

**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

Distr.: Restricted
24 February 2025

Original: English and French

Standing Committee
Ninety-second meeting

Global programmes

Summary

This paper provides an overview of developments in the global programmes of UNHCR since the last update to the eighty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee in February 2024 (EC/75/SC/CRP.3). It focuses on interventions and implementation in the following key areas: (a) self-reliance and inclusion; (b) development partnerships; (c) nutrition and food security; (d) education; (e) cash-based interventions; (f) public health, including mental health and psychosocial support; and (g) energy, settlement planning, shelter and housing, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

I. Introduction

1. In 2024, UNHCR's global programmes supported the needs of millions of forcibly displaced individuals, against a backdrop of new and ongoing conflict, political instability and human rights violations. These programmes covered the following areas: (a) self-reliance and inclusion; (b) development partnerships; (c) nutrition and food security; (d) education; (e) cash-based interventions; (f) public health, including mental health and psychosocial support; and (g) energy, settlement planning, shelter and housing, and water, sanitation and hygiene. UNHCR continued to co-lead the global shelter cluster and the global camp coordination and camp management cluster.

II. Updates on technical sectors

A. Self-reliance and inclusion

2. In 2024, significant progress was made in advancing self-reliance and inclusion for displaced persons by increasing access to digital work opportunities and labour mobility. Examples of this progress include Brazil's Companies with Refugees Forum, which now comprises over 135 members employing some 12,000 refugees, and Italy's Welcome Programme, which has offered online access to labour market inclusion opportunities to over 22,000 refugees since 2017. These examples demonstrate growing acceptance and inclusion of refugees into local labour markets. UNHCR and its partners implemented a range of initiatives aimed at supporting livelihoods and socioeconomic inclusion for over 207,400 Ukrainian refugees. These included advocating for employment rights and social protection, establishing refugee employment platforms, collaborating with governmental partners to promote an inclusive market systems framework and direct capacity building in the form of language and skills training.

3. Financial inclusion was bolstered through strategic partnerships with development finance institutions and impact investors. In Uganda, a blended finance programme facilitated access to financial services for over 130,000 refugee and host community entrepreneurs, providing them with loans, deposit accounts, financial literacy training and business development support. The program is now expanding its reach to benefit a greater number of forcibly displaced people through digital financial services. Its success has also garnered interest from additional financial institutions and investors, exploring opportunities for replication in other contexts. Furthermore, collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) enabled UNHCR to enhance refugee access to financial services. A key contribution of IFC was the conduct of comprehensive market diagnostics across multiple countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe, which helped to identify critical gaps and opportunities for financial inclusion. In Kenya, IFC facilitated the issuance of a \$20 million risk sharing facility, while in Poland, approximately \$17 million was secured as a second-loss guarantee for consumer loans - both initiatives specifically designed to improve financial access for refugees and host communities.

B. Development partnerships

4. In 2024, UNHCR strengthened its collaboration with key development partners and international financial institutions to integrate forced displacement responses into broader development investments in both host and return countries. This approach facilitated the mobilization of technical expertise and financial resources, supporting refugee-hosting countries worldwide in advancing economic inclusion, expanding access to social services, promoting self-reliance and implementing sustainable solutions for forcibly displaced persons. The *Agence française de développement*, or AFD, pledged 150 million euros as part of a four-year commitment aimed at promoting stability in fragile contexts affected by forced displacement. The *Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung*, or BMZ, advanced self-reliance and social protection through their dedicated funding instrument aimed at addressing forced displacement. The commitment was reflected as a contribution of 434 million euros for 2024 under the multi-stakeholder pledge on the humanitarian, development and peace nexus at the second Global Refugee Forum.

5. Collaboration continued with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, IFC and the Government of the Netherlands (Kingdom of), which committed 800 million euros over a four-year period commencing in 2023, under the “Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities” (PROSPECTS).¹ The initiative has achieved significant outcomes, including the enrolment of 1.1 million forcibly displaced children and youth in education programmes since 2023. Under the partnership, a joint study was also carried out with UNICEF to assess gaps and capacity needs for extending social protection to displaced populations, leading to proposals for a joint technical assistance facility to support field operations.

6. The Japan International Cooperation Agency reinforced its commitment to humanitarian, development and peace nexus initiatives across multiple countries, including Bangladesh, South Sudan and Uganda. In Uganda, the Agency has been strengthening the capacity of local authorities in refugee-hosting areas, enabling them to effectively integrate refugee populations into comprehensive area development plans.

