

UNHCR Evaluation Office 2023-2024 Year in Review Portal

Evaluating what works for the people we serve

2023-2024 in Review

17 evaluations
completed

Initiated 10 new evaluations, all
aligned with the organization's
strategic areas of work

The average days for
completed Management
Responses was 116

To operationalize the 2022
Evaluation Policy, a new
evaluation strategy was
launched

Evaluation Office's
expenditure represented
0.13% of UNHCR's total
expenditure for 2023 (below
the recommended 0.5% - 3%)

2023 UNHCR evaluations were
subject to independent external
assessment, achieving a quality
rating of 67%
(compared to 64% in 2022)



Welcome to UNHCR's Evaluation Year in Review Portal! This portal covers the reporting period of the 2023 ExCom Report, from July 2023 till June 2024. Throughout this period, evaluation has continued to play a crucial role in informing evidence-based decision-making, ensuring accountability and transparency, providing valuable insights, shining a light on good practice, and taking corrective action where needed. Through evaluation, UNHCR has been able to evaluate what works for the people we serve. In the past year, UNHCR completed 17 evaluations and initiated 10 new evaluations in alignment with the organization's strategic areas of work.

To operationalize the Evaluation Policy approved by the High Commissioner in 2022, a new Evaluation Strategy was launched in January 2024. The strategy provides a clear, costed framework for delivering outcomes that seek to improve the coverage and quality of evaluations, strengthening the capacity of managers to evaluate, as well as enhance the culture of evidence generation and its use in results-based planning and management decision-making.

This portal outlines the progress made in strengthening the evaluation function across UNHCR and achieving change across the three strategic dimensions highlighted in the new strategy:

- Coverage of strategic directions with quality evaluative evidence
- Capacity to evaluate and use evidence
- Culture of evidence and learning



Coverage of strategic directions with quality evaluative evidence

The number of evaluations has grown steadily from 4 evaluations completed in 2016 to 17 evaluations in the past year.

UNHCR evaluations, which were completed in the past year, were subject to independent external assessment and achieved an overall quality rating of 67 per cent, compared to 64 per cent in 2022. However, during the first half of 2024, three decentralized evaluations, of which two were carried out jointly with other United Nations agencies, did not meet quality standards and were reclassified as unpublished studies. Remedial measures are being put in place.

Overview of evaluations completed

Centralized evaluations
(Commissioned by the Evaluation Office)

Evaluation Type	Evaluation
Evaluations of Global Strategies & Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of the age, gender, and diversity policy (final report)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement (2019-2023)
Country Strategy Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Honduras
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mali
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mauritania
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mozambique
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tajikistan
Level 3 Emergency Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional refugee emergency response of UNHCR to the Ukraine level-3 emergency
Joint Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the crisis in northern Ethiopia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children

Decentralized evaluations
(Commissioned by Management)

Evaluation Type	Evaluation
Regional & multi-country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNHCR-UNICEF joint impact evaluation on the effects of the regional water, sanitation and hygiene programme in East Africa on social cohesion: Baseline report (KfW)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support of UNHCR to health, education and economic inclusion in West and Central Africa
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNHCR-UNICEF joint summative evaluation of the European Union's global promotion of best practices for children in migration 2020-2023 (funded by the European Union)
Country Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation of the Refugee and Migrant Advice Service's alternative to detention pilot programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation of cash-based interventions for livelihoods and economic inclusion in Burkina Faso
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance evaluation of the phase 3 livelihoods, energy and environment projects among Somali refugees and host communities in Ethiopia (funded by IKEA Foundation)

2 Capacity to evaluate and use evidence

The Evaluation Office is highly committed to enhancing the evaluation capacity of colleagues, ensuring they are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to commission and use evaluations to improve the organization's work.

Numerous initiatives to bolster evaluation capacities have been developed, including:

5 Senior Regional Evaluation Officers provide support for decentralized evaluations by developing learning materials and providing individual coaching to evaluation managers at the operations level.

Updated evaluation guidance to provide practical support to decentralized teams, along with targeted internal workshops and external professional training have been provided to UNHCR staff.

