

Global Programmes (EC/70/SC/CRP.3)

Introductory Remarks of Andrew Harper, Director of the Division of Programme Support & Management

74th Meeting of the Standing Committee, 6 March 2019

Thank you, Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm pleased to appear before this 74th Meeting of the Standing Committee to introduce the update on UNHCR's Global Programmes.

The Global Programmes reinforce our protection work in the field across a very broad range of operational activities. These include public health; HIV and reproductive health; nutrition and food security; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); shelter and settlements; energy and environment; registration and identity management; information management and cash-based interventions, as well as UNHCR's engagement as co-lead of the Global Shelter Cluster and Global Camp Coordination & Camp Management (CCCCM) Cluster.

In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, the objective of the Global Programmes is to uphold the technical integrity of our operational responses and ensure that the assistance and services provided are comprehensive in nature and anchored in existing national structures. As the organisation evolves with the process of regionalisation and decentralisation, so do the Global Programmes. The increasingly complex and unpredictable environment in which we operate encourages us to explore different ways of working and move towards more collaborative solutions to responding to the needs of our persons of concern.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Given the scope of the Global Programmes, I will focus on three key messages.

While I will elaborate on how the Global Programmes have evolved, allow me to emphasize that despite all the challenges, ensuring persons of concern have access to the most basic needs and upholding the technical integrity of our responses to assist in the safest and most sustainable way possible remains our absolute priority.

In the area of water and sanitation for example, an innovative water tracking system using mobile sensors in Uganda allows us to monitor the water levels and distribution rates across refugee camps, ensuring people can access safe drinking water in the most efficient manner.

Despite such encouraging developments, the fact remains that by the end of 2018, UNHCR's WASH Monitoring System indicated that only 59% of refugee situations had reached the basic level of access to water (20 litres or more per person per day and taking no more than 30 minutes per trip to collect). This is well behind the global average where 89% of the global population has access to basic drinking water services (SDG 6 Baseline Report). In fact access to water supply decreased in several emergency refugee situations, where the sharp rise in refugee populations exceeded the ability of UNHCR and its partners to adequately scale up, and at one point in South Darfur access to drinking water dropped to the dangerously low level of 5 litres per person per day.

In terms of sanitation the situation for refugees is even worse. The SDG 6 target is for everyone to have access to their own household toilet (not shared with other households). In refugee situations 83% are sharing toilets with one or more other households. In the worst case, in Republic of Congo, as many as 25 families are sharing one toilet.

Faced with the staggering fact that more than 60% of the shelter needs identified by UNHCR remained unmet due to lack of funding, UNHCR is working hard to diversify how shelter is provided depending on the given context. In north-western Kenya, and in many other operations, UNHCR provides refugee households with cash for shelter to ensure safe and dignified housing. The project provides value for money as refugees build the permanent shelters at 11-14 per cent lower costs than our partners. The project empowers refugees to deal directly with private sector providers such as masons and suppliers of building materials, and pay for the goods and services, contributing to the local economy. Biometric identification during the verification process and the opening of bank accounts reduces fraud and improves transparency. The cash for shelter project in Kalobeyei highlights how UNHCR uses cash assistance to help the refugees to transition to more durable solutions, in this case, integration with the host community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This brings me to my second point. In the current climate, we cannot respond to the ever growing needs worldwide alone, and nor should we. The Global Programmes are enabled and strengthened by leveraging key partnerships in the humanitarian, development and private sector context and pursuing a joint approach to planning and implementing whenever possible.

In December 2018, the four Principals of UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and OCHA committed to deliver cash assistance through joint cash platforms. Building on the Common Cash Facility in Jordan, the Greece Cash Alliance and LOUISE in Lebanon, UNHCR promotes collaborative approaches for cash transfer mechanisms that maximize efficiency and predictability, ensure effective coordination, leverage the expertise of all partners and maximize economies of scale.

In 2019, UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) committed to undertaking joint technical and strategic missions to strengthen joint responses to food insecurity and address growing rates of malnutrition.