7. UNHCR partnered with the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, the African Union and the League of Arab States to lead policy dialogue and training on integrating forced displacement into peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. This initiative stemmed from the multi-stakeholder pledge on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, announced at the second Global Refugee Forum. It is co-led by Colombia, Egypt, Norway, and the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

8. In 2024, UNHCR further strengthened its engagement with the African Development Bank through regional bodies such Southern African Development Community. A tripartite partnership on forced displacement, fragility, and climate resilience was established between all three parties in this regard. Furthermore, at the Africa Investment Forum, UNHCR organized a session on private sector investment opportunities in forced displacement settings. The session focused on agriculture, financial services and renewable energy. Moreover, partnerships with the Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank enabled the identification of additional priority areas for displacement programming.

9. Collaboration with the World Bank generated additional funds for refugee-hosting countries. Since 2017, the funding [Window for Host Communities and Refugees](#) has channeled \$4.97 billion in investments across 98 projects in 20 low-income host countries. In 2024, Benin and Togo were added to the financing window, with UNHCR supporting eligibility processes and providing policy analyses to align policy dialogue and programming with the needs of displaced populations and host communities. Moreover, \$976 million in grants have been provided by donor countries under the Global Concessional Financing Facility since 2016, unlocking \$7.7 billion in concessional loans for seven middle-income countries.²

10. The World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement is implementing its 2024-2027 strategy through 41 activities supporting the production and analysis of socioeconomic data to inform policies and strategies in 29 operations around the world. In 2024, it supported \$3 billion of investments by development actors in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ecuador, Lebanon and Yemen, targeting access to energy, agribusiness and social protection initiatives. Key achievements included country-specific surveys in Libya and South Sudan, the launch of a public e-learning course on socioeconomic evidence, and capacity building in 16 countries.

11. In 2024, UNHCR also strengthened its partnership with IFC through the UNHCR [Joint Initiative](#), which facilitated strategic collaboration across 30 country operations. Ten activities were jointly conducted with IFC, including preliminary assessments in Bangladesh, Chad, Mauritania and Mozambique. A key achievement was enhanced access to financial

¹ The project is implemented by UNHCR, the International Finance Corporation, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank. It operates at global and regional level, and focuses on eight countries in the Middle East and North Africa and in the East and Horn of Africa.

² Armenia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Jordan, Lebanon and the Republic of Moldova.

services, with six financial inclusion projects designed with IFC clients.³ The Joint Initiative also enhanced private sector-focused data production to explore new opportunities in employability in Mexico, agribusiness in Mozambique and housing in Poland. Joint regional workshops were also organized with IFC in several regions of Africa, to identify intervention opportunities in countries with conducive regulatory frameworks for promoting private sector investments in forced displacement contexts.

12. Throughout 2024, UNHCR engaged in development-oriented capacity building through initiatives such as its DevUP training programme, which benefited 200 national officers, as well as the Peer-to-Peer Resilience and Solutions Platform for senior leadership. Additionally, UNHCR provided training on humanitarian, development and peace engagement and the use of socioeconomic evidence in addressing forced displacement. For internal audiences, this included the Development playbook, which offers guidance on operationalizing development approaches. Externally, the Joint Data Center collaborated with the “building the evidence on forced displacement” research partnership, to devise e-learning modules in collaboration with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

C. Nutrition and food security

13. In 2024, UNHCR continued to work in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNICEF, WFP and the World Health Organization (WHO) to reduce child wasting under the Global Action Plan on [Child Wasting](#), supporting the sustainable development goals’ target 2.2. Efforts focused developing a global framework for accountability, conducting regional consultations to assess progress on national-level multisectoral roadmaps, supporting four new countries⁴ in roadmap development and launching a call to action advocating for sustained efforts and financial commitments, to prioritize malnutrition prevention and scale up treatment. Refugee inclusion remained central to this initiative. From January to December 2024, over 257,000 refugee children in 26 countries received treatment for acute malnutrition.

14. Since 2020, the [UNHCR-WFP Joint Hub](#) has supported 19 country operations in advancing joint assessments, self-reliance initiatives and preparing targeting strategies. In 2024, key achievements included the implementation of joint approaches in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Lebanon, South Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe. At the global level, the Joint Hub continues to strengthen joint appeals processes and facilitate the rollout of the [Joint Analytical Framework](#) for assessments and analysis. Through the provision of technical guidance, tools, coordination and capacity-building, the Joint Hub ensures more efficient, accountable, and targeted assistance and solutions for forcibly displaced populations.

