

UNHCR Evaluation Management Response			
Evaluation title:	Evaluation of Data Systems in MENA: Multi-country evaluation of phone-based contact centres		
UNHCR evaluation reference:	EVO/2025/05		
Entity that commissioned the evaluation:	UNHCR Regional Bureau, MENA and Evaluation Office		
Due date of Management Response:	14 October 2025		
Coordinator of Management Response:	Name: Stefanie Gross	Job title: Senior Protection Coordinator	Country/Office: Regional Bureau MENA
Management Response approved by (<i>senior manager in commissioning office</i>):	Name: Rema Jamous Imseis	Job title: Bureau Director	Country/Office: Regional Bureau MENA
Date:	15 October 2025		

General comments on the evaluation:	<p><i>[add any general remarks by the commissioning office on the evaluation findings, recommendations]</i></p> <p><i>The independent evaluation of UNHCR's phone-based contact centres (PBCCs) in the MENA region offers a valuable and constructive review of their overall contribution to Accountability to Affected People (AAP). It confirms the important role PBCCs play as an accessible channel for forcibly displaced and stateless persons (FDSPs) to obtain information, provide feedback, and access services, while also noting challenges such as long waiting times, gaps in feedback loops, and pressure on operations during periods of high demand.</i></p> <p><i>The evaluation's recommendations highlight the need to clarify the strategic role of PBCCs in different contexts, strengthening preparedness for sudden shifts in population movements or technology, make fuller use of PBCC data to inform programming, and enhance interagency collaboration. They also call for a greater attention to cost-effectiveness and efficiency standards, tailored to the realities of each country context.</i></p> <p><i>UNHCR welcomes these findings and remains committed to using them to strengthen its communication and accountability work. It should be noted, however, that the funding and operational landscape has changed significantly since the evaluation concluded in 2024. Even where there is agreement with recommendations, the extent and timing of implementation will depend on available resources and the need to balance competing operational priorities.</i></p>
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RECOMMENDATION 1:	<p>Strategic aims and priorities - Make explicit the aim(s) of the PBCC in each specific country context in terms of its strategic objectives, priority services and functions, and review this regularly involving a multi-functional team as contexts evolve.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more specific UNHCR aims for the use of PBCC in a particular country context in the annual planning process and for emergency response plans to guide the prioritization of services and functions. Aims should be more detailed than stating information provision and two-way communication roles. The priorities for the PBCC should be based on the comparative
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		<p>advantage of PBCCs in a given context and their relationship to other communication channels and roles they play. Undertake decision-making on PBCC as part of a broader UNHCR strategy for communicating with FDSP, better aligned to the AAP framework's core actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently engage technology-focused functions (e.g., ICT and IM staff at country level, ODM/DIMA at regional level, and PDSS/GDS at global level) together with CBP/programs in decision-making around PBCC development to ensure that other technology developments and service requirements are considered. At the country level, multi-functional teams provide a good structure for this. Review emerging experiences of creating omni-channel approaches for two-way communication, e.g., Tunisia's experience in integrating communication channels in a common system... Draw on the findings of the above review in c) as well as assessments of information and communication needs, priorities and preferences to design the PBCC potentially as part of an integrated system combining it with other channels including in-person, digital channels (e.g., apps and platforms). Develop and ensure the design, standards and developments in the PBCC are based on a combination of effectiveness and efficiency indicators and that they relate to its strategic aim(s) as well as clearly identifying their role in and then measuring against the four AAP commitments (see recommendation 4 and 5 together their suggested actions). Define the PBCC's aims clearly in annual and emergency planning, going beyond "information sharing" to include protection counselling, referrals, and service guidance. Establish a multi-functional team (Protection, CBP, ICT, IM, Programme) to review aims regularly, align them with AAP commitments, and avoid duplication with other channels. 				
Management response:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		[add only if partially agree or disagree was selected]				
Unit or function responsible:		CO Protection with support of other CO multi-functional team (MFT) functions and RB MENA (MPS/CBP, IM).				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Annual review of PBCC	Country Operations	Conduct a regular, at least annual, review of the PBCC to assess its evolving strategic objectives and added value, beyond its role as an information-sharing and two-way communication tool. Using an MFT approach, the review should identify and prioritize the core services and functions that are most responsive to operational needs. It should also be informed by assessments of information and communication priorities and preferences, and take into account emerging technological developments and their potential implications for future service delivery.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]

