

# Independent Evaluation of UNHCR's Decentralization and Regionalization (D&R) Reform

## Background of the Evaluation

From January to August 2024, an independent evaluation assessed UNHCR's Decentralization and Regionalization (D&R) reform (2019-2023), focusing on its design, implementation and outcomes across the organization. Our analysis centered on four key areas: Strategy; People, Organization and Governance; **Processes and Technology**—essential components of an effective organizational model, ultimately leading to actionable insights for enhancing the D&R framework. Within each key area, several facets of the reform were assessed based on the initiatives implemented.

## How can streamlined processes and advanced technology enhance reform execution?

### Technology

#### TECHNOLOGY ENABLERS

- New technology systems support D&R reform goals, but rollout faced challenges
- Centralized functionalities and distributed ownership hindered adoption
- Compressed training timelines limited the effectiveness of new systems

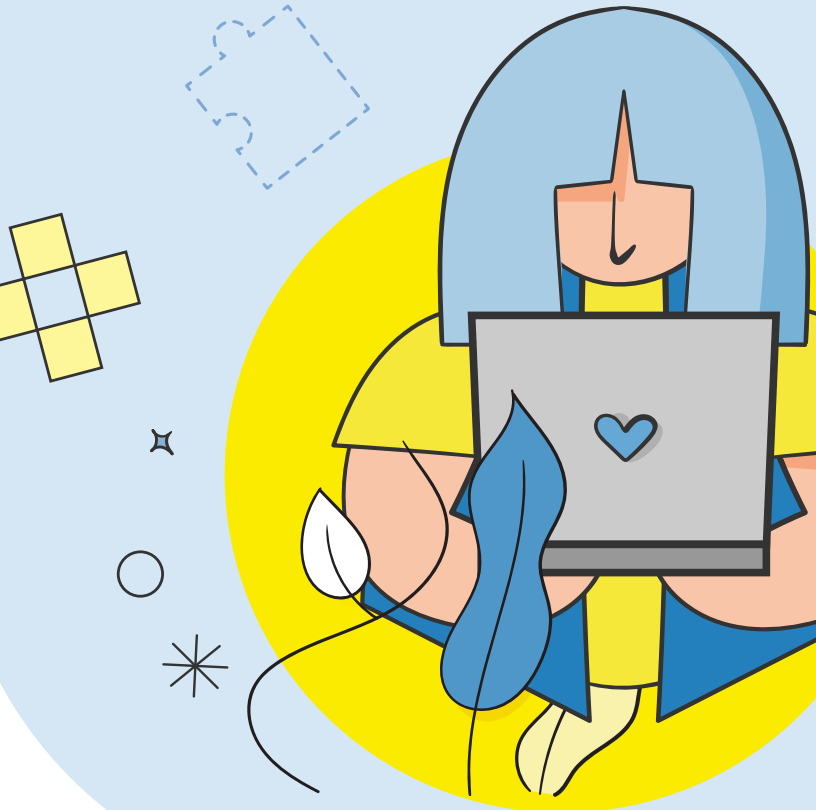
### Processes

#### PARTNERSHIP

- D&R strengthened UNHCR's collaboration with responsiveness to partners through increased regional presence and capacity at regional and country levels
- The degree of regionalization of some strategic partners limits these benefits. Management of donor relations remains centralized in many cases
- D&R has so far not enabled UNHCR to diversify its donor funding base
- Aims to increase local fundraising remain limited in success due, in part, to unclear eligibility criteria and lack of certainty regarding how the funds will be allocated

#### OPERATIONAL DELIVERY

- D&R increased agility and efficiency during emergencies, including enhanced coordination with stakeholders
- Empowerment to make resource-allocative decisions in line with approved authorities varies across regions and operations
- D&R has enhanced operational flexibility and responsiveness to local contexts by establishing protection pillars and specialized roles in critical areas in each Regional Bureau. The Regional Bureaux' proximity to operations has generally improved their understanding of local contexts and operational challenges, enabling more responsive and context-specific oversight
- There is growing, yet uneven technical protection capacity at regional and local levels, allowing stronger customization of global policies to local needs
- Supply in both emergency and non-emergency settings seems to have become more efficient due to regional procurement, however, disparities between regions persist



#### Enhance resource mobilization and partnership opportunities

##### Key actions include:

- Clarifying rules for budget increases from local fundraising
- Leveraging collective donor knowledge across the organization for a coherent, donor-centric approach
- Incentivizing Regional Bureaux Directors and Country Offices Representatives through KPIs tied to regional and local fundraising objectives

#### Strengthen workforce planning to inform staffing structures and optimize staffing

##### Key actions include:

- Support staffing by a comprehensive skills mapping exercise. Data on skills must be captured, periodically updated and made available for workforce planning and staffing
  - Improve the data quality on skills and current roles (incl. multiple roles and technical specializations) to enable better strategic workforce planning and overview at global and regional levels
  - Perform assessment of current technical capacities, incl. those of critical funded partners in order to identify and address capacity/capability gaps
  - Strengthen oversight and accountability in workforce planning
- Establish transparent criteria for prioritizing emergency financial resource requests by HQ and Regional Bureaux Directors, communicating decisions to individual operations for better understanding

- Align delegated authority for user rights with D&R principles by developing a framework for user identity/access control. Align the framework for system access distribution with D&R principles and with decentralized ways of working as a cross-cutting policy and culture of UNHCR