15. UNHCR is developing a global roadmap on agriculture to expand climate-smart and market-oriented agricultural solutions, enhancing economic inclusion, resilience, and self-reliance among displaced populations. This initiative focuses on mapping agricultural opportunities, constraints, and gaps in displacement areas across several countries including Chad, Ethiopia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Zambia, to inform context-specific interventions. In collaboration with governments, local communities, and private sector actors, UNHCR promotes sustainable farming practices, market access and improved food security for refugees and host communities. Additionally, UNHCR is strengthening partnerships with governments, the private sector and development partners, including IFC, the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, to advocate for inclusive policies, climate-resilient agribusiness investments and expanded financial services for displaced farmers and their hosts.

³ These include Centenary Bank in Uganda, Crystal Bank in Georgia, Equity Bank in Kenya, Financiera Confianza in Peru, and Nubank in Brazil and Colombia.

⁴ Also known as GAP countries, involved in the Global Action Plan (GAP) for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All, a WHO-led initiative.

D. Education

16. In 2024, UNHCR conducted a strategic review of its education initiatives to coincide with the midpoint of implementing its 2030 Refugee Education Strategy. The review focused on evolving government inclusion efforts and shifts in global education with an emphasis on quality learning.

17. Efforts were made to accelerate the implementation of the multi-stakeholder pledge made at the second Global Refugee Forum on predictable, multi-year financing to facilitate the inclusion of refugees in national education systems. To this end, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland provided initial funding to INSPIRE, a World Bank technical assistance facility designed to leverage its international development association funding for transitions towards greater inclusion. The facility was launched in Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan and plans for 11 additional countries have been finalised for 2025. Collaborations with governments, multilateral organizations and the private sector focused on aligning approaches, financing and priorities, as highlighted by a key Wilton Park meeting attended by six host governments and marked by renewed partner commitments. Recognising the critical nexus between humanitarian and development approaches on education for refugees, Education Cannot Wait and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office announced contributions to UNHCR, facilitating UNHCR's work on transition to inclusion in 2025.

18. This past year also marked the halfway point of the global 15by30 initiative to enrol 15 per cent of young refugees in higher education by 2030, with enrolment standing at 7 per cent at the end of the year. To maintain momentum, UNHCR continued to garner support for the thousands of higher education institutions in refugee hosting countries. This has been accomplished through initiatives such as Each One Take One and the Aiming Higher campaign which, to date, has raised more than \$23 million in scholarships through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative, known as the DAFI scholarship programme. In 2024, the DAFI programme supported over 9,500 refugee students in 58 countries. The programme has been shown to positively impact secondary education retention rates, particularly among girls. In addition, partners of the DAFI programme such as the Mastercard Foundation also awarded scholarships for young people affected by the conflict in the Sudan.

19. In April 2024, UNHCR and its partner, Education Above All, renewed their strategic partnership agreement to address the global challenge of out-of-school children in refugee contexts. This partnership has already helped enrol over 1.6 million out-of-school refugee children across 15 countries through investments in school infrastructure, community engagement, teacher support and targeted activities for vulnerable learners, including children with disabilities. To complement these efforts and expand access to primary education, UNHCR launched the Primary Impact Initiative multi-year funding mechanism in 2023, which has since raised \$8.7 million. Over the next three years, the initiative will focus on increasing equitable access to primary education, improving education quality, ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment and promoting inclusive education policies at national and local levels. Since 2023, Primary Impact activities have provided primary education access to over 431,000 displaced children, nearly half of whom were female. The initiative reached 1,029 primary schools in both camps and urban areas. This included 22,226 overaged children enrolled in accelerated education programmes.

20. By the end of 2024, the Instant Network Schools Programme, developed by UNHCR and Vodafone Foundation, had brought digital education to over 343,800 children and 6,250 teachers across six countries.

21. In 2024 UNHCR continued to increase the availability of data and evidence on refugee education with key partners. This includes pilot studies, for collecting baseline data on the foundational learning skills of refugee children, aimed at gaining deeper insights into their learning status and identifying gaps, thereby informing the process of integrating refugee students into the national education system. Furthermore, the [UNHCR Refugee Education Report](#) for 2024 was released and showcases results from 65 countries, a significant increase from the 12 countries covered in the previous report.

E. Cash-based interventions

22. In 2024 UNHCR delivered \$650 million in cash assistance to 6 million people in 100 countries, of which \$455 million were channeled through the UNHCR CashAssist system in 60 countries. The largest cash assistance delivery programmes were in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen.