Chad was jointly chosen for the first strategic review given it is one of the world's leading refugee-hosting nations, with refugees from Darfur concentrated in the East, from Central African Republic in the South and refugees from Nigeria concentrated in the western/Lake region. In recent years, UNHCR and WFP successfully introduced much-needed reforms into the refugee operation. Vulnerability-based targeting has already been introduced in several of the refugee camps. In some locations, assistance has been changed from in-kind to Cash Based Transfer modalities. Furthermore, a joint strategy on self-reliance has been developed (2015) and some, albeit limited, livelihoods initiatives have been launched with a view to building self-reliance and enhancing peaceful coexistence with host communities.

However, several challenges remain. The nutrition situation is critical in many camps in the East with global acute malnutrition rising and at levels greater than 15%. On top of this, food assistance and livelihoods support has been chronically underfunded for years. In six (6) of the refugee camps in the East (Sudanese refugees), the introduction of vulnerability-based targeting has encountered strong resistance from the refugee community, largely due to the very limited assistance

The mission identified the need for significant strengthening of the partnership between UNHCR and WFP in areas such as the development of a set of collective outcomes and a common vision with joint analysis, planning and monitoring using common indicators. It also highlighted the multiple opportunities, using the operational experience and knowledge within both organisations, in the development of more strategic and cost-effective interventions.

Ultimately, fostering such partnerships and joint approaches is a step toward a necessary culture change in how we plan, manage and report on our work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Gathering the right data which enables us to plan collectively towards a common goal and being able to demonstrate the collective impact, and the value for money is what we are striving to achieve.

UNHCR continues to enhance its capacity to make available quality and real-time data on displaced populations, including with respect to their protection situations and living conditions. By the end of 2018, UNHCR's population registry and case management system, PRIMES, had been rolled out across some 60 UNHCR operations. The PRIMES user community comprises 32 governments and external partners who are currently using the system. 2018 also saw the roll-out of an offline component, called RApp, which facilitates biometric registration in the most remote locations – it is currently in use in 23 operations. Biometric enrolment is a core component of UNHCR's registration processes, and is a key driver in risk mitigation and accountability to affected populations. Biometrics are essentially collected for all registered persons of concern from age five and above. In 2018, biometric records for 2.4 million persons of concern to UNHCR were captured, raising the total number of individuals with biometric

records in UNHCR's Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) and IrisGuard to **7.2 million**. Our current priorities are the Sudan, VenSit and the broader Sahel situation, all of which come with their own challenges. In addition, UNHCR has set the goal that every refugee should have a unique digital identity. UNHCR is seeking to realise this objective in a way which will empower refugees and facilitate their digital inclusion. Digital identity is one of the new pathways by which refugees can access greater opportunities, for example, by allowing them to prove their identity to access financial services (such as opening a mobile money account) or to undertake university courses online which might otherwise be inaccessible, and to be awarded with recognised qualifications in their own name.

In 2018, UNHCR rolled out a new integrated refugee health information system (iRHIS) and began collecting data from health services in refugee settings. The system will soon be fully operational in 16 countries, reflecting data from 135 sites and some 500 facilities, providing health coverage to around 5 million refugees.

As highlighted by the Deputy High Commissioner in her opening remarks, our initiative is to harness the relevant data we collect and ensure it is hosted within interoperable systems to inform evidence based decisions. By working with our partners, most notably WFP and the World Bank, we should be clear on why we are collecting data, collect it once and ensure that decisions are based on evidence rather than assumptions.

In light of the decentralization, ambitions of the GCR, and in the context of the overall UN reform, the RBM project has been recalibrated to empower field operations, providing them with the flexibility to select context appropriate indicators and construct plans which truly reflect the context on the ground. Individual strategic outcomes vary from country to country in pitch and formulation, but they all show a clear link to the achievement of a national SDG target, and hence also a UNHCR Strategic Result. Importantly, Strategic Outcomes cannot be achieved by UNHCR on its own. Achievement of Strategic Outcomes requires strengthened coordinated and concerted efforts, led by government stakeholders and encompassing all partners.

Chairperson, let me conclude here. I hope that my remarks have given the Committee a sense of the scope and importance of the work supported by UNHCR's Global Programmes. As always, I look forward to hearing the Committee's views and answering any questions that you may have.

Thank you.