RECOMMENDATION 2:	<p>Preparedness for change - Build into the design and development of each PBCC the preparedness for changes in context, technology and levels of demand for services.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in capacity for the expansion/contraction of the number of lines and channels. This includes having plans for change in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Human capacity, e.g., national rosters of operators or partners that can expand the number of operators in an emergency. – Effective and relevant training (e-) modules for operators during emergencies, or times of high turnover (including on the refugee knowledge base platform). – Financial capacity to enable these systems to be activated through contingency funds or access to emergency funds; and – Provision for change in the partner contracts of any contracted-out system, and clarity regarding responsibilities for how this will be resourced. • Plan for the future-proofing of PBCCs to ensure that software systems remain appropriate and sustainable by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Building in flexibility for technology change and integrating with other means of communication and identity management (e.g., the Digital Gateway). – Involve cooperation across all levels of UNHCR when assessing software systems that are used in PBCCs. Leverage expertise at global and regional levels to ensure that any new software systems introduced at the CO level use up-to-date and UNHCR-approved technology. – Avoid developing customized CRMs at country-level but instead deploy existing in-house tools where these have adequate support and evidence of success (e.g. RAIS). Where customized tools must be used, refrain from committing to long-term agreements with service providers to enable a shift to corporate tools when feasible. • Integrate PBCCs into emergency preparedness systems, to be considered as a standard emergency response tool. In preparedness guidance, include steps for setting it up and/or evolving it as the context develops (e.g., scaling up/down). Build flexible systems to scale up or down during emergencies, with operator rosters, partner support, and rapid training modules. • Develop national and partner surge rosters of trained operators that can be rapidly deployed during emergencies or sudden increases in call demand, ensuring continuity of service. • Integrate Helpline scale-up triggers into contingency and emergency preparedness plans, including pre-agreed activation of additional lines, operators, and updated IVR scripts. 			
Management response:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree			
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):	<i>[add only if partially agree or disagree was selected]</i>			
Unit or function responsible:	CO Protection with support of other CO MFT functions, RB MENA (MPS/CBP and IM) and in consultation with HQ (DIP, GDS, ICT).			
Top-line planned actions	By whom	Comments		Progress

				Expected completion date	Status	Comments
1	Ensure PBCC preparedness for change	Country Operations	Conduct a regular, at least annual, review of the PBCC to assess its capacity to adapt to change, including its ability to scale up or down in line with operational needs, while factoring in human, financial, technological, and administrative resources.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
2	Consider PBCC as emergency response tool	Country Operations	Systematically integrate PBCCs into emergency preparedness and response frameworks, reinforcing their role as a strategic tool for delivering timely, coordinated, and context-appropriate interventions.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
RECOMMENDATION 3:		Ensuring the accessibility and relevance of PBCC information and services - Invest in more participation of FDSP in the design stage of PBCCs to identify community priorities, barriers to access, and measures to overcome them as well as to ensure the relevance of PBCC information and services.				
		<u>Suggested actions:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ user-designed principles to ensure the sustained relevance of information, services and access through i) Regular (at least annual) assessments of information needs and priorities and communication channel preferences drawing on tools in the UNHCR AAP Toolkit; ii) Form partnerships with groups with special needs to identify barriers to access and ways to address them; lii) Involve groups with experience of impairment in testing PBCC systems and innovations for their accessibility. • Improve integration of facilities for people with communication disabilities and impairments, e.g., the option for video calls (with potential for a sign language option), speech-to-text functions, and voice-notes, with support from RB MENA (MPS/CBP and IM). • Make systematic the use of UNHCR multi-functional teams to inform the PBCC knowledge base and include involvement of field offices for local knowledge to incorporate; and engage UNHCR in country of origin, as necessary. • Structure engagement between PBCC management, communications, and CBP for consistent communication across channels and for the rapid updating of the knowledge bases used by PBCC operators and others. • At times of change in the country of origin/residence/other, establish a system to rapidly update the information priorities of FDSP through systematic engagement with community networks. Accelerate the updating of the PBCC knowledge base at this time. • Communicate findings on priorities identified for communication and PBCC services to the community including through community leaders, social media and other methods. • Ensure clear information is accessible to FDSP regarding any costs associated with the use of the PBCC e.g. cost of charges by operators for phone calls. • Conduct regular participatory assessments with refugees to identify priority information needs, preferred communication channels, and barriers to accessing the Helpline, ensuring that services remain relevant and responsive. 				