A network of operations-level Monitoring and Evaluation Focal Points has been established, and it is supported and guided by the Evaluation Office and the Division of Strategic Planning & Results.

An online learning module on Evaluation, developed by the Evaluation Office in collaboration with the Global Learning and Development Service and the Division of Strategic Planning and Results, will soon be ready for UNHCR staff.

3 Culture of evidence and learning

Management response to evaluations, in terms of the implementation of recommended actions, is an important measure of the successful uptake of evaluation evidence and learning. Management is required to report on the implementation of accepted recommendations in the first and second year following the completion of the evaluations. In 2023, management reported on several evaluations.

- The recommendations from the [2022 independent evaluation of the organization's support for strengthening national asylum systems](#) have directly informed the preparation of the new UNHCR strategy on strengthening national asylum capacity as well as many key initiatives and products, such as the asylum capacity assessment tool, the risk management tool on asylum systems and the learning strategy on asylum capacity development.
- UNHCR consistently uses findings of evaluations of crisis responses, such as those carried out in [Afghanistan](#), the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#), [Ethiopia](#) and in the [Sahel countries](#), to inform and improve the organization's preparedness, response & reporting on emergencies. Emergency roster membership has been reformulated to strengthen middle management membership and ensure sufficient capacity to steer refugee coordination and clusters for which UNHCR has lead roles.
- In response to recommendations made in the evaluation of the [regional refugee and resilience plan for follow-up to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic](#) and neighbouring countries, a conceptual framework and operating model were developed to clarify the regional plan's mandate and scope of work.
- Recommendations from the 2022 [evaluation of the organization's repatriation programmes and activities](#) included the necessity to generate good quality data and analysis to understand enablers and barriers to progress. In response, UNHCR has sought to modernize and standardize its work on measuring refugees' intentions to return.
- Evidence from previous evaluations informed the formulation of the regional multi-year strategies for the period 2025 to 2027, through targeted inputs from outposted Senior Evaluation Officers working as part of multifunctional teams.

UNHCR is currently designing the tracking and reporting system for documenting management's use of evaluations and recommendations.



In 2023, the development of timely management responses remained a challenge. The submission of management responses was delayed for half of the evaluations completed in 2023. UNHCR is currently designing the tracking and reporting system for documenting management's use of evaluations and recommendations.