23. Post-distribution monitoring in 50 countries indicated that 95 per cent of beneficiaries preferred cash or a combination of cash and in-kind assistance, with 95 per cent reporting improved living conditions. Yet, 67 per cent of households reported being able to meet only half, or less, of their basic needs, with the largest expenditures being food, health care and rent. Over two-thirds of the beneficiaries received cash digitally, with 38 per cent receiving assistance via personal banking or mobile money accounts, which represented a 2 per cent increase from 2023.

24. Two years into the new cash coordination model, which UNHCR is accountable for in refugee settings, the Global Cash Advisory Group commissioned a [review](#) in which UNHCR's leading expertise in cash coordination and commitment to this response modality were showcased. UNHCR co-chairs 17 cash working groups, of which 60 per cent are now co-chaired by local actors, which aligns with the UNHCR "grand bargain" commitment.

25. With decreasing humanitarian funding and growing needs, UNHCR will continue to implement its 2022-2026 policy on cash-based interventions. It will use cash as the primary response modality, including in emergencies, whilst improving design quality. UNHCR will leverage cash as a vehicle for protection and sustainable responses. Monitoring and evaluation and innovative approaches will remain crucial, along with a strong emphasis on the quality of cash assistance and the enhancement of partnerships.

F. Public health, including mental health and psychosocial support

26. UNHCR continues to support host countries in strengthening the resilience of national health systems, ensuring that refugees have access to essential national health services. A [joint study](#) carried out with the World Bank demonstrated that integrating refugees into national health systems enhances cost efficiency, healthcare infrastructure and public health outcomes, while also fostering social cohesion and aligning with global commitments, benefiting both refugees and host communities. Additionally, Queen Margaret University⁵ conducted case studies⁶ on best practices in health inclusion, offering valuable insights to inform policy development.

27. Despite progress, barriers to healthcare access remain, particularly for individuals with chronic illnesses, who face twice the access challenges compared to those without. The 2024 Regional Socio-Economic Insights Survey of Europe found that while 83 per cent of individuals accessed needed care, gaps persist in services related to non-communicable diseases, maternal health, and HIV and tuberculosis. Addressing these requires targeted strategies, sustainable financing, and stronger partnerships.

28. UNHCR strengthened its integrated refugee health information system, which is now operational in 22 countries and over 195 camp and settlement settings, providing a data-driven foundation for planning and advocacy. In 2024, nearly 9 million health consultations were conducted, with 83 per cent benefiting refugees and 17 per cent benefiting host communities. Additionally, over 90,000 women (94 per cent) received skilled childbirth care, contributing to improved maternal and neonatal health outcomes.

29. In 2024, UNHCR advanced global health advocacy by co-convening the Group of Friends of Health for Refugees and Host Communities, shaping discussions for the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2025. At the twenty-ninth United Nations Climate Change conference, UNHCR, alongside WHO, the International Organization for Migration and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, engaged with government representatives from Azerbaijan, Malawi, and Yemen on climate-resilient,

⁵ Also known as QMU and located in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

⁶ In Pakistan, Mauritania, Peru and Zambia.

migrant- and refugee-inclusive health systems. UNHCR, in partnership with WHO, co-hosted a global dialogue on non-communicable diseases in emergency settings. As part of this effort, UNHCR collaborated with the World Diabetes Foundation to enhance diabetes and hypertension care in countries like Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania.

30. In collaboration with health ministries, WHO, and other partners, UNHCR responded to multiple disease outbreaks, including cholera and mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries, by scaling up critical health interventions and water, sanitation, and hygiene measures. The response focused on case management, infection prevention, risk communication, surveillance, and vaccination. However, efforts to strengthen local health systems and undertake emergency interventions were hindered by access constraints, fragile infrastructure and insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

31. In 2024, the Sudan experienced a resurgence of cholera following heavy rainfall and flooding. The outbreak was further exacerbated by conflict, dire humanitarian conditions and overstretched health infrastructure, leaving 60 per cent of the population without access to healthcare. Cases of malaria and diarrhoea also increased due to contaminated water sources. In response, UNHCR, the Ministry of Health, WHO, and partners launched a multisectoral intervention, strengthening surveillance, early warning, and contact tracing. Support included scaling up local health services, establishing cholera treatment facilities, training health workers, and providing medical supplies.