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate accessibility features into the Helpline system such as voice notes, speech-to-text, and options for video calls with interpretation support, to improve access for persons with disabilities and communication impairments. 				
Management response:		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		The review of the evaluation report was undertaken prior to the recent and significant reductions in budget and staffing levels. In view of these changed circumstances, this recommendation could now be supported if the formulation referred to "enhancing" rather than "ensuring" the systematic consideration of PBCCs. This revised wording would more accurately reflect existing resource (and also access) constraints, while maintaining a progressive and measurable objective. It would also offer a more appropriate balance between ambition and feasibility, and would enable accountability for incremental yet demonstrable improvements over time.				
Unit or function responsible:		CO Protection with support of other CO MFT functions PBCC management and RB MENA (MPS/CBP and IM)				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Ensure inclusion of FDSPs in (further) design and development of PBCC	Country Operations	Conduct regular (at least annual) assessments of information needs and priorities and preferred communication channel to inform evidence-based adjustments to content and dissemination strategies and enhance the relevance and effectiveness of engagement efforts.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
2	Enhance access to PBCCs for FDSPs with special needs	Country Operations	Conduct regular (at least annual) consultations with FDSPs to identify barriers to access and develop actionable strategies to mitigate them. Strengthen the integration of facilities for individuals with communication disabilities and impairments, with technical and operational support from RB MENA, to ensure inclusive and accessible service delivery.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
3	Implement MFT approach to PBCC knowledge management	Country Operations	Operationalise a MFT approach to PBCC knowledge management to ensure the continuous availability of relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive information across sectors as well as channels, based also on structured engagement with FDSPs and host communities, to optimize coherence, accessibility, and operational utility.	Continuous	Ongoing	
RECOMMENDATION 4:		Tailoring standards for efficiency - Adapt and implement global level PBCC guidance covering an approach and standards for efficiency that drive the PBCC's strategic purpose, whilst upholding UNHCR's mandate and a high-quality service for FDSP service users. Ensure that efficiency standards and approaches can be tailored to the PBCC's role and strategic purpose within a specific context.				

		<p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing on global guidance, establish standards for efficiency that relate to UNHCR's PBCC aims at regional/global levels and adapt to specific country systems (as distinct from being driven by private sector standards). • Ensure that approaches uphold humanitarian principles and the need to provide a high-quality service for FDSP. Avoid unintentional compromise on this by using performance metrics for efficiency that combine the quality of calls and their effectiveness with the quantity of calls and other efficiency metrics (see recommendation 5 below). • When making decisions about how to enhance cost-efficiency, consider how operator welfare is affected by responding to any increases in targets for handled calls per day. • Orient data collection and performance management towards the full service cycle and not just call analytics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Building on global level guidance, adapt and apply UNHCR KPIs on call quality, e.g., operator knowledge, escalation of issues, and call etiquette. – Develop approaches and standards to track and understand better how tickets and referrals are processed. • Ensure clear and effective systems are in place for the prioritization of urgent cases, ideally including 24/7 access for callers with critical protection cases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify and invest in re-routing specific subsets of callers through alternative cost-effective communication channels, which will relieve the pressure on PBCCs (e.g., platforms for information provision, registration appointment bookings, and tracking status updates). – Ensure clarity for FDSP in the process of accessing services when there is an urgent need. Highlight the relationship/role of partners' hotlines and emergency service provision. • Identify and address processes that are causing blockages in the PBCC workflow and involve PBCC operators in the analysis and resolution. • Track not only call volumes but also call quality, urgent case handling, and referral follow-up. • Introduce alternative channels for routine requests (e.g., appointment bookings or status updates) to reduce Helpline workload and free operators for complex protection counselling. 				
Management response:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):						
Unit or function responsible:		RB MENA (MPS/CBP and IM) in consultation with HQ (DIP and GDS) and COs.				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Establish standards for efficiency	RB MENA	RB MPS and DIMA to develop standards	End 2027	Planned	[any other information pertaining to