Findings from selected evaluations

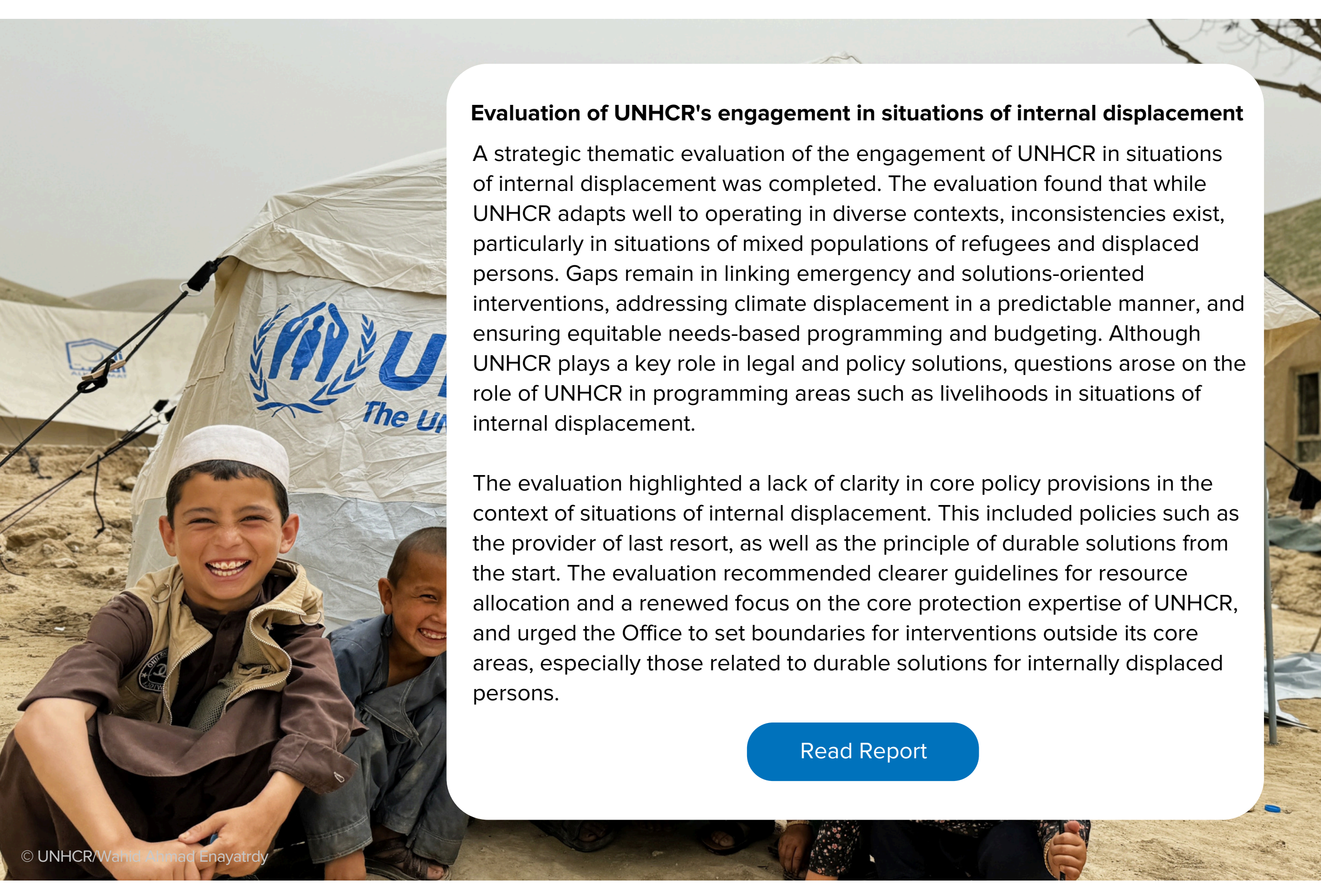
Evaluation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy

In 2023, the final year of the longitudinal evaluation of the implementation of the organization's 2018 policy on age, gender and diversity was completed. It concluded that while there is a relatively strong focus on girls and women in UNHCR programming, some core actions, including registration, are better addressed than others aimed at promoting broader gender equality, such as equal access to economic opportunities. Although UNHCR is increasing support for persons with disabilities, limited resources and technical expertise remain obstacles to inclusion.

The evaluation found a relatively strong focus on the rights and needs of unaccompanied children and adolescents, but no comprehensive approach for supporting older persons. The evaluation recommended that UNHCR reinforces and adapts existing data systems, strengthens commitment and action from leadership and management on age, gender and diversity, applies an intersectional lens in its programming, and continues investing in partnerships with key stakeholders.

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Evaluation of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement

A strategic thematic evaluation of the engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement was completed. The evaluation found that while UNHCR adapts well to operating in diverse contexts, inconsistencies exist, particularly in situations of mixed populations of refugees and displaced persons. Gaps remain in linking emergency and solutions-oriented interventions, addressing climate displacement in a predictable manner, and ensuring equitable needs-based programming and budgeting. Although UNHCR plays a key role in legal and policy solutions, questions arose on the role of UNHCR in programming areas such as livelihoods in situations of internal displacement.

The evaluation highlighted a lack of clarity in core policy provisions in the context of situations of internal displacement. This included policies such as the provider of last resort, as well as the principle of durable solutions from the start. The evaluation recommended clearer guidelines for resource allocation and a renewed focus on the core protection expertise of UNHCR, and urged the Office to set boundaries for interventions outside its core areas, especially those related to durable solutions for internally displaced persons.

