-based and impactful use of AI across UNHCR's work. UNHCR's governance of AI is being built on existing institutional processes and established decision-making structures.

Policy and guidance on AI must be developed in alignment with our internal Policy on UNHCR Official Guidance (2024), which is "*based on significant consultation with colleagues across operations and policy practitioners*". Oversight is provided through the Transformation Governance Board (TGB), which guides the implementation of all strategic digital transformation initiatives, including emerging technologies such as AI. To ensure coordination and consultation, UNHCR has also established a High-level AI Working Group to provide strategic direction, complemented by the Emerging Technology Reference Group (ETRG), a collaborative forum of senior managers and technical experts. At the implementation level, UNHCR Innovation Service continues to incubate promising AI applications by testing proofs of concept in safe sandbox environments and supporting their scale-up through existing mechanisms, with a focus on maximizing humanitarian impact. Finally, UNHCR Innovation Service has created the Big Data and AI community of practice, which serves as a knowledge-sharing platform for staff across the organization.

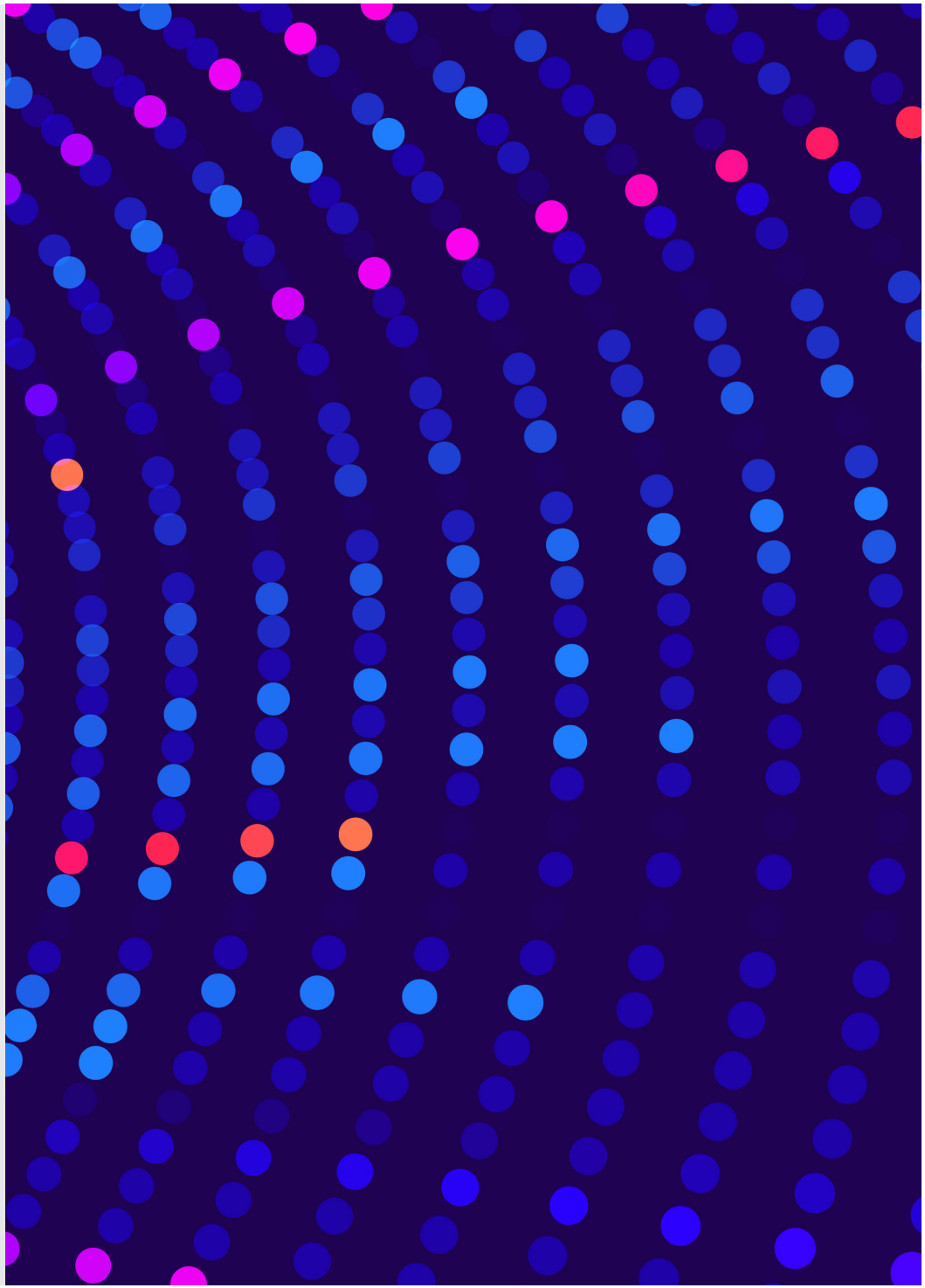
To ensure technical coherence and sustainability, AI solutions are reviewed by the Architecture Review Board (ARB) to verify alignment with organizational standards for security, interoperability and scalability. Building on UNHCR's existing governance mechanisms – including transformation oversight, enterprise risk management, data protection, cybersecurity and safety processes – a dedicated coordination function is being established to provide strategic direction, technical guidance and institutional oversight. Accountability is embedded through Enterprise Risk Management (ERM), which, through its operational risk registry, is a mandatory risk review process, enabling operations, regions and HQ teams to add AI-related risks. Additionally, the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) keeps a registry for all technology-based applications, including those involving AI, to ensure cybersecurity compliance. Our risk management frameworks ensure that compliance with UNHCR's data protection, information security and broader ethical safeguards remains a priority, minimizing risks to forcibly displaced and stateless people as well as to the organization. It also ensures alignment with refugee protection frameworks and the highest standards of the UN system. Critically, this mechanism will establish the institutional conditions required to scale responsibly to enable continuous learning and embed accountability and trust in the use of AI across the organization.

