

UNHCR Evaluation Management Response

Evaluation title:	MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE SAFE ACCESS TO FUEL AND ENERGY PLUS PROGRAMME - SAFE+2 (Joint Programme)
Entity that commissioned the evaluation:	FAO, IOM, UNHCR, and WFP
Due date of Management Response:	
Coordinator of Management Response:	Christopher Bender
Management Response approved by:	
Background	<p>The SAFE Access to Fuel and Energy Plus (SAFE+) program was conceived in 2018 in response to the massive influx of 700,000 Rohingya refugees to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, which led to the creation of the world's largest refugee settlement spanning 33 camps. This sudden influx placed severe strain on the region's fragile resources and ecosystems, including 2,500 hectares of protected forest allocated by the Government of Bangladesh. Immediate impacts included deforestation, soil erosion, and increased carbon emissions due to the daily requirement of 900,000 kilos of firewood for cooking, leading to significant environmental degradation and health issues for refugees.</p> <p>To address these challenges, UN agencies, in collaboration with donors and the Government of Bangladesh, launched the SAFE+ program (2019–2022), which significantly improved livelihoods, reduced environmental damage, and regenerated thousands of hectares of forest. SAFE+ 2 (2022–2025) builds on these successes with a focus on three integrated areas of intervention.</p> <p>This Mid-Term Evaluation aims to generate evidence on the programme's outcomes and impacts and guide the remainder of the programme's implementation period. The generated information is foreseen to provide actionable advice to the programme's key stakeholders and to guide similar (future) initiatives to achieve sustainable results. The main objective of this evaluation is to evaluate the programme's performance against the desired results articulated in the foundational programme document and Result Framework.</p>

Overall Comments: *[Any general comments on the evaluation findings and recommendations and HC/HCT's approach to address its recommendations]*

The SAFE+2 program partners have reviewed and discussed the recommendations from the midterm evaluation. Specific actions have been identified to address the evaluation recommendations, and improvement actions are already been implemented.

As a joint program, the evaluation process was designed to foster collaboration and shared accountability among all four partners. However, the Terms of Reference (ToR) did not specify any particular quality assurance procedures or mandate a formal management response. Instead, the evaluation's primary utility lies in facilitating discussions among partners based on the recommendations provided.

As the convening agency for SAFE+2, UNHCR administered the available funding for the evaluation through its coordination role. However, the evaluation should not be considered a UNHCR-led initiative.

Moving forward, the program partners aim to ensure that the evaluation findings are used effectively to guide program improvements while maintaining the collaborative spirit of the initiative.

Recommendation 1: Contingency Plans and exit strategy: Conduct a risk analysis of the project to identify risks and scenario planning, especially regarding funding reduction, assess their severity, and develop mitigation measures. Establish a contingency mechanism to address unforeseen challenges, with regular revisions as needed to adapt to evolving circumstances and funding landscape. Sustain and diversify funding sources, maintaining a balance between addressing immediate humanitarian needs and long-term developmental concerns. Develop an exit strategy, particularly for strategic priority 1: provision of clean cooking energy.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Create a sustainability strategy together with needed analysis and contingencies	Program	Q2 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO started the planned study on alternative energy solutions for cooking. During the discussion around the extension of SAFE+2 partners agreed to follow the study with pilot projects to test alternative energy sources to diversify cooking fuel. Discussion between UNHCR and the REP Fund as well as 	FAO study report on alternative energy solutions. Meeting minutes with SAFE+2 partners discussing energy

				<p>IOM through Norway Innovation Fund have started to explore access to climate financing. UNHCR through the REP Fund plans to engage a consultancy to identify the regulatory framework in Bangladesh.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOM started to distribute pressure cookers which would cover the entire refugee population. 	<p>contingency plans. ToR for the UNHCR REP Fund study on climate financing.</p>
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Recommendation 2: Enhance sustainability: Advocate with the Government of Bangladesh, showcasing the macroeconomic benefits of involving Rohingya refugees, particularly women and youth, in income-generating activities. Engage donors and partners in policy advocacy initiatives. Explore climate action funding sources to secure more sustainable funding streams. Develop livelihood activities tailored for refugee women to be implemented at the family and block levels within the camps, enhancing their empowerment, safety and reducing social stress.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Continue advocacy discussions with donors to extend the SAFE+2 program to mid-2027 and re-engage the Bangladesh government to	Program	Q2 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners have discussed with donors to extend the SAFE+2 programme until mid 2027. • Advocacy discussions with the Bangladesh government have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy briefs presented to donors.

explore policy and funding opportunities post-political changes.				been delayed after the political changes in Bangladesh after August 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of meetings with the Government of Bangladesh and key stakeholders. Meeting minutes and endorsement of programme extension.
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Recommendation 3. Gender Analysis: While the LPG distribution covers the entire population, prioritize a gender-focused approach across all three strategic priorities of the project. Conduct additional analysis on the role of women in cooking and fuel collection, plantation activities, and livelihood pursuits to inform targeted interventions and support gender equality objectives.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Leverage the inclusion of three gender indicators in annual reporting templates to systematically evaluate and improve women's involvement across SAFE+2 priorities.	Program	Q2 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three gender indicators were included in the annual reporting template 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised annual reporting templates with gender indicators.