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Evaluation of UNHCR's Level 3 regional refugee emergency response to the crisis in Ukraine

In 2023, an independent evaluation assessed the protection response in Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia following the refugee crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. The evaluation examined the provision of services, inter-agency coordination under the refugee coordination model, internal emergency protocols, and emergency preparedness and support to national governments. The evaluation also gathered the views of over 1,300 refugees from Ukraine through an online survey on the work of UNHCR.

The evaluation underlined the effectiveness of the organization's action, particularly its engagement with national governments and the timely deployment of resources to meet emergency needs, despite the scale and speed of the crisis. The evaluation's recommendations stressed the importance for UNHCR to further invest in emergency preparedness and to capitalize on the lessons learned in engaging with a technologically proficient target population.

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The background image shows a warehouse or distribution center. In the foreground, the back of a person wearing a purple patterned shirt and a white and grey patterned headscarf is visible. To their right, the back of a person in a pink t-shirt is also visible. In the background, other people are working, and there are large blue bags, likely containing humanitarian aid supplies, stacked on the right side. The lighting is bright, coming from overhead industrial lights.

Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (IAHE) of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan & the IAHE to the crisis in northern Ethiopia

UNHCR supported two IAHEs in Afghanistan and northern Ethiopia in the past year. In Afghanistan, the evaluation concluded that the inter-agency response, despite significant constraints, had been effective in meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable Afghans. In Ethiopia, international humanitarian assistance was delivered under extremely difficult circumstances, and the lack of a coordinated strategy and an inter-agency humanitarian country team impacted effectiveness. Both evaluations observed that there were important challenges faced in relation to preparedness and rapid scale-up, the adherence to humanitarian principles and the upholding of human rights.

[IAHE Afghanistan](#)

[IAHE Ethiopia](#)

Evaluation of the Phase 3 IKEA Foundation livelihoods, energy & environment projects among Somali refugees & host communities in Ethiopia

In 2023, the highest-scoring decentralized evaluation by the external quality assurance was the livelihoods and energy project in Ethiopia. This evaluation assessed a multiphase project, funded by IKEA, targeting Somali refugees and host communities. The final phase focused on enhancing the capacity of host and refugee cooperatives, market linkages and sustainability through livelihood, energy and environmental projects.

The evaluation found that the project's business model served as a visible proof of concept and prompted a shift in the mindset of targeted communities. The analysis revealed that cooperatives, which were supported, increased productivity, generated income and achieved better social cohesion. Recommendations emphasized the importance of strategic transition planning, government capacity-building and an enhanced focus on sustainability.

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Mauritania country strategy evaluation

The country strategy evaluation in Mauritania found that the close partnership between UNHCR and the Government improved the protection environment for refugees, and that the country operation demonstrated responsiveness and flexibility to adapt to challenging circumstances. While progress was made in including refugees in social protection and the national health care system, refugee inclusion in the education and finance sectors remains in the early stages.

The evaluation recommended that the role of the Malian refugee community in the management of the Mbera camp be further strengthened in the transformation of the camp into an urbanized, integrated settlement. This vision could be enabled by sustainable medium-term financing from the Window for Host Communities and Refugees mechanism of the World Bank's International Development Association, and through enhanced engagement by UNHCR with development actors.

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External engagement

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

The Evaluation Office has maintained its leadership role within UNEG and has supported the creation of new guidance for evaluation norms & capacities in the UN system. Notably, a training course on evaluation for staff members of 12 UN agencies was led by UNHCR in the Asia and the Pacific region in 2024.

Member States

The Evaluation Office has been engaging Member States by presenting key evaluation findings and recommendations and initiating discussions through informal briefings and side events. The UNHCR Evaluation Office has organized two Member State Briefings in the past year.

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE)

An IAHE is an independent assessment of results of the collective humanitarian response by member organizations of the IASC. IAHEs evaluate the extent to which collective results have been achieved and how humanitarian efforts have contributed to that achievement. UNHCR supported 2 inter-agency humanitarian evaluations over the past year – in Ethiopia and Afghanistan.

UN SWEO

The 2020 Secretary-Generals' report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review proposed the establishment of the UN Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office as part of his broader reform agenda. The purpose of the SWEO is to strengthen oversight, transparency, and to incentivize joint work and learning among the UN entities. The new SWEO was established in the second half of 2023.