5 FOSTER MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

UNHCR's engagement in AI is driven by strong collaboration across a diverse range of partners.

This includes governments, through letters of understanding and alignment with refugee response plans; the private sector, including, funding, technical expertise and initiatives that promote entrepreneurship and grant agreements with forcibly displaced-led and stateless-led organizations; and humanitarian partners, such as non-profits and foundations. Additionally, fostering partnerships with international institutions, including triple-nexus organizations, via memorandums of understanding and other cooperation mechanisms; and supporting the work of academic and research institutions, through cooperation framework agreements and other meaningful ways of practical engagement (e.g. research challenges). These partnerships are not mutually exclusive and collectively contribute to enhancing technical expertise and fostering innovation in AI initiatives, thereby supporting UNHCR's protection mandate.

Lastly, knowledge-sharing and knowledge management (KM) among UN agencies, including harmonized inter-agency working groups and task forces, are crucial for exchanging insights and experiences related to AI and technologies, ensuring that lessons learned are disseminated effectively. UNHCR's partnerships with the private sector are built on shared values, UNHCR Procedures on Due Diligence and Private Sector Engagement (2025), the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and rigorous oversight beginning with a robust, two-phase due diligence process. This screening uses strict exclusionary criteria to vet partners and is reinforced by clear agreements governing data protection and sharing to safeguard sensitive information, ensuring compliance with international standards. We also use our advocacy channels to ensure partners assess misuse of AI and risks to refugee protections, working to ensure collaborations are principled, secure and fully aligned with our protection mandate.



ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT ON RESPONSIBLE AI

Developments in AI bring both opportunities and risks for the forcibly displaced and stateless populations whom UNHCR is mandated to protect and assist.

They must not only be protected from the harms generated or compounded by AI systems but also empowered to enjoy the benefits of AI, including through more efficient and responsive services as well as skills and capacity development.

There is growing interest and discussion among governments, civil society, academia and the private sector on the use of AI tools in humanitarian contexts, as well as in international refugee protection and migration management. While AI offers opportunities in these contexts, certain use cases have the potential to pose significant risks to the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people, particularly groups already at heightened risk of vulnerability and marginalization – including ethnic, racial, religious, national and linguistic minorities, people with disabilities and those marginalized due to their membership of a social group or based on their political opinions – and to widen the digital divide.

Grounded in UNHCR's mandate, including its supervisory responsibility under the 1951 Convention, UNHCR will advise and support governments as well as advocate and engage with external actors and affected people on the ethical and responsible use of AI in the contexts in which we work.

More specifically, UNHCR will contribute to the following areas:

Setting and promoting standards

Developing and providing guidance to States and other stakeholders on the use of AI in refugee protection and asylum processes, to ensure respect for international refugee law and established norms. This includes developing guidance on key principles and safeguards that must be considered when developing and deploying AI systems and tools in these contexts.

Galvanizing action for responsible AI

Advocating with governments, the private sector, civil society and other actors, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, for best practices in ethical, responsible and rights-based use of AI in humanitarian settings and refugee protection. This includes the need for human rights due diligence and ethical impact assessments to be carried out in a participatory manner (including with forcibly displaced and stateless people) to identify the risks presented by AI systems and develop appropriate mitigation measures.

Keeping abreast of policy developments and research on emerging practices of AI

Monitoring and flagging situations posing high risks to forcibly displaced and stateless people, particularly those that may lead to bias or discrimination, limit access to asylum or rights, or contravene procedural fairness, due process and data protection principles and standards. Also, undertaking research and policy development that can enhance protection and service delivery in complex humanitarian contexts.