						implementing the action]
RECOMMENDATION 5:	<p>Management of PBCC for cost-effectiveness - Enhance the management of PBCC through a focus on cost-effectiveness that combines holistic analysis of costs and efficiency together with analysis of PBCC effectiveness in terms of outcomes including user satisfaction; referral rates, accuracy and action; effectiveness of feedback loop; and PBCC's contribution to protection outcomes.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure analyses of costs include the full range of costs, including direct costs (e.g., staff, software, equipment, and licenses) and indirect costs. Include the requirements of UNHCR support services (e.g., ICT, IM, HR and finance) in the analysis process, as well as partner hotline costs and service provision. • Analyze and consider the implications of patterns of caller composition and trends on the design of a PBCC (e.g., the proportion of new unique callers who may need more time per call and the scale of duplicate calls; new arrivals vs. established populations). Note peaks in trends or emergencies and how these have been managed. • Develop standards (adapted at CO level to CO strategic priorities) for user satisfaction; referral rates, accuracy and action; effectiveness of feedback loop; and PBCC's contribution to protection outcomes. • Consistently and regularly use methods to assess user satisfaction among different groups and explore how levels can be improved. This can be through satisfaction surveys at the end of a call and/or through community centers and draw on the tools in the existing MENA AAP toolkit. • Develop and systematically use methods to track referral rates and the accuracy of referrals, along with the level/speed/quality of actions following referrals. • Develop methods to understand the contributions of PBCC services (e.g., direct information, counselling and referrals) to protection outcomes and include them in the regular reporting of the CO. Share results of this monitoring with refugee leaders and community leaders every 3-6 months. • Undertake comprehensive cost analyses covering staff, ICT systems, and partner hotlines, and use these findings alongside effectiveness indicators (satisfaction, referral outcomes, protection impact) to guide management decisions. 					
Management response:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree					
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):	[add only if partially agree or disagree was selected]					
Unit or function responsible:	CO Protection and with support of other CO MFT functions and RB MENA (MPS/CBP, IM).					
Top-line planned actions	By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress		
				Status	Comments	

1	Assess PBCC user satisfaction	Country Operations	Regularly assess user satisfaction across diverse groups to identify areas for improvement to strengthen overall service quality and effectiveness.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
2	Monitor PBCC referral rates	Country Operations	Develop and institutionalize methods to monitor referral rates and assess the accuracy of referrals, together with the timeliness, quality, and effectiveness of follow-up actions, in order to strengthen accountability and optimize service delivery outcomes.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
3	Assess PBCC contributions to protection outcomes	Country Operations	Establish methods to assess the contributions of PBCC services (e.g., information provision, counselling, referrals) to protection outcomes, and integrate these findings in reporting to support evidence-based decision-making and accountability.	Continuous	Ongoing	
RECOMMENDATION 6:		<p>Use of data for program learning and adaptation - Enhance the use of PBCC feedback data for program learning and adaptation through more in-depth analyses and its integration with other feedback data.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on current models (e.g., Iraq) that integrate PBCC feedback on services and assistance with other sources of feedback. • Building on the enhanced performance measures in recommendations 4 and 5, deepen reports from PBCC feedback data, with more analyses of trends, the content of calls, and others in line with sector/program requests. • Regularly review the feedback for implications on program adaptation. Create action plans for program changes and follow up on their implementation as part of regular reporting to CO management. • Continue Integrating PBCC feedback into program decisions — for example, adjusting communication on cash or protection services. • Combine call data with other AAP feedback sources for stronger trend analysis. • Translate findings into concrete action plans and monitor follow-up. • Systematically integrate Helpline feedback with other community feedback mechanisms to provide a fuller picture of refugee needs and inform program adjustments. 				
Management response:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				

Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		[add only if partially agree or disagree was selected]				
Unit or function responsible:		CO Protection with support of other CO MFT functions and RB MENA (MPS/CBP and IM)				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Integrate PBCC feedback	Country Operations	Integrate PBCC feedback on services and assistance with other sources of stakeholder input, and systematically review the implications for programme adaptation, including through structured reflection within the programme cycle, to strengthen responsiveness, learning, and evidence-based decision-making.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
RECOMMENDATION 7:		<p>Positioning and interagency cooperation - Position UNHCR in each country and locally as a visible and active interagency actor in relation to PBCCs.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across COs, consistently share anonymized data from PBCCs to enable interagency trends analyses and shared contextual analyses. • Closely follow interagency initiatives, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund's (CERF's) pilot projects in collective AAP, to explore their implications for UNHCR PBCCs and share their lessons across COs. • Advocate for a global interagency study on costs, benefits, and appropriate contexts for interagency collective PBCCs. • Explore further options for interagency collaboration on the use of new technologies in relation to PBCCs and the contribution of UNHCR to this. • Invest in interagency coordination on AAP/CWC. Where it is not mature, i.e. not formally structured, lead a process to establish forums for interagency coordination and where it exists, play an active role in it. • Ensure that COs are aware of UNHCR's role in the development of relevant interagency tools such as the IASC resources for collective AAP • Ensure clear UNHCR terminology is used when referred to interagency PBCCs that distinguishes if the term refers to collective systems (e.g. a single PBCC that serves UNHCR, WFP, other agencies) or only to UNHCR and UNHCR implementing partners. • Share anonymized Helpline data and trends with partners to contribute to interagency analysis, joint planning, and advocacy on refugee needs. 				
Management response:		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				

Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		<p>This recommendation would have been agreed to if it had included a qualification along the lines of “in line with organizational commitments, operational strategies and available resources”. Such phrasing would have clarified that it applies only in contexts where UNHCR has determined that a PBCC represents the most effective mechanism to operationalize organizational commitments and strategic objectives, while recognizing that implementation remained contingent upon the availability of the necessary resources.</p> <p>We would have also suggested the deletion of bullets 3 and 6 under the suggested actions, as these appear to target HQ rather than COs.</p>				
Unit or function responsible:		CO Protection and senior management, with support of RB MENA and HQ.				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Explore interagency collaboration	Country Operations	Systematically explore options for interagency collaboration on the use of emerging technologies within PBCCs, and clarify the scope and nature of UNHCR’s contribution to technological integration and innovation.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
2	Strengthen interagency AAP/CWC coordination	Country Operations	Invest in strengthening interagency coordination on AAP/CWC. In contexts where such coordination is not yet mature or formally structured, take a leading role in establishing dedicated forums to facilitate collaborative engagement. In settings with existing coordination mechanisms, actively engage to enhance their effectiveness, coherence, and strategic impact.	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
RECOMMENDATION 8:		<p>Sharing lessons and promoting learning globally - Key findings, lessons and good practices from this regional evaluation should be fed into global tools, guidance and positioning, as appropriate.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate relevant lessons from the evaluation into the new Contact Centre Toolkit and any associated good practice guides to support CO PBCC development. Disseminate evaluation findings, with a view to promoting use of the evaluation results (key findings, lessons and good practices, recommendations for improvements) with UNHCR relevant audiences at RB and CO levels (e.g., CBP, PBCC management, IMs) particularly lessons regarding scaling up, down, exit and factors to consider when deciding upon PBCC models for specific contexts. For example disseminate during trainings, info sharing sessions and consultations, newsletters, etc. Share evaluation findings and good practices across operations via regular info sessions, newsletters, and regional consultations, highlighting practical approaches to scaling, exit strategies, and model selection. 				

Management response:		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):		[add only if partially agree or disagree was selected]				
Unit or function responsible:		DIP, in consultation with GDS, ICT, DER and RBs.				
Top-line planned actions		By whom	comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
1	Integrate evaluation lessons into Contact Centre Toolkit and other guidance	DIP	Integrate relevant lessons from the evaluation into the new Contact Centre Toolkit and any associated good practice guides to support COs in PBCC development.	Completed	Completed	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]
2	Disseminate evaluation findings	DIP	Disseminate evaluation findings to promoting use of results (including lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations for improvements) among UNHCR audiences at RB and CO levels	Continuous	Ongoing	[any other information pertaining to implementing the action]