Innovation in evaluation



Accountability to Affected People (AAP)

In line with the Evaluation Office's commitments, the principles of AAP is prominently reflected in its evaluations. In addition to interviews and focus group discussions with refugees in Mauritania, the country strategy evaluation also engaged the refugee community in Mbera camp through innovative participatory approaches, such as a workshop held with refugees to discuss the recommendations.



Impact evaluations

The Evaluation Office has initiated work on identifying appropriate contexts for carrying out rigorous quantitative impact evaluations within the organization. These efforts include an assessment of existing impact evaluations and the identification of partnerships with academic institutions, as well as protection-focused opportunities to pilot work in 2025.



Cost effectiveness

The assessment carried out by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network identified the need for UNHCR to be better able to demonstrate cost effectiveness. In response, as a starting point, centralized evaluations will work to present more information on the financial investments made in specific areas under evaluation.



Artificial Intelligence

The Evaluation Office has piloted the use of artificial intelligence in the production of evidence synthesis, with generally positive results. As UNHCR refines its guidance on the use of artificial intelligence, the Evaluation Office will continue to explore the use of such tools for enhanced efficiency.



Evaluating Innovations

The Evaluation Office is committed to promoting the testing of new approaches and tools in its work. Within the context of the organization's conceptual framework for incubating, validating and scaling up innovation, the Evaluation Office and the Innovation Service have agreed to rigorously evaluate promising innovations.



Year ahead



Global Thematic Evaluations

In 2024, UNHCR's work in important global strategic and thematic areas will be evaluated, such as GBV regionalization and decentralization, urban refugee livelihoods, climate action and cash programming.



Inter-Agency Evaluations

In 2024/25 several inter-agency humanitarian evaluations are planned including of the response to earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye, and to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia and DRC will be conducted.



Country Strategy Evaluations

Several country strategy evaluations will be evaluated, such as Brazil, Somalia, El Salvador, Korea and Bulgaria.



L3 Emergency Response Evaluations

UNHCR's response to the level-3 crisis in Ukraine and the regional refugee emergency in Sudan will be evaluated.



Examples of evaluations to be commissioned by Divisions/Regional Bureaus/Country Offices:

- Multi-country livelihoods evaluation in the Southern Africa region
- Multi-country evaluation of phone-based call centres in the Middle East and North Africa region
- Multi-country water, sanitation and hygiene programme in the Horn of Africa
- Welcome programme: Refugee economic inclusion in Italy
- Climate smart agriculture endline report, Rwanda
- Safe access to fuel and energy plus programme, Bangladesh

Looking ahead, more investment is needed in strengthening the decentralized evaluation function. The increasing level of earmarked donor resources has been accompanied by additional requirements for evaluation and reporting. However, capacity to professionally manage evaluations remains limited at country level.

Methodologically, and in line with the organization's increasing focus on sustainable solutions and inclusion, UNHCR will need to continue to develop relevant tools and approaches for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on its efforts related to policy advice, coordination and advocacy. Increased efforts will also be needed to raise additional external resources for innovative approaches, such as artificial intelligence and impact evaluations.

Message from Head of the Evaluation Office



Lori Bell

As we look back on this past year, the Evaluation Office at UNHCR remains steadfast in its commitment to driving accountability, learning, and improvement across all levels of our organization. Through rigorous evaluations, we have provided critical insights that have helped refine our strategies, ensuring that UNHCR interventions are both effective and impactful in supporting displaced populations.

Looking ahead, we are steadfast in our determination to further strengthening the decentralized evaluation function and enhancing the capacity of our colleagues, so that every action we take is informed by robust evidence. The Evaluation Office remains at the service of the mandate of the organization to support and protect refugees, internally displaced, host communities and stateless people worldwide. We are excited to build on the progress made this year and to contribute to even greater achievements in the year to come- Stay tuned!

To learn more about the Evaluation Office at UNHCR, visit our website or contact us at evo@unhcr.org

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