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress reports
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Recommendation 4. Access to Cleaner Cooking energy.

- All households should be provided with pressure cookers to minimise the cost of cooking and the use of firewood.
- Rohingya households should receive refresher training on the use and benefits of LPG and pressure cookers.
- Community awareness interventions should be provided to the host and Rohingya communities, focusing on the reasons for environmental damage and its devastating impact on us and steps that need to be taken

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Scale up the distribution of pressure cookers across all households and expand refresher training on LPG use while launching community awareness campaigns on environmental preservation.	Program	Q1 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities were continuously implemented. Discussions on alternative cooking solutions and funding sources were mentioned above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution records of pressure cookers. Training materials

Recommendation 5: Environment and Ecosystems

- Community awareness interventions should be provided to the host and Rohingya communities, focusing on the conflict of natural resources and how to solve the problems mutually. This programme may develop a mechanism-chain for resolving these conflicts.
- This programme should ensure many more women's engagement in food production with a robust monitoring system.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A					
Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Strengthen collaboration between FAO and UNHCR on watershed management, slope stabilization, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation, incorporating climate change awareness initiatives identified in the ISNA 2024.	Program	Q2 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy and Environment activities have picked up in 2024, partners are focusing on watershed management, slope stabilization and management of human-wildlife conflict. Increased coordination took place between FAO and UNHCR on environmental activities including watershed management and human elephant conflict management. The ISNA 2024 has identified low understanding of the impact of climate change and partners of the Rohingya Response are looking at ways to address this in 2025. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme reports

Recommendation 6. Resilience

- This intervention should take more initiatives to strengthen the Aggregation Centre effectively by increasing the production of both males and females and enhancing their capacity.
- The programme should strengthen the e-commerce platform by popularising the Farm2Go App.
- The programme should reprioritise the activities per the budget available to the implementing agencies. Many activities should be deducted from the planned activities as per the requirements.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Expand the WFP-supported Community Aquaculture project to additional camps and prioritize female participation in skills development activities under SAFE+2 resilience initiatives.	Program	Q2 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP have continued activities under SAFE+2, in 2024 more SAFE+2 funding was utilized for resilience funding in 2024. This includes the support for the aggregation centres. Any expansion will be subject to funding availability. • In 2023, WFP's resilience programme, under the SAFE+2, supported 5,227 refugees (1,833 men and 3,394 women) by facilitating various skills development activities to enhance their capabilities. WFP initiated a Community Aquaculture project in four refugee camps, benefiting 500 refugees (412 female, 84 male). Female participation is prioritized throughout pillar 2 and 3 activities. 	Reports

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Recommendation 7. Reprioritising the Activities

This programme should set the baseline value and the targets as early as possible to measure its final goal and impact.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Present the prioritized list of SAFE+2 activities for the program extension to donors and ensure alignment with available resources for timely implementation.	Program	Q1 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners have prioritized activities in 2023 which was presented to donors During the discussion on the SAFE+2 extension partners agreed to provide a prioritized list of activities for the extension period. 	Meeting notes/minutes Program documents Activity reprioritization list.

Recommendation 8. Programme Target Setting

This programme can replicate the findings of lessons learned and best practices in other areas.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions
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			Underway Completed Cancelled		and/or implementation stage
Maintain current program targets and ensure achievements are assessed holistically by integrating results from both SAFE+2 and bilateral funding sources.	Program	Q1 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the partners expect to extend the programme the targets have been kept at their current level. As the activities in the programme are not 100% funded through the programme and funding is complemented by bilateral funding the overall achievement of targets should be looked at including all received funding, SAFE+2 and bilateral. 	Program targets Reports

Recommendation 8. Aligning the Lesson Learned and Best Practices

The MPTF and bilateral fund model is efficient but has some disadvantages in implementing the activities within the planned timeline. To avoid this problem, the program should reprioritize the activities as per the timeline and availability of funds to achieve the target at the end of the program.

Management Response: Agreed

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, provide explanation: N/A

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents of actions and/or implementation stage
Conduct coordination meetings to document and disseminate lessons learned and best practices, ensuring	Program	Q2 2025	Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners continue monthly coordination meetings to discuss progress As partners are implementing SAFE+2 activities 	List of reprioritized activities.

activity reprioritization aligns with the extended program timeline.				through the programme and with other funding sources increased coordination has started in cooperation with ISCG to streamline lesson learnt and good practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities will be re-prioritized in accordance to the new extended timeline	
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