G. Energy, settlement planning, shelter and housing, and water, sanitation and hygiene

32. In line with the 2024-2030 Focus Area Strategic Plan on Climate Action, UNHCR continues to promote environmental sustainability and climate resilience in the areas of energy, settlement planning, shelter and housing, and water, sanitation and hygiene. These activities are supported by the Geneva Technical Hub. In 2024, the Geneva Technical Hub collaborated with Swiss academia to develop various disaster risk reduction tools, including [one to assess flood risk and design mitigation measures](#) using a community-based approach. In addition, guidance on “nature-based solutions” in humanitarian settlements⁷ was developed, with a catalogue of environmentally sound technical solutions. Further, technical support was provided to Algeria, Kenya, Mauritania, and the Republic of Congo. This included spatial planning, infrastructure optimization, water resource management, disaster risk reduction, and capacity building to enhance sustainability, resilience, and service delivery.

33. As part of the 2023 multi-stakeholder pledge on human settlements made at the second Global Refugee Forum, UNHCR and key partners have been working to mobilize resources for the Geneva Technical Hub 2.0 to be established in 2025. Its purpose will be to deliver integrated, context-adapted technical solutions in humanitarian settings, emphasizing climate-adaptive strategies, localization, and resource-efficient practices. It will aim at enhancing collaboration whilst building local capacity and promoting sustainable, long-term solutions. Additional donor support is being sought to build on the contributions provided over the past four years by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

34. The Energy Solutions for Displacement Settings programme, a partnership with the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*, or GIZ, under the SUN Global Programme funded by the *Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung*, or BMZ, concluded in 2024. In the final and seventh year of the programme, guidance and recommendations were consolidated based on activities and lessons learned throughout the implementation period. This included market-based solutions for clean cooking and electrification, the installation of mini-grids and collaborations with authorities to strengthen the policy environment. Lessons learned in addressing challenges related to security, sustainability, and scaling private investments led to the development of

⁷ The guidelines for integrating “nature-based solutions” in settlement planning are available on the UNHCR global website.

recommendations and guidance. These include strategies for sustainable investment, operations and maintenance models, user-centred design, de-risking private investments and facilitating improved refugee access to market-driven energy systems.

35. To foster climate resilience and reduce dependency on fossil fuels, UNHCR advanced the solarization of water systems and health facilities through Project Flow's innovative financing mechanisms. As of December 2024, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Rwanda and the Sudan had agreed to solarize 25 water systems and health facilities, which are expected to benefit 1.2 million individuals in the coming years.

36. The inaugural roundtable on the multi-stakeholder pledge on human settlements made at the second Global Refugee Forum convened over 100 participants. The event provided a platform for pledging entities to present their progress, share best practices, and collaboratively address implementation challenges. Participants also explored ways to strengthen partnerships and enhance the impact of their commitments. The roundtable featured interventions from the Governments of Ethiopia, Mauritania, Mozambique, South Sudan, Switzerland and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

H. Global shelter cluster

37. In 2024, the global shelter cluster supported shelter clusters in 30 countries and 11 cluster-like coordination systems, targeting 37 million out of the 98 million internally displaced persons in need of shelter and non-food items. Nearly 10 million people were reached with the efforts of over 1,000 partners. The cluster activated the donor consultation group and enhanced its global support team's capacity to consider broader settlement needs through the settlement approach and promote cash assistance and market-based solutions. It also launched two new working groups: one on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the other on the impact of extreme heat to shelters.

38. In addition, the global shelter cluster held an annual meeting that brought together over 200 practitioners to discuss the new [2024-2028 Global Shelter Cluster Strategy](#). A strategic advisory group meeting was also held to discuss modalities for operationalizing the strategy's commitments to coordination and collaboration, localization, evidence generation and use, and accountability to affected populations. Guided by the new global strategy, technical support was provided to all shelter clusters and seed funding was allocated to nine countries to develop pilot projects. The global shelter cluster also provided in-country technical support to its coordination teams in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic.

I. Global camp coordination and camp management cluster

39. In 2024, the global camp coordination and camp management cluster operated in 27 countries, with UNHCR leading or co-leading efforts in 19. These country operations managed and coordinated activities benefiting over 20 million individuals. Escalating violence and conflict resulted in displacement surges of over 15 million people across 7,000 sites in priority emergencies such as Myanmar and Sudan. In addition, new emergencies in Lebanon and the State of Palestine triggered the activation of additional coordination mechanisms. To address these emergencies, local actors benefited from Training of Trainers workshops held in Chad, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Nigeria. These served to strengthen local capacity and site management expertise.

40. Lastly, the cluster engaged in an extensive consultative process to develop its 2025–2029 global strategy. The strategy defines key priorities, focus areas, and innovative approaches aimed at enhancing the work of operations in this field. Grounded in a solutions-oriented, area-based approach, it addresses immediate needs while promoting sustainable, long-term solutions for displaced populations, including safe and voluntary returns or local integration.