Research, analysis and advocacy on AI in relation to information integrity in humanitarian contexts

Exploring, on the one hand, the potential of AI for monitoring and addressing information risks such as mis- and disinformation and hate speech; and on the other hand, investigating and building evidence on the impact of AI on information risks for forcibly displaced and stateless populations and for humanitarian actors.

Empowering and facilitating space for communities

Advocating for the meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in the full life cycle of AI solutions, so that such solutions are informed by their preferences and needs. Encouraging opportunities for engagement between forcibly displaced and stateless people and AI actors, including technology companies, developers, regulators, researchers and other stakeholders.

Supporting AI leadership within forcibly displaced and stateless communities

UNHCR will work to map initiatives and strengthen AI capacity and leadership within communities. linking them to local AI capacities and opportunities. Advocating for the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless communities within local, national and multilateral efforts to bridge the AI divide, including resourcing and programming to develop skills and capacity related to the full AI life cycle. Actively encouraging refugee-led AI development that addresses the needs of their communities, and the participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in AI-driven opportunities across sectors such as education, health and livelihoods.

AN INVITATION TO PARTNERS

The ambition of UNHCR's AI approach is vast, matched only by the immense scale and complexity of the global displacement challenges we face.

We recognize that we cannot achieve this vision alone. We are actively inviting committed partners from forcibly displaced-led and stateless-led organizations, academia and research institutions, the private sector – including philanthropic individuals and foundations, and leading technology corporations – and governments to join us in this critical and transformative endeavour. Your deep expertise, resources and shared innovative skills are crucial to accelerating our progress, scaling our solutions, and amplifying our impact on the lives of millions of displaced people.

The following areas provide compelling and mutually beneficial opportunities for collaboration:

Funding

Fund the design, rigorous development, responsible deployment and sustainable scaling of these high-impact AI use cases. Your investment can directly and demonstrably translate into lives saved, essential services improved, livelihoods restored and futures rebuilt for those forced to flee.

Joint proposal submissions

Collaborate with other international and UN organizations, advisory boards, research institutions, private sector actors and innovation hubs to prepare joint funding proposals that open access to resources typically unavailable to humanitarian organizations (e.g. academic research grants, innovation funds or cross-sector AI initiatives).

Capacity development

Support the development and delivery of targeted AI literacy programmes and specialized skills training within UNHCR and among our implementing partners. This will ensure sustainable adoption, foster a culture of data-driven innovation and build long-term success for these initiatives.

Technical collaboration & expertise

Lend your organization's world-class talent and deep knowledge in specialized areas such as Artificial Intelligence, data science, software engineering, product development, user experience (UX/UI) design and secure cloud deployment. Help us refine our solutions, overcome complex technical hurdles and ensure that our AI innovations are robust, scalable, secure and truly fit for purpose in diverse humanitarian contexts.

Thought leadership & storytelling

Join us as a vocal advocate in championing the ethical, responsible and impactful use of AI within the broader humanitarian sector. Help us share these compelling stories of innovation, resilience and hope with global audiences, inspiring broader engagement, mobilizing further support and shaping the global discourse on technology for good.

Investing in UNHCR's AI initiatives is far more than a conventional financial commitment; it is an investment in the preservation of human dignity, an investment in the development of scalable and sustainable solutions to some of the world's most pressing global crises, and an investment in a future where technology unequivocally serves our shared humanity. Together, we can harness the truly transformative power of Artificial Intelligence to bring tangible hope, meaningful change and a brighter future to millions of lives uprooted by conflict and persecution.

CONCLUSION

The strategic implementation of AI across our four strategic areas: AI for Protection and Service Delivery, AI to Inform Humanitarian Decisions and Response, AI for In-house Efficiencies and AI for Oversight, Integrity and Planning, supported by our core principles, will empower UNHCR to better serve displaced populations.

UNHCR's engagement in AI is approached through strong collaboration with forcibly displaced and stateless communities, inter-agency platforms, member states, the private sector, humanitarian partners and academic and research institutions. This collaborative approach will enhance technical expertise, foster innovation and facilitate humanitarian AI knowledge-sharing. By adhering to the cross-cutting principles (Ethical and Human Rights-based AI, Embrace AI Responsibility by Design, Ensure Robust Internal Governance, Champion People-centered AI, and Foster Meaningful Partnerships) UNHCR is poised to lead a transformative journey in AI that prioritizes impact, efficiency, protection and integrity.

UNHCR will harness the power of AI to drive positive change in humanitarian efforts, ensuring a more effective, responsive and ethical approach to aiding those in need.